Imagining the Miscellaneous Nation: James Watson's *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems*

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On August 6th, 1706, less than a year before the passing of the Act of Union that yoked England and Scotland uneasily together into the single political entity known as Great Britain, the *Edinburgh Courant* ran an advertisement for the first volume of a collection of verse printed by James Watson: "This day is publish'd a choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems, both Ancient and Modern. By Several Hands."[1] The second and third volumes followed in 1709 and 1711 respectively. As the first published anthology of Scottish poetry, the *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* has long been regarded as a milestone in Scottish literary history. The editor of the Scottish Text Society's edition, Harriet Harvey Wood, notes that the *Collection* is "one of the most influential works published in the history of Scottish poetry" and that it is "referred to by almost every historian and critic of Scottish literature from the 18th century onwards" (Wood, 2:ix). In the classic *The Paradox of Scottish Culture*, for example, David Daiches reads the *Choice Collection* as "an attempt to make contact with Scotland's literary past": "Watson saw himself as serving up to his countrymen what was still available of poetry written in an older tradition"[2] According to Daiches, the *Choice Collection* was "the most important manifestation of [Watson's] patriotism" (14). In the *History of Scottish Literature,* Maurice Lindsay agrees that Watson's "motives were undoubtedly patriotic," designed to "counter the increasing Edinburgh tendency to accept Anglicization."[3] Lindsay views Watson as a leading figure in the Scottish renaissance, suggesting that the *Choice*

Collection "ushered in the Eighteenth-century Revival by establishing a direct link with the makars."[4]

But such acknowledgments of the *Choice Collection*'s importance have historically been coupled with criticisms about its content. In particular, the *Collection* has been taken to task for its seeming disregard for genre or tone, as it features works like "Christ's Kirk on the Green," a rollicking burlesque of laboring-class life, alongside such serious works as the complex religious allegory "The Cherry and the Slae." Daiches calls the *Collection* a "somewhat odd assortment" (16) and "a mixed bag, indeed" (18), while Lindsay similarly refers to it as a "strange mixture" (170). Even Wood acknowledges that "it is difficult to deny that Watson's volumes present a rather unappetizing appearance at first sight," offering the reader an "apparently disorganized and heterogeneous mass of material"; elsewhere, she uses the terms "hotch-potch," "haphazard," and "unmethodical."[5]

This assessment of Watson's text as both seminal and flawed derives, I suggest, from a failure to consider the *Collection* in the wider context of British and European print culture. Criticism of the *Collection* has come out of a tradition of Scottish studies that has often been, for justifiable but perhaps now outmoded reasons, so concerned with authorizing a Scottish national literature that it has failed to relate Scottish literary activity to what was taking place beyond Scotland's borders. In particular, critics have neglected to notice the *Collection*'s affiliation with the contemporary genre of the *miscellany* popular in England and in France at the time, despite the fact that Watson himself draws attention to that affiliation. This essay seeks to address this oversight by considering the *Collection* in relation to several contemporary miscellanies. Furthermore, it investigates the national impulse behind Watson's employment of this particular genre. Recognizing the competing interests at stake in the Scottish political

landscape of 1706, Watson uses the imaginative space of the miscellany to bring readers of different tastes and interests together to promote the cause of Scotland at a time during which the nation's very existence was under threat.

Watson's prefatory remarks "To the Reader" of the *Choice Collection* make his interest in the form of the miscellany clear, as he asserts that, "the frequency of Publishing Collections of Miscellaneous Poems in our Neighbouring Kingdoms and States, may, in a great measure, justify an Undertaking of this kind with us."[6] In *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies*, Barbara Benedict examines the development of the printed miscellany form in Scotland's nearest "Neighbouring Kingdom," England, tracing it back to works like *Tottel's Miscellany* and *England's Helicon* in the mid sixteenth century.[7] Benedict suggests that, although published miscellanies started out as expensive objects designed for elite consumers, by the later seventeenth century, they had evolved into less expensive commodities whose marketability was determined by their ability to appeal to different tastes. She observes how such miscellanies often combined classically oriented poetry with more practically minded or entertaining genres in order to satisfy the mixed demands of new audiences who were intent on both self-improvement and diversion (5). In *"Profit and Delight": Printed Miscellanies in England, 1640-1682*, Adam Smyth, too, points out the variety found in miscellanies, noting that they "shared interests (and often audiences) with—among many other texts—song books, conduct manuals, commonplace books, manuscript verse collections, ballads, and educational tracts."[8] *Witts Recreations Selected from the finest Fancies of Moderne Muses* (1640), for example, combines poetic excerpts "*WITH A Thousand out Landish Proverbs*."[9] In the note titled "The Stationer to the Reader," the printer draws attention to the different tastes that are represented in the volume:

If new or old wit please the reader best,

I've hope each man of wit will be our guest,

The new was fram'd to humor some mens taste;

Which if they like not, they may carve the last. (no pagination)

In a similar effort to tempt different "mens taste," Hobart Kemp's *A Collection of Poems Written Upon Several Occasions by Several Hands* (1672) begins with an anonymous translation from the French of Philippe Habert's "The Temple of Death." Such an opening is designed, Benedict explains, to establish the "critical credentials" of the volume (74). But part 2 of Kemp's volume consists almost entirely of love songs drawn from contemporary plays. *Witts Recreation* and Kemp's *Collection* are arguably just as much "mixed bags" as Watson's *Choice Collection*. Seen in comparison with such earlier publications, then, Watson's work, with its mixture of "Comic" and "Serious" works, no longer appears so "disorganized" and "strange." It differs, however, from its English contemporaries in its focus on national concerns.

