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### On editing *The Merry Muses*

I was delighted to be asked to contribute to this volume, as I am extremely grateful to Ross, and to Patrick, for their generosity when I was a W. Ormiston Roy Fellow in the summer of 1998. It was a great privilege to spend a block of uninterrupted time in the peerless collection, and in Columbia. I have fond memories of days spent with multiple, and rare, editions by my side, familiarising myself with the reception of James Macpherson in North America,<sup>1</sup> and of hospitable evenings and weekends conducting research within the welcoming Scottish community. Ross and Lucie made particularly sure, as they have with all the Fellows, that I was never bored, hungry or thirsty: their legendary hospitality involved fine meals, whisky and good fellowship, enhanced by the delightful company of Wallace the dog. My thanks to all at the Thomas Cooper Library are genuine and lasting. In what follows, I would like to

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<sup>1</sup> The research I conducted enabled me to organise a panel on Macpherson at the American Folklore Society conference in Portland, Oregon, at the end of my summer as a W. Ormiston Roy Fellow, in 1998, and to write an essay, “‘Rude Bard of the North’: James Macpherson and the Folklore of Democracy” which appeared in the *Journal of American Folklore* Special Issue: James ‘Ossian’ Macpherson (2001). It also generated several conference papers: ‘Grandfather Mountain and the Acquired Family’ at the Culture, Community and Nation Conference in Vancouver, 2000, and ‘Scotland in the South: Highland Games at Grandfather Mountain and Charleston’ as part of the panel I organised on ‘Scotland and America: Public Events and Community Identities’ at the American Folklore Society conference in Albuquerque in 2003.

reflect on a more recent project: introducing a new version of the 1959 *Merry Muses of Caledonia*, as edited by James Barke, Sydney Goodsir Smith and J. DeLancey Ferguson, for Luath Press.<sup>2</sup> I felt this might be appropriate given Ross's knowledge of the volume—far greater than mine—expressed in his *Burns Chronicle* article of 1986 as well as his facsimile from the extremely rare edition in the collection.<sup>3</sup>

From the point of view of its editors, *The Merry Muses* offers singular challenges. The new Luath edition includes the introductory essays and headnotes by Barke, Smith and Ferguson, along with Smith's glossary, which first appeared in the 1964 American edition. Three illustrations from the 1959 edition are omitted<sup>4</sup> but this loss is more than compensated for by evocative new illustrations from Bob Dewar. For the first time, too, the music for the songs by Burns is included: this fulfils the original desire of the 1959 editors, thwarted because of Barke's untimely death. What I tried to do is to complement the work of Barke, Smith and Ferguson, partly by discussing the development of their edition, and partly by revisiting the peculiar history and characteristics of *The Merry Muses*.

I came to realise that *The Merry Muses* has, in many ways, a life and a validity of its own, independent of its authors and editors. Although associated with Burns from an early stage in its life, as is well known, it was first published after Burns's death and without his approval.

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<sup>2</sup> This paper is a condensed version of my introduction to the Luath edition of *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*, edited by James Barke, Sydney Goodsir Smith. With a Prefatory Note and some authentic Burns Texts contributed by J. DeLancey Ferguson, first published in 1959 (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2009). In its present form, it draws directly on a paper, 'On editing *The Merry Muses*' which was presented during the 'Robert Burns 1759 to 2009' conference at the University of Glasgow in January 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Ross Roy, 'The "1827" edition of Robert Burns's *Merry Muses of Caledonia*, *Burns Chronicle* 4th series: XI, 1986: 32; *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*. Facsimile edition (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press for the Thomas Cooper Library, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> The missing illustrations include the title page of the first edition, 'Ellibanks' from the Rosebery copy of the 1799 volume, and an illustration of the Anchor Close, where the Crochallan Fencibles met, by Rendell Wells.

Nor is there any extant proof he personally amassed these items with the intention to publish. Only certain of the texts, as the 1959 editors note, are verifiably Burns's, or collected by Burns, because of their existence in manuscript, or publication elsewhere. While some of *The Merry Muses* is indisputably by Burns, collected and amended by him, many more items were bundled into nineteenth century editions by their editors, in an attempt to add weight by association with Burns. However, a cautionary note should be raised: even if the texts indisputably passed through Burns's hands, they were designed for private consumption. This is not Burns as he might have wished to be remembered or at his most polished.

