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BOSWELL'S ACCOUNT OF CORSICA 1768

An Edinburgh cancel in a Glasgow book

The first edition of Boswell's *Account of Corsica* is not an extremely rare book. Copies are to be found in many major libraries on both sides of the Atlantic, and some of these libraries, notably Yale, Princeton, St Andrews University, and the National Library of Scotland have multiple copies which assist bibliographical examination. Despite these facts, and despite the expert attention of such distinguished bibliographers as F. A. Pottle,¹ R. Metzdorf² and P. Gaskell,³ no bibliographical account of the first edition of the *Account of Corsica* has yet been published which satisfactorily explains all its variants, particularly those relating to leaf D2 (pp. 51-2). It has been assumed in all descriptions of the book to date, and I would have shared this assumption in the absence of documentation to the contrary, that all variants in extant copies would have their origin in the printing house of Robert and Andrew Foulis, who printed the book at Glasgow for Boswell and his London publishers, Edward and Charles Dilly.

The recent loan to the National Library of Scotland⁴ of 18th-century printing ledgers belonging to the Edinburgh firm of Neill & Co. has shed new light on the printing and publishing history of the *Account of Corsica*. If the following analysis is correct, a cancel for leaf D2 of the book was printed by Neill in Edinburgh, on Dilly's or Boswell's instructions, after some of the stock of printed sheets had been distributed from Glasgow to Edinburgh and London, and this cancel was inserted only in that part of the total stock which was stored in and distributed

1 F. A. Pottle, *The Literary Career of James Boswell, Esq.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1929), pp. 50-4, no. 24.

2 R. F. Metzdorf, *The Tinker Library* (New Haven: Yale University Library 1959), pp. 64-5, nos 318-21.

3 P. Gaskell, *A Bibliography of the Foulis Press* (London: Hart-Davis 1964), pp. 278-9, 396-400.

4 National Library of Scotland MSS Dep. 196. Printing-house ledgers, 1764-73. I am grateful to Mr Warren MacDougall, Edinburgh, and to Mr Alan Bell of the National Library for bringing the ledgers to my attention; and to Mr Patrick Neill Fraser for permission to quote from them.

from Neill's warehouse in the Old Fishmarket Close, Edinburgh.

The article attempts, therefore, not only to add a relatively minor correction to the standard descriptions of a well-known 18th-century book, but also to suggest once more the importance of printing-house records as an aid to bibliographical analysis. Leaf D2 of the *Account of Corsica* (see Plates i and ii) is unlikely to be the only surviving example of a cancel printed *after* sheets had been distributed to various centres for sale. It may also suggest that the number of copies of an 18th-century book, which should be examined in an effort to identify all extant variants, should be revised upwards.

Patrick Neill, printer in Edinburgh, signed a deed of co-partnership with two prominent Edinburgh booksellers, Gavin Hamilton and John Balfour, on 7 December 1749. The firm became printers to the University of Edinburgh in 1754. On the retirement of the older partners, the business was conducted by Patrick Neill and his brother Adam Neill from 1766 onwards. Adam Neill was joined in business by Robert Fleming in 1767.⁵ On the evidence of the ledgers the business was a successful one. A good deal of time was taken up by the printing of the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, but a fair amount of book printing and job printing was also done. The firm also did some 'session' printing, i.e., the printing of legal papers relating to business in the Court of Session of Scotland. It was probably this side of the business which had brought lawyer Boswell and printer Neill together. Boswell knew Adam Neill well. He was later to use him as printer and as an agent in disguising the authorship of *A Letter to Robert Macqueen, Lord Braxfield* (1780) and consulted him in 1776 about the profits arising from newspaper and almanac publication.⁶ The firm of Neill had a long and honourable place in Edinburgh printing, continuing in business until 1973.⁷

According to the Neill ledgers, an account was rendered to Mr Edward Dilly of London in 1771 covering a number of miscellaneous printing jobs done on his behalf from 15 September 1767 to 22 May 1771. As can be seen from the transcript below, Neill printed on behalf of his London customer items as diverse as 'proposals' for books about to be published, and texts of educational and religious works. The

⁵ The fullest account in print of the House of Neill is Moray McLaren's *The House of Neill, 1749-1949* (Edinburgh: Neill 1949). Also useful is the earlier *History of the Firm of Neill & Co., Ltd.* (Edinburgh: Neill, n.d.) Both need to be revised in the light of N.L.S. MSS Dep. 196.

