

8-2020

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Patrick Scott

*University of South Carolina - Columbia*

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### Recommended Citation

Scott, Patrick (2020) "'Yon High Mossy Mountains': A Burns Song Manuscript from the Roy Collection," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 46: Iss. 1, 147–157.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol46/iss1/15>

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## **“YON HIGH MOSSY MOUNTAINS”: A BURNS SONG MANUSCRIPT FROM THE ROY COLLECTION<sup>1</sup>**

*Patrick Scott*

The existence of the Burns song manuscript described in this note has long been known to Burns scholars, and its major variants have been picked up by editors from an earlier collation or from catalogue descriptions when it was offered for sale. However, the manuscript itself has been elusive. Until 2000, it was in private hands, and so unavailable for study. It seems worth giving it fuller consideration.

The song was first published in 1792, headed “Yon wild mossy mountains,” in part IV of Johnson’s *Scots Musical Museum*.<sup>2</sup> Although there is no doubt as to Burn’s authorship, it seems to have attracted relatively little critical attention. At first glance, it seems a “drawing-room” song, much of it standard pastoral, decked out with Scottish topography but only superficially Scotticized in language. Soon after it appeared in the *Museum*, arranged by Stephen Clarke, Burns’s song was arranged by Haydn for William Napier’s series *Scottish National Airs*.<sup>3</sup> Recent more positive comment includes Carol McGurk’s reassessment of gender roles

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<sup>1</sup> This note is the ninth in an on-going series, in *SSL*, the *Burns Chronicle*, and elsewhere, illustrating Burns manuscripts in the G. Ross Roy Collection. I am grateful to Elizabeth Sudduth for facilitating access to older files on the acquisition, and to Matt Hodges for preparing a new scan, in connection with Burns projects supported by the Office of the Vice-President for Research, University of South Carolina (ASPIRE grant: 30000-18-47599). The manuscript is reproduced here by courtesy of the Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of South Carolina Libraries.

<sup>2</sup> *Scots Musical Museum*, IV (Edinburgh: James Johnson, 1792), 340-341 (song 331), in James Kinsley, *Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), I: 345-346 (Kinsley 163); Murray Pittock, ed., *The Scots Musical Museum* [OERB, vols 2 & 3] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), II.1: 407-408.

<sup>3</sup> William Napier, ed., *A Selection of Original Scots Songs*, 3 (1795), song 20 (Hob. XXXIa: 119); recording by Jamie MacDougall and the Haydn Trio Eisenstadt, *Joseph Haydn: Scottish Songs/Schottische Lieder*, vol. 6 (Brilliant Classics, 2008).

in the song (“the woman has conquered the man”) and Murray Pittock’s praise for the intermixing of the pastoral setting with the lure of the wild as “a hybridization of generic expectations later to be built on by Wordsworth.”<sup>4</sup>

What long deflected critics from reappraising the song was Burns’s mysterious comment that it “alludes to a part of my private history, which it is of no consequence to the world to know.”<sup>5</sup> Inevitably, every biographer has wanted to know, trying to identify the unnamed Lanarkshire lassie who, Burns writes, “was not the fairest,” but in whose arms he found himself clasped:

I loe the dear Lassie because she loes me.— (l. 15).<sup>6</sup>

Cunningham guessed wildly that “The heroine is either ‘Nannie,’ who dwelt near the Lugar, or ‘Highland Mary,’—most likely the former.”<sup>7</sup> Stenhouse opted, somewhat elliptically, for Highland Mary.<sup>8</sup> Taking a hint from the phrase “her armour of glances” (line 18), Scott Douglas at first identified the lassie instead as Jean Armour.<sup>9</sup>

However, the song says that she “resides” by “a lanely, sequestered stream” among the “wild mossy moors” at the headwaters of the Clyde, which would rule out Jean Armour. It seems to have been Chambers who, though silent on the name, first hinted that the song could be connected to a specific place and date. In his 1852 edition, Chambers had pointed out that, on his way from Mossgiel to Edinburgh, in late November 1786,

<sup>4</sup> Carol McGuirk, *Reading Robert Burns: Texts, Contexts, Transformations* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 21; Murray Pittock, in *OERB*, III: 113.

<sup>5</sup> R.H. Cromek, ed., *Reliques of Robert Burns* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1808), 298.

