'The joy of my heart': Robert Burns as Folklorist

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A discipline comes of age when it recognises the study of its own history as a valuable and important area for examination. Coming after the development of various techniques and principles, the study of its history reveals the evolution of the past into the present and gives a discipline solidity and depth. A widespread interest in historical matters has grown up over the past few years in folkloristics,[1] especially in the United States where this interest has been stimulated by such works as Richard M. Dorson's *The British Folklorists*, witness a recent issue of the *Journal of the Folklore Institute* in which Dan Ben Amos (1973:113–24) cogently suggests an additional reason for examining the past: it may reveal avenues for study and approaches to material discarded in their time, but which upon reflection reveal to current students new and interesting areas for research. A study of the history of a discipline is a positive and mature sign.

Many persons have contributed to a discipline's development, of course, making an historian's task difficult if not impossible. Dorson's book puts special emphasis on the exciting nucleus of persons who worked in England in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, most of whom were active in the Folklore Society. A variety of Scottish folklorists and proto-folklorists like Robert Chambers (an early urban folklorist), Sir Walter Scott (an imitator, utiliser and 'editor' *par excellence*), and Hugh Miller (an early functionalist), to name but a few, are included. But by and large Scottish figures are limited and the ballad and folksong history is left out, no doubt because S. B. Hustvedt in two earlier treatments (1916, 1930) had uncovered much of the story. But Hustvedt deals only with ballad scholarship, mostly with editors, and does not take into consideration the lyric and other non-narrative folksongs, for which there is ample printed evidence. Thus, anyone who focused on these latter, largely choosing to stress lyric folksong, has been left out of the major historical treatments of British folklore. Robert Burns (1759–96) is one such figure.

It is my contention that Robert Burns belongs to the history of folklore, that in fact he was a folklorist, and that he deserves a prominent place in the history of folksong scholarship. Robert Burns collected and edited and annotated. In his collecting he was a participant-observer long before Malinowski: a contextualist observing what he collected in a living, functioning milieu long before the current stress on its importance.

He was intuitively aware of what many have more recently suggested: one collects best from those one knows best. Burns also edited; and in this instance he was a man of his time: today his principles are unacceptable. But he was not of his time in his approach to collecting and annotating. Toward the end of his life he began to annotate extensively items he had collected, though his annotations were largely unknown and unpublished for years after his death. Unfortunately, he worked in isolation and his positive and advanced approaches were not influential: he had no direct contact with the mainstream of folksong enthusiasts. It was virtually a hundred years before his sophistication was seen again. An examination of his work years ago might well, as Ben Amos suggests, have altered the course of folksong scholarship. In retrospect his modernity is extraordinary, and the purpose of what follows is to give Burns the place he deserves in the history of folkloristics.

Robert Burns's own environment was largely a traditional one and as a participant in his culture he, like all people, unconsciously absorbed a variety of traditional elements. In this sense everyone is his or her own folklorist, picking up, mostly without being cognisant of doing so, material which enables them to sort out experience, to respond—in fact, to live. In a famous biographical letter to Dr Moore after he had received acclaim as a poet, Burns described the influences he had come under when he was a boy, and specifically mentions his mother, and an old woman, loosely connected with the family, who provided him with an early stock of songs, tales, legends, beliefs, proverbs, and customs: 'In my infant and boyish days too, I owed much to an old Maid of my Mother's, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity and superstition.—She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, inchanted towers, dragons and other trumpery.'[2] This sort of material he recalls and uses spontaneously throughout his life, though more so in the first years of his success as poet: he perhaps grew away from his background later; but he remained in frame of reference a product of a traditional milieu. A look at a variety of his letters provides an instant example of individual utilisation of folklore in context. How naturally he describes a new girl with whom he had had little success as yet to his friend James Dalrymple and quotes 'An Auld Sang o' my Mither's' perhaps in future anticipation:

> Kissin is the key o' love,
> An' clappin is the lock,
> An' makin o's the best thing
> That ere a young thing got.
>
> (Ferguson 1931:no. 84)

Or how easy it is, when writing to a jeweller, Mr Francis Howden, about altering some jewellery perhaps for his own marriage, for him to say *apropos* of marriage, 'Everybody knows the auld wife's observation when she saw a poor dog going to be hang'd—"God

help us! it's the gate we hae a' to gang!"', which further recalls his grandfather's sage advice to 'Leuk twice or ye loup ance!' (*op. cit:* no. 167). The variety of sayings, phrases, names,[3] song lines and titles, and more, that come up in the course of his letters shows the debt which he owed to his whole traditional environment, because it provided him with a frame of reference easily understood by his correspondents.[4]

Burns was more than an unconscious redactor of course: at times he quite consciously observed—though it is hard to draw a distinct line between conscious and unconscious observation—the world around him, its practices and customs, its songs and music, its beliefs and sayings. He was quite self-conscious about this. On his travels he collected historical traditions,[5] proverbs, sayings and he confessed to Mrs M'Lehose, the Clarinda of his correspondence, that 'I like to have quotations ready for every occasion.—They give one's ideas so pat, and save one the trouble of finding expression adequate to one's feelings' (*op. cit:* no. 178). And on the same subject, he said to Mrs Dunlop, 'Do you know, I pick up favorite quotations, & store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence' (*op. cit:* no. 524). No doubt many of these quotations were traditional, probably proverbial. In 1782 or 1783 he told several correspondents, 'I am . . . studying men, their manners & their ways, as well as I can. Believe me Tom [Mr Thomas Orr], it is the only study in this world will yield solid satisfaction' (*op. cit:* no. 10).[6] His conscious as well as unconscious observations formed the basis of his own poetical and song productions and later developed—with reference to song—into a full-blown conscious collecting for collecting and preservation's sake.

When it comes to songs (texts and tunes), Burns unconsciously absorbed many of them from his childhood. And his interest in song was, in a short and highly fragmented life, the most persistent interest—one might add influence—in his life. He wrote his first song 'O once I lov'd' when he was seventeen to praise his female harvest companion, Nelly Kilpatrick; it was composed to be sung to the traditional tune she often sang, 'I am a man unmarried'. This combining of his words with an existing tune seems spontaneous and was a practice which persisted throughout his life—even on his death-bed when he wrote the song beginning 'Fairest maid on Devon banks' to the tune 'Rothiemurchies Rant'. He wrote lines to existing tunes, mostly traditional, quite naturally. But later, after 1787 when he met James Johnson, the Edinburgh engraver, his collecting of tunes (to which he added words), and simultaneously the collecting of texts (some to be presented as collected and others to be edited), became indeed conscious. In his collecting and gathering of songs for inclusion in *The Scots Musical Museum*, Burns did not discriminate clearly between folksongs usually anonymous and passed on orally, and songs by known authors often learned from chapbooks or song collections. Both kinds formed the basis of popular music in eighteenth-century Scotland and such collections as Joseph Ritson's *Scotish Songs*, Johnson's *Museum* (*The Scots Musical Museum*), and Allan Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany* reflect this juxtaposition of old and new, traditional and non-traditional—in fact they are examples of popular taste; and

Burns, too, reflects this aesthetic preference. But he was also able to stand back and distinguish between these divisions of popular song and to describe and annotate the items. It is largely in connection with his work for *The Scots Musical Museum* that Burns can be called a folklorist or proto-folklorist.

