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GORDON LINDSTRAND

Fairly's Checklist of Robert Fergusson: Corrections and a Problem in Analytical Bibliography

In his "Bibliography of Robert Fergusson" John Fairly has provided a much-needed reference aid for Scottish literature but, unfortunately, one that may prove to be a serious distortion of bibliographical fact. In noting the chronology and describing three copies of The Works of Robert Fergusson printed by Oliver of Edinburgh, Fairly was led into error by a superficial examination of his exemplars. The first copy described (No. 43) is noted as the first London edition, printed for S. A. and H. Oddy of London. Its Preface is dated March, 1807; a back label bears the legend "New Edit."; and a frontispiece printed for Oddy is dated May, 1807. The remaining two copies are represented in Fairly by title-page transcriptions, but no further description, and a note in each case that the book is number 43 with a variant title. The title-page imprint for the second copy (44) has: Edinburgh, printed by Oliver for Blackwood of Edinburgh and the Longman firm of London; it is again dated 1807. The third copy (48) title-page announces a "New Edition," and it was printed for William Scott of Greenock, 1810. A close examination of three copies corresponding to Fairly's entries revealed that more than the title-page is variant in this edition and that the chronology established by Fairly for the 1807 copies is wrong.2

Fairly's second 1807 copy (44) is actually the first issue, and there is considerably more evidence for this conclusion than the priority imprint of Edinburgh which Fairly had apparently overlooked. Fairly's first 1807 copy (43) is actually a re-issue of the book; and the Greenock 1810 copy (48) is a further re-issue.3

1 Records of the Glasgow Bibliographical Society, III (1913-14), 115-55.
2 The exemplars inspected are in the collection of Professor G. Ross Roy who first noted that in addition to variant titles numbers 43 and 48 contained Contents pages that had been re-imposed. With this clue, the additional changes that are described here were subsequently discovered.
3 The distinctions I employ among editions, impressions, states, and issues are those created by Fredson Bowers in Principles of Bibliographical Description (Princeton University Press, 1949), pages 79; 84; et passim.
The pertinent bibliographical desiderata for a more accurate accounting of this Ferguson edition, together with my new sigla, are as follows: The book is signed and gathered in fours, with the signing beginning with the second full or B signature, in accordance with the normal practice at the time, and continuing through signature Zz with the customary excluded letters. The text consists of a long biographical account (with which signature B begins) followed by the poems. Preliminary matter consisting of Contents pages and a short Preface, which together make up the unsigned A signature, is prefixed with a pasted-in title-page. The last signature (Zz) consists of only two leaves conjugate. One of the copies I have used (Fairley 44) is in contemporary binding, so the original makeup of the volume is preserved: a blank leaf (of the paper of the book) preceding the title-page (the Frontispiece described by Fairley is lacking in this copy) is not conjugate with the title-page but is tipped in and pasted to it. As was customary for printing of this period, the composition of the book was begun with the text itself (that is, in this case, with the Life of Ferguson) on signature B, and the preliminaries composed after the text itself was finished. Not noted by Fairley were the facts that between the two 1807 copies the Contents pages type had been rearranged and two variant readings introduced, that substantive changes were made in the Preface, and that an earlier date of February, 1807, existed at the end of the Preface in the Edinburgh (Fairley 44) copy.

For the rest of my discussion of this edition I shall restore the correct chronology of the exemplars, and use these sigla: Fairley’s copy 44 is my 1807A; his copy 43 is 1807B; and his third copy of the edition, 48, is 1810. All three copies were printed at the same time, as part of a single edition or impression, early in 1807. A type analysis and spot collation by machine show that neither the 1807B nor the 1810 copy is a resetting; canted or misaligned type as well as all normal type show up in all three copies in identical arrangements in an identical page format. After the text of the book had been composed and machine, the preliminaries were then composed in the separate and unsigned signature A, followed in turn by the title-page, or both 1807 title-pages if consignments to both 1807 publisher-bookseller sources had already been contracted. As a result of someone’s having determined the need for changing and correcting certain matter in the preliminaries,

*For amplification through primary sources on this assumption and others I make in this paper concerning the printing of this book, consult any of several early nineteenth-century manuals on printing, but especially Caleb Stower, The Printer’s Grammar; or, Introduction to the Art of Printing (London, 1808).
this signature was reimposed and given the new date March, 1807. The time differential between the two Prefaces is not great, perhaps no longer than a few days, so that while the type pages of the text itself had already been broken up and the type distributed, the preliminary matter was undoubtedly still standing on the imposing stone.

