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## Andrew Foulis the younger: some illustrative letters

Robert Hay Carnie

THE FOLLOWING ten letters are printed here, apparently for the first time, in the belief that they provide a useful commentary on the later career of Andrew Foulis the younger as a printer of Greek literature. They illustrate clearly why he had a reputation as an unreliable and litigious man, and show the gradual breakdown in confidence of some of the people who engaged in publishing enterprises with him. In addition they contain an account—admittedly incomplete—of the publishing arrangements for the 1796 octavo Aeschylus and the 1797 octavo Euripides which throws light on the printing and distribution of these items, the last important publications of the Foulis press. A few minor points of detail can be added from the letters to the wholly admirable descriptions of these two publications made by Philip Gaskell in his *A bibliography of the Foulis Press*.<sup>1</sup> The correspondence also points clearly to the important role played by the Edinburgh bookseller, William Laing (1764–1832), in trying to find a market for the equipment and talents of the younger Foulis. Laing was an enthusiast for Greek printing. All the letters are to be found in the collections of his son, David Laing, the well-known Scottish antiquary, now in the possession of Edinburgh University Library, and are reproduced here by the kind permission of that institution.<sup>2</sup>

The fullest account in print of the career of Andrew Foulis the younger is that given by James Maclehose in his history, *The Glasgow University Press, 1638–1931*.<sup>3</sup> Maclehose stresses the fact that the Foulis press was in serious financial difficulties when the second Andrew Foulis took over in 1776, but he also makes clear the flaws in temperament which brought Foulis to lawsuits

<sup>1</sup> Philip Gaskell, *A bibliography of the Foulis Press*, London: Hart-Davis, 1964, pp. 386–91. Items 699, 702, 704.  
<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Mr C. P. Finlayson and his staff in the MS division for their help. The material is to be found at Laing MSS, III, 363; IV, 5; IV, 17; IV, 26.  
<sup>3</sup> James Maclehose, *The Glasgow University Press, 1638–1931: with some notes on Scottish printing in the last three hundred years*, Glasgow: University Press, 1931, pp. 195–203.

with his first partner, James Spotswood, from whom he separated in March, 1781, and which finally led to the loss of his university appointment in June, 1795. As the first letter printed below suggests, the University of Glasgow was, in 1791, willing to help Foulis in his appeal for help to carry on his press which was extensively equipped to print Greek classics. In the same year, however, the University expressed their dissatisfaction at the long delay in completing the *Catalogus impressorum librorum in Bibliotheca Universitatis Glasguensis* (Gaskell, 691, 691A) and four years later Foulis, deprived of his university appointment, was engaged in litigation with his former employers (Letter II). The editions of Aeschylus and Euripides discussed in Letters II to IX are the only significant items produced by him after his break with the university.

The short undated note (Letter X) shows Foulis operating as a picture framer from an Edinburgh address and adds another bleak detail to Macle-hose's sketch of his later life which ended in the poorhouse of Edinburgh in 1829.<sup>1</sup>

Except for normalisation of capitals, the letters are produced *verbatim*. Doubtful readings are enclosed in brackets.

Letter I

A. Foulis to [ ? ]<sup>2</sup>

March 12, 1791

Glasgow College March 12-1791

Sir,

Mr Brown having informed me of the work you are at present engaged in preparing the inclination I feel of rendering you any assistance in my power has induced me to transmit you the enclosed. It contains the substance of a memorial I sent some time ago to Mr Dundas<sup>3</sup> indulging a hope

<sup>1</sup> Maclehorse, pp. 202-3.

<sup>2</sup> I have been unable to identify the recipient of this letter. The reference in the text to 'the work you are at present engaged in preparing' makes it likely that it was to someone concerned with Greek scholarship.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville (1742-1811). This Scottish politician was the most powerful man in Scotland of his time. Home Secretary, 1791-1794.

that if a small recompense to those who have suffered in the public service was not unprecedented his Majesty's ministers would afford me some assistance. I was honoured with an obliging answer from Mr Dundas in which he recommended [sic] me to correspond with the Principal and professors of our University for their concurrence and he was pleased to say he would then take the memorial into further consideration. Their concurrence was obtained and sent but since that time I have received no answer. Seven months and upwards have elapsed and I suppose the business is either entirely laid aside or amidst the multitude of important affairs in which a secretary of affairs must be at all times engaged is forgotten.—I have therefore thought of trying a subscription and printed off a few copies of the enclosed<sup>1</sup>. If it affords any information of which you are not already possessed you will make what use of it you think proper, but as it is very uncertain that I shall ever have the courage to use it, I request the favour of your keeping the proposal out of view.