A chance meeting of James Johnson and Robert Burns in 1787 brought Burns's unconscious interest in folksong, and song in general, to the very conscious level. Johnson planned in his publication to preserve the traditional music of Scotland[7] (one volume of what became a series of six was almost ready for press when the two met). What was meant by *traditional* is debatable: perhaps simply music which bore some intuitive mark of Scotland, either being sung by her people or composed—tune or text—by a native.[8] Johnson's was not the first Scottish collection to be printed: earlier in the eighteenth century Watson's *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* (1706, 1709, 1711), W. Thomson's *Orpheus Caledonius: A Collection of Scots Songs* (1725–33, second edition in two volumes), Allan Ramsay's various publications, David Herd's *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs, Heroic Ballads* (1769/76, second edition in two volumes), to mention but a few miscellanies, had led the way. All were in part stimulated by a genuine antiquarian and patriotic urge to preserve what was Scottish (and in other circles ridiculed) before it was forgotten in the onslaught of English culture which began with the Union of the Crowns in 1603 and picked up momentum after the Union of Parliaments in 1707.[9] Unlike the majority of eighteenth-century collections, the *Museum* printed for each tune a text, for each text a tune—outwardly not reflecting the persistent bias of printing only one or the other in totality. But it becomes clear, primarily through Burns's correspondence, that the purpose of the *Museum* was essentially to preserve the tunes of Scotland; and to make them more memorable—perhaps more singable—words were provided, because tune and text, in the view of Johnson and Burns, were inseparable. That the tunes took precedence is amply illustrated by various statements of Burns such as 'Here, once for all, let me apologise for many silly compositions of mine in this work. Many beautiful airs wanted words . . .'[10] and '. . . I often gave Johnson verses, trifling enough perhaps, but they served as a vehicle to the music' (Dick 1962:no. 120). The tunes were foremost but they had to have a text to make them whole, a concept not universally accepted in ballad and folksong scholarship until the mid-twentieth century and still only given lip-service in some quarters.[11] Burns met Johnson; he liked the engraver's plan; he began to make contributions: by the second volume he was virtual editor, certainly prime director of the project. He wrote prefaces and contributed items, texts and tunes, giving directions on how they should be arranged and presented.[12] He solicited items from others; he made lists of contents; he urged Johnson to get the work into print, in some of the twenty-one letters directed to him[13]; and he read proof.[14] He described these and other activities and enthusiasms to various correspondents (Ferguson 1931:no. 193).[15] Assuredly, the *Museum* occupied all the time he could give it, for he was thoroughly in sympathy with its aims.

Burns personally contributed the bulk of the material ultimately published in *The Scots Musical Museum*. Much of this material he procured by active, conscious collecting, though we know little beyond this about his technique except for the glimpses he left in written appeals to correspondents for songs—texts or tunes or both—that he had heard from them before or had reason to believe they knew.[16] Such appeals are usually prefaced by a brief, enthusiastic report of the *Museum* and its purpose, followed by a request for an item. While a contemporary of Burns, Professor Gillespie, 'related how Burns was in the habit of tying his horse outside her [Kirsty Flint's] cottage door and sitting by her fireside while she sang "with a pipe of the most overpowering pitch"' (Dick 1962: *Songs*, Preface xi), we seldom know exactly how he collected or from whom, one notable exception being the tunes he specifically stated were collected from his wife, Jean Armour Burns, whose rural background was and continued to be traditionally oriented:[17] Burns describes her voice as being 'the finest "wood-note wild" I ever heard' (Ferguson 1931:no. 272). Usually he simply records that an item was collected. Tradition makes much of Burns's personality, of his instant capacity for rapport: he undoubtedly found collecting natural, easy and congenial.

Direct, stated evidence of his conscious collecting is derived from three sources: his letters (Ferguson 1931); the annotations of *The Scots Musical Museum* in an interleaved copy (Dick 1962: *Notes*) which he prepared for his neighbour at Ellisland, Robert Riddell of Glenriddell; and the Excise Manuscript, Edinburgh University Library, Laing II. 210[9] (E.U.L.).[18] In general Burns tells his friend and correspondent John Richmond that considerable amounts of his time on his Highland tour were taken up with learning Highland tunes and picking up Scotch songs (Ferguson 1931:no. 146). To the Reverend John Skinner, author of the popular 'Tullochgorum', he says, 'I have been absolutely crazed about it (Johnson's *Museum*), collecting old stanzas, and every information remaining respecting their origin, authors, &c, &c' (Ferguson 1931:no. 147). But more specifically he relates that he has collected 'O'er the moor amang the heather' from Jean Glover to whom he attributes it. In this instance, almost the only one, he also gives a brief look at her and her background as 'a girl who was not only a whore, but also a thief; and in one or other character has visited most of the Correction Houses in the West. She was born, I believe, in Kilmarnock. I took down the song from her singing as she was strolling through the country, with a slight-of-hand blackguard' (Dick 1962:no. 328). Of the song beginning 'My Harry was a gallant gay' sung to the 'Highlander's Lament' he says, 'The chorus I pickt up from an old woman in Dunblane . . .' (*op. cit.* no. 209) and the song text of 'Auld lang syne' 'from an old man's singing' (Ferguson 1931:no. 586). The 'Bob o' Dumblane' he learned 'on the spot, from my old Hostess in the principal Inn there', and he quotes several verses as a sample (E.U.L., p. 2). But he collected tunes as well. He indicates that he 'first heard the air ("Bhannerach dhon na chri") from a lady in Inverness, and got the notes taken down for this work' (Dick 1962:no. 157). He tells George Thomson in one of his fifty-six letters which contain a variety of cogent statements about songs that he still has 'several M.S.S. Scots

airs by me, which I have pickt up, mostly from the singing of country lasses' (Ferguson 1931:no. 554). He collected a tune, never before collected or printed from a' country girl's singing': 'Craigieburnwood' (*op. cit.*:no. 557). And in another letter to Thomson he asks, 'Do you know a droll Scots song, more famous for its humor than delicacy, called, The grey goose & the gled? . . . Mr. Clarke took down the notes, such as they are, at my request, . . . (*op. cit.*:no. 637).[19]

These are concrete statements in Burns's own words. Other evidence for Burns's collecting comes from the annotations of the *Museum* executed by William Stenhouse (1853) with additions by David Laing and Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe. Stenhouse annotated the items in the *Museum* referring to a vast body of historical material as well as to considerable amounts of holograph material some of which appears to be no longer extant. Stenhouse's work is generally held in good repute and his evidence must be considered. On the basis of his research, he claims that a number of items (excluding those definitely written by Burns) were transmitted to James Johnson by Burns and a quantity of these he says were collected by him as well.[20]

In addition to Stenhouse's direct statements about Burns's own collecting and Burns's own indications, there are indirect evidences in the letters (Ferguson 1931), the interleaved copy of the *Museum* (Dick 1962:*Notes*), and the Excise Manuscript (E.U.L.). In these far more numerous instances, one surmises that the items were collected.[21] For example, of 'Waukin o' the fauld' Burns says,

> There are two stanzas still sung to this tune, which I take to be the original song when Ramsay composed his beautiful song of that name in the Gentle Shepherd.—It begins:
>
> O will ye speak at our town,
> As ye come frae the fauld, &c—
> (E.U.L. p. 1)

He does not say he collected this, but he probably did, or recalled it from his youth as was the case so often.[22] In the Excise Manuscript Burns, annotating 'Saw ye nae my Peggy', indicates that

