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Introduction: Allan Ramsay's Future

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Allan Ramsay, *act.* 38
mezzotint engraving by George White
from the portrait by William Aikman (1722)
Irvin Department of Rare Books & Special Collections
University of South Carolina Libraries

INTRODUCTION¹

Murray Pittock and Craig Lamont

This special issue of *Studies in Scottish Literature* is dedicated to the work of Allan Ramsay (1684-1758), a foundational figure in poetic, generic, linguistic and cultural innovation in Scotland in the eighteenth century.² The essays collected here stems from the research underway for a new edition of Ramsay's work, and together they cover a wide range of current issues in Ramsay studies. They also indicate a growing recognition of Ramsay's importance, with a number of recent public-facing projects relating to the new edition, and an accompanying growth in public awareness of his importance.

The Edinburgh Edition of Allan Ramsay is the first comprehensive scholarly edition of Ramsay's poetry and prose (and music), making the works of this pioneering poet and cultural entrepreneur available in their entirety and edited to the highest contemporary standards. It will appear from Edinburgh University Press in five volumes: *The Gentle Shepherd* (planned for 2023), *Prose* (planned for 2024), two volumes of *Poems*, and *The Ever Green*. A paperback volume, *The World of Allan Ramsay*, is also planned, and it is expected that in due course an accessible newly-edited paperback selection of Ramsay's work, drawing on research from the full edition, will appear to replace the selection published by Scottish Academic Press in 1985, and now long out of print.

The Edinburgh Edition is funded by a £1M grant (fully economically costed [FEC] value) from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council from 2018-23, held by Professor Murray Pittock as Principal Investigator and General Editor. Other investigators are Dr Rhona Brown (Glasgow),

¹ The general URL for information and news about the Ramsay edition and related projects is: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/edinburghenlightenment/>.

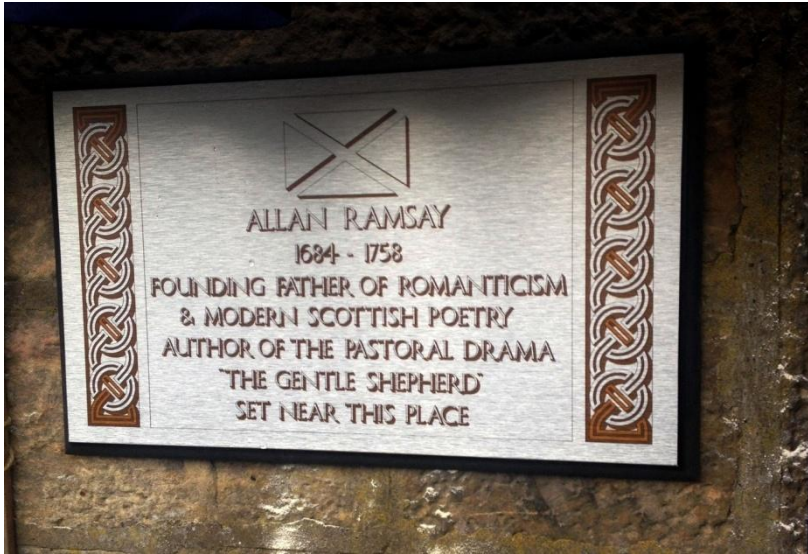
² Older works often give Ramsay's birth as in 1686, or sometimes 1685; the 1684 date given here is supported by cross-references from the poet's work enumerated by the Scottish Text Society editors, which leave open 1685 as a possibility, but render 1686 untenable, although it can still be found in some general reference sources. .

Dr David McGuinness (Glasgow), Professor Steve Newman (Temple) and Professor Daniel Szechi (Manchester). Dr Craig Lamont (Glasgow) and Dr Brianna Robertson-Kirkland (Glasgow and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) are the current staff on the project, which engages for the first time with the origins of the music of Ramsay’s songs. This aspect of the research is already proving very fruitful, demonstrating (for example) that after the second volume of the *Tea-table Miscellany*, Ramsay’s collection of “Scots songs” was very heavily drawn from the collections and performances of the contemporary Anglo-British music market. Research on the text will allow an expansion of bibliographical work on Ramsay editions, building on previous studies by Burns Martin (1931) and in vol. 6 of the Scottish Text Society edition (1974). Ramsay’s extant autograph manuscripts of Ramsay—located in Scotland, England and North America—are being used to collate the text and provide line-by-line variants, illustrating the evolution of Ramsay’s work from manuscript to print, as well as the changes found across variant editions. The extent of these notes, together with glossaries and other socio-cultural information, will provide the reader with a thorough insight into Ramsay’s early Enlightenment milieu.

The Edinburgh Edition is a textual edition with a difference: it is intended to go hand in hand with the revitalization of Ramsay’s public image and the development of cultural tourism and celebration based on both Allan Ramsay and his son. Outside Edinburgh, in the heart of what we now call “Ramsay Country,” there is the annual Allan Ramsay Festival, founded in 2016, and held at the Allan Ramsay Hotel in Carlops, in the Scottish Borders.³ The festival has featured songs from Ramsay’s *Gentle Shepherd*, performances which have subsequently been launched internationally, including an event planned in New York with TENET vocal artists in 2021. A Historic Environment Scotland plaque memorializing Allan Ramsay with an inscription by the general editor was unveiled at the Allan Ramsay Hotel in 2016 by the local MSP, Christine Grahame. Also in 2016, Stewart’s Brewery first produced their “Maggie Johnston’s Tuppenny Ale” to mark the Festival, which was supported by *Pub is the Hub*, an organization for revitalizing country pubs: it was the first award they had made in Scotland and the first based on a cultural case for support. Other sponsors and supporters of the Festival have included Cockburn’s of Leith, Sir Robert and Lady Clerk of Penicuik, and John

³ Rosemary Brown, proprietrix, Ramsay Hotel, email of 6 June 2017: “we can see Murray’s idea of creating ‘Ramsay country’ really beginning to take shape.” The hotel, and Dean Woodhouse’s innovative Ramsay Country walks and pictures, has since received accreditation from *Visit Scotland*, *Taste the Best* and *I Know Scotland*.