According to Benedict, post-Restoration miscellany collections "provided a space, if only symbolically, for the productions of all members of society. In this space, different literary languages and genres that represented or embodied different readers and traditions were juxtaposed." Moreover, she suggests, "By promoting the literary values of novelty and topicality, by prefatory rhetoric invoking variety, by a page layout that differentiated each item of the contents but eschewed conventional literary decorum, and by including public and privately circulated poems," miscellanies "invited readers to participate actively in the construction of literary interpretation" (5). Benedict situates the miscellany within the context of the developing print market and booksellers who were eager to capitalize on the economic

benefits of a growing reading public. But Watson was not interested in using the miscellany form merely to reach a wide-ranging consumer market. Instead, he used the genre of the miscellany, with its appeal to different "mens taste," to appeal to and therefore to unite differently minded readers under the common rubric of the nation.

For a model of miscellany with a national focus, Watson had to look further afield than his southern neighbor, since England offered no examples of miscellanies collected in the national cause. The closest thing it had to offer, *Poems on Affairs of State*, was concerned not so much with national affiliation as with political partisanship.[10] Instead, Watson turned to work published in another of Scotland's "*Neighbouring Kingdoms and States*," France. As Joan DeJean notes, "In the closing decades of the seventeenth century, French writers begin to draw up lists of their precursors and then to edit anthologies of their representative works" in a spirit of national promotion.[11] The most popular of these miscellanies was the *Recueil des plus belles pièces des poëtes françois, tant anciens que modernes*, which appeared in 1692. The compiler of the *Recueil des plus belles pièces* notes the novelty of the work.[12] Whereas other collections of poems by multiple authors appeared haphazard, "faits au hasard, sans aucun plan, & sans aucun ordre" ("made by chance, without any plan, & without any order"), the *Recueil* was organized more or less in chronological order: "On a rangé icy les Auteurs à peu prés selon l'ordre des temps. Je dis à peu prés, car on ne s'est point assujetti à une Chronologie exacte" ("The authors are grouped here approximately according to their time period. I say approximately, because it is difficult to ascertain an exact chronology").[13] The compiler also included short biographies, "de petites Vies des Poëtes" ("short lives of the poets"), before the work of each author in an attempt to set out an established canon. For the editor of the *Recueil*, collecting poetry was a national activity.

The anxious response that the *Recueil* generated across the Channel is indicated in Francis Saunders's comments in his reprint of Kemp's *Collection of Poems* published the year after the *Receuil*. Observing that "the French have lately Publish'd Five or Six Volumes of their choicest Poems, by several Hands," Saunders reports that he is printing the present work in order to demonstrate English superiority in writing miscellany poems: "As the *English* Genius and Language for the *Drama* and for *Epick Poetry*, has been granted, infinitely to excel theirs; so we have no less the Advantage in the less, tho' nice Productions of the Nature of these Collections." He asks the reader, however, not to regard his collection as in any way copying the French: "I must beg, that this Collection may not be thought to be done in imitation of them. We are pretty well recovered from the Servile way of following their Mode." [14]

Whereas Saunders would prefer to present his *Collection* as distinct from projects external to England, Watson draws attention to the publication of collections in other kingdoms to justify his own undertaking. If the English and French are publishing miscellany collections of poems, he suggests, then the Scots should do so, too. Moreover, Watson brings the different purposes of the miscellany in Scotland's two main "Neighbouring Kingdoms and States" together, combining the English commercial concern to offer something for everyone with the French interest in promoting a national culture. Like *Witts Recreations*, Kemp's *Collection*, and other seventeenth-century English miscellanies, Watson's *Choice Collection* includes diverse works drawn from many contexts. But like the French *Recueil*, the *Choice Collection* has a national purpose. It offers something for everyone who is interested in the well-being of the nation.

Watson's *Choice Collection* appeared during a time of intense debate regarding the nature of Scottish political, economic, religious, and cultural identity, a debate to which Watson

himself contributed no small part. Scots had risen virtually as one body to support the Company

of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies when English speculators, encouraged by William

II, had pulled out. The company's subsequent disaster at Darien caused a national financial

crisis and unleashed a backlash against the English. *The People of Scotland's Groans and*

Lamentable Complaints, Pour'd out before the High Court of Parliament, printed by Watson in

1700, for instance, blames the English government for the company's tragic failure.[15] Watson

was imprisoned in the Tolbooth for printing this pamphlet, released by an Edinburgh mob, then,

after pleading guilty on trial, exiled from Edinburgh for a year and a day (Wood, 2:xiv).

Returning to the Scottish capital in the heat of the discussion on a possible treaty of union with

England, he began printing pamphlets against the union, including William Forbes's vitriolic *A*

Pil for Pork-eaters or a Scots Lancet for an English Swelling (1705) and George Ridpath's *The*

Reducing of Scotland by Arms and Annexing it to England as a Province Considered (1705).[16]

The first volume of the *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems both Ancient and*

Modern followed closely on the heels of these pamphlets and shared their concerns to promote

Scottish interests. Where the pamphlets used rhetoric to dissuade readers against from

supporting the union, the *Collection* promotes Scottish independence through encouraging

readers to recognize the uniqueness of Scottish identity.