> The original words, for they can scarcely be called Verses, seem to be as follows; a song familiar from the cradle to every Scotish ear.
>
> Saw ye my Maggie,
> Saw ye my Maggie,
> Saw ye my Maggie,
> Linkin o'er the lea?
>
> High kilted was she,
> High kilted was she,
> High kilted was she,
> Her [coa]ts aboon her knee.—

What mark has your Maggie,
What mark has your Maggie,
What mark has your Maggie,
That ane may ken her be?
(E.U.L. pp. 7–8)

Of 'Hughie Graham' Burns says, 'There are several editions of this ballad. This, here inserted, is from oral tradition in Ayrshire, where, when I was a boy, it was a popular song' (Dick 1962:no. 303). Of 'The beds of sweet Roses,' he says, 'This song, as far as I know, for the first time appears here in print. When I was a boy it was a very popular song in Ayrshire. I remember to have heard those fanatics, the Buchanites, sing some of their nonsensical rhymes, which they dignify with the name of hymns, to this air' (*op. cit.*:no. 7). And he most emphatically says, 'Dainty Davie—I have heard sung, nineteen thousand, nine hundred, & ninety-nine times . . .' (Ferguson 1931:no. 586). This kind of recollection or self-collection is most common in Burns's comments on the songs in the *Museum*. That Burns did collect cannot be disputed though it is impossible to know for certain how he went about it—whether he collected by 'learning' the songs himself or whether he noted them down in writing: probably a combination. It is also possible that some of his collecting was even more haphazard—that he actually wrote down only bits and pieces which perforce had to be highly edited later to make a whole. However, he collected.

Burns's knowledge of the popular song repertoire of his time was not limited to oral experience and collecting: he knew of the wider repertoire in diachronic depth through the collections of tunes and texts, or one of the other, which so abundantly flooded the market in eighteenth-century Scotland—not to mention the broadsheet and chapbook material with which he was no doubt familiar. This combination of first hand and derived knowledge of Scotland's song forms the basis of his editorial work for the *Museum* and later for his commentaries on individual items. By his own admission, he was an expert, having 'paid more attention to every description of Scots songs than perhaps any body living . . .' (Dick 1962:no. 13). As a boy he possessed a collection of songs and 'pored over them, driving my cart or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse . . .' (Ferguson 1931:no. 125). He was familiar with the list of songs in [Wedderburn's] *The Complaynt of Scotland*, with Ramsay's work—especially *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, with Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, the controversial *Ossian* of MacPherson, David Herd's *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs, Heroic Ballads*, Ritson's collections of English and Scottish songs, and John Pinkerton's work. In a letter to George Thomson which further supports his claim to thorough book-knowledge of the subject, he requested Thomson to send him the tunes for which he wanted words, together with the first line of the usual text: 'I say, the first line of the verses, because if they are verses that have appeared in any of our Collections of songs, I know them . . .' (Ferguson 1931:no. 507).[23] Books primarily on tunes he referred to even more frequently: he often mentioned Oswald's *Caledonian Pocket Companion*

and in addition the collections by Aird, McGibbon, Gow, Cummin, Anderson, Dow, McDonald and Corri. In fact Burns can say in a letter to Johnson, 'I want much Anderson's Collection of strathspeys &c., and then I think I will have all the music of the country' (*op. cit.*:no. 452).[24] His examination of books was not limited to the texts and tunes: he was familiar with the historical material in introductions such as Ritson's famous essay on Scottish songs, with theoretical and historical treatises like Dr Beattie's *Essays on Poetry and Music* and William Tytler's *Dissertation on the Scottish Music*, and with such relevant periodical publications as *The Bee*. He was aware of various controversies such as those revolving round editorial principles: he knew the criticism levelled against Pinkerton (*op cit.*:no. 569). Burns, in fact, must have known virtually all the important collections of his day and they, together with his collecting, influenced his editing work for the *Museum*.

In a letter to William Tytler of Woodhouselee, Burns writes:

> Inclosed I have sent you a sample of the old pieces that are still to be found among our Peasantry in the West. I had once a great many of such fragments; and some of these here entire; but as I had no idea that any body cared for them I have forgotten them.—I invariably hold it sacriledge to add anything of my own to help out with the shatter'd wrecks of these venerable old compositions; but they have many various readings (*op. cit.*:no. 126).[25]

This letter written in 1787 approximately four months after his first meeting with James Johnson augured well for Burns's work in collaboration with him. But as so often has been the case with previous and subsequent editors, the actions of Burns did not live up to this bold and praiseworthy sentiment. Few texts reached Johnson in an unaltered form; many were amended or corrected because they were judged to be indelicate ('Let me in this ae night'); some texts were enlargements of a traditional fragment—a chorus, a stanza, or several lines ('I'm o'er young to marry yet'); some took off from a tune title and were inspired by it and the tune ('The Gardner wi' his paidle—or, The Gardner's March—'); some texts were inspired by a traditional idea ('A red red Rose'); many were imitations of traditional song form and diction ('Montgomerie's Peggy'); others were written completely by him or were by known authors; and some were taken from broadsheets. As a poet, he probably could not help touching up here and there, much as he did with his own poems and songs, many going through successive editions, multiple re-creations, having some relationship with the oral re-creative process. As a product of his time, he followed the existing editorial practices recognising that certain subjects were taboo in polite society (*op. cit*:no. 554). Like others, before and after him, the urge to conflate, to create a perfect version was no doubt great; but mostly he edited, altered, amended so that the songs could be preserved. In his editorial work he was also influenced and governed by an aesthetic ideal moulded in part by the traditional milieu from which he came; and his aesthetic ideal at times so reflected the traditional aesthetic preference that some of his own compositions and

editions were picked up and transmitted orally, in chapbooks, in published editions, re-entering the popular musical repertoire from which their inspiration had sprung.

The tunes which Burns as virtual editor of the *Museum* communicated to Johnson had three sources: those collected from oral tradition, those written by contemporaries and friends like Allan Masterton and Robert Riddell of Glenriddell, and those abstracted from one of the many books of tunes available to Burns. Dick has suggested that Burns did Scots music a very good turn indeed in this latter endeavour, for he only abstracted the basic melody, leaving the florid embellishments behind, thus restoring them to something approximating to their original state in oral tradition. Burns, not being a professional musician, was much less likely to touch up the tunes. His editorial practices did, however, sometimes lead him to choose only a portion of a tune (especially of the dance and instrumental ones found in books) to accompany a text, or to alter the tune slightly to accompany the text accurately. In the Hastie Manuscript (B.M.), for example, he gives the following note to the tune 'Braes o' Balquhidder', beginning 'When in my arms, wi' a' thy charms': 'Note. The chorus is the first, or lowest part of this tune—Each verse must be repeated twice to go through the high, or 2nd part. . .'. The fact, too, that he saw the tunes as foremost may have added to his general reluctance to alter them.

