
Patrick Scott, University of South Carolina - Columbia

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/patrick_scott/325/
with a miniature Kilmarnock edition beautifully bound in blue leather. It had been speculated that Dr Kirsteen McCue’s paper on “Songs from the Kilmarnock edition” would be naturally brief, but with Dr McCue’s usual detail study, the paper was very informative and illuminating, with her singing to illustrate her points. There followed a superb half hour performance of the “Songs from the Kilmarnock edition and First Commonplace book” by the accomplished Bill Adair which had the audience quite spellbound. Professor Nigel Leask gave a great concluding paper “Burns Commonplace Book and the Kilmarnock edition” reflecting his recent researches which will come to the public shortly in the first edition of the new Oxford edition.

Reviews

The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, volume 2; Enlightenment and Expansion, 1707-1800.


“Book history” has been a growing industry over the past few decades, and this big book provides an authoritative survey of recent research into how the books of Burns’s era were manufactured, financed, and distributed. Only a few sections are directly about Burns’s own books, most notably the two short chapters by G. Ross Roy on Burns and his publishers (pp. 570-582), and on the publication of The Merry Muses (pp. 583-585). But chapters such as those on music publishing, or on the development of the provincial Scottish book trade outside the major cities, of Scottish publishing in London, or of Scottish lending and subscription libraries, all provide interesting information relevant to Burns’s life and writing career. The book tells an extraordinary story, as the early-18th century traditionally-oriented shops of James Watson and Thomas Ruddiman gave way to an international book trade, where gentleman-publishers like William Creech in Edinburgh or Alexander Strahan in London spread modern Scottish writing far beyond Scotland.

The volume is divided into six major sections. Part 1, on the Emergence of the Modern Book Trade, opening with an excellent chapter by Warren McDougall on copyright, charts the business and technical changes that let the small printing-shops of 1700 mutate into the diversified trades in paper, binding, printing, engraving and binding, of 1800. Of Burnsian interest here is Stephen Brown’s chapter on Burns’s fellow-Crochallan Fencible, William Smellie (pp. 52-60). Part 2, Developing a Market-Place for Books, with separate chapters on Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and
London, covers the economics and organization of the Scottish book trade, with important new archival research in chapters by Richard Ovendon and William Zachs. Part 3, on the role of the Scottish book-trade in promoting international awareness of Scottish thought and Scottish books, provides separate chapters on e.g. the Netherlands, Germany, France, Italy, and America. Part 4, on The Popular Press, covers not only textbooks, and libraries, and newspapers, but cookery books and children’s books.

The heart of the book lies in the 120-page Part 5, Publishing the Enlightenment, with chapters by Mark Towsey, Richard Sher (on Adam Smith), Peter Garside, and the two editors (on the original Encyclopaedia Britannica). Of special interest here is David Shuttleton’s chapter on Burns’s mentor Dr. Thomas Blacklock (pp. 528-537). By comparison, the 70-page Part 6, on Scottishness and the Book Trade, with Ross Roy’s chapters, but also covering the revival of early Scottish literature, pre-Burns poets such as Ramsay and Fergusson, and Gaelic secular writing, will perhaps seem a little truncated.

Overall, however, one is amazed by the number and variety of the topics covered, and the skill with which so many distinguished researchers have been cajoled into providing brief introductions to complex topics. Scattered through the volume are wonderful short case studies of key books or representative figures. The mammoth scale (and price) of the book mean that few Burnsians will choose to buy their own copy, but it provides the most authoritative and up-to-date gateway to recent research on a range of Burnsian topics.

**Patrick Scott**

**Pippa’s Bum Book**

In the rush for the Christmas best seller list, we find Pippa Middleton entering the fray (purely on her own merits as a party planner and author) with a glossy book called “Celebrate”. To be fair, it has some awfully pretty pictures, but when it strays into advice about Burns Suppers it is simply awful.

Fundamentally, it is the sheer banality of the content: simply speaking, any Burns supper should be pure enjoyment.

I wrote my “Ultimate Burns Supper Book” a few years ago to dispel the fusty idea that every Burns Supper had to be a rigidly stuffy tartan night where the absence of women was compensated for by the consumption