Watson compiled his miscellany when Scotland was deeply divided on the issue of the

union.[17] Much of the general populace was decidedly anti-union, while members of Parliament

occupied differing positions, many of them, as Christopher Whatley has recently suggested,

entertaining the idea of union out of religious and dynastic concerns (4-5). The possibility of

union prompted a barrage of pamphlets that drew on different bases in representing Scottish

national identity. George Ridpath's publication of Thomas Craig's *Scotland's Soveraignty* [*sic*]

Asserted (1695), for example, reexamined the question of whether the Scottish kings swore homage to the English crown. Lord Belhaven's famous *Speech in Parliament, the Second Day of November 1706*, on the other hand, conceives of the Scottish nation as a pure blood-related group, engaging Scots as the sons of a "Mother Caledonia" who is being threatened with violence.[18] The sheer number of pamphlets flying from the presses, however, suggests a growing awareness of a new kind of national identity, one that depended not on the law or ties of blood, but on reading. As Bruce Levack suggests, "The volume of recorded opinion on the union, in the form of speeches, letters, proclamations, and pamphlets, is truly astonishing. Between 1603 and 1707 there was no other issue in the history [of] either nation, with the one exception of the English civil war, which attracted more attention and created more controversy than the union."[19] It is in the context of this new "*kind* of imagined community that is the nation" described so aptly by Benedict Anderson that Watson's *Choice Collection* must be considered.[20] Anderson examines the work of newspapers and novels in encouraging readers to see themselves as united into an "imagined community" through a common perception of "homogeneous, empty time" (24). Where Anderson focuses on the activity of readers in constructing the nation, however, the example of Watson's collection suggests the primacy of the printer in providing the conditions necessary for the imagining of the nation. Moreover, where Anderson focuses on the sense of homogeneity developed through the reading of novels and newspapers, the *Choice Collection* acknowledges the importance of representing heterogeneous interests within the nation.[21] Although Watson himself was a Jacobite, his *Collection* encourages readers from different political affiliations and linguistic registers to see themselves as participants in a nation that is based on difference rather than similarity. Most importantly, his *Collection* encourages this mixed population to comprehend that the best way

of ensuring the continuing existence of the diversity within Scotland is to keep the nation independent.

As a printer trying to make a living in a competitive economic environment and as the editor of the first newspaper in Scotland, the *Edinburgh Gazette*, Watson was particularly attuned to how, in Anderson's words, "print-capitalism . . . made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways" (36). His business depended on attracting disparate groups of readers. The title of the *Collection* itself, in mentioning both "Comic" and "Serious" poems, advertises the heterogeneity of the contents. Moreover, the epigraph from the second-century grammarian Terentianus Maurus that is printed at the end of the commentary in "The Publisher to the Reader" indicates Watson's awareness of the role of the readers in determining a work's success: "Pro captu Lectoris habent sua fata Libelli" ("The reader's fancy makes the fate of books").[22] In his prefatory comments, Watson registers a printer's sense of finding a new medium and a new, public audience for the poems in the *Collection*. Many of the poems had been circulating in manuscript miscellanies owned by "members of the middle classes rather than great noble families" in Scotland since the sixteenth century.[23] Watson, however, emphasizes their elite context, drawing attention to the "*Generous Helps*" that he has had from the "Repositories of some Curious and Ingenious Gentlemen, who take pleasure in keeping several Comic and Diverting Poems by them." He indicates that his concern is to move the poems from the "Repositories" of a few collectors to a printed form in which they could be consumed by more people and could be recognized as part of an extensive Scottish canon of works. Watson changes the poems from curious collectables, "Comic and Diverting Poems" with symbolic value that a few "Curious and Ingenious Gentlemen . . . take pleasure in keeping

. . . by them," into items with exchange value that a larger population could "take pleasure" in reading and that would serve as a source of national pride during a politically difficult moment. At the same time, however, he relies on the symbolic capital of the works as pieces that engaged his "Gentlemen" friends, presenting his collection as a means to social capital as well as national representation.

Watson also draws on the symbolic capital of the book, a form that, according to John Brewer, increasingly connoted "culture and gentility in the eighteenth century."[24] Many of the poems that Watson includes in his collection, such as "The Banishment of Poverty" and the "Life and Death of the Piper of Kilbarchan," were available on the market at the time as broadsides. Watson comments derisively on these publications when he indicates that the first volume is "chiefly composed of such Poems as have been formerly Printed most Uncorrectly, in all respects, but are now copied from the most Correct Manuscripts that could be procured of them."[25] He promotes his own publishing project by pointing out the typographical errors in the broadside publications, errors that he suggests devalue the texts. But his chief concern is not just to reprint the poems correctly, a task he could have accomplished merely by reprinting the broadsides: he was a prolific printer of these. Instead, he chose to reprint them *together* as a book with a national theme: this is, he announces, the "the first of its Nature which has been publish'd in our own Native Scots Dialect." The exchange value of the poems depends crucially on their symbolic value as they are represented as a corpus of texts by Scottish writers brought together in the covers of a book.

The poems in part 1 of the *Choice Collection* present a variety of political and religious perspectives. For example, "The Banishment of Poverty" celebrates the beneficence of the Duke of Albany (the Scottish title of the man who became James II). The speaker curses the

allegorical figure of "Poverty," lamenting that "Since first he laid his Fang on me / My self from

him I dought ne're draw." After dreadful adventures during which he is tied to this "Governor,"

he finally makes his way to the "*Inner-Court*" of the Abbey of Holyrood where he sees "that

brave Duke of Albany" who, with "one blink of his princely Eye / Put that foul Foundling to the

Flight" (Watson, 1:16). "Lintoun Address, To His Highness the Prince of Orange," on the other

hand, praises the Prince of Orange for being the one who can take "Pity" on "Poverty": "Thrice

Noble *Orange*, Blessed be the time, / Such fair Fruit prosper'd in our Northern Clime." In this

case, the Protestant William is the "Moses" who can "guard our Martial Thistle with the Roses"

(Watson, 1:11). From yet a different political and religious perspective, the author of ten stanzas

of "Hallow my Fancy," Colonel William Cleland, was a covenanting poet who, according to

David Daiches, "consciously tried to establish a non-courtly serious satiric Scottish poetic

tradition" (18). The nature of the poems included in the *Choice Collection* is designed both to

appeal to and to unite a readership that is itself politically diverse. The effect is not to promote a

particular politics, but to create a sense of the common Scottish denominator in the nation:

"Scots" culture—a culture that, as Watson presents it, is wide-ranging and inclusive.