Previous editors worked from the premise that *The Merry Muses*'s value was in rounding off the poet's corpus, allowing readers to appreciate the range of Burns's output as songwriter and collector. The contents, too, were supposed to represent Burns as we hope he was: openly sexual, raucously humorous, playful yet empathetic to women. Seen from that viewpoint, *The Merry Muses* offers tantalising glimpses of Burns's poetry at its rawest and bawdiest, at the extreme end of his love lyrics. These are texts which require imaginative readjustments on the part of the twenty first century reader, particularly for those who are unfamiliar with the bawdy or its modern erotic equivalents. Burns, as Barke emphasises, was working within a rich and varied, tradition of bawdry, in written and oral forms, in Scotland and beyond. Bearing these factors in mind, it becomes possible to appreciate the songs in context: for their good humour, verbal playfulness, and disrespectfulness towards standard social mores.

Seen in this way, *The Merry Muses* represents the worldview of the eighteenth century drinking club, like that of its first apparent editors, the Crochallan Fencibles:<sup>5</sup> a group of carousing companions who met in Dawney Douglas's tavern in Edinburgh. The Crochallan group were, perhaps, less practically sexual than other, more colourful organisations—the Beggar's Benison, for instance, or the Wig Club—but they certainly enjoyed erotic and bawdy songs.<sup>6</sup> Members included William Dunbar (d.1807), its presiding officer (and also a member, like Burns, of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge of Freemasons); Charles Hay (1747-1811) Lord Newton (the group's 'major and muster-master-general'); Robert Cleghorn (d.1798?) who was particularly involved with the 'cloaciniad' verses. Burns refers to his membership in writing, for instance, to Peter Hill, in a letter of February 1794.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps Burns sought to flatter his friends by hinting at their gentlemanly broad-mindedness when, as Ferguson notes, he circulated bawdy items in letters, as to Provost Maxwell of Lochmaben, or by lending his 'collection', to people like John M<sup>c</sup>Murdo of Drunlanrig. Burns was also indicating his own status as a gentlemanly collector, linked (in a 'cloaciniad' way) to his enthusiastic role in the *Scots Musical Museum*. It is in the context of the 'fraternal' enjoyment of the bawdry, to quote Robert Crawford, that *The Merry Muses* must be viewed.<sup>8</sup>

A related factor which has to be considered with *The Merry Muses*, too, is that it is primarily a collection of songs for performance rather than designed to be read silently; this was something, as an editor, that I found challenging. With the exception of one of two items designed for recitation, this is a collection which really comes to life when it is used as it was

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<sup>5</sup> *The Merry Muses of Caledonia; A Collection of Favourite Scots Songs, Ancient and Modern; Selected for use of the Crochallan Fencibles* (no publisher, no printer: 1799).

<sup>6</sup> See David Stevenson *Beggar's Benison. Sex clubs of Enlightenment Scotland* (Phantassie, East Linton: Tuckwell, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> See *The Letters of Robert Burns* 2 vols, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed J. DeLancey Ferguson and G. Ross Roy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) vol II, no.614.

<sup>8</sup> See Robert Crawford, *Robert Burns & Cultural Authority* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1999):13.

originally presented: ‘*for use*’ as a source text for singers. In my introduction, I consider modern performances including Ewan MacColl’s *Songs from Robert Burns’s Merry Muses of Caledonia* (1962); Gill Bowman, Tich Frier et al’s *Robert Burns—The Merry Muses* (1996), Jean Redpath’s recordings with Serge Hovey and the groundbreaking Linn series of *The Complete Songs of Robert Burns*.<sup>9</sup>