⁶ G. Scott and F. A. Pottle, *The Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle* (New York: Rudge 1928-34), 18 vols. Vol. XI, 60-6; Vol. XIV, 73-4.

⁷ It was probably the oldest surviving printing house in Edinburgh.

extent of the use by London publishers of economically priced Scottish printing in this period is yet to be fully established, but it is clear that Warden, Alexander and Jean Stewart's *Meditations* would all have a Scottish market.⁸ One can see, for example, on the basis of the handbills produced for the purpose that it was hoped to sell some copies of Mrs Stewart's *Meditations* during the meeting of the Church of Scotland in 1771.⁹ Two examples of Neill printing cancel leaves for books published by Dilly are also included. The complete account reads:

1767	Mr. Edward Dilly London	Dr-
Sept. 15	To 1 sheet proposals for printing Mr. Warden's System of Revealed Religion large 4to Long Primer and Pica Types w ^t alterations, 2000 cop...	1 6 -
1768		
February 19	To 1 cancelled Leaf of Mr. Boswell's history of Corsica, 1500 copies 7 Qr fine demy included	13 -
April 30	To 1 cancelled Leaf of Mr. Alexander's ¹⁰ Essays, 500 Copies, Paper included...	7 6
Oct. 27	To Mr. Warden's System of Revealed Religion, ¹¹ 96 1/4 Sheets largest 4to, with a number of Foot Notes, 1000 fine Demy @ £1. 1. per Sheet.	101 1 3
	To 50 Copies of Do on Royal paper, the forms being enlarged, charged at £0. 1. 6 per Sheet only	7 4 -
1769		
July 14	To Entick's English Dictionary ¹² 15 1/2 Sheets 6 pages Crown 12mo Brevier Type 8000 Copies at 5 per Sheet, with extra charges for names of places annexed...	80 - -

8 All three authors had Edinburgh connections. Warden was Minister of the Gospel, Canongate; Alexander was an Edinburgh M.D., and Mrs Stewart was the daughter of Sir Robert Stewart of Allanbank.

9 The Church of Scotland's General Assembly, May 1771, was reported in *The Scots Magazine*, XXXIII, 271-80; 328-30.

10 William Alexander, *Experimental Essays* (London: Dilly 1768).

11 John Warden, *A System of Revealed Religion, digested under heads, and composed in the express words of Scripture* (London: Dilly 1769).

12 John Entick, *The new spelling dictionary*. This work was first published by Dilly in 1765, and there were numerous editions up to 1800. See R. Alston, *A Bibliography of the English Language* (Leeds 1966), Vol. V. nos 238-77.

1770

Jan. 5 To Proposals for a complete body of Planting & Gardening by the Revd Mr. Hanbury¹³ 4 large pages 8vo Long Primer on fine Demy, paper included . . . 1 10 -

Dec. 27 To Meditations by Mrs. Jean Stewart¹⁴ 33 Sh No 500 fine at 19/- per Sheet 31 7 -

1771

Feb. 15 To Proposals for Mr. Whitefield's Works,¹⁵ 2 Reams Demy 3 - -

 226 8 9

May 22 To Hand Bills respecting the above Meditations distributed among the members of the General Assembly 3 6

