

2001

# Notes and Documents: A Prototype for Burns's Kilmarnock Edition; Burns and John Knox; An Indian Mystic and Burns

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### Recommended Citation

(2001) "Notes and Documents: A Prototype for Burns's Kilmarnock Edition; Burns and John Knox; An Indian Mystic and Burns," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 32: Iss. 1.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol32/iss1/19>

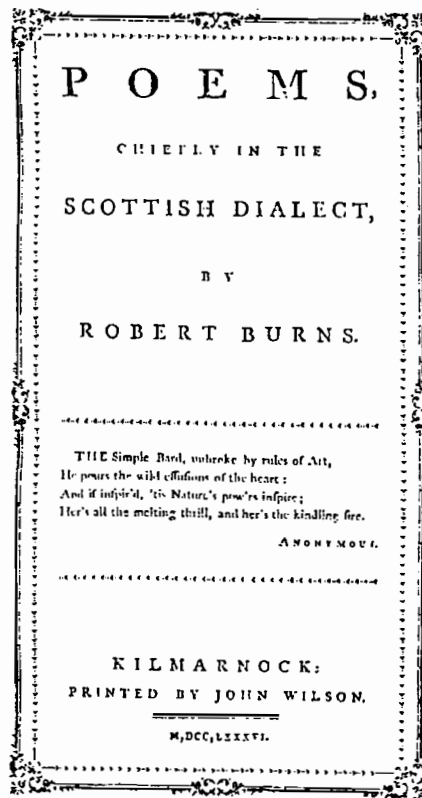
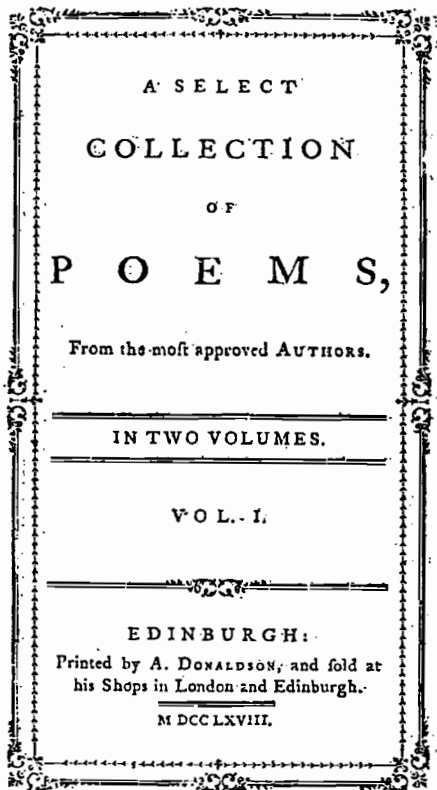
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## Notes and Documents