TITLE-PAGE VARIANTS. These variants supply needed information about the process of this book’s printing. The original or 1807A title-page is as follows:


In the 1807B copy four units of information differ; otherwise, the type itself and the type arrangement are identical with 1807A. (1) A comma is introduced into the fifth line which now reads TO WHICH IS PREFIXED, A. (2) The double rule is set higher on the page. (3) There is a completely new imprint as follows: LONDON: / PRINTED FOR S. A. & H. ODDY, 27, OXFORD STREET. (4) And, finally, the printer has added his name after the date, in small type and preceded by a row of dots, as follows: Oliver & Co. Printers, Edinburgh. In the 1810 copy there is only one line of type in common with the 1807 copies, and that is the seventh-line legend OF THE. Otherwise, the wording and punctuation of the title are the same as in 1807B, after which there is this added material and new imprint: [ornamental rule] / A NEW EDITION. / [ornamental rule] / GREENOCK: / PRINTED FOR WILLIAM SCOTT. / [ornamental rule] / 1810.

There is reason enough to conclude, from the evidence of the common element found in the 1810 copy—where it occurs in the same position on the page as it did in the 1807 copies, that the third title-page for the Greenock copy was made up at the Oliver shop.

CONTENTS PAGES VARIANTS. At a glance it is apparent that between 1807A and 1807B these pages were rearranged by line (not reset) to create a more appropriate organization of contents. In the 1807A copy, that containing the first preliminary signature machined for the first consignee, the two captions "Contents" and "English Poems" are followed by the list of separate contents of the book, beginning with the two opening prose selections, "Preface" and "A Sketch of the Life of the Author." Perceiving that "English Poems" did not actually head up a list of poems, the Oliver overseer or corrector ordered that this
caption be moved down to follow the prose material and that an extra double rule be added. The process would not require actual resetting, that is, new composition, unless the original standing type for the preliminary signature had already been distributed. Collation of these pages by machine has determined that the preliminaries were indeed still standing in their original typesetting and that all that was required was to re-impose the lines of type and run over at the bottoms of pages until the end of the Contents list was reached (the last page of contents in the original typesetting used up only half a page, and the new setting extends a little beyond this point). Two additional changes were made while newly imposing these pages. The original entry for the poem "The Simile" was changed to "The Simile," (the affected portion was definitely reset, so there is no likelihood of the unwanted letter having dropped out), which then made the spelling correspond with that appearing at the head of the poem in the book. The contents entry for the poem "Epistle to Mr Robert Fergusson" was changed by adding a comma and the initials "J. S." at the end. The poem itself does not bear this form of the title but the initials are set at the end of the poem, so the change within the Contents was made solely for the benefit of making better sense of the following poem which is "Answer to Mr J. S.'s Epistle." In these changes of the Contents pages, 1810 is identical with 1807B.

PREFACE VARIANTS. In all these instances actual resetting of the affected portions of lines was ascertained by machine collation, thus establishing the fact that these are real variants. The lemma reading here is always from 1807A, by page and line numbering.

