ROBERT BURNS AND FRIENDS essays by W. Ormiston Roy Fellows presented to G. Ross Roy

Patrick G. Scott  
*University of South Carolina - Columbia, scottp@mailbox.sc.edu*

Kenneth Simpson

*See next page for additional authors*
ROBERT BURNS AND FRIENDS

essays by W. Ormiston Roy Fellows

presented to G. Ross Roy
G. Ross Roy
as Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*
June 17, 2009
“The rank is but the guinea’s stamp,
The Man’s the gowd for a’ that.”
ROBERT BURNS AND FRIENDS

essays by W. Ormiston Roy Fellows

presented to G. Ross Roy

edited by

Patrick Scott

and

Kenneth Simpson

2012
To
Ross and Lucie Roy
with gratitude and affection
Preface

This volume pays tribute to the Burns scholar and editor G. Ross Roy, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of English & Comparative Literature at the University of South Carolina, and friend and mentor to successive generations of Burnsians and Burns scholars. For more than fifty years, Ross Roy has been one of the most active and respected scholars in Scottish literary studies, both for his own research on Burns and other writers, and for the pioneering and influential journal he founded and edited, *Studies in Scottish Literature*. Arguably it is that journal, as much as any other factor, that first brought the scholarly study of Scottish literature its now-established academic credibility and recognition.

The volume departs from the conventions of the *festschrift* in several ways: its contributors are neither the honoree’s distinguished contemporaries nor his former students, the topics of the essays in no way represent the full range of the honoree’s scholarly research and interests, and the volume champions no single methodology or perspective. In planning the volume, we were aware that many of the contributions to the splendid double-volume of *Studies in Scottish Literature* (2008) with which Dr. Roy concluded his editorship had already pre-empted a *festschrift* on traditional lines.

Instead, this volume focuses on a single author and theme (broadly interpreted, it is true), and the contributors represent a special subset of the many scholars who would wish to honour Ross Roy. The central thread through Dr. Roy’s own work has been Robert Burns, and the volume’s title also celebrates his own gift for friendship. The participants are scholars from both sides of the Atlantic who
have visited the University of South Carolina as W. Ormiston Roy Fellows to conduct research in the G. Ross Collection of Robert Burns & Scottish Poetry. Their essays explore aspects of Burns's relationships with his poetic predecessors and the cultural community of his youth, with his contemporaries, and with correspondents; his songs and song-editing; and his remarkable and very personal impact on subsequent generations. Three essays, still Burns-related, tie in with other threads in Ross Roy’s career: his interest in the literature of his native Canada, in literary translation, and in book collecting. Beginning with a biographical tribute to Ross Roy by one editor, the volume concludes with a checklist of Ross Roy’s published work by the other.

Thanks are due in the first instance to the contributors. Patrick Scott owes thanks to Tom McNally, Dean of Libraries at the University of South Carolina, and to his colleagues in Rare Books, for freeing time to work on the volume, and to the South Carolina Honors College for supporting Justin Mellette’s and Mark Taylor’s assistance with this and other Burns projects. Ken Simpson acknowledges with gratitude the help of Ronnie Young and David Simpson with some technical issues. Thanks are also due to the good friends who funded publication of the volume through a donation to the Library Fund. The frontispiece portrait has been kindly shared by the University of Glasgow. But above all, the volume owes its existence to the respect and affection, reflected in the dedication, that so many of us have for Ross Roy and Lucie Roy, true friends.

Patrick Scott & Kenneth Simpson
Contents

Preface vii
Patrick Scott & Kenneth Simpson

“G. Ross Roy: A Tribute” 1
Kenneth Simpson

“Burns’s Two Memorials to Fergusson” 5
Carol McGuirk

“Footnoted Folklore: Robert Burns’s ‘Halloween’” 24
Corey E. Andrews

“Robert Burns as Dramatic Poet” 38
R. D. S. Jack

“‘Tongues Turn’d Inside Out’: The Reception of ‘Tam o’ Shanter’” 47
Gerard Carruthers

“Epistolary Performances’: Burns and the Arts of the Letter” 58
Kenneth Simpson

“O My Luve’s like a Red, Red rose’: Does Burns’s Melody Really Matter?” 68
Kirsteen McCue

“Back to Burns” 83
Fred Freeman

“On Editing The Merry Muses” 95
Valentina Bold
“The Poor Man’s Friend in Need’: George Baird, Burns, and Hugh Miller” 108
David Robb

“James Hogg’s First Encounter with Burns’s Poetry” 122
Douglas S. Mack

“Alexander McLachlan: The ‘Robert Burns’ of Canada” 131
Edward J. Cowan

Marco Fazzini

“A Passion for Scholarship and Collecting: The G. Ross Roy Collection of Robert Burns & Scottish Literature” 155
Thomas Keith

Patrick Scott, with Justin Mellette

Notes on Contributors and on the W. Ormiston Roy Memorial Fellowship 181

Index 186

ABBREVIATIONS
The following abbreviations are used throughout the volume, for parenthetical references given in the text:
Spanning six decades, Ross Roy’s career is suffused with a love of Scotland which has its roots in his ancestry and a visit to the country at the age of eight with his grandfather, W. Ormiston Roy. As scholar, editor, teacher, and collector, Ross Roy has long been recognised as one of the foremost authorities on Scotland’s literary culture. His generosity in sharing this knowledge and inspiring others is legendary.

Born and educated in Montreal, Ross Roy is of Scots-Canadian heritage, with family roots in Quebec stretching back to the British conquest in the mid-eighteenth century, and with an ancestor who fought both on the losing side at Culloden and on the winning side on the Heights of Abraham. He graduated B.A. from Concordia University and M.A. from the University of Montreal, followed by the maîtrise from the University of Strasbourg and doctorates from the Universities of Paris and Montreal. In 2002 he received an honorary D.Litt. from the University of Edinburgh, and in 2009 the University of Glasgow conferred a similar honour.

Like many of his contemporaries, Ross Roy had his studies interrupted. Four years as a navigator in the Royal Canadian Air Force and with the R.A.F. honed precision skills that would serve him well as a textual editor. The values which Ross and his generation had then defended, they later brought with them into academe — intellectual freedom, responsibility, dedication, fairness, and a very real esprit de corps. To enter the profession in the next generation was a privilege: the collegial spirit and work-ethic then prevalent surely owed much to the shared endeavours and hardships of those who had seen war service.
Professor Roy’s teaching career has taken him to Strasbourg, the Canadian Royal Military College in Quebec, Montreal, Alabama, Texas Technological College at Lubbock, and as visiting professor to the University of Metz. For twenty-five years, from 1965, he taught at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, serving for many years as chair of the Comparative Literature Program, winning the University’s Research Award, and retiring in 1990 as Distinguished Professor Emeritus. Many are the testimonies to his inspirational teaching. As we know, Burns could be sceptical about the benefits of higher education, but his line in “Epistle to John Lapraik, an Old Scotch Bard” requires this qualification: “They gang in stirks and come out asses,/ But no frae G. Ross Roy’s classes.”

As the checklist of his publications indicates, Ross Roy’s scholarship embraces Scottish, English, and comparative literatures, but it is particularly his Burns scholarship that has won him international renown. His two-volume Clarendon edition of The Letters of Robert Burns (1985), revising J. DeLancey Ferguson’s edition of 1931, is a model of empirical textual scholarship. For this editor, Burns’s dictum, “Facts are cheeks that winna ding” (Kinsley I: 266) holds good: every letter was checked at source (where available); important letters were added; significant emendations were made. The method and the result are exemplary. This precedent is essential for Burns scholarship since the richness and diversity of Burns, the remarkable range of voices in poems and letters alike, can all too readily be used to support partial or subjective readings. Burns can so engender enthusiasm that it distorts judgement; not so in the work of Ross Roy.

Nowhere are these qualities of balanced enthusiasm, range, and perspective more evident than in his forty-five year editorship of Studies in Scottish Literature. When Professor Roy conceived of the journal in the early ’sixties it was almost impossible to find university teaching of Scottish literature even in Scotland. When Ross sought advice on founding a journal from his Scottish contacts, the response was less than encouraging. Fortunately, he was not deterred, and almost half a century later all with an interest in Scottish literature are the beneficiaries of one man’s vision and his
determination to make it a reality. Name those scholars of Scottish literature whom he has published? It’s easier to list those whom he has not. Nowadays academics are encouraged to ‘network’. Ross Roy has never needed to put this concept into practice. Yet in a’ the airts and every branch of the arts he has established his own clan, an extended family of fellow-enthusiasts; and this has been achieved by love of his subject and breadth and depth of knowledge of it. When tribute was paid to him at a symposium at USC in 1999, Ross, characteristically, more than repaid the compliment: “The great thing about Scottish literature,” he said, “is that you get to meet so many nice people.”

Professor Roy’s qualities as editor are many, but three warrant particular mention: an insatiable appetite for the creative imagination in its many manifestations (how many scholarly editors can number writers from MacDiarmid to Spark, McIlvanney, Leonard, and Gray among their friends and contributors?); a readiness to extend to all the possibility of submitting material for consideration (to how many young researchers has he offered that crucial break, their first publication?); and the judicious nature of that consideration, be it guidance as to matters of scholarly convention or rigorous engagement with the quality of argument. Scholarship would be the poorer without the scrupulous editorial surveillance of Ross and of his wife Lucie as associate editor. Studies in Scottish Literature has set editorial standards which those who follow must strive to maintain, difficult though that will be.

Ross Roy’s generosity finds many modes of expression. Bibliophile and Scotophile in equal measure, he has greatly enlarged the collection begun by his grandfather, which he inherited in 1959. In the Roy Collection in the University of South Carolina’s new Ernest F. Hollings Library are books and manuscripts that would be sought in vain in such major holdings as those of the National Library of Scotland or the Mitchell Library, Glasgow. These are treasures that Ross has gone out of his way to share by donating the bulk of his collection to the University and by being unsparing in affording access to both the collection and his expertise. The collection, and the conferences which it has engendered, have made the University of South Carolina the centre of
Scottish literary study in North America. The W. Ormiston Roy Memorial Visiting Research Fellowship in Scottish Poetry, established in 1990 by Lucie and Ross Roy in memory of his grandfather, has enabled scholars to research across a wide range of topics in Scottish literature. After visiting the Roys, all of them have come to know what “hospitality” really means. Burns’s lines, “the social, friendly, honest man,/ Whate’er he be,/ ‘Tis he fulfils great Nature’s plan,/ And none but he,” (Kinsley I:91) assume a new dimension.

The Scotland of 2012 is one which few would have envisaged in 1963 when Ross established *Studies in Scottish Literature*. Arguably it is the Scottish nation which is the greatest beneficiary of Ross’s endeavours. It is appropriate that on his eightieth birthday in 2004 tribute was paid to him by the First Minister, Jack McConnell. The provision of a platform for Scottish scholarship and Scottish writing has contributed much to the Scottish cultural flowering in recent decades. Ross Roy has played a major part by taking Scottish scholarship to far corners of the world and by befriending and encouraging so many writers and artists. And he has projects lined up for years to come: as he wrote in what was his final (double!) volume of *Studies in Scottish Literature*, “I know when to walk away, but I don’t have to run.” We are all the beneficiaries of his learning, enthusiasm, and generosity. This volume is a modest tribute of gratitude for his continuing friendship and inspiration.
Burns’s Two Memorials to Fergusson

Carol McGuirk

The more gifted the writer the more alert he is to the gifts, the things given or given up, the données, of language itself.... A seemingly infinite obligingness of language may indicate an onerous burden of obligation, though the obligation may be only that of accommodating oneself to expectation.

—Geoffrey Hill, “Unhappy Circumstances”

Early in February 1787, Robert Burns requested permission from the governors of Edinburgh’s Canongate church to place a headstone on the neglected grave of Robert Fergusson (1750-1774), whose poems had once enjoyed a lively local popularity but were slipping into obscurity. In the petition, Burns ignores Fergusson’s partial eclipse of reputation, calling him “justly celebrated” for works of “deathless fame,” and in this way softening his implicit rebuke to an ungrateful public: “I am sorry to be told that […] his] remains ... lie in your church yard among the ignoble Dead unnoticed and unknown …. —Some memorial to direct the steps of Lovers of Scottish Song … is surely a … tribute due to [his] memory, a … tribute I wish to have the honor of paying” (Roy I: 90). Burns, “alert to the gifts” of stanza-form and vigorous Scots diction that he had received from Fergusson, is speaking here to private obligations, though his explicit reference is to a more nebulous entity, the “Lovers of Scottish Song.”

Six months earlier, he had settled accounts with John Wilson, printer of Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect
(Kilmarnock 1786), receiving some £56 after reimbursing Wilson for the costs of paper and printing.\(^1\) In late November he had traveled to Edinburgh to arrange for an expanded second edition, making an early visit to Ferguson's grave. When he wrote his letter to the Canongate bailies on 6 February, the new edition was underway and he had the prospect of further income. Nonetheless, his commissioning even of a modest monument was an extravagant gesture. At this time, and for the nine years remaining before his own death, Burns had numerous family claims on a scanty income. His own youngest brother, John (d. 1785), lay in an unmarked grave in Mauchline; yet some compelling sense of duty led Burns, within weeks of arriving in Edinburgh, to pledge this memorial in tribute to his "elder brother in the Muse" (Kinsley I: 323). The Kilmarnock edition had been received with a wild enthusiasm that Ferguson's own poetry had never enjoyed, and some emotion more complex than appreciation—something conscience-stricken—underlies this episode.

\(^1\) Burns reported his profit for the 1786 Poems not as £56 but as "near twenty pounds" (Roy I: 145) in the personal history he sent to John Moore on 2 August 1787. Among the biographers, Robert Fitzhugh offers the most succinct breakdown of credits and debits: "The 612 copies brought in £90, of which the printer’s bill took £34/3/-; but Burns says that he cleared only £20. Perhaps the difference is accounted for by the £9 passage money for Jamaica which he paid down, and which he may have ‘lost’ (108). (The cost of the passage was in fact slightly higher, being 9 guineas, not 9 pounds). Fitzhugh mentions a further payment made to Elizabeth Paton, mother of Burns’s first child, on 1 December 1786, but mentions no amount: this was for £20. In reckoning profits Burns evidently subtracted some £30 (the payment for Jamaica passage given to Irvine shipping agent James Allen and the payment to Elizabeth Paton), which would reduce his profit to £26. He may then have rounded off downward in reporting to Moore; but the remaining £6 discrepancy might represent a further debit: a 50% down payment to “Robert Burn, Architect” for Ferguson’s headstone.
In the event, it was difficult to pay for the headstone. Burns sent a messenger in 1792 to his friend Peter Hill, an Edinburgh bookseller, with instructions:

£5-10 per acct I owe to Mr Robt Burn, Architect, for erecting the stone over poor Ferguson [sic].—He was two years in erecting it ... & I have been two years paying him ...; so he and I are quits.—He had the hardiesse to ask me interest on the sum; but considering the money was due by one Poet, for putting a tomb-stone over another, he may, with grateful surprise, thank Heaven that ever he saw a farthing of it.

(Roy II: 133)

“Mr. Robert Burn, Architect,” selected to engrave and set the stone, is curiously the poet’s near-twin in name; a surrogate performs the practical work of discharging this debt to Fergusson’s memory.2 Burns’s reverence for Fergusson’s burial place is remembered in a poem of 1962 that calls up Robert Garioch’s own wandering thoughts while standing at Fergusson’s grave:

Canongait kirkyard in the failing year
is auld and grey, the wee roseirs are bare,
five gulls leam white agen the dirty air:
why are they here? There’s naething for them here.
... Strang, present dool
ruggs at my hairt. Lichtlie this gin ye daur:
here Robert Burns knelt and kissed the mool.

(Garioch, “At Robert Fergusson’s Grave” 16)

Garioch expresses that same recognition of kinship, poet to poet, that animates Burns’s references to Fergusson. His poem’s speaker “canna hear” the public address being given

---

2 On Burns’s calling the stone-mason an architect: the poet typically used that word as a synonym for “builder” or “contractor,” as in a letter of February 1789 that tells his cousin James that his father-in-law James Armour has agreed to take their cousin William as apprentice: “to bind himself to be a Mason.” The letter then refers to James Armour as “a pretty considerable Architect in Ayrshire,” which has been read as a snobbish inflation of Armour’s status, although Burns has already made it clear that Armour is simply a busy master-mason (Roy I: 377).
at a ceremony honoring Fergusson. Around him in the silent crowd are “Fergusons mainly, quite a fair/ turn-out, respectfully, ill at ease”; but Garioch’s strong emotion has little to do with the name-recognition that leads the general public to honor literary merit. He celebrates not a surname but a shared calling to write in Scots. For him as for Burns, Fergusson’s grave site was ground sacred to poetry.

The headstone in the Canongate churchyard was not Burns’s first memorial to Fergusson, however. That would be *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (Kilmarnock, July, 1786), a showcase for many “things given” by the elder to the younger poet, especially Fergusson’s revitalized “Standard Habbie” stanza, with its exuberant, repetitive rhyming. Just as striking, and less often studied, are the elements in Fergusson’s poetic practice “given up” or re-purposed by Burns, who shifted the subject-matter of Scots poetry in important ways, reshaping the Scots vernacular as a vehicle

---

3 Allan Ramsay rediscovered the Standard Habbie stanza (8A,8A,8A,4B,8A,4B) for the eighteenth-century vernacular revivalists, perhaps first encountering it in James Watson’s *Choice Collection* (1706) in a comic elegy for Habbie Simpson, Piper of Kilbarchan, by Robert Sempill of Beltrees (c. 1595–c. 1668). George Saintsbury’s *History of English Prosody* gives the best general account of what he calls the Burns meter:

The famous “Burns metre” has been traced by the ingenious to those other ingenious who wrote it in foreign lands and early mediaeval times; and we have seen how it is as common as anything (and commoner than “common measure” itself) in English poetry, certainly of the fifteenth, perhaps of the late fourteenth century .... Almost the whole beauty of this “Burns-metre” (which was at least five hundred years old, perhaps much more, when Burns was born) consists of the sharp “pull up” of the fourth and sixth lines as compared with the other four, and the break of fresh rhyme after the opening triplet. The eighteenth century had despised refrains; Burns brought them in on every possible occasion, both in the regular form of exact, or nearly exact, repetition, and in the other of partly altered “bobs” at the end of verses (3, 5-6).

Tom Scott describes Fergusson’s bold reshaping of the stanza: “It had ... elegiac, heroic, realist, pathetic, and satiric possibilities: it was ... formal and classical yet lively and graceful as a highland dance. Fergusson found it only used for comic elegy and left it fit for many further purposes” (23-24).
for introspection: “to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears in [...my] own breast,” as he puts it in his 1786 preface (Kinsley III: 971). William Shenstone’s elegiac English poems are praised in a prominent paragraph near the opening of the preface, but Burns offers a tribute to Scots predecessors near its close, asserting the “genius” of Allan Ramsay (1686-1757) and—in wording warmer but more complicated—the “glorious dawnings of the poor, unfortunate Ferguson” (Kinsley III: 971). Although his own writings have been “kindled at their flame,” the poet has refused “servile imitation”—equivocal language that declares a link while insisting on a fundamental difference. The commissioning of the grave-marker shares a similar tinge of ambiguity, for to set up a memorial is among other things to mark a closure. Burns’s 1786 volume, like the headstone he ordered in 1787, remembers Fergusson yet addresses him historically, especially by grouping him with Ramsay, whose best Scots poetry was published during the 1720s, at the other end of the century. Burns honors his predecessors as capstones of a bygone era, paying his respects but also declaring the beginning of a new age.

Fergusson’s own poetic calling was effectual but brief: he stopped writing at around age twenty-three. Locally celebrated, he was never accepted, let alone taken up, by the Anglophilic literati of Edinburgh. While all classes had mingled at the Cape Club, a singing and drinking fraternity celebrated in Fergusson’s poetry, the elite of the city, who knew him well, allowed his reputation to slide into obscurity. As has been seen, it was no brother of the Cape who ordered a headstone for Fergusson thirteen years after he had died at age twenty-four in the Edinburgh madhouse. No review of his volume of poems, published in January 1773, was printed in Scotland, although a 50-word notice appeared in London’s Monthly Review (Manning 87). The literati, with their ongoing promotion of Edinburgh as a world capital of Enlightenment, may have been offended by Fergusson’s vivid celebrations of their city’s voluptuous banquet of stenches, as in these octosyllabic lines:

Gillespie’s Snuff should prime the Nose
Of her that to the Market goes,
If they wad like to shun the Smells
That buoy up frae markest cells;
Whare Wames o’ Paunches sav’ry scent
To Nostrils gi’e great Discontent.

(“Auld Reikie,” McDiarmid II: 115-16;
subsequent quotations from this edition)

Burns’s 1786 volume also luxuriates in local color yet suppresses Fergusson’s focus on the grotesque and the bizarre: the rural and small-town settings in his 1786 Poems are handled very differently from Fergusson’s fascinated close-ups of a teeming and clarty capital. Burns never printed his own most corrosive satires, including “Holy Willie’s Prayer,” during his lifetime. He published such edgy texts as “Address to the Deil” and “The Holy Fair” in 1786, but in those cases satiric attack is tempered by not wholly unsympathetic character analysis, such as the half-admiring sketches of the ranting preachers in “The Holy Fair.” Burns called this element in his work, which mitigates harsh satire, “manners-painting” (“The Vision,” Kinsley I: 112). He highlights idiosyncrasies of culture and also—like Alexander Pope in the “Moral Epistles”—offers shrewd psychological assessments of his characters. The satires that Burns published target superstition and fanaticism, topics few Enlightenment readers would take personally.

Henry Mackenzie’s influential review of Poems (1786) in The Lounger mentions that the satires have been found objectionable by some, but he defends Burns, urging readers to “look upon his lighter Muse, not as the enemy of religion, (of which in several places he expresses the justest sentiments), but as the champion of morality, and the friend of virtue” (Low 70). There was no such defense by Mackenzie of Fergusson’s poems. Probably Mackenzie was annoyed by “The Sow of Feeling” (1773), a dramatic monologue that sends up Mackenzie’s bombastic play The Prince of Tunis (1773) and best-selling novel The Man of Feeling (1771):

I’ll weep till sorrow shall my eye-lids drain,
A tender husband, and a brother slain!
Alas! the lovely langour of his eye,
When the base murd’rers bore him captive by!
Burns's Two Memorials to Ferguson

His mournful voice! the music of his groans,
    Had melted any hearts—but hearts of stones!

(McDiarmid II: 131)

The Sow’s soliloquy laments the butchering of her mate for food. Ferguson’s ridicule is mainly directed at the new (and in his view decadent) culinary vogue for pork in Edinburgh; but it is not surprising that Mackenzie took offense.

Burns first encountered Ferguson in a borrowed volume during his early twenties. He later wrote that the experience changed his life, inspiring him to rededicate himself to poetry (Roy I: 143). A closer acquaintance began in February 1786, when Burns wrote to John Richmond in Edinburgh requesting that he send him by return messenger a copy of Ferguson’s poems (Roy I: 28), the first mention of Ferguson in Burns’s letters. In the same letter Burns says he has been busy with work on “The Cotter’s Saturday Night,” “The Twa Dogs,” “Scotch Drink,” “The Ordination,” and “Address to the Deil” (see Roy I: 27-28). Probably Richmond sent Burns the 1782 (third) edition of Ferguson’s poems, a volume that Burns consulted as he put the Kilmarnock Poems into final form. He then passed it along during spring of 1787 to the aspiring poet Rebekah Carmichael, further extending the circle of Scottish poets obliged to Ferguson.

Close study of Ferguson had by then served its purpose. Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect (1786) emulates Ferguson’s spirit of fraternal camaraderie, taking up his topics and verse-forms almost as if imagining rejoinders to an “elder brother” in an epistolary exchange. Some of the more closely linked texts are Ferguson’s “Caller Water” and

4 Matthew MacDiarmid speculates that the outpouring of dialect poetry by Burns in 1784 means that he first encountered Ferguson in that year (I: 180). Yet in Burns’s own account in his autobiographical letter to John Moore (Roy I: 133-146), he remembers having first read Ferguson “in his twenty-third year,” or around 1782 (see also McGuirk, “The Rhyming Trade’ 153-54).

5 Burns then acquired a third and more recent copy of Ferguson’s works: the Edinburgh Central Library retains an edition of 1785 that bears Burns’s signature. The intense phase of his study of Ferguson passed, however, with the publication of his first volume of poems (Lindsay 131).
Burns’s “Scotch Drink,” Fergusson’s “Hame Content” and the late lines on the Grand Tour in Burns’s “The Twa Dogs,” Fergusson’s “The King’s Birth-day in Edinburgh” and Burns’s “A Dream,” Fergusson’s “Answer to Mr. J. S.’s Epistle” and Burns’s “To J. S****,” Fergusson’s “The Rivers of Scotland: An Ode” and Burns’s “The Vision,” and Fergusson’s “Leith Races” and Burns’s “The Holy Fair.”

Burns’s satires aimed at Auld Licht partisans are departures: Fergusson, afflicted with a religious melancholy, never assaults a clergymen in Scots. Yet even Burns’s kirk satires draw freely on Fergusson’s reshaping of the Standard Habbie stanza (Scott 24).

What Burns utterly rejected was his predecessor’s off-hand packaging of his poems. Even Burns’s title, Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, which now sounds so inevitable, departs from custom. Eighteenth-century precursors had never advertised dialect in their titles. Fergusson’s 1773 title, like Ramsay’s in 1721, was simply Poems, though this was changed by an editor in 1779 to Poems in Two [i.e., English and Scottish] Parts. Ramsay’s Tea Table Miscellany (1724-37) and The Gentle Shepherd (1725) had been given pointedly English titles despite including vernacular Scottish lyrics. Ramsay’s preference for English titles extends even to his antiquarian anthology Ever Green: A Collection of Scots Poems wrote by the Ingenious before 1600 (1724), where “Scots” is deferred to a subtitle.

Fergusson had hoped to publish “Auld Reikie,” his mock-epic celebration of Edinburgh, in book form, but had taken ill soon after the lukewarm Edinburgh reception of the first canto; he died in 1774 without working on it further. If the poem had been completed and separately published under that title, “Auld Reikie” would have been the first volume of Scottish poetry bearing a title in Scots—that I have been able to trace, at any rate—since the Union of Parliaments in 1707.

---

6 For a summary of parallels between Fergusson and Burns see McGuirk, “‘Rhyming Trade” 155-156, n7 and n8. Thomas Crawford identifies numerous parallels in his notes (see his Index, p. 394, under sources and parallels); The Scots Magazine in 1925 also printed a list of parallels between the two poets.
It may have been the negative example of Fergusson’s limited reception that led Burns to negotiate so carefully his use of Scots language. By titling his book *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, he announces dialect without actually using it, preparing readers for what is to come. All his prefatory matter is in standard English. Dialect-use is reserved for the poems, yet is firmly emphasized in those: there is none of the faintly apologetic light dusting of dialect typical of Ramsay in successful mid-career. From the first title of the opening poem (“The Twa Dogs,” not “The Two Dogs”), these are poems “chiefly” in “Scottish”; indeed, “The Twa Dogs,” at 238 lines, is the second-longest poem Burns ever wrote: a sustained dialect performance—in the octosyllabics so often chosen by Fergusson—opens Burns’s debut volume. Burns suppressed the majority of English poems and songs completed before 1786 in order to keep this first book mainly vernacular in diction as well as “chiefly” descriptive/epistolary (as opposed to lyric) in focus. Only three texts identified as songs are printed in 1786. Yet although Burns insists on dialect, he is careful to teach his meaning—never assuming, as Fergusson had, that readers were chums, members of an in-group already in the know. The glossary of Fergusson’s *Poems* (1773), for instance, was not designed to assist non-Scottish readers, explaining numerous words that any reader would already have known—“Bridal” (“Wedding”), “Colley” (“Sheepdog”), “E’ening,” (“Evening”), “Gabbling” (“Speaking”), “Rue” (“Repent”), “Sleek” (“Smooth”), “Strappin” (“Lusty”), “Tail of May” (“End of May”), “Weet” (“Moisture”), and “Yelp” (“To Make a Noise”)—while omitting any number of puzzling Scots words. To take dialect words used in just one of Fergusson’s poems, “The King’s Birth-day in Edinburgh,” as an example, the glossary provides no entry for “limmer,”

---

7 “The Holy Fair,” also printed in the Kilmarnock *Poems*, is five lines longer than “The Twa Dogs” but as a kirk satire may have been considered a risky choice to open the volume. “The Vision” appeared in the 1787 *Poems* at 276 lines, but the version printed in 1786 was shorter—228 lines.
“ding,” “steek,” “gowany,” “tither,” “wyte,” “muckle,” “baith,” 
“clarty,” “bairns,” and “blude.”

Burns’s glossary of 1786 defines 233 words. Although 
shorter than Fergusson’s by some twenty-three words, it is 
much more helpful. Surprisingly few words are explained by 
both poets, but “cogs” occurs in each. Fergusson gives 
“wooden dishes”; Burns, almost as brief, adds a sense of 
relative size and design: “Cog, or coggie, a small wooden dish 
without handles” (Kilmarnock 237). Fergusson, for “blinkit,” 
gives “Look’d hastily” (1773 Poems 124), while Burns 
provides contexts for use: “a glance, an amorous leer, a short 
space of time” (Kilmarnock 236); he expands these in his 
glossary of 1787: “a little while, a smiling look; to look kindly, 
to shine by fits” (Edinburgh 351). Finally, almost as if 
addressing Fergusson’s superfluous glossing of self-
explanatory terms, Burns opens his 1786 glossary with a 
headnote explaining classes of words that will not be 
defined, including poetic elisions and changes of the English 
participial “ing” (e.g. “strapping”) to Scottish “-in” or “-an”:

Words that are universally known, and those that differ from 
the English only by the elision of letters by apostrophes, or by 
varying the terminations of the verbs, are not inserted. The 
terminations may be thus known; the participle present, 
instead of ing, ends, in the Scotch Dialect, in an or in, 
particularly when the verb is composed of the participle 
present, and any of the tenses of the auxiliary, to be. The past 
time and participle past are usually made by shortening the ed 
into ’t. (Kilmarnock 236)

Burns’s glossary excludes cognates and minor variations 
in spelling, saving room for clarification of some private 
coinages—i.e., “Burnewin” (“burn-the-wind, a Blacksmith,” 
Kilmarnock 237). He also uses the glossary for what are in 
effect short footnotes, though this is more true of his 
expanded 1787 glossary. Fergusson’s “The King’s Birth-day 
in Edinburgh” mentions “blue-gown bodies,” for instance, 
but offers no gloss. Burns likewise uses the phrase in his 
verse-epistle to John Rankine, only italicizing it in the 
Kilmarnock Poems but glossing it in 1787: “one of those 
beggars, who get annually, on the King’s birth-day, a blue 
cloke or gown with a badge” (351).
The 1773 edition of Fergusson not only glosses halfheartedly but more or less hides the dialect poems (eight were printed) in the back of the book. The second and third Fergusson editions are built on *Poems* (1773), with many more Scots poems appended and, as mentioned above, with the title changed to *Poems on Various Subjects ... In Two Parts*. The poems in Part 1 are in standard English. Some of these, contrary to long-held consensus, are highly successful. Tom Scott rightly praises “The Canongate Playhouse in Ruins” (23), and more recently Susan Manning has called for a moratorium on the “crude binary reading” that assumes that Fergusson’s English writing must be inferior to his Scots (94). Nonetheless, Part 1 does not prepare a reader for the explosion of hallucinatory Scots poems in Part 2 (of the 1782 edition that Burns owned), poems such as “To my Auld Breeks” or the midnight dialogue-poem “The Ghaists,” whose dreamlike intensity is unlike anything in Burns—unlike anything in Scottish poetry until the phantasmagoric Scots of Hugh MacDiarmid’s *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926). Yet Fergusson’s genius would have been apparent only to a persistent reader, someone who, like Burns, kept reading all the way through the love trials of Damon and Alexis in Part 1. The poems in dialect are placed almost as if an afterthought: Fergusson’s masterwork is left unframed.

Burns’s Kilmarnock edition offers by contrast a series of framing devices; it proclaims “the Scottish Dialect” even in its title yet never separates the English from the Scots. Not only in his glossary but within the poems themselves, Burns makes Scots words much more accessible by linking dialect words in compound phrases with their English equivalent. Burns’s mock-elegy for his sheep Mailie, for instance, passes along her dying words to her “toop-lamb, my son an’ heir” (Kinsley I: 33), a phrase that first italicizes the Scots “toop” (a male sheep, a ram) and then explains it twice: “my son an’ heir.” In “The Holy Tulzie” he addresses “a’ ye flocks o’er a’ the hills,/By mosses, meadows, moor, and fells” (Kinsley I: 73), where the English “hills,” “meadows,” and “moor” assist non-Scottish readers toward guessing more or less correctly at “mosses” (peat-bogs) and “fells” (stretches of hill-moor).
Another example appears in “The Author’s Earnest Cry and Prayer,” a burlesque address to Parliament in which the rustic speaker commiserates with the Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger, over “Yon mixtie-maxtie, queer hotchpotch,/The Coalition” (Kinsley I: 189). A loose translation would be “that mixed, odd, heterogeneous mixture, the mixing of rival parties.” “Mixtie-maxtie” is Burns’s coinage—at any rate, this is the earliest cited use in the Oxford English Dictionary. “Hotchpotch,” a word from Scotland common in England as “hodge-podge,” at once follows and clarifies it. Burns then links both terms to a political “mixture,” the Coalition. Here it is the English word that receives italic emphasis. Burns often uses italics or small caps to mark a word at the same time that he keeps English and Scots in close proximity: the two worlds of language remain linked in Burns’s poems. He may have devised this juxtapositioning of dialect with standard English after studying and discarding the strict division of English and Scots into separate sections by Fergusson (or his editors).

Two languages are juxtaposed even on Burns’s title page, where the provocative “Scottish Dialect” is buffered by an English epigraph just below that aligns the use of Scots not with local or national pride but instead with “Nature’s pow’rs”:

The Simple Bard, unbroke by rules of Art,
He pours the wild effusions of the heart:
And if inspir’d, ‘tis Nature’s pow’rs inspire;
Her’s all the melting thrill, and her’s the kindling fire.
Anonymous (Kinsley III: 970)

This promise of natural poetry from a “Simple Bard” puts the matter of vernacular Scots usage in a light intended to be appealing to contemporary readers across Britain. Burns’s epigraph, like his self-manufactured glossary, extends a welcome to every feeling heart, reassuring prospective readers. At the same time, the purely English epigraph, in being attributed to “Anonymous,” is decisively severed from the main volume and specifically excluded from the writings of “chiefly Scottish” Robert Burns.
In 1721, Allan Ramsay’s standard-English Preface to his first volume of Poems (printed by Thomas Ruddiman, uncle of the Walter Ruddiman who some fifty years later showcased Fergusson’s poems in The Weekly Magazine) had been charming but self-deprecating. As David Daiches observes, “he was on the defensive about his ‘Scotticisms.’ They may, he said, ‘offend some over-nice Ear,’ but ... ‘become their place as well as the Doric dialect of Theocritus, so much admired by the best judges.’ One cannot imagine Dunbar defending his Scots language in this way” (in Woodring 100-101). In 1773, Fergusson had not provided any preface.

Burns’s preface of 1786 has been much studied: it is defensive, distanced, as if to offset the genial intimacy of address in the poems to follow. Its formal English refers to the poet in the third person, as if “not by Burns himself but by someone closely interested, a press agent perhaps, a noted literatus, a Reverend Hugh Blair or Doctor Moore,” as Jeffrey Skoblow writes (118). It opens with no mention of Scotland or the use of Scots, the title having already identified the language and culture mainly celebrated. The poet begins instead with the social and educational gulf that separates the working and leisure classes: “The following trifles are not the production of a Poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegancies and idlenesses of upper life, looks down for a rural theme” (Kinsley III: 971). With a dash of resentment, Burns places front and center the difference between what is expected of poets and what he is prepared to offer. Burns’s wording is always chosen with care and is especially significant here: a struggling tenant farmer cannot look “down” but must look across the social landscape for “rural themes.” Burns opens his preface with an announcement—I intend to speak in these poems of my life as a poor man—that electrified readers in and, eventually, out of Scotland. Allan Cunningham, who was a child in 1786, in 1834 looked back and marveled at the impact of the Kilmarnock edition: “had a July sun risen on a December morning, the unwonted light could not have given greater surprise” (I: 37).

The 1786 poems surprised Scotland by steering literary Scots in a different direction. No longer chiefly the argot of
urban riot or rustic pastoral, it had become again, for the first time since the Makars, a means of searching a poet’s own soul. Despite the stylized English, there is nothing of imposture—more like a guarded truth-telling—in the preface’s last paragraph:

To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings ... in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene.... these were his motives for courting the Muses, and in these he found Poetry to be it’s <sic> own reward.

(Kinsley III: 971)

Never defending dialect per se, the preface mainly asserts the authority of a dialect-user to speak as a poet, to speak for himself, and to speak also to (and for) people like himself—a potential audience far larger than the Cape Club. Despite Burns’s “seemingly infinite obligingness,” to return to Geoffrey Hill’s musings on poetic language, all is not accommodation in his preface: beneath its “surface humility,” as Fiona Stafford has observed, is “an ... assertion of superiority” (54).

