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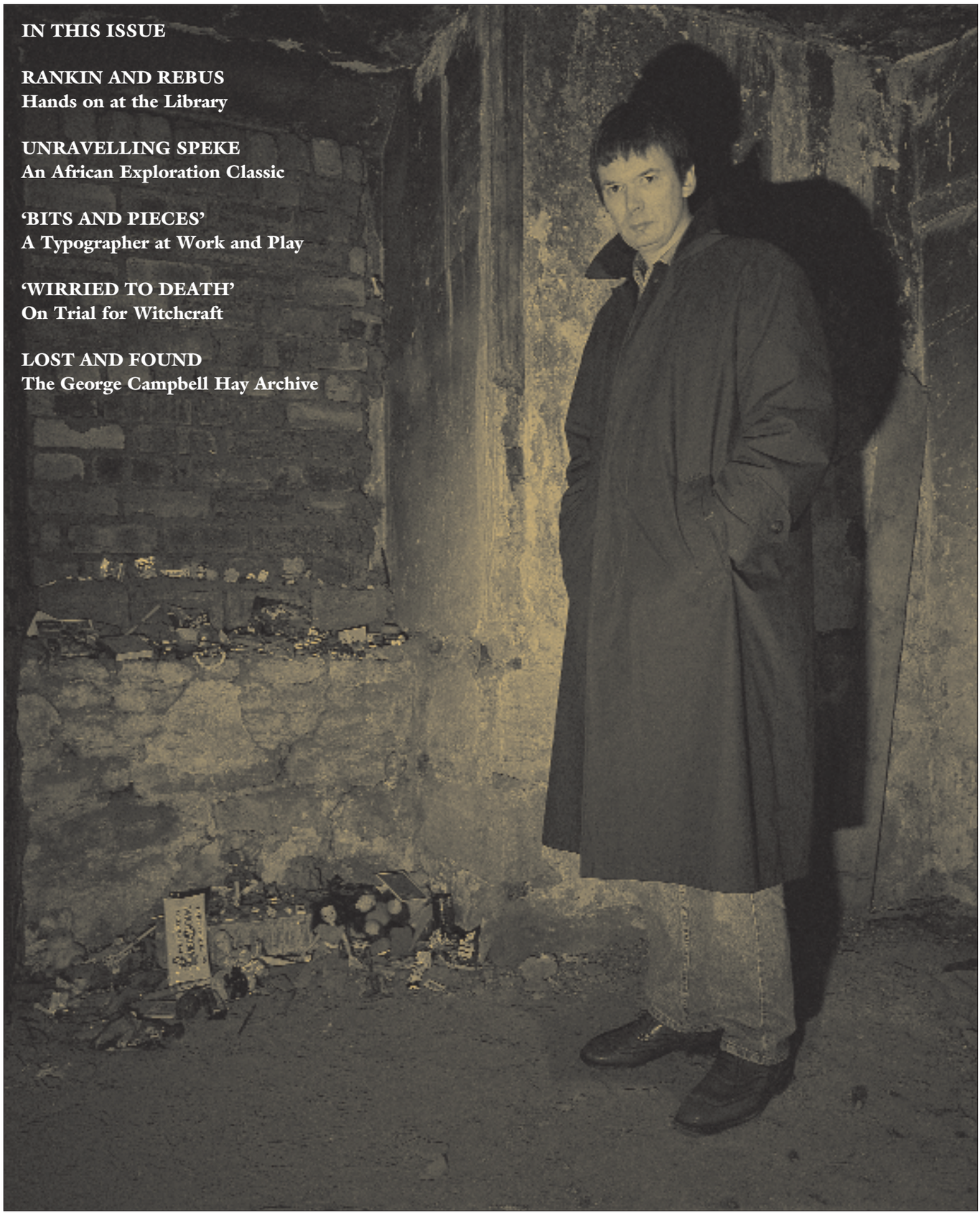

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'Wirried to death'

Anna Tait's Trial for Witchcraft

LOUISE YEOMAN

Historian Louise Yeoman is an expert on Scottish witchcraft. Here she describes an extraordinary discovery in the holdings of the National Library of Scotland: a Register of Commissions volume for the years 1630–42 that brings to light over a hundred cases of witchcraft most of which were previously unknown to modern scholarship. One in particular stands out. The case against Anna Tait provides an exceptional insight into one woman's tragic life amid a maelstrom of religious and social tensions.

If you look in Christina Larner's *Sourcebook of Scottish Witchcraft*, you won't find any mention of Anna Tait. She was one of many accused witches whose names were unknown to the compilers of the *Sourcebook*. The details of Anna and almost a hundred others recorded in a National Library of Scotland manuscript are not present in the published records of Scotland's Privy Council. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, the editors of the Privy Council volumes had carefully combed the holdings of the National Archives of Scotland for their material. What they didn't realise was that a single volume of the Register of Commissions, for the years 1630–42, had escaped them. In it were hundreds of records of Privy Council commissions to try criminal trials. In it was Anna Tait.

I first came across Anna and Adv.Ms.31.3.10 when my friend and fellow researcher Dr Michael Wasser of McGill University, Montreal, showed it to me in the Library's North Reading Room. A historian of crimes of violence in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scotland, Michael was instantly aware of the significance of the manuscript. Out of hundreds of records, almost the first thing he pointed out to me was the account of Anna Tait's trial. Usually a commission is a bare record of who is accused of what crime and who is to try them, but the commission to try Anna stood out because of the amount of detail it contained. It was a remarkably moving document. I undertook to transcribe it and prepare an edited version for the Scottish History Society.

In Haddington in 1634 Anna Tait was, in the original Scots of the commission, 'thrie several times deprehendit putting violent hands to herself at her awne hous'. In other words, she was caught trying to kill herself. Suicide, like witchcraft, was considered to be a particularly heinous crime against God's law, punishable by forfeiture of the entire goods of the victim and dishonourable burial in unconsecrated ground.

When Anna was apprehended for attempted suicide, the commission records that she told a tale of adultery, poisoning, domestic murder, unwanted pregnancy, botched home-abortion and death. Here is this part of the commission, slightly adapted and with the spelling modernised:

She was for that cause, upon the 18th of December, taken and committed to ward within the tolbooth of the said burgh where being demanded and examined why she put hands to herself, she answered that the intolerable trouble of her mind, which she conceived for the murder of her first husband called John Coltart, nolt driver [cattle drover], and for the murder of her daughter, moved her thereto.

Confessing plainly that about twenty-eight years ago, she being married to the said John, ane aged man, before the marriage she had sundry times committed fornication with William Johnston, her present husband, and that within the time of the marriage she had likewise committed adultery with him. To be quit of her first husband, she consulted with the Devil for his destruction, and that the Devil having directed her to make a drink of foxtrie leaves [foxglove leaves], she did the same, and gave it to her husband to drink who within three hours departed this life.

Concerning her daughter, she confessed that the daughter being with child, and she [Anna] having a purpose to murder the infant in the mother's belly, at last she consulted with the Devil. He gave her direction to buy wine and to mix it with salt and give it to her daughter to drink, which she having drunken, she shortly thereafter departed this life.

The commission further states that: 'upon the 8th of December instant; she had carnal copulation with the Devil in her own bed, and that upon the 11th of December the Devil came to her bedside, gripped her by the hair of her head and did nip her cheek'. Anna was to be tried not as an adulteress or murderer, but as a witch. The commission was the licence to the magistrates of Haddington to try her – but where were the records of her trial?

As a curator, a key aspect of my work in the Manuscripts Division is helping researchers who come to the National Library of Scotland. While I was working on the commissions, it happened that Dr John McGavin came to me with an enquiry relating to early modern Scottish drama. When John mentioned he was going to search through the Haddington Burgh records in the National Register of Archives, I asked him to keep an eye out for witchcraft trials, especially for Anna Tait's trial in case it survived. To my delight, not long after out conversation he e-mailed that he had found her trial records in the Haddington Burgh Court book.

In my experience, researching witchcraft cases can provoke an intense mixture of conflicting emotions. To cast unexpected light on a unique case is a matter for rejoicing; but the details I found in the court book were even grimmer than those of her commission. On several occasions Anna had tried to hang herself using her own head-dress (her 'curch'). When she was taken into custody she attempted suicide again, by trying to cut her own throat. And then, in the direct address of the charge against her, 'when your hands were bound and your feet maid fast in the stocks, no

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The first printed picture of witches in flight is from Ulrich de Constantia Molitor's *Tractatus de Lamiis et Pythonicis Mulieribus*, which was first published in 1489. The National Library of Scotland has a copy published in Paris, 1561 (K.205.d).



The witches of Northamptonshire riding 'all upon a sowes back', from *A Brief History of Witchcraft* … collected by John Taylor, Northampton, 1866 (Klr.170(1)).



A witches' sabbath engraved by Jan Ziarnko, from Pierre de Lancre's *Tableau de l'Inconstance des Mauuais Anges et Demons*, Paris, 1613 (Klr.207).

other meanes being left to accomplish your devilishe designes, ye knocked your heid to the wall and stocks, wherby thinking to dispatch your self.' The court book claimed that Anna had made a covenant with the Devil and had sex with him in the form of a black man and in the form of the wind. Shape-shifting, a not uncommon piece of Scottish popular belief about Auld Nick, is here overlaid by the sinister assumptions of European demonologists that any woman entering a demonic pact had sex with the Devil, took his mark and swore her soul away to him. Anna was explicitly accused of all three actions.

The trial provided further personal information about Anna to add to that from the commission. Taking both sources together, we can muster a fragmentary mosaic of her life. It seems that in 1606 she married her first husband John Coltart, a cattle drover, at a place called 'Furd Kirk' in England. Cattle drovers often travelled far afield in the course of their work, and so too had Anna. Interestingly enough, she was accused of having made an appointment to meet the Devil at 'Ellerslie'. The only places of this name are to be found in the west of Scotland, and not near her home in Lothian. Taking into account the vagaries of seventeenth-century spelling, the 'Ellerslie' in question may have been the little Lanarkshire village of Elderslie, famed as the birthplace of William Wallace. Whichever it was, Anna's world clearly stretched well beyond the confines of Haddington.