8.8 it is the fact that [it, is the fact, that] 1807B; 1810
8.15 since it was first written] since it was written 1807B; 1810
8.22 he shall ever] he will ever 1807B; 1810
9.5 hopes that might be] hopes that can be 1807B; 1810
9.7-9 without considering himself / bound to support, by personal responsibility, his assertions / in point of fact, when rationally required, or]
without considering himself / bound, when rationally required, to support, by personal / responsibility, his assertions in point of fact, or 1807B; 1810
9.14 person, there is reason to think, will]
person, it is perhaps to be regretted, will 1807B; 1810
9.17 urbanity, which] urbanity which 1807B; 1810
9.21 prejudice] prejudices 1807B; 1810
9.22 memory (for which he feels an ardent reverence) has been]
memory, for which he feels an ardent reverence, has been 1807B; 1810

10.2-3 his own pusill-animity, were he, on such an occasion, to suppress] his own pusil-animity, were be, on the present occasion, to suppress 1807B; 1810


A few of these changes do not seem to substantially improve the text, although others do and those in doubt to the modern reader can be accounted for as being consistent with the style of their author.

PRESS FIGURES AND TYPE IDENTIFICATION ANALYSIS.

The presence of press figures, while not yielding any obvious importance relating to the printing of the book, argues that the three copies are of a single impression. A single missing press figure of the sequence in 1807B introduces an interesting problem for bibliographical analysis. This figure is a dagger found at the bottom of page 128 (Q4) in 1807A and 1810 but missing in the chronologically intermediate (that is, according to a chronology established from title-page dating and the evidence of changes in the preliminary signature) copy of 1807B. I do not believe there is sufficient cause to assume that the figure got pulled out during inking of the forme or through other accident—a hypothesis that would attest exclusively, by pointing to the necessity of replacing the figure before printing the 1810 copy, to the significance of press figures as a tool in bibliographical analysis. Another bibliographical explanation takes precedence. An examination of type wear and distinctive type for this signature (Q) reveals that the chronologically intermediate copy, 1807B, actually contains one of the last copies of this signature (sheet) to be machined for the edition. Taking the evidence from this signature as the basis for a working hypothesis, I conducted a further analysis of type wear and discovered that the first copies machined of every sheet or signature do not necessarily appear in copies of the book comprising the first issue of the edition; that is,

Footnotes:


9 My evidence is a series of five examples of broken letters having sufficient deterioration from machining to show that 1807B is the last printed of the three copies of this signature. By the term "distinctive type" used throughout this paper I mean to refer to type that have assumed peculiar positions in the line and which shift about during machining, or type that is distinct owing to circumstances of the type casting process that produced an unusual or even abnormal type ornament or letter. "Type wear" is an overall term that includes all forms of broken and deteriorating typefaces.
the evidence of type wear or distinctive type does not enable one to establish accurately the dating of issues or construct a valid "early to late" order for the machining of sheets. The dating of copies for the Ferguison edition poses no special problems, except perhaps for a conceivably false date on the 1810 copy, but the bibliographical evidence from this edition, as discussed below, should place severe restrictions on type analysis as a bibliographical tool. As only a partial list of results, the following data ascribe the general characteristics of the order for the composing and machining of the edition by showing the distribution of sheets for twelve signatures.

C : 1807A > 1807B + 1810
L : 1807A > 1807B > 1810
M : 1807A > 1807B > 1810
O : 1807A > 1807B + 1810
Q : 1807A + 1810 > 1807B
R : 1807A > 1807B > 1810
U : 1807A > 1807B > 1810
Y : 1807A > 1807B > 1810
Cc : 1807A > 1810 > 1807B
Ee : 1810 + 1807A > 1807B
Ff : 1810 > 1807A + 1807B
T : 1810 > 1807A + 1807B

These results are hardly what we would expect to find if we assumed that, according to the chronology of the copies, greater wear of the type (or shifting of distinctive type) would show up (even, I might add, in a small edition size) in the 1810 copy or last issue of the book. Some of the signatures in the 1810 issue were unquestionably machined prior to their counterparts in 1807A and 1807B.