Edwin Morgan rightly sees Fergusson as “a poet who really had his gaze on Edinburgh” (83). Fergusson’s poems about life in the capital celebrate the “daft days” around the New Year, the races at Leith, the opening and closing down of the legal Courts of Session. His treatment of country people, while respectful, is much more conventional. In the rare instances when he turns to peasant subjects in his dialect poems, he stands far back. “The Farmer’s Ingle” (1772) is among his best poems. Nonetheless, it is not addressed to the farming family it describes, who serve as the mute centerpiece in a poetic lesson actually aimed at “gentler” readers:

Frae this lat gentler gabs a lesson lear;
Wad they to labouring lend an eidant hand,
They’d rax fell strang upo’ the simplest fare,
Nor find their stomacks ever at a stand.
Fu’ hale and healthy wad they pass the day,
At night in calmest slumbers dose fu’ sound,
Nor doctor need their weary life to spae,
Nor drogs their noddle and their sense confound,
Till Death slip sleeely on, and gi'e the hindmost wound.
(“The Farmer’s Ingle”: MacDiarmid II: 137)

The poem, which describes the supper and evening pastimes of a rural family, was one inspiration for Burns’s “The Cotter’s Saturday Night.” Yet Fergusson’s “ingle” or household fire, which expels the cold, warms the food, and draws the family close, is characteristically amplified by Burns. His cotters likewise gather around a hearth-fire, but later in the poem they themselves become a “wall of fire,” an elemental force encircling and protecting Scotland. “The Farmer’s Ingle” was of interest beyond Edinburgh: appearing in The Weekly Magazine (13 May 1773), it was soon reprinted in The Perth Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure (21 May 1773; see McDiarmid II: 285). Yet the appeal of “The Cotter’s Saturday Night” was broader still. For over a century, this was among the most admired of Burns’s poems, no doubt in large part because of its vision of working families as strong and indomitable, not politically quiescent and meek.

Linking Scots dialect to an articulate and self-respecting peasantry, Burns was able to surmount the difficulties in reception that a use of Scots vernacular created. If the Scots words were puzzling, he would explain them; and if the peasantry in Scottish poetry had long been silent, they would now speak up. Still, as he settled the contents of the 1786 Poems, two questions must have constantly recurred. How could the Scottish dialect become a medium for enduring poetry, not just locally circulated like Fergusson’s in Edinburgh, Dumfries, and Perth, but read and reviewed throughout Britain? Could any dialect poet expect a fate different from Fergusson’s, an extraordinary poet whose work had been read, enjoyed, and then forgotten?

Allan Ramsay’s The Gentle Shepherd and songbook series The Tea-Table Miscellany (1724-37) had achieved, Burns knew, just such a currency outside Scotland. Yet these were, as their titles suggest, Anglicized projects; furthermore, Ramsay’s portrayal of peasants was even more equivocal than Fergusson’s. Contradicting the admiring sketch of dialect-speaking “Mause” in the back-story of The Gentle Shepherd, for instance, is Ramsay’s main plot, wherein the
hero is revealed, as the title hints, to be no peasant by birth but instead the long-lost son of a baronet, Sir William Worthy. Peggy, Patie’s bride-to-be, is then discovered to be Patie’s cousin—exactly his equal in birth. Mause herself is something other than the rustic that she appears to be. Once Peggy’s nurse and still loyal to the Worthy family, she says that ignorant peasants call her a witch because she speaks like an educated person. Even Ramsay’s forenames assign a superior grace to the well-born: there is a world of social difference between “Patie” and “Peggy,” the names of the hero and heroine, and “Bauldy” and “Neps,” names of the herdsman and his wife-to-be.

*The Gentle Shepherd* is a much more interesting play than most critics have acknowledged, though Steve Newman has done it justice. But the plot, in which all the attractive “peasants” turn out to be of gentle birth, shatters no paradigms. Furthermore, although Ramsay’s song collections were very popular, his poems had received almost as little critical attention as Fergusson’s. His reputation in Burns’s day was that of a purveyor of ultra-light diversions. This was not fair, given the razor-wit of Ramsay’s occasional experiments with a gritty street-Scots (“Lucky Spence’s Last Advice”). Still, he seldom risked offending polite readers after the earliest phase—circa 1720—of his long poetic career.

Burns never dreamed of Ramsay’s “minor” status, any more than he could endure the thought of Fergusson lying, “unnoticed and unknown,” in a pauper’s unmarked grave. He sought for Scottish vernacular poetry the same high cultural profile that he sought for himself; and he wanted nothing less than “to be distinguished,” as he put it in the final paragraph of his 1786 preface (Kinsley III: 972). Remembering and honoring his precursors, he nonetheless became the first of the eighteenth-century Scots poets to break away from caricature in the portrayal of dialect-speakers. This is not to say that Burns is never comic, but his jokes at the expense of rustics are rooted, as in “Holy Willie’s Prayer,” in idiosyncrasies of speech, belief, and behavior. His

---

Scots-speakers are “characters,” not stereotypes like Fergusson’s Sandie and Willie or archetypes like Ramsay’s Bauldy in The Gentle Shepherd, who might have walked slowly north out of fifteenth-century Wakefield’s Second Shepherd’s Play.9

Burns’s second monument to Fergusson, the headstone he commissioned in 1787, paid public tribute to a poet whose reputation had been local and fleeting. His first memorial to his “elder brother in the Muses,” the Poems of 1786, surmounted the difficulties Fergusson had encountered by retaining a similar intensity of dialect while moving vernacular poetry out of the capital city to the margins of Scottish culture. Burns employs cotters, old farmers, haranguing preachers, sentimental ploughmen, even a pet sheep, as powerful speakers. As mentioned, Burns gave his copy of Fergusson away in 1787 to would-be Scottish poet Rebekah Carmichael, having learned what he could. He passed along something of Fergusson to an aspiring English writer as well. Although never mentioning Burns, William Wordsworth’s Lyrical Ballads (1798) carries on the Scots vernacular poets’ shared project of distilling a newly representative kind of poetry from the “language of conversation in the middle and lower classes”:

9 In “Eclogue,” first poem in the Scots portion of his 1773 volume (twenty-eight poems in English and nine in vernacular Scots, though many more Scots poems had appeared in The Weekly Magazine), Fergusson makes a rare use of dialect-speakers, Sandie and Willie, in a country setting. He may have placed this poem first as an homage to Ramsay, for it resembles the interchange between young shepherds that opens The Gentle Shepherd. Fergusson’s Sandie, a plowman, is—like Ramsay’s character Roger—comically unlucky in love, complaining to his sympathetic friend Willie that his scold of a young wife has yet to spin any cloth for him though she has had the lint a year; instead, she has been stealing away into Edinburgh to shop for tea. Fergusson’s midnight town-poems are another matter, but to Fergusson a country setting suggests sunshine, cheerful work, and uncomplicated young men who speak, like Sandie in “Eclogue,” of small domestic comforts and distresses.
The majority of the following poems ... were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure.... [W]hile they are perusing this book, [... readers] should ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents. (“Advertisement” 443)

Wordsworth encountered Burns at age 17, borrowing the 1786 Poems from a school-friend. He and his sister Dorothy so highly regarded the book that they purchased and annotated the expanded 1787 edition. Fergusson’s expressive Scots dialect became in Burns’s own hands a means to re-center poetry around the no-longer-silent voices of “poor bodies,” a lesson not lost on Wordsworth as he worked on his contributions to Lyrical Ballads. It is pleasant to consider that Wordsworth’s partial emulation of Burns, who partly emulated Fergusson, was a means by which the forgotten Robert Fergusson’s rich gift of Scots was paid forward for future generations in places far from Edinburgh’s moonlit streets. Through Wordsworth’s own adaptations of Burns’s poetic diction, Fergusson, in company with the “younger brother” that he never met, passed—unremarked yet instrumental—into the traditions of British Romanticism.

Works Cited


Robert Burns’s interest in folklore and the supernatural started at an early age and found its way into nearly everything he wrote. In his famous autobiographical letter to Dr. John Moore in 1787, Burns testified that his wide knowledge of Scottish folk beliefs concerning the supernatural “owed much to an old Maid of my Mother’s, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition” (Roy I: 135). He continues that

She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the county of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions ... and other trumpery.

Despite his apparently dismissive attitude about these beliefs, Burns admits to Moore that the maid’s collection had “cultivated the latent seeds of Poesy” in him.

Other letters suggest that such folk beliefs and customs may have influenced his own thinking in ways that he could not fully admit. In a letter to Captain Richard Brown from 1788, Burns mused that “Life is a fairy scene; almost all that deserves the name of enjoyment, or pleasure, is only charming delusion; and in comes ripening Age, in all the gravity of hoary wisdom, and wickedly chases away the dear, bewitching Phantoms” (Roy I: 245). In this rumination, the supernatural is a source of delusion and desire, offering only a “fairy scene” and “bewitching Phantoms” that tantalize but offer no fulfillment. With characteristically wry irony, Burns concludes by asking his friend, “How do you like my Philosophy?” Joking aside, Burns expresses key ideas about
the supernatural in this passage that shaped his writing on folk beliefs and customs.

The most prominent of such works, “Halloween” (1785), has been traditionally regarded as the definitive treatment of Scottish folk customs surrounding the holiday. At 252 lines (among the longest poems in the Burns canon), “Halloween” offers a wealth of folkloric practice that is skillfully interwoven within an episodic narrative. A chapbook edition of the poem from 1802, in the G. Ross Roy Collection at the University of South Carolina, gives a fairly thorough summary of the folk customs found in the poem. In full, the title reads:

*The Merry Diversions of Halloween, Giving an Account of The Pulling of the Kail Stocks— Burning Nuts— Catching Sweethearts in the Stack Yard— Pulling the Corn— Winding the Blue Clue— Winnowing the Corn— Sowing the Hemp Seed— And the Cutting of the Apple, with the Conclusion of these Merry Meetings, by telling Wonderful Stories about Witches and Fairies.*¹

The poem teems with rich, often confusing detail about these folk practices. As if to account for their ambiguity, Burns meticulously explains the customs by using footnotes throughout “Halloween.” Burns’s talents as both a cultural observer and scenarist are thus fully employed in a poem which has actually become more highly regarded as an anthropological account than as a literary work.

In his recent “cultural history” of Halloween, David J. Skal describes Burns’s poem as a “paean to the holiday and a valuable historical document,” one which “recorded and memorialized Halloween customs involving fortune-telling with apples and nuts practiced in Scotland.”² Similarly, Nicholas Rogers discusses the poem as a “burlesque account of Halloween’s games and divinations,” focusing particularly on “early modern courtship customs and...social, principally

¹ *The Merry Diversions of Halloween* (Stirling: Randall, 1802). Another item in the Roy Collection pertaining to Burns’s poem is *The Mignonette: A Christmas and New Year’s Gift Book* (New York: Appleton, 1856), in which “Halloween” is accompanied by engraved illustrations.

masculine, license.”

Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century, the poem served as a touchstone in numerous histories of Scottish folklore, often representing a kind of historical testimony rather than artistic work. William Motherwell remarked that the poem “exhibits a highly humorous and masterly description of some of the most remarkable superstitions of the Scottish peasantry.” As can be readily surmised, the poem’s title and content are of primary interest in such historical accounts, which seek to situate Burns’s micro-history of Halloween in the context of other cultural practices.

Early reviewers and readers commented on the poem’s blending of description and folklore, noting both such literary predecessors as Robert Fergusson’s “Hallow-Fair” and John Mayne’s “Halloween,” and allusions to such earlier poets as Virgil and Theocritus. James Anderson, in his review of the Kilmarnock edition in the *Monthly Review*, stated that the poem was “a valuable relic, which … will preserve the memory of these simple incantations long after they would otherwise have been lost.” Interestingly, he added that the poem was “properly accompanied with notes, explaining the circumstances to which the poem alludes.” In the *English Review*, John Logan criticized the poem’s tonal imbalance; while “Halloween” gave “a just and literal account of the principal spells and charms that are practised on that anniversary among the peasants of Scotland,” the poem was “not happily executed. A mixture of the solemn and burlesque can never be agreeable” (Low 77). James Currie praised the poem’s descriptive passages, noting after the twenty-fifth stanza that “those who understand the Scottish dialect will allow this to be one of the finest instances of description, which the records of poetry can afford” (Low 139). In reviewing Lockhart’s *Life of Burns*, Thomas Carlyle asserted that “our ‘Halloween’ has passed

---

and repassed, in rude awe and laughter, since the era of the Druids; but no Theocritus, till Burns, discerned in it the materials of a Scottish Idyl” (Low 360). Lastly, in his edition of the Works, Allan Cunningham stated that “the whole poem hovers between the serious and ludicrous: in delineating the superstitious beliefs and mysterious acts of the evening, Burns keeps his own opinion to himself” (Low 405).

This last has proved difficult for many contemporary critics of the poem. Unlike Burns’s other long narratives such as “Tam o’ Shanter,” “Love and Liberty,” and “The Cotter’s Saturday Night,” “Halloween” has never enjoyed widespread popularity and has attracted few critical admirers.\(^6\) The dearth of critical comment is hard to believe, given the poem’s abundance of Scots vocabulary; it is among the very densest of Burns’s Scots poems, rivaling the single Scots letter Burns wrote in terms of sheer volume of Scots words. David Daiches’ assessment in his standard book Robert Burns remains the characteristic response:

> We need say little of “Halloween”.... It is an able enough piece ... but the poem remains of more interest to the expert in folklore than to the general reader; its accumulation of descriptions of Halloween folk customs ... becomes tedious.\(^7\)

Elsewhere Daiches describes the poem as having “an almost antiquarian or anthropological insistence on detail.”\(^8\) In his seminal study, Thomas Crawford highlights this contradictory quality: “‘Halloween’ should be among the very best things Burns ever did. Its language is pure vernacular Scots, its subject a series of rustic genre pictures ... full of a pulsating, joyous movement.... And yet, considered as a whole, the poem fails to please.”\(^9\) One of chief reasons for this failure, according to Crawford, is the poem’s “elements


of superciliousness, of conscious superiority, and even of thinly disguised cruelty.”

Many contemporary critics share the opinions of Daiches and Crawford about the poetic merit of “Halloween.” In his article “Burns and Superstition,” Edward Cowan calls it “an extraordinary poem in the sense that it is extraordinarily disappointing.” He continues that although “commentators have suggested that it is invaluable as a source for folklore ... in fact it is not,” concluding that “the poem is a monument to wasted opportunity.” The Canongate Burns offers only a short comment, noting that “the prose explanations of Burns reveal another example of his extraordinary talent for turning prose into poetry within the body of ‘Halloween.’”

In a brief but intriguing analysis of “Halloween,” Marilyn Butler states that the poem “resembles a report by an antiquarian on the religious practices of an unfamiliar community, complete with headnotes and footnotes.”

Along with such considerations, another key complaint with the poem involves its formal properties. “Halloween” does not offer a sustained narrative focused on a few chief incidents, and its ensemble cast of twenty characters often confounds the reader. When one adds these formal challenges to the poem’s arcane folk content and high Scots usage, it is little wonder that “Halloween” has not attracted more appreciative readers. However, as if to circumvent this eventuality from the start, Burns appended footnotes to the poem in order to invite a broader audience likely unfamiliar with the Scottish folk content. Butler notes that “Burns emerges here as a pioneer of the common Romantic practice ... of accompanying a poem about ‘simple’ beliefs with a learned paratext, as though inviting readers to proceed to serious study.” Indeed, the use of paratextual commentary was a technique uncharacteristic of Burns’s work in general.

11 Andrew Noble and Patrick Scott Hogg, eds., The Canongate Burns (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001), 83.
In his entire body of work, numbering over six hundred poems and songs, only fourteen employ Burns’s own footnotes. Of the fourteen footnoted works, “Halloween” outnumbers all others with sixteen notes of considerable length. The poem also includes a prose preface, another infrequent device used by Burns in only three other poems. The preface directly explains the need for explanatory footnotes: "The following poem will, by many readers, be well enough understood; but for the sake of those who are unacquainted with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, notes are added to give some account of the principal charms and spells of that night" (Kinsley I: 152).

While they clarify matters of content, Burns’s footnotes also underscore and indeed, embody the distance between the poem’s folk content and the poet’s conception of its readers. Again, the preface is tellingly direct:

The passion of prying into futurity makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such honour the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it among the more unenlightened in our own (Kinsley I: 152).

These comments have understandably alienated many readers. Although he had insider contact with a presumably “unenlightened” folk culture that would later fuel his nationalist song-collceting project, Burns appears to regard the folk content of “Halloween” with an outsider’s eye, perhaps the curiosity of a Collins or disdain of a Johnson. However, it would be unwise to take the preface too much at its literal word. As a writer of prose, Burns was a canny rhetorician. The prefaces to his 1786 and 1787 editions are

---


Poems with prefaces are “A Dream,” “Halloween,” “Prayer: O Thou Dread Power,” and “Tam o’ Shanter.”
small masterpieces of rhetorical persuasion. Likewise, the poet’s letters reveal a writer acutely aware of his self-image, particularly how that self-image can be shaped to meet the needs of differing audiences. As a matter of routine, Burns sized up potential readers and adapted his personae to meet both the writing occasion and the reader(s).

In the case of “Halloween,” the speaker begins by actively distancing himself from the poetic content to follow, offering the folk core of “Halloween” as a remnant from the past designed for the perusal and entertainment of educated, “philosophic” readers. Kenneth Simpson remarks that “the voice of the preface is that, not of participant, but of cultural tour-guide.” Burns immediately follows the preface, however, with an epigraph from “The Deserted Village” that begins, “Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain, / The simple pleasure of the lowly train” (Kinsley I: 152). This epigraph perhaps indicates a familiar class defensiveness on the part of a famously touchy poet. This tonal shift continues as the poem proceeds and the footnotes proliferate. The class divide enunciated in the preface in fact begins to erode, and the footnotes shift from descriptive explanation to imperative instruction. Elaborating, expanding, and affirming, the poem’s paratext creates a supplementary set of referents that aligns the reader with the folk content.

As Gerard Genette has argued, the footnote can open up entirely different rhetorical horizons in a text:

In denying himself the note, the author thereby denies himself the possibility of a second level of discourse, one that contributes to textual depth. The chief advantage of the note is actually that it brings about local effects of nuance ... or as they also say in music, of register, effects that help reduce the famous and sometimes regrettable linearity of discourse.

---

Such a strategy is at work in “Halloween”; the poem’s paratext—its preface, epigraph, and footnotes—at first distances both poet and reader from the folk content. Peering into the world of the poem as a curious outsider, Burns’s speaker adopts a pose that for many readers belies his folk authenticity in rather damning fashion. However, a “second level of discourse” emerges in the poem, one that encourages understanding and appreciation of the folk customs.

Such strategies are endemic to relations between paratexts and body texts. As noted by Derrida in his own exemplary paratextual essay “Living On,” “there is no paradigmatic text. Only relationships of cryptic haunting from mark to mark.”18 In Derrida’s essay, paratext follows, supplements, and diverts the body text for the entire length of the essay. Likewise, as Anthony Grafton has argued, the footnote is not merely a functional notation. It has its own specific set of generic requirements and standards. Grafton nicely invokes the example of Gibbon, writing that “in the eighteenth century, the historical footnote was a high form of literary art.... And nothing in [Gibbon’s Decline and Fall] did more than its footnotes to amuse his friends and enrage his enemies.”19 Grafton concludes that Gibbon’s footnotes “not only subverted, but supported, the magnificent arch of his history” (p. 3). Evelyn Tribble has suggested the shift from marginal note to footnote may indicate a new conception of critical authority vested upon the author, stating that “footnotes are yet another manifestation of the marked shift in canons of taste.”20

If one interprets Burns’s preface to “Halloween” in this light, as a strategic paratextual ploy to capture readers’ attention, its class abnegation becomes more explicable.

Actively anticipating and blocking automatic class prejudice is a constant feature of Burns’s poetics. In this example, Burns anticipates and prepares for predictable snobbery by highlighting the poetic subjects’ “rude” origins. The novelty of Scottish primitivism was still current at the time of the poem’s composition, with such notable precedents as Ossian. Beyond appealing to a current fad in popular taste, Burns also represents the “rude” folk culture of rural Scotland as a source of community that offers a type of social pleasure not to be found in Scottish cities, let alone London. Much more strongly than Goldsmith may have intended, the epigraph further underscores the tension between observation and participation in “Halloween.” Burns had personally witnessed the delicate balance between interest and derision that privileged observers visited upon peasant culture. His ambivalence about the popularity of “rude” cultures should lead one to suspect the preface acts as a kind of rhetorical Trojan horse, bringing outsiders into an unfamiliar folk culture where they are expected not only to observe but participate in the rites of the holiday.

An invitational shift from outsider observation to insider participation occurs quite literally in the footnotes to “Halloween.” The first eight notes employ third-person plural to describe the customs being enacted in the body of the poem. For instance, note six appears after the lines, “The lassies staw frae ‘mang them a’, / To pou their stalks o’ corn” (46-47). The note explains the action thus: “They go to the barnyard, and pull each, at three different times, a stalk of oats. If the third stalk wants the ‘top-pickle,’ that is, the grain at the top of the stalk, the party in question will come to the marriage-bed anything but a maid” (Kinsley I: 154). The footnote extends and elaborates upon the apparently innocuous act of the lasses, providing a helpful clue to the outcome of Rab and Nelly’s dalliance in the sixth stanza: “her tap-pickle maist was lost, / When kiutlin in the fause-house / Wi’ him that night” (52-54). While the distancing third-

person voice of the note seems to provoke the smug, knowing wink of an “enlightened,” entertained reader, at the same time it also represents such a reader’s distance from the tightly-knit community at the heart of the poem.

This effect is reinforced by such paratextual commentary as that found in the first footnote, where Burns states that Halloween “is thought to be a night when witches, devils, and other mischief-making beings are abroad on their baneful midnight errands; particularly those aerial people, the fairies, are said on that night to hold a grand anniversary” (Kinsley I: 152). To the Scot, such reductive explanation may seem wholly unnecessary, particularly given the primary place of fairy lore in Scottish folk culture. Likewise, folk beliefs about witches abound in Scotland and pertain directly to Halloween customs. Marian McNeil notes that “witches were believed to have the power to aid or blight fertility ... and also trafficked in the affections, and by means of a love potion could induce a goodly youth come of honest folk to marry ‘ane ugly harlot queyne.’” Beyond informing readers who lack folk knowledge of fairies, witches, and the like, the footnote further demonstrates the gulf in perception and experience that separates an “enlightened” audience from Scottish folk communities. Indeed, as “Halloween” continues, the “enlightened” reader may feel like Tam o’ Shanter enviously spying on the outskirts of the witches’ dance and wishing to join in.

The purpose for this rhetorical strategy becomes clearer by the poem’s second stanza and fourth footnote where the nationalist imagery one expects from Burns is strongly drawn. Martial nostalgia for the time when “Bruce ance rul’d the martial ranks” (12) is abundant, and Bruce himself is

\[22\] On Scottish folk beliefs about fairies, see for instance Alan Bruford, *The Green Man of Knowledge and Other Scots Traditional Tales* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen Univ. Press, 1982).

glossed in the footnote as “the great deliverer of his country” (Kinsley I: 153). The Scottishness of the poem takes center stage, with none too subtle admonitory expressions of national solidarity. Though the “merry, friendly, countrifolks” (14) of rural Scotland no longer shake their “Carrick spears” (13), their customs, practices, and rites—in Raymond Williams’s phrase, their “whole way of life”—involve an entirely different set of beliefs and values.24 In the text of the poem proper, the beliefs and values that orient and guide Scottish folk culture are incomprehensible to the outsider. While the footnote delivers a basic understanding of what the folk rites signify, it also opens up a new horizon of meaning, a second level of discourse. That is to say, Burns’s use of paratext points to gaps in access to experiences that differentiated folk culture from that of enlightened readers. In this sense, the footnote bridges whole “ways of life” that were being increasingly confounded in eighteenth-century Scotland and Britain as a whole.

Throughout the poem Burns acts as a participant-observer in the classic anthropological sense. He clearly is, and is not, a part of the folk culture that is the poem’s subject. As in many of his other works, Burns adopts a persona (here “Rab M’Graen”) who finds his way into “Halloween.” He is described as a “clever, sturdy fellow” (136) who defies social conventions and the Kirk (we learn his son has “gat Eppie Sim wi’ wean” [138]). Rab is doubtful of the value of the Halloween celebration but not so skeptical that he doesn’t get “sairly frighted / That vera night” (143-44). Rab’s ambivalence toward Halloween customs matches the author’s; both reveal a similar resistance toward the conformity implied by custom as well as an abiding affection for such occasions that provoke social gatherings and a sense of community. Burns’s other alter-ego in “Love and Liberty,” the Bard “of no regard,” states this quite plainly:

What is title? What is treasure?
What is reputation’s care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,

In the “how and where” of “Halloween,” Burns reveals himself to be an intrepid anthropologist who does not hesitate to enter the various cultures surrounding him, looking for points of connection and difference.

Those points of contact in “Halloween,” however, are not found in the world of fairies and witches. Unlike “Tam o’ Shanter” where witches represent another universe of experience and fun, the alternate world of “Halloween” is peopled less with witches and devils than with “merry, friendly, countra-folks.” As in Burns’s other poems of social custom like “The Holy Fair,” the ostensible purpose of the holiday in “Halloween” is offset and often subverted by the actual practices of folk participants. Mischief-making becomes the province not of witches and fairies but rather the characters themselves, who dramatize and enact folk customs out of a desire for fun. For instance, the character Merran, “her thoughts on Andrew Bell” (92), follows the instructions of the “spell” described in the ninth footnote with unexpected results; the note advises one to “steal out, all alone, to the kiln, and darkling, throw into the ‘pot’ a clue of blue yarn; wind it in a new clue off the old one; and, toward the latter end, something will hold the thread: demand ... who holds? and answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, by naming the Christian and surname of your future spouse” (Kinsley I: 156). The twelfth stanza recounts Merran’s shock when something or someone holds the thread:

    Something held with the pat,
    Good L__d!  but she was quaukin!
    But whether ‘twas the deil himself,
    Or whether ‘twas a bauk-en’,
    Or whether it was Andrew Bell,
    She did na wait on talkin
    To spier that night (102-109).

The poem is overrun with such characters and incidents, highlighting the ever present ironic humor that is one of the most recognizable traits of Burns’s writing. Such irony
conveys Burns’s insider status in the world of poem proper, where official holidays, pagan or Christian, are celebrated with a carnivalesque humor that foregrounds sensual pleasure. Burns’s participant-observer status serves a dual purpose in “Halloween,” particularly in how the footnotes shift in rhetorical design and purpose. As noted above in the case of Merran, the actual “spell” is related to readers in instructional format. Of the final eight notes, seven are written in second-person imperative with anywhere from three to six specific actions to be taken. All of these notes offer folk strategies for discerning the identity of future spouses. The fifteenth note is a typical example:

Take three dishes, put clean water in one, foul water in another, and leave the third empty; blindfold a person and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged; he (or she) dips in the left hand; if by chance in the clean water, the future (husband or) wife will come to the bar of matrimony a maid; if in the foul, a widow; if in the empty dish, it foretells, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times, and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered (Kinsley I: 162).

The twenty-seventh stanza relates the wrath of poor “auld uncle John” in conducting this experiment, “[Who] because he gat the toom dish thrice, / He heaved them on the fire” (241-42).

A poem of social pleasure and community, “Halloween” deserves to be more widely read and known. Despite formal difficulties, “Halloween” offers readers a tableau of characters whose enjoyment seems genuine enough. Their participation in folk customs also involves just enough irony to suggest that they are not as “rude” and “unenlightened” as we are led to believe in the preface. Likewise, the poem’s sophisticated paratext implicates the knowing reader in the wistful enterprise of such casual anthropology. To the degree that the poem condescends to its subject and actors, the knowing reader’s comfortably superior distance from their strange practices is affirmed. By the same token, such affirmation also blocks the reader’s participation in just such practices as are encouraged (nay, dictated) by the footnotes. It is explained to us as easy enough—“take an opportunity of going unnoticed to a ‘bear stack,’” or “take a candle and go
alone to a looking glass,” and so forth—and yet such commands are impossible for readers with “philosophic” minds to perform. The last laugh of “Halloween” is actually on them too, for Burns reminds us in the final stanza just what fun the holiday offers to those who know how to really enjoy it:

Wi’ merry sangs, an’ friendly cracks,  
I wat they did na weary;  
And unco tales, an’ funnie jokes—  
Their sports were cheap an’ cheery:  
Till butter’d sowens, with fragrant lunt,  
Set a’ their gabs a-steerin;  
Syne, wi’ a social glass o’ strut,  
They parted aff careerin  
Fu’ blithe that night (244-52).
Robert Burns as Dramatic Poet

R. D. S. Jack

One of the most enjoyable features of Ross Roy’s Burns conferences at the University of South Carolina is the time allowed for performance. That opportunity accords with the aural tradition in which Burns worked. I am personally sympathetic to this because of my schooling. Born near Burns’ birthplace, and educated at Ayr Academy, I was not introduced to Ayrshire’s bard as part of the academic curriculum. That was confined to English authors. Instead we all had to recite or sing his verses. Thus we all became masters in memorizing. Having heard ‘Ca’ the yowes’ sung thirty times, you never forget the words! This training also mirrored the rhetorical methods which Burns followed. I too was taught grammar, rhetoric and dialectic first and so could match his claim to be at an early age “a Critic in substantives, verbs and particles” (Roy I:135). It is this, literally ‘trivial’ voice which I shall employ in assessing the dramatic Burns.

When I later chose to specialise in early literature, I remained involved in a culture which, at both popular and courtly levels, relied heavily on aural means of transmission. In that context, I became aware that the discrete classical division of written literature into genres had a looser aural, indeed ‘vocal’ equivalent. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, lyrical, dramatic and narrative voices were often subsumed within the idea of ‘Poesie’ as the imaginative branch of oratory.¹ Burns himself knew the advantage of

switching from a generic to a vocal perspective. When claiming that he is now a Poet with capital P it is the latter categorisation he employs and within it his dramatic voice is subsumed—“I muse & rhyme, morning, noon & night; & have a hundred different Poetic plans, pastoral, georgic, dramatic, &c. floating in the regions of fancy, somewhere between Purpose and resolve” (Roy I:357).

With a performer’s eye and in the same pragmatic spirit I have chosen to prove the existence of a dramatic voice in the most unpromising areas of Burns’s art—his romantic and patriotic lyrics and major supernatural narrative, “Tam o’ Shanter.” In so doing, I am indirectly claiming that his own voice is always elusive. The generic vision conceals this by limiting his strictly theatrical verses to five theatrical prologues. But Watson’s Choice Collection had introduced him to a wide variety of alternative dramatic forms—debate, cantata, masque, and flyting—which flourished during the Scottish renaissance and reformation. From this base, his more overtly dramatic work emerged, his epistles in verse and prose, his dialogues, his cantata, The Jolly Beggars and many of his satires.

“Oh, my Luve’s like a red, red Rose” is a suitable starting point for analysis as it seems to be the epitome of his simple, “heaven-taught” muse. The voice, like that of its author, is that of a youthful, amorous male. The only issue seems to be how he has transformed a series of hyper-conventional images of love into so moving a poem. Look closer, however and one sees that each stanza depends on the rhetorical device of anaphora. “O my Luve’s like”, “I will love thee still”, “Till a’ the seas”, “And fare thee weel” are all repeated initially. The poem therefore mixes Romantic directness with Neoclassical mannerism. And that is not all. On Burns’s own evidence he published the poem in his capacity as folk-song collector. As it was just “a simple old Scots song which [he] had pickt up in this country,” the authentic authorial voice retreats even further from view (Roy II:258).

The romantic lyrics also prove that he can assume voices which are not even remotely his own. In “John Anderson, My Jo,” the persona is that of an aged faithful married woman who sings proudly of her equally ancient and faithful partner. None of the states imagined here were, or could be,
Burns’s but once more the vision is convincingly presented. If the two songs contrast in this way, they share the anaphoric presentation of the romantic voice and its submergence within the folk tradition. Burns may encourage his own bawdy image to the Crochallan Fencibles but here he purifies an earthier folk original. In it John’s wife views his aging process in selfish and sexual terms. Simple antithetical images contrast past potency with present impotence. His penis, once a powerful “chanter pipe” now plays no tunes; once powerful it is “now waxen wan.”

Burns’s text for Johnson’s Musical Museum maintains the same rhetorical pattern. The wife contrasts her husband’s hair, once black as the raven’s, with its present snowy whiteness; his youthful, unwrinkled forehead with present baldness. The divergent endings illustrate how completely bawdiness has been converted into sentimentality. While Burns’s female persona wishes a platonic blessing on her husband’s “frosty pow,” her original model threatened him with “the cuckold’s mallison” if he failed, again, to satisfy her sexually. But if a complete character change has been invented, it emerges from close mirroring of the folk song’s stylistic, rhetorical and dialectical structuring.

Viewed realistically these contrasts and variations seem puzzling. Related to the most basic tests of ancient oratory these concerns disappear. Already “John Anderson, My Jo” illustrates the guidance given for classical invention—*varius sis sed tamen idem*—while the test of arguing on both sides of the question, designed to prove the range of one’s persuasive virtuosity, is obviously well adapted to a personality like Burns’s which “contains multitudes.”

“John Anderson my Jo” also introduces the vexed question of sentimentality. Modern sensibility finds excessive emotionality, especially in the positive Utopic range of reference, distasteful. But Burns, that icon of down-to-earth Scottishness, regularly praises sentimental writers and creates sentimental types. His conversion of Mrs Anderson into one half of a Darby and Joan relationship demonstrates this. His use of the same purifying, idealising

---

2 *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*, 1799, with intro. by G. Ross Roy (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 53-55.
techniques in his overtly patriotic and political lyrics will provide further examples of these 'tender skills.'

My first example, “Robert Bruce’s March to Bannockburn,” takes me back to my early Burns competition days. At the age of twelve, I recited that poem for the great Russian translator, Samuel Marshak. At the end, he congratulated me on being “A fine little soldier.” Saving his memory, this was inaccurate; I would have made a truly reluctant soldier. What I could do was inhabit vicariously another non-proven soldier’s vision of Bruce’s heroism.

My experience in performing confirms not only the range of Burns’s histrionic imagination but also the clear ‘stage-directions’ he gives. The first of these is usually structural. Of the six stanzas on Bannockburn, two deal with past, present and future respectively. Bruce rouses memories of the past with a series of commands and exclamations. When he comes to the present, he changes to rhetorical questioning in order to prevent the less valorous from defecting. Only a really brazen quisling could publicly exit as proof that coward, slave-like traitors do exist!

Bruce addresses the future by recalling the commands and exclamations which opened the poem. But within this artificial stylistic circle one difference emerges. The anaphoric exclamations of stanza five recall the style of stanza one. But they are democratic appeals, not feudal directives. The call “Follow me” is justified in terms of “your sons” the blood of “our veins”. Neither the poem nor the argument can end there because this is a hierarchical age, where leaders lead and followers follow. So Bruce returns to his oratorical rostrum having, like Mark Anthony, effectively descended.

Burns offers as wide a range of patriotic personae as he does romantically. “The Lament of Mary Queen of Scots” shows him transferring his eulogistic skills from martial praise of a victorious king in the fourteenth century to romantic and spiritual praise of a tragic queen in the sixteenth. For her, as for Bruce, an especially dramatic moment is chosen. The poetic spotlight illuminates Bruce before his greatest victory; Mary is caught in its beam as she faces execution.
Once more a clear structure aids the interpreter. Mary’s victory is mirrored in the seasonal cycle. Spring dominates, being the setting for six out of the poem’s seven stanzas. What does change is Mary’s relationship to it. Initially self-absorbed, the clear “azure skies” only highlight the contrasted darkness for one who “fast in durance lies.” Thoughts of her rank and the honour she knew in France only intensify her misery as she sees even servants enjoying Spring. The transition from inward-looking defeatism to altruism and heavenly victory appropriately begins in the central stanza. From self-analysis, Mary turns outwards to Scotland “and mony a traitor there.” Re-gaining her sense of superiority from this she next contemplates her arch-enemy Elizabeth. Both as woman and as head of the Stewart line, she conquers her as well. Beth Tudor may win the short-term temporal victory but she is a “false woman” in more senses than one and therefore has no successor. Through “My son! my son!” she will gain the political triumph. Stewarts not Tudors will rule Britain.

Spiritual victory and the remaining three seasons are reserved for the final stanza. As sign that Mary now reads God’s resurrective purpose correctly she does not see the cycle ending with winter and “the narrow house o’ death.” God signs his resurrective purpose in the joys of the next spring. Then Mary will share the eternal spring reserved for the faithful:

Let winter round me rave;
And the next flowers that deck the spring,
Bloom on my peaceful grave.

This, for me, is one of the most touching stanzas Burns ever wrote. Cathartically, it brings Mary out of worldly tragedy into the twin joys of the divine succession (James) and eternal life (herself).