Bearing in mind that age of marriage was often quite late in seventeenth-century Scotland, Anna was probably about fifty years old at the time of her trial. Her second husband William Johnston was a miller who had lived at Winram, near Anna and her first husband. Proximity no doubt assisted their illicit affair.

Given that millers and cattle drovers were often relatively prosperous, it is likely that Anna had some standing in her community to keep up – very far from the stereotype of an accused witch as a poor begging woman going door to door looking for alms.

It is mentioned in the commission that Anna had acquired the alias 'Hononni', a Scottish variant of the English 'Hey nonny no!' a popular refrain in songs – an ironically jolly nickname. The commission also names her beloved daughter Elizabeth Johnston and chillingly records the circumstances of her death:

The said Elizabeth, being as ye confessed with child (to whom, few but yourself knows and neither will ye reveal the truth of it), and apparently being loath to let it be known to whom the child belonged, she and ye sought all means to kill, to murther the child in her belly, that it might not come to light who was the father thereof, or how it was gotten, whether in adultery or incest, or what other unlawful way.

To that effect ye consulted with diverse of your confederates fra whom, ye got sundry feall [evil] counsel and by their advice, administered feall drinks to your daughter. But these not doing your turn and all other means failing you, ye went to your old maister the devil … who gave you advise to buy ane mutchkin of white wine, and mix a pint thereof with salt and minister the same unto your daughter, and it would do your turn. The which

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cruel and devilish counsel ye willingly obeyed and fetched the wine, mixt with the same with salt and gave it to your daughter to drink. By which she presently swelled and shortly thereafter both she and the child died.

In token wherof, you have confessed that the devil gave you as much money in true and real turners [small copper coins] as would buy the said mutchkin of wine and salt. And this deed only of all the devilish and abominable actions has most troubled you, and been the greatest cause of your desire to murder yourself.



An illustration from *The Wonderful Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Philip Flower*, Greenwich, 1838 (originally published 1619) (Klr.160(1)).



An exorcist at work: an illustration from *A Strange and Wonderful Relation of Margaret Gurr of Tunbridge in Kent* by John Skinner, published in London, *c.* 1681 (Klr.2).

It would seem that, in trying to cover up her daughter's unwanted pregnancy, Anna ended up killing her own child. Blaming herself for Elizabeth's death, she no longer wanted to live and repeatedly tried to kill herself. When it was put to her that the Devil had advised her do all this and that she had become a witch, it seems she barely bothered to defend herself. Facing the shameful death of being strangled and burned at the stake, and asked in court whether she wanted anyone to speak in her defence, she answered, 'none but God in heaven'. Anna Tait – adulteress, murderer, abortionist – was regarded as such a paragon of evil, that in seventeenth-century Scotland the Devil had to be invoked to explain her conduct – an explanation supported by her own confession of witchcraft. It is interesting to speculate whether the legal freedoms available to women in twenty-first-century Scotland might have averted or modified the tragedy and violence that overtook her life.

There is also the question of how issues of mental disturbance and suicidal urges were dealt with in her society as compared with today's. In a modern case such a suicidal defendant might be found unfit to plead. How very differently Anna's contemporaries viewed her mental distress. That she was described as 'trublit in conscience' points to the context of prevailing beliefs which sealed her fate. Diaries, books, letters and sermons of radical Presbyterians and Covenanters of the seventeenth century often allude to the tortured doubt experienced by people as to whether they were part of the Calvinist 'Elect' or were predestined to go to hell. Demonic temptations and suicidal impulses were acknowledged as possible complications on the earthly passage to whatever after-life lay in store. To despair that one might have fallen into transgressions worthy of hell-fire was seen as signalling deep piety, not mental instability. In fact, Anna's despair may have made her seem more, rather than less, culpable to her interrogators. She was on the right road but had somehow perversely, to their minds, turned aside. Scorning the 'right' remedies of prayer and repentance, she seemed to have deliberately chosen the harmful means of demonic pact and suicide. Perhaps the reason society found it necessary to punish despairing people was to encourage others, in the face of such common but terrible states of mind, to intensify their piety.

Faced with the reality of burning large numbers of accused witches, amongst whom were many suicidal and mentally disturbed people, later generations of Scottish Privy Councillors began to doubt the wisdom of this approach. In 1662, in the midst of a nation-wide witch panic, the council issued commissions under strict orders that, to proceed with executing a convicted witch, it must be found that 'At the tyme of their confessions they were of right judgement, nowayes distracted or under any earnest desyre to die'. Almost thirty years after Anna's death, Scotland's judicial elite was showing the first glimmer of sensitivity to the issue of attempted suicide by witch-confession. This Privy Council directive to consider the mental state of the accused shows how things had moved on in a relatively short time frame, but too late for Anna Tait. At any rate, because of her murder confession this modification would have made no difference to the outcome of her trial. For her, there could be one only ending – execution. Because she had confessed guilt on all counts, she was not burnt alive (which tended to be reserved for those who died 'impenitent', refusing to confess). However, her sentence was as follows:

It was given for doom [sentence] by the mouth of William Sinclair dempster [pronouncer of sentence] that the said Anna Tait should be taken, her hands bound behind her back and conveyed by William Allot, lockman [executioner] of Haddington to the ordinary place of execution, and there wirried [strangled] to the death at ane post and thereafter her body to be burnt in ashes, desuper act.

Note on sources

The commission for Anna's trial is edited from Adv.Ms.31.3.10, f.102v. Her trial records may be found in National Archives of Scotland, Haddington Burgh Court Register B30/10/13, fos.24r-26v. A calendar of the witchcraft commissions in Adv.Ms.31.3.10 (including transcriptions of Anna Tait's commission and her trial records) has been prepared by the author for Julian Goodare (ed.), *Miscellany XIII*, Scottish History Society, forthcoming.

Dr Julian Goodare and the author are co-directors of the 'Survey of Scottish Witchcraft 1563–1736', a new project funded by the ESRC to produce an on-line database of the Scottish witch-hunt. The toll of the hunt is conservatively estimated at around 3,000 cases. The survey will be a replacement for the current main reference work on the subject: C. Larner, C.H. Lee, H.V. MacLauchlan, *A Sourcebook of Scottish Witchcraft*, Glasgow, 1977 (Hist.S.60.W.L2). Those wanting a quick and fairly reliable introduction to the Scottish witch-hunt are advised to consult Christina Larner's seminal work *Enemies of God*, 1981 (HP2.201.01744). Whilst in some respects this admirable book has been superseded by more recent scholarship, it is still the best available summary of the Scottish witchcraft to date. *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context* edited by Dr Julian Goodare will be published by Manchester University Press in early 2002.

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Rankin and Rebus

Hands on at the Library

Between 1983 and 1986, when I was doing my Ph.D on Muriel Spark, I was in the National Library of Scotland almost every day. At that time the Library didn't yet have the Muriel Spark Archive and there were no autobiographical books by her – and so I scoured newspapers at the Library for reviews of her work, hoping to find useful nuggets of information. I remember trying to track down a poem written by Muriel Spark while she was at James Gillespie's school. I'd found a reference to this poem being published in an Edinburgh paper and so I went through every single page of the local papers for the relevant period, I even checked out the *Glasgow Herald*. But I never found that poem. If it exists, it's probably sitting somewhere in her archive right now.

In 1984 I went on a tour of the Library led by Ian Campbell, who is a Professor of English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. He took us to the vaults. It was a maze of cavernous tunnels. Somebody said that the cells for defendants facing trial at the Edinburgh courts had once been down there, and that there was still a connecting passageway that led up into the court. This gave me an idea for *Knots and Crosses* (N3.87.497), the first Rebus book, which I'd already started writing: the chase scene through underground tunnels was inspired by that visit to the bowels of the National Library, but in the book they're relocated beneath the Central Lending Library.

I left Edinburgh in 1986. Over the next ten years I came back about three or four times a year to do research, pursuing all sorts of things. I would often trawl through newspapers at the Library. It's really hard when you're looking at old newspapers not to get sidetracked by football results, crosswords and adverts. By the time I came to research *Black and Blue* (N3.97.310) everything I wanted to look at was on microfilm. I read the original newspaper reports on the Bible John case in the *Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald* for October '68 to March '69; the newspapers also gave me all sorts of useful background information on Scotland in the late Sixties. There's a scene in *Black and Blue* where Rebus is doing exactly that sort of research in the Library, only he's looking at actual newspaper clippings; the model for his approach came from my own experience.

In the recent South Bank Show documentary about me, an actor portrayed me as a student in my early twenties. He was filmed at the Library with a big pile of books – Muriel Spark titles and crime fiction, to get over what I was spending most of my time on. All the filming had to be done early in the morning before the Library opened so that readers weren't disturbed.

In *Black and Blue* the serial killer bribes one of the Library staff to compile a list of the people who have been searching for material about Bible John, and John Rebus's name comes up. I don't really think any of the staff at the National Library would be susceptible to being bribed by anyone, let alone a serial killer! Rebus is absolutely fascinated by his subject and wants to do all the work himself. He's very much a loner. He ploughs through all the newspaper reports, anything to get the best possible fix on the case.

I've heard that some other crime writers have researchers working for them. But that means you're getting someone else's sense of the material, not your own, and it's just not the way I work. Like Rebus, I want to get the best possible feel for what's involved.



Left: Ian Rankin photographed by Gordon Wright.

Cover: Ian Rankin photographed by Allan Forbes.

IAN RANKIN

Ian Rankin is the author of the internationally acclaimed Inspector Rebus crime novels. He started writing Knots and Crosses, *the first book in the Rebus series, while he was a Ph.D student at the University of Edinburgh. His novels are underpinned by thorough research, some of which has taken him (and Rebus) to the National Library of Scotland. Here he tells of a relationship with the Library that began when he was a student. (This article was edited from an interview).*

Note on sources

The National Library of Scotland has extensive holdings of national and local Scottish newspapers. A proportion of these have been copied onto microfilm, but many are still to be filmed and are available at the Library as hard copy. Readers access newspaper files by title through the main catalogue, which lists the holdings of particular newspapers and indicates whether these are on microfilm or not. The newspaper files are heavily used, partly because full runs of newspapers are hard, if not impossible to access elsewhere. The Library has copies of *Newsplan* books for all parts of the UK, among them *Newsplan: Report of the Newsplan Project in Scotland* (Issue Hall.Publ.6.2.4S), to be found on the open shelves in the Issue Hall, which lists local newspapers in Scotland, detailing the location of those which are available to the public, and provides a starting point for those wishing to research Scottish newspapers.