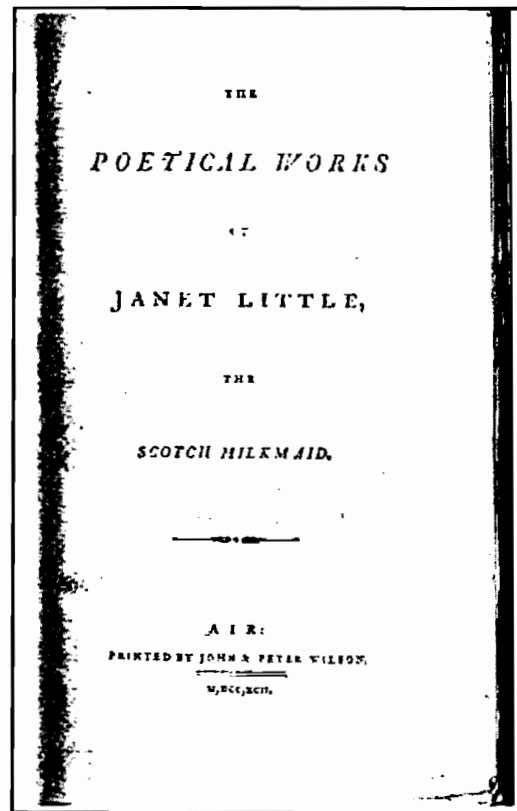
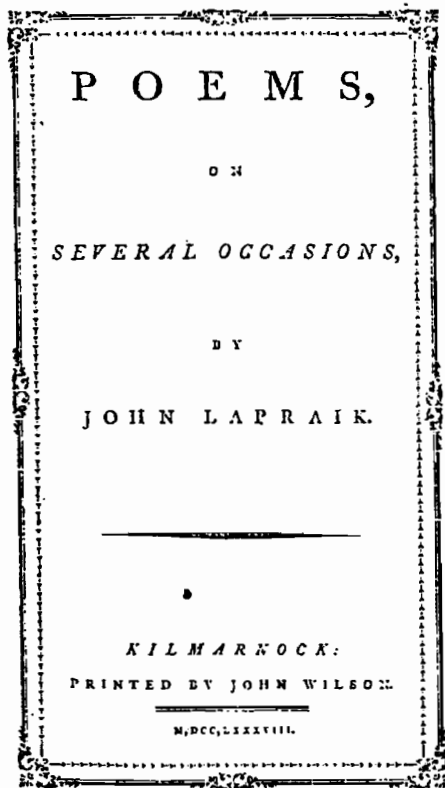
### A Prototype for Robert Burns's Kilmarnock Edition?

The title-page of Robert Burns's *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (Kilmarnock, 1786) has frequently been praised as a fine piece of design, and it has been suggested that the poet may himself have helped with it. The printer, John Wilson, probably found it attractive and recommended it to other poets who came to him to have their books printed, for we see it reappear unchanged in John Lapraik's *Poems, on Several Occasions* of 1788 and David Sillar's *Poems* of 1789. It is also possible that these authors, who were friends of Burns and would doubtless have seen Burns's volume or received copies of it, may themselves have told Wilson to follow the layout of their friend's book. It does not appear that when John and Peter Wilson removed their business to Ayr they were still inclined to follow this layout, however, for we find that when Janet Little ("The Scotch Milkmaid") published her *Poetical Works* in 1792 her volume had a much more conventional, and less aesthetically pleasing, title-page. Little was in the employ of Burns's friend Mrs. Frances Dunlop, where she must have seen a copy of his work. Although apparently no longer used by the Wilsons, the design of Burns's Kilmarnock volume did not completely disappear. In 1805 the Edinburgh firm of J. Robertson published *Burns' Celebrated Songs* which would appear to have been inspired by one of the earlier editions noted here.

An interesting title-page which Burns may have seen is to be found in a miscellany which appeared in Edinburgh in 1768, printed by A. Donaldson, entitled *A Select Collection of Poems, From the Most Approved Authors*, in two volumes. We do not have proof that the poet possessed or had seen a copy



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of this work because his library was dispersed at auction with only the scantiest description of its contents listed on the auction bill. We know, however, that he was familiar with many of the Scottish and English collections of the time, for he constantly refers to “Collections” without identifying them, particularly in his correspondence with George Thomson.