It is, of course, undeniably sentimental and even intelligent critics use that fact to dismiss it with faint praise. I have no quarrel with the diagnosis; descriptively Burns does excise all Mary’s weaknesses, dwelling on her courage, nobility, sexuality and faithfulness alone. Dramatically, she is then faced by her anti-type in evil, the soulless “Bess Tudor” of his letters, that “perfidious Succubus” whose guilt exceeded Judas Iscariot’s (Roy, II: 73).
The same methods can be traced, less stridently, in ‘Bruce’s March to Bannockburn.’ By omitting troublesome facts such as Bruce fighting for the English against Wallace and so replacing the “truth of chronicles” with an idealized hero figure, he makes it easier to sympathize with the cause of freedom he represents. This is in accord with the early moralised view of history which saw facts as the rough ground out of which ethical patterns could be traced and transmitted as guidelines for future action. Burns knew the method early on. Blind Hary’s Wallace as represented in Hamilton of Gilbertfield’s significantly ‘protestantized’ eighteenth-century text, he records, filled him with “a Scotish [sic] prejudice” (Roy, I: 136).³

Sentimental persuasion was, however, also appropriate to and encouraged within the ‘trivium.’ These are three of the Seven Liberal Arts and an artist aims not at realism but at mannerism. The poet especially is not concerned with mirroring actual behaviour but with imaginatively presenting Ideas of behaviour and exploring the limits of possible action. Not only Bruce and Mary but the idealised peasants in “The Cotter’s Saturday Night” are, therefore, presented as the most virtuous possible representatives of their kind and set against villains of equally deep-dyed villainy. Cathartically, the orator-poet arouses pity or joy via exaggerated oppositions between good and evil. He is not failing to affect the real world—he hopes to influence practical moral action—but he does so at one remove through ideistically constructed oppositions between good and evil. Burns in this way anticipates the methods of Dickens. The cotter’s family like Oliver Twist may seem unrealistic but both are perfect emotive vehicles for arousing sympathy.

The danger of applying solely realistic criteria to Burns is only one part of the problem. Seeking to reduce to one consistent authorial personality the man whom Byron famously defined in terms of antitheses and self-contradictions is another critical danger.⁴ While this psychological bias has been implicit in the earlier analyses of

³ Cf. Burns’s phrase “genuine Caledonian Prejudice” (Roy, II: 73).
Burns’s romantic and patriotic lyrics, it is especially evident in his supernatural poems.

“The Address to the Deil” offers a microcosmic introduction to these contradictory attitudes. Observe how many devils appear in it and the different sides of Burns they reflect. The learned and literate Burns opens the poem epigrammatically with the apocryphal Miltonic devil “That led th’embattl’d Seraphim to war.” To that apocryphal vision he returns in Stanza 19, this time recounting Lucifer’s defeat by Michael in *Paradise Lost*, Book VI. Within this referential circle, the superstitious side evokes both the folk devil (appeased in colloquial language as “Nick or Clootie”) and those elemental sprites associated with him in the pagan world. The faithful Burns is also reflected. The Biblical devil of Old Testament and Eden is introduced, then distinguished from his merciful New Testament equivalent. Psychological and Masonic perspectives only reinforce the confusion. Within the human soul and the mysteries of the cult, Satan remains a shadowy, concealed entity observed by a shifting authorial persona, at once above religious fundamentalism and superstition yet a victim of both.

The changeability of attitude and perspective evident in the “Address” stems from Burns’s own admission that, in this area, he is divided by disbelieving head and accepting heart. It also provides a helpful introduction to Burns’s longest lyrical poem, “Tam o’ Shanter.” Here, lyrical and dramatic voices combine within a narrative poem. That voice seldom dominates in Burns. Tam’s story was, as he confesses to Alexander Tytler, “an essay in a walk of the muses entirely new to [me]” (Roy, II: 85).

In arguing that all three voices conjoin in this poem I shall begin with narrative. That it is a narrative poem and part of performance tradition is revealed by its sources. Its origins lie in folk narrative but also involve the antiquarian, Captain Grose. He was a visual artist and when Burns asked him for a drawing of Alloway Kirk he requested a poem about the same building and drawing on the pre-existent folk tales connected with it. These stories are echoed in the poem and so the poet-narrator’s voice is again submerged.

That Tam’s journey is an essentially *dramatic* narrative poem is implied by its aural origins but re-confirmed by its
form. If Burns relinquishes some of his authorial responsibility to the storytellers of the past, he also relinquishes responsibility to a narrator who becomes one of the most powerful characters in the story. He it is who guides the reader's reaction to events. An attempt to read the poem in consistent biographical terms is, therefore, a truly hopeless activity. It is after all the representation of a drunken man's vision of supernatural events as first related in folk tales, then re-transmitted by a self-evidently bemused narrator on behalf of an author who "contains multitudes" and is especially undecided when it comes to witches!

Burns's reliance on the quidditative strengths of drama—the spoken word and the visual immediacy of the form—also reinforces the poem's 'theatrical' appeal. One has to hear Kate's Ayrshire accent to appreciate the power of her prophecy. The assonance of "th[oo] wood be f[oo]n'd deep dr[oo]n'd in Doon" is lost in the Anglicisation of "thou would be found deep drowned in Doon." But if we hear her, Burns' power to create pen portraits of individual characters lets us see her as well. Sitting there, "gathering her brows like gathering storm, nursing her wrath to keep it warm," specifically poetic skills also enter the narrative.

Having briefly suggested a synthesis of all three voices in Tam's 'Poesie,' I shall end as I began, recounting the clear signs Burns provides for performers at the same time as he artfully conceals himself from view. Formally, the poem naturally divides into five acts: Introduction (1-58), Tam's Journey (59-104), the Devil's Dance (105-92), the Infernal Chase (193-219) and Dénouement (220-4). In theatrical terms, the first section offers an overview of Ayr on a busy market night, aurally strengthened by the onomatopoeic echoing of horses' hooves on the cobbles. Visually, a panning-in technique spotlights Tam as final focus after his chosen hostelry and select companions have drawn us in to see him.

Clear contrasts mark off the second movement. From lethargy, warmth and conviviality Tam is hurtled into frenzied action and bitter weather accompanied by his horse alone. Spatially, he enters a broader landscape but loses his mental freedom as fears crowd in upon him. Further contrasts mark off the third section. Tam's frenzied journey
is literally stopped in its track as Maggie freezes in fear. Visually, a stark lighting change turns the wood’s darkness into ghostly brightness while Tam quits centre stage for the wings, allowing the Devil to replace him at centre stage.

An aural cue and another lighting change herald the final chase scene. Tam’s cry of “Weel done Cutty Sark” “in an instant” turns the whole stage dark. When light returns, both focus and action have dramatically changed. As Tam’s carousing led to his first journey, so the devil’s carousing into the frenzied chase, led by Maggie with the witches in pursuit. The conclusion to this farcical scene is appropriately light. The action we have seen wittily fails to support the overt ‘moral’ against excessive drinking. For Tam, you will notice, is not “drown’d in Doon” as Kate benevolently prophesied. Indeed only Meg suffers and she appears entirely guiltless of that vice!

Burns attracts biographers because his life was, in itself, dramatic. Yet, as Sir Alexander Gray noted, he was, in specifically literary terms, “Of all the great poets ... the least original; one might say, the most anxious not to be original.” The different ways in which Burns dramatically subsumes, and even conceals, his already variable voice as well as broadening its range beyond his own immediate experience has been the topic of this article. That breadth of reference, while aiding the universality of his general appeal, poses a major problem for those who wish to interpret his verse on its own histrionic terms.

“Tongues Turn’d Inside Out”:
The Reception of “Tam o’ Shanter”:

Gerard Carruthers

... Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer’s banes in gibbet airns;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen’d bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae a rape,
Wi’ his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi’ blude red-rusted;
Five scymitars, wi’ murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father’s throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o’ life bereft,
The grey hairs yet stack to the heft;
Wi’ mair o’ horrible and awefu’,
Which even to name wad be unlawfu’.
Three Lawyers’ tongues, turn’d inside out,
Wi’ lies seam’d like a beggar’s clout;
Three Priests’ hearts, rotten, black as muck,
Lay stinking, vile, in every neuk.—

“Tam o’ Shanter” has always been among the most popular of Burns’s poems. Critical emphases and interpretations have varied greatly over the two centuries since its first

---

1 Acknowledgement is due to the British Academy for travel support to present the original version of this paper at the Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society conference, in Charleston, S.C., and to the Editor of Studies in Scottish Literature (where it first appeared: SSL, 35–36, 455-463) for permission to offer it here, in slightly modified form.

2 Kinsley II: 554. Hereafter quotations from the poem are referenced in the text by line number only.
publication, from the couthy and sentimental through the
dramatic and folkloristic to the psychological or even
anthropological. Yet the passage quoted above, a crucial
turning point both in the narrative and in the poem’s
psychological and dramatic development, has seldom been
given its due attention. As so often in criticism, to focus on a
gap or maybe repression in the dominant critical readings is
to reread the text, and perhaps throw a fresh light on its
complexity.

Similarly, the re-examination of a neglected textual crux
or editorial difficulty often brings to the surface significant
conflicts in a work, and (if one allows the biographical leap)
its author. Revealingly, the passage quoted above was one
with which Burns himself became uncertain, the only point
in the text at which he made a major change after
publication, and a point over which a modern editor of the
poem might still pause over the motivation, validity, and
effect, of the changes. At the urging of Alexander Fraser
Tytler, and before Burns first included “Tam o’ Shanter” in
an edition of his own poems, he removed the last four lines
from the quoted passage. Tytler purported to believe that
the lines were “good in themselves” but opined that, since
“they derive all their merit from the satire they contain,
[they] are here rather misplaced among the circumstances of
pure horror.”3 James Currie, parroting Tytler, and ever
fastidious in his presentation of Burns in the first collected
edition of the works in 1800, remarks that “independent of
other objections, [the expunged lines] interrupt and destroy
the emotions of terror which the preceding description had
excited.”4

Tytler, later Lord Woodhouselee, who was fast becoming
a pillar of the prestigious Scottish legal system when Burns
began to know him, bridled at the four lines not out of
professional shock (as Currie hovers on the edge of
implying), but because of what he took to be an interruption
to the poem’s decorum. The lines, as Tytler acknowledges,

3 Donald Low, ed., Robert Burns: The Critical Heritage (London,
4 James Currie, ed., Works of Robert Burns, 4 vols. (Liverpool,
1800), III: Appendix, p.21.
are skilful and, indeed, contain one of the most strikingly strange images ever to issue from Burns’s pen. The lawyers’ tongues are inverted so as somehow to show a dark stitching of lies in a metaphor of hypocrisy that is obvious enough. What this looks like physically, however, is a little difficult to imagine. The tongues are prepared, it seems, as a demonic offering, or delicacy even, alongside the priests’ hearts. After being ripped out and ritually inverted, the tongues are reconstituted by being sewn up, though quite how this can be done “wi’ lies” is unclear.

Burns, then, has presented us with a moment more surreal than he produces anywhere else in his writing. To help us out with this difficult visualisation he offers the analogy of the clumsily repaired clothing of the beggar. This concrete comparison notwithstanding, the fabric of the supposedly straightforward narrative tale has been punctured for an instant by the over-exuberance of the narrator. And this moment parallels other moments of rupture in the poem, most obviously Tam’s ejaculation, “Weel done, Cutty-Sark” (l.189), where the scene of orgy at Alloway Kirk is interrupted by an excess of human emotion and imagination which is the ultimate subject of the poem.

It is true enough, as Tytler realises, that Burns signals in show-stopping manner his satiric intent in the four excised lines with a garrulous narrator immediately telling us of things he has just said he cannot name (and where he even names something he cannot literally see). These excised lines, then, might be said actually to reinforce the essential unity of the poem in that the narrator can be seen to have become infectiously inebriated as he recounts Tam’s tale.

Tytler and Currie, though, wish the poem to be seen as a cogent “tale of terror” and therefore disarm themselves from reading the full psychological panoply of “Tam o’ Shanter.” Tytler shows this deficiency again when he comments of the poem in a letter of March 1791 to Burns:

The only fault it possesses, is, that the winding up, or conclusion of the story, is not commensurate to the interest which is excited by the descriptive and characteristic painting of the preceding parts.—The preparation is fine, but the result is not adequate. But for this perhaps you have a good apology—you stick to the popular tale (Low, p. 96).
The notion of “Tam o’ Shanter” as based upon a “popular tale” has dogged the text. Apart from the ubiquitous “wild ride” aspect in the context of folktale, it is far from clear what particular source, if any, Burns had in mind for his poem. Burns in a letter to Francis Grose during the summer of 1790 provided several stories of diabolic doings surrounding Alloway Kirk that loosely inform “Tam o’ Shanter” and which, in their diffuse collective, speak of no particularly cogent local folk tradition prior to Burns’s composition of his poem (Roy II:29–31). No doubt the ruins of Alloway Kirk did excite local superstition, but Burns was, in a sense, playing to the gallery. The poem appears in its first published form in the Edinburgh Magazine for March 1791, and, more importantly, one month later in volume two of Captain Grose’s Antiquities of Scotland. In the second of these contexts, it is part of a rather odd item. Amidst a survey of the much more venerable ruins of abbeys and castles in the book, Alloway Kirk is very small beer. Its insertion as a location of historical curiosity is really an excuse for Grose’s drinking crony, Burns, to parade his fine poem. Grose provides a very short and vague description of the ruin at Alloway, the most salient point of which is to say that “it is one of the eldest parishes in Scotland”, which is to say nothing at all. In a limp footnote to his discourse, Grose says of the kirk, “the church is also famous for being wherein the witches and warlocks used to hold their meetings.” The text of “Tam o’ Shanter”, itself a (very large) footnote to Grose’s description, is in toto a kind of staged over-excited response to the real, physical scene which Grose’s book ostensibly surveys. And this textual relationship too has something about it of the “tongue turn’d inside out” as Burns and Grose collaborate in an imaginative and picturesque rather than merely factual version of “local history”.

Neither Grose nor Burns offer anything in the way of any local legend that is richly or even firmly delineated. In “Tam o’ Shanter,” what we actually see Burns performing is his latest act of cultural substitution within the Presbyterian

---

5 Francis Grose, The Antiquities of Scotland, II (Edinburgh, 1791), 32.

culture from which he emerges, as certain highly generalised parts of the folk past of Scotland rather than the folk present of Ayrshire are inserted into his native locale. A very similar earlier example of Burns behaving in this way can be found in his poem “Halloween” (1785), as the bard takes his poetic model from Robert Fergusson’s essentially North East centred “Hallowfair” (1772) and transplants this to his native Ayrshire, where such November festivity would have been largely seen as “Papist” or “Pagan” by the most douce Calvinist Presbyterians. Arguably, there is an ironic circular effect going on in “real life” with this process, revealed, perhaps, by William Aiton’s comments in his Agricultural report for 1811 on the magical practices of Halloween in Ayrshire: “The manner in which these spells are conducted, and their absurdity, are properly exposed in the poem of Hallow’e’en by the celebrated Robert Burns.”

I suspect that Burns actually brings such customs to the fore in a way that their weight of actual practice in late eighteenth-century Ayrshire probably does not justify. Aiton’s scant source for his comments on the superstitions of Halloween is Burns’s poem itself. Does Burns’s poem, then, reflect or, instead, rather create the notion of such pagan festivities going on in Calvinist Ayrshire? We should be wary of the “realism” of “Halloween” precisely because Burns circumscribes it with a dissonantly anthropological persona. In his prefatory remarks to the poem he very coolly comments that the customs he describes, “may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind” (Kinsley I:152).

The persona here is that of enlightened historian and in the contrasting narrative of the poem itself, obviously enough, that of folk raconteur enjoying the festivities he describes. Burns’s colliding of such personae, though, need not lead to the tired old diagnosis of “crisis of identity.” Burns is often a “poet of the gaps,” conjugating different registers that will not simply cohere as part of the reality of the complex human psychological terrain in which he is ultimately interested. His performances in both “Halloween” and “Tam o’ Shanter” cut across the mentalities of Ayrshire

---

7 Quoted by John Strawhorn, *Ayrshire at the Time of Burns* (Kilmarnock, 1959), p.79.
Calvinism, Scottish folk-belief and contemporary antiquarianism, as well as the “age of sentiment”, in a fashion that refuses absolute authority to any of these.

“Tam o’ Shanter” is perhaps Burns’s poem that has most suffered under the “scholarly” pursuit of “authority” and “authenticity.” We see a good example of this in John Gibson Lockhart’s promotion of the “Galloway” version of the legend in his biography of Burns, primed by the ever-unreliable “Honest” Allan Cunningham. In the “Galloway” story, the day following the events of Tam’s adventure a young woman is found to be in possession of hairs from the tale of Tam’s mare, and so exposed and executed as a witch. This version is not, as Cunningham claims (and as Lockhart implies), a superior rendition of the story. Cunningham and Lockhart wishfully construct, in a way that Tytler might have desired, a more rounded out and less fizzled out narrative. However, it is ultimately a reduction of Burns’s materials to the level of misogynistic fear, a precise turning “inside out” of the design of the text of “Tam o’ Shanter” which actually ridicules the swaggering though fearful male psyche.8 One might well wonder whether Cunningham, in fact, is consciously responding to Tytler’s remarks on the poem: fabricating a more seemingly resonant piece of folk legend than that “popular tale” which Tytler assumes to be directing Burns’s version to such disappointing conclusion.

We find a variation on the problem of “Tam o’ Shanter’s” consistency in the attitude of Mrs Dunlop. Her early enthusiasm for “Tam o’ Shanter” in extracts that Burns had sent her was dissipated by her receipt of the entire work and, in disgust, she wrote to the poet, “Had I seen the whole of that performance, all its beauties could not have extorted one word of mine in its praise, notwithstanding you were the

author.” Burns replied to her that the poem represented a “finishing polish” he was unlikely ever to better in his work; and Dunlop retorted that this “finishing polish” “was a little tarnished by the sweat and smoke of one line which I felt rather a little too strong for me” (Roy, II: 83-84). Whatever this line was, and it may well have been one of those among the four expunged, as James Kinsley speculates, the charge is that Burns has himself become over-excited in the telling of his tale (Kinsley, III: 1349). Again, this is somewhat ironic since the expunged lines represent, in fact, a quite conscious exploding of the narrative voice, or a signalling of over-excitement and, at the same time, a very nice layer of satire that elaborates upon the purpose of the poem to encompass the topsy-turvy nature of human institutions. Underneath our various institutions of society, whether the church, the law, or Tam’s marriage (and it is significant that the expunged lines show horrible sins against family ties), there are dark forces straining against our sociability. If Mrs Dunlop refers to another line in the poem, perhaps one that is sexually voyeuristic, this is also a misapprehension where she fails to read the psychological fervour that the poem essays and which it punctures even as it is revelatory.

The comments of Dunlop, Currie and Tytler all fail to appreciate the full “jouissance” of the poem, in a sense akin to the usage of Roland Barthes when he suggests that the best playfulness by a writer shatters the conventional “pleasure” of the text where such limited pleasure is to be found in work that connects to “a homogenizing movement of the ego”. “Tam o’ Shanter” is a striking text in this sense, as it explores the hidden angst of the rationalising ego, since Tam is actually experiencing a fantasy of sexual irresponsibility. It also implodes, in its deliberately limp, exhausted conclusion, a narrative that might have appeared previously to be much more credulous of Tam’s experience.

---

Burns’s refers by “finishing polish”, presumably, to the very smooth narrative control that he produces in his poem, but this narrative control includes by way of ironic counterpoint to its “wild ride” fabric, instances where the excitement—either of Tam himself, or the narrator—is deliberately toppled over. The unwary reader might not immediately register this internal ridicule, even in the four excised lines mentioned above, but must be brought up short by the mock moralitas of the final lines drawing attention to the less than harmful consequences of the whole episode for Tam:

When’er to drink you are inclin’d,
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,
Think, ye may buy the joys o’er dear,
Remember Tam o’ Shanter’s mare (ll.221-224).

The rather dubious stories of Burns’s composition of the first version of “Tam o’ Shanter” in febrile manner as he walked along the River Nith are the result of the reception of the poem as a work that is thought ought to be well-integrated as a folktale and to be somewhat unconscious in, and more respectful of, its catalogue of chilling delights. This attitude to the poem, however, flies in the face of Burns actually questioning the “sweat and the smoke” of the situation he essays as part of the poem’s interrogation of “the unconscious.” The final lines confront the reader with the question: what are the consequences of bottled up and released frustration for the human psyche?

Of Burns’s contemporaries Samuel Taylor Coleridge, writing in 1809, produces the most canny insight into “Tam o’ Shanter” as he comments on the lines “To snow that falls upon a river/A moment white—then gone forever!”:

In poems, equally as in philosophic disquisitions, genius produces the strongest impressions of novelty while it rescues the most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission. Truths of all others the most awful and mysterious, yet being at the same time of universal interest, are too often considered as so true, that they lose all the life and efficiency of truth and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul side by side with the most despised and exploded errors (Low, p. 110).

Coleridge points us towards a quality of “Tam o’ Shanter” that is apparent not only in the lines that provide his cue, but
in the poem as a whole. The fragility of the moment or the basic unit of truth is precisely what is at issue throughout Burns’s poem. Somewhat ironically, we might say that Burns reactivates in his supernatural story “the most despised and exploded errors” so as to illuminate a psychological terrain that has lain hidden “in the dormitory of the soul” and which underpins his supernatural tale. Tytler, Dunlop and Currie, however, desire Burns’s poem to be a polite antiquarian composition rather than the dissonant interface that it undoubtedly is between inner and outer human worlds.

Puritanical Scotland has been somewhat uncomfortable with “Tam o’ Shanter”, precisely because it has seemed to be Robert Burns’s most personally representative poem. We see this in Walter Scott, also writing in 1809, as highly perceptive comments on the poem’s manic excellence give way to dismay as its author’s biography is brought to mind:

No poet, with the exception of Shakespeare, ever possessed the power of exciting the most varied and discordant emotions with such rapid transitions. His humorous description of the appearance of Death (in the poem on Dr Hornbook) borders on the terrific, and the witches’ dance, in the ‘Kirk of Alloway’ is at once ludicrous and horrible. Deeply must we then regret those avocations which diverted a fancy so varied and so vigorous, joined with language and expression suited to all its changes, from leaving a more substantial monument of his own fame and to the honour of his country (Low, p. 207).

It is not clear what the “avocations” to which Scott refers are, but, presumably, he has believed stories of the poet’s real-life excess as an interference with his powers of concentration and creativity. It is peculiar that Scott should choose to make such an inference immediately after observing Burns’s ability in the conjugation of emotion. The response to Scott is not so much that this poetic propensity might actually be seen as consonant with the fragile Burns he believes in (though one might pursue such a line). Rather, it is that the poetic fluidity he admires in Burns, in the case of “Tam o’ Shanter” the poem’s simultaneity in the “ludicrous and horrible”, should be enough in itself. Scott contradicts himself in appreciating poetic fluidity, but then desiring a “substantial monument” in a manner that establishes a dominant note in the Scottish
response to Burns, generally, and to “Tam o’ Shanter” particularly.

The Scottish misappreciation of “Tam o’ Shanter” is, in itself, monumentally, consistently solid. John Wilson sees “the description of the horrors of the scene [as] overcharged, and caricatured so as to become shocking rather than terrible” (Low, p. 315). Thomas Campbell laments what he takes to be the relegation of the supernatural to “comic effect,” the implication being that Burns’s personal sense of levity militates against the sustaining of a suitably serious note (Low, p. 323). John Gibson Lockhart opines that “Tam o’ Shanter” shows “what Burns might have done,” and again Burns’s supposed inconsistency is highlighted in this remark (Low, p. 349). Thomas Carlyle pets his lip and terms the poem “a mere drunken phantasmagoria painted on ale vapours” (Low, p. 368). A century later Edwin Muir leans heavily upon Carlyle’s conception. For Muir, “Tam o’ Shanter” speaks of the historic dysfunctional Scottish cultural system where dissociated reason and fantasy cannot organically cohere as they would within a more well-integrated national, literary sensibility.¹ It is extraordinary how all of these responses miss the point as they lament the absence of a better balanced or a more consistently centred poem than the one Burns provides. A crucial point made by “Tam o’ Shanter” is that human cogency is not easily available, precisely because of our conflicting and confused urges toward sociability and pleasure. The very fabric of the poem imitates this human uncertainty.

The four lines that Burns removed from the poem for the 1793 “Edinburgh” edition represented a small surrender. They lived on beyond this edition for several years both in further printings of Grose’s Antiquities of Scotland and in the highly popular anthologies of Scottish poetry produced by Brash and Reid, but Currie’s edition largely put paid to them in collected editions of Burns for nearly two centuries.

It was Professor Roy himself, at the meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, where I first presented this argument, who drew attention to an intriguing exception.

There was one subsequent collected edition of Burns, of far narrower circulation than Currie’s, that took these four lines seriously, and retained them in the text, placing them differently in a way worth consideration. This was the Bewick (or Alnwick) edition of 1808, which reordered the lines as:

(Three Lawyers’ tongues, turn’d inside out,
Wi’ lies seam’d like a beggar’s clout;
Three Priests’ hearts, rotten, black as muck,
Lay stinking, vile, in every neuk.)
Wi’ mair o’ horrible and awefu’,
Which ev’n to name wad be unlawfu’.12

This rearrangement, presumably not a typesetting error since it is retained in succeeding Bewick editions including a special selection of 1828, has much to commend it. It has the merit of taking to an even greater pitch the idea of horror that cannot be depicted, following on from lines that, as we have seen, are encompassing an idea (stitching with lies) which is already too exuberantly abstract to be any kind of easy pictorial image. Did the Bewick edition somehow have an intimation of Burns’s original intention for these lines? At the very least it presents a superior solution to the arrangement of the material than the Tytler-Currie approved excision of long canonical tradition.

The limited reappearance of the excised lines as a footnote on the same page in Kinsley’s edition in 1968 was a welcome phenomenon, but also a typographical demonstration of how Burns’s tongue had been turned inside out. In accepting Tytler’s advice, Burns had bowed for an unfortunate moment to a polite sensibility that was precisely the reverse of his identification in “Tam o’ Shanter” of the raggedness of the human psyche and of human society. Future editors of the poem might well turn serious attention to re-inserting the missing lines (discussing also the precise place to locate them). Their re-inclusion would be in keeping entirely with Burns’s psychological critique in, and his artistic design for, “Tam o’ Shanter.”

12 The Poetical Works of Robert Burns; with his Life. Ornamented with engravings on wood by Mr. Bewick (Alnwick: Davison, 1808), II: 14.
“Epistolary Performances”:
Burns and the arts of the letter

Kenneth Simpson

Scholarship increasingly identifies Burns as a multi-voiced poet, a sophisticated literary artist, and a complex human being. His letters repay scrutiny in terms of the various qualities they reveal: the reflection of the wide range of Burns’s reading, his remarkable powers of recall, and his capacity for mimicry; the diversity of voices and styles employed, indicating a considerable dramatic talent; the narrative verve and mastery of rhetoric that mark him out as the novelist manqué; and the psychological implications, in that the chameleon capacity of Burns the writer exacerbates the problems of identity of Burns the man.

Many of Burns’s letters are carefully crafted; they are artefacts, works of conscious artistry as much as the poems are. Even in times of stress, as in the breach with the Armour family, he writes as conscious, sometimes self-conscious, craftsman with quotes ready to hand, including from himself (Roy I:45, 47).1 Burns’s letters substantiate the assertion of Dr Johnson in his Life of Pope: “There is indeed

---

1 Acknowledgement is due to the British Academy and the Department of English Studies, University of Strathclyde, for supporting initial research on this project and travel to the Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society conference at the College of Charleston, South Carolina.

2 Hereafter in this essay, references in the text to G. Ross Roy, ed. Letters of Robert Burns (1985) are given as volume number and page number only.
no transaction which offers stronger temptations to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse.”

In many letters Burns writes for effect, often projecting self-images, as in the letter to Sir John Whitefoord of 1 December 1786, two days after his first arrival in Edinburgh, where he identifies himself as a “bard of Nature’s making” (I: 68). Often he writes ironically rather than literally, or, by his own testimony, he performs. To Lady Henrietta Don he wrote,

I have here sent you a parcel of my epistolary performances.... I might have altered or omitted somethings in these letters; perhaps I ought to have done so; but I wished to show you the Bard and his style in their native colors (I:103-4).

Burns’s readiness to be recruited as Caledonia’s Bard fostered further an innate tendency to role-playing. Consequently, just as Holy Willie does not represent the viewpoint of his creator, one must beware of citation of every letter as evidence of Burns’s speaking *in propria persona*. His response to a line in James Cririe’s *Address to Loch Lomond*—“Truth/ The soul of every song that’s nobly great”—was to thunder, “Fiction is the soul of many a Song that’s nobly great” (I:326); likewise some of his letters.

Plainly Burns relished the craft of letter-writing and, as he testified to Dr Moore (I:141), he made copies of those with which he was especially pleased. Some letters were clearly intended for publication: for instance, the letter of 7 February 1787, responding to the unsought advice of the Earl of Buchan, exists in several manuscript versions and was published in *The Bee*, 27 April 1791 (I 90-92). The course of the eighteenth century had provided significant precedents. Albeit with their author’s reluctance, Swift’s letters had begun to appear in print from 1740, and the first of Smollett’s were published in 1769, but the example that Burns may also have followed was that of Pope, who in 1736 himself began preparation of an edition of his letters. Those letters transcribed in the Glenriddell Manuscript may well represent the nucleus of the edition that, had he lived longer,

---

Burns would have presented to the world. To Mrs Dunlop he wrote of what he had prepared for Robert Riddell of Glenriddell: “I have lately collected, for a Friend’s perusal, all my letters; I mean, those which I first sketched in a rough draught, & afterwards wrote out fair” (II:270). Finding only one of his letters to her, he offers this explanation: “I wrote always to you, the rhapsody of the moment” (II:270). Likewise to Peter Hill he acknowledges, “writing to you was always the ready business of my heart” (II:292). An attempt is being made to placate those who will see themselves as under-represented.

Burns’s letters reflect the breadth and depth of his reading, garnered by the “retentive memory” for which he was, he told Moore, “a good deal noted” (I:135). John Murdoch’s use of the second (1767) edition of Arthur Masson’s *Collection of English Prose and Verse* provided a range of literary models (Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope, among others), as did the *Spectator* essays. Echoes of, for instance, “To Leonora” can be heard in letters to recipients as diverse as William Niven, Burns’s father, and ‘Clarinda’ (I:5, 6, and 183-4). Murdoch’s teaching emphasised rhetoric, which Burns first put into practice in adolescent debates with Niven and Thomas Orr and continued in their correspondence. Early letters to Alison Begbie [?] have a formality of manner at odds with the sentiments which he wishes to convey: having stressed that the one rule he will invariably keep with her is “honestly to tell you the plain truth,” he adds, “There is something so mean and unmanly in the arts of dissimulation and falsehood, that I am surprised they can be acted by any one in so noble, so generous a passion as virtuous love” (I: 12). The modesty topos is used to great effect to correspondents ranging from Alison Begbie [?] to this to Mrs Dunlop: “I am a miserable hand at your fine speeches; and if my gratitude is to be reckoned by my expression I shall come poorly off in the account” (I:369); and, in a letter to Margaret Chalmers which has begun “I hate dissimulation in the language of the heart,” he goes on to claim, “My rhetoric seems quite to have lost its effect on the lovely half of mankind” (I:165).

The letters serve as an index to, and timetable of, Burns’s reading. When he writes to Robert Muir, 20 March 1786, “I
intend we shall have a gill between us, in a Mutchkin-stoup” (I: 29), there is a clear evocation of these lines from Allan Ramsay’s “Lucky Spence’s Last Advice”: “gie us in anither gill,/ A mutchken, Jo, let’s tak our fill.” Confirmation comes in a letter of 3 April when he quotes from “the famous Ramsay of jingling memory” (I:30). Similarly, references to his personal relationship with his muse (e.g. “my muse jilted me here, and turned a corner on me, and I have not got again into her good graces,” I:112) may have been prompted by the example of Robert Fergusson in “The King’s Birthday in Edinburgh,” where the poet’s muse, in addition to an incapacity for whisky, proves irrelevant to the occasion.

It is the legacy of Burns’s reading of fiction that is especially evident. To Moore, Burns wrote, “I have gravely planned a Comparative view of You, Fielding, Richardson, & Smollet [sic] in your different qualities & merits as Novel-Writers’ (II:37). From them he learned much. In their range and subtlety of technique the letters bespeak a potential novelist of real quality, many of them exuding imaginative energy and narrative drive. There is an exuberant anecdote of John Richmond’s staid landlady, Mrs. Carfrae, with whom Burns lodged initially in Edinburgh, and the “Daughters of Belial” who lived above (I:83), and Burns’s vivid account of the horse-race with the Highlander down Loch Lomond side, possibly inspired by Dr Slop’s fall in Tristram Shandy, volume II, ch. 9, exemplifies the collusion of style, syntax, and sense (I: 125). The “incomparable humor” (I:296) which Burns so admired in Smollett prompts a caricature of Miss Nancy Sherriff (I:119) almost certainly inspired by the description of Lieutenant Lismahago in Humphry Clinker in Jerry Melford’s letter of 10 July. Totally at odds with the egalitarianism for which Burns is celebrated is this voice which is remarkably redolent of the same novel’s Matt Bramble: “I have ever looked on Mankind in the lump to be nothing better than a foolish, headstrong, credulous, unthinking Mob; and their universal belief has ever had extremely little weight with me” (I:349). Surely it was Parson Adams in Fielding’s Joseph Andrews who inspired this: “I have such an aversion to right line and method, that when I can’t get over the hedges that bound the highway, I zig-zag across the road” (I:131), and Fielding is also the model for
the mock-heroic in which Burns excels (e.g. to Stephen Clarke, II: 141-2; and to William Nicol, II:183-4). There are so many echoes of *Tom Jones* in the letter to Miss Wilhelmina Alexander enclosing “The Bonnie Lass of Ballochmyle” that Burns was surely relishing his skill in the mode, proving his claim at the outset, “Poets are such outré Beings, so much the children of wayward Fancy and capricious Whim, that I believe the world generally allows them a larger latitude in the rules of Propriety, than the sober Sons of Judgment & Prudence” (I:63). Though the lady did not respond, it seems that she later came to cherish the letter. Tom Jones’s behaviour as sentimental lover, reading Sophia’s letter a thousand times, probably inspired this: “Schetki has sent me the song, set to a fine air of his composing. I have called the song Clarinda: I have carried it about in my pocket and thumbed it over all day” (I:221). Truly striking is the extent to which Burns models not just his writing but his behaviour on his reading.

As Carol McGuirk has demonstrated, Burns was no stranger to the concept or the practice of sentimental encounter. Even in the earliest letters feeling is an index to virtue. At the age of twenty-one, Burns writes to Niven, “I shall be happy to hear from you how you go on in the ways of life; I do not mean so much how trade prospers ... as how you go on in the cultivation of the finer feelings of the heart” (I:5). Alison Begbie is told how the thought of her affects him: “I grasp every creature in the arms of universal benevolence, and equally participate in the pleasures of the happy, and sympathise with the miseries of the unfortunate” (I:9). Several letters typify the self-approving joy of the benevolentist; this, for instance, to Clarinda: “The dignified and dignifying consciousness of an honest man, and the well-grounded trust in approving Heaven, are two most substantial [?foundations] of happiness” (I:253). Like “To a Louse,” letters testify to the influence of Adam Smith and particularly the concept of “the spectator in the breast,” which plainly struck a chord with Burns’s fissile personality: Burns is revealed as both actor and judge. A letter to

---

Clarinda reproduces an internal dialogue, in effect a lengthy soliloquy laden with quotations (I:210). The letter to the Duke of Queensberry enclosing The Whistle dramatises a debate with himself (II:109-10), and it is reprised in the Glenriddell Manuscript. Wild apostrophising to Clarinda elicits the self-admonition, “But to leave these paths that lead to madness” (II:189). Pronoun shifts between first- and third-person recur; and in the Clarinda correspondence he alternates freely between ‘I’ and ‘Sylvander’. Psychologically revealing also are the letters alluding to his decision to take Jean as his wife to Ellisland in that they play upon the terms of trial, jury, and verdict.

Models of sensibility were to be found in the novels that were his “bosom favorites” (I:141), Tristram Shandy and The Man of Feeling. There are various echoes of Mackenzie, later designated his sole “favorite Author” (II:269). “You know I am a Physiognomist” (I:6), he reminds Niven; much is made in Mackenzie’s novel of skill in physiognomy. Mackenzie’s fragmented narrative is “a bundle of little episodes;” Burns sends John Ballantine “a parcel of pieces whose fate is undetermined” (I:31). In a note in the Glenriddell Manuscript, Burns disclaims responsibility for errors, calling to mind Mackenzie’s editor who blames the curate for the nature of the text.

Sterne’s influence is everywhere. Burns as self-conscious narrator owes much to Tristram. “A damned Star has almost all my life usurped my zenith,” he tells Peter Stuart, editor of the Morning Star, in a line that is undiluted Shandy (I: 408). How should one respond to the hostility of Providence? Burns’s answer would often seem to be with a typically Sternean anti-rationalism. In his statement of his ‘creed’ to Mrs Dunlop he contrasts “the cold theorems of Reason” with “a few honest Prejudices & benevolent Prepossessions” (I:419). When Burns writes, “Offences proceed only from the heart” (I:436), he is quoting Tristram’s Uncle Toby.

It seems virtually certain that Burns was familiar with at least some of Sterne’s letters. Letters from Yorick to Eliza (10 letters to Mrs. Draper) appeared in 1773 and were

---

reprinted in 1775; his daughter, Lydia Medalle, published 114 letters of Sterne with a memoir in 1775; and his *Works*, published 1780, included 126 of his letters. For long Sterne was accredited—erroneously—with the first instance of the use of the word ‘sentimental’ on the basis of this passage (the letter is to Elizabeth Lumley, later his wife):

I gave a thousand pensive, penetrating looks at the chair thou hadst so often graced, in those quiet and sentimental repasts—then laid down my knife, and fork, and took out my handkerchief, and clapped it across my face, and wept like a child.  

Here is Burns to Margaret Chalmers:

I never saw two, whose esteem flattered the nobler feelings of my soul ... so much as Lady McKenzie and Miss Chalmers. When I think of you—hearts the best, minds the noblest, of human kind—unfortunate, even in the shades of life—when I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days, than I can do with almost any body I meet with in eight years—when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again—I could sit down and cry like a child! (I:317).