The poems Watson includes in the *Choice Collection* also represent different linguistic

registers. As Murray Pittock suggests, Watson's claim to feature poems in "our own Native

Scots Dialect" is "a promise not altogether fulfilled" (*Romanticism*, 46). Some poems are in

"our own Native *Scots* Dialect," but many are written in standard English. The consequences of

this unfulfilled promise are significant, however, as the selections Watson includes in the

Choice Collection emphasize the heterogeneity of languages in Scotland. Wood reads Watson's

inclusion of sixteenth-century English poems by Scottish writers as evidence of how "far the

Anglicization of the written language had gone before James and his courtiers ever crossed the

Border" (Wood, 1:xxv). She suggests that Watson's work further separates Scots from English, associating Scots with vigorous and bawdy poems and "homely proverbs," and English with "poems of gentility" (Wood, 1:xxvii). But it is important that Watson includes both languages in his *Collection* without privileging either. Indeed, his *Collection* calls into question what exactly constitutes "our own Native *Scots* Dialect."

Earlier English collections like *Witts Recreations* and Kemp's *Collection*, as we have seen, combined literate and oral forms. But in the *Choice Collection*, Watson suggests a different hierarchy between the two. Part 1 begins, not, like Kemp's *Collection*, with a translation of a work originally composed in a foreign language in order to establish the work's "critical credentials," but with a poem written in Middle Scots, "Christ's Kirk on the Green," a rollicking account of "Dancing and Deray" (disturbance or disorderly action) among the rural laboring classes during a holiday celebration. The poem represents a crossover between literary and oral traditions in number of ways. The author of "Christ's Kirk" demonstrates his skill as a sophisticated poet of a literary tradition, as the satiric tone and artful rhymes demonstrate.[26] But "Christ's Kirk" also announces its affiliations with the oral tradition, deriving its stanzaic template from a song and dance form. Moreover, the poem's description of the music, singing, and dancing of Tom Lutter, the piper, calls attention to its own oral and performative origins:

Good Lord, how he could lance [leap];

He played so shrill, and sang so sweet

While *Tousie* took a Trance:

Old *Lightfoot* there he could foreleet [surpass],

And counterfitted *France*,

He held him like a Man discreet [polite],

And up the *Morice* dance

He took that day. (Watson, 1:2)

Tom's music and dancing galvanize the action of the poem, encouraging the peasants to join in with their own dancing, "stepping in with stends [jumps]" and "bob[bing] with many bends."[27] Although the poet satirizes the lower orders' response to the music, the poem also reflects ironically back on the members of the court who were listening to the song. And the observation regarding Tom's attempt to "counterfit [*sic*]" France comments on the use of foreign dancing masters at court.[28] Watson chose to follow "Christ's Kirk" with another poem that combines literate and oral traditions, "The Blythsome Wedding." Like "Christ's Kirk," "The Blythsome Wedding" situates itself within a poetic literate tradition, showing its affiliation with both older and contemporary works. But also like "Christ's Kirk," "The Blythsome Wedding" reflects on poetry in its oral and performative role. The poem is, first and foremost, a song, written with nine verses and a chorus that urges the reader's participation: "Fy let *us* all to the Briddel, / For there will be Lilting [merry singing] there" (Watson, 1:8).

The "credentials" that "Christ's' Kirk" and "The Blythsome Wedding" establish for the *Choice Collection* are concerned not, like Kemp's *Collection*, with satisfying the reader's aspirations to acquire an education, but with representing the fluid relationship between the oral and print worlds. No trajectory from a literate to an oral register such as is found in Kemp's *Collection* exists in the *Choice Collection*. The poems that follow "Christ's' Kirk" and "The Blythsome Wedding" in part 1, although derived from manuscripts, as Watson explains, relate in varying degrees to oral culture. "The Banishment of Poverty" is presented as sung "To the tune of *The Last Good Night*" in a contemporary broadside. "The Epitaph of *Habbie Simson*"

laments the death of a well-known piper, an important figure at "Play, Race, Feast and Fair" (Watson, 1:35). Alexander Montgomerie's "The Cherry and the Slae" was adapted from a well-known dance tune, "The Bankis of Helicon," and his "Solsequium" was also originally composed to music.[29] The last selection to appear in part 1, "Hallow my Fancie," is a song. While miscellanies like Kemp's *Collection* entertained readers with oral works, they also educated them in a system that devalued orality. Watson, however, did not devalue orality, but saw it as intimately linked with the printed word.

Moreover, Watson appears eager to follow the example of France's *Recueil* by including poetry "*tant anciens que modernes*," as his work suggests in its subtitle. But Watson's representation of the relation between "ancient and modern" poems differs from that of his French contemporary. The compiler of the *Recueil* undertakes "une Histoire de la poësie Françoise" from the time when the language of the poetry could be easily understood by contemporary readers to the present day. The work also suggests a genealogy of taste; poems that may not interest readers today, the compiler observes, might have been valued in their own time: "ce qui paroistra mediocre aujourd'huy, estoit peut estre bon en son temps" ("That which might seem mediocre today was perhaps good in its own time") (1:1). Watson, however, eschews such chronological impulses as he intermingles ancient and modern verse seemingly at random in the *Collection*. In this way, he avoids setting the poetry of the past in its historical context and reading it as valid only for its historical interest.[30] The poems in Watson's collection are presented as important not only in their own time, but also in the present. They are not relics, but living poems that have a dynamic part to play in representing the nation.