Should it occur to you who are conversant in public affairs that any thing may still be urged in favour of the memorial above mentioned or an application made through any other channel with probability of success I should esteem your advice a particular favour. If you think a personal application to Mr Dundas, as I cannot trouble him with more letters with propriety, would be of any use, I would come up to London.

I remain

Sir

your most obedient humble servant  
And. Foulis

Letter II

A. Foulis to W. Laing, bookseller in the Canongate. Glasgow, Dec. 22, 1795.

Glasgow Dec<sup>r</sup>. 22-1795.

Sir,

I have just received yours and I dare say upon reflexion you will not find yourself so much alarmed—You say you have written to Mr Payne &

<sup>1</sup> A slight sketch of the origin of the Glasgow Press, and Academy of Fine Arts, 1791, 8 pp. (Gaskell, no. 692). There is a copy in Laing MSS III, 363.

have mentioned that when you engaged to print Aeschylus<sup>1</sup> there was no word of Porson's<sup>2</sup> edition in the agreement and that it was to be printed from the best editions &c.—That, on your part at any rate is certainly a sufficient defence—From the small number of the impression<sup>3</sup> and the form of the edition it must be clear to any unprejudiced person that there was little view to profit [sic] much less to injure any man—

A professor has informed you & I doubt not that the same professor or professors have endeavoured to draw down the prosecution.

I have been since July last engaged in three different processes with the college and no doubt certain members of that body wish for wicked but obvious reasons to add another process to the number—

I proposed to be in Edinburgh in the beginning of the year & to bring with me the two first volumes of the Euripides,<sup>4</sup> in consequence of the present business and of your anxiety I shall see you sooner—

I sent by Watson<sup>5</sup> the imperfections—except sheet 2B L.P. which you say has been dirty'd—If it cannot be used I shall reprint the sheet not having another to supply

I remain,

Dear Sir

yours

And. Foulis.

<sup>1</sup> The reference here is to the folio Aeschylus of 1795 (Gaskell no. 699). Laing's name appears in the imprint along with a group of prominent London booksellers.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Porson (1759–1808), Fellow of Trinity College and Professor of Greek in the University of Cambridge. It is clear from the following letter that Foulis had had access to a text prepared by Porson and had used his readings without permission. A search made in the Porson papers in Trinity College by the College Sub-Librarian, T. Kaye, on behalf of the present writer, failed to produce any relevant correspondence.

<sup>3</sup> Gaskell, p. 387, quotes Murray to the effect that 52 copies were printed on small paper, and 11 copies on large paper.

<sup>4</sup> The Greek and Latin edition of the *Tragedies* in 10 volumes (Gaskell, no. 704).

<sup>5</sup> Gabriel Watson, the Edinburgh carrier. He had an office in the Gallowgate, Glasgow. See *Jones's directory*, Mennons: Glasgow, 1789.

Letter III

W. Laing to A. Foulis

Edin. 10 March, 1796.  
(Office copy)

Edin. 10 March 1796

Mr And. Foulis  
Printer, Glasgow

I am authorised to ask an answer to the following queries, which I hope you will readily do, in course.