Before discussing Burns's annotations of his material, it is necessary in passing to mention that Burns's collecting and study of tradition were not limited to the *Museum* and George Thomson's *Select Scottish Airs*[26] or, for that matter, to songs. There is, however, another book of songs associated with Burns's name, *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*, which was first published four or five years after Burns's death. This collection of bawdy songs has caused over the years considerable embarrassment to certain Burns's enthusiasts because an admitted interest in bawdry is antithetical to middle class morals. It is interesting to note that enthusiasts have long recognised Burns as a collector with reference to the *Merry Muses*—better to have collected than written! And probably the first recorded instance of Burns's collecting is a version of the bawdy song 'Brose an' Butter' which exists in holography for 1785 on the back of the draft of a letter to Margaret Kennedy of Daljarrock. Burns, like many before and afterwards, enjoyed such songs, collected them for his and his friends' edification and worked over many of them in ways similar to his editorial practices *vis-à-vis* the texts for the *Museum* (Ferguson 1931:no. 488).[27] It is much more difficult, however, in this case to discover originals on which he worked as their circulation was oral rather than written, save for such manuscript collections as those he made. Burns circulated his manuscript among friends and fellow enthusiasts (*op. cit.*:no. 604) and had Peter Hill make a copy of it for Andrew Erskine. Gershon Legman and James Kinsley conjecture that Peter Hill pieced together the 1800 edition entitled *Merry Muses of Caledonia; A Collection of Favourite Scots Songs, Ancient and Modern; Selected for use of the Crochallan Fencibles*,[28] using the copy made of Burns's manuscript, holograph material such as letters containing bawdy songs sent to

his friends, and existing oral material shared by members of the Crochallan Fencibles (an Edinburgh male convivial society to which Burns belonged).

In at least one instance, there is evidence of Burns's interest in legends—possibly consciously collected but just as possibly part of his early traditional learning. In a letter to the antiquary Francis Grose whom Burns had advised concerning antiquities in Ayrshire which should be included in *Antiquities of Scotland*, Burns told Grose three legends associated with the ruins of Alloway Kirk (*op. cit.*:no. 401); Grose agreed to include a drawing and description of the church if Burns would provide a poem. Burns did, using one legend primarily, turning it into a superb legend-poem, retaining the spirit and contextual apparatus such as hints of verity, so associated with legend-telling. The poem 'Tam o' Shanter' is again an example of Burns's use of the traditions he had collected and absorbed. Other poems show Burns consciously describing the traditions and customs he saw around him and brought together. The poem 'Halloween' is a splendid example, carefully annotated with illuminating footnotes by the author and preceded by this statement: 'The following POEM will, by many Readers, be well enough understood; but, for the sake of those who are unacquainted with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, Notes are added, to give some account of the principal Charms and Spells of that Night, so big with Prophecy to the Peasantry in the West of Scotland' (Kinsley 1968:1. 152, no. 73). Continuing to be a student of 'men, their manners, and their ways', Burns also collected bits of antiquarian knowledge, often relating to material objects: he tells Mr David Blair the traditions behind a dirk which Burns must have given to Blair (Ferguson 1931:no. 682); he collected a country musical instrument which he wanted drawn on his coat of arms and he described it in considerable detail to George Thomson (*op. cit.*:no. 647). This is not to mention the variety of proverbs and sayings it appears he consciously recorded when they took his fancy. Burns was interested in people, in what made them tick, so he often collected and recorded the striking qualities he saw in them.

Not only did Burns collect and subsequently edit songs, but he also annotated this material using as his sources his wide knowledge of oral tradition gained from first-hand and book study. Often such annotations were comparative and involved pointing out differences in various versions; sometimes they were historical and conjectural. They are not always correct, nor is proof always provided: seldom does Burns support an assertion or tell the basis of his conclusion. This is understandable when one realises what a limited amount of time was actually at Burns's disposal for this kind of work. Incidentally, his astute comments certainly undermine the frequent and widespread notion about Burns, that is, that he was unlettered, a heaven-taught ploughman. Many of the annotations are exceedingly valuable and show the depth of his knowledge on the subject of folksong.

Over and over again Burns pinpoints the unique qualities of Scots music, qualities which make him love it and qualities which distinguish it from other national musics: 'There is a certain something in the old Scotch songs, a wild happiness of thought and

expression, which peculiarly marks them, not only from English songs, but also from the modern efforts of song-wrights, in our native manner and language' (*op. cit.*:no. 147). But he also developed a more exact notion of a Scottish music as containing

> a certain irregularity . . . a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of accent & measure that the English Poetry requires, but which glides in, most melodiously with the respective tunes to which they are set . . . There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions & Fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers, the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables, & yet, very frequently, nothing, not even *like* rhyme, or sameness of jingle at the ends of the lines.—(Ewing 1938: 37–8).

He tells Thomson (who often criticised some of the Scottish songs for just those reasons that Burns, would praise them, and who wanted to Anglicise them), 'let our National Music preserve its native features.—They are, I own, frequently wild, & unreduceable to the modern rules; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect' (Ferguson 1931:no. 559).

Not only was Burns at pains to define Scotland's national, traditional music, but he was also aware of differences between ballads, stories told in song, and the more lyric folksongs he personally favoured. Although he frequently uses the word *ballad* interchangeably with *song*, he specifically advises Thomson in a way which indicates his knowledge of their inherent differences when he says, 'You must, after all is over, have a Number of Ballads, properly so called.—Gil Morice—Tranent Muir—Mcpherson's Farewell—Battle of Sheriffmuir, or, We ran & they ran . . . Hardiknute—Barbara Allan . . .' (*op. cit.*:no. 586).

Burns was also anxious to provide histories, backgrounds to the songs he collected and edited. He wanted to know who the author was: as a poet himself, he knew an extraordinary pride in authorship and imputed such to others. And he felt sorry for those whose names were lost: always he saw an individual author behind a song. He was quick to attribute authorship where possible and since a number of pieces in the *Museum* had known-authors, this was not difficult.[29] But he was aware of the inherent problems involved in discovering who an author was, recognising the unpredictable nature of oral and popular channels of transmission. With some amusement he told Thomson, 'I myself, have lately seen a couple of Ballads sung through the streets of Dumfries, with my name at the head of them as the Author, though it was the first time ever I had seen them.—' (*op. cit.*:no. 646). Here he is referring to a broadsheet or chapbook attribution capitalising on his name and fame to sell a product, an advertising gimmick with diachronic precedent. Actually, Burns planned to publish an edition of all the songs he wrote for George Thomson and for the *Museum* 'lest I should be blamed for trash I never saw, or be defrauded by other claimants of what is justly my own' (*op. cit.*:no. 695); but his early death prevented this. To the Reverend John Skinner he wrote, 'I have heard your "Tullochgorum", particularly among our west-country

folks, given to many different names, and most commonly to the immortal author of "The Minstrel", who indeed never wrote anything superior to "Gie's a sang, Montgomery cried" ' (*op. cit.*:no. 203). Of many songs, he can only say they are old, their author's name is lost (Dick 1962:nos. 9, 93; E.U.L., pp. 6, 7, 9, 10). Often he indicates what portion of the text is his or Ramsay's or some other known author's, often giving a sample of the old verses.[30] He can make such statements because of his wide oral and book knowledge which prepared him for his comparative comments.

Burns recognises other results, too, of sometimes long oral tradition (a term which he uses Dick 1962:no. 303) such as the variation that develops in texts (Ferguson 1931:no. 557), tunes and titles,[31] though he does not speculate on its causes. Of 'Wally, waly' he says,

> In the west country I have heard a different edition of the 2nd Stanza. Instead of the four lines beginning with 'When cockle shells' &c; the other way ran thus:
>
> O, wherefore need I busk my head,
> Or wherefore need I kame my hair
> Sin my fause luve has me forsook,
> And says he'll never luve me mair.
>
> (Dick 1962:no. 158)

In the song 'For lake of gold she's left me, O!', he says, 'the country girls in Ayr Shire instead of the line:—"She me forsook for a great Duke"; say "For Athol's Duke she's me forsook", which I take to be the original reading' (*op. cit.*:no. 163). Burns saw too that in oral transmission words may be changed or altered when not understood, and gives the interesting example of the alteration of the Gaelic title and words 'Leiger m'choss' to 'Liggeram Coss' (Ferguson 1931:no. 593).