<sup>6</sup> For this line, Cromek, 499 n., compares “I love my love because I know my love loves me,” the refrain of “The Maid in Bedlam,” *SMM* I, song 46 (*OERB* II: 92-93), but cf. also “And I love the dear shepherd, because he loves me,” in song 835, “How pleasing’s my Damon,” *Vocal Magazine, or, Complete British Songster*, no. 6 (London: Harrison, 1781): 224, suggested by Otto Ritter, *Quellenstudien zu Robert Burns, 1773-1791* [*Palaestra*, XX] (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1901), 166.

<sup>7</sup> Allan Cunningham, ed., *Works of Robert Burns, with a Life*, 8 vols (London: Cochrane & M’Crone, 1834), IV: 201.

<sup>8</sup> William Stenhouse, *Illustrations of the Lyric Poetry and Music of Scotland*, in six parts (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1853), 314, referring back to his note on “The Highland Lassie,” 116-117.

<sup>9</sup> William Scott Douglas, ed., *The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Burns Arranged in the Order of their Earliest Publication* (Kilmarnock: James M’Kie, 1871), 288, though the identification is not repeated in Scott Douglas’s *Works of Robert Burns* (Edinburgh: Paterson, 1877-1879), on which see below, nor in his revised *Kilmarnock Edition of the Poetical Works of Robert Burns* (Kilmarnock: M’Kie, 1876, with reprints under varying imprints into the 1930s).

Burns stayed overnight at Archibald Prentice’s farm at Covington Mains, near Biggar.<sup>10</sup> In 1856, for his Library Edition, Chambers added a footnote: he had discovered in Archibald Prentice’s journal that on May 1, 1787, just before Burns set out on his Border Tour, he had made a previously-unrecorded return visit to Covington Main. This “rapid excursion,” Chambers inferred, was “probably connected with some circumstances about which Burns wished to observe silence,” and, remembering Burns’s reticence about the heroine of this song, he concluded, without saying that this song was connected with the repeated visits to Covington Main, that the May visit there “might be a similar case, if not the same.”<sup>11</sup> By his 6-volume edition in 1877, Scott Douglas had picked up Chambers’s footnote, still only hinting at the romance, but taking Chambers’s date for the visit as a definitive date for the song.<sup>12</sup> By 1896, in Henley and Henderson’s edition, Chambers’s cautious hint had become the confident assertion that, while the song “is held by some to refer to Mary Campbell,” “Burns occasionally visited a peasant-girl near Covington, Lanarkshire.”<sup>13</sup>

There have been dissenters. James Mackay suggested a “more prosaic” explanation for Burns’s trip back to Covington, as connected not to a local lassie or to this song, but to Burns’s buying a horse ready for his planned Scottish tours.<sup>14</sup> Once such speculation is allowed, further explanations seem possible. Archibald Prentice had subscribed for 20 copies of Burns’s Edinburgh edition, presumably for local distribution: Burns might have visited to pick up the money Prentice had collected. Equally, since Burns kept the visit dark, perhaps he had borrowed money from Prentice in November on his way to Edinburgh that he now needed and was able to repay. But James Dick is surely accurate in saying “Nothing certain is known of the origin of the verses.”<sup>15</sup> Even the dating of the song in 1786 or 1787 is conjecture, based solely on trying to match the geographical location in the song with two of Burns’s known journeys on the relevant

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Chambers, ed., *The Life and Works of Robert Burns*, 4 vols (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1851-1852), II: 13-14 (citing a letter from Prentice’s son to John Wilson, dated March 8, 1841, published in the *Edinburgh Intelligencer*),

<sup>11</sup> Robert Chambers, ed., *The Life and Works of Robert Burns* [*Library Edition*], 4 vols (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1856-56), II: 68n-69n. For another possible “rapid excursion” from Edinburgh, over Hogmanay 1786, see Craig Shairp, “Robert Burns’s Missing Weekend,” *SSL*, 33-34 (2004), 413-420.

<sup>12</sup> Scott Douglas, *Works*, II: 38 39: “We have now no hesitation in assigning the close of 1786 as the date of this composition.”