1. How many sheets of the 2d volume of the small Aeschylus<sup>1</sup> still remain to be finished and how long time will be requisite to complete the work. 2. Why in the folio edition, did you not acquaint Mr Porson with the use you meant to make of his *var. lect.* - as had you done so, from his known benevolence, you might have had his authority & permission for taking them! I [am] also desired to beg you will immediately forward proofs of the sheets you have set up. - Those formerly sent are fallen aside - Do not neglect this! I likewise wish you to write Mess. Payne & Elmsly<sup>2</sup> how the paper stands. Also your account as to money transactions - Do not omit writing them *one hour* - and be particular in answering the *first* query - I have both spoken and written much in your vindication - I have engaged you would have the book finished by a certain time - Mr Porson will not keep the proof sheets one day longer than necessary. - I have had much illwill about the folio edition - I rest my defence on the object of entering into the undertaking, to keep you from starving, at least as a *bone* by the way, and also my ignorance of everything respecting Mr Porson or his edition - I hope to see you come forward with spirit in what still

<sup>1</sup> The octavo Aeschylus in two volumes of 1796 (Gaskell, no. 702). The fact that the second volume was still incomplete in March, 1796, confirms Gaskell's belief that the date '1794', mentioned on the cancel title-pages of the 1806 issue as the date of first publication, is an error.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Payne, bookseller, Pall Mall, London (1752–1831): Payne took over from his more famous parent of the same name in 1790. By his death in 1831 he was regarded as the 'father' of the London book-trade. See John Nichols, *Literary anecdotes of the eighteenth century*, London, 1812–15, (9 vols.) vi, 439–40. Peter Elmsly, bookseller, the Strand, London (1736–1802): this well-known London bookseller was born in Aberdeenshire. Some time before his death he gave up his business to his shopman, David Bremner (*Literary anecdotes*, vi, 440–41). Bremner, whose name appears on the title-page of the Euripides, is presumably the 'friend' in Letter VI. Laing's correspondent in Letter IX is the Rev. Peter Elmsly (1773–1825), nephew of the bookseller.

remains to finish with these London gentlemen - I shall advance you money on their account if you want it, or indeed do anything for you in my power, that you may come honorably out with them - For any sake write them & me by first post.

Inclosed I send you a note of imperfections of *one* L P copy of Aeschylus that Mr Payne wants - Do what you can to furnish them. - I am

Yours &c  
[Signed] WL.

Letter IV

W. Laing to A. Foulis

Edin. 22 Aug. 1796  
(Office copy)

Mr And. Foulis  
Printer Glasgow  
Sir,

Edin. 22 Aug. 1796

I hereby agree to take the 300 copies of Euripides's Tragedies to be completed in 8 vols,<sup>1</sup> now in your press at the rate of 2/6 each volume, and that you will have twentyfive pounds paid you directly by a bill at a short date, the balance to be settled so soon as the book is finished - I likewise agree to stand security to the amount of £50 St. for whatever quantities of paper you need in order to compleat the work.

I am Sir, Yrs &c.

P. S. The impression to be limit to 300 2d paper & 100 fine-

I accept of the above terms

And. Foulis.

<sup>1</sup> The Euripides was actually completed in *ten* volumes. The change of plan is probably the reason why this agreement was replaced by the one in Letter V. The figure mentioned there of 3/- per volume ties up with the 30/- per book (10 vols) mentioned in Letter VI.

Letter V  
W. Laing to A. Foulis

Edin. 6th Oct. 1796  
(Office copy)

Mr Andrew Foulis,  
Sir,

I agree to what you have proposed, viz. To take the 300 of the fine Euripides at 3/- p. vol. & that the impression will be limited to that number under the penalty of fifty pounds sterling.

I am Sir  
Yours &c.  
W.L.

I agree to the above

And. Foulis.

Letter VI

W. Laing to [P. Elmsly]

Edin. 30 Oct. 1797  
(Office copy)

Sir,

In answer to your obliging favor of the 27th curr. I offer the Euripides, on the following conditions -

I I agree to part with 150 copies of the fine paper Euripides, at the prime cost Viz 30/- p. book, and also, that all the copies that are, or hereafter be subscribed for by the trade, shall be equally divided - I subjoin the names of those already obtained<sup>1</sup>. 2d I agree to take 50 common paper copies being more than a sufficient number for the country, at the supposed price at 21/- each.

The remainder being 100 to go to London.

3d That I shall on no account whatever, lower the price nor exchange a single copy, without acquainting your friend therewith; giving him the refusal of the reversion, but this not to be attempted for *Two Years* after the publication, and lastly that already having paid £400 Stg and the remaining £50 to pay for next week on delivery of the 10 Vol.