*The Merry Muses* themselves are a relatively tame group of texts. They are heterosexual in orientation, describing consensual sex in familiar positions, and with a strong focus on male and female genitalia. They operate according to their own rules: they are rhythmic, mimicing the actions they describe; they use easily-understood euphemisms for sexual experiences. There is the statement, for instance, in ‘Ye Hae Lien Wrang Lassie’, based on farming experiences (like many of the metaphors), ‘Ye’ve let the pounie o’er the dyke, / And he’s been in the corn, lassie’. So, too, obvious images are used: the ‘chanter pipe’ of ‘John Anderson My Jo’; the women’s ‘dungeons deep’ in ‘Act Sederunt of the Session’. Some, of course, are more explicit, like ‘My Girl She’s Airy’, expressing a longing, ‘For her a, b, e, d, and her c, u, n, t’. *The Merry Muses* is, too, a self-conscious display of ability in diverse poetic styles, within the context of bawdry. In ‘Act Sederunt of the Session’, for instance, satirical techniques to suggest the ridiculousness of contemporary kirk attitudes to sex. Then there is the bawdy mock-pastoral of ‘Ode to Spring’.

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<sup>9</sup> Ewan MacColl, *Songs from Robert Burns’ Merry Muses of Caledonia*. Sung by Ewan MacColl. Edited and annotated by Kenneth S. Goldstein. np: Dionysus, 1962. D1; Gill Bowman, Tich Frier et al, *Robert Burns—The Merry Muse* (Glasgow: Iona Records, 1996) IRCD035; Redpath, Jean, *Songs of Robert Burns*. Arranged by Serge Hovey, 7 vols. First published 1976-1990. Rereleased on 4 CDs (USA: Rounder; Cockenzie: Greentrax, 1990-1996). CDTRAX 029, 114-16; *Robert Burns. The Complete Songs*. 12 vols. Various artists. Ed Fred Freeman (Glasgow: Linn Records, 1995-2002). Linn Records CDK 047, 051, 062, 083, 086, 099, 107, 143, 156, 199, 200 and 201.

The textual history, however, is extremely complicated, and this was something that held up the Luath edition, while I came (perhaps not fully, even yet) to an understanding of it. Although many, or most, of its texts were no doubt familiar to the Crochallans, *The Merry Muses* was not itself published until three years after Burns's death, in 1799, without being attributed to Burns in the book itself, and without his permission or approval. This volume has no specific reference to Burns and his precise involvement with its production would seem to be minimal if any. However, the *Merry Muses* was linked to the poet through his association with the Crochallans. According to literary legend, the 1799 volume was compiled after Burns's death, based on a manuscript allegedly inveigled out of the grieving Jean Armour.<sup>10</sup> This manuscript is no longer extant, or at least its location is unknown; in 1959 Ferguson revised his earlier opinion that it might have been destroyed. Related to this, the 1799 edition was long thought to have been published in Dumfries; modern scholars, including Ferguson, think it more likely that it was published in Edinburgh. Moreover, until the later nineteenth century, and not conclusively until the publication of the 1959 edition, the existence of the Crochallan volume was itself based on rumour. The one copy occasionally available to late nineteenth century editors, such as William Scott Douglas and, later, W.H. Ewing, was that which passed through the hands of William Craibe Angus and which, by 1959, was in the personal collection of the former Liberal Prime Minister, the Earl of Rosebery. The Rosebery copy, which is very slightly damaged, lacks a date, and so the only way of dating *The Merry Muses* was to use the watermarks on its paper. These placed the volume at around 1800 or earlier, until the discovery of Ross's own copy, dated 1799, made exact dating possible. A microfilm copy of the Rosebery, however, was made accessible to the 1959 editors, and is in the National Library of Scotland.

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<sup>10</sup> See J. DeLancey Fergusson, 'The Suppressed Poems of Burns', *Modern Philology* 30 (1): 1932: 53-60 and 'Burns and The Merry Muses', *Modern Language Notes*, Nov 1951: 471-73.

The printed text has been in flux and development since its first appearance. Since 1799, *The Merry Muses* has passed through over thirty editions or printings, with minor or major variations, up to 2000. There are concentrated clusters: at least seven editions which can be tentatively dated between 1900 and 1911, and a minimum of ten more, including a US printing, between 1962 and 1982. There is a gap between around 1843 and 1872 and, again, between 1930 and 1959, possibly reflecting attitudes to erotic texts, and censorship.