 226 - 12 - 3

The date of the entry relating to the *Account of Corsica*—19 February 1768—is important. According to the Foulis-Boswell letters at Yale, Foulis had completed the printing of 500 copies by 30 December 1767 and '500 copies with the Titles & cancell'd leaves are carefully gather'd, collated, and packt up, Directed for Mr. Dilly at London; and the rest are preparing'. Foulis's letter of 30 December 1767 also mentions 1000 copies in preparation which are to be distributed in Scotland.¹⁶ Boswell ordered publication of his book in Edinburgh on 15 February 1768:

Monday 15 Feb. 1768

This day I heard from Mr. Dilly my *Account of Corsica* was ready for publication; so I ordered Mr. Neill to give out copies in Scotland.¹⁷

Nevertheless there seems to have been a short delay at this point. The book was advertised as published, and available from Neill's printing

¹³ William Hanbury, *A complete body of planting and gardening* (London: Dilly 1770-1), 2 vols.

¹⁴ Mrs Jean Steuart, *Meditations upon several texts of Scripture* (London: Keith 1771) I have not seen a copy of this, and do not know whether Dilly's name appeared in the imprint. It was severely reviewed in *The Monthly Review*, XLIV, 313-16 (April 1771).

¹⁵ Probably the six-volume edition of Whitefield's *Works*, edited by the Scottish minister, J. Gillies, and published in London, 1771-2.

¹⁶ Gaskell, p. 399.

¹⁷ *The Private Papers of James Boswell*, VII, 150.

house, in *The Caledonian Mercury*, 20 February 1768, and *The Edinburgh Advertiser*, 23 February 1768. It seems entirely possible that the cancelled leaf mentioned in Dilly's account was set up and run off before 19 February to allow for the distribution and sale of Edinburgh copies from 20 February onwards.

The entry in Neill's ledger does not, unfortunately, identify the specific leaf which was replaced in his printing house. From the circumstances of publication, however, we are clearly looking for a cancel which appears in only a proportion of the copies sold and has typographical characteristics which differentiate it from the rest of the book. The D2 cancel fits these requirements. We know from the Foulis/Boswell letters that 500 copies were packed up and ready to be sent direct to Glasgow from London on 30 December 1767, and could not have had the Neill cancel in them. It also seems unlikely, although not impossible, that copies retained by Foulis at Glasgow and sold to Glasgow customers, would have this particular cancel leaf in them.

Three cancel leaves have been found in copies of the *Account of Corsica*. The cancels of E2 (pp. 87-8) and Z3 (pp. 357-8) are present in nearly all copies examined. There are variations within these cancels, which Pottle and all subsequent bibliographers explain as examples of 'printing in duplicate', as described in McKerrow's *An Introduction to Bibliography*.¹⁸ Neither Pottle nor Gaskell seem to have seen a copy of the cancel leaf D2 (pp. 51-2) which is found in a much smaller number of copies.¹⁹ It is significant that Gaskell's otherwise admirable description (Item 473) is based exclusively on the copies at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow, and at the British Library, and not on copies now in Edinburgh. The Rothschild catalogue notes the existence of a D2 variant in two of their copies,²⁰ but describes it loosely as a variant state. The reason for this particular cancellans was to correct the wrong attribution in the cancellandum of the quotation from Crebillon to the Scottish dramatist John Home, and to add Home's name to a quotation from his work: 'And virtue springing from the iron soil.' which appeared further down the same page.

18 R. B. McKerrow, *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1927), p. 216.

19 See table (on p. 191) for known copies with the D2 cancel. It has not been previously noted by bibliographers that the state of the E2 cancel which has the line division 'fief of Is|tria' also contains the misprint 'patriotrick' for 'patriotick'.

20 *The Rothschild Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1954), nos 442-5. Copies 444 and 445 are described as having 'D2' in the 'second state'. The leaves are, in fact, cancels.