As I indicated earlier, there is no reason to suppose that the normal procedure for printing a book in the early nineteenth century should not prevail in this edition, nor is there any reason to suppose that the Oliver shop is not typical. Accordingly, we may assume that the following is an accurate reconstruction: the type for a given forme was distributed immediately after machining in order to have a sufficient type supply for succeeding formes—unless there was a special need to keep composed copy tied up in standing type for a greater than normal length of time, as in the case of the preliminary or A signature. The entire edition, consisting of portions for, I think, just two consignees (the Blackwood and Longman firms; and the Oddy firm) plus a limited number of extra copies, was machined and the sheets stored in the warehouse to await the preliminary signature and the first two title-pages. A first batch of copies was given the Edinburgh-Blackwood-
Longman title-page (1807A) and sent out of the warehouse probably before the changes in the preliminaries were made and the new preliminary signature machined. The printer would have been understandably reluctant to introduce by cancels the seven out of eight preliminary signature pages affected by the changes. It is quite possible, of course, that there exists somewhere a copy bearing the 1807A title-page but containing the new preliminary signature. This would mean only that the new preliminary signature was being worked off before the first consignment of folded sheets had been delivered. This copy would have to be classified as a state of this edition, or as a second state of the first issue of the edition. But from existing evidence we can only maintain that the 1807A copy is the first issue of this edition, and that 1807B and 1810 are re-issues (owing to new title-pages and changes having been introduced into the text matter). The Greenock 1810 consignment could not have been a large one, for the reason that this consignee was secured (to take on faith the title-page date) nearly three years subsequent to the initial issuance of the book and the printers were not likely to have stocked themselves with very many more sheets than would exceed conservative speculation on the success of the project.

It is interesting to note at this point the publisher's bibliographically misleading caption "New Edition" on the title-page of the 1810 copies and also, according to Fairley, on the paper back label of his 1807B (No. 43) copy. The opportunity to advertise a new consignment or new issue as a "new edition" was rarely overlooked by printers of this and earlier periods. As bibliographical evidence the advertisement merely corroborates our assurance that the first consignment of 1807A copies had left the printer's warehouse before the occasion for making up a new preliminary signature arose. This conclusion is again supported by the data in the mixed signatures table above in that the type analysis did not disclose the relationship whereby 1807A would contain one or more signatures that were the last of their lots to be machined: that is, the situation of 1807B + 1810 > 1807A does not appear to exist.

The mixing within a machined signature could occur at any one of several stages between the time the sheets had been worked off and the final step of pressing the folded sheets preparatory to delivering the unbound books to the consignee. As the signature was worked off, the pressman himself in turning the heap for perfecting (or printing by the second, usually outer, forme) has occasion to reverse the order created by early to late machining. As the handler grasped the worked-

\footnote{For a fairly detailed discussion of the consequence to textual bibliography of the pressman's turning of the wrougth-off heap, see Fredson Bowers, \textit{Bibliography and Textual Criticism} (Oxford, 1964), pages 104-11.}
off heap a token at a time (or as much as his hands could conveniently and with safety grasp) he actually created a new arrangement of the order in which the sheets were printed, one in which the perfect correlation of first to first and last to last printing between the two forms could not be preserved. Picking up the perfected sheets (and if the edition were a large one several heaps might be involved, with obvious further complication of sheet mixing) for transfer to the tables, floor space, or bins in the warehouse as well as the several steps of warehouse processing of the finished sheets (drying-layering-down-gathering-folding-pressing) provide several opportunities whereby the early to late printing order within a signature can be mixed. In fact, one early nineteenth-century printing manual elaborates on the instances in which “through ignorance or carelessness” the handling of printed sheets produces, at the very worst from the printer’s viewpoint, an imperfect book to be discovered later by the bookseller. All that is really essential throughout the warehouse process is to keep the sheets of one signature separate from those of another, to make certain that only one sheet is used for every book made up, and that the signatures be in the order indicated by their signing. Enough flexibility existed, then, in the manner of handling the machined sheets to account for an 1810 copy of the Ferguson edition having a signature that was actually machined earlier than its counterpart in a copy from an earlier issue, in either 1807A or 1807B. The mixing of the early to late printing order of signatures is the only explanation I can find to account for the patterns revealed by a type analysis.