He recognises regional variation as well:

> The people in Ayrshire begin this song ['Johnny Faa, or the Gypsie Laddie']:
>
> The gypsies cam to my Lord Cassili's yet.
>
> They have a great many more stanzas in this song that I ever yet saw in any printed copy. The Castle is still remaining at Maybole where his lordship shut up his wayward spouse and kept her for life (Dick 1962:no. 181).

Elsewhere he says this is one of the few songs he thinks definitely originated in Ayrshire (*op. cit.*:no. 161). But he also knew that songs with wide distribution could be and were often localised (*op. cit.*:no. 191). Burns wanted, then, to know the place of origin if possible: 'This tune ["The ither morn"] is originally from the Highlands. I have heard a Gaelic song to it, which I was told was very clever, but not by any means a lady's song' (*op cit* :no. 345). Of 'Go to the Ew-bughts, Marion' he says,

> I am not sure if this old and charming air be of the South, as is commonly said, or of the North of Scotland. There is a song apparently as ancient as *Ewe-bughts Marion*, which sings to the same tune, and is evidently of the North. It begins thus:

The lord o' Gordon had three dochters,
May, Marget, and Jean,
They wad na stay at bonie Castle Gordon
But awa to Aberdeen.

(*op. cit.*: no. 85)[32]

He also conjectures on the subject of date of origin: 'Bess the gawkie' 'shews that the Scotish Muses did not all leave us when we lost Ramsay and Oswald, as I have good reason to believe that the verses and music are both posterior to the days of these two gentleman' (*op. cit.*: no. 4). And of 'There's nae luck about the house', in his words 'one of the most beautiful songs in the Scots, or any other language', he postulates that 'It is long posterior to Ramsay's days. About the year 1771 or '72, it came first on the streets as a ballad; and I suppose the composition of the song was not much anterior to that period' (*op. cit.*: no. 44). In a more complex vein, he writes about 'Highland laddie':

> As this was a favorite theme with our later Scotish Muses, there are several airs & songs of that name.—What I take to be the oldest, is to be found in the Musical Museum, beginning, 'I hae been at Crookie-den'—one reason for my thinking so is, that Oswald has it in his coll.[n] by the name of, 'the auld Highland laddie.'— It is also known by the name of 'Jinglan Johnie,' which is a well-known song of four or five stanzas, & seems to be an earlier song than Jacobite times.—As a proof of this, it is little known to the peasantry by the name of 'Highland laddie,' while every body knows Jinglan Johnie.—The song begins
>
> Jinglan John, the meikle man
> He met wi' a lass was blythe & bonie.
>
> (E.U.L. p. 10)

Burns also attempts to discover possible routes of dissemination. On this subject Burns several times notes the similarity between certain Irish and Scottish tunes (Ferguson 1931: no. 576) and suggests how difficult it is to know where they were really begun or how they spread. On the latter point he suggests that a body of material, especially tunes, was common to both because 'the wandering Minstrels, Harpers, or Pipers, used to go frequently errant through the wilds both of Scotland & Ireland, & so some favorite airs might be common to both' (*op. cit.*: no. 576). And further he adds, 'In the neighbourhood & intercourse of the Scots & Irish, & both musical nations too, it is highly probable that composers of one nation would sometimes imitate, or emulate, the manner of the other.—' (*op. cit.*: no. 647). Of 'Jockie's Gray breeks' he says, 'though this has certainly every evidence of being a Scotish air, yet there is a well known tune & song in the north of Ireland, called, "The Weaver & his shuttle O", which though sung much quicker is, every note, the very tune.—' (E.U.L. p. 6).

Although he tended to lump all the popular songs—oral and written—together, he recognized their differences, that the oral songs had a certain quality which made them memorable and transmittable: 'The two songs in Ramsay, one of them evidently his

own, are never to be met with in the fireside circle of our Peasantry; while, what I take to be the old song is in every shepherd's mouth.—' (E.U.L. p. 8). Ramsay he imitated but also judged: the old words had something Ramsay did not. Burns recognised this and so did his 'compeers'.

In addition to these notes which touch on matters of authorship, oral tradition and its characteristics like variation and localisation, routes of dissemination and place of origin (all of which show an amazing amount of sophistication for a tenant farmer/exciseman beset with financial, family, and health difficulties), there is a variety of interesting historical notes which adds to the history of the songs annotated. In the Excise Manuscript especially, Burns includes a number of anecdotes and traditions which are related to songs:

> I insert this song ('Bob o' Dumblane') to introduce the following anecdote which I have heard well authenticated. In the evening of the day of the battle of Dumblane (Sheriffmoor), after the action was over, a Scots officer in Argyle's army observed to his grace, that he was afraid the Rebels would give out to the world that *they* had gotten the victory—'Weel, weel', returned his Grace alluding to the foregoing ballad; 'if they think it be na weel bobbit, we'll bob it again.'—(E.U.L. p. 2).

Burns provides an anecdote about how the song 'Kirk wad let me be' helped a Covenanting clergyman escape a band of soldiers, who were in search of him, by acting in a very unministerial way and loudly singing the song—maybe even composing it on the spot (*op. cit.*: p. 3); and he describes a 'dramatic interlude at country weddings' which uses the first stanza of the same song (*op. cit.* p. 3). The second Bishop of Chisholm, of Dunblane, he has heard, would like to hear 'Clout the Caldron' if he were going to be hanged because of its soothing qualities (*op. cit.* p. 11). He gives the tradition, commonly known, about 'Dainty Davie':

> This song, tradition says, & the composition itself confirms, was composed on the rev. David Williamson's begetting the daughter of Lady Cherry trees with child, while a party of dragoons were searching her house for him to apprehend him for being an adherent to the Solemn League & Covenant.—The pious woman had put a lady's night-cap on him & had laid him abed with her own daughter, & passed him to the soldiery as a lady, her daughter's bedfellow (*ibid.*).

Elsewhere he quotes Stephen Clarke's opinion that the tune 'Cumnock Psalms' was based on a Catholic chant (Ferguson 1931: no. 637). And of the much-used tune 'Hey tutti taitie', Burns says, 'There is a tradition, which I have met with in many places of Scotland, that it was Robert Bruce's March at the battle of Bannock-burn' (*op. cit.*: no. 582). He occasionally provides information, often anecdotal, about the authors of various songs as he did with Cunningham the player, author of 'Kate of Aberdeen'.[33] He discusses topographical points such as the location of the birch trees in 'The bush aboon Traquair' (Dick 1962: no. 80). He quotes Dr Blacklock as a source of various

historical notes (*op. cit.*:nos. 89, 160). He explains elements in songs out of his vast knowledge:

> The title of this air [14th of October] shews that it alludes to the famous King Crispian, the patron of the honorable Corporation of Shoemakers. Saint Crispian's day falls on the fourteenth of October, old style, as the old proverb tells:
>
> 'On the fourteenth of October
> Was ne'er a sutor sober!'
>
> (*op. cit.*:nos. 174, 188)

He often implies that a song is based on fact (*op. cit.*:no. 174).