<sup>13</sup> W.E. Henley and T.F. Henderson, eds, *The Poetry of Robert Burns* [*Centenary Edition*], 4 vols (Edinburgh: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1896), II: 373.

<sup>14</sup> James A. Mackay, *RB: A Biography of Robert Burns* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1992), 303-304.

<sup>15</sup> James C. Dick, *The Songs of Robert Burns* (London: Henry Frowde, 1903), 357.

route. While late 1786 provides a *terminus a quo*, Burns could have written it much nearer its publication in the *Scots Musical Museum*, making the *terminus ad quem* August 1792. And, as I argue below, he could have revised the song later than that.

For two hundred years, Burns editors have based their text for this song on just two closely-related texts, the song as published in the *Scots Musical Museum*, and the Hastie MS, in the British Library, which was the manuscript Burns sent to Johnson to be engraved.<sup>16</sup> Fifty years ago, for the Clarendon edition, James Kinsley, who generally privileges manuscript over print, chose the Hastie MS, while for the recent *Oxford Edition of Robert Burns*, which aims to show Burns's work as it was encountered by his first readers, Murray Pittock reproduces the published song from the first or Catch Club printing of the *Museum*. Each edition records the major variants in the other text.

Where they differ is in their treatment of variants that had been recorded from a third text, an additional autograph manuscript, or even two additional autograph manuscripts. Kinsley had never seen this additional MS himself, but reported three variants (Kinsley I: 345). In 1955, when Kinsley took over the Clarendon edition in 1955, the original editor Robert Dewar had transferred to him some twenty-five years of research notes, including "collations of a number of manuscripts which were again inaccessible or that could not be traced" (Kinsley I: v). For this song, Kinsley states that "Dewar collated a MS omitting ll. 9-12, with these variants," that is, "high" in line 1, "eyes" in line 4, and "vallies" in line 5 (Kinsley I: 345), but he has to use this information without being able to say quite where Dewar got it.

In the notes in *OERB*, Pittock records the Dewar variants, as transmitted through Kinsley, though questioning whether, if Dewar's manuscript source is not extant, they can now still be treated as authentic. The *OERB* notes also record, from an undated sale catalogue, another manuscript source for the song, with a number of similar variants. Nearly all the variants listed from this further source are of accidentals (spelling and punctuation), but they include all four markers of the missing Dewar source: the omission of the third stanza and the variants "high," "eyes," and "vallies" (*OERB*, III: 112-113).

All these variants, those Kinsley took from Dewar and those in the undated sale catalogue, derive, if indirectly, from a single source, the Burns autograph manuscript now in the Roy Collection at the University of South Carolina. *OERB* records that the undated sale catalogue stated a set price

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<sup>16</sup> British Library, Add. MS 22307, f. 93, the only manuscript of this song listed in Margaret M. Smith and Penny Boumelha, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, III:1 (London: Mansell, 1986), 191 (BuR 1268).

for the manuscript of £2600, so indicating that the catalogue was not from an auction, as previously suggested, but from a bookseller. The bookseller was Maggs Brothers of London, who catalogued the manuscript at that price in 1976.<sup>17</sup> In the Maggs description, the manuscript was already described as bound in full red morocco, with the provenance letter described below bound in, just as it was when bought for Roy Collection twenty-four years later. The same London firm had previously listed the same manuscript in a catalogue in 1952, then priced at £200.<sup>18</sup> Both Maggs catalogues included transcriptions of the manuscript, and it seems likely, as discussed further below, that Dewar had made his notes on the variants, not from the manuscript itself, or an earlier unsourced transcription in the *Burns Chronicle* in 1948, but from the 1952 Maggs catalogue.<sup>19</sup>

What is now the Roy manuscript was purchased at auction at Christie’s, New York, in December 2000.<sup>20</sup> It is a single leaf, 22.9 x 18.3 cm, written on laid paper, in ink, on one side only (verso blank), and mounted on a guard, in a slightly larger binding of red morocco, with gilt rules and spine title, two raised spine bands, and all edges gilt, by Sangorski and Sutcliffe.<sup>21</sup> No watermark is visible. The *OERB* entry, based on the earlier printed catalogue description, suggests it is a “non-holograph MS.,” but it sold as authentic without disclaimer in 1952, 1976, and 2000; it was inspected before the 2000 sale by the library’s bidding agent and after the sale by Professor Roy; and it has over the past twenty years been

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<sup>17</sup> *Autograph Letters and Historical Documents* [Catalogue No. 977] (London: Maggs Brothers, 1976), item 14, which also provided an image of the manuscript. A copy of the 1976 Maggs description, though not of the illustration, was pasted in the front of the bound manuscript some time before it was bought for the Roy Collection. Because of lockdown, the Maggs catalogues were rechecked from the entries on Rare Book Hub, at: <https://www.rarebookhub.com/>.