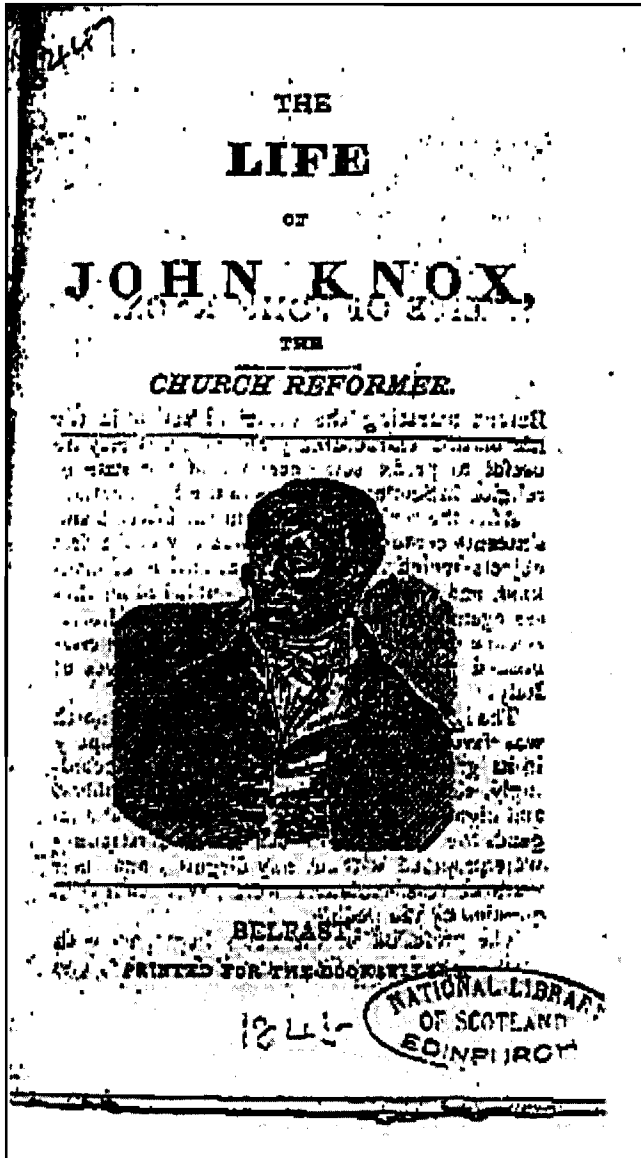
Obviously, nothing certain can be said without proof that Burns had seen the *Select Collection*, but the remarkable similarity between the two title-pages suggests that either Burns or Wilson had seen this collection, or another book which in turn had been influenced by the *Select Collection*. One can see as improvements the removal in the Kilmarnock edition of the connection between the outer frame and the inner, thus allowing each of the frames to stand alone both vertically and horizontally, with connections only at the corners. The substitution of the small arrows for the rules can also be seen as an enhancement, making the page somewhat more open. In defense of the *Select Collection*, the title-page achieves a harmonious effect with the ornament in the rule which separates the volume number from the lower part of the page. It must be admitted that Donaldson created a winning title-page, one which Burns may have had the artistic sense to adapt to his own work, improving it slightly in the process.

GRR

### A Burnsian Odd Couple

The re-use of wood engravings to portray more than one person in a book goes back a long way, at least to the *Nuremberg Chronicle* of 1493. One such re-use or misuse has not apparently been commented upon. It occurs on the title-page of a Belfast chapbook of considerable rarity, with only one copy listed in the OCLC as of January 2001. Another copy, the title-page of which is illustrated below, is in the Lauriston Castle Collection of chapbooks in the National Library of Scotland, and is dated 1845 by that institution. The portrait is obviously of Robert Burns, similar to those which can be found on several nineteenth-century chapbooks containing selections of his work. One assumes that the unnamed printer of *The Life of John Knox* had a wry sense of humor.

GRR



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## An Early Indian Mystic and Robert Burns

Anne Fremantle (1909—) is a prolific writer, editor and translator, as well as a frequent guest on radio and television shows. She was born in France, the daughter of Frederick Jackson, a privy councillor, Sheriff of London and a director of the Bank of England. Anne Fremantle was a graduate of Oxford University and the London School of Economics. She moved to the United States in 1940. Born into the Church of England, she became a Muslim at age nine, and converted to Roman Catholicism in 1943. Especially after her conversion, her interests turned to religion and mysticism. Among her publications of this period we find *The Age of Belief: The Medieval Philosophers* (1955), *This Little Band of Prophets: The British Fabians* (1960), *The Protestant Mystics* (1964), and she edited *Mothers: A Catholic Treasury of Great Stories* (1951), *A Treasury of Early Christianity* (1953), *Christmas is Here: A Catholic Selection of Stories and Poems* (1955), *The Social Teachings of the Church* (1963), and *Communism: Basic Writings* (1970). Fremantle was also a regular reviewer and contributor to the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *New Statesman*, the *New York Times*, *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Catholic World*, and was Associate Editor of *Commonweal*.