<sup>1</sup> This list of subscribers is unfortunately not in the Laing collection.

I demand no interest on the cash I have advanced, but require your friend to allow me to draw on him for £225 at one month's date from the day the books shipped

Thus Sir I have stated my conditions. They certainly are highly advantageous to your friend -

The work being just finished will be ready for shipping next week - It has all the fragments &c & an index

I remain Your most obed. sert.

Letter VII

W. Laing to D. Bremner

Edin. 24 Nov. 1797  
(Office copy)

Edin. 24 Nov. 1797

Mr. David Bremner

To William Laing

To 150 Euripides Gr & Lat 10 Vols 30/-

£225

To Expences shipping & 2 large boxes

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£225 - 18 -

State of Mr B proportion

Shipped for Mr Walker \_\_\_\_\_ 20

\_\_\_\_\_ Messrs. White \_\_\_\_\_ 26

\_\_\_\_\_ Mr Faulder \_\_\_\_\_ 12

\_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Bremner \_\_\_\_\_ 92

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Sir, By the inclosed rect, you will find I have sent off Euripides, viz. 92 for yourself & the remainder as stated. I have also inclosed the subscription paper with an order for the above gentlemen to settle with you - - I have shipped for J. Cuthill - - 12 copies, Egerton 12 Payne 12 Lunn 12 and Edwards 6 ditto<sup>1</sup> making in all 54 copies, which is 4 copies less than your proportion— I have accounts with all my subscribers - particularly

<sup>1</sup> Walker, White, Faulder, Bremner, Cuthill, Egerton, Lunn, and Edwards were all London booksellers. W. H. Lunn was a bookseller in Cambridge before he moved to Soho Square, London. Edwards was a bibliophile as well as a bookseller and was the son of Edwards of Halifax. Some account of all of them can be found in volume iii of Nichols's *Literary anecdotes*.

Egerton & Cuthell & Payne with whom I have a regular acct & am generally in their debt - Lunn owes me for other books - as for the work I have no doubt of it pleasing you & the public — I have lately had the private opinion of an eminent [sic] scholar here who assures me that after perusing a considerable part of the work he only found a very few typographic errors that were not worthy of notice. Fowlis [sic] has however engaged that shd any be discovered, that he will cancell such & reprint it, at his own expence - From the small impression I have sold some already here at £3 - in Bds and subscribed at as a 7/ Vol in London. As to those remaining in my hand, you need be under no apprehension of my affecting your Sale by [improperly] bringing forward mine.

Good Mr. Elmsley's advice has been always in my view that tho merch'd. certain in the sale it would not speedily be sold, as I am sure that to force it into the market would ruin the book - Being therefore under no present need of selling, but at the full trade price, they shall be put aside, one day sooner or later to be brought into the field with advantage.

Having always had an ardent desire of encouraging Gr. printing here I was led to publish Euripides not only with this view, but likewise to support a poor tho a very ingenious & I believe honest man

\_\_\_\_\_ I should have told you before that Fowlis [sic] printed on some *broke*, *useless paper* about 100 of the first 2 vols of Euripides<sup>1</sup>. When in London I exchanged for books, I wd otherwise have pd for, 60 copies with Faulder and 20 with Lunn. I send you a few, on return. They will sell for 6/- in bds and you are ch'd 3/6 - Faulder & Lunn pay me 4/- . They are very coarse - - but contain all the plays added by King<sup>2</sup>, viz. 4— I have now said every thing respecting this transaction that I at present remember.

The titles are reprinted and I shall avail myself of your permission of drawing at one month for your proportion — I have fully paid Fowlis for the fine paper. I have not been a loser as [yet] by the book<sup>3</sup> — Mr. F. intends to send off [ ] 100 coarse by the first ship — the fine [were]

<sup>1</sup> This explains the issue on large, inferior quality paper of volumes i and ii seen by Gaskell who deduces from the title-page that all ten volumes were issued on this paper. It is clear from this passage, however, that about 100 copies of the first two volumes *only* were so issued. Gaskell, p. 390.