<sup>18</sup> *Autograph Letters and Historical Documents* [Catalogue No. 806] (London: Maggs Brothers, 1952), item 33. No binding is indicated in the 1952 description.

<sup>19</sup> “‘Yon Wild Mossy Mountains’: An Inedited Manuscript,” *Burns Chronicle*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser. 23 (1948), 3, for which no source is cited, no location or owner given, and no editor named.

<sup>20</sup> *Fine Printed Books and Manuscripts ... Thursday 14 December 2000* (New York: Christie’s, 2000), 37-38, lot 23 (with a better facsimile than in 1976).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Elizabeth A. Sudduth, with Clayton A. Tarr, *The G. Ross Roy Collection of Robert Burns: An Illustrated Catalogue* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 2, and cf. Peter J. Westwood, ed., *The Definitive Illustrated Companion to Robert Burns* ([Irvine]: Distributed National Burns Collections Project), 2004, vol. 6, pt. 2, 3889; Patrick Scott, *Robert Burns: A Documentary Volume [DLB Biography]*, 383] (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2018), 201. As with other Burns manuscripts, since 2009, the University of South Carolina Libraries Digital Collections have included a high-quality digital image that can be enlarged for close study: <https://digital.tcl.sc.edu/digital/collection/rbc/id/1068/rec/1>.

repeatedly viewed and examined by Burns researchers visiting South Carolina. To date no one seeing it has questioned that it is in Burns's hand.

Bound in with the manuscript is a letter about its early provenance, with an endorsement by the next owner. Because the letter-writer was blind, the letter is in pencil, and a little irregularly written, making transcription sometimes difficult. It reads:

My dear sir

Dumfries 27th January 1829

I repeat my thanks for the letter of credit which you kindly gave me upon Messrs Maxwell & Maury of Bordeaux—I return it inclosed, & though I have not used it, I will always retain a gratefull sense of their very obliging attentions. To your Revered Parents I owe the best acknowledgements for the very condescending goodness which has been my own & [?mine] comfort. I have a particular satisfaction in sending your demand for a written document of Robt Burns. He sent this song to my wife in the first year he began to compose his inimitable poetry.

Blessings to your parents and prosperity to their family is the hope of My dear sir

Your very obliged

JE Perochon

At the foot of the second page this has been endorsed in ink:

Mr. Parochon, who was a French gentleman & blind, married Miss Dunlop the Daughter of the Friend of the Poet, he sent these lines to me in January 1829.

Alex Maxwell

The writer of the letter, Joseph Elias Perochon (1749-1836), whose father was French, was a London merchan, “one of the worthiest of men without sixpence,” whom Mrs. Dunlop's eldest daughter, Agnes Eleanora Dunlop (1760-1825), had married in 1794 “after three year's deliberation.”<sup>22</sup> When he lost his sight, they moved to Dumfries, and befriended Jean Armour Burns. The recipient and endorser of the letter was most likely Alexander Maxwell (1787-1867), from a Dumfries family, who had been in business in Liverpool, “amassing a fortune”.with his brothers Wellwood, later of The Grove, Dumfries, and George.<sup>23</sup> Alexander's “revered parents” were Wellwood (Johnstone) Maxwell, of Barncleuch,

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<sup>22</sup> Frances Dunlop to Burns, March 21, 1794, in William Wallace, ed., *Robert Burns and Mrs. Dunlop*, 2 vols (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1898), II: 272. Her younger sister, Susan, also had a husband of French descent, James Henri with an estate “near Bordeaux” which his posthumous son was able to reclaim.

<sup>23</sup> William McDowall, *History of the Burgh of Dumfries* (Edinburgh: Black, 1867), 506.