Kennedy of Newhall. In 2018, David McGuinness, Brianna Robertson-Kirkland and Aaron MacGregor ran a very successful historic ceilidh in the Scottish borders, based on dances from Edinburgh which dated before 1725. The Allan Ramsay Hotel now has a large and permanent exhibition of Ramsay-related trails, books, pictures and QR codes linked to Ramsay's music.



The Ramsay project has also drawn public attention to Ramsay in Edinburgh, the city with which he is so strongly associated.⁴ Based on research from the edition, the National Library of Scotland mounted a Treasures Exhibition on Ramsay, opening on 18 February, 2020. Before this year's medical emergency closed NLS to visitors, it had been planned to run for three months; however, the exhibition's research and interpretative work have been given wider, and longer-lasting, accessibility through a video tour and description.⁵ Significant outcomes are expected

⁴ For related work on Ramsay and Edinburgh, see Murray Pittock, *Enlightenment in a Smart City: Edinburgh's Civic Development, 1660-1750* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), *passim*; Craig Lamont, Craig Lamont, "Allan Ramsay & Edinburgh: commemoration in the city of forgetting," *Scottish Literary Review*, 10.1 (2018): 117–137. The Interactive Map of Enlightenment Edinburgh, showing Ramsay sites, and the Edinburgh Heritage Trail mentioned below, are linked from: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/edinburghenlightenment/>.

⁵ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyWvV-XrWlw&feature=youtu.be>.

in the years to come from the project's work in association with the National Galleries of Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland. The Project's Allan Ramsay Heritage Trail in Edinburgh, intended to increase Ramsay tourism, was profiled in *History Scotland* in 2018 and adopted by Midlothian and Borders Tourism Action Group. Newhall, where Ramsay recited and possibly produced *The Gentle Shepherd*, was redeveloped and themed in 2018-19 as a wedding venue linked to the poet's ballad opera, and is already proving a popular destination. The Edinburgh Edition and its previous 2015-17 scoping grant from the Royal Society of Edinburgh have supported all of these developments.

This issue is the first-ever collection of essays on Ramsay published outside Scotland, and the second special issue connected with the Ramsay edition and its precursor projects, following a Ramsay special issue of *Scottish Literary Review* in 2018.⁶ It presents new essays on Ramsay's historical importance in Scottish culture, in relation to the Enlightenment and Romanticism, poetry, the stage, topographical identity, the learned tradition, and Scottish literary language. The wider context for Ramsay studies, beginning in the nineteenth century, is covered in detail by Murray Pittock, with an overview of Ramsay's multi-faceted achievements and their importance at the national level. Ramsay remains overlooked and misunderstood as a writer, and his sophistication in terms of genre and language-to say nothing of cultural entrepreneurship-remains seriously underestimated. His presence in John Goodridge's *Catalogue of British & Irish Labouring Class & Self-Taught Poets* (2020), may technically be justifiable, but it is a strange place to find someone whose parents were the son of the factor of an earl and the daughter of a gentleman of leisure. Ramsay's social background was more similar to Wordsworth's than Clare's, down to the effect of the early death of his father on the family; one suspects that his use of Scots has led him to be categorized as a "dialect" writer, while the British establishment roll-call of his 1721 subscription list (now the subject of further study by the project) has been completely neglected. Rhona Brown traces the names and networks concerned in the poem 'The Fair Assembly' (1723), revealing a good number of Jacobite interest and connections. The commemoration of *The Gentle Shepherd* in "Ramsay Country" is mapped by Craig Lamont, taking cues from the contesting claims over the location of the pastoral found in periodicals and posthumous editions. Ralph McLean places Ramsay in the company of Archibald Pitcairne and Thomas Ruddiman in an examination of scholarly Latin and it is shown that Ramsay's "imitations" (rather than "translations") were part of an emerging linguistic trend in neoclassical

⁶ Murray Pittock, ed., Allan Ramsay special issue, *Scottish Literary Review* [Association for Scottish Literary Studies], 10.1 (Spring-Summer 2018).

expression. Returning to *The Gentle Shepherd*, Steve Newman makes the case for a reading of the work as a “major text,” with an emphasis on improvement teased out through drafts of Ramsay’s manuscripts. Brianna Robertson-Kirkland approaches the same text from bibliographical and musicological points of view, tracking the changes to the songs from the first edition (1725) through the Foulis edition of 1788. Finally, Jeremy Smith investigates manuscript and print sources of *The Ever Green* and *The Gentle Shepherd*, illuminating the collaborative work by Ramsay and Ruddiman to render a stylized—and arguably the first synthetic—form of Scots. Ramsay is thus the progenitor of both Burns and MacDiarmid. The essays constitute, therefore, as a group, an up-to-date conspectus of issues involved in work on the Edinburgh Edition and, we believe, as individual studies, some of the best current research on the importance of Ramsay’s achievement in the broader picture of eighteenth-century studies.

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