Even more conclusive than the argument from limited distribution of the D2 cancel leaf, is the fact that, on close visual examination, it reveals substantial physical differences from the other printed sheets and from the other cancels in the volume suggesting, via hindsight, that this particular cancel originated in another printing house than that of the Foulis brothers. The English roman text type is very similar in the D2 cancel to that in the rest of the book, and could easily deceive eyes as typographically unsophisticated as mine. The long primer roman used in the quotations, however, in the cancel leaf is strikingly different from the Wilson long primer founts used by Foulis. This distinctive typeface reminds me strongly of a long primer used in the printing of cheap Bibles, issued in parts, which were printed in Edinburgh in the 1760s and described in the newspaper advertisements of these Bibles as Bain types.²¹ It is known from the Neill ledgers that Neill purchased type both from the Wilson foundry in Glasgow and the Bain foundry in Edinburgh. I know of no evidence that the Foulis brothers used anything but Wilson type in the 1760s.

There are a number of conjectural points in the above argument. If these conjectures are correct, and I think they are, the leaf D2 of Boswell's *Account of Corsica* is an Edinburgh cancel in a Glasgow printed book.

TABLE OF COPIES WITH LEAF D2 CANCELLANS

LIBRARY	LOCATION MARK	LEAF D2	LEAF E2	LEAF Z3
Detroit Public Library	not known	cancellans	cancellans fief of Istria	cancellans
National Library of Scotland	Gray 1345	cancellans	cancellans fief of Istria	cancellandum Padre Mariana
New York Public Library	Berg Collection	cancellans	cancellans (not seen)	cancellans
Oberlin College, Carnegie Library	not known	cancellans	cancellans fief of Istria	cancellans
Princeton University Library (2 copies)	not known	cancellans	cancellans (not seen)	cancellans

²¹ Mr Gaskell has informed me in a private letter that he also thinks that the type in question is a Bain type, although he cannot identify it with any of those shown in Bain's *Specimen* (1787).

ter of its inhabitants. Hieronymus de Marinis, a Genoese, who writes on the dominion and government of the republick, says of this island, 'Terrae viscera ferri fodinis affluunt, naturae cum ipso Corsicae nomine in uno conspirantis praedicio, Corsi enim corde sunt ferreo, adeoque ad sicam armaque prono (a). The bowels of the earth abound in mines of iron; nature conspiring, by a sort of prejudice, to form a similarity between the name (b) of Corsica and the temper of the people; for the Corsicans have hearts of iron, and are therefore prone to arms and the sword.' The Marquis D'Argens (c) applies to Corsica these lines of Crebillon,

La nature maratre en ces afreux climats,
Produisoit au lieu d'or du fer et des soldats.

In that rude isle, instead of golden ore,
Nature, to aid the genius of the place,
On her high hills the massy iron bore,
And bade her sons still rise a hardy race.

JOHN HOME,

I may add

And virtue springing from the iron soil.

(a) Graev. Thesaur. Antiq. vol. I. p. 1410. (b) Corsica, Cor-sica. COR, the heart; SICA, a filetto, heart of steel. (c) Lettres Juives. let. 55.

D 2

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D 2

TABLE (CONTD)

Rothschild	444	cancellans	cancellans fief of Istria	cancellans
Rothschild	445	cancellans	cancellans fief of Istria	cancellans
St Andrews University Library	Typ. BG D68FB	cancellans	cancellans fief of Istria	cancellans
Yale University Library, Beinecke Library	Im B654 768 Copy 3	cancellans	cancellans fief of Istria	cancellandum Padre Mariana

COPIES WITH D2 CANCELLANDUM

Houghton Library, Harvard; Huntington Library; Indiana University Libraries, Library of Congress (2 copies); Linderman Library, Lehigh University; Michigan State University Library; National Library of Scotland; Newberry Library; New York Public Library (General Collection); Northwestern University Library; Princeton University Library (2 copies); St Andrews University Library; University of Massachusetts Library; University of Rochester Library, Library Company of Philadelphia; University of Texas Library; University of Virginia Library; Yale University Library (6 copies).

I am grateful to the rare book librarians in all these institutions for their help in providing data for this list, and to Mr E. Ingles, Rare Book Librarian, University of Calgary, for his assistance in compiling it.