The 1799 volume languished in obscurity for much of the nineteenth century, with the possible exception of the possibly early ‘Dublin’ version,<sup>11</sup> at least until the publication of the ‘1827’ edition. This, it has been argued by Gershon Legman and by Ross,<sup>12</sup> was probably published in 1872 in London for John Hotten, with the publication numerals reversed, to confuse the perceived censors. It is difficult to be precise in tracing the ‘1827’ text’s history, but it spawned a variety of private editions. Most of these appeared, in all probability, from the third quarter of the nineteenth century into the early twentieth century. It is possible that some editors directly consulted the 1799 volume, but more likely that they are a self-generating set, based on an assumed provenance going back to the Crochallans and Burns.

There are, then, multiple variants of the ‘1827’, with more or less minor variations and have been ably surveyed by Ross in his extremely helpful article, which updates M’Naught’s earlier attempt to present the various versions of the *Merry Muses* chronologically. Where M’Naught finds seven versions post the Crochallan edition, noting that most are related,

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<sup>11</sup> *The merry muses : a choice collection of favourite songs* (Dublin: Printed for the booksellers, [1804?]).

<sup>12</sup> See Gershon Legman *The Horn Book* (New York: University Books, 1964): 148-9 and *The Merry Muses of Caledonia* (New York: University Books, 1965): lxii.



Ross identifies seventeen variations, with estimated dates ranging from 1872 to 1920 (using techniques such as tracing library accession dates to determine the latest possible date of publication).<sup>13</sup>

As I have no doubt Ross knows, there are additional copies, which he did not have access to at the time of writing his valuable piece. There is, for instance, a substantial number of editions in Edward Atkinson Hornel's collection, available for public consultation in the Hornel Library, Broughton House, Kirkcudbright. Hornel was assisted in purchasing these items by James Cameron Ewing and their correspondence relating to the building of this collection is cited below. Within the Broughton House collection there are copies of Ross's 1<sup>14</sup> 1, 3 (with manuscript notes by J.C. Ewing), 5 and 12 along with a 'Dublin' edition of '1830?' and a related 'London' edition of '1843'. Just this week I heard of another edition which had been found in Broughton house, which I have yet to examine. The Ewart library in Dumfries also holds an 1827 edition, Ross's 7, at Shelfmark Db151 (821 BUR). There is also an NLS copy of no 7.<sup>15</sup> There are now several photographic copies of the 1827 available on the internet, too. For instance, at the time of writing, there were multiple editions, including some from the '1827' sequence, along with Gershon Legman's edition.<sup>16</sup>

For those less familiar than Ross with the contents of the '1827' sequence, it is worth mentioning that, there, items from the 1799 volume mingle with other pieces apparently by

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<sup>13</sup> G. Ross Roy, 'The "1827" Edition of Robert Burns's *Merry Muses of Caledonia*', *Burns Chronicle* 4<sup>th</sup> series: XI (1986): 32-44; D. M'Naught, 'The Merry Muses of Caledonia', *Burns Chronicle* III (1894): 24-45.

<sup>14</sup> The Broughton House shelfmarks are, respectively: 1 (Su 151-6 and Su 151-7), 3 (Su151-10), 5 (Su 151-8); 6 (Su 151-5), 10 (Su 151-4), 12 (Su 151-9), '1830' (Su 151-12), 1843 (Su 151-11).

<sup>15</sup> Ewart library shelfmark Db151 (821 BUR); NLS H1.77653.

<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.drinkingsongs.net/html/books-and-manuscripts/1700-1799/1799-merry-muses-of-caledonia/index.htm>.

Burns and with a selection of other erotic pieces of varying quality, many of them similar to broadside literature, then in circulation. As well as many additional items to the 1799 printing, which are soon classified into sections of 'Scottish', 'English' and 'Irish' themed texts, at the end, too, there is a set of bawdy 'Toasts and Sentiments'. Most of this new material has nothing directly to do with Burns, and more to do with the perceived activities, and proclivities, of eighteenth century British drinking clubs. Burns is explicitly named as author on the assumed earliest text and thereafter. The '1827' usually includes a preface, reprinted from one edition to the next, with occasional variations, explaining the Burns' credentials, and putting the texts into bawdy context. It also includes two letters: the one from Burns to Robert Ainslie of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1788, describing a sexual encounter with Jean Mauchline (which Barke interrogates in his essay) and to James Johnson of 25<sup>th</sup> May 1788 relating to the marriage to Jean Armour. There is also a copy of the 'Libel Summons' or 'The Court of Equity'. It is not completely clear what all the sources for the '1827' edition were: it is possible that it makes reference to the lost Burns manuscript, or to the 1799 edition, or to previously published items in some cases, or to a combination of all of these.