Burns is both actor and spectator. Noting “the reckless grace of his letters to women,” and adding that “Such letters were intended to be shown about,” Lewis P. Curtis remarks of Sterne, “He was preoccupied with the absorbing drama of his own existence.”  

Exactly the same might be said of Burns. He is emphatically a man of his age. Martin Price comments that “Sterne is full of an ironic awareness of the excesses of sentiment even as he prizes it; and, like Boswell, he tends both to feel deeply and to study himself while feeling, always aware of the conflict and exploiting its incongruity.”  

Only the last clause needs slight qualification: Burns’s experiencing of the incongruity is perhaps more private than public. The self-projections and self-analysis evoke both Sterne’s Yorick and the Rousseau of the *Confessions*. Rousseau writes, “I will...continue faithfully to set forth what

---

Jean Jacques Rousseau was, did, and thought.”9 Burns informs Moore, “I have taken a whim to give you a history of MYSELF” (I:133); and his opening gambit to Archibald Lawrie is “Here I am – that is all I can tell you of that unaccountable BEING – Myself” (I:147).

As with poems such as “Ode, Sacred to the Memory of Mrs Oswald of Auchincruive” and his epigrams on the Earl of Galloway, some of Burns’s letters fulfil a cathartic function. To Mrs Dunlop he writes, “Well, I hope writing to you will ease a little my troubled soul” (II:45). To Ainslie he exclaims, “I am d-mnably out of humour ... & that is the reason why I take up the pen to you: ‘tis the nearest way, (probatum est) to recover my spirits again” (II:211-2). With the news that Jean has borne him twins, he asks Richmond to wish him luck and sends him “Green grow the rashes, O” (I:51).

Alongside the element of bravado is the sense that writing offers not only an alternative world but even the potential to write one’s way out of the problems of the real world. To Muir, Burns affirms, “But an honest man has nothing to fear ... a man, conscious of having acted an honest part among his fellow creatures; even granting that he may have been the sport, at times, of passions and instincts” (I:258); and it is evident that he is writing principally to reassure himself. Similarly, he writes to Rev. William Greenfield “in the Confessor style, to disburthen my conscience” (I:74). From early in his correspondence Burns’s friends such as Richmond are enjoined to respond so that he can reply with “letters as long as my arm” (I:28). Paradoxically, correspondence is a means of fixing things, a constant to offer as counter to his chameleon qualities; so, too, the repetition of phrases and sentences, as in the accounts of the conduct of the Armours (I:41, 42, 44) or taking on Ellisland and the excise to support his mother and siblings (I:224, 239, 314, 351, 357), serves as an attempt to fashion a definitive version of his conduct. This applies equally to the formulaic repetition of his reasons for marrying Jean Armour in letters spanning almost a year, April 1788 to February 1789.

---

9 Cited in Price, p. 759.
Burns, who referred in one letter to his “fugitive Pieces” (I:340), is trying to reconcile the flux of experience and the need for stability or fixity; and he is confronted by paradox. He assures Margaret Chalmers, “I have no formed design in all this, but just in the nakedness of my heart write you down a meer [sic] matter-of-fact story” (I:82), and one is left wondering if he recognised the oxymoron. In a letter to Mrs Dunlop in which he stresses the importance of spontaneity and originality, he acknowledges, “I have often thought of keeping a letter, in progression, by me” (I:295): experience and inscription are to run in tandem. Begun 3 March 1794 and resumed nineteen days later, a letter to Cunningham carries the admission, “In fact, I am writing you a Journal, & not a letter” (II:286). Several letters, exemplified by the following, actually begin in medias res: “Do not blame me for it, Madam” (II:142); “No! I will not attempt an apology” (II:145). The Shandean influence is apparent in what is virtually a prototype of stream-of-consciousness narration.

Writ large in Scottish literature from the eighteenth century on is the idea that identity—sometimes both personal and national—is to be found in the act of writing. Identity is text. Text fuses stability and flux. Witness Coleridge on Scott, in whose work he identified “the contest between the two great moving principles of humanity: religious adherence to the past ... the desire and the admiration of permanence ... and the passion for increase of knowledge, for truth as the offspring of reason— in short, the mighty instincts of progression and free agency.”10 How telling that in Redgauntlet Darsie Latimer, scion of men of action, finds identity in “the rage of narration.”11 Likewise Boswell pleads in a letter to Temple, “Let me have it to tell.”12 Here the relics of the bardic function merge with the psychological imperatives of the writer. For Burns, literature offers a hyper-reality: he tells William Dunbar, “I often take up a

10 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Epistolaria, ed. Arthur Turnbull et al. (London: George Bell, 1911), II: 181.
Volume of my Spenser to realize you to my imagination, and think over the social scenes we have had together” (II:5).

Burns’s metaphors reflect the polarities that he would reconcile. His career is regularly a “vortex” (I:379, 393, 426; II: 51) and his is “a meteor appearance” (I:107). At the same time he alludes to his fathering poems (I:164), and references to family and poems are often conjunct. Mrs Dunlop is informed, “I look on your little Namesake [Francis Wallace Burns] to be my chef d’oeuvre in that species of manufacture, as I look on “Tam o’ Shanter” to be my standard performance in the Poetical line” (II:83). Creative and procreative ‘performance’ are to function in tandem: he fathers poems and songs by Nancy McLehose and a son by her maid, Jenny Clow.

Yet, from as early as September 1786, Burns recognised the dichotomy of ‘the Man’ and ‘the Bard’ (I:56). The man who represented himself as, variously, “the Ayrshire Bard,” “the rustic Bard,” and the Bard of “old Scotia” (I:71, 77, and 97) is, ultimately, the bard of the modern multiple self. As depression increasingly took its hold, the later letters highlight the price Burns paid for his chameleon talents. To Alexander Cunningham he begins a letter of 25 February 1794 with an emended line from Macbeth, V, iii, “Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?” (II:282); and what follows is the letter in which he offers his extended thoughts on religion. His awareness of internal division is evident from a range of letters spanning his last nine years: in December 1787, “My worst enemy is Moimême” (I:185); “My nerves are in a damnable state… This Farm [Ellisland] has undone my enjoyment of myself” (II:3); and—most telling of all—this to Erskine of Mar, 13 April 1793:

when you have honored this letter with a perusal, please commit it to the flames. BURNS … I have here, in his native colours, drawn as he is; but should any of the people in whose hands is the very bread he eats, get the least knowledge of the picture, it would ruin the poor Bard forever (II:210).
“O my Luve’s like a red, red rose”: does Burns’s melody really matter?

Kirsteen McCue

When Donald A. Low supplied the notes to his new *Songs of Robert Burns* in the early nineteen-nineties, he confidently described “O my Luve’s like a red, red rose” as “Scotland’s most famous love-song.”¹ One of Burns’s top-ten songs, it is frequently anthologised, most recently in Stewart Conn’s edition of *Scotland’s 100 Favourite Love Poems* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2008), and it is just as commonly heard on disc or in live performance. All the greats of the Scottish vocal industry throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first have made it their own, from the sweet tones of Joseph Hislop in the early nineteen-twenties, through those famous renditions by Kenneth McKellar and his peers, to the new interpretation of Eddi Reader now introducing it to a whole new generation.

Burns’s songs frequently have complex histories all of their own. Henley and Henderson and the major Burns song editors of the twentieth century have noted in the case of ‘Red, red rose’ that there is a rich array of broadsides and chapbooks in existence before Burns’s lyric, and certainly at around the time of its composition.² Their detailed

comparisons of these sources have shown that the images which mean so much to readers and listeners alike may not be those of Burns. Indeed James Kinsley goes so far as to suggest that we might “be doing an injustice to oral tradition in regarding [the song] even as a reconstruction by Burns” (Kinsley III: 1455). The evidence shows that the images of the narrator’s love being like a red rose, like a melody played in tune, that the rocks will melt before his love runs out, or that he’s happy to traverse ten thousand miles for his lover, are all found somewhere else. This is really disappointing for Burns lovers, if they take it at face value. But as many critics before me have stated, it’s not what Burns borrows but how he refashions it which makes this the masterpiece that it is. As Franklin B. Snyder so aptly states: “The electric magnet is not more unerring in selecting iron from a pile of trash than was Burns in culling the inevitable phrase or haunting cadence from the thousands of mediocre possibilities.” But songs rely on another major ingredient – melody – and in the case of this particular song, the mastery of the final product has a great deal to do with Burns’s initial choice of tune.

It was normal practice at the time of Burns’s work on James Johnson’s The Scots Musical Museum and George Thomson’s A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs to write sets of lyrics to match tunes, often to preserve a tune for future generations. Moreover, though Thomson in particular received vicious criticism for setting Burns’s lyrics to different tunes (not chosen by Burns himself) especially after the poet’s death in 1796, the practice of mixing and matching songs and tunes was also far from irregular. Burns himself, in his correspondence, might mention one tune for a

---

song he sent to Johnson, Thomson or any number of his good friends, but he just as often mentions other tunes which might easily be used instead. Some songs sit nicely with a number of tunes of similar sentiment – provided the overall structure, the rhythms and general ‘feel’ of the tune match those of the song lyric. But sometimes they require something more than this, and it cannot be denied that the finest of Burns’s lyrics (e.g. “Red, red rose,” “Ae fond kiss,” “Of a’ the airts,” “Ca’ the yowes,” etc.) sit best with the tunes he originally chose. His method of composing songs, given in such detail in his letter to Thomson in September 1793 (Roy II: 242), and mentioned in different contexts in his Commonplace Book, illustrates that his emotional connection with the moods of a melody, not to mention his detailed understanding of its structures, rhythms and chiming cadences, are crucial to the quality of the lyric he then created to match it. And in the case of his ‘Red, red rose’ there is a strong match indeed. The tune Burns chose was a new tune by Niel Gow called “Major Graham’s Strathspey” which had recently appeared in Gow’s Collection of Strathspeys and Reels with a Bass for the violoncello or Harpsichord, published c.1784.

While the song made its first appearance with Burns’s choice of the Gow tune in Johnson’s Scots Musical Museum, it only did so after Burns’s untimely death in 1796, and sadly we have no correspondence between Burns and Johnson concerning this particular song. In fact Burns’s lyric is found before this in a rival music collection edited by one of several important Italian musicians living and working in Edinburgh. Hans Hecht believes that Burns made the acquaintance of Pietro Urbani (1749-1816) in the summer of 1793 when the Italian singer visited Dumfries.5 This social event was described by Burns in his letter to Alexander Cunningham of November that year, when the poet explained that he and Urbani, “lived together three or four days in this town, & had a great deal of converse about our Scots Songs” (Roy II: 258). Urbani’s sophisticated

Selection of Scots Songs, harmonized and improved, which he published in six volumes between 1792 and 1804, was clearly in his thoughts when he spent time with Burns. He persuaded the poet to translate a verse of an Italian song for him: Burns wrote that he “rather made an English verse to suit his rythm [sic] & added two verses which had already been published in Johnson’s Museum,” and Burns also “gave him a simple old Scots song which I had pickt up in this
country, which he promised to set in a suitable manner”—that is, his “Red, red rose” (Roy II:258-9). So here Burns suggests the song’s oral roots, which, when added to the printed sources in existence at this time, show just how popular this song was across both oral and literate communities. Burns described the song as one of “the simple & the wild” and he had reservations that his editor George Thomson would think it “the ludicrous & the absurd.” Burns asked that Urbani publish this song anonymously and explained that he could not give more songs to Urbani, as he was writing songs for Thomson’s collection. Burns was particularly peeved at Urbani, who was apparently bragging unjustifiably about his collaboration with the poet.

Urbani’s tasteful musical setting is unlike any of the other settings that have made this song famous. It is a highly stylised piece, very much created for drawing room entertainment with accompanying parts for forte-piano, violin and, most unusually, viola and not violoncello. Unlike all other settings this one has three beats in the bar, giving Urbani’s melody a waltz-like feel, with its accompanying quaver pulses in the violin and right hand of the piano. But its unusual choice of metre often places the emphasis on the ‘wrong’ words, particularly in the penultimate line of the second stanza. Where Burns writes “I will love thee still, my Dear” Urbani changes this to “And I can love thee still, my Dear.” His tightly sectionalised melody, and possibly a lack of understanding of the text, places the emphasis on “can” which would seem misplaced, when there are many other words in that line which would benefit from some kind of melodic foregrounding. Rarely known and hardly ever performed, it has only recently appeared in its first recording by Jamie MacDougall with Concerto Caledonia. Beautiful as this is, Urbani’s musical matching of Burns’s lyric certainly does not move the heart.

---

6 There is much discussion about the categorisation of songs at this time, particularly in John Aikin’s Essays on Song Writing published in London c.1772, which Burns knew well.
In contrast, when the fifth volume of the Museum appeared in 1796 it presented Burns’s lyric with his chosen melody, ‘Major Graham’s Strathspey’. Apparently, if we are to believe the Hastie Manuscript copy of the lyric, this was not necessarily Burns’s first melodic possibility. The manuscript has a Gaelic tune title - *Ceud soraídh uam* [misprint for *nam* (?)] do’n Ailleagan - given beside the lyric. This tune was published as the first of the Perthshire Airs (no.87) included in Patrick McDonald’s *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs*, published in Edinburgh in 1784:8

The translation of the Gaelic given alongside is “A thousand blessings to the lovely youth,” though a literal translation is appropriately “A hundred farewells from me to the little jewel.” Burns knew this collection as he mentions it to Mrs Dunlop in his letter of 17th [Dec.] 1791 (Roy II: 124-5). The melody is slow and beautiful, characterised by highly dotted rhythms, shown here, but Burns had clearly decided against it, for this title is scored and replaced by Gow’s ‘Major Graham’s Strathspey’.

---

Unlike the pretty, self-contained Urbani melody, this one
clearly matches Burns’s idea of this ‘species’ of song, in that it has a certain “wild irregularity”\(^9\). It is slow yet spikey in its rhythms and wide and expansive in its musical range. As Francis Collinson explains in his definition of the strathspey, this was a “Scottish dance, a reel of slower tempo” which “allowed the use of more elaborate steps both in the setting step and in the travelling figure.”\(^10\) It is characterised “by its dotted quaver-semiquaver rhythm and the inversion of this, the Scotch snap.” And, moreover, Collinson states that the term “strathspey” doesn’t really begin to appear in print until the mid-eighteenth century, giving James Oswald’s *Caledonian Pocket Companion* (1743-1759) and Robert Bremner’s *Scots Reels* (1757) as the sources of the first tunes with this title. Both of these collections were well known to Burns, and provided him with many tunes for his songs. Created to showcase a fiddler’s prowess with the bow, and a dancer’s most elaborate steps, the strathspey was therefore a newly developed variant of a traditional Scottish musical form, which was as stylish as it was stylised. Moreover the strathspey also often covers an extended musical range, and thus has the capacity for wide expression. This characteristic therefore allows stylised or sentimental emotional effusion in lyrical terms, much sought after in the salons of Enlightened Scotland, and something which Burns did supremely well.

A closer examination of his “Red, red rose,” as published in 1796 in the *Scots Musical Museum* (no. 402), illustrates this. When matched with the spikey yet stately “Major Graham,” the lyrics take on a certain emphasis not shared by the later, and more popular, choice of tune to which the lyric is normally sung. The words in bold are those upon which the emphasis is placed when sung to “Major Graham’s Strathspey,” and the lyrics are those printed in the *Museum*:

O my Luve’s like a red, red rose,
That’s newly sprung in June;

---


O My Luve’s like the melody
That’s sweetly play’d in tune. –

As fair art thou, my bonie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will love thee still, my dear[*],
Till a’ the seas gang dry. –

Till a’ the seas gang dry, my Dear,
And the rocks melt wi’ the sun:
O I will love thee still, my Dear,
While the sands o’ life shall run. –

Then fare thee weel, my only Luve!
And fare thee weel, a while!
And I will come again, my Luve[*],
Tho’ it ware [sic] ten thousand mile! –

[* There is a pause marked above these words, which thus encourages a musical emphasis.]

Like many fiddle tunes found in the Museum and other contemporary collections, this is a tune with a wide range – from middle C to top G – and the narrator draws attention to himself (‘my’) in the first stanza most often on the lowest note of the piece, which appears at the beginning of the first strain of the melody. The emphasis is then placed on himself (‘I’) in the second half of the melody where the tessitura is higher and very expressive. There is little doubt then who is the most important figure in this song, if you’re hearing it sung to “Major Graham.” The first person in the form of ‘I’ and ‘my’ is emphasised at regular intervals across the four verses. The depth of his love (deep) and its longevity (still) are also brought out by the melody. And the focus of his ardent love is also, naturally, frequently emphasised, but with a number of different images which simply articulate how important she is to him – from the physical immediacy of the colour of the rose and the sound of the melody to the expanses of time and space reflected in the choice of seas, rocks and miles.

While melodies of this period are often thought of as providing the perfect line of descent from ancient to modern, they are often newly forged using some older materials. The
fact that collections by Oswald, Bremner and Gow, to name but three, are so popular at this time is not because they are presenting old materials alone, but that they are able to recreate this older material for the contemporary audience. Steve Newman has suggested that it is “the very lack of sophistication in Scottish tunes” that “makes them ideal catalysts of sociability, for by not demanding the connoisseur’s ear, they encourage the audience” to sing along. This is supported by the popularity of many of the simple folk-like tunes, but it is not the case with all Scots tunes of the time. A melody like “Major Graham” is far from “simple” or lacking in sophistication. The “wild irregularity” of this tune allows space for highly stylised expression. Burns’s lyric, rooted firstly in an oral performance, but also connected to the contemporary printed demotic song tradition of Scotland, becomes a personal and stylised expression of love, which is very much part of what Newman describes as a “laboratory for the exercise of sympathy” so important to the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment (p. 298). Into the nineteenth century, the strathspey, not surprisingly, becomes the standard “exhibition recital piece” for fiddlers, as is still the case today. For Burns it allowed the perfect exhibition of his finest sentimental lyrical writing, and while very much of its moment, it has continued to retain this popularity. As Iain Crichton Smith has stated, “No poet could write like this now, for the statements are far too large: but this is not to say that certain people do not feel like this.”

When Johnson did publish “Major Graham,” he rather confused matters by adding a second, older melody (no. 403) as an alternative for “Red, red rose.” This ‘old set’—a tune called ‘Mary Queen of Scots’—is very simple, with a much

13 To confuse matters further, no 404 in this volume of the Museum was “Mary Queen of Scots Lament”–the same tune as
smaller range and only a few dotted rhythms. It includes just two short musical phrases each of which is repeated. There is a little problem with this, as the Museum prints the second half of the first stanza under the music for part two of the tune, which is wrong! But no one seems to have noticed this. In fact the major complaint about “Red, red rose” is made in William Stenhouse’s note on the song.14 He blames the Museum’s principal musician Stephen Clarke for causing a performance problem with “Major Graham.” Normally tunes in Scots song collections of the period follow the same format – the melody is in two halves (A and B) or four sections (AABB), for each half is repeated, as is the case with

“Mary Queen of Scots.” Clarke’s version of “Major Graham” uses only three of these four melodic strains. The opening strain of the tune (A) appears in the Museum without a repeat sign and this means that only the first stanza is sung

---

to this opening part of the tune. It should have repeat marks so that stanza two (“As fair art thou, my bonie lass”) should also be matched to this first part of the melody (A). Instead, without the repeat mark, the words for stanza two are then underlaid to the second part of the melody (B). Clarke’s setting then presents the second strain again, with stanza three (B). But at this point the melody finishes, leaving the final “farewell” stanza left without any musical accompaniment. This has always caused great confusion for the performer, who then has to choose either the opening strain (A) or the high second strain (B) one more time for the final stanza. Stenhouse blames Clarke for this, but in fact it seems to have been a simple error. Comparison with Gow’s original strathspey shows that it should have a regular 4-part structure. It is quite clear that stanzas one and two should be sung to the opening strain of the melody and stanzas three and four to the second, higher and infinitely more expressive strain, and insertion of the simple repetition marking would have avoided any confusion. This point was subsequently recognized by the twentieth-century American composer Serge Hovey. His setting of “Major Graham’s Strathspey” was included in his Robert Burns Song Book project, in which he worked on 324 of Burns’s songs between the late nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-seventies. When the song appeared in print in 2001 his notes state clearly: “here, for the first time, “A Red, red Rose” is presented as Burns intended it to be sung.”

Johnson’s alternative melody, “Mary Queen of Scots,” never became popular with Burns’s “Red, red rose,” and neither did George Thomson’s choice of a William Marshall fiddle tune called “Wishaw’s Favourite,” published in his Select Collection in 1799. Both tunes are perfectly pleasant, but both are self-contained and even restricted in terms of

---


16 George Thomson, A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs, Third Set, 1799, no.89.
displaying the emotional expression of Burns’s lyric. Moreover, at least in Thomson’s case, the tune didn’t quite fit the lyric as presented by Burns, and consequently Thomson amended it, most notably changing Burns’s “So deep in love am I” to “So deep, so deep in love am I.” While neither of these choices grabbed the popular imagination, amazingly neither did “Major Graham.”

The tune most commonly combined with Burns’s lyric for “Red, red rose” is another popular eighteenth-century melody, “Low down in the Broom.” Burns drew Thomson’s attention to this tune, but he created no lyric for it himself

17 Thomson presented it as “from an old Ms. in the Editor’s possession.” Thomson may well have been disillusioned that it had already been published by Urbani and Johnson. His decision to present the lyric as ‘anonymous’ possibly also reflects the song’s popularity by this time both orally and across a range of printed sources.
(Roy II: 240). It is, however, found in a number of contemporary collections known to Burns, including Oswald’s *Companion* (where it is called “My love’s in the Broom”) and Johnson’s *Scots Musical Museum*, where it is matched with the unattributed lyrics “My daddy is a canker’d carle” (vol. 3, no. 90). Any general search illustrates that it is one of those melodies with wide circulation across the British Isles. Davidson Cook states that Burns’s lyric is first matched with “Low down in the Broom” in Robert Archibald Smith’s *The Scottish Minstrel*, which appeared between 1821 and 1824 (vol. 3, p. 81).

Certainly by the Burns centenary in 1896, “Low down in the broom” was the first choice for editors and performers alike. There are several similarities with “Major Graham,” but there are two notable differences. “Low down in the broom” is a much smoother melody than “Major Graham,” so it certainly doesn’t inspire Burns’s categorisation of “the simple & the wild.” But it does have a similar first melodic strain, or section, with a beautiful low note also at the very beginning. In “Low down in the broom” this low note combines with the word “luve,” rather than with the “my” as in “Major Graham.” Moreover, the second strain of “Low down in the broom,” high and expressive like Burns’s original choice of tune, is usually performed with an elaborate pause on the word “And,” stressing nicely the continuation of the narrator’s love. A fine combination, and undoubtedly easier to sing than “Major Graham,” it is this melody that is now far better known than all the others. Interestingly, “Low down in the broom” appears in Smith’s collection, as it does earlier in the *Museum*, as a three-part melody. Smith copes with this by extending Burns’s lyric. He supplies stanza one with the opening low part of the tune, and stanza two then sits with the second higher strain. The third part of the melody (which is a repetition of the opening first strain) then sits with the following four-line creation:

```
Till a’ the seas gang dry my dear,
’Till a’ the seas gang dry,
```

---

And I will love thee still my dear,  
‘Till a’ the seas gang dry.

He then presents the third stanza with the opening strain,  
the fourth with the higher second strain, and again creates a  
ew final verse to match the third and closing strain of the  
song:

Tho’ ’twere ten thousand mile, my love,  
Tho’ ’twere ten thousand mile;  
And I will come again, my love,  
Tho’ ’twere ten thousand mile.

So does Burns’s original choice of melody really matter?  
In terms of general enjoyment probably not. And personal  
taste undoubtedly plays its very important part. But I would  
argue that within Burns’s contemporary context it most  
certainly does. “Major Graham’s Strathspey” is a piece  
rooted in tradition, but elaborating an older form, and is  
thus a perfect match for Burns’s lyric, which is doing exactly  
the same thing. The sentimental attributes of Burns’s words  
are beautifully foregrounded by Gow’s statuesque melody  
with its dotted rhythms and by that expressive second strain  
of the tune. No other choice accentuates these elements as  
impressively, and this tune doesn’t demand any lyrical  
manipulation to make its point. It is this original tune-lyric  
combination – coming from the same species—which best  
presents what David Daiches calls “that combination of  
swagger and tender protectiveness” which is Burns’s “red,  
red rose.”

---

Back to Burns

Fred Freeman

Perhaps there is no country in the world, where the prejudice in favour of national music is carried to so great a height as in Scotland. This is the more surprising at first view, because the Scots are, in many other respects, a people singularly liberal and enlightened...Many of the Scottish melodies, having in themselves very little intrinsic merit, are yet fixed in the hearts and affections of Scotsmen.

The above quotation is from a little-known, but far-reaching, manifesto of taste, An Account of the First Edinburgh Musical Festival held between the 30th October and 5th November, 1815. To which is added An Essay, Containing Some General Observations on Music (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1816).

It was written by George Farquhar Graham, one of the founding fathers of the Edinburgh Festival, and a man who most succinctly expressed the social and cultural values of a nation formally disavowing its own outstanding achievement. Rhetorically, he would differentiate between ‘science’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘foreign composition’, on the one hand; ‘ignorance’, ‘prejudice’ and ‘national’ music, on the other.

Graham was neither the first nor the last to explain away the great anonymous song tradition of the Scottish Borders, the Northeast and Highlands, the songs of Ramsay, Burns, Hogg and Tannahill and many others, simply because they represented a popular culture that was not part of the way he, and the elite arbiters of taste, saw Scotland in the world.
Their legacy was to create what John Clive has dubbed “cosmopolitan provincials”: a nation so studiously hell-bent on becoming cosmopolitan that it denies its own national ‘genie’. In very practical terms this meant that, in the eighteenth century, our university libraries would have every copy of the French philosophes going and little of the poets on their own doorstep, like Robert Fergusson or Thomas Mercer. It meant that we might have a national vernacular poet, Robert Burns, who was culturally acceptable to the literati of Scotland and England as a poet of ‘nature’, but we would perpetuate the nonsense of compiling lists of Scotticisms and, generally, of rejecting Scots language as backward and inferior.

In our rewriting of history we would, in the minds of Scots men and women, reduce one of Europe’s rich, colourful languages to a ‘dialect’, the merest ‘slang’ - and that even in the face of great writing in Scots over several centuries, from Barbour to MacDiarmid and beyond. As far back as 1724 Allan Ramsay pinpointed the problem with exquisite accuracy.

There is nothing can be heard more silly than one’s expressing Ignorance of his native Language; yet such there are, who can vaunt of acquiring a tolerable Perfection in the French or Italian Tongues, if they have been a Fortnight in Paris or a Month in Rome: But shew them the most elegant Thoughts in a Scots Dress, they as disdainfully as stupidly regard it as barbarous. But the true Reason is obvious: Every one that is born never so little superior to the Vulgar, would fain distinguish themselves from them by some Manner or other, and such, it would appear cannot arrive at a better Method (Preface to *The Ever Green*).

The point is as a nation we pride ourselves, to use Ramsay’s expression, on ‘Ignorance’ of our native languages and our vernacular traditions (especially those of song) so as not to appear uneducated or socially inferior. We lack integrity, and for that we pay a heavy price. Instead of working on the axiomatic principle that it is better to know two or three languages than one, we continue to educate our children in total ignorance of their Scots and Gaelic heritage, in total ignorance of the folk traditions (yet thriving underground in and out of the country) which, ironically, keep Scotland in the forefront of international culture. One
thinks, naturally, of Eric Bogle who, as a song-writer, has won the highest cultural awards the Australian government bestows; our numerous folk groups – Malinky, Deaf Shepherd, Capercaillie, Battlefield Band, the Tannahill Weavers, Old Blind Dogs, etc. – who have long earned their livelihoods performing Scottish folk music in Germany, America and farther afield. They are, for all the world, the cultural face of Scotland and are, arguably, better known than so much of what passes for Scottish literature or music in Scotland.

The problem is that, for the most part—and we are indeed very adept at this—we have become a nation not of actors but of reactors. Historically, we have so preoccupied ourselves with reacting against one form of cultural domination or another that we have lost much of what we are. As Muir so aptly put it in “Scotland 1941”:

Courage beyond the point and obdurate pride
Made us a nation, robbed us of a nation.

The men of the Scottish Enlightenment are a case in point. They would self-consciously make Scotland the ‘historical nation’ through beating the English at their own game: polishing their English prose and verse; driving a wedge between an unwanted past and a desirable present (writing-off the seventeenth-century as the dark ages despite the achievements of Napier, Sibbald, Mackenzie, Pitcairne and others); turning their backs, officially speaking, on a Scots Vernacular Revival that was creative, dynamic, revolutionary. They would play the game out with a vengeance.

In summarising the benefits of a post-Enlightenment Scotland that had regenerated itself at the expense of its past, Lord Kames would aptly describe what had been deemed ‘progress’ as a Janus-faced ‘blessing’ and a ‘curse’.

For Burns much of it was undoubtedly the latter. As a song-writer he has suffered 200 years of neglect for pursuing his own way and creating a different behavioural model for us all. This would not have surprised him. He followed his vocation as song-writer with open eyes, challenging the social and artistic hierarchy of the G. F. Grahams of the day.

In a defiant letter to fellow song-writer Rev John Skinner, he avers:
The world may think slightingly of the craft of song-making, if they please... The world, busy in low prosaic pursuits, may overlook most of us; but “reverence thyself”. The world is not our peers, - so we challenge the jury (Roy, I: 167-8)

Burns's nemesis was not only the literary world, who accorded the ‘lesser lyric’ (popular song) a lowly status, which it still has, but those who would try to recast his work and make it, from their point of view, fully acceptable to the nation and the world. It was George Thomson, editor of the influential and far-reaching Select Collection, who engaged Pleyel, Kozeluch, Hummel and, ultimately, Haydn and Beethoven to orchestrate the Burns songs: a mini industry for Viennese Classical composers who churned out hundreds of Burns arrangements at a guinea a time. In all fairness to him, Thomson was a musical entrepreneur who hoped to win fame through marrying Scottish folk song to the most celebrated ‘art’ music of the day.

Unfortunately, what he succeeded in doing was to make a dog's breakfast of the Burnsian tradition. The two idioms, classical and folk, were not well suited. Moreover, Thomson treated the songs cavalierly, either encouraging the Viennese composers to do with them as they would (they, in fact, paid little attention to Scottish folk conventions and musical forms) or tampering with them himself. After all, they were only, in the words of Pleyel, “une musique barbare.”

Little wonder that Patrick MacDonald would complain in 1784 about “modern harmony that weakens..native expression” (Collection of Highland Vocal Airs) and William Dauney about the “absurd” and “incongruous...dressing up of our Scottish melodies in German, or Italian, or even in English costume too!” (Ancient Scottish Melodies). Burns's colleagues, essentially the committee of The Scots Musical Museum, James Beattie and William Tytler, remonstrated in their essays against the entire operatic approach as “finical gesticulation,” vocal “quavering,” “smothering of words”; for Burns, the “capon craws and queer ha ha’s” of the stage settings (“Amang the trees”).

One has only to hear Beethoven's very heavy, sentimental orchestration of “Duncan Gray” to appreciate how far off the mark he was, and how far from Burns’s directives:
Duncan Gray is that kind of light-horse gallop of an air, which precludes sentiment. – The ludicrous is its ruling feature (Roy, II: 163-4).

The pawkie Scots understatement of “Duncan Gray,” underpinned by the lightness of the tune, gives way, in Beethoven, to Germanic overstatement as the light reel and rural humour completely dissolve. We are reminded of George Steiner’s claim: “very language maps the world differently.” We might add that every national tradition maps the world differently. The change of idiom conveys us from the genuinely rural comic to the heavily contrived, self-consciously operatic: the metropolitan personae of country bumpkins singing, with wide vibratos, heavily textured classical music. This is Burns as he never was—a manikin whom we must dress-up to make respectable, a specimen of the ‘natural’ man, ‘the heaven-taught ploughman’.

As Burns tried to convince Thomson, folk humour was “not vulgarity”; it did not require the gloss of buffoonery to make it palatable:

What pleases me as simple & naïve disgusts you as ludicrous & low (Roy, II: 252-3).

This was a critical distinction for the poet. When Domenico Corri spoke of comic song as “the most comprehensive and expressive style”; as the genre that “approaches very nearly to speaking” (The Singer’s Preceptor), he clearly had Burns in mind, especially the songs, like “Gude’en to you, kimmer.”

That might fall into the category of grotesque humour. The grotesque, and Burns’s use of it, bears serious revaluation in the Scottish tradition, from the damning comments of James Sibbald, in 1802, to modern notions that comic verse in Scotland is somehow responsible for giving rise to an intellectually light-weight literary tradition. The operative word, as Corri notes, is “comprehensive.” The grotesque, as Burns saw it, provided not one but two texts in its Hogarthian ambivalence: (1) social satire on a society that created decadent characters in the first place; (2) recognition of principles of energy and freedom amongst the downtrodden over social hierarchies and decorum designed to keep the lowly in their place. As Burns put it so pungently:
Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum,
Who have character to lose.

(“See the smoking bowl before us”)

The comic was, as Corri suggested, the most ‘expressive’
genre, embracing Burns’s idea of reunifying the individual
through a more comprehensive vision of self, the idea being
that, on a higher plane, all human contradictions could be
reconciled – man/woman at once a beast who defecates,
fornicates, lactates, etc. and an aspiring angel who looks
towards redemption and the afterlife. To paraphrase Burns:
God understands all man’s ‘passions’ as it was he who
implanted them in the first place. The problem with the Holy
Willies of this world is that they are not whole people; that
they pretend these passions do not exist; that they, like the
lassie oblivious to the louse in her hair, think they dwell on a
higher plane of being from the rest of us.

Isaiah Berlin’s distinction between two types of poets is
pertinent here. In his essay on Verdi, Berlin distinguishes
between
Those who are not conscious of any rift between themselves
and their milieu..and those who are so conscious...(For the
first) art is a natural form of expression; they see what they
see directly, as they seek to articulate it for its own sake.
Burns, in Berlin’s terms, was a direct artist, articulating what
he saw (or heard) for its own sake. Hamish Henderson,
perhaps more closely than Berlin, identifies the central
divide between Burns and the literati when he differentiates
between art that “turns in on itself,” art for art’s sake, and art
that grows organically out of its milieu. This art “depends on
society,” is integrally part of the community. The artist’s
songs are “part of reality for the people.” For Henderson
(writing in hitherto unpublished papers), as for Burns, the
primary concern for the modern Scottish art-poet was to
renew his energies through ‘direct contact’ with the folk.

This, essentially, was Burns’s great achievement. He
avowedly came out of a people’s tradition and was
wholeheartedly behind Johnson’s defence of simple lyrics
and music (Scots Musical Museum, preface to vol. 2) as “the
favourites of Nature’s Judges-the Common People.” To a
remarkable extent he was a folk artist working in an oral tradition. His mother and one of the old maids of the household provided him with a seemingly illimitable fund of stories, songs and ballads. He was himself “a brother catgut”: that is, a fiddler who tested all his songs on his own fiddle; who mixed with fiddlers up and down the country, usually pilfering their tunes for song; who drew continually upon his fiddle background in advising Thomson (who played the violin) about getting “any of our ancients Scots fiddlers” (Roy, II: 317) to demonstrate the points he was making about the tradition within which he worked.

Burns would use all his instrumental experience in perpetuating the tradition and, innovatively, adapting it for song – and all this against a background of stiff opposition; hence his ongoing arguments with Thomson about strathspeys, jigs and hornpipes. Very often in Burns, the medium – the jig or reel - is an integral part of the message. For example, if his subject is mischievously festive, normally with reference to dance, Burns employs jigs and slip jigs in a rhythmical mouth-music (like “The Deil’s Awa’”). If his subject is whimsically descriptive in its representation of jerkily moving characters of lore, like ‘Wee Willie Gray’, he will use the jerky, jumping, double hornpipe from the Borders. For an unbroken, breathless tension, as in the description of the chaos of Sheriffmuir (“O cam ye here”), his choice is always a reel. And so forth.

What is wholly revolutionary in Burns is, however, his use of form as an end in itself, where the song is, fundamentally, just about rhythm, about the tune itself: an elaborate excuse to bask in the flow of the jig, reel or strathspey. For this reason alone he would spend hours composing songs on horseback between the beats of his horse’s hooves or, as he said, “swinging at intervals, on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair” (Roy, II: 242), neatly to wed his words to the traditional dance forms. He had a nightmarish time convincing Thomson of something that yet eludes the scholars: the fact that, very often, meaning is less important than form in the songs; that many of the songs are a highly evolved mouth-music that calls upon skills far beyond the accomplished poet.
In this sense Burns looks far ahead to the Russian Formalists. Here is the poet, in a Formalist posture, taking Thomson to task over the simplest of traditional Scottish forms, the jig:

If you mean, my dear Sir, that all the Songs in your Collection shall be Poerty of the first merit, I am afraid you will find difficulty in the undertaking more than you are aware of.-There is a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs, a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call, the *feature notes*, of the tune, that cramps the Poet, & lays him under almost insuperable difficulties.-For instance, in the air, My wife's a wanton wee thing, if a few lines, *smooth & pretty*, can be adapted to it, it is all that you can expect.-The following I made extempore to it; & though, on farther study I might give you something more profound, yet it might not suit the light-horse gallop of the air so well as this *random clink* (Roy, II: 157).