<sup>2</sup> John King, classical scholar, Cambridge (1696-1728): King published *Hecuba*, *Orestes et Phoenissae* at Cambridge in 1726 (Greek with Latin translation). There was an Eton edition of 1748 republishing King's translations and notes with the addition of *Alceste*.

<sup>3</sup> The MS is torn at this point. The brackets indicate *lacunae* and suggested readings.

twice collated but it will be necessary [to see that] the binder place the titles of the plays and the arguments in their proper places—

I find I owe Mess. White a bal. of 17/ which will make their account only £51. 3 for you to receive--With respectful compts to Mr. Elmsley--  
I remain Sir

Your very humble sert.

Letter VIII

From Peter Elmsly, bookseller, Sloane St. to W. Laing. London, 13 May, 1800

Dear Laing,

I have yours complaining of a wretched man of whom I formerly thought very differently to what now, I not only think, but know. I have little doubt of the truth of all you say of him. I believe I have full as much reason to complain of him as you have, but cui bono complain? He is not worth a shilling & all that you can expect is to make wretchedness more wretched. Do not suppose that there is money due to him for printing the small Aeschylus. If you will settle that acc<sup>t</sup>. with him & repay me what I have advanced on acc<sup>t</sup>. of paper & printing I will deliver the whole concern to you & give you a handsome sum into the bargain. That *you* should suppose the man capable of printing even two volumes without money in advance; rather surprises me? The truth is he is overpaid; he has disposed of our paper & I have little doubt but the end will turn out disgraceful, & nearly a clear loss to all concerned. I beg you will not again mention his name to me. To serve him I brought upon myself & my successor a considerable loss which I regret much less than the vexation I thereby have felt, & still feel at a time when existence itself is rather a burthen to me, from bad health, than an enjoyment. The only advice I can offer you is what I mean to follow myself, to pocket any loss & vexation as quietly as I can, & banish the idea of the unhappy creature from my mind as much as I can, for I do not think that either you or I would add to his misery, if we had it in our power: as for any redress that is out of the question. I wish you better health & am, Sir,

Your most obed<sup>t</sup> servant.

Peter Elmsly

Sloane St. London May 13, 1800

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Letter IX  
Rev. Peter Elmsly to W. Laing

1 July, 1806<sup>1</sup>.

Gower Street, London  
1 July 1806

Dear Sir,

I am about to give you a little trouble, which, however, I am sure you will excuse with your usual civility. Foulis, the printer, is now in London, and is desirous of coming to a settlement respecting the edition of Aeschylus which has lain in the dust so many years.

I remember, when I was in Edinburgh the first time, about four years ago, you shewed me a letter from my uncle to you, in answer to one of yours dated 10 May 1800 which is now set before me. My uncle's letter contained some account of Foulis's conduct, which I wish to see, as I am almost a stranger to the man and the business. I have the greatest reason to suspect that his statements are in great part erroneous, but I could wish to have it in my power to prove them to be so. For this reason I shall be much obliged for a copy of that letter, or the loan of the original; and for any other document or information respecting those transactions which you may happen to possess. I trust that it is needless to assure you that I will take care to avoid committing you in the smallest degree. Foulis appears to me to be a troublesome and litigious man, with a memory of the most accomodating kind but such men are seldom dangerous to those who are sufficiently early apprized of their dispositions. He also brings a charge against us for some copies of his folio Aeschylus, which I am vehemently disposed to suspect, were paid for in ready money, if they were at all received from him.

I will also be much obliged to you if you will permit one of your family to call on Mr. Cowan<sup>2</sup>, a paper-maker in your town, and ask for

<sup>1</sup> Foulis's efforts to reach a settlement with Elmsly's nephew in July, 1806, probably led to the 1806 issues of the octavo Aeschylus and the two volumes of Euripides. I suspect that unsold stock was handed over to him to issue as he pleased.

<sup>2</sup> Probably Charles Cowan, papermaker in Edinburgh and at Penicuik, or another member of this long established papermaking firm. It is significant that Gaskell has noted that the paper on which some of the octavo Aeschylus was printed, is marked W<sup>C</sup> & Co. (William Cowan?) as is the paper for both issues of the Euripides. Gaskell, pp. 388, 390.