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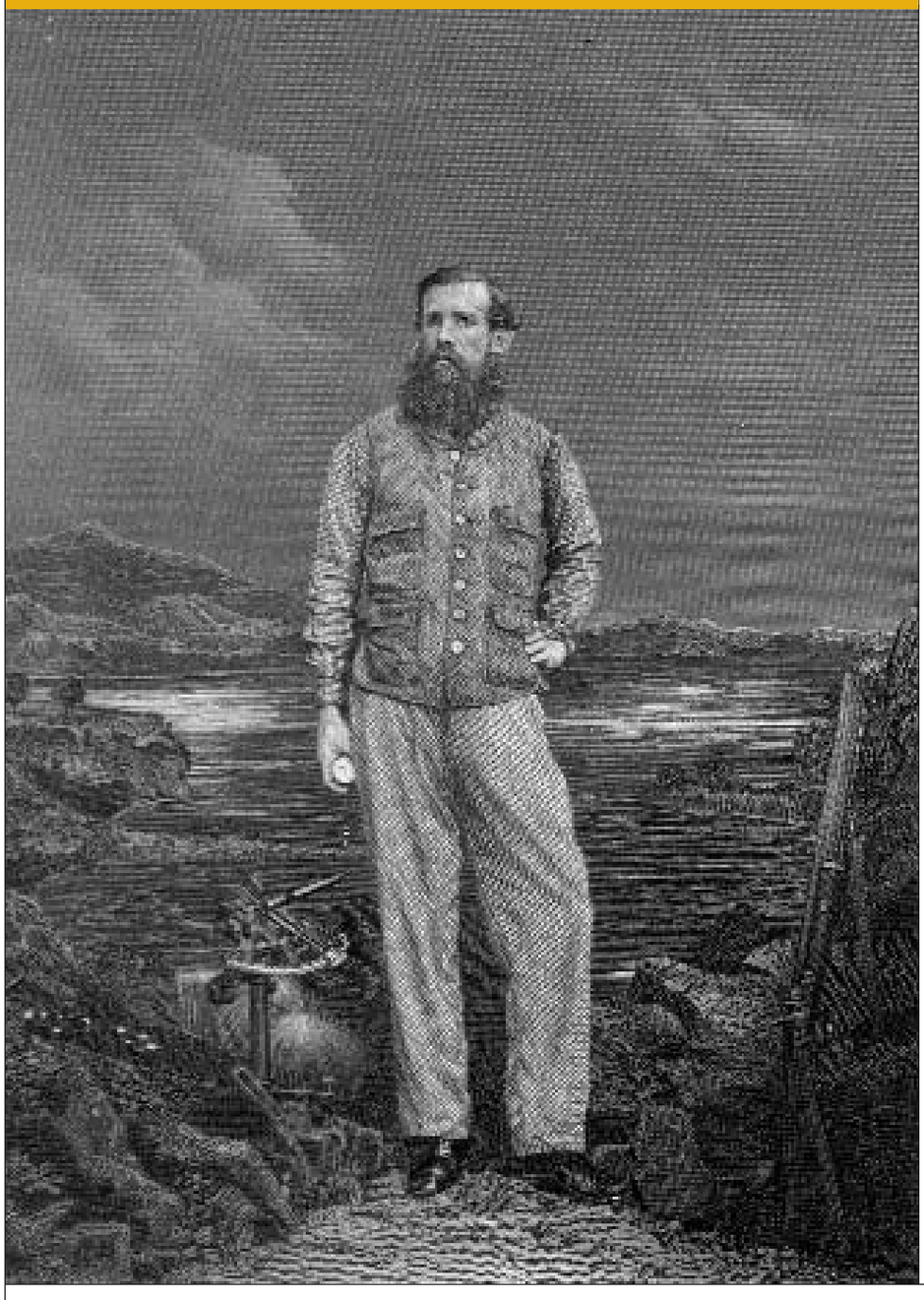
Unravelling Speke

The Unknown Revision of an African Exploration Classic

DAVID FINKELSTEIN

The fact that the National Library of Scotland has in its possession John Hanning Speke's original Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile *as well as the succession of proofs of the book makes it possible to analyse the editorial approach of its editor. Publishers John Blackwood commissioned John Hill Burton to edit Speke's* Journal. *David Finkelstein here analyses just how neutral this editing process was, and identifies ways in which the published* Journal *departs from Speke's apparent perspective.*



In late 1990 I found myself in the Manuscripts Division at the National Library of Scotland working on what was supposed to be a short-term project. The aim was to create a listing of uncatalogued archival material relating to the eminent Edinburgh publishers William Blackwood & Sons. Famous for publishing George Eliot, Joseph Conrad, John Buchan and Anthony Trollope, as well as for their monthly *Blackwood's Magazine*, the firm was a major presence in Edinburgh from 1805 to 1980. Over the years, most of their papers have accumulated in the Library, making the Blackwood Papers one of the most complete archives of publishing activity to be found anywhere in Britain.

I spent nine months trying to tackle this mountain of correspondence, financial records, ledgers and ephemera. Just a temporary job, I told myself, while I thought about how to get full-time employment in academia. But something odd happened. Instead of being just a short-term interest, the Blackwood Papers proved an overwhelming force in my life, steering and taking control of my career and research work. In the vaults of the National Library, I uncovered untold stories of publishing intrigue, battles over books and money, moments of largesse and generosity, incidents of political and social significance. Over a decade and several academic posts later, I am still in Edinburgh, and still uncovering unknown narratives of cultural and historical relevance.

One of the most intriguing of these untold tales is to be found scattered throughout the correspondence files of the firm and centres round three items innocuously labelled in the Library catalogue as 'MS.4872-4. John Hanning Speke. Manuscript and proofs of Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile.' Concealed behind this short entry is a tale of intrigue and revision concerning the British explorer John Hanning Speke's battle to trace the original source of the Nile, the resulting difficulties encountered by the Blackwood directors in turning an explorer into an author, and the previously unknown ghost-writer who made Speke's book a reality.

The first edition of *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, 1863 (R.125.c) contains this portrait frontispiece of John Hanning Speke.

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'My men killing a cow, with magician, dwarf and King Kamra's officers looking on': an illustration by Speke's travelling companion, Captain Grant: *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (R.125.c).

On 22 June 1863, John Hanning Speke stood in front of Royal Geographical Society members in London and declared, 'The Nile is settled'. He was referring, of course, to the mystery of the source of the Nile River, which had exercised explorers (and governments) for over 2,000 years. Herodotus had attempted (and failed) to ascend the length of the Nile in 460 BC, going only as far as the first cataract at Aswan in Egypt. The Emperor Nero sent two legions into the Sudan sometime after 54 BC who equally failed to find the source. Other expeditions in other centuries by other imperial powers all returned defeated. While China, North America, Australia and the lands and lakes of other continents were mapped over time, this particular geographical question remained unsolved through to the late-nineteenth century.

Speke's controversial journeys in search of the Nile source occurred at the start of a period of intensive activity in Africa. Between the 1850s and 1890s, European governments and institutions began to increase their involvement in 'the Dark Continent', leaving their political and physical imprints on the African interior. Missionaries and explorers such as Richard Burton, David Livingstone, Henry Baker, the Welsh-American Henry Stanley, and the Frenchman Paul du Chaillu, were the ones who filled in details of the African spaces that were subsequently divided up by colonial powers, Britain in particular. Their published accounts of exploration and discovery were extremely influential in shaping Victorian attitudes to Africa and its indigenous people, as well as in providing political rationales for colonial expansion into the African sub-continent. John Hanning Speke, born in 1827, was a British military officer who became fascinated with Africa while in his twenties. In 1854 he was invited to accompany the explorer and polymath Richard Burton in an expedition through what is now modern day Somalia. The two subsequently teamed up again between 1857 and 1859 to explore unknown territory in what is now Tanzania and Uganda. During this expedition, Speke struck out on his own and came upon Lake Victoria Nyanza. Based partly on instinct, and partly on his perception of its immensity, Speke concluded that it was the source of the Nile River. The claim was disputed by Burton, and on their return to Britain in 1859 Speke, who had arrived ahead of Burton, announced his discovery to the Royal Geographic Society and secured funds for a second expedition.

With a new travelling companion, James Augustus Grant, Speke set sail for Africa in late April 1860, with the hope of proving his theory about the lake and tracing its course down to Egypt. The expedition lasted three years, and its success led to a triumphant welcome in London and announcement to the Royal Geographical Society in June 1863. Doubts soon began to emerge about Speke's claim, however, as it seemed to contradict received geographical notions of African topography. The result was furious (and partisan) debate between those who supported Speke's claims and those, like Richard Burton, who discounted them.

The controversy and interest surrounding Speke's claims ensured a bestseller for whoever could strike an agreement to publish his work. Newspaper owners and publishers vied for the rights to his story. The *Illustrated London News* was the first off the mark, tracking down Speke and Grant to gain exclusive rights to produce a five-page, illustrated account of his revelations to the Royal Geographical Society. The London-based publisher John Murray, whose lists had featured important travel accounts by David Livingstone, Mungo Park, Charles Darwin and the Frenchman Paul du Chaillu, bid an extraordinary 2,000 guineas for Speke's journal account of his expedition. Speke chose instead to go with the Edinburgh-based publishers William Blackwood & Sons, who had supported him in the past and published his articles in their monthly *Blackwood's Magazine*.

However, when in 1863 the head of the firm, John Blackwood, scrutinised samples typeset from Speke's diary entries, he was appalled and shaken. Speke, the successful explorer, was a failure as a writer. 'He writes in such an abominable, childish, unintelligible way,' John Blackwood noted incredulously, 'that it is impossible to say what anybody could make of them, and yet he is full of matter & when he talks and explains all is right.' (22 July 1863, MS.4177, f.73.) Although Speke was eager and willing to do anything to get the job done, 'working away like a galley slave,' as Blackwood put it, he was incapable, it seemed, of producing the bestselling book everyone was hoping for.