One cannot help but admire his vast musical knowledge here, down to the slightest of appropriate touches: his use of that watch-word ‘rhythmus’, probably borrowed from Alexander Malcolm’s *A Treatise of Musick* (Edinburgh, 1721), one of the first major musical treatises in Europe. In his adherence to the ‘feature notes’ principle we have Burns’s direct method of composition: from the tune to the lyrics. And in the exercise of the principle we find both the conservative and the revolutionary, conserving a huge body of instrumental music (which would probably have been irretrievably lost) and putting it to song.

Burns was no mere collector. In fact, he rightly describes himself as a ‘composer’. He expected to be treated as such. In a damningly critical letter to Thomson and those of ‘cultivated taste’, Burns unswervingly states his case.

Many of our Strathspeys, ancient & modern, give me most exquisite enjoyment, where you & other judges would probably be shewing signs of disgust...in fact, unless I be pleased with the tune I never can make verses to it.-Here I have Clarke on my side, who is a judge that I will pit against any of you (Roy, II: 307).

Brave words indeed: Burns pitting his judgement against that of the preeminent composers of Europe. In fact, he would not be restrained by Thomson’s “strait-jacket of Criticism” (Roy, II: 351).
With these arguments he had thrust himself into the forefront of the ongoing European battle for national cultures. Burns did not flinch. It is hard for a twenty-first-century person to appreciate fully his courage and pertinacity. At a time when Pleyel was lionised in London; when Haydn, his mentor, conducted Pleyel’s own symphonies, Burns, without any formal musical qualifications, laid down a direct challenge to him:

Whatever Mr Pleyel does, let him not alter one iota of the original Scots Air; I mean, in the Song department...But, let our National Music preserve its native features.—They are, I own, frequently wild, & unreducible to the more modern rules; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect (Roy, II: 211).

Moreover, Burns would function, not merely as a traditionalist, but as an artist of his own time. It is a pity MacDiarmid did not know Burns the song-writer better; he would have appreciated one who could “see the Infinite, / And Scotland in true scale to it.” No archetypal Ayrshire figure entrenched in his region, ‘Robin’ was indeed, “a rovin boy”: a national internationalist traveling throughout Scotland, collecting and adapting Gaelic tunes, Borders slip jigs and hornpipes, Northeast Strathspeys, European melodies off the boats and amongst the immigrant musicians (like Pietro Urbani and Domenico Corri). As a man of the Enlightenment Burns would use the ‘poet of nature’ role to his own ends:

You know that my pretensions to musical taste, are merely a few of Nature’s instincts, untaught & untutored by Art.—For this reason, many musical compositions, particularly where much of the merit lies in Counterpoint, however they may transport & ravish the ears of you, Connoisseurs, affect my simple lug no otherwise than merely as melodious Din (Roy, II: 235).

With these words we see him at the very centre of the Ancients-versus-Moderns controversy, which had raged throughout the century and reached a head in the 1790s. He loathed the “melodious din” – the “new noisy stile,” Dr John Gregory called it – of the Classical composers. In the Ancients vs. Moderns debate – whether complex harmony was better than simple melody; instrumental music better than vocal; accompaniment more important than words – he
stood with Du Bos, Rousseau, Burney, his own colleagues, Tytler and Beattie, on the side of simplicity, clarity, the enunciation of words and syllables. In the course of debate with the Viennese composers, Burns evolved a theory of what he termed “ballad simplicity.” His ruling principle was that great art was a matter of simplicity; one should see the bare bones of the art form. In this connection Burns agreed with the Classical Greek artists as well as with his friend and portrait painter, Alexander Nasmyth, who came to believe that “it is amazing how little makes a good picture: and frequently the less that is taken in the better.” In practical terms this meant that he could do exactly what Hamish Henderson advocated 200 years later: namely, renewing his art through drawing upon the purity and simplicity of Scottish folk traditions: basic dance and instrumental rhythms and forms; mouth music; speech patterns of vernacular song; simple pentatonic and hexatonic tonalities. The ideal was stated by Johnson on a title page of The Scots Musical Museum:

In this Publication the original simplicity of our Ancient Airs is retained unincumbered with useless Accompaniments and graces depriving the hearers of the sweet simplicity of their native airs.

But this is not to say that Burns did not engage with European ‘art’ music. He clearly knew (and enjoyed) Baroque music, often spending musical evenings with harpsichordists like Jessie Lewars and his close colleague, Stephen Clarke, who was a resident player at St Cecelia’s Hall. He admired and adapted for song the airs of Oswald and of Niel Gow, which owed much of their inspiration to Corelli; and here, in fact, we see him advocating the happy recipe Ramsay had commended as follows earlier in the century:

And with Corelli’s soft Italian song,
Mix ‘Cowdenknowes’ and ‘Winter nights are long’.
(‘To the Music Club 1721’)

Overall, the light texture, clarity and articulation of the Baroque were more akin to Scottish folk music. The Baroque, which belonged to the opposite end of the century, was everything the coming classical composition was not. That is what Burns discerned and Thomson did not.
But there was another serious bone of contention. Burns conceived of song essentially as speech and unflinchingly championed vernacular Scots as the ideal medium for “the pastoral simplicity” he sought. Where even his mentors, Dr John Moore and Professor Josiah Walker, had failed to dissuade him from using Scots, the poet was hardly to be browbeaten by Thomson. The ‘Doric’ was so central to his doctrine of “ballad simplicity” that he was prepared to withdraw his material from publication rather than to compromise on the use of it, asserting:

Apropos, if you are for English verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter (Roy, II: 149; 16 September, 1792).

But let me remark to you, in the sentiment & style of our Scottish airs, there is a pastoral simplicity, a something that one may call, the Doric style & dialect of vocal music, to which a dash of our native tongue & manners is particularly, nay peculiarly apposite.... Now, don’t let it enter into your head, that you are under any necessity of taking my verses.— I have long ago made up my mid as to my own Authorship; & have nothing to be pleased, or offended at, in your adoption or rejection of my verses (Roy II: 153; 26 October, 1792).

But why did Burns argue for only a “sprinkling” or “dash” of his “native tongue”? The reason was because he had the artistic integrity to appreciate, as Stanley Hyman, Gavin Greig, David Daiches and Hamish Henderson and others have underlined, that Scots song was naturally ‘bilingual’; that, to use Hamish Henderson’s expression, it “may be said to include English and go beyond it” (Alias MacAlias).

Burns would forge a very malleable language out of a conflation of Scots dialects, Old English, neoclassical English and more. He was like a painter with the largest palette of colours, freely using “ee,” “keeker,” “eye”; “nicht” or “night,” etc., depending upon his rhyme, internal rhyme or alliteration pattern; his register of language. When, for example, in “Auld Lang Syne,” he fluctuates between “cup o’ kindness” and “williewaught”; when he mixes everyday colloquial idioms, like “gie’s a haun’”, with that little biblical “thine,” he ingeniously gives us both intimate personal reflection and serious universal statement. No wonder Ralph Waldo Emerson declared, in a Burns Centenary speech, that
Burns created “the only example in history of a language made classic by the genius of a single man.” Alexander Keith maintains that Burns almost single-handedly rescued the song tradition of Scotland and reinvented it in the process. In more recent times Hamish Henderson has insisted (in unpublished papers) that “Gradually the poet and the community must be threaded together again.” Arguably, Burns was the first modern to attain to this goal and, in so doing, saved folk-song for Scotland and, perhaps, for much of Europe.

The song tradition has again had to go underground in order to survive, but it is yet alive and well. As a nation we would be well advised to go back to it and to the man who fully recreated it.
On Editing *The Merry Muses*

Valentina Bold

Among my recent projects has been introducing a new version for Luath Press of *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*, as originally edited in 1959 by James Barke, Sydney Goodsir Smith and J. DeLancey Ferguson.¹ The topic is especially appropriate for a volume honouring Ross Roy, given his own research on *The Merry Muses*, in articles for *Studies in Scottish Literature* and *Burns Chronicle*, as well as in his introduction to a facsimile from the extremely rare first edition in the Roy Collection.²

From the point of view of its editors, *The Merry Muses* offers singular challenges. The new Luath edition includes the introductory essays and headnotes by Barke, Smith and Ferguson, along with Smith’s glossary, which first appeared in the 1964 American edition. Three illustrations from the 1959 edition are omitted, but this loss is more than compensated for by evocative new illustrations from Bob Dewar. For the first time, too, the music for the songs by Burns is included: this fulfils the original desire of the 1959

¹ This paper is condensed from my introduction to the *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*, ed. James Barke and Sydney Goodsir Smith, with a prefatory introduction by J. DeLancey Ferguson (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2009), and my “On editing *The Merry Muses*,” Robert Burns International Conference, University of Glasgow, January 2009.

editors, thwarted because of Barke's untimely death. What I tried to do is to complement the work of Barke, Smith and Ferguson, partly by discussing the development of their edition, and partly by revisiting the peculiar history and characteristics of The Merry Muses.

I came to realise that The Merry Muses has, in many ways, a life and a validity of its own, independent of its authors and editors. Although associated with Burns from an early stage in its life, as is well known, it was first published after Burns's death and without his approval. Nor is there any extant proof he personally amassed these items with the intention to publish. Only certain of the texts, as the 1959 editors note, are verifiably Burns's, or collected by Burns, because of their existence in manuscript, or publication elsewhere. While some of The Merry Muses is indisputably by Burns, collected and amended by him, many more items were bundled into nineteenth-century editions by their editors in an attempt to add weight by association with Burns. However, a cautionary note should be raised: even if the texts indisputably passed through Burns's hands, they were designed for private consumption. This is not Burns as he might have wished to be remembered or at his most polished.

Previous editors worked from the premise that the value of The Merry Muses was in rounding off the poet's corpus, allowing readers to appreciate the range of Burns's output as songwriter and collector. The contents, too, were supposed to represent Burns as we hope he was: openly sexual, raucously humorous, playful yet empathetic to women. Seen from that viewpoint, The Merry Muses offers tantalising glimpses of Burns's poetry at its rawest and bawdiest, at the extreme end of his love lyrics. These are texts which require imaginative readjustments on the part of the twenty-first century reader, particularly for those who are unfamiliar with the bawdy or its modern erotic equivalents. Burns, as Barke emphasises, was working within a rich and varied tradition of bawdry, in written and oral forms, in Scotland and beyond. Bearing these factors in mind, it becomes possible to appreciate the songs in context: for their good humour, verbal playfulness, and disrespectfulness towards standard social mores.
ON EDITING THE MERRY MUSES

Seen in this way, The Merry Muses represents the worldview of the eighteenth-century drinking club, like that of its first apparent editors, the Crochallan Fencibles, a group of carousing companions who met in Dawney Douglas’s tavern in Edinburgh. The Crochallan group were, perhaps, less practically sexual than other, more colourful organisations—the Beggar’s Benison, for instance, or the Wig Club—but they certainly enjoyed erotic and bawdy songs. Members included William Dunbar (d.1807), its presiding officer and also a member, like Burns, of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge of Freemasons; Charles Hay (1747-1811), Lord Newton, the group’s “major and muster-master-general;” and Robert Cleghorn (d.1798?), who was particularly involved with the ‘cloaciniad’ verses. Burns refers to his membership in writing, for instance, to Peter Hill, in a letter of February 1794 (Roy, II: 278). Perhaps Burns sought to flatter his friends by hinting at their gentlemanly broad-mindedness when, as Ferguson notes, he circulated bawdy items in letters, as to Provost Maxwell of Lochmaben, or by lending his ‘collection’, to people like John McMurdo of Drumlanrig. Burns was also indicating his own status as a gentlemanly collector, linked (in a ‘cloaciniad’ way) to his enthusiastic role in the Scots Musical Museum. It is in the context of the “fraternal” enjoyment of the bawdry, to quote Robert Crawford, that The Merry Muses must be viewed.

A related factor which has to be considered with The Merry Muses, too, is that it is primarily a collection of songs for performance rather than designed to be read silently; this was something, as an editor, that I found challenging. With the exception of one or two items designed for recitation, this is a collection which really comes to life when it is used as it was originally presented: ‘for use’ as a source text for singers.

---

3 See the subtitle of the 1799 edition: A Collection of Favourite Scots Songs, Ancient and Modern; Selected for use of the Crochallan Fencibles.
4 See David Stevenson, Beggar’s Benison: Sex Clubs of Enlightenment Scotland (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2001).
In my introduction, I consider modern performances including Ewan MacColl’s *Songs from Robert Burns’s Merry Muses of Caledonia* (1962); Gill Bowman, Tich Frier, and others’ *Robert Burns—The Merry Muses* (1996); Jean Redpath’s recordings with Serge Hovey; and the ground-breaking Linn series of *The Complete Songs of Robert Burns*.⁶

Despite the volume’s reputation, the *Merry Muses* songs are a relatively tame group of texts. They are heterosexual in orientation, describing consensual sex in familiar positions, and with a strong focus on male and female genitalia. They operate according to their own rules: they are rhythmic, mimicking the actions they describe; they use easily-understood euphemisms for sexual experiences. There is the statement, for instance, in “Ye Hae Lien Wrang Lassie,” based on farming experiences (like many of the metaphors), “Ye’ve let the pounie o’er the dyke, / And he’s been in the corn, lassie.” So, too, obvious images are used: the “chanter pipe” of “John Anderson My Jo,” or the women’s “dungeons deep” in “Act Sederunt of the Session.” Some songs, of course, are more explicit, like “My Girl She’s Airy,” expressing a longing, “For her a, b, e, d, and her c, u, n, t.” *The Merry Muses* is, too, a self-conscious display of ability in diverse poetic styles, within the context of bawdry. In “Act Sederunt of the Session,” for instance, satirical techniques suggest the ridiculousness of contemporary kirk attitudes to sex, and “Ode to Spring” uses bawdy mock-pastoral.

If the songs sometimes seem simple, the textual history of the collection is extremely complicated. This was something

---

that held up the Luath edition, while I came (perhaps not fully, even yet) to an understanding of it. Although many, or most, of its texts were no doubt familiar to the Crochallans, *The Merry Muses* was not itself published until three years after Burns's death, in 1799. The 1799 volume has no reference or attribution to Burns in the book itself, and obviously a posthumous publication was published without his own involvement. However, *The Merry Muses* was linked to the poet through his association with the Crochallans. According to literary legend, the 1799 volume was compiled after Burns's death, based on a manuscript inveigled out of the grieving Jean Armour.\(^7\) This manuscript is no longer extant, or at least its location is unknown; in 1959 DeLancey Ferguson revised his earlier opinion that it might have been destroyed. Related to this, the 1799 edition was long thought to have been published in Dumfries; modern scholars, including Ferguson, think it more likely that it was published in Edinburgh.

Moreover, until the later nineteenth century, and not conclusively until the publication of the 1959 edition, the existence of the 1799 Crochallan volume was itself little more than rumour. The one copy occasionally available to late nineteenth-century editors, such as William Scott Douglas and, later, W.H. Ewing, was that which passed through the hands of William Craibe Angus and which, by 1959, was in the personal collection of the former Liberal Prime Minister, the Earl of Rosebery. The Rosebery copy, which is very slightly damaged, lacks a date, and so the only way of dating *The Merry Muses* was to use the watermarks on its paper. These placed the volume at around 1800 or earlier, until the discovery of what is now the Roy copy, dated 1799, made exact dating possible. A microfilm copy of the Rosebery copy, however, was made accessible to the 1959 editors and is in the National Library of Scotland.

The printed text has been in flux and development since its first appearance. Since 1799, up to the year 2000, *The

Merry Muses had passed through over thirty editions or printings, with minor or major variations. There are concentrated clusters: at least seven editions which can be tentatively dated between 1900 and 1911, and a minimum of ten more, including a US printing, between 1962 and 1982. There is a gap between around 1843 and 1872 and, again, between 1930 and 1959, possibly reflecting attitudes to erotic texts, and censorship.

The 1799 volume languished in obscurity for much of the nineteenth century, with the possible exception of the possibly early ‘Dublin’ version, at least until the publication of the ‘1827’ edition. This, it has been argued by Gershon Legman and by Ross Roy, was probably published in 1872 in London for John Hotten, with the publication numerals reversed, to confuse the perceived censors. It is difficult to be precise in tracing the ‘1827’ text’s history, but it spawned a variety of privately-published editions. Most of these appeared, in all probability, from the third quarter of the nineteenth century into the early twentieth century. It is possible that some editors directly consulted the 1799 volume, but more likely that they are a self-generating set, based on an assumed provenance going back to the Crochallans and Burns.

There are, then, multiple variants of the ‘1827’, with more or less minor variations, and these have been ably surveyed by Ross Roy in his extremely helpful article, which updates M’Naught’s earlier attempt to present the various versions of The Merry Muses chronologically. Where M’Naught finds seven versions since the Crochallan edition, noting that most are related, Professor Roy identified seventeen variations, with estimated dates ranging from 1872 to 1920 (using techniques such as tracing library accession dates to determine the latest possible date of publication).

---

8 The Merry Muses: a Choice Collection of Favourite Songs (Dublin: Printed for the booksellers, [1804?]).
Over the twenty-three years since Professor Roy’s article, he has acquired additional ‘1827’ variants for the Roy Collection, and, as he knows, there are further copies in other collections to which he did not have access at the time of the article. There is, for instance, a substantial number of editions in Edward Atkinson Hornel’s collection, available for public consultation in the Hornel Library, Broughton House, Kirkcudbright. Hornel was assisted in purchasing these items by James Cameron Ewing, and their correspondence relating to the building of this collection is cited below. Within the Broughton House collection there are copies of Roy editions 1, 3 (with manuscript notes by J.C. Ewing), 5 and 12, along with a ‘Dublin’ edition of ‘1830[?]’ and a related ‘London’ edition of ‘1843.’ In January 2009, I heard of another edition which had been found in Broughton house, which I have yet to examine. The Ewart library in Dumfries also holds an ‘1827’ edition, Roy edition 7, and a copy of the same edition is in the NLS. Several versions are now available on the internet, too, with multiple digitizations from the ‘1827’ sequence, along with Gershon Legman’s edition.

As Professor Roy has pointed out, in editions from the ‘1827’ sequence, items from the 1799 edition mingle with other pieces apparently by Burns and with a selection of other erotic pieces of varying quality, many of them similar to broadside literature, then in circulation, which are soon classified into sections of ‘Scottish’, ‘English’ and ‘Irish’ themed texts. Added at the end, too, there is a set of bawdy ‘Toasts and Sentiments’. Most of this new material has nothing directly to do with Burns, and more to do with the perceived activities, and proclivities, of eighteenth-century British drinking clubs. Burns is explicitly named as author on the assumed earliest ‘1827’ edition and thereafter. The ‘1827’ usually includes a preface, reprinted from one edition.

to the next, with occasional variations, explaining the Burns credentials, and putting the texts into bawdy context. It also includes two letters: the one from Burns to Robert Ainslie of 3rd March 1788, describing a sexual encounter with Jean Mauchline (Roy, I:251), which Barke interrogates in his essay, and his letter to James Johnson of 25th May 1788, relating to the marriage to Jean Armour (Roy, I:280). There is also a copy of the “Libel Summons” or “The Court of Equity.” It is not completely clear what all the sources for the ‘1827’ edition were: it is possible that it makes reference to the lost Burns manuscript, or to the 1799 edition, or to previously published items in some cases, or to a combination of all of these.

There are two intriguing further ‘sources’ that an editor of The Merry Muses needs to evaluate. The first is the Allan Cunningham manuscript copy of The Merry Muses, discovered by Gershon Legman but, sadly, not available to the 1959 editors (although Good sir Smith makes reference to it in later editions). It is contained within an ‘1825 Dublin’ edition of The Merry Muses at the British Museum, and additional items from it are reprinted in Legman’s The Horn Book and discussed very fully again in his edition of The Merry Muses of Caledonia. The main value of the Cunningham manuscript lies in pointing to Burns as author of some otherwise unattributable items, as Smith notes in the second edition of the Barke, Smith and Ferguson version, where certain items (as mentioned below) are transferred between sections in the book on the strength of Legman’s statements.

The second intriguing shadowy presence in the editorial story relates to the abortive edition planned by the art dealer and bibliophile William Craibe Angus (1830-1899). This was to be based on the Crochallan volume of 1799 and was to be edited by William Ernest Henley (1849-1903), using one of the two transcriptions from the 1799 edition by J.C. Ewing.14

14 “The Merry Muses of Caledonia,” bound volume including transcript and notes by J.C. Ewing, Andrew Carnegie Library, Dunfermline (Local Studies, 1247a).
The Craibe Angus volume, as Goodsir Smith points out, was consulted by M’Naught when he was preparing the 1911 Burns Federation edition. It played an influential role, too, for Barke and Smith in understanding the textual history of The Merry Muses. In my introduction to the new Luath edition, I consider the effect of Ewing’s transcript on the 1959 editors, and offer observations on the way elements of it—particularly the notes on specific songs, and their provenance—influenced Barke and Ferguson. The Ewing transcript, which was drawn to the 1959 editors’ attention by Maurice Lindsay, played a major role in the early preparations for the 1959 editions. Barke made a partial transcript of some of Ewing’s introductory notes but, more importantly, its existence—again through the aid of Lindsay—allowed the team to establish the existence and whereabouts of what was then the only known copy of the 1799 volume.

The first edition of The Merry Muses that made any effort to restrict its content to Burns’s own compositions, or pieces he collected, was the 1911 Burns Federation edition, compiled anonymously—under the pseudonym of ‘Vindex’—by Duncan M’Naught, editor of the Burns Chronicle. M’Naught’s claim was to combat the misinformation in the ‘1827’ sequence of editions, by reprinting the “Original edition,” as “A Vindication of Robert Burns in connection with the above publication and the spurious editions which succeeded it.” He follows the 1799 fairly closely, with minor title changes, and he includes also useful, albeit brief, headnotes; comparing these with the 1959, it can be seen that the 1959 editors made explicit reference to M’Naught and approached the text with similar interests.

My new edition for Luath preserves the integrity of Barke, Smith and Ferguson’s pioneering edition. The editors presented their work in 1959 under the auspices of Sydney

---

Goodsir Smith’s Auk Society, for which a subscription of two guineas bought a ‘free’ copy, anticipating the possibility of prosecution if the work were published in the ordinary way. Ferguson, Smith and Barke were among the first editors to consider the book seriously, as a collection which included significant work by, or recorded by, Burns. Their scholarly commentary, especially in the headnotes, draws attention to the situations where the songs first appeared as well as to their contexts, and remains extremely useful. This edition groups the texts by their provenance rather than being caught up in the ‘1827’ sequence. Perhaps paradoxically, because the 1959 editors adopted a rational system of presentation and organisation, it could be suggested that Burns might have approved.

While individual items from The Merry Muses had appeared, often in expurgated forms, in editions of Burns’s complete poetry or works—most notably in the 1893 Aldine edition of 1893 and in the 1890 edition by William Scott Douglas—, the 1959 editors worked primarily from such key texts as the 1799 Rosebery edition. The Rosebery copy is in itself intriguing, partly because it includes manuscript notes by William Scott Douglas, as Ewing notes in his own set of notes on this copy, now in Dunfermline’s Carnegie Library; the 1959 editors made full use of this copy—often in an unacknowledged way. The 1959 team also made use of J.C. Ewing’s transcription of the Rosebery volume, as well as the 1911 Burns Federation edition, and I discuss their use of these sources at length in my introduction to the Luath volume.

Ninety-seven texts appear in the 1959 edition as compared to eighty-six in the 1799 and the omissions from the 1959 are intriguing. Sometimes it seems that a song is

---

17 The notes on the 1799 edition match other examples of Scott Douglas’s handwriting, as, e.g., his notes in NLS MS 2074. I am grateful to George Stanley of the National Library of Scotland for bringing this to my attention.
omitted for not being bawdy enough, although associated with Burns directly. For instance “Anna” (1799: 8-10), better known as “Yestreen I had a pint o’ wine,” is omitted in the 1959 edition, and so is “My Wife’s a wanton wee thing” (1799: 116-7). Other pieces are, perhaps, seen as distracting from the Burnsian emphasis of the 1959 edition and, therefore, not used. While the 1959 editors include the “Original set” of “The Mill, Mill-o” from 1779, they omit the version below it, starting “Beneath a green shade I fand a green maid” (1799: 73-4), which was in Ramsay’s Tea-Table Miscellany of 1724.

There were various offshoots from the 1959 edition. Smith and Ferguson oversaw a second edition, for the US market, which appeared in 1964 with G.P. Putnam’s Sons, New York. This follows the 1959 text, using the same illustrations and ordering of the texts. One substantial change, though, is that Robert Burns is now credited on the title page; also added is a glossary, by Goodsir Smith. The New York edition takes account, too, of Gershon Legman’s recent discovery in the British Museum Library of Allan Cunningham’s manuscript, which, Smith writes, “suggests that six songs previously grouped in Section III are actually Burns originals” and indicates that “the purified versions of these in the Aldine edition of 1839 are in fact forged expurgations by Cunningham.” The discovery affects “Ye Hae Lien Wrang,” “Comin’ O’er the Hills o’ Coupar,” “How Can I Keep my Maidenhead?,” “Wad Ye Do That?,” “There Cam a Cadger,” and “Jenny Macraw.” In the 1964 edition, however, these songs remain in Section III.

---

18 Robert Burns, The Merry Muses of Caledonia. Ed. Barke, Goodsir Smith, Ferguson (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1964). Although the glossary is not credited to Smith, its manuscript existence in the National Library of Scotland, at NLS ACC 10397/44 shows that he was the primary author, and corrector, of this.

In 1965, the edition went into its third incarnation, with its third publisher, W.H. Allen, in London.\textsuperscript{20} For 1965, Smith moves the six songs at question into section IV, “Collected by Burns.” The notes to these songs, too, are amended accordingly. Aside from new references to Legman, however, the 1965 edition is identical to the 1959. In 1970, it was reprinted as a paperback by Panther, in London, with the same changes from 1959 as in the 1965 edition.\textsuperscript{21} To round off the set with its original publisher, \textit{The Merry Muses} came out, finally, with Macdonald, in 1982.\textsuperscript{22}

Most modern editions, with various editors and publishers, and equally various titles, draw strongly on the 1959 text and its descendants. They include the unashamedly uncredited version of Barke, Smith and Ferguson’s 1965 text in \textit{Bawdy Verse and Folksongs, written and collected by Robert Burns}, described only as “introduced” by Magnus Magnusson.\textsuperscript{23} The Paul Harris edition, as \textit{The Secret Cabinet of Robert Burns}, is more skilfully edited. The selection is smaller than that in the 1959 edition, with sixty one texts in total and useful headnotes.\textsuperscript{24} Other significant editions include Eric Lemuel Randall’s, of 1966, which includes very full headnotes, a generalist’s introductory essay, and selected illustrations.\textsuperscript{25} Finally, the 1999 University of South Carolina Press facsimile edition of the Roy Collection copy of 1799, boxed with Ross Roy’s authoritative introductory essay,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{The Secret Cabinet of Robert Burns. Merry Muses of Caledonia} (Edinburgh: Paul Harris, 1979).
\end{flushleft}
takes the set to its starting point, providing a reliable text for the earliest known version of *The Merry Muses*.\(^{26}\)

The 1959 edition, ultimately, represented a labour of scholarship as well as a labour of love: the letters that passed among the three editors give some indication of the gargantuan effort involved, and one which yielded very tangible results. This edition is as much, if not more, their creation than Burns’s. At the time of editing, Barke was at the height of his fame as the novelist of *The Immortal Memory of Burns*, the multi-part novel which follows the poet from birth to death. The depth of his research on Burns has still not been fully recognised.\(^{27}\) Smith, equally, was making his reputation as a poet and editor, having recently published on Robert Fergusson’s poetry.\(^{28}\) Fergusson was the most scholarly, well respected for his Burns Letters and the biography *The Pride and the Passion*. Sadly, Barke died before the edition was seen through to completion. The making of the edition (which took eleven years to complete) was beset with problems, as the editorial correspondence, considered in the Luath edition, makes apparent.\(^{29}\)

I hope that this essay has given at least a flavour of the development of *The Merry Muses* into the 1959 edition, and onwards into the new Luath version. It is a book which is complex textually, it is complicated as a song collection, and the relationship with Burns complicates things further. In spite of all of this, or because of it, *The Merry Muses of Caledonia* is ripe for scholarly and critical reassessment: as a sequence of editions that needs to be rigorously collated (perhaps minus the misleading ‘1827’ texts) and as a set of lively songs in its own account.

---

\(^{26}\) See n. 2 above.

\(^{27}\) There is still no major study of Barke as a novelist, or scholar on Burns; we hope in due course to publish the proceedings of the Mitchell Library’s Barke centenary conference, to be edited by Valentina Bold and David Borthwick.


\(^{29}\) See, in particular, the Barke Papers, in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
“The poor man’s friend in need”: Baird, Burns and Miller

David Robb

... that best portion of a good man’s life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love

Not all acts of kindness, thankfully, go unremembered. George Husband Baird (1761-1840), principal of Edinburgh University for an astonishing forty-seven years, was a good man and his life, we may be sure, had its full quota of acts of kindness and of love. For most students of Scottish literary history, however, Baird would be quite unremembered, had it not been for particular acts of kindness and of love which brought him into contact with two of Scotland’s finest writers, Robert Burns and Hugh Miller. While Baird tried to help Miller directly, it was with a view to helping someone else, that he had turned to Burns many decades earlier. A comparison of the two episodes underlines for us the transition from one age to another, even within a single lifetime, for although acts of kindness might seem outside time, the spirit of the age may be just as visible in them as in any other human action, detectable in the traces of even our most humble initiatives.

For Baird’s lifetime covered a period of particularly crucial change in Scotland and there can be no modern study of the Scottish Enlightenment which does not explore the suddenness and completeness of its demise. Nor is it only from the viewpoint of a later century that it is apparent how rapidly, at this juncture, one distinct age followed another. Scott’s famous statement which resonates in the final
chapter of *Waverley* (‘there is no European nation which, within the course of half a century or little more, has undergone so complete a change as this kingdom of Scotland’) is only one of many which reveal the astonished self-awareness of the generations whose lives straddled the new millennium. Cockburn’s *Memorials of His Time* (1856) are a late and substantial embodiment of that awareness, but one encounters — here, there and everywhere in the writings of the period — innumerable expressions of the same perception. Lockhart, for example, in *Peter’s Letters To His Kinsfolk* (1819), evokes his youthful enthusiasm for the novels of Henry Mackenzie thus, the imaginings of that earlier age now seeming like a blissful dream in comparison to the brittle, mundane present:

The beautiful visions of his pathetic imagination had stamped a soft and delicious, but deep and indelible impression on my mind, long before I had heard the very name of criticism; perhaps before any of the literature of the present age existed — certainly long, very long, before I ever dreamt of its existence. The very names of the heroes and heroines of his delightful stories, sounded in my ears like the echoes of some old romantic melody, too simple, and too beautiful, to have been framed in these degenerate over-scientific days.

Baird lived through one of the most significant transitions in modern Scottish life. Admittedly, we cannot expect to reconstruct the ending of the Scottish Enlightenment out of two small episodes in the life of one obscure man but it might be possible, at the very least, to register a changing atmosphere when we look at some of the details we find in them.

George Baird, one could argue, is a particularly good piece of litmus for illuminating the changing environments encountered in his long life, for while he was clearly sufficiently active as a man of books, and of religion, and of practical administration to gain and maintain the personal approval of his contemporaries, he was far from being a leading spirit of his age. Although occupying a position of

---

social prominence in Scott’s Edinburgh—indeed two positions of prominence, for not only was he principal of the university but he also commanded a series of prestigious pulpits culminating in that of the High Church—he seems to have left surprisingly little mark on the consciousnesses of most of his fellows. He is not mentioned in Scott’s *Journals*, nor does he pop up in Cockburn’s *Memorials*. He seems to have made no impression on Lockhart while he was writing *Peter’s Letters* nor has Elizabeth Grant, the ‘Highland Lady’, anything to say about him in her memoirs. He does make an appearance, however, in Lockhart’s *Life of Scott* because he it was who led the distinguished company in prayer, in Abbotsford itself, before Scott’s coffin set off on its journey to Melrose Abbey. While clearly a solid (indeed, for long, a seemingly immovable) presence in the Edinburgh scene, he was one of those overshadowed by the greatness which surrounded him: his immediate predecessor as principal was the historian William Robertson, and it was as Hugh Blair’s successor that he took over the pulpit of the High Church. He can be seen, if we choose, as a figure emblematic of Edinburgh’s slow descent from cultural pre-eminence into mere professional respectability.

It would be easy to make him out to be no more than a nonentity who got lucky. Michael Shortland describes him, with obvious justification, as ‘by any reckoning an undistinguished occupant of the office [of principal]’.

In 1792, while still the local minister in the obscurity of Dunkeld, he had the good fortune to marry the daughter of Thomas Elder, lord provost of Edinburgh. It was an age of shameless patronage and within the year he had been made both minister of Edinburgh’s New Greyfriars Church and joint professor of Hebrew at Edinburgh University. He had been an undergraduate there in the 1770s and had developed a notable skill in European languages but, like so many other Scottish students in that age, he had not actually gone so far as to obtain a formal degree. The university admittedly awarded him an honorary M.A. in 1787 in recognition of his

---

persistence as one ‘who had been many years an alumnus’ and now, in 1792, they awarded him an honorary D.D. as well.\(^3\) The following year, on Robertson’s death, he was made principal despite his total lack of academic distinction. It is as a sign that a decline from the intellectual and cultural peaks of the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment was setting in that Richard B. Sher discusses Baird’s appointment to the principalship:

Upon the death in June 1793 of William Robertson, the man who most fully represented the Moderate Regime in the church and university, this transformation [i.e. the fading of the Moderate clergy’s centrality in Scotland’s cultural life] was given symbolic expression. Expecting Robertson’s office as principal of Edinburgh University to be offered to him as a mark of respect, Hugh Blair was deeply hurt when the town council chose instead a much younger minister who lacked impressive literary or academic credentials but possessed powerful political connections. This incident illustrates as well as any other the movement of Blair and his generation of Moderate literati from the center to the periphery of Scottish intellectual and institutional life.

And in a footnote, Sher quotes Blair’s complaint in a letter (18 March 1795) to Alexander Carlyle:

*The Provost [writes Blair] by his influence with the Council conferred the office at once on his son-in-law George Baird, without taking the smallest notice of me. I could not but feel this as an affront.\(^4\)*

Apart from the occasional letter, or prayer, which reached print, Baird’s only published contribution to learning or knowledge was his 1796 edition of the poems of Michael Bruce (1746-67). More of this in a moment, but it can be said at the outset that (to put it kindly) a more self-effacing piece of editing by an editor is hard to conceive. When one turns to the Preface to get a sense of Baird’s own response to his poet, one finds it to be made up largely of John Logan’s original

\(^3\) Sir Alexander Grant, Bt., *The Story of the University of Edinburgh during its first three hundred years* (London: Longmans, Green, 1884), II:270.

preface from the first edition of 1770 and an essay from 1779 by Lord Craig on Bruce and his work, an essay which had apparently done much to establish Bruce’s modest reputation. Baird’s edition even retains Logan’s original title. (To be fair, the edition does set out to correct the injustices and inaccuracies, in terms of the attribution of Bruce’s poems, perpetrated by Logan earlier.)

Nor was Baird a dynamic leader of the university: in Alexander Grant’s 1884 account of the institution he is described as not leading from the front (as we’d say) but as always going along with the majority views of the Senate. The latest *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* describes Baird’s undergraduate performance as not brilliant but “plodding, persevering, and well-mannered.” One might conceivably rest content with that as a summary of his whole life. Perhaps a more generous (though still limiting) summary came from Sir Robert Christison (1797-1882), professor of medicine at Edinburgh University, who alludes to his ‘kindliness, benignant features, cheerful deportment, deferential manners, conversational power, and [his] rich fund of anecdote’ (Grant 270-1).

If Baird was not driven by academic ambition, however, it is clear that he had a marked desire to do good to his fellow creatures. In particular, he had a strong lifelong concern for those who were less fortunate than himself. (These were a goodly number: it is easy to feel that few members of his generation were more fortunate than Baird — at least until his final years.) Hence his interest in writing and writers emerging from the obscurity of humble life, and his passionate concern to improve the lot of those with little or no education. And it is in the comparison of the two particularly prominent cases in which he involved himself that we can not only do justice to Baird’s humanity (if not to his intellectual eminence) but can also glimpse another facet of that “transformation” (to use Sher’s word) of an eighteenth-century outlook based on a simple sense of our shared humanity as it developed into an incipient early-Victorian

---

world of social analysis and goal-directed organization. Helping our fellows was becoming less a matter of merely aiding individual misfortune and more a case of organizing a full-scale response to society’s imperfections. But it is time to turn to the two episodes themselves.

In his biography of Burns, Ian McIntyre touches upon the poet’s generous response, in a letter from Ellisland, on February 28, 1791, to a request from Baird asking for a contribution of some words of introduction to increase the sales of a projected new edition of the poems of Michael Bruce.6 It seems that Baird and Burns had been friendly at least from the early 1780s (in other words, even before Baird was placed in Dunkeld – the DNB says that, in old age, he often claimed to have met with Burns frequently at that time), and Baird had been one of the subscribers to the Kilmarnock Edition in 1786.