Watson makes his readers active participants in constructing this new miscellaneous nation, as he instructs them in ways of reading that will advance the national cause. Arguing

that the *Collection* is the first of its kind to promote the "dialect" of Scotland, he suggests that

his readers should "give some Charitable Grains of Allowance, if the Performance come not up

to such a Point of Exactness as may please an over nice Palate." The "Point of Exactness" to

which he refers here has both aesthetic and moral connotations, as the *Collection* contains what

could offend both sensibilities. Watson is not asking his readers *not* to judge; in fact, he flatters

his readers, as people with "gentlemanly" aspirations, that they will be able to tell if the

Collection is offending the taste of "an over nice Palate." As Bourdieu would later famously

observe, "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier."[31] But Watson asks his readers to put

such aesthetic and moral concerns away in the service of the nation. In addition to instructing

his readers on how to be constructive consumers of national material, Watson also enlists their

help as producers, asking them to supply him with texts that he can then print. In the

advertisement published in the August, 1706 *Edinburgh Courant*, Watson announces his

intention to publish a "Second Part" in "November next" (Wood, 2:xix). He claims that he

already has "some very good Copies already in the Publisher's Hands, and others Promis'd,"

but he also solicits material from his readers: "It is therefore earnestly desir'd that all who have

any such Copies worthy of Printing may give them into Mr. Vallange, or the Printer of the

Poems" (Wood, 2:xix). For Watson, establishing a Scottish national literary corpus involves a

collective agreement between printer and reader.

        In this process, it is not the writer who plays the most important part in articulating

national identity. Rather, that role falls to the printer who makes a variety of texts available to

his readers for their collective consumption. Watson includes some names of authors in his

Collection. For example, the first poem in the collection, "Christ's Kirk on the Green" was

"Composed (as was supposed) by King James the Fifth" (Watson, 1:1) . Works by George

Buchanan, tutor to Mary, Queen of Scots, and Alexander Montgomerie, court poet to James VI

of Scotland, also carry indications of their authorship. "Hallow My Fancie" includes a note

explaining: "It was thought fit to insert the following Verses, because the one half of them . . .

were writ by Lieutenant Colonel *Clealand* of my Lord Angus's Regiment, when he was a

Student in the College of *Edinburgh*" (Watson, 1:142). The names that appear in Watson's

anthology do not promote individuals who serve an "author function," however. Nor are their

individual contributions important in their own right. Rather, it is their juxtaposition in the

same volume, a task that the printer, Watson himself, performs, that is crucial in creating a

sense of national collectivity.

Watson's views on the importance of printing for the national cause are evident in the

edition of Jean de la Caille's *The History of the Art of Printing* that he translated and printed in

1713. In the "*Publisher*'s PREFACE to The PRINTERS In Scotland" in that work, Watson

suggests that the printing itself began as a national activity. Printers, he says, contribute to the

"publish[ing] and preserv[ing]" of "every Kind of profitable Instruction and Invention" "for the

Republick" and they were accorded great respect and honour at the advent of printing: "Those

illustrious Persons were honoured, and ranked among the best of their fellow Citizens, in those

Times." [32] His own printing of the de la Caille's book qualifies as act for the "Improvement" of

his own nation, and he indicates that while de la Caille did an admirable job of representing the

honors and memorials given to printers in Europe, he omitted any reference to printing in the

British Isles: "Our Author has not been pleas'd to take any Notice of the Time, when

PRINTING first commenc'd in *Britain*" (6). Leaving the history of printing in England to

England's "own Writers," Watson concentrates instead on presenting a history of the art in

Scotland up to its present sad state. He notes with dismay the appointment of Andrew Anderson

as "King's Printer" in 1671, with a monopoly "to continue for Forty one Years" (11). Although

he admits that Anderson produced "the greatest Part of a very good *Octavo* Bible," Watson

takes Anderson's wife to task for doing a poor job of running the business after Anderson's

death. For Watson, editorial inaccuracy is a non-patriotic activity: "She regarded not the Honour

of the Nation, and never minded the Duty la[id] upon her as the Sovereign's Servant" (13).

Watson imagines his work serving as a clarion call to his fellow printers to restore the true art

and, as a result, represent the nation more favorably:

> I entertain a settled well grounded Hope, that the Perusal of this [work], will
>
> inspire us all with a noble and generous Emulation of equaling, nay, exceeding,
>
> if we can, the best Performances of our laudable Ancestors in the Employment.
>
> That since our Native Country has at present as many good Spirits, and
>
> Abundance of more Authors than in any former Age; we may make it our
>
> Ambition, as well as it is our Interest and Honour, to furnish them with Printers
>
> that can serve them so well, that they need not, as many of our former Authors
>
> have been forc'd to do, go to other Countries to publish their Writings. (5-6)

Good printing, he suggests, will keep good authors in "our Native Country." In the "*Publisher*'s

PREFACE to the PRINTERS in *Scotland*," then, as in the *Choice Collection*, "printing" and "the

Honour of the Nation" are intimately connected. In the former, it is the printer's accuracy that is

important; in the *Collection*, it is his ability to compile a miscellaneous sampling of

representative texts to appeal to the interests of Scottish readers and channel them into concern

for the nation.