But above all, Burns repeatedly confirms his theoretical position that a song is a unity of text and tune. When he writes to Johnson or Thomson or various casual correspondents about songs, he almost invariably gives the names of both text and tune, or a few lines of the text and then a name for the tune. So that for 'This is no mine ain house' which appears in the *Museum*, he says that only the first half stanza is old: Ramsay wrote the rest; then he writes four verses of old words which is followed with the important, completing information: 'The tune is an old Highland air, called *Sluan truish willighan* '(*op. cit.*:no. 216). In addition he suggests that the tune itself often conveys the spirit of its title (*op. cit.*:no. 18) which he believes alludes to the first text used to the tune. Texts, he felt, because they were so often localised, were replaced with new words in a new locale or at a later time; but tunes persisted, being, in his words, 'the language of nature' and thus more universally applicable, and persistent (*op. cit.*: no. 16). It goes without saying that he recognised that more than one text might be sung to a given tune; conversely a text might itself be sung to different tunes. It takes, however, a text and a tune to make a song. Burns knew this and his annotations and letters amply show that he did more than pay lip-service to this position.

The evidence that Burns knew something beyond the texts and tunes of the songs is not overt at all. To find these valuable statements of sources, his own and those of others, his historical notes and theoretical views, one must go behind the printed material which he published, or which he knew was published, and consult his letters, his annotations of song in the interleaved copy of the *Museum* and the Excise Manuscript as well as the valuable historical work done subsequently by such persons as Stenhouse, Laing, Sharpe and Dick. It is only then that Burns as folklorist—collector, historical student, annotator (and song writer for that matter)—can be seen. His annotations are most valuable, for as Henry G. Farmer has said, '. . . the history of the "auld sangs" of Scotland would not have been so well documented had it not been for the poet's discreet and lengthy annotations . . .' (Dick 1962:*Songs* p. vi).

No doubt there is a variety of reasons why the annotations were not published: certainly additional cost was one; purpose and audience were others. Burns began his work for the *Museum* in the guise of National Bard and he became, through his editorial and poetic work, the collective voice of the people. He was not anxious to admit how

many songs were his own because he tried to pass them off (in the *Museum*) as Scotland's voice, as some of the prefaces he wrote for the *Museum* illustrate: 'Ignorance and Prejudice may perhaps affect to sneer at the simplicity of the poetry or music of some of these pieces; but their having been for ages the favorites of Nature's Judges—the Common People, was to the Editor a sufficient test of their merit' (vol II, Preface 1 Mar. 1788). And 'Consciousness of the well-known merit of our Scotish Music, and the national fondness of a Scotch-man for the productions of his own country, are at once the Editor's motive and apology for this Undertaking . . .' (vol. III, Preface 2 Feb. 1790). He could hardly then admit himself to be the author or amender of half the items.[34] Some of his edited songs as well as original ones did, however, have all the earmarks of traditional pieces, circulating orally themselves: 'Why is he great, but from this, that his own songs at once found susceptible ears among his compatriots; that sung by reapers and sheaf-binders, they at once greeted him in the field, and that his boon companions sang them to welcome him at the alehouse?' (Dick 1962:Introduction XXVII). Burns did not admit his rôle and thus his texts alone are limited in usefulness in determining what was actually circulating before and during his time; they are inaccurate records of collecting unless one looks behind them to his own annotations and those of subsequent scholars.

But there is evidence that Burns—unlike many collector-editors of his time and afterwards—began to realise as he delved more and more into the subject through collecting, active participation, and study that the annotations he was capable of making were of equal importance to the texts and tunes he had recovered. In a letter to George Thomson referring to Thomson's plan to re-publish Dr Beattie's *Essays on Poetry and Music*, Burns says, 'On my part, I mean to draw up an appendix to Dr's essay, containing my stock of anecdotes, &c, of our Scots Airs & Songs' (Ferguson 1931:no. 535). But, even more important, he wrote to James Johnson—probably in 1792—asking for another copy of the *Museum* interleaved so 'that I may insert every anecdote I can learn, together with my own criticisms and remarks on the songs. A copy of this kind I shall leave with you, the Editor, to publish at some after period, by way of making the Museum a book famous to the end of time, and you renowned for ever (*op. cit.*:no. 513).[35] One might add, that such a publication would certainly have placed Burns in the very vanguard of folksong scholarship, if not as its leader. However, the book—if begun—was never completed. Earlier he had annotated some items for Robert Riddell of Glenriddell in the interleaved *Museum*. No doubt the hypothetical interleaved book would have followed that plan but would have been more exhaustive. Farmer has even suggested that the Excise Manuscript contains missing pages from the Riddell interleaved *Museum*, though this is highly improbable; but it is possible that the Excise Manuscript, certainly written after November 1791 when Burns became an exciseman and thus had access to the paper on which it is written, was a preliminary beginning of the fuller annotations Burns projected. The notes and comparative comments are generally more expansive in the Excise Manuscript than in the interleaved *Museum*.

That the hypothetical interleaved Museum was not completed is a great loss, but that it was planned adds immeasurably to Burns's stature as a folklorist and scholar.

It is impossible to condone in terms of modern standards of collection and transcription the editorial work of Robert Burns except by saying that at least he provided in his annotations information which gives some indication of the original on which he worked and it seems probable he intended to supply more. While this is not a viable excuse today, it is historically accurate to say that he was following the editorial principles of his time—those of Ramsay and especially of Percy. His editorial work differed in quality and kind from theirs because he was a poet *and* a product of the songs' traditional milieu himself, so that what he did to the texts was more likely to fit the folk aesthetic preference, thus having more chance of being accepted by the folk. His technique is perhaps analogous to the oral re-creative process. It is interesting to note here that the most rigid and vitriolic editor of Burns's time, Joseph Ritson, is amazingly easy on Burns whom he calls 'a natural poet of the first eminence' when he notes in a footnote only that

> Mr Burns, as good a poet as Ramsay, is, it must be regretted, an equally licentious and unfaithful publisher of the performances of others. Many of the original, old, ancient, genuine songs inserted in Johnsons *Scots Musical Museum* derive not a little of their merit from passing through the hands of this very ingenious critic (Ritson 1794:I. LXXV, 69 n.).

Sir Walter Scott, a poet too, followed Burns, not Ritson, in his own editing, and said of the songs Burns edited that he 'restored its original spirit, or gave it more than it had ever possessed' (Scott 1809:30).

Gershon Legman who has studied thoroughly Burns's editing of bawdy songs says

> . . . that Burns was wrong in attempting to 'purify' the bawdy Scottish folksongs he collected, and in part wrote, in the polite versions he later produced specifically to accompany and to preserve the musical heritage of their folkloristic tunes. To the modern folklorist, Burns did almost equally wrong in attempting to improve these folk-collected texts, even when his improvement consisted not of expurgating them but of making them, in some cases, a good deal bawdier and always more personal. This is, however, the right of every folk-poet and singer . . . Legman 1965:LXV.[36]

At least in the case of the *Museum* he gives information which makes it possible to discover what he has done.

Robert Burns undoubtedly deserves a place in the history of folksong study and thereby folkloristics. Most of the people enumerated as folklorists or proto-folklorists in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland such as Scott, Allan Cunningham, R. H. Cromek, William Motherwell, C. K. Sharpe, James Hogg, John Pinkerton, and Robert Jamieson were ballad enthusiasts: Burns did not ignore narrative folksong; he was actually interested in all divisions of folksong but he favoured the lyric and he was not alone in preferring or publishing lyrics. A number of collections such as those by Allan Ramsay had appeared, and lyric folksongs were regularly included in predominantly

ballad collections; but Burns is alone as a lyric enthusiast in collecting, annotating, and developing a theoretical position about the material. As such he should be seen as a central figure in the history of folksong study. Because his focus was different from the dominant ballad interest and because his contact with this interest was indirect and limited to print, he has been overlooked.