There are two intriguing missing links to all of this. The first is the Allan Cunningham manuscript copy of *The Merry Muses*, discovered by Gershon Legman but, sadly, not available to the 1959 editors (although Smith makes reference to it in later editions). It is contained within an '1825 Dublin' edition of *The Merry Muses* held within the British Museum, with additional items reprinted in Legman's *The Horn Book* and discussed very fully again in his edition of *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*.<sup>17</sup> Its main value lies in pointing out Burns's authorship in one or two instances, as Smith notes in the second edition of the

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<sup>17</sup> See Gershon Legman *The Horn Book* (New York: University Books, 1964): 129-69; Gershon Legman *The Merry Muses of Caledonia* (New York: University Books, 1965), particularly 271-3.

Barke, Smith and Ferguson version, where certain texts (as mentioned below) are transferred between sections in the book on the strength of Legman's statements.

Another intriguing aside is the abortive edition planned by the art dealer and bibliophile William Craibe Angus (1830-1899), based on the Crochallan volume and to be edited by William Ernest Henley (1849-1903), using one of the two transcriptions from the 1799 edition by J.C. Ewing.<sup>18</sup> This volume, as Smith points out, was consulted by M'Naught while he prepared the 1911 Burns Federation edition. It played an influential role, too, for Barke and Smith in understanding the textual history of the *Merry Muses*. In my introduction, I consider the effect of this transcript on the 1959 editors, and offer observations on the way elements of it—particularly the notes on specific songs, and their provenance—influenced Barke and Ferguson. The Ewing transcript, which was drawn to the editor's attention by Maurice Lindsay, played a major role in the early preparations for the 1959 editions. Barke made a partial transcript of some of Ewing's introductory notes but, more importantly its existence—again through the aid of Lindsay—allowed the team to establish the existence and whereabouts of the 1799 volume.

The first edition of the *Muses* which made any effort to restrict its content to Burns's own compositions and collected pieces was the 1911 Burns Federation edition, compiled anonymously—under the pseudonym of 'Vindex'—by Duncan M'Naught, of the *Burns Chronicle*.<sup>19</sup> Described as the 'Original edition', with the claim that it is, 'A Vindication of

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<sup>18</sup> 'The Merry Muses of Caledonia', bound volume including transcript and notes by J.C. Ewing, Andrew Carnegie Library, Local Studies, 1247a.

<sup>19</sup> *The Merry Muses of Caledonia (Original Edition). A Collection of Favourite Scots Songs Ancient and Modern; Selected for use of the Crochallan Fencibles* (no place of publication: the Burns Federation), 1911. See

Robert Burns in connection with the above publication and the spurious editions which succeeded it'. M'Naught follows the 1799 fairly closely, with minor title changes. There are useful, albeit brief, headnotes by M'Naught too; comparing these with the 1959, it can be seen that the modern editors made explicit reference to M'Naught or, at least, approached the text with similar interests.

My new edition, for Luath preserves the integrity of, Barke, Smith and Ferguson's pioneering edition. The editors presented their work in 1959 under the auspices of Sydney Goodsir Smith's Auk Society, for which a subscription of two guineas bought a 'free' copy, anticipating the possibility of prosecution. Ferguson, Smith and Barke were among the first editors to consider the book seriously, as a collection which included significant work by, or recorded by, Burns. Their scholarly articles, drawing attention to the situations where the songs first appeared as well as to their contexts, particularly in the headnotes, are extremely useful. This edition groups the texts by their provenance rather than being caught up in the '1827' sequence. Perhaps paradoxically, because the 1959 editors adopted a rational system of presentation and organisation, it could be suggested that Burns might have approved.