The more Speke's jumbled notes were scrutinised, the clearer it became that something had to be done. Even the typesetters were becoming alarmed, as John's co-partner and nephew William Blackwood III noted in an effort to amuse, with copyboys falling over in fits of laughter at the slips in sentence construction, spelling mistakes, slack use of punctuation, and serious lapses in grammatical and syntactical coherence. Faced with a flawed text of this type, John and William Blackwood realised that in order to safeguard their

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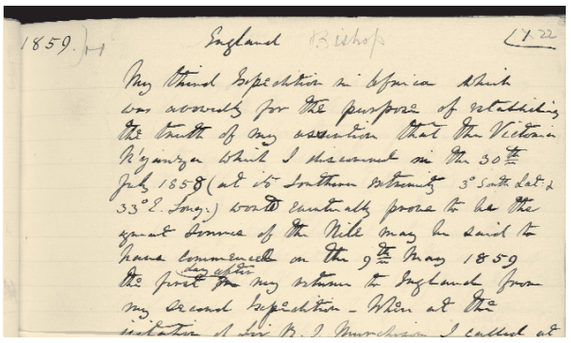
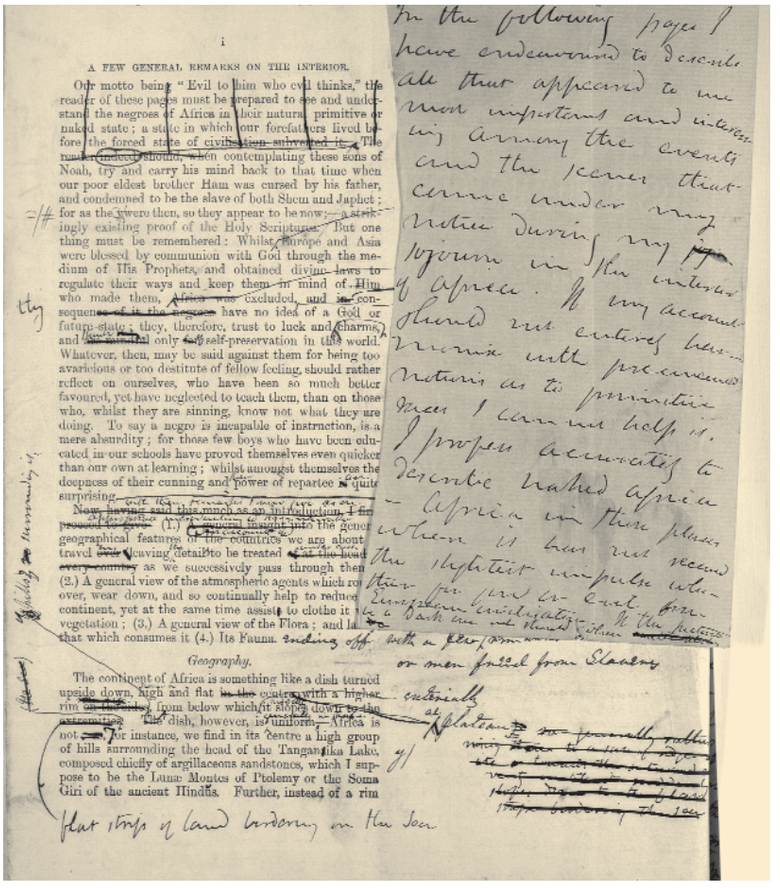


Speke describes the aim of his third expedition in Africa, avowedly for the purpose of establishing the true source of the Nile (MS.4872).



John Hill Burton made numerous changes to Speke's introduction to his *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, as these proofs show (MS.4873).

investment, and Speke's reputation, they needed to call in someone to 'edit' or construct the book, someone who could listen to Speke and fashion what he said, and what he had written, into a commercially viable narrative.

Several journalists and editors were considered for the job, but the person eventually chosen was John Hill Burton (1809–81), an Edinburgh lawyer, bibliophile and eminent historian, who in 1867 was appointed the Queen's Historiographer for Scotland. On 4 August 1863, Burton agreed to undertake the 'task of unravelling Speke'. He quickly set out his views regarding the correct approach to the book; what was wanted here was 'to make Speke articulate & not in any way adorn it.' (4 August 1863, MS.4178, f.146.) Speke, the inarticulate traveller, was likened by Burton to a small farmer in need of a good lawyer to sort out an argument, but who was unable to express his grievances properly. Only by endless questioning could all the information come out.

More significantly, the matter to Burton appeared 'like an endless thread and required no end of breaking.' Unravelling Speke was now a matter of breaking up the old narrative and constructing a new one, and within a week Burton had no doubts as to what he considered the end result would be: 'the most complete characteristic picture of savage life that ever was.' (13 August 1863, MS.4177, f.88.) This is the defining moment in the reconstruction of Speke, illustrating exactly when the ideological framework of the text began to be reshaped into a preconceived social model, the original 'scientific' purpose of the work, and the detailing of the evidence for Speke's claims regarding Lake Victoria, being submerged under a narrative portraying the triumph of Speke over nature and inferior races. Speke, and not the Nile River, was to be the hero and centre of this tale.

Speke was installed in Craighouse, Burton's home in the Morningside area of Edinburgh, and work was immediately begun on unravelling and remaking Speke's text. Burton's initial view of the central theme of Speke's book, the explicit portrayal of 'savage' life and the implicit triumph of Speke over it, began to dominate. By the beginning of October 1863, the textual and illustrative work had been completed.

The process of change from original manuscript to final product can be recovered due to the existence in the National Library of Scotland of the original manuscript and proofs covering all three stages of revision (the already mentioned MS.4872-4). The initial manuscript source contains sections from Speke's original African journal interspersed with manuscript written by him on his return to Britain, as well as material 'rewritten' by Burton. This material was subsequently typeset in its entirety, and the first proofs were extensively revised and written over by Burton, forming the basis for a second proof which underwent further corrections and deletions before the final printing.

Speke's original journal presented a journey frustrated not only by African cupidity and hostility to foreign intruders, but also by Speke's naïveté in dealing with Arab traders and African porters and villagers. It demonstrated his overwhelming ambition and drive to become the first white explorer to reach Lake Victoria at all costs, an ambition which precipitated the abandonment of the temporarily incapacitated Grant at crucial moments in his push forward. It also detailed quite frank discussions of sexual matters between Speke and his African hosts, and hinted at sexual liaisons with African women during his travels. Burton's additions to and revisions of the journal not only changed its spelling, punctuation and grammar, but also recast and suppressed passages potentially damaging to the image envisaged for Speke.

Speke was to be viewed as a standard-

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bearer for British values, the stern imperialist, paternal, patient yet firm in coping with adverse circumstances and unruly porters. The presentation of Africa and its people was accordingly manipulated to further highlight Speke's qualities and achievements. Thus Burton eliminated passages dealing with Speke's treatment of King Mutesa and his courtiers for venereal disease, as well as long discussions between Speke and members of Mutesa's royal family regarding pregnancy and sexual practices. More importantly, the ideological context of the work was changed and manipulated to suit the defined purpose of the work. Speke's original introduction began as follows:

Our motto being 'Evil to him who evil thinks,' the reader of these pages must be prepared to see and understand the negroes of Africa in their natural, primitive or naked state; a state in which our forefathers lived before the forced state of civilisation subvented it. (MS.4873, p.1)

What is notable regarding this introduction is the link it establishes between Africa and Europe. The link is inevitably one designed to illustrate the superiority of European civilisation, a civilisation which has 'progressed' beyond the 'primitive' state of African civilisation. Also implicit in this beginning, however, is an invitation to the reader to view the African people in light of an almost Rousseauian notion of the 'Noble Savage' existing in a state of nature once common to all mankind. This view of Africa and its peoples was rejected during the revision process. In the revised first proofs, the passage was struck out and substituted with the following statement in John Hill Burton's handwriting:

In the following pages I have endeavoured to describe all that appeared to me most important and interesting among the events and the scenes that came under my notice during my sojourn in the interior of Africa. If my account should not entirely harmonise with preconceived notions as to primitive races, I cannot help it. I profess accurately to describe naked Africa – Africa in those places where it has not received the slightest impulse, whether for good or for evil, from European civilisation. (MS.4873, p.1; also *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile,* xiii.)

As can be seen, the revision is more overtly hostile and categorical in its definition of Africa. The narration is more authoritarian: it is no longer the reader but Speke who is allowed to 'understand' Africa, presenting only what he thinks important about the sub-continent. Even more crucially, all links between Europe and Africa have been erased. This is a naked, dark Africa disconnected from and untouched by European impulses and civilisation. The end result was a depiction of an African society dominated by superstitious beliefs (encouraging polygamy and self-interest), its people of nomadic nature, lacking an effective government and a structured agricultural base, and gripped by inter-tribal rivalries exacerbated by the slave trade. The inevitable conclusion, the revised text unequivocally stated, was an African man who 'works his wife, sells his children, enslaves all he can lay hands upon, and, unless when fighting for the property of others, contents himself with drinking, singing, and dancing like a baboon, to drive dull care away.' (*Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, xxii.) Such rhetoric, as Christine Bolt has pointed out in Victorian Attitudes to Race, reflected the increasing and dominant use of religious and political generalisations to justify nineteenth-century colonial activity in Africa. 'Opening' Africa, to use a phrase often quoted in Speke's journal, was deemed necessary on the grounds that a continent without a proper religion and civilisation needed enlightening and rigorous management. Speke's triumph over the inhospitable 'Dark Continent' thus conformed to a British imperial view that success in Africa called for a type of 'muscular Christianity', coupled with a vigorous 'management' of the indigenous population.

Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* was published in December 1863 and immediately sold out. Debate over its geographical veracity rose sharply, while its hidden, reconstructed message calling for further exploration and development of Africa went unchallenged. The matter culminated in a planned debate between Speke and his sharpest critic Richard Burton, which was to be held in Bath on 16 September 1864. The meeting never took place, Speke having shot himself accidentally during a hunt that morning. The issues raised by Speke's claims regarding his discovery were not conclusively settled for another eleven years. In 1875 Henry Stanley successfully proved Lake Victoria's role as the source of the Nile during his circumnavigation of the lake. But for John Blackwood, the scientific and geographical questions and criticisms that had been raised by Speke's claims were merely side issues; what mattered most was that Speke had achieved what others had failed to do, to find the true source of the Nile. As we have seen, this had not been the sole motivation for the firm working so hard to reconstruct Speke. By emphasising Speke's unique role as a successful explorer and imperial adventurer, rather than as a scientist or geographer, Speke the inarticulate traveller was turned into an articulate, saleable commodity.