Yon high mossy mountains, sae lofty & wide,  
 That nurse in their bosom the youth of the Clyde,  
 Where the grouse lead their coverts thro' the heather to feed,  
 And the shepherd eyes his flock as he pipes on his reed.  
 Not Gowrie's rich vallies, nor Forth's sunny shores;  
 To me hae the charms o' yon wild mossy moors;  
 For there, by a lanely, sequestered stream,  
 Resides a sweet lassie, my thought, & my dream.  
 She is not the fairest, altho' she is fair;  
 O' fine education but sma' is her share:  
 Her parentage humble as humble can be,  
 But I loe the dear lassie because she loes me.  
 To Beauty what man but must yield him a prize,  
 In her armour o' glances, & blushes, & sighs;  
 And when wit & refinement hae polish'd the darts,  
 They dazzle the e'e as they flee to our hearts.  
 But kindness, sweet kindness, in the fond sparkling e'e,  
 Has lustre outshining the diamond to me.  
 And the heart beating love as I'm clasp'd in her arms,  
 O these are my lassie's all-conquering charms.

and his wife Margaret. A fourth brother, William Maxwell, had established a separate business in

**Robert Burns, Autograph Manuscript of "Yon high mossy mountains"**  
**G. Ross Roy Collection of Robert Burns, Burnsians & Scottish Poetry**  
 Courtesy of the Irvin Department of Rare Books & Special Collections,  
 University of South Carolina Libraries



Bordeaux, and William Maxwell's partner there was presumably James Maury, American consul in Liverpool from 1790-1829, who had earlier been in partnership with Wellwood, or if not James Maury himself, then one of his relations.<sup>24</sup>

This Perochon-Maxwell-Bordeaux connection usefully confirms the authenticity of the 1829 letter, and therefore the provenance it provides for the Burns manuscript as formerly owned by Perochon's late wife. If the letter as a whole is authentic, there is no reason to doubt Perochon's statement that Burns himself had sent the manuscript. That it was not part of the Lochryan Burns collection, along with Mrs. Dunlop's own Burns manuscripts, perhaps argues that Burns had indeed sent it to Agnes, rather than to her mother. One might reasonably reject the hyperbolic family anecdote that he sent it "in the first year he began to compose his inimitable poetry," but on the usual dating, the song was written in 1786 or 1787, when Agnes would already be 27, and Perochon's account at least suggests the manuscript was in her possession before they got married.

This time-bracket for the Roy manuscript of 1787-1794 provides significant background for the relationship between the Roy manuscript and the two better-known source texts. The Hastie manuscript was sent by Burns to James Johnson for *Scots Musical Museum*, part IV, so presumably dates from after publication of part III, in early 1790, and before the date of the preface to part IV, in August 1792.

The question is which of the two manuscripts Burns wrote first, and the relationship among the texts can be examined most easily through a detailed collation of the variants. The collation below also records variants from Dewar, the *Burns Chronicle* transcription, and other sources, where these seem to have influenced previous discussions; the text in Cromek derives from *SMM*, including the repeat of ll. 34. For the three significant source-texts, the collation aims to include all the substantive variants, but not most of the differences in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. For instance, *OERB* notes that *Hastie* consistently uses "&" where *SMM* spells out "and," and this is also the case in *Roy*. The collation uses the following *sigla*:

<i>Hastie</i>	Hastie MS, British Library, as reported in <i>OERB</i> , vol. III
<i>SMM</i>	<i>Scots Musical Museum</i> , vol. IV (1792)
<i>Roy</i>	Roy MS, University of South Carolina Libraries
<i>BC</i>	<i>Burns Chronicle</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ser. 23 (1948), 3
<i>Dewar</i>	Robert Dewar's collation, as given in Kinsley's footnotes
<i>K</i>	Kinsley, <i>Poems and Songs</i> , vols 2 and 3 (not separately noted)

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<sup>24</sup> For the Maxwell firm and family, see: <http://hyslopmaxwell.com/liverpool>. Like many Liverpool firms, they were involved in trading cotton, tobacco, and sugar from the southern United States and the West Indies.

except where adding information to *H*).