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the quantity and price of the paper which he furnished to Foulis by my uncle's desire towards the end of 1799, or beginning of 1800<sup>1</sup>.

Any packet of papers, however large, will reach me free of postage, if inclosed to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, Esq. Under Secretary of State, Whitehall, and if you inclose any letters to your correspondents here, I will take care to have them delivered. I saw your son<sup>2</sup> the other day, who is grown very tall, and prefers London to any large town in which he has ever lived, except Edinburgh. I beg pardon for putting you to the expense of postage, but it is too late to send for a frank, and I am not sure whether you would not be offended at the indorsement of post-paid—at least I make that excuse for saving a shilling.

Pray what is become of my old acquaintance Macknight<sup>3</sup>? I have not heard of him for many months. I remain, Dear Sir,

truly yours,  
P. Elmsley

Letter X

Andrew Foulis to Mr. David Laing. n.d.

Mr David Laing

Sir

Please give the bearer the portrait of Rizzio and the small landscape as I expect the frame for it this forenoon.

And. Foulis

Catherine Street Friday Morning<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Elmsley's dates are too late to refer to the items mentioned in the previous note. They may be a mistake arising from his unfamiliarity with the details of Foulis's business dealings with his uncle.

<sup>2</sup> It is not clear which of William Laing's nine children this would be.

<sup>3</sup> Probably Thomas Macknight, D.D. (d. 1836). James Macknight, the well-known Biblical critic, father of Thomas, died in 1800, and could hardly be referred to here.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Edinburgh Directories, Andrew Foulis's Edinburgh address from 1799 to 1801 was Strichen's Close.

## 'Britannia liberata' (1714): an Oldmixon discovery at Aberdeen

Pat Rogers

In 1969 I reported what appeared to be a ghost item in Lintot's *Monthly Catalogue*. This was a poem entitled *Britannia liberata*, attributed to the miscellaneous Whig writer, John Oldmixon. At that time I stated that no copy appeared to have survived, but that there were none the less 'good reasons for believing Lintot's entry to be an accurate one'<sup>1</sup>. This surmise proves to have been correct, but the other supposition was wrong. Whilst none of the larger English or American libraries holds a copy, and no example has been located in private hands, *Britannia liberata* is after all extant. It is found in the University Library, King's College, Aberdeen—a fact I owe to Mr David Foxon. Thanks to the kindness of the Librarian, I am now able to supplement my earlier description of the poem by reference to the text itself. Oddly for such a staunchly Hanoverian work, it has been preserved in the University's Macbean Jacobite collection<sup>2</sup>.

The work is a folio, paginated [1-2] 3-9 [10], and signed [A<sup>1</sup>] B-C<sup>2</sup>. It measures approximately 33 cm. in height. The title-page, which is reproduced in the illustration, contains one curious feature. Lintot's catalogue had listed [James] Roberts as the bookseller involved, but the title-page names [John] Pemberton<sup>3</sup>. We know that Oldmixon was concerned with both men at this period, although Roberts's name is more common on the title-page of his works. Nevertheless, such a discrepancy is worthy of note: it should warn us against any impulse we might have to make precise deductions about a missing text from even the most explicit contemporary sources. Incidentally,

<sup>1</sup> 'A lost poem by Oldmixon', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, lxiii (1969), 291-94.

<sup>2</sup> As well as Mr Foxon and the Librarian, Mr H. J. H. Drummond, the Library staff (particularly Mrs Joan Mitchell) gave me help for which I am most grateful. My gratitude is also due to the Librarian for permission to reproduce the title-page of *Britannia liberata*.

<sup>3</sup> *Monthly Catalogue*, i, 41. Pemberton was named as publisher of *Poems and translations*, edited by Oldmixon, on its appearance in April 1714. But it has been generally accepted that this collection, which helped to spark off the Pope-Curl quarrel, was really a Curl production. For the link with Roberts, see letters by Curl in Public Record Office, SP 35/61/14, 33.