Burns responded to the request with speed and ardour, for Baird’s main goal was not his own financial gain nor yet justice for the dead poet, but principally the raising of money to help support Bruce’s still-living mother. McIntyre quotes the letter’s opening, which vividly conveys Burns’s enthusiasm in his mock outrage at Baird’s tone of diffidence, and points out that Burns was willing to make available, additionally, any unpublished poem of his which Baird might think appropriate. This would have included ‘Tam o’ Shanter’ (though he does not specify it). In the event, Baird was counseled by Hugh Blair and John Moore against using any of Burns’s poems and there is no obvious trace of Burns in the edition which finally emerged in 1796. The letter is worth quoted in its entirety:

Why did you, my dear Sir, write to me in such a hesitating style on the business of poor Bruce? Don’t I know, & have I not felt, the many ills, the peculiar ills, that Poetic Flesh is heir to? -- You shall have your choice of all the unpublished poems I have; & had your letter had my address, so as to have reached me in course of post (it but came to hand this morning) I should have directly put you

---

out of suspense about it. -- I suppose I need not premise, that I still reserve these my works so much in my power, as to publish them on my own account, if so the spirit move me, at any after period. -- I only ask that some prefatory advertisement in the Book, as well as the Subscription bills, may bear, that the Publication is solely for the behoof of Bruce's Mother: I would not leave Ignorance the least room to surmise, or Malice to insinuate, that I clubbed a share in the work from mercenary motives. --

Nor need you give me credit for any remarkable generosity in my part of the business. -- I have such a host of Peccadillos, Failings, Follies, & Backslidings (anybody but myself might perhaps give some of them a worse appellation) that by way of some balance, however trifling, in the account, I am fain, so far as my very limited power reaches, to do any good I can to my fellow-creatures, merely for the selfish purpose of clearing a little the vista of Retrospection. -- You who are a Divine, & accustomed to soar the wild-goose heights of Calvinistic Theology, may no doubt look down with contempt on my creeping notions; but I, who was forced to pick up my fragments of knowledge as the hog picks up his husks, at the plough-tail, can understand nothing sublimer than this debtor & creditor system.

I sincerely feel for the lamentable, incurable breach, in the family of your truly illustrious Patron. -- I ever remember with grateful pride, my reception at Athole-house; & when I saw in the Newspapers the accounts of his Grace's conjugal Piety, my heart ached again, to have it in my power to take him by the hand & say, 'Sir, you are an honor to Human-nature; & I not only esteem, but revere you!' I intended to have strung my rustic Lyre to her Grace's ever-dear & sacred memory; but soon, all my ideas were absorbed in the agonies of a violent wrench Fate gave the dearest chords of my bosom, the death of the Earl of Glencairn. -- He also was a Being who did honor to that Omnipotence which called him into existence. -- From him all my fame & fortune took its rise: to him I owe every thing that I am or have, & for his Sake I wear these Sables with as much devout sincerity as ever bleeding Gratitude did for departed Benevolence. --

My kindest Complais to Mr. Walker.-- Do you know an acquaintance of Mr. Walker's, & a Countryman of mine, a Mr. Wyat? If you have an opportunity, please remember me kindly to him.--
You need not send me Bruce’s M.S.S. for my criticisms.-- It is among very good hands, indeed among hands superior to mine, already.--

I have taxed your friendship with the trouble of transmitting the inclosed letter to Dr Moore, the celebrated author of Zelucco.-- I leave it open for your perusal, I mean the printed sheet.-- It is one of my latest productions; & I dare say you may have it, if you will, to accompany Bruce’s works.-- Please inclose it with the card, & seal it with black, & send it to the Doctor.-- I do not know his particular address, but it will not be difficult to find, in a Man of his celebrity & rank.--

I am most sincerely, Yours
ROB\textsuperscript{T} BURNS
Ellisland near Dumfries
28\textsuperscript{th} Feb\textsuperscript{ry} 1791 (Roy II: 75-6)

Within the stylistic formalities of the age, the letter does indeed convey the intimacy of a few years standing between the two men: these are not strangers addressing each other. Burns is not bashful in hinting at the lack of strictness in his own private life, nor is he unwilling to invite Baird to chuckle over the ‘wild-goose heights of Calvinistic Theology’ or also at the ironic suggestion that he himself is not capable of understanding the intricacies of current religious thought. The letter wanders, too, from subject to subject in the way that a one-issue correspondence between two strangers would not do. And would Burns have risked that breezy, abrupt, half-accusing opening to someone he didn’t know? Although this is the only letter to Baird to be found in Burns’s collected correspondence, it seems to substantiate Baird’s claim from later in his life that he and Burns had known each other rather well at this time.

However, what one wants to point to is Burns’s recurrent stress on Feeling. This is hardly a surprise in a document from the Age of Feeling, but the letter brings home once more how, twenty years after Mackenzie’s famous novel, the language of Feeling had become both pervasive and stylistically standard. (“have I not felt…I sincerely feel...my heart ached again”). It is not that we feel any insincerity on Burns’s part, but simply that we recognize, once more, how Feeling was still woven throughout the contemporary manner of public self-expression.
And we can readily see here, in practice, how the age associated Feeling with morals and conduct: Burns is not just talking about what he feels but is demonstrating that he is feeling *rightly*. Furthermore, the main purpose of Burns’s reply is to make an offer of considerable generosity to help a woman he has never met, the mother of a man he had also never met. We can also feel him responding, however, to two stock images of the time — the very stuff of Feeling — namely distressed, poverty-stricken Age, and (in ‘poor Bruce’) humble, obscure and luckless talent, the natural poet tragically thwarted by fate.

When Baird’s edition of Bruce finally appeared, the surprisingly few words it contains from (it has to be assumed) Baird’s own pen show the same characteristics: his awareness of a mother and son combined in undeserved misfortune elicits the same association of sympathetic feeling with moral action. As Baird says in introducing Craig’s earlier paper, “ANNE BRUCE will read that paper with tenderness; and, with the tear of feeling in her eye, will pray, ‘God bless him.’—That man is to be pitied who does not feel, that He who has so deserved this prayer, is enviable.”

The first episode, therefore, is very much of its time, namely a matter of two powerless individuals, ready objects of feeling (Michael Bruce and his mother), being pitied and assisted by a handful of (again) individuals with the emotional motivation to help (Baird, Burns, Craig). The whole episode is structured round individual human relations, interacting purely on the basis of direct sympathetic emotions.

By the time we come to the second instance, however, a new environment has been super-added to the simple humanity of human beings helping each other. Baird first met Hugh Miller in the course of his journeying as chair of a kirk committee for developing education in the Highlands, and the goal of Baird’s efforts for Miller is no longer the simple relief of destitution but the furthering of a career. Baird himself had been the instigator of the General Assembly’s Highlands and Islands Committee, the need for

---

which he had outlined in 1824 and which he had brought into being a year later. Hew Scott’s *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae* says that, looking back after a few years of the committee’s work, “he had found nearly one hundred thousand human beings unable to either read or write, and innumerable districts where the people could not hear sermon above once a year, and had seen thousands of habitations where a Sabbath bell was never heard, where he had now witnessed schools and libraries established, knowledge increased, and greedily received.”8 Nor was Baird’s role confined to chairing committee meetings and addressing the Edinburgh General Assembly: he journeyed all over the highlands and islands. Hew Scott says that he covered around 7000 miles in total, an achievement which did immense credit to a man of his years. Hugh Miller says in *My School and Schoolmasters* that Baird had covered over 8000.9

Equally important, however, was fund-raising and the National Library of Scotland possesses a letter from Baird designed for exactly this purpose. It is what we’d call a circular letter: it is fully set up in print (thanks to the lamentable non-invention of photocopying) with space left simply for the name of the addressee, and it was doubtless sent out in dozens to all the landowners of the highland districts. Its purpose, predictably enough, is to persuade them to give financial support to the scheme: “A benevolent Landlord can perceive no higher ornament on his estates, than an intelligent, moral, and religious peasantry—educated up to that degree which is suitable to their sphere of life.”10 And Baird was able to claim, after only four years of the committee’s work, some impressive achievements: 85 schools had been established, attended by 7000 scholars, and needing an income of £2000 a year. But he reckoned nevertheless that ‘upwards of 50,000 persons are computed

---

10 Letter, 28th October, 1829, NLA: APS.3.81.19.
in these districts as unable to read or write.’ Baird’s passion and energy are clear to see.

If Baird lacked the highest intellectual distinction, he was notably (and creditably) endowed with human sympathy, moral energy and practical effectiveness. Both of the episodes which we are discussing here reveal these strengths, but whereas the earlier one has a quality (in its method and in the language associated with that method) which we might describe as feminine, his later philanthropic career, and the specific aid he held out to Hugh Miller (as well as the discourse surrounding it), are more typical of the masculine ethos of the ‘post-Enlightenment’ period in Edinburgh cultural life which Ian Duncan has recently analysed.\(^\text{11}\)

As Miller indicates in his autobiography, it was while Baird was on one of his many tours of the highlands that he asked to meet with the author of the recently published *Poems of a Journeyman Mason* (1829). Shortland (p.18) is doubtless correct in assuming that Baird’s initial interest in Miller was in part because of the stonemason’s apparent potential as an example of what could be achieved by way of educating the highlanders, but despite Miller’s awkwardness in responding to his overtures the principal’s patience and sincerity in wishing to help the young man remained constant. (Baird’s request for a straightforward letter outlining Miller’s educational experiences resulted in a wholly unlooked-for document of over 60,000 words, and his initial generosity in offering to provide Miller with hospitality in his own home so that he might establish himself in Edinburgh was met with the sturdy response that, for the moment, Miller preferred to remain up north working as a stonemason.)

Miller’s manuscript collection of letters from and to himself, copied out to form a volume of correspondence, can be consulted in Edinburgh University’s New College Library.\(^\text{12}\) Apart from the large documents which make up his Memoir and also the handful of scraps of correspondence


\(^\text{12}\) Hugh Miller’s Letter Book: New College MSS Mil 1.1.
which Shortland quotes in his edition, there are only a very few other letters between Baird and Miller, as well as an account by Miller (in a letter to another correspondent) of a visit he made to Baird early in 1835. These few items, however, are to illustrate the difference in tone and atmosphere surrounding this later instance of Baird’s generosity. The language of Feeling has faded. While there is still a lingering courtliness, it no longer leans towards that paraded emotional softness which distinguishes expressions of sympathy during the previous age. Rather, it is direct, sometimes business-like, with Baird writing not merely as a hyper-sensitive individual but (as in this first example) as a practical man of affairs, writing not for himself but to convey the settled policy of the hard-headed committee which he chairs. He is responding to Miller’s request on behalf of a friend of his:

I was glad to hear from you by your friend Mr Munro. He appears to me to be a man as you represent him of a sense and intelligence very creditable to him when compared with the means of improvement he has enjoyed.

I regret therefore very sincerely that the rules of the Assembly Committee unfortunately preclude their taking him on their list of candidates for one of their schools. His age being 42 is an insuperable bar to their doing so. For their resolution and their uniform practice has been to decline taking any individual on their list who has reached 40 years of age, -- as if they took them in more advanced life they feared that the number of super-annuation salaries might rise soon to a burdensome amount. (6 January 1830 [Letter no. 9])

And in dealing with Miller himself he can be brisk and business-like, even expressing himself in the third-person (and so, at the opposite pole from the first-person emotional confessions of men of Feeling):

Principal Baird presents his compliments to Mr Miller, and will be glad to learn whether Mr Miller has any objections to the Manuscript account of his own biography sent to the Principal some time ago being referred to in one of the literary journals, and parts of it being printed therein. The Principal will be happy always to hear of Mr Miller’s welfare. (14 February 1832 [Letter no. 44])
Most revealing of all, perhaps, is Miller’s account, in a letter to Lydia Fraser describing a visit to Baird made soon after Miller moved to Linlithgow while training to be a banker. Baird is not only clearly seriously ill but also the victim (it would appear) of a particularly heart-rending family circumstance. But where a writer of the previous age would doubtless have totally deliquesced when confronted with this situation, Miller is firm and objective, refusing to parade the sorrow and pity which he nevertheless clearly feels.

The poor principal found himself unable to rise and I was shewn up to his room. He received me with great kindness, held my hand between both his for more than ten minutes, and overpowered me with a multitude of questions, -- particularly regarding my new profession and what had led to it. Ah said he, when I had given him what he requested, - the history of my connexion with the Bank, the choice of your townsmen Mr Ross shews that you still retain your character for steadiness and probity. The remark was accompanied with a sigh which at the time I could not understand. I was very desirous, he continued, to see you on Thursday. My friend Professor Wilson was dining at the house of a neighbouring gentleman; I was to have met with him there, and wished to have introduced you to him, but even had you not been engaged I could not have availed myself of the opportunity as I was taken so ill that after accepting I had to decline the invitation."[sic] He regretted that he should be so unable to do any thing for me, but said he would use his influence with the professor to procure me a favourable review. After sitting by his bed side for a short time I took my leave, afraid that he might injure himself by his efforts to entertain me; for they were evidently above his strength. It struck me too that there was a tone of despondency about him which mere indisposition could not have occasioned. -- Benevolent old man! from what I have since heard I have too much reason to conclude that his sickness is of the heart. The son whom I saw, -- a reckless dissipated man, has contracted debts to an immense, indeed unascertained amount, but they are known to exceed ten thousand pounds; he has involved his poor old father in them; and the family estate is in consequence in the market. Every one here is sorry for the Principal, and regret that in his old age he should be stripped of the property which he so delighted in, and of the wealth of which he made so excellent an use. (January? 1835 [Letter no. 128])
This is sensitive and far from unfeeling, but totally lacking the rhetoric of Feeling itself. There is no longer a pausing on the naked expression of emotion; instead, Miller’s informal narrative sweeps on with its tale, human sympathy being conveyed primarily by the very absence of direct expression — and therefore contrasts with the language of Burns and Baird on the matter of ‘poor Bruce’. But then, the latter were writing just before the creation of *Lyrical Ballads*, whereas Miller had long been familiar with the tight-lipped emotional depths of Wordsworth’s reaction to, say, Simon Lee, the old huntsman:

\[
\text{I’ve heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds} \\
\text{With coldness still returning,} \\
\text{Alas! The gratitude of men} \\
\text{Has oftner left me mourning.}
\]

There were no unkind hearts amongst Baird and his friends, but plenty of gratitude. That Baird’s long life and involvements spanned ages which were a world apart was obvious to Miller himself. In another letter to Lydia, also in January 1835, he mused that Baird

seems to form a kind of connecting link between the literature of the past and of the present age. In his youth he was the friend and companion of men whose names leap to our tongues when we sum up the glories of our country, — of Burns and Robertson and Blair. Nearly fifty years ago he edited the poems of Michael Bruce, in behalf of the mother of the poet, who was then very poor and very old, — childless, and a widow. Twenty years after, he was the warm friend and patron of the linguist Murray. He was the first who introduced Pringle, the poet, to the notice of the public. He lived on terms of the closest intimacy with Sir Walter Scott, and is thoroughly acquainted with Wilson. What a stride from the times of the historian of Charles V to those of the editor of ‘Blackwood’s Magazine’! Does it not sound somewhat strangely that the friend and contemporary of the amiable though ill-fated poet of Kinross, who died nearly sixty years ago, should be the warm friend of your own H—— M———?  

---

James Hogg’s First Encounter with Burns’s Poetry

Douglas S. Mack

In his autobiographical “Memoir of the Author’s Life” (1832), James Hogg gives a wonderfully vivid account of his first encounter with Burns’s poetry. This event took place, Hogg tells us, in 1797, and he adds that, because of it, he “resolved to be a poet, and to follow in the steps of Burns.” Clearly, this passage in the “Memoir” is important for any assessment of Hogg’s own understanding of his literary career, and it is also of great potential interest with regard to the extraordinary impact of Burns among younger Scots in the closing years of the eighteenth century. However, as we shall see, there are some reasons to question the accuracy of Hogg’s story, and the present essay sets out to offer a new assessment of its factuality and real significance.

The relevant passage in the “Memoir of the Author’s Life” reads as follows:

The first time I ever heard of Burns was in 1797, the year after he died. One day during that summer a half daft man, named John Scott, came to me on the hill, and to amuse me repeated Tam o’ Shanter. I was delighted! I was far more than delighted—I was ravished! I cannot describe my feelings; but, in short, before Jock Scott left me, I could recite the poem from beginning to end, and it has been my favourite poem ever since. He told me it was made by one Robert Burns, the sweetest poet that ever was born; but that he was now dead, and his place would never be supplied. He told me all about him, how he was born on the 25th of January, bred a ploughman, how many beautiful songs and poems he had composed, and that he had died last harvest, on the 21st of August.
This formed a new epoch of my life. Every day I pondered on the genius and fate of Burns. I wept, and always thought with myself—what is to hinder me from succeeding Burns? I too was born on the 25th of January, and I have much more time to read and compose than any ploughman could have, and can sing more old songs than ever ploughman could in the world. But then I wept again because I could not write. However, I resolved to be a poet, and to follow in the steps of Burns.

I remember in the year 1812, the year before the publication of the “Queen’s Wake,” that I told my friend, the Rev. James Nicol, that I had an inward consciousness that I should yet live to be compared with Burns; and though I might never equal him in some things, I thought I might excel him in others. He reprobated the idea, and thought the assumption so audacious, that he told it as a bitter jest against me in a party that same evening. But the rest seeing me mortified, there was not one joined in the laugh against me, and Mr. John Grieve replied in these words, which I will never forget, “After what he has done, there is no man can say what he may do.”

In Sir Walter: A Four-Part Study in Biography (1932), Donald Carswell bluntly dismissed Hogg’s story about the recitation of “Tam o’ Shanter” by John Scott in 1797 as “a ... bare-faced lie.” Hogg was in his twenties in the 1790s, and he spent that decade working as a shepherd at Blackhouse farm on the Douglas Burn, a tributary of Yarrow. Carswell argues, convincingly, that in the 1790s “every intelligent peasant in Scotland” had heard of Burns, and that by 1797 Hogg would certainly have heard of him from his employer, Mr Laidlaw of Blackhouse.

---

1 Quoted from “Memoir of the Author’s Life” in Hogg, Altrive Tales, ed. Gillian Hughes, The Stirling/South Carolina Research Edition of the Collected Works of James Hogg (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. 17–18. Burns in fact died on 21 July 1796, not 21 August as Hogg states. Likewise, Hogg appears to have been mistaken in his belief that he shared Burns’s birthday, 25 January: see the note by Gillian Hughes on this point in her Stirling/South Carolina edition of Altrive Tales, p. 216.

Further support for Carswell’s view is provided by the fact that Hogg’s 1832 account of his epoch-making first encounter with the poetry of Burns does not fit very well with what he writes in the much earlier version of his autobiographical “Memoir” published in *The Mountain Bard* of 1807. In the 1807 “Memoir,” Hogg discusses his experiences as a teenager in the 1780s, before going on to describe his time at Blackhouse:

From Singlee I went to Elibank upon Tweed, where, with Mr Laidlaw, I found my situation more easy and agreeable than it had ever been. I staid there three half years, a term longer than usual; and from thence went to Willenslee, to Mr Laidlaw’s father, with whom I served as a shepherd two years; having been for some seasons preceding employed in working with horses, threshing, &c.

It was, while serving here, in the 18th year of my age, that I first got a perusal of “The Life and Adventures of Sir William Wallace,” and “The Gentle Shepherd;”... To give you some farther idea of the progress I had made in literature;—I was about this time obliged to write a letter to my elder brother, and, having never drawn a pen for such a number of years, I had actually forgot how to make sundry of the letters of the alphabet, which I had either to print, or patch up the words in the best way that I could, without them.

At Whitsunday 1790, being then in the nineteenth year of my age, I left Willenslee, and hired myself to Mr Laidlaw of Blackhouse, with whom I served as a shepherd nine years. The kindness of this gentleman to me it would be the utmost ingratitude ever to forget; for indeed it was much more like that of a father than a master; and it is not improbable that I should have been there still, had it not been for the following circumstance.

My brother William had, for some time before that, occupied the farm of Ettrick-house, where he resided with our parents; but having taken a wife, and the place not suiting two families, he took another residence, and gave up the farm to me. The lease expiring at Whitsunday 1793 our possession was taken by a wealthier neighbour. The first time that I attempted to write verses, was in the spring of

---

3 The date for the expiry of the lease on Ettrick-house is given in the 1807 text as 1793, rather than the correct year 1804; this appears to be a printer’s error caused by eye-slip (the year 1793 occurring in the next sentence).
the year 1793. Mr Laidlaw having a number of valuable books, which were all open to my perusal, I, about this time, began to read with considerable attention, and, no sooner did I begin to read so as to understand, than, rather prematurely, I began to write. The first thing that ever I attempted, was a poetical epistle to a student of divinity, an acquaintance of mine. It was a piece of most fulsome flattery, and was mostly composed of borrowed lines and sentences from Dryden’s Virgil, and Harvey’s Life of Bruce. I scarcely remember one line of it.

But the first thing that ever I composed that was really my own, was a rhyme, entitled, *An Address to the Duke of Buccleuch, in beha’f o’ mysel’, an ither poor fo’k.*

In the same year, after a deal of pains, I finished a song, called, *The Way that the World goes on;* and *Wattie and Geordie’s Foreign Intelligence,* an eclogue: These were my first year’s productions; and having continued to write on ever since, often without either rhyme or reason, my pieces have multiplied exceedingly.4

It is hard to see how Hogg could resolve to become a poet in 1797, if he was already writing poetry in 1794. What, then, are we to make of his account of his meeting with John Scott in 1797? In attempting to understand the nature of this passage, it is useful to bear in mind that its first appearance was in the version of the “Memoir” published in *Altrive Tales* in April 1832. Significantly, in the 1832 version of the “Memoir” Hogg made various alterations to the passage from the 1807 version quoted above, and these alterations seem designed to provide a better fit with the new story about his first encounter with the poetry of Burns. For example, in the 1832 version of the “Memoir” Hogg says that he began to write verse in 1796, although the 1807 version gives this date as 1793. Likewise, the 1832 version omits Hogg’s detailed account of his “first year’s productions” as a poet.

The story about the meeting with the “half daft” John Scott was written about thirty-five years after the event it purports to describe, at a time when Hogg was looking back over his long career as a writer while preparing a new version

---

of his autobiographical “Memoir.” Interestingly, in April 1832, the month in which the new Altrive Tales version of the “Memoir of the Author’s Life” was published, Hogg signed a contract to write a book-length Memoir of Burns.5

Perhaps, then, given all the circumstances, the passage in the 1832 version of the “Memoir of the Author’s Life” about Hogg’s first encounter with the poetry of Burns should not be regarded as a sober factual account of an actual meeting with John Scott in 1797.6 Instead, it can be seen as something that is, in a way, even more interesting: a piece of Romantic myth-making, in which Hogg stakes a claim to be recognised as Burns’s successor in the role of spokesman for, and poet of, the Scottish people. The ploughman Robert Burns, “the sweetest poet that ever was born,” had died “last harvest;” and now John Scott passes on the flame to the young shepherd, James Hogg. Interpreted in this way, the story about John Scott in the 1832 “Memoir” provides an indication that Hogg’s literary career was, in some ways, defined and shaped by his intense desire, as shepherd-poet, to become the successor of the great ploughman-poet, Robert Burns.

Nevertheless, in addition to recording the meeting with John Scott in the 1832 version of his autobiographical “Memoir,” Hogg mentions this story on two other occasions. Arguably, this lends support to the factuality of the story. However, these two other accounts were both written after 1832, and in them Hogg may simply be referring back to what he wrote in the 1832 “Memoir.” One of the two other

---


6 Hogg has left two other accounts (both brief) of his alleged meeting with John Scott in 1797. However, these two other accounts were both written after 1832: see the relevant notes by Gillian Hughes on p. 220 of her edition of Altrive Tales.
accounts forms part of Hogg’s note on “Tam o’ Shanter” in the Hogg–Motherwell edition of Burns:

Of all the funny poems of Burns, this is my favourite one. It was the first of his that I ever heard, and it still remains highest in my estimation, which may in some measure be owing to the supreme youthful delight with which I first heard it. Though I have related the anecdote somewhere else, I may mention here, that in the summer of 1797, there was a man named John Scott, a great original, but accounted “rather harum-scarum ways,” came to me on the summer hill. He had taken a fancy to me, and thought nothing of coming five or six miles out to the wild hills to visit, and well did I like to see him coming, he had so many songs and stories of all sorts. Among other things he recited Tam o’ Shanter to me one day, and it is impossible to describe the delight and amusement that I experienced. I made Jock sit down and repeat it over and over to me until I learned it by heart. That was the first hour I ever heard any thing about Burns; I had heard an old man once mention his name, but all that he could or would tell me of him was, “Humph! where hae ye been a’ your days that ye never heard o’ Burns?” From that day to this I have regarded Tam o’ Shanter as an inimitable poem.7

Hogg also refers to the John Scott story in a letter of 21 April 1834 to an unknown correspondent. This letter appears to have been written in response to an offer by Hogg’s correspondent to provide copies of some original letters by Burns for the Hogg–Motherwell edition. Hogg writes:

I never felt more grateful to any human being than to you for the generous disinterested proffer you have made me of the original letters of my great and matchless predecessor which now that the whole nation has been ransacked over and over again I consider as a treasure. By all means send me a copy and keep the originals. Do you think I would suspect a gentleman of forging a single line or even a word who has shown such an interest in me? Besides the stile of Burns is so peculiar I could swear to any two lines of it either in poetry or prose. Cancel whatever you please for that has been found necessary through all his original letters to a great extent. Alas I never saw him! But it was not because I was too young to remember him but I was then a poor lonely

shepherd on the wild mountains of Ettrick Forest and had no communication whatever with the literary world and though we were contemporaries I never saw or heard of him till the year after he died when a kind of half daft chield Jock Scott came to me on the hill and recited me 'Tam o’ Shanter. I was petrified with delight and never suffered him to quit me until I had it all by heart and whether it be from that first impression I cannot tell but it has been my favourite poem ever since. After I learned that we were both born on the 25th of Jan’ I determined to be his successor in Scottish poetry against all disadvantages and have at length attained that enviable distinction. But the queerest thing of all was that I had learned to identify myself so much with my predecessor that I expected to die at the same age and on the very same day of the month. So when the 21st of August began to approach I grew very ill—terribly ill and told the people who were waiting on me that I feared I was going to die. They said “they hopet no.” But before midnight I was so ill and so frightened that I was skirling and haudding by the blankets but after the 21st was fairly over I grew better. It certainly was rather a singular coincidence that we should both have been born on the 25th of Jan’ and both in the middle of terrible snow storms. What would I give to have a son on the 25th of Jan’ for I am sure he would turn out the greatest poet of us all. I have done all that I could to have a son on the 25th of Jan’ and I came so near it once that I had a daughter on the 23rd.8

It would appear from all this that Hogg’s admiration of Burns was so great as to be almost obsessive. Nevertheless, it also seems clear that he did not wish to be a mere imitator of his “great and matchless predecessor.” Instead, he aspired to make his own distinctive contribution as he followed in Burns’s footsteps. In the 1832 “Memoir,” this point is made explicit in the final paragraph of the story about John Scott, when Hogg writes: “I remember in the year 1812, the year before the publication of the ‘Queen’s Wake,’ that I told my friend, the Rev. James Nicol, that I had an inward consciousness that I should yet live to be compared with Burns; and though I might never equal him in some things, I

thought I might excel him in others.” The Queen’s Wake was the book-length poem that established Hogg’s reputation among his contemporaries, and he no doubt mentions it here in order to provide backing for his audacious claim that, in some ways, he might even outdo Burns. Audacious as it is, however, this claim does not amount to evidence of an ambition to replace Burns as the pre-eminent bard and spokesman of the non-elite people of Scotland. Instead, as he looks back over his literary career in his revised autobiographical “Memoir” of 1832, the author of The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) is simply asserting that it had been his ambition to try to continue Burns’s project, and that he had attempted to do so, not as an imitator, but in his own distinctive way.

Hogg’s sincere regard for Burns is given eloquent expression in his poem “Robin’s Awa!,” with which he concludes his Memoir of Burns. “Poor Jamie” (Hogg himself) “blunders an’ sings as he can,” but “at the blithe strain there was ane beat them a’,— / O there’s nae bard o’ nature sin’ Robin’s awa”:

Robin's Awa!

AIR—“There will never be peace till Jamie comes hame.”

By The Ettrick Shepherd

Ae night, i’ the gloaming, as late I pass’d by,
A lassie sang sweet as she milkit her kye,
An’ this was her sang, while the tears down did fa’—
O there’s nae bard o’ nature sin’ Robin’s awa!
The bards o’ our country, now sing as they may,
The best o’ their ditties but maks my heart wae;
For at the blithe strain there was ane beat them a’,—
O there’s nae bard o’ nature sin’ Robin’s awa!

Auld Wat he is wily and pleases us fine,
Wi’ his lang-nebbite tales an’ his ferlies langsyne;
Young Jack is a dreamer, Will sings like a craw,
An’ Davie an’ Delta, are dowy an’ slaw;
Trig Tam frae the Heelands was aince a braw man;
Poor Jamie he blunders an’ sings as he can;
There’s the Clerk an’ the Sodger, the Newsman an’ a’,
They but gar me greet sairer for him that’s awa!
'Twas he that could charm wi’ the wauff o’ his tongue,  
Could rouse up the auld an’ enliven the young,  
An’ cheer the blithe hearts in the cot an’ the ha’,—  
O there’s nae bard o’ nature sin’ Robin’s awa!  
Nae sangster amang us has half o’ his art,  
There was nae fonder lover an’ nae kinder heart;  
Then wae to the wight wha wad wince at a flaw,  
To tarnish the honours of him that’s awa!  

If he had some fauts I cou’d never them see,  
They’re nae to be sung by sic gilpies as me,  
He likit us weel, an’ we likit him a’,—  
O there’s nae sickan callan sin’ Robin’s awa!  
Whene’er I sing late at the milkin my kye,  
I look up to heaven an’ say with a sigh,  
Although he’s now gane, he was king o’ them a’,—  
Ah! there’s nae bard o’ nature sin’ Robin’s awa!"
Alexander McLachlan: 
The “Robert Burns” of Canada

Edward J. Cowan

Ross Roy is a native of Canada’s most exciting city. In the eighteen-twenties John MacTaggart, the scurrilously wicked author of The Scottish Gallovidian Encyclopaedia, having discovered that Montrealers found the Scots brogue not only vulgar but highly offensive, decided “to cultivate the English lisp.” His satirical attempts at self-improvement were no more successful, we may imagine, than his feeble efforts at courtship: “I have met with girls from my own Old Scotland, that I liked to spend the day with very much, but they had no pretensions to beauty: we could talk of witches, and quote Burns together.”¹

An engineer on the Rideau Canal and a poet of some accomplishment himself, MacTaggart neatly conveys a sense of how the Scots, out of all proportion to their numbers, dominated the politics and economics of what remained Canada’s most important city throughout the nineteenth-century, while indicating the resentment bred of their achievement. Scots were still to the fore as Ross Roy was growing up and where there were Scots there was Burns. As he himself has asserted, the Bible and Burns accompanied most Scots emigrants, including his own great-grandfather,

so his life-long fascination for the poet arguably had pre-natal origins.\textsuperscript{2}

It was nonetheless a problem at Burns Suppers in Canada to find plausible reference to that great country in Burns' poetry. One such was Burns' awesome \textit{cri de coeur}, “Address of Beelzebub,” his devastating response to those highland landlords who refused to allow their tenants “whose property they were” to emigrate “to the wilds of Canada, in search of that fantastic thing – Liberty” (Kinsley I:254). Another was when the spurned Burns, refused the hand of Jean by old Armour, compared his bewilderment to that of a “a feebly-struggling beaver down the roarings of Niagara” (Roy I: 36).

It was at a conference organised by the local Burns Club in Niagara-on-the-Lake that I first met Ross, ever since treasuring fond memories of Burns, whisky and guid crack. It is a pleasure, as well as a privilege, to be able to contribute to his festschrift.

As Professor Roy and others have charted, in the aftermath of the Burns phenomenon every community in Scotland, and many in Canada as well, produced its local bards, or perhaps song-writers would be more accurate for many of these effusions were meant to be, and were, sung.\textsuperscript{3} It was claimed that the Land of Burns had produced over 3000 poets “of greater or lesser degree,” though how this figure was guesstimated is not revealed.\textsuperscript{4} As a Montrealer, Ross Roy

\textsuperscript{2} “Critique,” \textit{The Scotsman}, 1 November 2008, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Selections from Scottish Canadian Poets Being A Collection of the Best Poetry Written by Scotsmen and their Descendants in the Dominion of Canada}, Introduction by Daniel Clark, The
would have been familiar with the much-loved verses of William Henry Drummond, whose *Complete Poems* with an introduction by Neil Munro was published by McClelland & Stewart in 1926. He may also have known the works of J. M. Harper of Quebec who was born in Johnstone, Renfrewshire.5

Another of the bardic crew from Johnstone who made something of a name for himself on both sides of the Atlantic, was Alexander McLachlan, of whom it was observed in 1862 that he was to Canada what Burns was to Scotland.6 Two years later he was dubbed the “Robert Burns of Canada.” The dubber became something of the duffer following his statement that “In racy humour, in natural pathos, and in graphic portraiture of character, he will compare favourably with the great peasant bard. In moral grandeur and beauty he strikes higher notes than ever echoed from the harp of Burns.”7 Further hyperbole accrued. McLachlan’s poem, *God*, was said to be equal in “grandeur and sublimity to the best efforts of the greatest Anglo-Saxon or Celtic poets.” His *Balaclava* stood comparison with

---

Caledonian Society of Toronto (Toronto: Imrie, Graham and Company, 1909), x.
Edward J. Cowan

Macaulay and Aytoun. Shortly after his death he was characterised as “in many respects, the most thoughtful, the most richly endowed, of all the Scottish American poets.” It is the intention of this investigation to determine whether there is any merit in these somewhat exaggerated claims.

McLachlan and his family are of considerable interest in the context of the mid-nineteenth-century emigrant experience. His father, Charles, a cotton-mill mechanic, went to Canada with his brother Daniel in the 1830s, settling in Caledon Township, Ontario, where they each acquired half of a two hundred acre lot. Daniel was accompanied by his wife and children but Charles left his family at home where he returned to visit them at least twice. Plans of the family joining him were dashed when he died suddenly at Paterson, New Jersey, where he worked winters as a machinist. Back home, Alexander’s upbringing was entrusted to his maternal grandfather, Alexander Sutherland, a Cameronian, and spiritual descendant of the extreme Covenanters, the “suffering, bleeding remnant,” who were severely persecuted by the state for their religious beliefs during the “Killing Times” of the 1680s. This man had a great influence on young Alexander. An unpublished scrap by McLachlan was entitled Hamilton’s Address to the Covenanting Army before the Battle of Drumclog:

Long, too long, has the oppressor,
Trampled o’er this bleeding land.
For our country, God and Freedom,
For the covenant we stand.¹⁰

Short though it is, this is much more effective than Burns’s “Solemn League and Covenant” quatrain (Kinsley II:803).

The other individual who made a lifelong impact on the boy was his teacher John Fraser, who, he later declared, “inspired me with the wish to do something for humanity, and to, by and by, leave the world a little better than I found

---

⁹ Ross, Scot in America, 399.
¹⁰ Metro Toronto Public Library.
it." Years later in Johnstone, in 1874, Fraser presided over a lecture on Shakespeare by his onetime pupil, now billed as the “celebrated Scoto Canadian poet,” who was on tour partly to promote his recent publication, Poems and Songs. Fraser also gave the address when McLachlan was presented with an edition of Shakespeare and twenty-four volumes of Scott’s works, publicly subscribed in Johnstone.

At age 13 Alexander went to work in the Paisley cotton mills which he escaped on becoming apprenticed as a tailor in Glasgow. An encounter with Chartism, doubtless inspired by Fraser who was a Chartist activist, bred a lifelong interest. Quite a number of Scottish emigrants to Canada at this time had Chartist sympathies, and it is possible that McLachlan was no exception, for there is some evidence that his political activities necessitated his departure in 1840 at the age of 22. Similar radical political views had earlier forced fellow-poet Alexander Wilson of Paisley to emigrate to America in 1794, where he became known as “The Father of American Ornithology.”¹¹

Within a year McLachlan had sold half of his father’s farm and bought another lot in Perth County which he cleared. He married his cousin Clamina (daughter of his Uncle Daniel), by whom he had eleven children. He took two of his sisters out to Canada, but it was not until 1859 that his last sister emigrated along with their mother, who died a year later. In the mid eighteen-forties Alexander moved his growing family back to Caledon. Like Burns he was a poor farmer, resuming his tailoring in the town of Erin which had been founded by Clamina’s brother-in-law, Daniel MacMillan. In time they moved to Amaranth a little north of Erin. He seems to have spent most of his time writing, reading, lecturing and dreaming. He died at Orangeville in 1896. Throughout his life he operated, as did so many of his countrymen, through a Scottish network.

Back in Scotland Alexander had won a reputation for “spouting,” and the muse followed him to Canada. He published *The Spirit of Love and other poems* in 1846, to be followed by three other volumes printed at his own expense. In addition, he contributed to publications in Canada and Scotland. On 25 January, 1859, he spoke at the Burns centennial festival in Toronto, praising his hero as the descendant of “the old blue-bonneted apostles of integrity,” who were responsible for creating a social fabric, “which had its foundation in rectitude and sturdy self-reliance,” informed by the Bible and the ballad. He proudly asserted that Burns stood at “the head of the literature of the working classes.”

Alexander then recited his poem “To the Memory of Robert Burns.”

The prominent politician Darcy McGee shared the platform with McLachlan on that day. Through McGee’s influence, the poet was appointed Emigration Agent for the Province of Canada in Scotland, a post which demanded a return home in 1862 in search of potential recruits. He targeted Paisley and Glasgow, attracting many weavers to his meetings. In a lecture to the Paisley Emigration Society he stressed the toughness and heroism of the pioneering life and praised winter as the most enjoyable time of the Canadian year. From 1859 McLachlan became a popular lecturer throughout Ontario and New York State, and it may be suspected that Burns was one of his favourite subjects.