Speke was not the only African explorer to have his work rewritten to fit generalised British notions of Africa. There is evidence to suggest that works by David Livingstone, Henry Stanley and Paul du Chaillu were similarly revised during the same period. That such influential texts of African exploration were routinely reworked in such fashion tells us a great deal about Victorian manipulations of text and author to serve ideological and commercial purposes. Speke's story offers us a cautionary tale of authorial intention and textual veracity. The next time you read one of these nineteenth-century narratives, consider who might really be speaking to you from its pages.

Note on sources

Speke's manuscripts, revised proofs and publishers' correspondence regarding its revision are in the Blackwood Papers (MS.4872–4874, and among the series MS.4001–4940 and MS.30001–973). Inventories of the papers catalogued by 1968 are available in the Library as *Catalogue of Manuscripts acquired since 1925*: Volume 3, Blackwood Papers. More recent additions are available in a separate listing in the Library, and are also being made available upon completion of full cataloguing record online and via the Library website (http://www.nls.uk).

Readers interested in secondary sources on Nile exploration should consult *The White Nile* (Penguin Books, 1960) and *The Blue Nile* (Penguin Books, 1973) by Alan Moorehead; both are still the best general histories on the subject of Africa and Nile River exploration. *Speke and the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* by Alexander Maitland (Constable, 1971) is a comprehensive but inaccurate biography of Speke. *The House of Blackwood: Author–Publisher Relations in the Victorian Era* by David Finkelstein (Penn State Press, forthcoming in 2002) gives further details of Speke's revision by John Hill Burton and the Blackwood publishing firm.

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Lost and Found

The George Campbell Hay Archive Unfolds

MICHEL BYRNE

At first sight the George Campbell Hay Archive is a modest collection of papers, photographs and books. It includes a handful of unremarkable, scruffy notebooks. But unremarkable is the last thing they are. In these notebooks Hay jotted down ideas, first drafts, diary entries, and sometimes transcriptions of poems by friends. In June 2001 Michel Byrne was thrilled to be able to identify one of these as a poem hitherto lost from Sorley MacLean's brilliant Dàin do Eimhir love cycle.

'£3.00 auction buy reveals Gaelic treasure', announced the *Scotsman* on 14 March, 1985. 'The literary papers of one of the leading Gaelic poets of this century were sold at an Edinburgh auction recently for £3.00, the price of the old suitcase in which they were contained. The papers, which represent the life work of the poet George Campbell Hay, who died at his home in the city almost a year ago, could easily have been lost forever, if it was not for the presence of a local antiquarian bookseller, Mr Donald MacCormick, at the saleroom … Being a Gaelic speaker, Mr MacCormick was quick to appreciate what the suitcase contained as he outbid an elderly woman looking to pick up some cheap luggage.'

One elderly woman's loss was the nation's gain, as the collection of nineteen notebooks, plus loose typescripts, handscripts, photographs and printed books were sold on by MacCormick to the National Library of Scotland. Delight at the acquisition was mixed with astonishment in some quarters: back in March 1984, friends of Hay had urged his executors to search the flat in Maxwell Street carefully for just such items, but only four notebooks and some loose sheets had been found. These were deposited in the Library some months after the MacCormick acquisition. The Library also purchased further printed books owned by Hay and books and documents linked to his father John MacDougall Hay (the author of *Gillespie* (U.55.d)), and in 1985 and 1989 Angus Martin deposited materials relating to his books *The Ring-Net Fishermen* (NE.23.d.12) and *Kintyre: The Hidden Past* (HP2.85.255). These elements formed the core of the Hay Archive which I was fortunate enough to catalogue in 1989, having been offered the opportunity to prepare an annotated edition of Hay's work for a postgraduate thesis.



George Campbell Hay photographed by Gordon Wright.

Prior to undertaking this research, my knowledge of Hay's work was thin – I was acquainted with a handful of his Gaelic poems and the long war poem 'Mochtàr is Dùghall', but had no deep sense of his voice or his qualities, let alone of the breadth of his writing. My first step was to familiarise myself with Hay's three published collections *Wind On Loch Fyne* (1948) (T.32.b), *Fuaran Slèibh* (1948) (T.89.c) and *O Na Ceithir Àirdean* (1952) (NE.731.b.2), all long out of print. With only a handful of the poems dated, one might hazard that some of the English poems in *Wind On Loch Fyne* were the efforts of a novice, and some poems clearly dating from the war could be regarded as his best work, but there seemed little discernible trace of development in Hay's poetic practice and ability. Major themes emerged across four languages (Gaelic, Scots, English and some French): the Tarbert fishing community, Loch Fyne and the hills of Kintyre, the blasphemy of war, the predicament of Scotland and the call to heroism. There was clearly a love of tradition, and a dedication to an aesthetic of technical discipline, of highly elaborated craft. There was high seriousness and no irony, but literary wit and playfulness too. There was a perplexing (because so uncontemporary) absence of ego or of sexual love, but a passionate love of place. There was a bewildering multiplicity of voices, among them the propagandist bardic voice. Much of the 'poster poetry' of nationalism was eloquent and certainly none of it was out of place in the Gaelic tradition. Yet I found it impenetrable in its utter single-mindedness, its heroic disinterest in ambiguities, tensions and inner conflicts.

The richness of Hay's diction in Gaelic also posed a challenge, as I struggled through his denser poems. This poet was a highly alert linguist, who seemed to have at his disposal every word he had ever read or heard. (I was probably being too cerebral and

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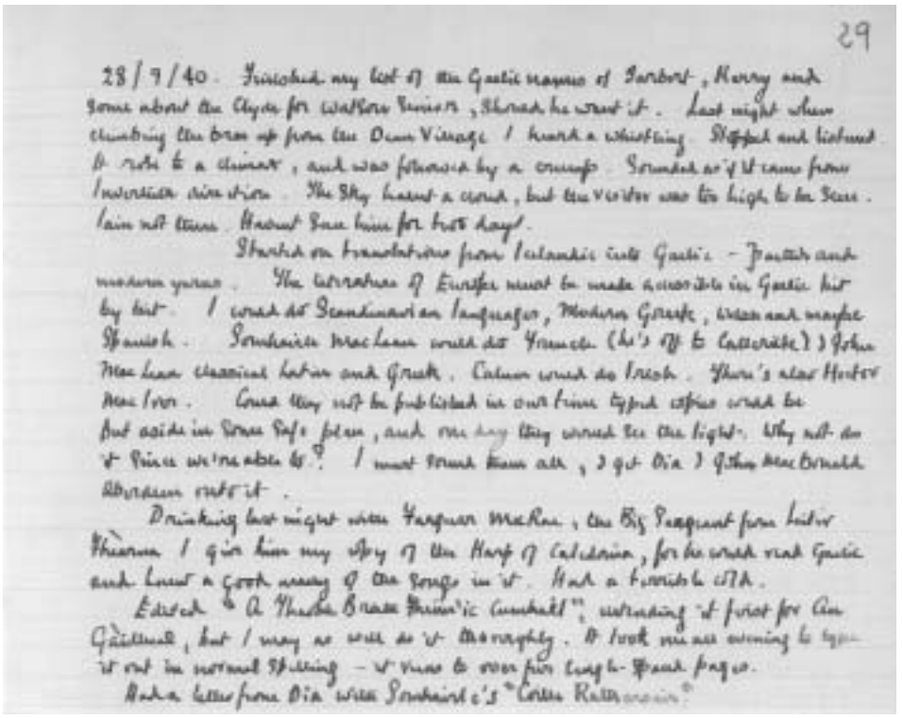

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28/9/40. Finished my list of the Gaelic names of Tarbert, Harry and some about the Clyde for Watson Burns, Shrank he went it. Last night when climbing the brae up from the Drill Village I heard a whistling. Stopped and listened. A rush & a dunner, and was followed by a cronch. Sounded as if it came from Inverlussa direction. The sky heard a cloud, but the visitor was too high to be seen. I am not sure. Heard some hiss for two days.

Started on translations from Icelandic into Gaelic – Poetic and modern verse. The literature of Europe must be made accessible in Gaelic bit by bit. I would do Scandinavian languages, Modern Greek, Welsh and maybe Spanish. Somhairle MacLean would do French (he's off to Castlebay) John MacLean classical Latin and Greek. Calum would do Irish. There's also Hector MacIver. Could they not be published in our own time, copies could be put in a safe place, and one day they would see the light. Why not do it since we're able to? I must speak them all, I get Dia I think MacDonald Aberdeen rate it.

Drinking last night with Farquar MacRae, the Big Sergeant from Islay Theatre. I give him my copy of the Harp of Caledonia, for he would read Gaelic and I hear a good many of the songs in it. Had a favourable idea.

Edited "A Theatre Breac Gaidhlig Cumhaidh", intending it first for An Gaidheal, but I may as well do it thoroughly. I took me all morning to type it out in normal spacing – it runs to over five single-sheet pages.

And a letter from Dia with Somhairle's "Cuillin Ridge"

In a diary entry for 28 September, 1940 (MS.26728), Hay writes of his dream to make the literature of Europe accessible in Gaelic: 'I would do Scandinavian languages, modern Greek, Welsh and maybe Spanish. Somhairle MacLean would do French … John MacLean classical Latin and Greek. Calum [MacLean] would do Irish. There's also Hector MacIver. Could they not be published in our own time … copies could be put in a safe place, and one day they would see the light. Why not do it since we're able to?'

should have allowed the aural sensuousness of the language, viva voce, to work its spell.) The musicality of so many of the texts was curious and enticing, as was the mystery of his adventurism across linguistic boundaries – Gaelic titles given to Scots poems and parallel poems in Gaelic and English, such as 'Tlachd is Misneach' / 'Pleasure and Courage', which gave nothing away about their genesis. (Were these pairs twins delivered together, or was one an older sibling – and if so, which?)

For all that biographical matter is tangential, and may even be inimical, to the appreciation of a text's possibilities, the human personality behind the poetry was a constant fascination through my years of research. The varying personae of Hay's poetry and its extroversion gave a definite impression of courage, of thorough commitment, of concern for humanity, of deep sensibility to the natural world. But who was the man behind the plethora of voices, this chameleon poet working on the cusp of traditions, languages and cultures?