Watson's promotion of Scottish independence came to naught; the Articles of Union were voted upon in November 1706, and Scotland's and England's Parliaments were officially dissolved to clear the way for the creation of the Parliament of Great Britain on May 1st, 1707. But even after this point, Watson continued his efforts with the *Collection*. The second part was published in April 1709, two years after the union. Appropriately, it begins with "*ROBERT* the III. King of *Scotland*, His Answer to a Summons sent Him by *Henry* the IV. of *England,* to do Homage for the Crown of Scotland," which asserts Scotland's independence from England: "For our Heretage was ever Free, / Since *Scota* of *Ægypt* tuik the Sea." This poem, dating as far back as the early sixteenth century, gained a particular poignancy in the time just after the union.[33] While part 2 contains the "Epithalamium on the Marriage of *Mary* Queen of *Scots* to the *Dauphin* of France," an anonymous translation of a poem by George Buchanan in praise of the Catholic queen, it also features John Burel's Protestant and anti-aristocratic "Passage of the Pilgremer."[34] Part 3 of the *Choice Collection* followed in 1711, featuring linguistically different works ranging from "The Flyting Betwixt Polwart and Montgomerie," with its joking insults in a mixture of Latinate and Scots—"Calumniator, Blasphemator, vile Creature untrue ,/ Thy Cheiping and Peiping with Weeping thou shalt rue"—to the tragic "King *Charles*'s Lament" written in standard English. In 1713, the same year in which Scottish representatives at Westminster made a motion to repeal the union, Watson reprinted all three volumes of the *Choice Collection*. For him, the project of encouraging an awareness of the political, religious, and linguistic identities of Scotland continued even after the nation had lost its independent political voice, for, as Christopher Whatley observes, the union was by no means seen as an unalterable fact (chapter 9).

As I have suggested in this essay, judgments of Watson's *Collection* as inherently flawed in its organization can be reconsidered in the light of a broader understanding of eighteenth-century print culture in the "Kingdoms and states" surrounding Scotland. This readjustment has important implications for how we read the Scottish literary canon. As the editors of *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature* observe, Scottish literature came to be recognized as a legitimate field of study after World War I, largely as a result of the publication of G. Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*.[35] But Smith's championing of Scottish literary studies also limited its scope, since he defined Scottish writing as inherently doubled: "It becomes, under the stress of foreign influence and native division and reaction, almost a zigzag of contradictions," or, as he suggests, a "Caledonian antisyzygy," a "Scottish antithesis of the real and fantastic."[36] Subsequent critics eagerly adopted Smith's characterization of Scottish writing as essentially schizophrenic.[37] Daiches, for instance, attempts to historicize that schizophrenia by identifying the union as one significant cause of "a split, or a series of splits, in the whole national ethos of Scotland."[38] In his discussion of *Choice Collection* as a reflection of this split, Daiches devotes six and a half of his ninety-seven-page book to discussing Watson and his "extraordinary mixed bunch" of poems. The condemnation of Watson's *Choice Collection* that Daiches initiated has continued to support, and to be supported by, the view that Scottish writing after the union is somehow flawed, its writers torn between two worlds.[39] Wood, for example, quotes Daiches in asserting that Watson's *Choice Collection* "illustrate[s] . . . the contemporary dilemma of Scottish poetry," torn between the opposite poles of Englishness and Scottishness (Wood, 2:xix). But viewed in relation to miscellanies from Scotland's "Neighbouring Kingdoms and States," the *Choice Collection* appears not as an originary moment of "Caledonian antisyzygy"

or the epitome of a fundamental "split" in the "national ethos," but rather as an example of a genre that, in the words of Adam Smyth, "blurr[ed] with other texts" in "an embracing of diversity" (173).

In addition, as I have also suggested, a closer examination of texts like Watson's can give us a more precise appreciation of the ways in which readers, writers, printers, and print market conditions conjoined to create multiple possibilities of national imagining in Britain at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In her study of printed collections of poems, Benedict distinguishes between the miscellany and the anthology: anthologies, she suggests, are "conventionally defined as volumes containing a historical survey of English literature, and they are thought of as being compiled by editors from canonical material. Miscellanies, in contrast, are understood to be bundled together from contemporary, fashionable material by booksellers" (3). The burden of Benedict's argument, however, concerns the development of the anthology, which she reads as prompting "the formation of a canon: a demonstration of refined choice" (4). The miscellany, according to this logic, is an early evolutionary stage of the anthology. Adam Smyth, on the other hand, reads the printed miscellany forward from the Renaissance commonplace book.[40] Smyth ends his examination abruptly at 1682 with the publication of *Wit and Mirth*, after which he suggests that the printed miscellany "dissipated into other kinds of text" (3). According to Smyth, there is "a decline in any declared serious purpose for these collections: formerly presented as guides to social advancement or at least specimens of elite life, they subsequently appear as collections of poems, interesting in themselves and not dependent on constructed connotations, invoked contexts, or grand intentions" (173). Watson's *Collection* was produced in the transitional period after the collections that Smyth discusses were finished and before the establishment of the eighteenth-century anthology that governs

Benedict's argument. The *Collection* shows affinity with contemporary printed miscellanies, but it differs significantly from them in that it invents a new "serious purpose" for the miscellany, a purpose that was particularly apposite during the debate on the union with England: to represent the nation as an inclusive yet heterogeneous community constructed by its readers. Watson's *Choice Collection* imagines a new kind of nation as it foregrounds the activity of the printer in creating the conditions necessary for readers to become both consumers and producers of national affiliation.

