

1992

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Recommended Citation

(1992) "Notes and Documents: Hogg's Mountain Bard; Burns's "Geordie"," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 27: Iss. 1.
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol27/iss1/19>

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Notes and Documents

James Hogg's *Mountain Bard* (1807): An Important Copy at the University of South Carolina

James Hogg's first published book was *Scottish Pastorals* of 1801, but his poetry did not attract widespread attention until the appearance in 1807 of *The Mountain Bard*, a collection of poems written in the traditional ballad style. *The Mountain Bard*, which was published by Archibald Constable, grew out of the contribution made by Hogg to Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-03); and Scott did much to advise and encourage Hogg while *The Mountain Bard* was being prepared for publication.

An important copy of the 1807 *Mountain Bard* survives at the University of South Carolina in the Thomas Cooper Library. This copy contains the bookplate of "Adam Sim / Coulter"; and bound into it is a note of 6 October 1834 from Hogg to "Mr Sym and Mr Christison." The note reads:

Mr Hogg's kindest respects to Mr Sym and Mr Christison. Cannot join them to night as his better half will not hear of it. Will be happy to see both gentlemen to breakfast to morrow at Nine

Altrive Lake
Octr 6th 1834

Altrive Lake was Hogg's farm in Yarrow; and this note was written just over a year before his death. During his later years, Hogg's fame helped to attract large numbers of tourists to Yarrow, many of whom wished to meet

the poet. "Mr Sym and Mr Christison" were doubtless in residence at the Gordon Arms or Tibbie Shiel's Inn, two famous hostelries near Altrive which were established in Hogg's lifetime, and which, nearly two centuries later, still continue to thrive.

The Cooper Library copy of *The Mountain Bard* also contains a letter of 17 December 1853 from Hogg's nephew William Hogg to: Adam Symm Esqr / Culter-Mains / By Biggar. This letter begins:

Sir,

I have been very long in fulfilling my promise to you, but as it is not very long since the inclosed Poem by my Uncle the Ettrick Shepherd came to hand I could not fulfill it much sooner, I am certain it is his own hand of writ—but I am sorry to say the poem is not complete

The poem in question is "Thirlestane," first published in 1807 in *The Mountain Bard*; and the surviving portion of Hogg's manuscript for the poem has been bound into the Cooper Library copy. Thirteen of the poem's nineteen stanzas appear in the manuscript; and the manuscript text differs significantly from the published version. For example, in the manuscript stanza 11 appears as follows:

Hail reverend brother Baldwin said
Here in this unco land
The humble Baldwin bows to thee
An' offers thee his hand

In *The Mountain Bard* of 1807, this stanza reads:

"Haile, revirent brither," Baldwin said,
"Here, in this unco land,
A temple warrior greets thee well,
And offers thee his hand.

The new Stirling-South Carolina collected edition of Hogg is in active preparation, and *The Mountain Bard* of 1807 will appear early in the life of the edition. Clearly, the survival of the manuscript of "Thirlestane" will be of great importance in the preparation of this edition. Together with other documents, such as the manuscript of "Gilmanscleuch" owned by the Duke of Buccleuch, the "Thirlestane" manuscript will throw light on such matters as the nature and extent of Scott's involvement in the preparation of the published text of *The Mountain Bard*.

Any information about other surviving manuscripts and letters by or concerning Hogg will be gratefully received by Dr. Douglas Mack, General

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Robert Burns and the Ballad "Geordie"

For many years scholars had lost track of Robert Burns's song which he titled "Geordie—An Old Ballad." The song was first published in James Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* in 1792 (Vol. IV, No. 346), but is not admitted to the Burns canon by J. W. Egerer.¹ This points up the difficulty of determining whether songs which Burns sent to Johnson were only collected by him, were written by him, or were, as was frequently the case, expanded or "improved" by him—this latter case included alterations to bawdy songs to render them suitable for the drawing rooms of the time. James Kinsley includes "Geordie" in his edition of the poems and songs of Burns.² In the *Museum* Johnson printed two sets of words to the air—"A Country Lass" and "Geordie—An Old Ballad." We need not necessarily be taken in by the term (which we can assume to be that of Burns) "An Old Ballad" because he not infrequently so styled songs which he had written almost in their entirety—the best-known case of this obfuscation occurred with "Auld Lang Syne," which he called an "old Song of the olden times" when he had, in fact, written almost the entire song in the form in which we now know it.³