In 1977 Fremantle published *Woman's Way to God* with St. Martin's Press in New York. One of the subjects of the book is Lalla Yogiswari (1379?—?), an Indian woman of good family who was detested and driven from her husband's home by her mother-in-law. We are told that Yogiswari:

Adopted a Kashmiri saint called Sed Boy as her *guru*, and went about the country singing.... One day she saw a famous contemporary Muslim saint, Sayyid Ali Hamadani, who was influential in converting Kashmir to Islam. Saying "I have seen a man" Lalla fled into a nearby baker's shop, jumped into the blazing oven, and disappeared. Legend said that Sayyid followed her, and asked the baker's wife if any woman had come into the shop, but the baker's wife said no. Suddenly Lalla jumped out of the oven, dressed in the green garments of Paradise.<sup>1</sup>

According to Fremantle, "Lalla's poems and sayings are still quoted verbatim in Kashmir, and she is still highly revered there" (Fremantle, p. 78).

There is also a story about her earlier incarnations. Among her most famous poems are those which "relate her own spiritual odyssey" (Fremantle, p. 79) seeking truth. Fremantle tells us that "suddenly she found, in her own soul, her Self, and learned that this Self and the Supreme Self were one" (p.

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<sup>1</sup>Anne Fremantle, *Woman's Way to God* (New York, 1977), p. 78. Henceforth Fremantle.

79). In all, ten four-line stanzas are quoted in *Woman's Way to God*. Fremantle does not specify where the divisions in these "specimens" occur; the first five stanzas would appear to make up one unit, the sixth and seventh stanzas seem each to be independent, the eighth and ninth fit together, and the tenth stands alone.

In the first unit we follow Lalla from her claimed beginning as a cotton bloom, through being woven into cloth which was then cut by a tailor and fashioned into a garment, and as such she "Found...the Self and attained release" (Fremantle, p. 79). That section ends:

Hard is the way of the Soul on earth  
Ere it may reach the journey's end.  
Hard is the path of life in each Birth,  
Ere thou cans't take the hand of the Friend.

The following stanza opens: "Absorbed within Thyself, Thou remaindest hidden from me," but "When I beheld Thee in my Self" there emerges the possibility of perfect union. This and the following stanza are less structured than those which come before and which follow. In the second of these stanzas, which may in fact be meant to form one unit with the first, the protagonist wishes to "befoul" itself (we are never told what gender the protagonist is; quite possibly it is sexless).

The eighth and ninth stanzas obviously belong as a pair because every line begins with the words: "For a moment saw I..." (Fremantle, p. 80).

Any reader familiar with the works of Robert Burns will be astonished at the final stanza, which reads:

But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;  
Or, like the snow-fall in the river,  
A moment white, then melts for ever (Fremantle, p. 80).

Given to the reader by Anne Fremantle as the work of Lalla Yogiswari are these four lines from "Tam o' Shanter." The only alteration which has been made is that Fremantle writes "like the snow-fall in the river" whereas Burns wrote "like the snow falls in the river." This alters the meaning of Burns's text, but we do not have to suspect that Fremantle made the alteration on her own. In the 1850s Robert Chambers published his important edition of Burns which went through several reprintings, and we find the reading "snowfall" there also.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless there were other editors of Burns's work who carried on this misreading.

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<sup>2</sup>*The Life and Works of Robert Burns*, ed. Robert Chambers, 4 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1856), III, 145.



Placed as it is, at the end of Fremantle's selections from the poems of Lalla Yogiswari, this short quotation from Burns rounds off the selection admirably—one more example of how an appropriate quotation from Burns can be found for almost every situation. I don't really believe, however, that the overall impression created by the selection would have been lessened had Ms. Fremantle made a discrete bow to Scotland's Bard.

GRR