We can see the uniqueness of Watson's project if we contrast it with two works, both by Alan Ramsay, published in 1724, a decade after the second printing of Watson's collection: *The Ever Green, Being a Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious Before 1600* and the *Tea-Table Miscellany.* In *The Ever Green*, Ramsay includes many poems from the *Choice Collection* of his predecessor. But Ramsay creates a very different relationship with his readers and imagines a very different kind of Scottish nation as a result. Whereas Watson emphasized the relationship between the printer and the reader, Ramsay foregrounds the editor. On one level, he presents his job as connecting writers from the past with readers from the present. He claims that the poetry included in his collection, both the "serious and comick," reflects a "Spirit of Freedom" from the time of the "antient Heroes" of Scotland. The poems are a way for the "OLD BARDS" to convey their "Love of Liberty" to the present generation. Ramsay presents himself as merely an invisible link, signing the dedication as "Their [the bards'] faithful Publisher / And your [the present generation's] most humble / And devoted Servant."[41] But in fact, this belies the work he actually does perform in *The Ever Green*, since he takes it upon himself to add new material to the poems, to explain their orthography to his readers, and to shape the context. Watson presented his material for the readers to pick and choose from and

to use in the construction of a nation. Ramsay, on the other hand, makes the readers view the materials through the editor's framework.

According to Benedict, the editorial work of mid eighteenth-century anthology editors "redefines the contents as a more or less coherent body of work selected on consistent principles that illustrate social values" (12). For Ramsay, those "social values" involve not so much cultivating morals as promoting a historicist's perspective. In the *Choice Collection*, Watson, uninterested in the question of chronology, interleaves older and new poems. Ramsay, however, asserts history as an important element in determining how to read Scottish literature, and he separates the poems in *The Ever Green* from the more modern works that he includes in the *Tea-Table Miscellany*. The poems and songs he included in *Tea-Table Miscellany* are associated with contemporary oral performance; the poems in *The Ever Green*, however, date from "*Before 1600*," before the Union of Crowns; they are literary relics of the pure Scottish nation. In Ramsay's work, then, the Scottish past becomes separated from the present. It is true that the poems and songs in the *Tea-Table Miscellany* give Scotland a voice in a more inclusive kind of Britishness in the present, as several recent critics have argued, but this is at the expense of relegating independent Scottishness to the past in *The Ever Green*.[42] While Watson's *Choice Collection* involves the printer and the reader in constructing a rich, contemporary Scotland, Ramsay's work begins associating Scottishness with history, which would gain further currency after the 1745 uprising and would culminate in the romantic fascination with Scotland as a symbol of nostalgia.[43] Barbara Benedict remarks on the material and cultural changes in the eighteenth century that repositioned the reader from "collaborative participant in forging literary culture" to "recipient of

commodified literature who reads poetry to train his or her moral response" (6). In the case of Scotland, this shift also resulted in repositioning the reader from acting as a "collaborative participant" in national collectivity in Watson's *Collection*, to serving as a "recipient" of received notions of "nation-ness" in Ramsay's work. Watson's *Choice Collection* presented a model of a "miscellaneous" nation, a model that became residual when that of the historical nation came to dominate, but one that may have much to offer a twenty-first-century Scotland facing the challenge of finding a national identity fit for an increasingly diverse population.

<A>**Notes**

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[1] Harriet Harvey Wood, ed., *James Watson's Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems*, 2 vols. (Aberdeen: Scottish Text Society, 1977 and 1991), 2:xix, hereafter referred to as Wood.

[2] David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience* (London: Oxford Univ., 1964), 13, 16.

[3] Maurice Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature*, rev. ed. (1977; London: Hale, 1992), 170-71. In *The Literature of Scotland* (London: Macmillan, 1984), Roderick Watson suggests that Watson produced the *Choice Collection* in order "to satisfy the literary nationalism of new readers" (170). See also David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, 1680-1830* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), 125-27.

[4] Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature*, 171. In a similar vein, in her review of Wood's edition of the *Choice Collection*, from *Review of English Studies* 45 (1994): 604-05, Sally Mapstone comments that one of the "striking features" of the *Choice Collection* is "its continuities back and forth to early and later stages of the Scottish poetic tradition" (604).

[5] *Watson's Choice Collection,* ed. Wood, 2:ix, xix, xxii. More recent discussants have been less condemnatory, but have marginalized Watson in different ways. Cairns Craig in "The Study of Scottish Literature," from *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ., 2007), comments that Watson's *Choice Collection* was "influential" (1:20), but the collection earns only two brief citations in all of the three volumes of the *EHSL*. Fiona Stafford, in *Starting Lines in Scottish, Irish, and English Poetry from Burns to Heaney* (Oxford: Oxford Univ., 2000), 51-52, and Murray Pittock,

in *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford Univ., 2008) 46-47, read Watson in terms of his influence on later poets like Allan Ramsay and Robert Burns.

[6] James Watson, *A Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems, both Ancient and Modern. By Several Hands* (Edinburgh: James Watson, 1706), hereafter, Watson. Although I will give page numbers for references to Watson, the section entitled "The Publisher to the Reader" is unpaginated.

[7] Barbara Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton: Princeton Univ., 1996). See also Julia Boffey and John J. Thompson "Anthologies and Miscellanies: Production and Choice of Texts," *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375-1475* ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1989), 279-315.

[8] Adam Smyth, *"Profit and Delight": Printed Miscellanies in England, 1640-1682* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ., 2004), 2.

[9] *Witts recreations. Selected from the finest fancies of moderne muses* (London: Printed by R[ichard] H[odgkinson and Thomas Paine] for Humphry Blunden at the Castle in Corn-hill, 1640).

[10] Steven Zwicker, in "*Poems on Affairs of State* (London, 1689-1716 and New Haven, 1963-1975)," *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* 4 (1998): 309-17, reports that the *Poems on Affairs of State* ran to thirty volumes between 1689, the date of its original publication, and 1716.