While some of *The Merry Muses* appeared, often in expurgated forms, in editions of Burns's complete poetry or works—most notably in the Aldine edition of 1893 and William Scott Douglas's<sup>20</sup>—the 1959 editors worked primarily from key texts: the 1799 Rosebery edition for instance. The Rosebery copy is in itself intriguing, partly because it includes manuscript notes by William Scott Douglas, as Ewing notes in his own set of notes on this copy, now in

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too D. M'Naught, D., 'The Merry Muses of Caledonia', *Burns Chronicle* III, February 1894: 24-45 and 'The "Merry Muses" Again', *Burns Chronicle* XX, 1911: 105-19.

<sup>20</sup> See *The Poetical works of Robert Burns*, ed George A. Aitken, 3 vols (London: Aldine, 1893) and William Scott Douglas *The complete poetical works of Robert Burns*, 2 vols (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1890).

Dunfermline's Carnegie Library; the 1959 editors made full use of this copy—often in an unacknowledged way. The 1959 team also made use of J.C. Ewing's transcription of the Rosebery volume, as well as the 1911 Burns Federation edition and I discuss their use of these sources at length in my introduction to the Luath volume.<sup>21</sup> Ninety seven texts appear in the 1959 edition as compared to eighty six in the 1799 and the omissions from the 1959 are intriguing. Sometimes it seems that a song is omitted for not being bawdy enough, although associated with Burns directly. For instance 'Anna' (1799: 8-10), better known as 'Yestreen I had a pint o' wine', is omitted in the 1959 edition. Similarly, 'My Wife's a wanton wee thing' (1799: 116-7) is omitted by Barke et al.. Equally other pieces are, perhaps, seen as distracting from the Burnsian emphasis of the 1959 edition and, therefore, not used. Therefore, while the 1959 editors include the 'Original set' of 'The Mill, Mill-o' from 1779, they omit the version below it, starting 'Beneath a green shade I fand a green maid' (1799: 73-4) which is in Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellany* of 1724.

There were various offshoots from the 1959 edition. Smith and Ferguson oversaw the second edition, which was the US one, appearing in 1964 with G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York. This follows the 1959 text, using the same illustrations and ordering of the texts. One substantial change, though, is that Robert Burns is now credited on the title page; there is also the addition of Smith's glossary.<sup>22</sup> Smith, too, takes account of Gershon Legman's recent discovery of the Allan Cunningham's manuscript in the British Museum Library which, according to Smith, 'suggests that six songs previously grouped in Section III are actually

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<sup>21</sup> It is possible to verify that the notes on the 1799 were by Scott Douglas, too, by comparing his handwriting here in other known sources of his writing. See, for instance, his notes in NLS MS 2074. I am grateful to George Stanley of the National Library of Scotland for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Burns *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*. Edited by James Barke and Sydney Goodsir Smith. With a Prefatory Note and some authentic Burns Texts contributed by J. DeLancey Ferguson (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1964). Although the glossary is not credited to Smith, its manuscript existence in the National Library of Scotland, at NLS ACC 10397/44 shows that he was the primary author, and corrector, of this.

Burns originals' and indicates 'the purified versions of these in the Aldine edition of 1839 are in fact forged expurgations by Cunningham.'<sup>23</sup> This affects 'Ye Hae Lien Wrang,' 'Comin' O'er the Hills o' Coupar', 'How Can I Keep my Maidenhead?', 'Wad Ye Do That?', 'There Cam a Cadger' and 'Jenny Macraw'. The songs, however, remain in Section III at this point. When the edition went into its third incarnation, and through its third publisher, printed in 1965 in London, for W.H. Allen,<sup>24</sup> Smith moves the six songs at question into section IV. 'Collected by Burns'. The notes to these songs, too, are amended accordingly. Aside from new references to Legman, however, the edition is identical to the 1959. This volume was reprinted by Panther, in London, in 1970, as a paperback, adopting the same changes as in the 1965 edition.<sup>25</sup> To round off the set with its original publisher *The Merry Muses* came out, finally, with Macdonald, in 1982.<sup>26</sup>