To restate the implications of the evidence in the mixed signature table, any issue of the Oliver Ferguson edition (except for the 1807A for the reasons already noted relating to its date of shipment) is a composita of early to late printed sheets. The detection of recurrent distinctive type, broken type, and type shifting its position in the line, has long been a technique of analytical bibliography for help in determining, among other things, compositor identification and the dating

1 Stower, pp. 399-400.

*In addition to broken type and general type wear, there is also to be kept in mind the evidence of the lost press figure in signature Q in 1807B, and the phenomenon of dislocated or angling type. An example of the last occurs, for example, in signature T, 332.5, where the word “I” is above the line in 1807A and 1807B but even with the line, or normal, in 1810. There is insufficient cause from our knowledge of printing-house practice to assume that a stoppress correction would have been made for so slight a problem. Angled letters are common occurrences during machining and they would not have been regarded by the printer as problematic or as inaccuracies.
of copies. But if one cannot assume an unchanging regularity of printing house procedure, the evidence from a type analysis can have only a very limited application in the bibliographical study of texts. The results of a type analysis, then, can be meaningful only if the investigator understands that he will have to search among copies representing all issues and states of an edition in order to create an "ideal copy," or that very likely nonexistent copy in which the early to late printing order of sheets is faithfully represented.

A final note on the printing of the Fergusson book concerns again the customary practice at the time of composing and machining the preliminary signature last, after the text of the book was ready. Casting off copy for this book produced the wasteful circumstance of signature Zz, the last signature containing only two leaves conjugate. One could tentatively assume that at least the two 1807 title-pages were set up in type and imposed with the text of this signature, on the basis of the printer's having to make the best use of his presses and labor force. However, the real saving would lie in imposing the four pages for signature Zz in one forme, printing half the edition size on this forme, and then turning the unperfected sheets end for end, as well as over, for imposition on the same forme to arrive at, with the cutting of the sheets across their short dimension, the completed two-leaf signatures. Our conclusion can only be that the title-pages were imposed and machined separately and, it must be judged, resulting in an inefficient use of press and personnel. This reconstruction does serve some end, as by it we have learned still more about the nature of the entire transaction. One can at least assert that the printer had more than one consignee in mind when he printed the edition, or he would not have excluded the single title-page (with its single contracted designation) from the preliminary signature. It was customary to compose the title-page with the preliminaries, after the main parts of the book had been printed and, if matter was still wanting to fill out white space, to sometimes include a half-title page. Fairley does not report a half-title page, and the existence of a copy of this edition with one would alter my reconstruction of the entire transaction. The fact is that it would have been an easy matter, and also an economical move, to have included the title-page with the preliminaries, as considerable leading and white space do exist in the preliminary signature. The title-page then, and by implication the con-

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tracted sale of copies, was a decision left to the very last minute. This seems surprising, except for the fact that the Oliver company was evidently large enough to afford printing on speculation. The indisputable popularity of Fergusson’s poems during these years we may conclude, is the final evidence needed for a total reconstruction of the printing of the Oliver 1807 edition.

Postscript.

Since writing this paper I was able to examine another copy of this book, in the possession of the University of South Carolina library. If the present makeup of this rebound and badly stabbed volume is still that of its original form, and no new parts have been added to falsify its identity, it belongs to the first issue of the edition and is identical with 1807A. There are two important exceptions to this positive equivalence with 1807A but they constitute further evidence of the mixing of signatures and do not affect the bibliographical description: that is, this exemplar (which I shall designate A2) is still of the first issue of the edition, unless we want to break down all means of distinguishing among issues as a result of the mixed signature evidence advanced in this paper. For signatures C and Q, and perhaps for others as well, since I have not systematically extended my type analysis to the entire book, this copy is identical with 1807B, not the first issue. Consequently, for the two appropriate entries in the mixed signature table, we must now read for C: 1807A > 1807B + A2 + 1810, and for Q: 1807A + 1810 > 1807B + A2. The new exemplar supplies additional evidence of the inevitable mixing of early to late order among printed sheets that we should expect to encounter in type analysis.

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