It is easy to understand why—beyond the difference in focus, either narrative or lyric—Burns has been ignored, for he differs in a number of ways from this group of ballad men. Many of these men were primarily editors: he was in addition a conscious collector and a knowledgeable scholar who realised the necessity for considerable annotation. With the exception of James Hogg, Burns is the only one of these men who came from the very background where traditional songs were culturally functional.

Unlike these men, Burns's work was done primarily in isolation. He did meet or correspond with a variety of antiquaries and *cognoscenti* of his day: his neighbour at Ellisland, Robert Riddell of Glenriddell, who has some claims to being an amateur folklorist and antiquarian himself; William Tytler (*Dissertation on the Scottish Music*), Dr Beattie (*Essays on Poetry and Music*), and Dr Blacklock—all three said to be textual collaborators to the *Museum* (Ferguson 1931:no. 145); the Reverend Hugh Blair, David Stewart Erskine (11th Earl of Buchan), James Sibbald, and William Smellie. But he wrote to and knew these men as Scotland's poet, a rustic bard, rather than as genuine antiquary and scholar. His contact with activities and interests similar to his own was through the written printed books and there is every reason to believe he knew just about everything available. In this isolation he differs from the ballad men whose complex network of communication, actual and through correspondence, has led subsequent researchers to see that the pool of resources, the fund of material, in fact the sources of collection during this period were much more limited than it was once thought. A number of editors, for example, drew upon the traditions of Mrs Brown of Falkland. Burns's sources were different: they were only his.

In a sense, Burns occupies a *cul-de-sac* in the history of folksong study: he took from tradition and the books available but he had no direct contact with persons involved in similar endeavours during his lifetime. But he did have an influence: he and his works by their example were among the stimulating forces in the rise and development of German Romanticism, which later re-stimulated the earlier interest and study of Scottish traditional material here exemplified by Burns. Certainly he posthumously influenced the persons who came after him, especially on the sticky subject of editing. Allan Cunningham was most probably led to his forgeries, that is, imitations of traditional songs passed off as traditional, because of Burns's success in doing that himself. Scott, too, follows him. It is interesting to note the number of known ballad scholars and editors who also worked on Burns, mostly as editors (and who were doubtless influenced by him). Allan Cunningham published an edition of *The Complete Works of Robert Burns*; R. H. Cromek, the influential and important *Reliques of Robert Burns* and editions of his works; James Hogg and William Motherwell, *The Works of Robert*

Burns, whose commentary was enriched by communications from Peter Buchan. Incidentally, Motherwell served at various times as secretary and president of the Paisley Burns Club. Robert Chambers edited *The Life and Works of Robert Burns* as well as other more limited publications; C. K. Sharpe annotated the annotations of Stenhouse's *Illustrations of the Lyric Poetry and Music in Scotland*, intended to accompany the *Museum*. Sir Walter Scott admired Burns's work and reviewed books on him as in the *Quarterly Review* for 1809; and Scott's son-in-law John Gibson Lockhart published a *Life of Robert Burns*. And at the end of the nineteenth century, Andrew Lang, a folklore scholar more broadly-based than the ballad editors above, edited both *Selected Poems of Robert Burns* and *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*.

Vis-à-vis folk song, Burns might be called a saviour because, in the words of many commentators, he 'rescued' old wrecks and saved them by editing, making hitherto unprintable songs printable: in this sense he was a populariser, preparing the songs for that collection of popular taste, *The Scots Musical Museum*. Burns can also be called a revivalist—a person who witnessed a decline in interest in songs, a waning of their influence, but worked over them until they had renewed vitality (Keith 1922:83–4).[37] Indeed, there are many ways to look at this remarkable man: as poet and song writer; as magnetic personality remembered in anecdote, legend, celebration, and song; as common man who made good but remained true to his roots. To this list may be added folklorist, folksong scholar, for he consciously collected and edited and studied and annotated a body of songs—especially lyrics, which were largely being overlooked by ballad enthusiasts of the time—as well as observing 'men, their manners, and their ways'. The magnitude of his achievements justifies the popular opinion of him as a man 'unco by-ordinar' '. Certainly one could say of Robert Burns, both in his practice and intent, as he said of the antiquary Francis Grose,

> A chield's amang you, taking notes,
> And, faith, he'll prent it
>
> (Kinsley 1968:1. 494, no. 275).

NOTES

1 Folkloristics is the scholarly study of folklore—the study, in the broadest sense, of the traditional, learned, repetitive ways of responding to situations in life. Folklore may include verbal 'gut reactions' to common situations, resulting in the satisfying articulation of a principle, time-honoured, in proverbial form. It may enable an individual to build a house without recourse to written plans—in accordance with traditional and conventional precepts learned by an individual as a member of a culture and repeated by him as other individuals likewise repeat the pattern. In addition, folklore includes certain artistic, educative *genres*, like song and narrative.

2 Ferguson 1931: no. 125. All references to Burns's letters are to Ferguson's edition; only letter numbers will be given.

3 In writing to William Pitt (Ferguson 1931: no. 311) about the unfair tax on Scotch whisky, he signs the letter with the appropriate and traditionally recognisable appellation, John Barleycorn. And in a tongue-in-cheek letter to Charles Sharpe, the father of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe (Ferguson

1931:no. 446), sending along words he had written to an air by Sharpe, he signs himself Johnie Faa—again an appropriate signature, for he described the differences of class between himself and Sharpe early in the letter.

4 A variety of other letters show Burns's spontaneous use of traditional material; Ferguson 1931: nos. 42, 56, 58, 96, 110, 117, 125, 140, 147, 152, 154, 173, 174, 178, 188, 209, 218, 237, 252, 259, 264, 290, 304, 321, 325, 338, 385, 413, 417, 426, 437, 506, 507, 557, 561, 569, 588, 605, 614, 629, 659 provides examples.

5 As an example, see Ferguson 1931:no. 137.

6 The words to 'study men, their manners, and their ways' are a quotation from Pope. In another letter (Ferguson 1931:no. 13), to his former teacher John Murdoch, describing his general activities and responses, before the publication of his first volume of poems some three years later, Burns says, 'In short, the joy of my heart is to "study men, their manners, and their ways"; and for this darling subject, I chearfully sacrifice every other consideration.'

7 The other musical collection with which Burns was connected, George Thomson's *Select Scottish Airs*, ultimately, because of Burns's interest, came close to duplicating the *Museum's* aim. Originally, Burns was to write or provide twenty-five English songs to accompany Thomson's selection of tunes. Burns provided far more by sending, unsolicited, texts written or chosen by him to fit a Scotch air. Finally, Thomson like Johnson—of whom he was jealous—hoped to include all the 'Scotch airs.'

8 Later, when Burns felt they had used all the Scottish tunes, he suggested and finally included tunes from related Irish tradition. See Ferguson 1931:no. 664.

9 Burns's own conception of the *Museum*, too, was a patriotic one. See Ferguson 1931:no. 288 as an example, as well as the Prefaces to the 3rd and 4th volumes of the *Museum*.

10 Burns, *Notes on Scottish Song* in Dick 1962:no. 103. Unless otherwise indicated, references to Dick will refer to *Notes on Scottish Songs by Robert Burns* and item numbers will be given.