In the Hastie MS (letters from Burns to Johnson) there is a transcript of "A Country Lass," which Burns titled "Altho' I be but a Country Lass," and which appeared to the same air with "Geordie" in the *Museum*. To this Burns has added the following note: "Put likewise after this song the inclosed old ballad, as it sings to the same tune.—It is rather too long, but it is very pretty, and never that I know of was printed before" (Kinsley, III, 1394). Kinsley notes that the air may be as old as the seventeenth century, and that it is a close copy of the Ossianic "Oscar's Ghost" to be found in Domenico Corri's *New and Complete Collection of the Most Favourite Scots*

¹J. W. Egerer, *A Bibliography of Robert Burns* (Edinburgh, 1946), p. 23.

²James Kinsley, ed., *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns* (Oxford, 1968), II, 618-9.

³*The Letters of Robert Burns*, 2nd ed., ed. G. Ross Roy (Oxford, 1985), II, 246.

Songs (Edinburgh, 1783, II, 21). With his extensive knowledge of Scottish music both printed and traditional it is quite probable that Burns knew the air from this source or elsewhere.

The ballad, too, is well enough known. It appears in Francis Child's collection as No. 209, where it is noted in variants A-N, with an additional Northumbrian variant originally published in a broadside of c. 1630. The fact that Burns's is the A variant situates it as the earliest printed one known to Child, thus bearing out the poet's testimony that it had not been previously in print.

The Hastie MS does not now contain the text of "Geordie," but it has recently turned up with a letter from Johnson's daughter C. Lilian Johnson to her son William, and signed with her married name of McPherson. The ballad as printed, when collated with this manuscript, shows how carefully Johnson followed songs as Burns sent them to him. The letter, from someone who as a child knew Burns, and whose father was one of the poet's intimates, is worth quoting in full.⁴

Edinburgh March 11th 1859

Dear William

I duly received your welcome letter and its kind enclosure, of which more hereafter. I would have said something in my last letter concerning Burns Centenary, my old enthusiasm being far from being extinguished, but feared to do so from the state of health of your family. I almost jumped off my chair for joy when I found that the long lost Ballad of 'Geordie' had been so appropriately revived and presented by you on such a heart stirring occasion, and was delighted with the account your paper gave me of the whole affair. I think that the commencement of the friendship between the Poet and my father had been brought about by the Publication of the first volume of the Scots Musical Museum in which he became highly interested, and afterwards gave many songs of his own composition, likewise old airs to which when words were wanting, he married to immortal verse. The air of 'Hey tutti taiti['] the maits aboon the meal the night⁵ was wrote Scots wha wi Wallace bled, the Quakers wife' was a Gaelic Air Ligeram Cosh, and many others, and I think I remember my father saying, the

⁴I am most grateful to Mr. Jack Milne of Jacksonville, owner of the MSS, for making available the text of the letter for publication.

⁵"the maits aboon the night"—a line from "O Fare ye Weel my Auld Wife," *Scots Musical Museum* (1792), No. 354. In the reissue (1803) of the *Museum* Johnson identified several of Burns's contributions, but not this one, and William Stenhouse claimed in the Blackwood 1853 edition (IV, 327) that it had been communicated to Johnson by David Herd, where it appears in his *Ancient and Modern Scots Songs* (Edinburgh, 1776, II, 222-3; the first line reads "And fare ye weel, my auld wife").