Most modern editions, with various editors and publishers, draw strongly on the 1959 text and its descendants. They include the unashamedly uncredited version of Barke, Smith and Ferguson's 1965 text in *Bawdy verse and folksongs written and collected by Robert Burns*, described only as 'introduced' by Magnus Magnusson.<sup>27</sup> The Paul Harris edition, as *The Secret Cabinet of Robert Burns*,<sup>28</sup> is more skilfully, edited. The selection is smaller than that in the 1959 edition, with sixty one texts in total and useful headnotes. Other significant

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Burns *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*. Edited by James Barke and Sydney Goodsir Smith. With a Prefatory Note and some authentic Burns Texts contributed by J. DeLancey Ferguson (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1964): 6.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Burns *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*. Edited by James Barke and Sydney Goodsir Smith. With a Prefatory Note and some authentic Burns Texts contributed by J. DeLancey Ferguson (London: W.H. Allen, 1965).

<sup>25</sup> Robert Burns *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*. Edited by James Barke and Sydney Goodsir Smith with a prefatory note and some authentic Burns texts by J. DeLancey Ferguson (London: Panther, 1966), reprinted 1970.

<sup>26</sup> *The merry muses of Caledonia. Robert Burns*. Edited by James Barke and Sydney Goodsir Smith ; with a prefatory note and some authentic Burns texts contributed by J.DeLancey Ferguson. Edinburgh: Macdonald Publishers, 1982.

<sup>27</sup> Magnus Magnusson *Bawdy Verse and Folksongs. Written and Collected by Robert Burns* (London: Macmillan, 1982) first published 1965 as *The Merry Muses of Caledonia* (W.H. Allen & Co, Ltd.)

<sup>28</sup> *The Secret Cabinet of Robert Burns. Merry Muses of Caledonia* (Edinburgh: Paul Harris, 1979).

editions include Eric Lemuel Randall's, of 1966, which includes very full headnotes, a generalist's introductory essay and selected illustrations.<sup>29</sup> Finally, the 1999 facsimile edition of the 1799, by Ross Roy, with its accompanying essay,<sup>30</sup> takes the set to its starting point, providing a reliable text for the earliest known version of the *Merry Muses*.

The 1959 edition, ultimately, represented a labour of scholarship as well as a labour of love: the letters give some indication of the gargantuan effort involved, and one which yielded very tangible results. This edition is as much, if not more, their creation than Burns's. At the time of editing Barke was at the height of his fame as the novelist of the *Immortal Memory* of Burns, the multi-parted novel which follows the poet from birth to death. The depth of his research on Burns has still not been fully recognised.<sup>31</sup> Smith, equally, was making his reputation as a poet and editor, having recently published on *Robert Fergusson's* poetry.<sup>32</sup> Ferguson was the most scholarly, well respected for his Burns *Letters* and the biography *The Pride and the Passion*. Sadly, Barke died before the edition was seen through to completion. The making of the edition (which took eleven years to complete) was beset with problems, as the editorial correspondence,<sup>33</sup> considered in the Luath edition, makes apparent.

I hope that my remarks have given at least a flavour of the development of *The Merry Muses* into the 1959 edition, and onwards into the new Luath version. It is a book which is complex textually, it is complicated as a song collection, and the relationship with Burns complicates

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<sup>29</sup> *The Merry Muses Illustrated* ed Eric Lemuel Randall (London: Luxor Press, 1966).

<sup>30</sup> *Robert Burns and The Merry Muses*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press for the Thomas Cooper Library: 1999 [accompanies 1999 edition].

<sup>31</sup> There is still no major study of Barke as a novelist, or scholar on Burns, although it is hoped that the proceedings of the conference on his centenary, which took place in Glasgow at the Mitchell Library in 2005, will be forthcoming in the future, co-edited by Valentina Bold and David Borthwick.

<sup>32</sup> Sydney Goodsir Smith, ed., *Robert Fergusson, 1750-1774* (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1952).

<sup>33</sup> See, in particular, the Barke Papers, in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

things further. In spite of all of this, or because of it, *The Merry Muses of Caledonia* is ripe for scholarly and critical reassessment: as a set of books which needs to be rigorously collated (perhaps minus the misleading 1827 texts) and as a set of lively songs in its own account. I hope I will have the chance to discuss this in person with Ross, and send my very best wishes on the occasion of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference.

**Valentina Bold, University of Glasgow, Dumfries**