11 Because Burns so consistently associated his own words with pre-existent tunes, Dick (*Songs* 1962: Preface, v) calls him a 'tone-poet'.

12 The Prefaces to vol. 2, 3, 4 are undoubtedly by Burns. And the notes written on the pages of songs sent to Johnson by Burns (B.M.) enlarge the view of Burns as editor: for example, to item 19 'Tune, Niel Gow's lamentation for the death of his brother' Burns adds: 'Note—it will be proper to omit the name of the tune altogether, & only say—"A Gaelic Air" '. In the Hastie Manuscript (B.M.) there are at least forty-six directions of this kind out of approximately one hundred and forty-eight items in Burns's hand.

13 Examples of encouragements and directions to Johnson can be seen in Ferguson 1931:nos. 452 and 513.

14 See, for example, Ferguson 1931:no. 506.

15 'I am engaged in assisting an honest Scots Enthusiast, a friend of mine, who is an Engraver, and has taken it into his head to publish a collection of all our songs set to music, of which the words and music are done by Scotsmen.—This, you will easily guess, is an undertaking exactly to my taste.—I have collected, begg'd, borrow'd and stolen all the songs I could meet with.'

16 Ferguson 1931:nos. 145, 193, 203, 598 are examples of this written collecting technique.

17 See Ferguson 1931:no. 568 ('There was a lass, and she was fair'):no. 644 (The Posie'), Dick 1962: no. 308 ('A Southland Jenny that was right bonie') for examples. From Dick 1962:no. 188 we additionally discover that 'This edition of the song ("Up and warn a' Willie") I got from Tom Niel of facetious fame in Edin.r' And in Ferguson 1931:no. 636 he says that he collected 'Ca' the yowes to the knowes' from a clergyman, a Mr Clunzie.

18 These latter two are included in Dick 1962. The latter, appended to the book, was edited by Davidson Cook and was first published in the *Burns Chronicle and Club Directory* 31 (January 1922). Any

quotations, however, are from the original manuscript (E.U.L.). Cook's edition is not entirely accurate.

19 Stephen Clarke was the musical collaborator of Burns for the *Museum* and on numerous occasions he transcribed tunes for Burns. But there is every indication that when he was not available—he lived in Edinburgh and Burns in or near Dumfries during most of the collaboration—Burns was capable of notating the melodic line himself. In the Hastie Manuscript (B.M.), Burns gives a few bars of item 52, 'Ca' the ewes' but completely writes out the melody for a verse of item 122, 'Here's his health in water'. Over the years there has been much discussion of Burns's musical capabilities: early biographers, taking their cue from Burns's childhood teacher John Murdoch, claimed him a musical illiterate. Murdoch's estimate was based on a limited exposure to Burns; and Burns's own subsequent performance suggests that he was extremely well-informed musically. He must certainly have read music for he chose tunes for some of his own texts out of the available songbooks; he altered certain parts of tunes—particularly dance tunes—to fit the texts he had in mind; he played the fiddle and used it to help acquaint himself with tunes before writing for them. For a discussion of Burns's musical aptitude, see Dick (*Notes* 1962: Introduction).

20 Stenhouse lists 76 items as edited by Burns, mostly from traditional sources; 44 tunes probably collected but certainly communicated to Johnson (157, 175, 231, 264, 308, 326, 327, 345, 346, 348, 362, 365, 373, 377, 378, 392, 398, 400, 405, 406, 410, 411, 412, 414, 416, 430, 434, 444, 448, 456, 461, 462, 476, 484, 486, 492, 495, 497, 498, 499, 551, 581, 593, 597); 36 texts sent to Johnson, presumably collected but not edited (188, 205, 208, 233, 236, 237, 281, 303, 320, 326, 327, 328, 345, 346, 348, 359, 361, 365, 372, 377, 384, 392, 397, 400, 411, 416, 424, 428, 444, 459, 461, 462, 473, 484, 579, 581).

21 See the following as examples: Dick 1962: nos. 9, 11, 25, 47, 85, 93, 162, 181, 182, 216, 315, 324; E.U.L.: 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11; Ferguson 1931:no. 130, 267, 290, 586, 605, 644, 667, 684. Of many items Burns identifies an old portion on which he based his song. Such fragments were either collected or remembered.

22 The following represent items probably recalled from his youth: Dick 1962:nos. 7, 33, 41, 51, 158, 234, 313; Ferguson 1931: nos. 126, 264, 385, 557, 567, 635, 644, 659, 667.

23 For additional discussion of Burns's song library see Cook 1927.

24 See Dick (*Songs* 1962: Preface and Bibliography) for a fuller description of Burns's musical books.

25 Included in this letter to Tytler are parts of six items, headed by the title *Fragments*: 'Rowin't in her apron', a stanza to the tune 'Bonie Dundee', 'Young Hynhorn', 'Willie's rare', 'The Lass o' Livistone', and 'Rob Roy'. Most of these have been admitted under one guise or another into the Burns's canon by literary students although there is every reason to believe that in this instance Burns simply wrote down what he had himself learned orally or collected.

26 Burns's work for Thomson, coming after the initial work with Johnson, is less influenced by collecting and involves much editorial work, especially on book-derived texts.

27 Gershon Legman (1965) suggests that Burns often added verses to the end of bawdy songs and fragments he collected. And many of these songs were the 'indelicate' verses he rewrote or discarded completely in his work on the *Museum*.

28 Legman 1965: Introduction liv-lv and Kinsley 196:55–21. See also Gershon Legman, *The Horn Book: Studies in Erotic Folklore and Bibliography* (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books Inc., 1964).

29 For examples of attribution of authorship from the interleaved *Museum* alone, see Dick 1962: nos. 8, 20, 36, 37, 46, 49, 69, 91, 97, 102, 104, 120, 121, 126, 133, 141, 162, 166, 176, 184, 186, 190, 197, 201, 205, 208, 218, 228, 246, 269, 278, 285, 289, 293, 330, 340.

30 See as examples, Dick 1962:nos. 16, 18, 25, 47, 51, 68, 96, 103, 107, 140, 162, 216, 231, 258, 290, 323; Ferguson 1931:no. 646; E.U.L.: pp. 1. 2, 11, 12.

31 See Dick 1962:nos. 151, 176, 209, 247, 278, 312, 315, 323, 324, 337, 338; Ferguson 1931:no. 577.

In the Hastie Manuscript (B.M.), Burns says in his note to item 142 'Auld King Coul' I have met with many different sets of the tune and words but these appear to be the best'.

32 This verse from Child 237 is another example of collected or recollected material.

33 For examples see Dick 1962:nos. 35, 102, 201.

34 During Burns's lifetime volumes of the *Museum* did not name him as author of many items he could have claimed. He did have a letter code, several letters of which referred the initiated to his works. See Ferguson 1931:no. 280.

35 This portion of the letter has perished and is published by Ferguson on the authority of Cromek who had printed it and who may have seen the original.

36 Parenthetically, following Legman's suggestion, one can surely say that Burns would undoubtedly have been an informant *par excellence*. And perhaps in a certain sense he should be viewed as such, as a remarkably original yet tradition-bound redactor of oral material.

37 Dick (*Songs* 1962: Foreword, VIII): '. . . we must not forget that it was his flair for and apperception of the old and neglected melodies, that prevented the loss of much of Scotland's proud heritage from her social and cultural past which otherwise would certainly have fallen into desuetude'.

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