Angus Martin's *Kintyre: The Hidden Past* had provided warm human insights: into the role played by his great-aunts and by skipper Calum Johnson in the early years, into Hay's identification with Tarbert, even into his disturbing episode of psychosis during the Greek Civil War. But the older Hay was reticent, and a mystery even to his friends. It was his own correspondence in earlier years, as preserved in three National Library of Scotland archives, which really brought him alive. First and foremost, Douglas Young's voluminous collection (Acc.6419), which includes around ninety letters from Hay mainly from 1939 to 1946 (Box 38a, with further poetry typescripts in Box 101), and helps place Hay firmly in the orbit of MacDiarmid's Renaissance – Young provided the link with both Grieve and Sorley MacLean. Hay's close relationship with 'Dia' ('God', as Young was known to his friends!) came as no great surprise, both having been contemporaries at Oxford. However, it was a revelation to discover that Hay had initiated a brief but warm friendship with the Reverend Kenneth MacLeod: this most unlikely of alliances, between the doyen of Gaelic Twilightists and the young firebrand, was recorded in nineteen extant letters by Hay (mostly of 1938–39), preserved in the MacLeod Collection (Acc.9927, Box 6). Thirdly, thirty-nine letters from Hay were deposited by the late Robert Rankin after the poet's death (Acc.10105), dating from as early as 1934, when the two Fettesian schoolboys had taken their individual paths to Cambridge and Oxford.

These collections allowed floods of sunlight into both the poet and his poetry. The personality which emerges is an engaging one: intelligent and erudite but not at all solemn; earnest, warm and generally cheerful, politically both incisive and naïve. There are moments of youthful fanaticism, brief glimpses of depression (particularly after his capitulation to the British authorities), and an enduring obsession with the threatened survival of Scotland for which the evangelical urgency of his political verse seems an appropriate and natural expression. There are comments on Scottish and British politics and history, on European literatures, reflections on his own and other writers' work, variant versions of poems, even moments of inspiration caught on the page, such as the drafting of the wonderful Scots winter lyric 'Fuar Fuar' in the margins of a letter to Young.

Hay's letters of the late 1930s are best read with an eye to the diary entries from November 1938 to May 1941 preserved in one of the MacCormick notebooks (MS.26728). These combine brief pointers to his literary activity (including visits to composer F.G. Scott) with accounts of his political activities (e.g. with Wendy Wood and with the newly formed Young Scottish Nationalists) and reflections on the worsening war situation. The diary illuminates his increasingly isolated stance on conscription, and provides an interesting journal for the study of nationalist activism of that period. The story of his arrest and trial in 1941, though cut short, is told with a good deal of panache and a raconteur's flair.

Remarking on Hay's rapid acquisition of languages and extraordinary powers of memory, Ronnie Black remarked in a recent review that 'it's easy to see how images multiplied frighteningly inside his head', and this is exactly the impression one gets from George's collection of notebooks; his wartime notebooks in particular are a great melting-pot of things heard and things read, in varying admixtures of Arabic, French, Italian, Gaelic and English. In 1968 Hay had deposited two small wartime notebooks in the Library (MSS.14967 and 14968), containing typed versions of all poems composed in his years abroad till his return to Tarbert in 1946 (and including most of 'Mochtàr is Dùghall', his magnum opus undiscovered till the 1980s). But it is the more rough-and-ready wartime notebooks found by MacCormick (MSS.26729–31) which best illustrate the ferment in his mind from 1944 to 1946, the wildly eclectic reading and assimilating of Arabic,

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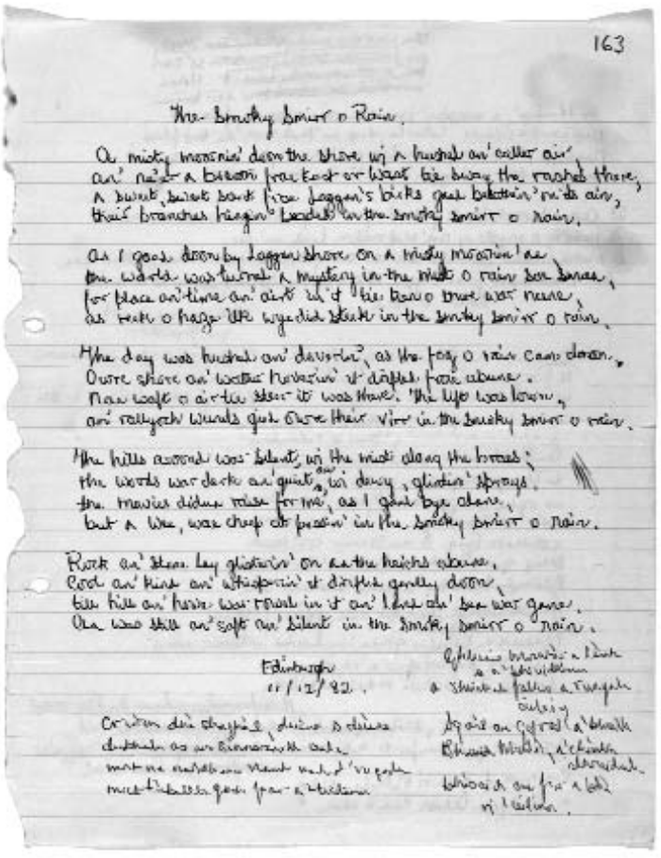
The first draft of 'Na Baidealan' ('The Battlements') (MS.26723, 80v).



1983 revisions to 'The Smoky Smirr o Rain' and 'Mochtàr is Dùghall' (MS.26744, 163v).

Italian, French and Croatian (via Italian) literature. In these notebooks you will find initial sketches for his portrait of wartime disintegration 'Esta Selva Selvaggia' (an English poem), recreations of Petrarch and Cecco Angiolieri, of French Resistance songs and Croatian poetry, examples of the floral *stornello* rhymes which inspired 'Flooer o the Gean', Tunisian riddles and aphorisms (some of which were embedded in 'Mochtàr is Dùghall', others translated and published in O Na Ceithir Àirdean), and a variety of other inspirational sparks for 'Mokhtar' (e.g. an Arabic keen and a medieval Italian call to repentance).

Of the growth of Hay's arguably greatest single poem 'Bisearta', there are only the smallest hints (beyond a slightly amended final draft): quotes from the fifteenth-century Italian hymn on which Hay based his swaying metre and one sole long line ('Chunnaic mi 'n dreòs san oidhche air fàire ag crathadh a sgiathan s a' ruagadh nan rionnag làimh ris' – 'I saw the blaze in the night on the horizon beating its wings and scattering the stars around it'). The genesis and germination of that wonderful poem must remain a mystery.

There were moments of revelation, however, in the earlier notebooks: it was pleasure indeed to trace the development of the superb lyric 'Na Baidealan' ('The Battlements'), from a first draft (in notebook MS.26723) to a four-verse version (sent to Kenneth MacLeod) later distilled to the three verses published in *Fuaran Slèibh*. Equally exciting was the discovery of a musical nexus of drafts for 'Siubhal a' *Choire*' ('The Voyaging of the *Corrie*', Hay's most triumphant sea-lyric) and indeed of several musical notation notebooks filled with airs and song-settings both traditional and original (MSS.26741–43). Here was another dimension to Hay's eclecticism, already so evident linguistically and stylistically: in a modern development of a longstanding Gaelic tradition, many of his lyrics existed in the overlapping dimensions of artsong, folksong and poetry.

The manuscript collection (including printed books with marginalia) brought to light over a hundred unpublished poems, a third of these from the late 1930s, and the remaining two-thirds from the 1960s on, particularly the 1980s. None of these could be ranked beside the work of the 1940s, but there are interesting items nonetheless, from the scabrous satirical sequence 'The Scottish Scene', to a children's story and song broadcast on BBC ('The Crew of the *Shelister*'), a recreation of adolescent expeditions with the Tarbet fishermen ('An Druim-àrcan 's an t-Ìochdar', scribbled in book margins), or a response to the Thatcher victory and the Referendum debacle ('The Twa Capitals') – not to mention small pithy quatrains damning Secretary of State Willie Ross or the proposed Scottish Assembly.

The notebooks suggest spates of rapid composition, but also bear witness to Hay's tendency in later years to revisit published material, emending and expanding – and creating headaches for the critical editor! Problems of textual primacy needed addressing at every turn. Hay's own copy of *Wind On Loch Fyne* (MS.26778), for example, carried two sets of emendations, but in addition some of the poems were expanded, 'The Smoky Smirr o Rain' being given an additional three, four or five verses in various drafts thirty-five years after composition. Editorial decisions on Gaelic poems were further complicated by the existence of a finalised typescript from the 1970s (MS.26745) collecting all Hay's published Gaelic poems, with its own set of revisions. I was fortunate indeed in having the luxury of two editions (thesis, then book) on which to exercise variant editorial stances.