splendid air, of a the airts the wind can blaw, was composed in his own shop, where there were always Piano fortes, by a M^F Marshal, to which the Poet wrote that most lovely song. In one of the Poets early letters to my father he styles him an honest Scots enthusiast [*sic*],⁶ one day a violinist who used to be designated Red Rob Macgregor entered my fathers shop, and began to extol Italian music, my father rose and putting a fine Cremona in his hand, desired him to play him the Broom of the Cowden knowes, (the tune has but one strain and only a seraph would add another) he played it several times when my father looking up perceived the tears fast running down Robs cheeks. Ah you beast says he, he was an exquisite performer that man. My father was not married then, and in another letter he says, Dear Johnson have you never a goddess, black, brown or fair, to whom I could write a few stanzas to celebrate her charms. The next time he came to town I was some months old when M^F Burns called at the shop he earnestly desired to see M^{TS} Johnson, tho an intellectual woman she expressed some timidity, she went, and was delighted with his kindness, he took me in his arms, and fondled and caressed me much, so when he took his leave, alas for the last time she says to her husband: Oh Jamie, he has an unco sparkle in his ee, will he no write something on me, like Willie Wastles wife.⁷ For all Robert Burns researches from all the musical old wives and young lasses in the country gathering many old songs, and tunes, and rescueing [*sic*] them almost from oblivion, no pecuniary recompense could be offered, the only thing my father could ever do for him was in regard of a skene dhu, which had belonged in former times to the Bold Outlaw, the veritable Rob Roy Macgregor himself, which Burns had become possessed of, and which my father got splendidly set in silver for him.⁸ The Museum was dedicated to the Society of Antiquaries, in all seven vols. I do not know if there is any copy extant but that deposited in their Archives, my father had great merit in the editorship of this work, and the zeal and indefatigable industry with which he prosecuted the undertaking, he cut the steel types all with his own hands at leisure hours, and likewise did all the engraving, he employed the best musicians of the day to set the simple airs to harmonious basses. My fathers work drew down the approbation of many of rank and fortune. One gentleman said, Johnson I will give you a Bank credit for five hundred, if it will assist you in this National work but my father gratefully declined, and it was as well as the gentleman died soon after, for all this the profits were not large it was just as my mother said a 'drapping guse' now and then in latter years M^F Blackwood made an offer to purchase it which he did not accept, it was repeated after his death, and my mother

⁶This expression does not appear in the known letters from Burns to Johnson. In the last known letter to Johnson (about 1 June 1796) the poet calls him "a good, worthy, honest fellow"—*Letters*, II, 381.

⁷"Sic a wife as Willie's wife" (Willie Wastle dwalls on Tweed)—*Kinsley*, II, 640-41.

⁸An interesting example of the weaving of legend, because Burns wrote that the dirk (Burns's word) had belonged to Lord Balmerino. In his letter to Johnson of c. February 1794 Burns asked that it be mounted at his (Burns's) expense (*Letters*, II, 280), but Johnson offered it as a gift to the poet.

thought she would accept, though but a fourth of his first offer, when the bargain was concluded he made a firm stipulation, that Burns letters and whatever volumes of the work remained should be given up to him. In the search for letters, there were six or seven of them some very short. I had only retained the *Ballad* in question, and I think it written on a leaf of his Gaugers book M^T Blackwood promised when the work was published, he would present me with a copy But from that day to this I have never heard more of it. I must now conclude this too long letter I am proud and pleased with your being chosen President of the Scottish Charitable Society, it will gratify you to have a hand in relieving [*sic*] your poor countrymen Adieu your loving Mother

C L M^cPherson

The writer's reference to "M^T Blackwood" is, of course, to William Blackwood (1776-1834) founder of the publishing house. The *Scots Musical Museum* was indeed reissued by Blackwood in 1838 and 1853. Proof that Blackwood still had material in the hand of Burns is to be found in the fact that the last letter which Burns wrote to Johnson (about 1 June 1796) and which was only partially printed in Vol. V of the *Museum* is reproduced complete in facsimile in Vol. I of Blackwood's reprint.⁹

Lilian McPherson refers to the *Museum* being dedicated to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, however she is referring to the second issue of the work. The first five volumes (1787-1796) were dedicated to the Catch Club "Instituted at Edin^r. June 1771"; when the sixth volume was published in 1803 (it will be recalled that the poet died in 1796; without his enthusiasm and prodding it took Johnson eight years to produce it) Johnson dedicated it to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and at the same time reissued the first five volumes with the new title page. Johnson's daughter is also wrong in stating that there were seven volumes to the set. Her naive statement that she did not "know if there is any copy extant but that deposited in their Archives" is amusing. We can only wonder if the other letters to which Johnson's daughter refers have come down to scholars. This centennial letter is further evidence of how enduring was the reputation of Burns as a warm human being.

GRR

⁹*Letters*, II, 381-2. The MS is now in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library.