- Maggs A* *Autograph Letters* ... [Catalogue No. 806] (*Maggs*, 1952)  
 (transcription through line 16 only)  
*Maggs B* *Autograph Letters* ... [Catalogue No. 977] (*Maggs*, 1976)  
 (transcription through line 16 only)  
*OERB* Pittock, *Oxford Edition of Robert Burns*, vol. III (not separately  
 noted except where it adds information to *H*).

Variants below are keyed to the line numbers in Kinsley, also used in the *OERB* collation of the Hastie MS. (*OERB* III: 112-113).

**Title:** Yon wild mossy mountains *SMM*

- 1 wild *Hastie*, *SMM*] high *Roy*, *BC*, *Dewar*, *Maggs A* and *B*  
 and wide *SMM*, *BC*] & wide *Hastie*, *Roy*, *Maggs A* and *B*<sup>25</sup>  
 2 o' the Clyde *Hastie*, *SMM*] of *Roy*, *BC*, *Maggs A* and *B*  
 3 Where the grouse thro' the heather lead their coveys *Hastie*] Where  
 the grouse lead their coveys thro' the heather *SMM*; Where the  
 grouse lead their coveys thro' the heather *Roy*, *Maggs A* and *B*  
 4 tents *Hastie*, *SMM*] eyes *Roy*, *Dewar*, *Maggs A* and *B*  
*Lines 3-4 repeated in SMM.*  
 5 valley *Hastie*, *SMM*] vallies *Roy*, *Dewar*, *Maggs A* and *B*  
 7 sequestered *Hastie*, *Roy*, *Maggs A* and *B*] sequestred *SMM*;  
 sequesterèd *BC*.  
**Lines 9-12 not present in *Roy*, *Dewar*, *Maggs A* and *B***  
 10 Ilk stream foaming down its ain green, narrow strath *SMM*, *K*] Where  
 ilk stream faems alang its ain green, narrow strath, *Hastie* correcting  
 narrow green strath  
 14 O' nice education *Hastie*, *SMM*, *K*] O' fine education *Roy*, *BC*, *Maggs A*  
 and *B* (not noted by *Dewar*)  
 share *SMM*, *Roy*] skair *Hastie*.  
 17 maun yield *SMM*, *Hastie*] must yield *Roy*, *BC*, *Maggs B* [*facsimile*],  
 reported in *OERB*, not noted by *Dewar*  
 18 In her armour of *SMM*] In Her armour of *Hastie*, correcting Her armour  
 is; In her armour o' *Roy*,

The collation fully confirms the natural inference from the sale record, that the “Inedited” text in the *Burns Chronicle*, the variants Kinsley printed from Dewar’s notes, and the undated sale catalogue collated in *OERB*, are indeed all derived from the Roy manuscript. Because Dewar seems only to have recorded variants from the first two stanzas, not mentioning “fine” (l. 14) or “must” (l. 17), it seems more likely that he took his notes from the 1952 sale catalogue (*Maggs A*), rather than from the manuscript itself, or from the *Burns Chronicle*.

The collation also provides some data for considering the sequence of the manuscripts. In two places where *Hastie* differs significantly from

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<sup>25</sup> *OERB* indicates that the undated sale catalogue (i.e. *Maggs B*) has “no ‘and’” in this line, where *SMM* has “and wide”; though it is barely visible in the *Maggs B* facsimile, the *Maggs B* transcription has “&,” as in *Roy*.

*SMM*, in the rewriting of lines 3 and in having “share” not “skair” in line 14, *Roy* matches the later, *SMM*, version, not *Hastie*. Twice, in lines 10 and 18, in writing the song out for Johnson, Burns revises the phrasing; line 10 is in the stanza *Roy* omits, but in line 18, *Roy* more or less follows the revision, not the earlier version. Once you set aside matters of Burns’s penmanship, such as using “&” for “and,” there is no place where *Hastie* and *Roy* share a reading that is not in *SMM*. The inference must be, therefore, that *Roy* is a fair copy made after *Hastie*, indeed after the text was settled for *SMM*. Because there seems to have been no earlier or other manuscript among Burns’s own papers, and because *Roy* incorporates the revisions in *Hastie*, Burns may, indeed, have copied out the song for to give to Miss Dunlop from *SMM*, rather than from manuscript or memory.