There is no doubt that the poet’s empathy with Burns ran deeper than the usual superficial invocation of the bard. A healthy sense of man’s inhumanity to man sustained him until the end of his life. He claimed that since early boyhood he had worshipped Freedom under the Wallace oak at Elderslie, and that sense of freedom was to inform much of his verse. Burns, with all his faults, was his hero:

To thee the noble work was given

---

12 Quoted by Mary Jane Edwards, in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 1891-1900, vol. 12, online version. This excellent article, which I have shamelessly plundered, has uncovered a great deal of new information about McLachlan.

13 Published in his *Poems and Songs* (1874), 38-39.
To lift the poor and lowly.
Thy words are living, soulful things,
Around the world they're ringing;
Hope's smiles they bear, and everywhere
Set weary hearts a-singing. (95)  

There are distinct echoes of Burns in McLachlan’s “The Spirits of the Press”:
He's but a knave — a party slave,
To aims heroic blind —
Who'll meanly strive to keep alive
The hatreds of mankind.
Leave party slurs to hungry curs
Who're paid to bark and bite!
Trade not for gain your heart and brain,
But dare defend the right. (99)  

Almost ballad-like is the “The Fisherman’s Wife”:
Oh, they hae mony ills to dree,
A weary weird to dree,
The folk ordain’d to snatch their breid
Frae oot the angry sea
Oh! little do the big folk ken
The struggles o’ the poor,
The battles o’ brave fishermen,
Or what their wives endure.” (291-2)  

McLachlan’s “Provost John M’Rae” satirises the man who is on his way to success and greatness because he has acquired a cow:
Weel, Kirsty, since we’ve got a coo
We maun turn Tories, lass:
We maunna speak to puir folk noo,
But snoul them as we pass.
We’ll get in wi’ the muckle folk,
An’ min’ ma words this day,
Ye’ll see I’ll be nae langer Jock,
But Mr. John McRae. (300)  

While some of McLachlan’s Scottish poems perhaps tend to cleverness rather than brilliance, as in “A Lang-Heidit Laddie” (347) and “Ahead of His Time” (349), there is much merit in such compositions as the “Auld Hawkie” sequence (304, 324, 342), which is redolent with emulations of

---

14 Page references below are to Poetical Works of Alexander McLachlan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).
Burnsian language and sentiment. Auld Hawkie was the nickname of William Cameron, a well-known Glasgow patterer who composed and sold chapbooks:\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{verbatim}
For rich and puir would gather roun'
To hear him lay the gospel doun
Or lash some wicked, graceless loun,
In some high station,
Wha ground the faces o' the poor,
And obstinately, dowff and dour,
Misruled the nation.

He placed the culprit in your sicht,
And gart you lauch wi' a' your micht—
Nae wee bit snicker, but outricht,
Wi' sides a' shakin';
Or made your heart heave like a sea,
For oh, an orator was he
O' Nature's makin'!
\end{verbatim}

Productions like “Auld Granny Broon” (318) and “The Warlock o’ Gryffe” (328) illustrate his strength “in the weird” that one commentator detected.\textsuperscript{16} He shared with Burns a facility for effectively combining horror and humour in his treatment of the supernatural.

The Willie Fulton poems are hugely enjoyable, Willie serving as a kind of alter ego for McLachlan:

\begin{verbatim}
Willie Fulton leev'd up 'mang the Gleniffer braes,
In a wee flow'ry spot o' his ain;
Peculiar he was in his words and his ways,
Yet surely he leev'd not in vain . . .
I couldna tell a' that was writ in that face;
'Twas a volume to study and scan—
A guide to oor incomprehensible race
On a new and original plan;
A kind o' judicial synoptical face,
Closely written and a' underlined—
A living comment on the haill human race,
By Faith, Love and Hope countersigned. (359)
\end{verbatim}

Human dignity and worth pervade “The Cringer Re-buked” (362) and “Poverty’s Child” (364). “Clamina” (384) treats of

\textsuperscript{15} Cowan and Paterson, \textit{Folk in Print}, 28-30.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Poetical Works}, 26.
his personal desolation on the death of his wife, though it is
striking that love poetry is conspicuously absent in the
McLachlan canon; his world is relentlessly male. “Rein Old
Adam In” (386) is an attack on consumerism; “Auld
Skinflint’s Dream” (389), hilariously inspired by “Holy
Willie’s Prayer,” concerns the thoughts of a miser
contemplating his impending death.

I would not wish to convey the impression that
McLachlan was exclusively a political poet. Like his mentor
he was capable of producing a good deal of rubbish, much of
it cringe-inducing and better left unwritten, with the obvious
proviso that words written to be sung often appear bathetic
in print. He produced many poems of almost unbearable
banality, crassly sentimental effusions like those which
clutter the pages of anthologies of the Victorian era in both
Scotland and Canada. Poems such as “Poverty’s
Compensations” and “Gaun Hame” are nowadays quite
unacceptable. The latter is about death, as are an unhealthy
number of McLachlan’s creations:

It’s no’ me that’s deein ava, Mary.
It’s no’ me that’s deein ava:
It’s but the worn clay drappin aff, Mary
It’s but the auld house gaun to fa’;
It’s but the caged bird getting free, Mary
That soon will soar singin awa’. (66)

Many of his poems dwell upon the meaning of life and death.
He clearly had serious doubts about the hereafter and it is
fairly certain that for a time his faith deserted him, as
evidenced by such examples as “Man” and “A Dream”:

Life’s a great mystery, deeper than Death,
Infinite History, woven of breath.
Mortal do thou make their meaning sublime. (45)

The theme runs through many other compositions such as
“To An Indian Skull” (69), “The Old Ruin Grey” (78), “The
Seer” (79), “The Ruined Temple” (84), and “Change” (86).
Confirmation of this period of doubt is provided by the 1848
census which lists his household as having “no creed or
denomination.” In later life he turned to spiritualism, a topic
on which he lectured in both Scotland and Canada.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{17}\) *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, as in n. 12 above.
His “Memories of Scottish Literature: An Address to the Scottish Thistle in Canada” is best forgotten with its hopelessly clichéd rhymes. In truth some of what can be assumed to have been his earlier Scottish effusions could have been written by anybody. He apostrophised the River Cart in “Cartha Again,” a favourite theme which figures in several pieces:

Oh why did I leave thee? Oh why did I part
From thee lovely Cartha, thou stream of my heart?
Oh why did I leave thee and wander awa’
Frae the hame o my childhood, Gleniffer an a’? (102).

“I Winna Gae Hame” and “Scotland Revisited” are in similar vein. Rather better is “Recollections of Clydesdale,” a poem in honour of David Boyle of Greenock who was Archaeologist of Ontario. After much nonsense about “running aboot the braes,” paddling in the rills, celebrating “Benlomond hoar” and the spirit of freedom, the poem ends with:

Just here the muse got aff the track
And as I canna ca’ her back
Nae langer noo my brains I’ll rack
Sae let her gang
In hope we sune may hae a crack
I quat (quit) my sang. (112)

“The Scot,” a poem for James Bain of Toronto Public Library, demonstrates McLachlan’s sense of humour:

A real enthusiast indeed,
His heart is apt to tak’ the lead,
And get the better o’ his heid,
E’en for a myth,
To ruin beyond a’ remede
Rins a’ his pith . . .

He’s gi’en owre muckle to debating,
And theologic speculating:
On far-aff things he’s contemplating,
Lost in a trance:
To be, as said, watching, waiting
For the main chance. (122-3)

Alexander McLachlan remained poor most of his life because, according to one of his editors there was not a great market for poetry in nineteenth-century Canada. He lacked any kind of patron; “to the struggling pioneer, poetry was no
indispensable desideratum.” Nonetheless it is clear that his poetry did bring some rewards and that his poverty has been somewhat exaggerated. It was stated in 1900 that McLachlan “remained a Scottish bard of the first half of his century, rather than a Canadian bard of the second half, the bard of a glorious dawn” in Canada’s literature. Elizabeth Waterston argues that he

remained an emigrant, not an immigrant. He was too tied to his native range of awareness to be able to move on and adjust as poet to his new homeland. It was a mark of his limitation as well as of his achievement that he was always called ‘the Burns of Canada.’ The judgements of both commentators are rather harsh. McLachlan is of great interest precisely because he inhabited two worlds. He was an individual who attempted to keep alive his Scottish identity based on his early life beside the Cart and the Clyde and his experiences as a radical; as such he is a valuable example of how Scots approached Scottishness and kept it alive in exile.

Rather more perceptive is the view of Kenneth Hughes that McLachlan, “Poet Laureate of Labour,” represented a “vulgar” strain of Canadian writing which found little acceptance in the country’s elitist and conservative literary establishment, and W. J. Keith’s comment hailing the poet’s output as “the first notable Canadian example of what might be called proletarian verse.” Such views are somewhat more sympathetic than that of my friend, Professor Waterston, who seems to ask a great deal in expecting McLachlan to adjust poetically, much more rapidly than she thinks he actually did, to his adopted country. He makes the point in poem after poem that the freedom which had eluded him in Scotland was attainable in Canada. Indeed, it will be argued in the remainder of this discussion that McLachlan was deeply committed both emotionally and artistically to Canada, a commitment clearly demonstrated in his later

---

18 *Poetical Works*, 25.
19 Waterston, *Rapt in Plaid* 27.
poetry and powerfully signalled in his ambitious sequence *The Emigrant*, a truly remarkable attempt to encapsulate the emigrant experience, while conferring a poetic identity upon the great new country which sustained him. Of course, since the work is unfinished, his ambition was not fulfilled but the experiment was not a total failure as some recent excellent Canadian criticism has shown.

In approaching this opus McLachlan was able to draw upon some of the remarkable output of the phenomenal amount of literary material about Canada that had already been produced by Scots. In particular, he depended upon John Galt’s two emigrant novels, *Bogle Corbet: or, The Emigrants* (1831) and *Lawrie Todd* (1832), as well as Catherine Parr Traill’s *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836). The latter and her sister Susanna Moodie, author of *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852), were both married to Scots, so, along with Galt, who in 1827-29 founded the Ontarian towns of Guelph and Goderich on behalf of the Canada Company, they probably reinforced McLachlan’s sense of the specifically Scottish emigrant experience. For the background to the Gaelic experience he used *Gloomy Memories* (Toronto 1857), by Donald McLeod, who had emigrated from Scotland in 1854 to Woodstock, Ontario.

*The Emigrant* opens with an apostrophe to Canada, “Land of mighty lake and forest,” but apostrophizes it as a land lacking a stirring story, a glorious past, and traditions and songs about the deeds of heroes, and so oddly screens out the experience of the native peoples whom most of his fellow immigrant Scots seemed intent upon discussing and describing. For McLachlan, there is no need to seek foreign inspiration when history is being forged in the backwoods, where poetry, “have we but the hearing ear,/Is always whisp’ring near.” The emigrant, undoubtedly a close approximation to Alexander McLachlan himself, receives a

---

departing sermon from his grandfather in sentiments worthy of Burns:

There’s much which we must teach ourselves,
That is not taught at college;
Without a sympathetic soul,
How vain is all our knowledge!
Be charitable when you speak
Of man and human nature;
Who finds no worth in human hearts
Must be a worthless creature. (217).

Having described the journey, the “pioneers of civilization/Founders of a mighty nation” enter the forest, depicted as a pristine wilderness bereft of birdsong. The first tree is cut, the log cabin built. The first winter sets in, a time to be whiled away with stories of a hunter’s love for an Indian maid and the singing of ballads from home. A lengthy account of a battle with the native peoples is seriously anachronistic. There follows the tale of the Gael, Donald Ban. The sequence ends with a promise to return to the saga at some future point when the innocence of the first settlers would be shattered by an influx of speculators, jobbers, incompetent teachers, bogus preachers, unqualified physicians and cunning politicians, all intent upon the destruction of the Canadian Eden (209-56). Such pessimism clearly blighted the colony; when McLachlan was appointed Emigration Agent for Scotland, he was no longer at liberty to enlarge upon such negative developments since he was supposed to be recruiting potential emigrants rather than warning them off.

Shortly after he emigrated, McLachlan consciously contributed to the creation of a poetic identity for Canada. In this, art reflected life because his sense of Canadian identity was firmly rooted in his identity as a Scot. His editor rather exaggerated in asserting that McLachlan’s patriotism and love of motherland were even more pronounced than they were in Burns, but Rabbie never experienced exile. We do not know what he would have made of Jamaica. Burns excelled at transforming the familiar into unforgettable poetical experience. McLachlan had to express the unfamiliarity of the Canadian outback in poetic terms. “The Picnic” is rendered as a very douce version of “The Holy
Fair.” The acquisition of “Acres of His Own” signifies “the road to independence,” in which Nature’s nobility scorns mock gentility:

Fools but talk of blood and birth
Ev’ry man must prove his worth.
Up, be stirring, be alive!
Get upon a farm and thrive!
He’s a king upon a throne
Who has acres of his own! (201-2)

There are echoes of some of Burns’s wounding ditties in “Neighbour John,” “dull as stone,” the kind of person we have all met:

Talk not of old cathedral woods
Their Gothic arches throwing,
John only sees in all those trees
So many saw-logs growing. (203)

McLachlan attempted a Canadian accent in “The Backwoods Philosopher” (264) and Old Hoss (282). Several poems look as if they might have been intended for a follow-up to The Emigrant, including one in honour of “Backwoods Hero” Daniel McMillan that provides a believable picture of the inherent difficulties in establishing a community from scratch and dealing with its querulous inhabitants (278). McLachlan’s Carlylean “Past and Present” (195) is as shrewdly observed as his poem on the Sage of Annandale himself (308).

He also memorialises old acquaintances such as Hugh McDonald (311) and his teacher John Fraser, the Burns-like Chartist:

A bulwark to the mild and meek,
A staff was he to all the weak,
A voice for all who could not speak . . .

Oh! why will men not walk erect,
Their brows with native glory deck’d,
And feel the joy of self-respect,
And moral worth;
And throw aside their castes and creeds,
And make their standard noble deeds—
    Not blood and birth? . . .

Cast selfishness from out thy mind.
Feel for and with all humankind,
Leave nothing but regret behind. (317)

John Fraser’s musical talents resulted in an American tour with his own cast of performers in 1852. His daughter, Jeanie, caught a chill from which, after a lingering illness she died in Lanark, Ontario. Fraser then retired to Johnstone, dying in 1879.22

If these poems on broadly Scottish themes could be said to preserve McLachlan’s philosophy of life then Canadian verses such as “The Man Who Rose From Nothing” (204), “Young Canada Or, Jack’s As Good’s His Master” (207) and “Hurrah For the New Dominion” (208) celebrate freedom, achievement and human worth in the new land. “The Men of the Dominion” (205) could have been in the running for Canada’s national anthem and its sentiments are distinctly Burnsian:

The man of downright common-sense
Scorns make-believe and all pretence,
    Puts intrigue far apart,
Despising double-dealing work,
And ev'ry little dodge and quirk,
    With all his head and heart.

With freeman written on his brow—
His ancient badge the spade and plow—
    A true-born son of Adam—
A brother of humanity,
He shows the same urbanity
    To plowman and to madam. (205)

What McLachlan’s modern critics perhaps fail to stress is that he took values from Burns which he transplanted to, and cultivated in, his adopted country. Admittedly, this was a severely selective Burns which suppressed the bard’s sexual escapades and misdemeanours, his absence of thrift, his disagreements with the Kirk, and his supposed over-fondness for the bottle, which latter McLachlan was prepared to overlook. Instead he promoted the man of independent mind, the critic of tyranny, privilege, rank, misbegotten wealth, corruption and Man’s inhumanity to

22 Poetical Works, p. 415, note.
Man. He celebrated Burns’s reverence for nature, for honest toil, for education, for individual freedom and the sanctity of human worth and dignity, all values which were regarded in the nineteenth century as ideal qualities in new emigrants, and still treasured by most Canadians today. Burns was thirty-seven when he died, McLachlan seventy-eight. We cannot know how Burns’s ideas might have evolved had he lived, but what is remarkable is that McLachlan cherished his passion for poetry and the justice of the Chartist cause until his dying day. He was a lifelong socialist who could celebrate imperial achievement.

His “Scottish Emigrant’s Song” won second prize at a Scottish event in Toronto 14 September 1859. It begins with the usual maudlin invocation of heathy hills, golden broom, bonnie glens and wimpling burns but it ends by saying that should France threaten to invade, the Scots can be relied upon:

\[ \ldots \text{to put the Lion's foot} \]
\[ \text{Ance mair upon his neck;} \]
\[ \text{A Highland host in Canada} \]
\[ \text{Will don the kilt again,} \]
\[ \text{And rush their native land to free} \]
\[ \text{Like thunder on the main.} \]
\[ \text{And brother Scots owre a' the earth} \]
\[ \text{Will stretch a haun to save,} \]
\[ \text{We're no the chiel wad sit and see} \]
\[ \text{Our mother made a slave.} \]
\[ \text{The spirit o' the covenant,} \]
\[ \text{Wi' every Scot remains.} \]
\[ \text{The blood o' Wallace and o' Bruce,} \]
\[ \text{Is leaping in our veins.}\]

Similarly, McLachlan composed a paean to Britain, celebrating the visit to Canada of the future Edward VII, in 1860. Scots will defend their queen, Victoria, “the glory of the world,” but the poem ends with a slight warning:

\[ \text{May wisdom guide the prince's heart} \]
\[ \text{And from all ill preserve it,} \]

\[\text{23 This and the quotations in the remainder of this article are from The Alexander McLachlan papers and appear by kind permission of Metro Toronto Public Library for which the author is extremely grateful.}\]
And we'll be true to him, if like
His mother he'll deserve it.
McLachlan adhered to the long-standing Scottish constitutional principle that so far as the monarch was concerned loyalty had to be earned.

A great opportunity was missed when in 1974 the University of Toronto Press re-issued McLachlan’s *Poetical Works* of 1900, with the addition of a few poems from earlier publications. Unfortunately it did not include any of the author's unpublished poems. The 1900 volume had been edited by a group of the poet’s friends who left out some of his more interesting material, apparently highlighting anything remotely Christian but censoring items considered too political. When I once stated at the annual Burns Conference at the University of Strathclyde that I did not know where the missing poems were, a sweet lady suggested that I should look in an archive! Actually I had visited many but I had somehow missed the Metropolitan Library of Toronto which contains various papers arranged by McLachlan’s daughter, Mary, most likely for a planned publication. Unfortunately there is at present no trace of what must have been a substantial correspondence, which should contain exchanges with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Oliver Wendell Holmes and James Russell Lowell, all Harvard men. Another correspondent, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was obviously a great influence. McLachlan was not totally fixated on Burns; other favourite *literati* were Coleridge, Shelley, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Scott and Hogg, Carlyle and Ruskin.

Some of the Metro Library poems prove that his radicalism accompanied him to the grave. They may have been written much earlier but the fact that he preserved them is significant. “The Workman’s Song” requires no comment:

```
Come all ye weary sons of toil,
And listen to my song,
We’ve ate oppression’s bitter bread,
And ate it far too long.
O, poverty’s a dreadful thing,
Her bite is always keen:
Oppression’s foot is always shod,
```
And greed is always mean.
The great, the greasy multitude
Should neither think nor feel;
They've but to lick the hand that holds
Their noses to the wheel.
O, they forget the blood of Knox
Is running in our veins,
Or that we e'er listened to
The peasant poet's strains.

“The Cry of the Oppressed” reads almost like a call to revolution:
Tell them the change is close at haun,
The voice o' the oppressed
Is rising up o'er all the laun,
And won't be put to rest.
Tell them oure lang they've had the grip,
It's greed that bursts the sack,
And they maun find some fairer way,
The game o' gie and tak.
For oh, if they're to guide affairs!
If such things are to staun.
You'll soon hae nocht but Millionaires
And Beggars in the laun,
And Liberty shall perish then,
And Scotland's thistles wither,
And slaves shall till ilk Scottish glen,
Where we were bairns thegither.

This was meat too strong for Canadian stomachs in 1900.
In 1896, the year of McLachlan's death, Robert Service arrived in British Columbia. In his so-called “sourdough” poems Service would arguably create a much more long-lasting version of Canadian identity which still persists worldwide than anything produced by McLachlan.24 By the end of the nineteenth century there were, in any case, many competing cultural, literary and ethic contributions to the rich Canadian mosaic but Alexander McLachlan could be said to have processed Burns for his fellow Canadians so that

long-standing Scottish values and assumptions, encapsulated by the bard, were made available to the denizens of the new dominion. Such values, in many cases, coincided with those which were deemed desirable in aspiring emigrants, for whom, around Confederation, Scots of a certain type were regarded as something of a benchmark. In poetic achievement, adventurousness, wit, the celebration of love and the human spirit, joy and originality he was far from deserving the accolade of “Robert Burns of Canada,” but he never claimed to be so. By his own account he wished to do something for humanity, and to leave the world a little better than he found it, in which endeavours he certainly did not fail. He was the most accomplished of the Scottish-Canadian poets writing in his day and as such, was as deserving as any to be named Canada’s Burns.

When, on a special invitation from my patron and friend G. Ross Roy, I visited the University of South Carolina for several weeks in summer 1997, I was working mainly on the translation of Hugh MacDiarmid’s *On a Raised Beach* and some of his shorter lyrics in Scots, for a book which came out in Italy in 2000. Yet it was Ross’s enthusiasm for Robert Burns and all his achievements which attracted my curiosity and moved me on more than one occasion.

I remember that one hot July morning Ross teasingly played the part of a detective story’s weaver, waking me up quite early and telling me that he would fetch me soon because he had, at his house, some serious stuff to show to me. He obviously did not reveal the secret behind that mysterious invitation, yet I suspected that the reward for that trip would be enormous. Once in his house, I was told that a special clerk from the bank would arrive soon, with a substantial box which I would be allowed to peep into. And so it was.

That morning I had the opportunity to read some of the most moving original letters by Robert Burns, especially the ones in which love was protagonist, with some suspected traces of tears shed on the sheets of paper, here and there within his handwriting convolutions. I obviously wondered, and asked on several different occasions, why and how those letters crossed the ocean and landed in South Carolina,
getting larger and larger pieces of the whole story, little by little, through the voice of Ross himself.

More than once we sat at a table, sipping Amarone sometimes, planning not only my book on MacDiarmid but one on Burns as well. The Burns one proved to be more than complicated, a real challenge for a translator of poetry. I was fascinated at that time, and I still am, by the rhythms and the story of “Tam o’ Shanter,” yet it was the songs, and the love songs especially, that I liked best, remembering not only the talks I shared with Ross but also all the Jean Redpath recordings which Valerie Gillies had played to me some years before in Edinburgh.

So, in July 2002, as my contribution to the celebration in Edinburgh when Ross’s achievements were recognized with an honorary degree, I decided to publish a little book with three Burns songs translated into Italian. It was Burns’s stanza constructions and his rhymes which I wanted to reproduce most, yet my translations from “Of A’ the Airts” and “John Anderson My Jo” turned out to be more literary and formal than the original songs, as was also my first version of “A Red, Red Rose”:

Una rossa rosa rossa

Come una rossa rosa rossa è l’amor mio
Appena sbocciata in giugno;
Come una melodia è l’amor mio
Suonata con dolcezza e armonia. –

Sei così bella e dolce, fanciulla mia,
E sono di te così innamorato
Che sempre t’amèrò, cara mia,
Finché i mari non avranno dissecato. –

Finché i mari non avranno dissecato, cara mia,
E le rocce non si scioglieranno al sole:
T’amèrò sempre, cara mia,
Intanto che fluiscono le sabbie della vita. –

E allora addio, unico amor mio!
E allora addio, anche se per poco!  
E verrò di nuovo, amor mio,  
Anche se dovessi fare mille miglia!

Speaking about “song,” James Fenton writes that people often want to know, when the subject of writing for music comes up, whether the music or the text comes first. If the music does indeed come first, then the lyricist had better think of this work as something rather less than poetry, for it is rather too much to expect that words fitted to pre-existent music can amount to much more than a very professional job.

Despite all the truth contained in Fenton’s observation, I have never considered Burns’s lyrics something less than poetry, and I never wanted my translations to be less than ‘Italian’ poetry.

Yet we must admit here that a translator of songs has to face a double challenge: on the one hand, the musicality of the song itself; on the other, the fact that both the melody of the tune and the lyrics are supplied to him or her by the original country or original author. How can he or she be faithful to all of these details, and still be producing something which can be accepted by a different kind of audience speaking a different language and sharing a different cultural and musical context? I am aware that, like the translations produced in the nineteen-seventies by Masolino D’Amico or Renato Ferrari, my 2002 translations of the three Burns songs resulted in texts to be read on the page, more than words to be sung or sound waves to be listened to.

At this point, it is necessary to let my readers know that part of my participation in the arts also involves amateur performance, singing and playing, on my guitars, some of the most memorable tunes both from the past and present, though mainly tunes composed by modern and contemporary songwriters. This sometimes involves the translation of some of my favourite songs into Italian to create something fresh for my friendly audiences, who can, at least in part, catch some new resonances in my versions of Hamish Henderson, Van Morrison, Terry Callier, Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen.
Yet, for a translator of songs, Burns was and still is a real giant to be defeated: all the monosyllables contained in his songs are a challenge to any translator, and especially to an Italian one, and his lyrics are challenging also because of his tight rhythms contained in that incredible economy of words. The only singable result I have managed so far is, again, *A Red Red Rose*, in this version that was first presented in May 2008, at a seminar on translation I gave for a master class at the University of Pisa. This is, obviously, and again, dedicated to my friend Ross, and I am sure other versions or singable translations will come, hopefully in the near future:

*Una rossa rosa rossa*

Rosa rossa è l’amor mio  
Appena uscita in giugno  
L’amor mio è una melodia  
Dolce e in armonia  

Sei così bella cara mia  
E io tanto perso in te  
Che t’amerò per sempre amor  
Finché s’asciuga il mar.  

Finché s’asciuga il mare amor  
E fondono le rocce  
T’amerò per sempre cara mia  
Pur se la vita scorre via  

E allora addio, solo amor mio,  
E allora addio ma per poco,  
E verrò di nuovo amore mio  
Dovessi fare mille miglia!
References
Ferrari, Renato, ed. *Burns the Songster: A Selection of Songs and Ballads*, 2 volumes (Bologna: Cooperativa Libraria Universitaria, 1974).
A Passion for Scholarship & Collecting: The G. Ross Roy Collection of Robert Burns & Scottish Literature

Thomas Keith

Stories of collectors’ quests for books go back to ancient times, and many are recounted in Nicholas Basbanes’ excellent 1995 book, *A Gentle Madness*, but it was the Rev. Thomas Frognall Dibdin who first coined the term “bibliomania” in his 1809 book, *Bibliomania; or, Book-Madness; containing some account of the History, Symptoms, and Cure of This Fatal Disease*. Though Dibdin cited a “legitimate medical authority as a source for...the illness,” he himself called his book a “bibliographical romance,” so it is not off the mark to identify his comments as tongue-in-cheek:

[Bibliomania] has raged chiefly in palaces, castles, halls, and gay mansions, and those things which in general are supposed not to be inimical to health, such as cleanliness, spaciousness, and splendour, are only so many inducements toward the introduction and propagation of the BIBLIOMANIA! What renders it particularly formidable is that it rages in all seasons of the year, and at all periods of human existence.

Apropos, there is a rare book in the Roy Collection written in 1811 by the Reverend William Peebles from Newton-upon-Ayr. Peebles had previously been the object of Burns’s satire in both “The Holy Fair” and “The Kirk’s Alarm.” Peebles’

---

book is a ranting polemic titled *Burnomania: The Celebrity of Robert Burns Considered in a Discourse Addressed to All Real Christians of Every Denomination*. Combined with bibliomania from time to time, “Burn[s]omania” is known to afflict some Burnsians.

Whether purchasing a book from a major auction house or from a parking-lot flea market, a collector can easily feel that he or she has stepped in at just the right moment and rescued that book for posterity—from a less discriminating collector, from an unscrupulous, high-priced, or slovenly bookseller, and always from the poor soul who might have cherished it just as much, had they only found it. Writing in 1862, John Hill Burton touched on this experience:

> It is, as you will observe, the general ambition of [collectors] to find value where there seems to be none, and this develops a certain skill and subtlety, enabling the operator, in the midst of a heap of rubbish, to put his finger on those things which have in them the latent capacity to become valuable and curious...In such a manner is it that books are saved from annihilation, and that their preservers become the feeders of the great collections in which, after their value is established, they find refuge; and herein it is that the class to whom our attention is at present devoted perform an inestimable service to literature.³

There is perhaps only one thing a book collector enjoys as much as finding the books he or she is looking for, and that is walking away, after some expected haggling, with a great (i.e., inexpensive) price. Collecting goes back to ancient times, and there is an appropriate quotation on this subject in the Bible, much relished by Ross Roy:

> It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer,
> But when he has gone his way, then he boasteth.
> (Proverbs XX, 14)

Trace elements of “bibliomania” can be found in the character of any serious collector. A colorful description of serious collectors was given in a speech to the Bibliographical Society of America in 1950 by Clifton Waller Barrett, whose extensive collection of American Literature is

---

now at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Barrett spoke about what he referred to as the “genus” Collector:

First of all he must be distinguished by his rapacity. If he does not covet and is not prepared to seize and fight for every binding, every issue and every state of every book that falls even remotely within the range of his particular bibliomania, treat him as the lawful fisherman treats a nine-inch bass; throw him back—he is only an insignificant and colorless offshoot of the true parent stock.4

Ross Roy is by any definition a serious collector. It has been Dr. Roy’s passion to gather a massive and comprehensive collection of material on Burns and Scottish literature that is now the largest such collection in North America, and is rivaled in size only by the Mitchell Library Collection in Glasgow.

Dr. Roy dates the beginning of the G. Ross Roy Collection of Scottish Literature to 1890 in Quebec when his grandmother, Charlotte Sprigings, inscribed an edition of Burns’s works to his grandfather: “W. Ormiston Roy / from his friend, / Charlotte A. Sprigings. / Xmas 1890.”5 By the time he died, in 1958, and left his collection to his grandson, W. Ormiston Roy had been collecting Burns and Burns-related books for at least sixty-six years. During the fifty years that have followed, Ross Roy has increased the size of that original collection at least ten-fold and, with deliberation and patience, he has added some of the rarest books known not only to collectors of Scottish literature, but to all book collectors. These include a copy of the Kilmarnock Edition (1786) and the only known complete copy of The Merry Muses of Caledonia (1799). A conservative calculation would make the Roy Collection one hundred and twenty years old.

A compelling influence on content of the Roy Collection is the literary background of the collection’s namesake and founder. Dr. Roy may not have known when he started out

---

how his passion for books and for Burns would lead him to become both a world-class collector and a world-class Burns scholar. By following those parallel interests Dr. Roy created three solid institutions for his fellow academics and his fellow collectors: the forty-four-year-old, distinguished scholarly journal, Studies in Scottish Literature; the G. Ross Roy Collection at the University of South Carolina’s new Ernest F. Hollings Library; and the W. Ormiston Roy Memorial Fellowship which each year provides funds and housing for a scholar chosen from an application process, to conduct research in the Roy Collection for up to five weeks.

Conceived in 1963 when Dr. Roy was teaching at the University of Montreal and published later that year when he moved to Texas Tech University, Studies in Scottish Literature had an original editorial board comprising David Daiches, A.M. Kinghorn, Hugh MacDiarmid, A.L. Strout, and Dr. Kurt Wittig. Contributors have included some of the most important Scottish authors, poets, scholars, and critics of the last seventy years, including Alan Bold, George Bruce, Ian Campbell, Edward J. Cowan, Thomas Crawford, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Douglas Gifford, Duncan Glen, Alasdair Gray, Seamus Heaney, R.D.S. Jack, Tom Leonard, Maurice Lindsay, Norman MacCaig, Sorley Maclean, Margery Palmer McCulloch, William McIlvanney, Edwin Morgan, Edwin Muir, Trevor Royle, Tom Scott, Iain Crichton Smith, Sydney Goodsir Smith, Muriel Spark, Rodger L. Tarr, Robert Crawford, and Christopher Whyte, just to name a few.

Scholarship and collecting are two fields that have often remained separate, with the practitioners of each commonly avoiding the other’s field, let alone excelling in it. However, Dr. Roy has managed to succeed at both and by doing so has in many respects helped bring the relationship between research and collecting much closer than it has ever been.

To help shed a little light on Dr. Roy’s double achievement, here is a quote from Dr. A.S.W. Rosenbach who was one of the most famous American booksellers of the twentieth century and who, along with Henry E. Huntington, J. Pierpont Morgan, and Harry Hunt Ransom, was one of the century’s greatest book collectors as well. In 1927 Rosenbach wrote:
It is a wonderful and magnificent thing that the gathering of books in this country is in the hands of leaders of her industries, the so-called business kings, and not in the hands of college professors and great scholars... It is paradoxical, but true, that not a single great library in the world has been formed by a great scholar.\textsuperscript{6}

Obviously Dr. Rosenbach did not imagine or predict the scope of Dr. Roy’s vision. One could reasonably speculate, given stereotypes attached to scholars and academics, that it is primarily from the academic side that the wall between collecting and scholarship is maintained, but that is not necessarily true. When the major Philadelphian book collector Seymour Adelman was urged by his friends to publish a compilation of his various papers and speeches produced over a lifetime of experience collecting books, Adelman did so and wrote in his 1977 introduction:

My main anxiety is that I am now in danger of losing my franchise as a collector... I was put on this earth to collect books, not to write them. It has taken me fifty years to gather my collection, now forever happily in residence at Bryn Mawr College, and I would like to add to its shelves from time to time. Hence my concern. If, because of this book, my integrity as a collector is sullied by authorship, who knows what dire consequences will follow. Will any self-respecting rare-book dealer ever let me into his shop again? Will I be permitted to attend auction sales? Will I be expelled from the Philobiblon Club?\textsuperscript{7}

Bear in mind that is only for being an “author” that Adelman is traumatized into fearing that he’ll be thrown out of the collecting brotherhood, he doesn’t even mention what would probably to him be the much more disturbing appellation of “scholar.”

So there is a reason why the G. Ross Roy Collection in the University of South Carolina’s new Special Collections library is a place where a massive and valuable collection of Scottish material will continue to grow and be preserved; where scholarly research can be conducted; and where the

\textsuperscript{6} A.S.W. Rosenbach, \textit{Books and Bidders} (Little, Brown: Boston, 1927).

curious or needy who have exhausted their searches in the stacks can go to find what they’re looking for. The reason is that Dr. Roy is both a collector and a scholar, and it is his resolve that this comprehensive collection should be accessible to researchers. Who is allowed to use this collection? Legal fine print aside, Patrick Scott, former Director of Special Collections, puts it most simply: “anyone with a pure heart, clean hands, and a photo ID.”

In regard to Burnsomania mentioned earlier, Dr. Roy has somehow managed to avoid the symptoms of it. Yet, being well rounded in all ventures, Dr. Roy does have in the collection a wooden bowl and spoon that are thought to have belonged to the poet. One story such objects tell is about the peculiar craze throughout most of the nineteenth century for personal relics of Burns. In fact, the obsession with all things Burnsonian led to quite a few suspicious or wild claims. Following an exhibit for the centennial of the poet’s death held by the Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts in 1896, the Memorial Catalogue of the Burns Exhibition was published by Wm. Hodge & Co. and T&R Annan & Sons in 1898. The editor of the catalogue, Wm. Young, R.S.A., went to great lengths to explain that of all the objects on exhibit, which included portraits, paintings based on the poet’s works, manuscripts, holographs, books and relics, it was the relics which generated the greatest excitement among the attendees: “Hence it is everything connected, in the remotest degree, with his earthly pilgrimage [that] is guarded by all sorts and conditions of men with a solicitude that is apt to evoke a smile from those outwith the pale of the national feeling.” The objects included every kind of furniture, kitchen implements, toiletries, scissors, knives, medals, swords, pistols, spectacles and snuffboxes, all having some relation to the poet and his contemporaries. Young also points out that the assumption that these items were what they were claimed to be was accepted by most of the public with “unquestioning faith,” and he goes on to suppose that if the exhibit were to feature the very set of bagpipes the devil was playing in the poem “Tam o’ Shanter” that it “might have been on view without exciting more than the mildest measure of surprise.”
Dr. Roy once expressed his opinion on the subject of relic-mania and Burnsomania in relation to that always-elusive character Highland Mary, and I paraphrase:
For all the locks of hair identified as belonging to Highland Mary, one can only reasonably conclude that she was bald at the time of her death.

And yet, these artifacts, authentic or not, form part of what is the material research in addition to the books of this collection. Though there is currently a trend among university collections that is starting to incorporate items of research value other than books, from the beginning Dr. Roy has filled this collection with more than the traditional items found in traditional book collections.

The Roy Collection is, of course, well grounded in eighteenth-century Scottish poetry and song with essential as well as rare editions of Ramsay, Fergusson, Macpherson, the song collections by Oswald, Johnson and the rest, as well every major eighteenth and nineteenth-century edition of Burns, tracked in an annotated, interlinear edition of Egerer’s Bibliography, rebound in four volumes. Every biography of Burns as well as the correspondence, major critical essays, bibliographies and illustrated folios, are to be found in the Roy Collection. In addition to books, standard formats include pamphlets, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, and broadsides.