The discovery of unpublished poems

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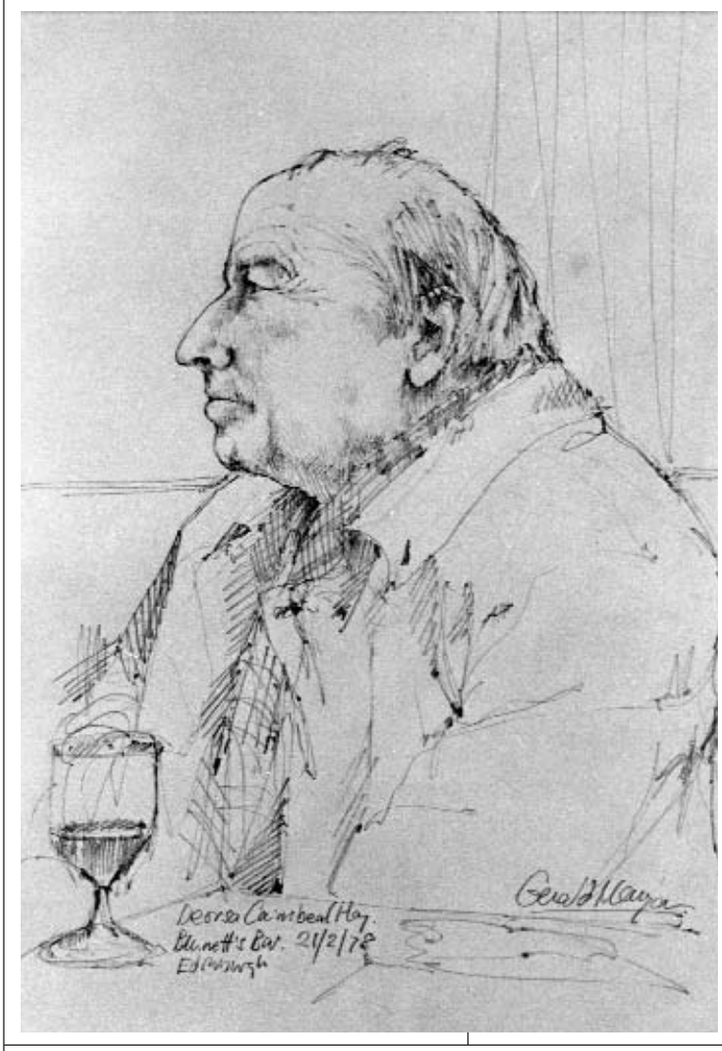
was satisfying, as was the untangling of the linguistic threads of Hay's creative processes – the confirmation, for example, that most of Hay's 'paired' poems had originated in Gaelic, or that the poem 'The Fences' (published in *Chapman*) was in fact a direct translation of a Gaelic poem now surviving only in unfinished draft form. Such satisfactions were offset by the frustration of uncovering titles of poems now lost. Scurrilousness (the staple of traditional Gaelic satire) is not a tone one readily associates with Hay, nor is anti-clericalism, and it is a pity to have no trace left of efforts such as 'Marbhaisg air na h-Eaglaisean' ('A Curse on the Churches') and 'Na Griogalaich' (a long poem on the MacGregors in Hell, which ruffled the sensibilities of Kenneth MacLeod), or of a certain 'Pomp and Circumstance' removed from *Wind On Loch Fyne* as 'it might give offence unnecessarily'. Hay's shifting of registers in Scots could be traced too, through Douglas Young's copies: from the Tarbert dialect of an early version of 'The Destruction of the Land' to the Lallans of the published version ('bloodrudd light' to 'bluidreid licht', for example), and a similar transposition effected on the unpublished 'Spring Here Northaway' some thirty years after composition. Further material for the linguist is to be found in notebooks MSS.26722, 26736, 26737, and in file MS.26747: Gaelic and Scots words and expressions heard in Tarbert speech, extracts from Hay's projected dictionary of Gaelic usage, Kintyre place-names.

The notebooks facilitated the tracing of scattered periodical appearances and, above all, established a definitive chronology of composition for most of Hay's work. Thus major poems published in the 1970s such as 'Walls of Balclutha' (in *Chapman* 21) or 'Solan' (*Akros* 11/32) were shown to date in fact from the particularly creative period in late 1947 which had produced 'Seeker, Reaper' (shortly before Hay's definitive hospitalisation). There was also the surprise of discovering that highly embellished lyrics like 'Siubhal a' *Choire*' and 'An Gleannan' were the work of a twenty-one-year-old.

The collection also gathers many of Hay's prose writings (in MS.26746), including short stories on the Tarbert fishing published in the *Scots Magazine*; the poetic manifesto published in Hugh MacDiarmid's *Voice of Scotland*; a long feature on Gaelic poetry serialised in *New Alliance*; the treatise on poetry and society ('Poetry In the World or Out of It?') serialised in *Scottish Art and Letters*; the wonderful wartime accounts 'The Dancers at Ras el-Hamra' and 'Men on Gamila' (the latter published in *Lallans* thirty years later); a thirty-four-page study of Gaelic song as a source of Scottish history; and a variety of pedagogical/propagandist pieces in Gaelic and English. An interesting addition has been the seventy-five-page typescript (Acc.10651), 'Scotland, an Anthology', a socio-historical collection in prose and poetry (Gaelic, Scots, Latin and English) drawn from an astonishing array of sources.

The richness of the Hay Archive is still unfolding. As recently as July 2001, while looking through poems by Sorley MacLean transcribed by Hay around 1939 in a notebook (MS.26722, 58v, 59r) I realised that one of the poems, 'Dàin do Eimhir XVI', had never been published. This was a most exciting discovery. I contacted Christopher Whyte, presently working on a definitive edition of MacLean's classic love cycle *Dàin do Eimhir* and he confirmed that this was one of the 'lost' poems of the sequence. Hay's original poems have now been collected, but it will be a while yet before we get the true measure of the writer and a full picture of his contribution. The archives of the National Library of Scotland await further gleaning.



A photograph of a drawing of George Campbell Hay by poet and artist Gerald Mangan, who sent Hay this image of his portrait, the original having been sold in London (MS.26750).

Note on sources

Among the items in the George Campbell Hay Archive, Acc.6419, Box 38a contains a letter of 23/4/1940 which has the Scots poem 'Fuar Fuar' written in the margins; notebook MS.26728, 31r gives a lively diary account of Hay's arrest near Arrochar in May 1941; notebook MS.26729, 15r has notes in French, English, Gaelic and transcriptions of Arabic riddles, which include two items used in Mochtàr is Dùghall; and notebook MS.26731, 4r contains outlines for Hay's war poem 'Esta Selva Selvaggia' – the poem itself is in English. Photographs (MS.26750) show Hay and friends on fishing boats on the coast near Kintyre. *The Collected Poems and Songs of George Campbell Hay* edited by Michel Byrne is published by Edinburgh University Press in association with the Lorimer Trust, 2000 (HP3.200.1168).

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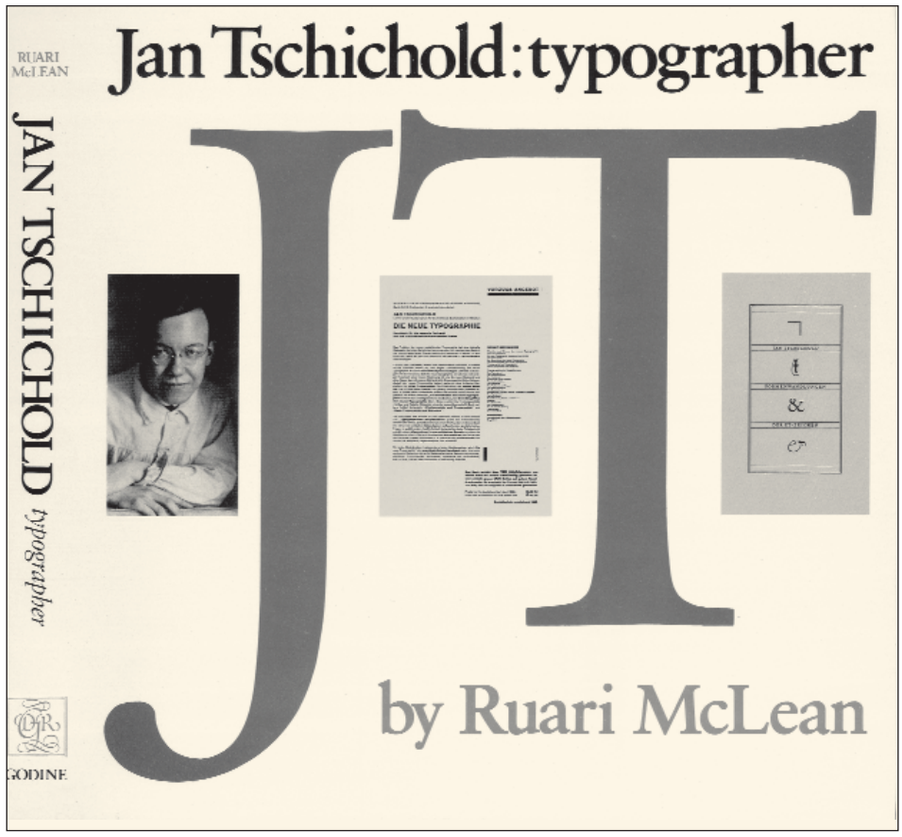
'Bits and Pieces'

A Typographer at work and Play

Ruari McLean is one of the great typographers of the twentieth century. He has written or compiled over thirty books on typography and book design, and his Manual of Typography *is a classic. However, his archive at the National Library of Scotland reveals the immense diversity of work he undertook during a long career. Here he reflects on the difficulty of deciding what material is suitable for inclusion.*



The National Library of Scotland has a 'Ruari McLean Archive', which sounds rather grand. Over the years, I have passed on papers and books, bits and pieces that I no longer needed or had room for. For instance, during my time as a Trustee of the Library I found it held very few books illustrated by Albert Dubout, a French illustrator I had been collecting for years. I therefore handed over my set of Molière's *Works* – a limited edition in four volumes, illustrated with superb colour plates by Dubout: they took up too much of my limited space, and I am not particularly fond of Molière. I was also happy to pass on to the Library examples of books which I had personally designed. But there are certain books I'm not ready to part with yet – for instance, a small collection of books bought for their titles, such as *Junior Fun in Bed*, *You Can Make a Stradivarius Violin* and *The Women in Gandhi's Life*. (Incidentally, the Gandhi book turned out to be serious and moving).

As a typographer and book designer myself, I value highly the work of distinguished book designers such as Dwiggins, Updike, Ehmcke and Behrens. I believe that libraries should ensure that their catalogues can be searched under the names of important book designers. Boston Public Library provides an example of this approach, and they also keep their Dwiggins collection on open shelves, so that students can appreciate it as a body of work.

In choosing what should go to the National Library of Scotland in the future, I face certain dilemmas. For instance, letters present a problem – here, I refer to my collection of three-dimensional letters of the alphabet, cast in china or bronze, or cut in wood or other material. Should the Library collect those?

More important, of course, are 'epistles'. Some, written by important people, are of obvious interest. But what about the many letters to me from my parents? And what about the letters from an old school friend who has sent me about thirty a year, since 1945. (When we met in Cairo in 1942, he was in RAF 'erk's' uniform and I was in naval officer's uniform; we therefore had great difficulty in finding any restaurant where we could go and eat together.) His letters are legible, because typewritten, and always amusing: I am convinced that he could have become a great writer but, sadly, he never did.