But *Roy* is an authorial fair copy. The sequence of the two authorial manuscripts has implications both for editors and critics. A social text editor will, of course, still print the first only published text, from *SMM*, but a critical editor must consider what to do about the variants in *Roy*. If the *Roy* manuscript had preceded *Hastie* and *SMM*, as Professor Roy thought, then Burns’s first version would have had only five stanzas, and the third stanza in *Hastie* and *SMM* (ll. 9-12) was an addition. Since the collation shows that the *Roy* manuscript is later, its textual changes could well be considered revisions. An old school editor might well have felt bound to delete the third stanza, and accept the other changes of wording, as being Burns’s final decision about the text.

Not all variants between authorial texts, whether in manuscript, or an authorially-sanctioned printed text, represent deliberate aesthetic improvement. Literary critics, once alerted to variants, tend to attribute authorial intent or readerly effect when other factors may be in play, but it is well documented that authors, including Burns, copying out their own poems, make changes that seem of little significance.<sup>26</sup> As far as we know, Burns did not get proofs of the Johnson texts to correct. There are changes between *Hastie* and *SMM* that one would hesitate to judge authorial, notably the substitution of “sequestred” for “sequestered” in line 7 (where *Roy* follows *Hastie*), and of “share” for “skair” in l.14 (where *Roy* follows *SMM*). There are changes of spelling and presentation where *SMM* probably simply represents the style of the engraver rather than of the author, as in the use of “and” for “&.”

But, apart from the deletion of the third stanza, a number of variants in *Roy* seem to shift the song, to soften what was already a fairly dilute use of Scots. The shift is not imposed uniformly. While Burns writes “of,” not

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<sup>26</sup> The classic discussion of “indifferent variants” in Burns that are still demonstrably authorial is by E. A. J. Honigman, *The Stability of Shakespeare’s Text* (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), esp. 56-59, 70, 76-77.

“o’,” in line 2, he still writes “o’,” not “of,” in lines 6, 14, and 18. He retains most of the Scots words or spellings in the earlier text, as with “sae” (line 1), “lanely” (l. 7), “lassie” (ll. 8, 24), “sma” (l. 14), “loe” and “loes” (l.16), “een” (l. 20), and “e’e” (l. 21). But there is some Anglicization: “tents” becomes “eyes” (l. 4) and “maun” becomes “must” (l. 17). Substituting “fine” for “nice” (l. 14) might be considered consistent with this shift. Generally, if the choice presents itself, editors, critics, and readers of Burns, as of other Scottish literary texts, prefer the text that more clearly marks itself as Scots, and avoid texts with signs of Anglicization.<sup>27</sup> Before the rise of social text theory, the default editorial position might well have been to reject the idea that priority should be given to the author’s final intentions (a classical assumption that revision is improvement), and replace it instead with the romantic idea that the earlier text is fresher and unspoilt by the pressure of external expectations.

If the analysis above is plausible, then the Roy manuscript is the last extant version in Burns’s hand, but it need not represent his (only) final intentions. At least arguably, it was a fair copy written for a specific purpose, for presentation to an upper-class Scottish lady. The language is slightly modified, not Anglicized wholesale, and the result is still recognizable late 18th-century art-song, not folk-song, but the purpose may have influenced Burns, consciously, semi-consciously, or unconsciously, while he was copying the song out for a recipient he did not know directly, or did not know well. Even if this were so, at some level, however, the punctuation and spelling in the Roy manuscript follows closely the patterns in the Hastie manuscript, demonstrating that where those features were changed for the *Scots Musical Museum*, the modifications were in-house styling, not done at Burns’s instigation.

Given the partial and uncertain information about this manuscript that has been available in the past, fuller study was long overdue. It sometimes surprises Burnsians that there are still manuscripts in Burns’s hand that have never been fully described. Despite earlier printed references, this manuscript was missed by what is still, after forty years, the most-nearly comprehensive list of Burns poetic manuscripts, the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*. The expansion of Burns scholarship in the past ten years, and the *Oxford Edition of Robert Burns*, provide an incentive for updating that earlier list, and digitization makes comparison of multiple texts much easier than in the past. Each individual Burns manuscript can contribute to reconstructing the full story of Burns’s poetry, and each warrants renewed scrutiny.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Patrick Scott, “Divergent Authenticities: Editing Scottish Literary Texts,” *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 39 (2013): 3–14 (4-5).