The Roy Collection is strong in the areas of original manuscripts, letters, holograph proof copies, association copies and annotated editions of Burns, as well as housing the David Morrison Scotia and Scotia Review Collection, the Jonathan B. Pons Collection, the Robert Fitzhugh Research Collection, manuscripts and books of the poet Hamish Henderson and the scholar Robert Thornton, and original research notes, drafts, and recordings of Serge Hovey and related working papers for Hovey’s Robert Burns Song Book donated by the late Esther Hovey and her son, Daniel. Some of the rare holograph materials in the Roy collection are original letters between Burns and “Clarinda,” Agnes McLehose, Burns’s letter to John McMurdo which includes the one and only mention by Burns of his Merry Muses of Caledonia, a Burns autograph manuscript of the song, “Ay Waukin’, O,” Robert Ainslie’s copy of the 1787 Edinburgh
edition with Burns’s handwritten notes indicating proper names throughout, James Hogg’s annotated copy of Burns’s poems, and Burns’s own annotated copy of the first volume of John Moore’s 1789 two-volume novel, Zeluco. Among very recent acquisitions has been a previously-unrecorded autograph manuscript of Burns’s poem “A Poet’s Welcome to his Bastart Wean.”

The Roy Collection is also quite advanced when it comes to non-standard formats such as chapbooks; printed art, including posters and postcards; photographs, including cartes de visite, stereoviews, and various photographic prints; paintings and sculpture; audio-visual materials, including 35 mm films, videos, and DVDs; printed music, including songbooks, scores, and sheet music; sound recordings, including Edison Amberol records, 78s, 45s, reel-to-reel tapes, 8-track tapes, LPs, cassettes and compact disks; realia, or what is also called “material culture,” including relics such as the porridge bowl, as well as statues, various souvenirs and Mauchline Ware; computer files; and anything that would be kept in a vertical file including clippings from newspapers and magazines, photocopies, brochures, Burns Supper programs, maps, trade cards, and academic papers.

It is Dr. Roy’s dedication to gathering a broad scope of traditional and non-traditional formats, the depth of his commitment to detail and variants, and his vital contributions to scholarship that make the Roy Collection rank so high among book collections and which make it especially valuable to scholars. An important milestone was reached in April 2009 when The G. Ross Roy Collection of Robert Burns, An Illustrated Catalogue was published by The University of South Carolina Press. Comprising 476 pages and with 67 illustrations, this essential reference tool was compiled and edited by Elizabeth Sudduth, with the assistance of Clayton Tarr, and has an introduction and annotations by Ross Roy himself.

Dr. Roy’s passion has been to create a legacy for Burns research and enjoyment of which Ross and his wife, Lucie Roy, can be proud, and for which the University of South Carolina, its library, and the rest of us are grateful.
Publications by G. Ross Roy
a Checklist, 1953-2011

Patrick Scott
with the assistance of Justin Mellette

Books and other separate publications:
The City: A Prose Poem.
   4 leaves. 300 copies.
ed. and transl., Twelve Modern French-Canadian Poets.
Le Sentiment de la Nature dans la Poésie Canadienne Anglaise, 1867-1918.
   University of Nevada Press Bibliographical Series, 1.
   Vols. 1-36, 1963-2008
   Vol. 1: Texas Technological College; vol. 1:1 also
distributed with variant imprint “Printed at the

1 This checklist incorporates where relevant, in abbreviated form, records of Ross Roy’s publications from the University of South Carolina’s online catalogue, and the compilers acknowledge Elizabeth Sudduth’s help with this.
Scottish National Press and published by William MacLellan, ... Glasgow.”
Vol. 2:3-4-vol. 16: University of South Carolina/University of South Carolina Press.
Vols. 17-36: Studies in Scottish Literature, Department of English, University of South Carolina.

Robert Burns.
--catalogue of exhibition in McKissick Memorial Library.
ed. and intro., The Life and Death of the Piper of Kilbarchan, by Robert Semphill.

ed. and intro., Archibald Cameron’s Lament.
ed., intro., and glossary, Tam o’ Shanter, by Robert Burns, from the Afton Manuscript.
Music transcriptions by Laurel E. Thompson and
Jonathan D. Ensminger.  
Second printing, reproduced digitally from the first, [2004]. Pictorial boards.  
--papers from the 1990 Sixth International Conference on Medieval & Renaissance Scottish Language and Literature.  
--bi-lingual Scots-Portuguese edition.  
Robert Burns 1759-1795, a bicentenary exhibition from the G. Ross Roy Collection.  
--on the web at http://www.sc.edu/library/burns/burns.html  
ed. and intro., Robert Burns, A Poem, by Iain Crichton Smith.  
Issued in three forms: 300 copies in wrappers, 26 copies lettered and signed by poet and artist in blue boards, 50 on Zerkall laid paper numbered and specially bound.  
ed. and intro., Essay on Burns, by Ralph Waldo Emerson.  
Pp. 4. Printed wrappers, with text also on inside back wrapper. 150 copies.
--keepsake for the Burns bicentenary, with menu and Emerson's address from the Boston Burns Club, 1859.
  Pp. x + 325.
--papers from the 1996 Burns bicentenary conference, with cover and illustrations by Alasdair Gray.
ed. and intro., The Merry Muses of Caledonia.
ed., Robert Burns and America.
--papers from the Robert Burns World Federation meeting, Atlanta, Georgia, July 2001.
  Pp. xiv + 566 + CD-ROM.
--final regular volume of the original series, with cover and endpapers by Alasdair Gray; contributors include
  William McIlvanney, Edwin Morgan, Seamus Heaney, Muriel Spark, Alasdair Gray, Iain Crichton Smith, George
  Bruce, Tom Leonard, and Maurice Lindsay.
intro. and selected annotations, in The G. Ross Roy Collection of Robert Burns, An Illustrated Catalogue, by
  Elizabeth Sudduth, with the assistance of Clayton Tarr.
at  http://www.sc.edu/library/digital/collections/cbook5.html
Articles and Contributions to Books:

“Teaching English in France,”

“Walt Whitman, George Sand and Certain French Socialists,”

“A Bibliography of French Symbolism in English-Language Publications to 1910,”

“An Edition of Allan Ramsay,”

“Bibliographie Analytique: French Translations of Robert Burns to 1893 [two parts],”

“French Critics of Robert Burns to 1893,”
--reissued as separate pamphlet, 1964.

(with Michael Gnarowski) “Canadian Poetry: A Supplementary Bibliography,”

“Some notes on the Facsimiles of the Kilmarnock Burns,”
*Bibliotheck*, 4:6 (1965), 241-245.

“The Merry Muses of Caledonia,”

“Burns in France,”

“Wordsworth on Burns,”

“Robert Burns and William Creech: A Reply,”
“Robert Burns and the Aberdeen Magazine,”
*Bibliothèque*, 5:3 (1968), 102-105.

“David Crawford – An Unrecorded Broadside,”

“French Stage Adaptations of Fielding’s *Tom Jones,*”

“Scottish Poetry, 1660-1800,”

“Robert Burns’s Politics and the French Revolution,”

“Some Notes on Scottish Chapbooks,”
--available on the web at http://www.sc.edu/library/spcoll/chapbook.html

(with R. L. Oakman and A. C. Gillon), “A Computerized Bibliography of Scottish Poetry,” in

“Robert Burns: A Self-Portrait,”

“‘Auld Lang Syne’: The Manuscript of the Most Widely-known Poem in the English language,”
--Ross Roy was not responsible for errors in illustrations and captions added by the editors.

“The Jacobite Literature of the Eighteenth Century,”
“The Thorn on Scotland’s Rose: Hugh MacDiarmid,”

“The ‘Sighan, Cantan, Grace-Proud Faces’: Robert Burns and the Kirk,”

“The French Reputation of Thomas Carlyle in the Nineteenth Century,”

“The British Poetic Miscellany,”
*Notes & Queries*, n.s. 30:3 [continuous series 228] (June 1983), 222-223.

“Hardyknute--Lady Wardlaw’s Ballad?,”


“Editing the Makars in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries,”
in *Scottish Language and Literature, Medieval and Renaissance*, ed. Dietrich Strauss and Horst W. Drescher (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), 509-521.

“Sixteen Poems of Burns: Their First Publication,”

“Scottish Studies in the USA,”

“The ‘1827’ Edition of Burns’s Merry Muses of Caledonia,”

“Burns’s Second (Edinburgh) Edition,”

“Henley and Henderson,”
“The Bible in Burns and Scott,”

“The Brash and Reid Editions of `Tam o’ Shanter’,”
*Burns Chronicle*, 98 (1989), 38-44.

“Pursuing a Dream,”
*Books in Scotland*, 31 (Summer 1989), 5-6.

“We are exiles from our Fathers’ Land’: Nineteenth-Century Scottish Canadian Poets,”

“The G. Ross Roy Scottish Poetry Collection at the University of South Carolina,”
*Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook 1989* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1990), 147-152.

“The G. Ross Roy Collection at South Carolina,”

“Scottish poets and the French Revolution,”

“Robert Burns and the Brash and Reid chapbooks of Glasgow,”
--also on the web at:

“James Hogg’s *Mountain Bard* (1807): An important copy at the University of South Carolina,”
“Robert Burns and the Ballad ‘Geordie’,”
*ibid.*, 243-246.

“Editing Burns’s Letters in the Twentieth Century,”

Foreword: *Hugh MacDiarmid, the Thorn on Scotland’s Rose.*

“Editing Robert Burns in the Nineteenth Century,”


“John Moore, Scottish European,”

“Poems and Songs spuriously attributed to Robert Burns,”

“The mair they talk, I’m kend the better’: Poems about Robert Burns to 1859,”

“Robert Burns,”

“Notes and documents: A New Song for the Burns Canon,”
--the song is “Deluded swain,” or “The Collier’s Dochter.”

--reprint from introduction for 1999 facsimile.
“A Prototype for Robert Burns’s Kilmarnock Edition?,”
“A Burnsian Odd Couple,”
*ibid.*, 216-217.
“An Early Indian Mystic and Robert Burns,”
*ibid.*, 218-220.
“Preface,”
in *Duncan Glen & Akros: Forty Years of a Scottish Press: an exhibit from the G. Ross Roy Collection*, by Patrick Scott, with introduction by Duncan Glen
“Important Editions of Robert Burns,”
“Robert Burns,”
in Mark Cumming, ed., *The Carlyle Encyclopaedia*
“Thomas Carlyle’s Reputation in France,”
*ibid.*, 394-396.
“Robert Burns and Francis Grose,”
“Edward Dowden on Burns,”
*ibid.*, 476-477.
(with Elizabeth Sudduth), “William Creech and the Firm of Cadell and Davies,”
*ibid.*, 477-479.
“Important Editions of Robert Burns, Part II,”
*Family Tree*, 14 (October-November 2004).
“Robert Burns: Poet of the People,”
Marco Fazzini (Venezia: Amos Edizioni, 2005 [2006]),
205-228.
“The Scottish-North American Diaspora: Nineteenth-
Century Poets across the Atlantic,"

ibid., pp. 245-262.


“Roy Collection of Burns MSS,”

Eighteenth-Century Scotland, 22 (Spring 2008), 4-5.

“Duncan Glen: an appreciation,”
in A Festschrift for Duncan Glen at Seventy-Five, ed. Tom Hubbard and Philip Pacey (Kirkcaldy: Craigarter Press, 2008), 75.

“What Burns Means to Me,”

Robert Burns Lives!, no. 42 (March 2009).

--concluding statement for web-series at http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns_lives42.htm


“Robert Hartley Cromek to William Creech,”

ibid., 504-512.


“Robert Burns” and “The Merry Muses,”

Reviews:
Review of Burns: a study of the poems and songs, by Thomas Crawford,
Review of Laurence Sterne, de l’homme à l’oeuvre, by Henri Fluchère,
Books Abroad, 36:3 (Summer 1962), 284.
Review of Sur les pas de Chateaubriand en exit, by P. Christophorov,
ibid., 290.
Review of Collected Poems, by Hugh MacDiarmid,
Review of The Scots Musical Museum, ed. James Johnson,
Studies in Scottish Literature, 1:2 (October 1963), 143-144.
Review of The Jolly Beggars, by Robert Burns, ed. John C. Weston,
Review of Scottish Short Stories, by James Macarthur Reid,
Books Abroad, 38:3 (Summer 1964), 313.
Review of Hugh MacDiarmid: A Festschrift, ed. K.D. Duval and
Sydney Goodsir Smith,
ibid., 317.
Review of Burns: Authentic Likenesses, by Basil Skinner,
Books Abroad, 39:2 (Spring 1965), 221-222.
Review of Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres Delivered in the
University of Glasgow by Adam Smith. Reported by a student
in 1762-1763, ed. John M. Lothian,
ibid., 226-227.
Review of The Merry Muses of Caledonia, by Robert Burns, ed.
James Barke and Sydney Goodsir Smith,
Review of La Critique Classique en Angleterre de la Restauration
à la mort de Joseph Addison, by Alexandre Maurocordato,
Review of Un Journal “Philosophique”: La Décade (1794-1807), by
Joanna Kitchin,
Books Abroad, 41:3 (Summer 1967), 303-304.
Review of Une femme témoin de son siècle: Germaine de Staël, by
Françoise d’Eaubonne,
Review of Clarinda: The Intimate Story of Robert Burns and
Agnes MacLehose, by Raymond Lamont Brown, and
Burns and his Bonnie Jean, by Yvonne Helen Stevenson,
Review of E.M. Forster: Récit et Mythe Personnel dans les
Premiers Romans (1905-1910), by Henri A. Talon,
Books Abroad, 43:3 (Summer 1969), 426.
Review of Reader’s Guide to Scotland, ed. D. M. Lloyd, and
Library Resources in Scotland, ed. Smith and Walker,
Review of L’Éruption du Krakatoa, ou Des Chambres inconnues
dans la maison, by Simonne Jacquemard,
Books Abroad, 44:3 (Summer 1970), 431.


Review of Twentieth-Century Scottish Literary Manuscripts from Vol. 9, No. 4 of The Bibliotook. *ibid.*, 305.


Review of Murdo and Other Stories, by Iain Crichton Smith, *ibid.*, 558.


Review of Scottish Literature in English and Scots: A Guide to

[as Alexander Fraser] Brief notice: Hamewith; Complete Poems, by Charles Murray, ibid., 305-306.


Review of Ris a’ Bhruthaich: The Criticism and Prose Writing of Sorley MacLean, by Somhairle MacGill-Eain, ibid., 676-677.


PUBLICATIONS BY G. ROSS ROY

ibid., 371-372.
ibid., 372-373.
Review of *A Garioch Miscellany*, ed. Robin Fulton,
[as Guilem I. McConagal] Review of *McGonagall: A Library Omnibus*, by William MacGonagall,
Review of *Complete Works of Robert Burns*, ed. James A. Mackay,
ibid., 230-232.
Brief Notice: *Scottish Ambassador* [periodical].
ibid., 250-251.
[as Alexander Fraser] Brief notice: *The Glasgow Novel*, by Moira Burgess,
ibid., 251.
Brief Notice: *The Scottish Gallovidian Encyclopedia*, by John Mactaggart, ed. L.L. Arden,
ibid., 254.
Review of *an seachnadh agus dàin eile / the avoiding and other poems*, by Aonghas MacNeacail,
Review of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, by Hugh MacDiarmid, ed. Kenneth Buthlay,
Review of *A Bibliography of the Foulis Press*, by Phillip Gaskell,
Review of *Two Glossaries by Robert Burns*: ... Reproduced in facsimile. Introd. By Donald A. Low.
Review of *The Porpoise Press 1922-1939*, by Alistair McCleery,
Review of *Burns-Lore of Dumfries and Galloway*, by James A. Mackay, and *Burnsiana*, by James A. Mackay,
[as Arthur Davidson Ross] Brief notice: *Pocket Scots Dictionary*,
ed. Iseabail Macleod et al.,
ibid., 283-284.
[as Alexander Fraser] Brief notice: *Diaries of a Dying Man*, by William Soutar,
ibid., 284-285.
Review of *Hugh MacDiarmid and the Russians*, by Peter McCarey,
Review of L'espace du diable, by Jacques Renaud,  
*World Literature Today*, 64:2 (Spring 1990), 439.

Review of Burns A-Z The Complete Word Finder, compiled James A. Mackay,  

Review of Thomas Percy: A Scholar-Cleric in the Age of Johnson, by Bertram H. Davis,  
*ibid.*, 321-323.

Review of The History of Scottish Literature, gen. ed. Cairns Craig: vol. 2, 1660-1800, ed. Andrew Hook,  
*ibid.*, 25 (1990), 326-331.

[as Alexander Fraser] Brief notice: Twentieth-Century Scottish Classics, by Edwin Morgan,  
*ibid.*, 338-339.

Review of Nationalism in Literature—Literarischer Nationalismus: Literature, Language and National Identity,  

Review of MacDiarmid-Christopher Murray Grieve: A Critical Biography, by Alan Bold,  

Review of An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry, by Derick Thomson,  

Review of A l’écoute de l’écoumène, by Gilles Hénault,  

Review of The New Makars, ed. Tom Hubbard,  
*ibid.*, 562.

Review of The Scots Musical Museum 1787-1803, ed. Donald A. Low,  

Review of Two Gothic Tales: Deux Contres Noirs, by Robert Louis Stevenson, translated by Jean-Pierre Naugrette,  
*ibid.*, 348-351.

[as Alexander Fraser] Brief notice: Goose Girl, by Eric Linklater,  
*ibid.*, 353-354.

[as Annie McEwan] Brief notice: Bibliography of Iain Crichton Smith, by Grant Wilson,  
*ibid.*, 357-358.

Brief Notice: Gertrude of Wyoming 1809, by Thomas Campbell.  
*ibid.*, 358-359.

[as Arthur Davidson] Brief notice: Bibliography of Neil M. Gunn, by C. J. L. Stokoe,
Review of Birmanie blues suivi de voyages à l’intérieur, by Roseann Runte, *ibid.*, 534.
Review of Pervigilium Scotiae, by Tom Scott, Somhairle MacGill-
Eain (Sorley MacLean), and Hamish Henderson, *World Literature Today*, 72:3 (Summer 1998), 666.


Review of *On a Raised Beach and Other Poems / Sopra un terrazzo marino e alter poesie*, by Hugh MacDiarmid, ed. and transl. by Marco Fazzini, with a poem by Seamus Heaney, *World Literature Today*, 76:2 (Spring 2002), 166.


**Series Editorships:**

Series editor, University of South Carolina Department of English Bibliographical Series, 1966-75.

Series editor, Scottish Poetry Reprints, 1970-.
Notes on Contributors
and on the
W. Ormiston Roy Memorial Fellowship

The W. Ormiston Roy Memorial Visiting Research Fellowship was established by Professor and Mrs. G. Ross Roy in memory of Dr. Roy’s grandfather, W. Ormiston Roy (1874-1958), of Montreal, Canada. Since it was inaugurated in 1990, the Roy Fellowship has brought scholars to South Carolina from six different Scottish universities, Canada, Italy, France, and elsewhere in the United States, and the topics of their research in the Roy Collection have ranged from Robert Burns and eighteenth-century Scottish poetry, through Scottish writers of the early nineteenth century, the Victorian period, and the twentieth-century Scottish Renaissance.

In addition to the contributors listed below, previous Roy Fellows have included Donald Low of the University of Stirling (Roy Fellow, 1990; editor of Robert Burns: The Critical Heritage, The Songs of Robert Burns, etc.); Robert H. Carnie of the University of Calgary (Roy Fellow, 1991; author of Burns 200, Burns Illustrated, etc.); Jill Rubinstein of the University of Cincinnati (Roy Fellow, 1999; editor of James Hogg’s Anecdotes of Scott); Pauline Mackay, University of Glasgow (Roy Fellows, 2010); and Roy Rosenstein, American University of Paris (Roy Fellow, 2011).

With the agreement of the donors, the Roy endowment has also twice provided travel support for Scottish scholars to participate in major conferences at South Carolina, for the Burns bicentenary in 1996 and the Burns 250th anniversary in 2009. Most recently, the endowment has brought to the University four distinguished scholars of Scottish literature, to give the first W. Ormiston Roy Memorial Lectures, in what
is expected to be a continuing series: Ian Duncan, University of California at Berkeley (2008); Edward J. Cowan, University of Glasgow (2009); Robert Crawford, University of St. Andrews (2010); and Nigel Leask, University of Glasgow (2012).


Valentina Bold (Roy Fellow, 1998) is Reader in Literature and Ethnology at the University of Glasgow, Dumfries. She is acting director of the Solway Centre for Environment & Culture, and teaches on the MA Tourism, Heritage & Development program as well as supervising research students. Her publications include *James Hogg: A Bard of Nature’s Making*, a Lewis Grassic Gibbon anthology, *Smeddam*, and a new edition of Burns’s *Merry Muses of Caledonia*.


Edward J. Cowan FRSE (Roy Lecturer, 2009) is Professor Emeritus of Scottish History, University of Glasgow, and former Director of the University’s Crichton Campus in Dumfries. He taught previously at the Universities of Edinburgh and Guelph, Ontario, and has been a Visiting Professor in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. He has published widely on various aspects of


Fred Freeman (Roy Fellow, 2000) is Honorary Fellow in English at the University of Edinburgh. His publications include *Robert Fergusson and the Scots Humanist Compromise* (1984) and *A Tuppeny Tannahill* (2011); contributions to David Daiches’s *Companion to Scottish Culture* and to *The History of Scottish Literature*; production of a 12 volume CD set *The Complete Songs of Robert Burns* from Linn Records and 3 volumes of a 5 volume CD set *The Complete Songs of Robert Tannahill* (Brechin-All-Records); and a tribute album to Hamish Henderson from Greentrax Recordings.

R. D. S. Jack (Roy Fellow, 2003) is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He held a Chair in Medieval and Scottish Literature at Edinburgh from 1987–2004 and is now Honorary Professorial Fellow in Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities. His monographs include *The Scottish Influence on Italian Literature, Patterns of Divine Comedy, The Road to the Never Land* and *Myths and the*
Mythmaker: A Literary Account of J.M. Barrie’s Formative Years.


Kirsteen McCue (Roy Fellow, 2006) is Senior Lecturer and Head of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow and Co-Director of the Centre for Robert Burns Studies there. Her publications include a number of essays on Scottish song culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and editorial materials for Joseph Haydn’s folksong settings for George Thomson. She is currently editing James Hogg’s Songs by the Ettrick Shepherd and his Contributions to Musical Collections and Miscellaneous Songs for the Stirling/South Carolina Research edition of the Collected Works of James Hogg. She will then edit Burns’s songs for George Thomson for the new Collected Works of Robert Burns.
Carol McGuirk (Roy Fellow, 1993 & 2004) is Professor of English at Florida Atlantic University. As well as numerous articles on Burns, her publications include Robert Burns and the Sentimental Era (1985), an edition of Burns’s Selected Poetry (1993), and Critical Essays on Burns (1998).

David Robb (Roy Fellow, 1994) is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Dundee. His publications include George MacDonald (1987), The Collected Poems of Alexander Scott (1994), and Auld Campaigner: A Life of Alexander Scott (2007), which was Scottish Research Book of the Year. He has been both Secretary and President of the Association for Scottish Literary Studies, and he is currently a member of the Literature Panel for the Saltire Book of the Year.

Patrick Scott (co-editor; Roy Fellowship Selection Committee, 1990-date) is Distinguished Professor of English, Emeritus, at the University of South Carolina, where from 1996 to 2011 he was also Director of Rare Books & Special Collections. Recent publications on Scottish topics include an introduction for Stevenson’s Treasure Island (2008) and articles on James Hogg, George Douglas Brown, and Serge Hovey.

Kenneth Simpson (co-editor; Roy Fellow, 1992 & 2001) was Reader in English Studies at the University of Strathclyde where he was also Founding Director of the Centre for Scottish Cultural Studies and Director of the annual Burns International Conference. He has twice been Neag Distinguished Visiting Professor in British Literature at the University of Connecticut; also Honorary Professor of Burns Studies at Glasgow University. Publications include The Protean Scot (1988), Burns Now (1994), and Love and Liberty: Robert Burns – A Bicentenary Celebration (1997).
Index

Abbreviations used, x
Adelman, Seymour, 159
Ainslie, Robert, 101, 162
Aiton, William, 51
Aldine edition, 105
Allen, W.H., and *Merry Muses*, 105
Anderson, James, 26
Andrews, Corey E., “Footnoted Folklore: Robert Burns’s ‘Halloween’,” 24-37
Angus, W. Craibe, 99, 102
Armour, James, 7 n.2
Armour, Jean, 99, 101
Atholl, Duchess of, 114
Auk Society, 103
Aytoun, William
   Edmonstone, 134
Bain, James, of Toronto, 140
Baird, George, 108-121
Barke, James, 95 et seq., 107 n. 28.
Barrett, Clifford Waller, 156-157
Barthes, Roland, 53 and n.10
Basbanes, Nicholas A., 155
Battlefield Band, 85
Beattie, James, 86, 91
Beethoven, 86, 87
Beggar’s Benison, 97
Berlin, Isaiah, 88
Bewick, Thomas, 56-57
Blair, Hugh, 17, 110, 111
Bogle, Eric, 85
Bold, Valentina, “On Editing *The Merry Muses*,” 95-107
Boswell, James, 66
Bowman, Gill, 97
Boyle, David, of Ontario, 140
Bremner, Robert, 74
Brown, Richard, 24
Bruce, Michael, 111-116; Robert Burns on, 113-115
Buchan, Earl of, 59
Burn, Robert, architect, 7, and n.2
Burns, Robert, as dramatic poet, 38-46; and folklore, 24-37, 44-45, 50-52; as
letter-writer, 58-67; and *The Merry Muses*, 95-107; as song-writer, 68-82, 83-94; and George Baird, 108-121; and Michael Bruce, 113-115; and ‘Clarinda’, 66, 161; and Robert Ferguson, 5-23; and James Hogg, 122-130; on “Duncan Gray,” 87; G. Ross Roy Collection of, 155-162; Kilmarnock edition, 6 n.1, 8-9, 11-13; glossary, 13-14; preface to Kilmarnock edition, 17-18; footnotes by, 24-37; translation of, 150-154


Burns Federation, 103, 104 Burton, John Hill, 156 Butler, Marilyn, 28 Cameron, William, 138 Campbell, Thomas, 56 Canada, 1-2, 131-149 *Canongate Burns, The*, 28 Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, 97 Cape Club, 9 Capercaillie, 85 Carlyle, Alexander, 111 Carlyle, Thomas, 26-27, 56, 144, 147 Carmichael, Rebekah, 11, 21 Carruthers, Gerard, “‘Tongues turn’d inside out: the Reception of Tam o’ Shanter”, “47-57 Carswell, Donald, 123 Chalmers, Margaret, 66 Chartism, 135 Christison, Robert, 112 Clarke, Stephen, 78, 90, 92 Cleghorn, Robert, 97 Clive, John, 84 Clow, Jenny, 67
Cockburn, Henry, 109, 110
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 54, 66, 147
Collinson, Francis, 74
Conn, Stewart, 68
Contributors, notes on, 181-185
Corelli, Arcangelo, 92
Corri, Domenico, 87, 88, 91
Covenanters, 13
Craig, Lord, 112
Craig, Robert, 97
Crawford, Thomas, 12 n.6, 27-28
Crimie, James, 59
Crochallan Fencibles, 40, 96, 98
Cunningham, Allan, 17, 27, 52; and The Merry Muses, 102, 105
Currie, James, 26, 48-50
Daiches, David 16, 27, 73 n.9, 93
D’Amico, Masolino, 152
Dauney, William, 86
Deaf Shepherd, 85
Derrida, Jacques, 31
Dewar, Bob, 95
Dibdin, Thomas Frognall, 155
Dick, James C., 68 n.2
Dickens, Charles: Oliver Twist, 43
Douglas, Dawney, 97
Douglas, William Scott, 99, 104
Drummond, William Henry, 133
Dryden, John, 125
Dumfries, Ewart Library, 101
Dunbar, William, 16, 66, 97
Dunfermline, Carnegie Library, 104
Dunlop, Mrs. Frances, 52-53, 60-63
Dunlop, Francis Wallace, 67
Dunnigan, Sarah, 52 n.8
Dylan, Bob, 152
Edinburgh Festival (1815), 83
Edward, Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, 146-147
Egerer, J.W., 161
Elder, Thomas, 110
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 93, 147
English Review, 26
Erskine of Mar, John Francis, 67
Ewing, James Cameron, 101, 102, 104
Ewing, W. H. 99
Fenton, James, 152
Ferguson, J. DeLancey, 95 et seq.
Fergusson, Robert, 83 et seq., 197; and Burns, 5-23; and glossary to Poems, 13-14;

Ferrari, Renato, 152
Fielding, Henry, 61-62
Fitzhugh, Robert, 6 n.1
Fraser, John, 134-135, 144-145
Fraser, Lydia, 120, 121
Freeman, Fred, “Back to Burns,” 83-94; and Robert Burns: the Complete Songs, 97 n.6.
Freemasonry, 97
Frier, Tich, 97
Galt, John, 142
Garioch, Robert, 7
Genette, Gerard, 32
Gillies, Valerie, 151
Glencairn, Earl of, 114
Glossary, to Fergusson’s Poems, 13-14; to Burns’s Kilmarnock edition, 13-14; to Merry Muses, 105
Goldsmith, Oliver, 30, 32
Gow, Niel, 70, 73, 74-77, 92
Grafton, Anthony, 31
Graham, George Farquhar, 83, 85
Grant, Sir Alexander, 112
Grant, Elizabeth, 110
Gray, Alexander, 46
Gregory, John, 91
Greig, Gavin, 93
Grieve, John, 123
Grose, Francis, 44, 50, 56
Hamilton, William, of Gilbertfield, 43, 124
Harper, J.M., 133
Harris, Paul, 106
Hary, Blind, 43, 124
Hay, Charles, Lord Newton, 97
Haydn, Franz Joseph, 86, 91
Hecht, Hans, 70
Henderson, Hamish, 88, 92, 93, 152, 161
Henderson, T.F., 68
Henley, William Ernest, 68
Hill, Geoffrey, 5, 18
Hill, Peter, 97
Hislop, James, 68
Hogarth, William, 87
Hogg, James, 122-130, 147, 162; on “Tam o’ Shanter,” 127; on Burns’s style, 127-128; “Robin’s awa’,” 129-130
Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 147
Home, Henry, Lord Kames, 85
Hornel, Edward Atkinson, 101
Hotten, J.C., 100
Hovey, Serge, 79, 97, 161
Hughes, Kenneth, 141
Hummel, Johann Nepomuk, 86
Hyman, Stanley E., 93
Johnson, Samuel, 58-59
Johnson, James, 40, 68 et seq., 88, 92, 101
Kames, see Home
Keith, W. J., 141
Kilmarnock edition, 6 n.1, 8-9, 11-13; glossary, 13-14; preface, 17-18; George Baird as subscriber, 113
Kinsley, James, 68-69 n.2.; on text of “Tam o’ Shanter,” 57
Kozeluch, Leopold, 86
Laidlaw, Mr., of Blackhouse, 123, 124
Legman, Gershon, 100, 102, 104
Lewars, Jessie, 92
Lindsay, Maurice, 103
Lockhart, John Gibson, 52, 56, 109, 110
Logan, John, 26
Low, Donald A., 68
Lowell, James Russell, 147
Luath Press, 95
Macaulay, Thomas, 134
MacColl, Ewan, 97
McCue, Kirsteen, “’O my Luve’s like a red, red rose’: does Burns’s melody really matter?,” 68-82
MacDiarmid, Hugh, 15, 91, 151
McDiarmid, Matthew, 11 n.4
McDonald, Patrick, 73, 86
McGee, Darcy, 136
McGuirk, Carol, 62; “Burns’s Two Memorials to Fergusson,” 5-23
McIntyre, Ian, 113
McKellar, Kenneth, 68
Mackenzie, Sir George, 85
Mackenzie, Henry, 10, 63, 109, 115-116
McLachlan, Alexander, 131-149
McLehose, Agnes, 67
McMurdo, John, of Drumlanrig, 97
M’Naught, Duncan, 100, 102-103
McNeill, Marian, 33
Macpherson, James, 32
MacTaggart, John, 131
Mack, Douglas S., “James Hogg’s First Encounter with Burns’s Poetry,” 122-130
Magnusson, Magnus, 106
Malinky, 85
Manning, Susan, 9, 15
Marshak, Samuel, 41
Marshall, William, 79
Masson, Arthur, 60
Maxwell, Provost, of Lochmaben, 97
Mayne, John, “Hallowe’en,” 26
Memorial Catalogue (1898), 160
Mercer, Thomas, 84
Merry Diversions of Halloween, 25
Merry Muses of Caledonia, The, 39-40, 95-107
Mignonette, The, 25
Miller, Hugh, 108, 116-121
Milton, John, 44
Monthly Review, 9, 26
Moore, Dr. John, 6 n.1, 11 n.4, 17, 24, 58-67 passim, 93, 115, 162
Morgan, Edwin, 18
Morrison, David, 151
Motherwell, William, 26
Muir, Edwin, 56, 85
Munro, Neil, 133
Murdock, John, 60
Napier, Archibald, 192
Nasmyth, Alexander, 92
Newman, Steve, 26, 76-77
Nicol, James, 123, 128
Old Blind Dogs, 85
Ossian, 32
Oswald, James, 74, 92
Panther Books, and Merry Muses, 105
Peebles, William, 155-156
Pitcairne, Archibald, 85
Pitt, William, 15
Pleyel, Ignace Joseph, 86, 91
Pons, Jonathan, 161
Pope, Alexander, 59-60
Preface, to Allan Ramsay’s
Poems (1721), 16-17; to The
Ever Green, 84; Burns’s
Kilmarnock edition, 17-18
Pringle, Thomas, 121
Putnam’s, G.P., and Merry
Muses, 104-105
Ramsay, Allan, 8 n.3, 9, 12,
16, 19-20; Ever Green, The,
12, 84; Gentle Shepherd,
The, 19-20, 124; “Lucky
Spence’s Last Advice,” 19-
20; Tea-Table Miscellany,
The, 12, 19, 104
Randall, Eric Lemuel, 106
Reader, Eddi, 68
Redpath, Jean, 79, 97, 151
Richmond, John, 11
Robb, David, “The Poor
Man’s Friend in Need’:
George Baird, Burns, and
Hugh Miller,” 108-121
Robertson, William, 110
Rosebery, Earl of, 99, 104
Rosenbach, A.S.W., 158-159
Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 64-
65
Roy, G. Ross, portrait, ii;
tribute to, 1-4; on the
Bewick text of “Tam o’
Shanter,” 56-57; on The
Merry Muses, 95 n.2, 100,
106; as scholar-collector,
and G. Ross Roy Collection,
155-162; on Scots-Canadian
poetry, 131-132, and n. 3;
checklist of publications by,
163-181
Roy, Lucie C., dedication, v;
as associate editor, 3; and
the Roy Collection, 162
Roy, W. Ormiston, as Burns
collector, 157; Memorial
Visiting Fellowship, vi-viii,
4, 181-185
Ruddiman, Thomas, 16
Ruddiman, Walter, 16
Russian Formalists, 89
Saintsbury, George, 8 n.3
Salmon, P.B., 38
Scots Magazine, The, 12 n.6
Scots Musical Museum, The,
40, 69 et seq., 86, 88
Scott, John, 122, 126
Scott, Patrick, preface, v-viii;
(co-compiler)
“Publications by G. Ross
Roy: A Checklist, 1954-
2011,” 163-181
Scott, Tom, 8 n.3, 15
Scott, Walter, 55, 66, 108-
109, 110, 121, 135, 147
Second Shepherd’s Play, 20
Select Collection of Original
Scottish airs, 69; and see
also; Thomson, George
Service, Robert, 147
Shakespeare, William, 55, 67,
135
Shenstone, William, 9
Sher, Richard B., 111, 112
Shortland, Michael, 110
Sibbald, James, 87
Sibbald, Robert, 85
Simpson, Kenneth, 30;
preface, vii-viii; “G. Ross
Roy: A Tribute,” 1-4;
“Epistolary Perform-
ances’: Burns and the Arts
of the Letter,” 58-67
Skal, David J., 25
Skinner, John, 85-87
Skoblow, Jeffrey, 17
Smith, Adam, 62
Smith, Iain Crichton, 77
Smith, Sydney Goodsir, 95 et seq.
Smollett, Tobias, 60, 61
Snyder, Franklin B., 69
Spenser, Edmund, 67
Sprigings [later Roy], Charlotte, and the Roy Collection, 157
Stafford, Fiona, 18, 32
Steiner, George, 87
Stenhouse, William, 78
Sterne, Laurence, 61, 63-65
Strawhorn, John, 51 n.7
Sudduth, Elizabeth A., 100 n.12, 162
Sutherland, Alexander, 134
Swift, Jonathan, 59
Tannahill Weavers, 85
Theocritus, 16, 26, 27
Thomson, George, 69, 86 et seq., 92
Thoreau, Henry David, 147
Thornton, Robert D., 161
Translation, 150-154
Tribble, Evelyn, 31
Tytler, Alexander Fraser, and “Tam o’ Shanter,” 44, 48-50, 52, 55
Tytler, William, 86
Urbani, Pietro, 70-73, 91
Victoria, Queen, 147
Vindex, 103
Walker, Josiah, 93, 114
Wallace, William, 43, 124, 136
Waterston, Elizabeth, 141
Watson’s Choice Collection, 8, 39
Weekly Magazine, 16
Wig Club, 97
Williams, Raymond, 34
Wilson, Alexander, 135
Wilson, John (printer and publisher), 5-6
Wilson, John (critic), 56, 121
Woodhouselee, see Tytler
Wordsworth, Dorothy, 21
Wordsworth, William, 108, 121, 123, 147; and Burns, 21-22; Advertisement to Lyrical Ballads, 21