I also have some letters from Joyce Cary, whose writing was almost illegible; they will infuriate any librarian who takes charge of them. His wife transcribed his novels, all handwritten, for publication, but she could not write legibly either, which caused many misprints in his books. (My wife happened to be her niece, and could not write legibly either, which was why I could not employ her as my secretary, which she regretted.)

I have passed on to the Library a letter from John Betjeman. Before the Second World War, he worked in the layout department of a famous London advertising agency. I went to ask for a job. He was kind, talked to me and though no job resulted he sent me a hilarious handwritten letter. Perhaps it, too, will end up in the National Library of Scotland. I have a small collection of handwritten letters kept primarily for their calligraphy, from Alfred Fairbank, Stanley Morison, Jan Tschichold, and others.

I cannot throw away any picture postcard I think is beautiful and I have drawers full of them. I don't have any signed by Picasso, but I do have one signed by Augustus John. How will the Library file that, I wonder?

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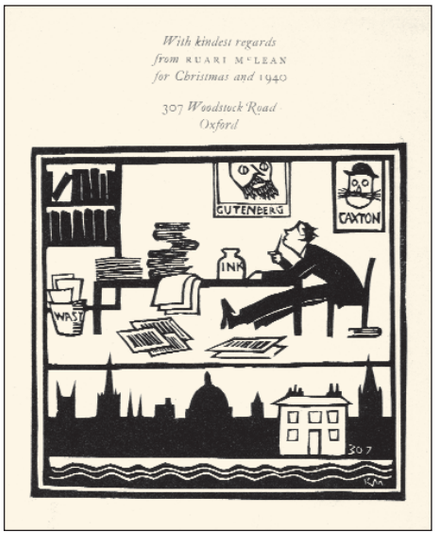
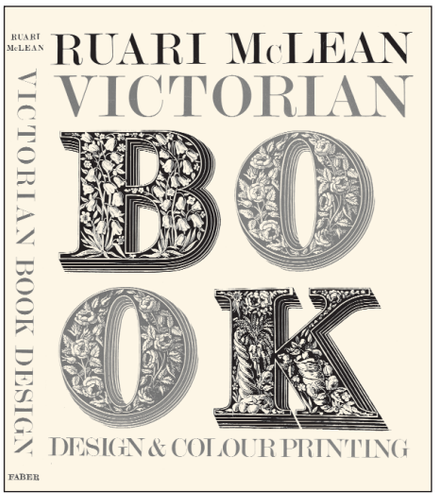




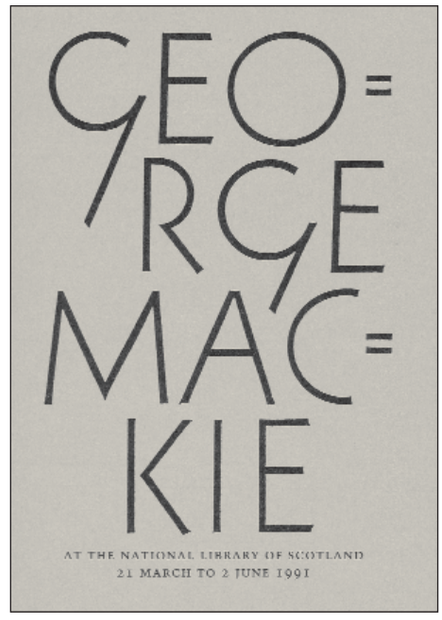
Opposite: *Jan Tschichold: typographer* (x.211.b), London, 1975.

Left: Ruari McLean's humorous drawings were often incorporated into his own greetings cards, such as this example.



Above: The office at Broomrigg on the island of Mull often contained ducks, goslings, a hen, a cat and a dog.

Left: *Victorian Book Design & Colour Printing*, London, 1963 (SU.37), one of Ruari McLean's many works on the book arts.



Above: From the Ruari McLean Archive. The announcement of an exhibition at the National Library of Scotland about designer George Mackie, who set his elegant stamp on many of the books published by Edinburgh University Press during the editorship of Archie Turnbull.



The first issue of the classic boys' comic *Eagle* appeared on Friday 14 April, 1950, priced 3d. At Ruari McLean's suggestion the heading was drawn by Berthold Wolpe. As typographical adviser to the *Eagle*, Ruari McLean's responsibilities included laying out the text, marking it for the type setter and designing the titles for the graphic strips and stories.

Note on sources

The papers and books donated by Ruari McLean to the National Library of Scotland illuminate the development of one of the most eminent typographers of the twentieth century. The archive includes notebooks kept over many years in which are to be found brief, telling, critiques of the design of hundreds of books. Cuttings from magazines and newspapers about typography and book design, as well as having an intrinsic interest, show what caught Ruari McLean's eye. The archive contains a considerable number of book jackets and publications designed by him; proofs and sketches for layouts often bear, in note form, professional interchanges between the designer and the publishers he worked for. Additionally, there are many charming examples of Ruari McLean's humorous drawings of domestic life. The Library also has copies of books written by him, including his autobiography, *True to Type* (2000) and his war memoirs, *Half Seas Under* (2001). Cataloguing of the Ruari McLean Archive is presently underway.

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Notes on contributors

MICHEL BYRNE is a Lecturer in Scottish Gaelic in the Department of Celtic at the University of Glasgow. He is editor of *The Collected Poems and Songs of George Campbell Hay* (Edinburgh University Press and the Lorimer Memorial Trust, 2000; a paperback edition is planned for 2002).

DAVID FINKELSTEIN is Head of the Media and Communication Department at Queen Margaret University College. A specialist in Victorian print culture and book history, he is author of *An Index to Blackwood's Magazine, 1901–1980* (Scolar Press, 1995) and *The House of Blackwood: Author-Publisher Relations in the Victorian Era* (Penn State Press, forthcoming 2002).

RUARI MCLEAN is a distinguished typographer who has written a number of important books about the book arts, including his authoritative *Manual of Typography* (Thames and Hudson, 1980). His autobiographical writings are *True to Type* (Werner Shaw and Oak Knoll Press, 2000) and *Half Seas Under* (Thomas Reed Publications, 2001).

IAN RANKIN is a leading writer of detective fiction. His award-winning novels featuring DI John Rebus are set in Edinburgh. The latest book in the series, *The Falls* (Orion, 2001), appears in paperback in November this year, while the next Rebus mystery, *Resurrection Men*, is set to appear in January 2002.

LOUISE YEOMAN is curator of early modern manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland. She co-directs the Survey of Scottish Witchcraft 1563–1736. In *Reportage Scotland* (Luath Press in association with the National Library of Scotland, 2000), she assembled a collage of Scottish history based on documents and books held at the Library.

NLS diary dates

October 2001
The Library's popular exhibition *The Write Stuff*, featuring photographs of leading Scottish writers by Gordon Wright, ends on 31 October. Those who missed it have another chance to see it when it tours to various venues around Scotland next year.

From Acheson to Paolozzi (book launch)
Duncan Macmillan talks about writing on Scottish art at the launch of the paperback edition of his book *Scottish Art in the 20th Century*. This event is free but ticketed.
31 October at 7pm

November 2001
The National Library of Scotland Elizabeth Soutar Bookbinding Award 2001 is announced. All the entries to the competition are on display at the Library during November.

Writing about Spark – problems and jokes
Aileen Christianson talks about the work of Muriel Spark. This event is free but ticketed.
7 November at 7pm

The Library launches *Experiences of War*, a new website aimed at schools, on 9 November. Looking at the wartime experiences of three individuals using letters, diaries and photographs, the website features a programme of educational activities linked to the Scottish curriculum. See it at www.nls.uk/experiencesofwar.

The National Library of Scotland/Saltire Society Scottish Research Book of the Year is announced as part of the Saltire Society Literary Awards.

January 2002
The winner of the Robert Louis Stevenson Award is announced. The Award is jointly funded and administered by the Library and the Scottish Arts Council. The prize is a two-month visit to the Hotel Chevillon International Arts Centre in Grez-sur-Loing near Fontainebleau, France.

A selection of material from the Donald Dewar Collection donated to the Scottish Parliament goes on display at the Library from 14 January to the end of February. The collection, which includes books, photographs and many other items of personal and political memorabilia, will eventually be housed in the Donald Dewar Reading Room at Holyrood. Scholars and members of the public will then be able to access the collection by arrangement with the Library.

A winter series of writers' events is also planned. For further details of this series, and for more information on any of the events mentioned in the Diary, please contact Jackie Cromarty (details below).

In the next *Folio (Spring 2002)*

ALISON LINDSAY, Publications Officer at the National Archives of Scotland, writes about Jane Shaw (1910–2000), a Scottish writer whose surviving papers are soon to be deposited in the National Library of Scotland, where they will constitute a fresh resource for those interested in popular children's fiction. Jane Shaw's books were mainly published under the Collins' Children's Press imprint and by Thomas Nelson. Alison Lindsay considers the light Jane Shaw's papers throw on the author and on the children's publishing field in her day.

ALAN RIACH, general editor of the sixteen-volume *Collected Works of Hugh MacDiarmid*, describes how discoveries in the National Library of Scotland reveal a haunted, pain-filled man, as evidenced in MacDiarmid's *New Selected Letters*. 'A library at night is a sleeping monster', as Philip Larkin said; 'it guards many treasures but it threatens violence too'. Alan Riach's most recent book of poems is *Clearances*; he is Head of the Department of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow.

MURRAY SIMPSON, Director of Special Collections at the National Library of Scotland, reflects on the story behind the Hugh Sharp Collection. Hugh Sharp accumulated about 1500 volumes before his tragically untimely death in 1937, at the age of forty. Using highly fastidious criteria, he confined himself to first issues in pristine condition. His collection consists mainly of British and American imprints, in the fields of literature, history and sport. What does the Hugh Sharp Collection tell us of its originator's collecting principles and vision?

CHRIS TAYLOR offers an overview of the extensive Italian collections at the National Library of Scotland, giving a concise account of the range of material both in the Italian printed books and manuscripts collections. He considers what the Italian collections reveal of the relationship – cultural, artistic, commercial and domestic – between Scotland and Italy, and discovers an ongoing and fruitful interchange at all sorts of levels. Chris Taylor is Curator of the French and Italian Collections in the Collection Development Division of the National Library of Scotland.

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Folio is edited by Jennie Renton