[11] Joan DeJean, "Classical Reeducation: Decanonizing the Feminine," *Yale French Studies* 75 (1988): 26-39; the quotation is from 27.

[12] The compiler is believed to be either Bernard le Bouvier de Fontenelle or Catherine d'Aulnoy.

[13] Preface, *Recueil des plus belles pièces des poëtes françois, tant anciens que modernes, depuis Villon jusqu' à M. de Benserade*, 5 vols. (Paris: Barbin, 1692), vol. 1 (no pagination).

[14] Hobart Kemp, *A Collection of Poems By Several Hands Most of Them Written By Persons of Eminent Quality* [1672] (London: Printed by T. Warren for Francis Saunders at the Blue-Anchor in the Lower Walk of the New Exchange, 1693), no pagination.

[15] *The People of Scotland's Groans and Lamentable Complaints, Pour'd out before the High Court of Parliament* (Edinburgh: James Watson, 1700). For a complete list of Watson's publications, see D. Wyn Evans, "James Watson of Edinburgh: A Bibliography of Works from his Press, 1695-1722," *Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions* 5.2 (1982): 1-158.

[16] William Forbes, *A Pil for Pork-eaters, or a Scots Lancet for an English Swelling* (Edinburgh: James Watson, 1705), and George Ridpath, *The Reducing of Scotland by Arms and Annexing it to England as a Province Considered* (Edinburgh: James Watson, 1705).

[17] On the controversy surrounding the union, see chapter 1 of T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2000* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999); William Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations with England: A Survey to 1707*, rev. ed. (1977; Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ., 1994); J. Robertson, *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the Union of 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1995); and Christopher Whatley, *The Scots and the Union* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ., 2006).

[18] George Ridpath, *Scotland's Soveraignty Asserted* (Edinburgh, 1695), and George Hamilton, Lord Belhaven, *Speech in Parliament, the Second Day of November 1706* (Edinburgh, 1706).

[19] Bruce Levack, *The Formation of the British State: England, Scotland, and the Union, 1603-1707* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 14.

[20] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nations*, rev. ed. (1991; London: Verso, 1983), 25.

[21] Although "heterogeneity" has been seen more recently by postcolonial critics as a reactionary opposite to a more politically radical form of hybridity, I suggest that the heterogeneity that Watson's *Collection* offered did indeed in its time offer a radical challenge to the political homogeneity threatened by the combined British Parliament. See "Heterogeneity and Hybridity," in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 72-86.

[22] This was also the epigraph to *Tatler* 1 (12 April 1709).

[23] Priscella Bawcutt, "Manuscript Miscellanies in Scotland from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century" in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. Sally Mapstone (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2005), 189-210; the quotation is from 194.

[24] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1997), 189.

[25] There is a personal note here, as several were published by his rival, Andrew Anderson's widow.

[26] See David Parkinson, "The Entry of Wealth in the Middle Scots 'Crying of ane Playe,'" *Modern Philology* 93 (1995): 23-36, especially 26, and *The Christis Kirk*

Tradition: Scots Poems of Folk Festivity, ed. Allan H. MacLaine (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1996).

[27] The music moves one participant so forcibly that he "did hoast at both the Ends," and it is a disagreement about who shall dance with Tousie that initiates the brawl. See *Watson's Choice Collection*, ed. Wood, 1:2.

[28] As John M. Ward, in "Newly Devis'd Measures for Jacobean Masques," *Acta Musicologia* 60 (1988): 115-42, comments, "Many if not most of the dancing masters active at the court of England [during the second decade of the seventeenth century] appear to have been French" (115).

[29] Helena Shire discusses the collaboration between poetry and music in chapter 6 of *Song, Dance, and Poetry of the Court of Scotland Under King James VI* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1969), 139-180; see especially 144 and 165-173. Shire notes that the tune for "The Cherrie and the Slae" was still current as "part-song" and "lived on, as did its stanza, into the eighteenth century" (173).

[30] Watson also stays at a remove from the debate on the relative merits of ancient and modern texts.

[31] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard Univ., 1984), 6.

[32] Jean de la Caille, *The History of the Art of Printing* (Edinburgh: James Watson, 1713), 3.

[33] See *Watson's Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* (Glasgow: Maurice Ogle, 1869), xvii. The editor remarks that this poem was mentioned in *The Complaint of Scotland* (1549).

[34] See Jamie Reid-Baxter, "Burel, John," *ODNB* (2004),

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4099>.

[35] Gerrard Carruthers, David Goldie, and Alastair Renfrew, "Introduction," in *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 11.

[36] G. Gregory Smith, *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (London: Macmillan, 1919), 4.

[37] As Eleanor Bell, in *Questioning Scotland: Literature, Nationalism, Postmodernism* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), notes, attempts by Scottish cultural nationalist critics to define Scottishness served to perpetuate "essentialist forms of national identity such as the 'Caledonian Antisyzygy,' as a convenient means of codifying and determining Scottishness" (3).

[38] Daiches, *Paradox*, 10. According to Daiches, the union was one "significant cause" in "splitting" the nation, but Daiches believes that the divided nature of Scotland reaches back to well before 1707.

[39] This view has only recently begun to be dismantled. Janet Sorensen, in *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 2000), for example, complicates the "split [schiz] mind [phrene]" phenomenon in Scottish literature (6). As she remarks, "The writings of the center turn out to be as ambivalent as those of a supposedly 'schizophrenic' periphery" (7).

[40] Smyth, *"Profit and Delight,"* 2. While Benedict reads the miscellany as helping to create literary culture, Smyth's examination of marginal notes by actual readers of miscellanies suggests that these works challenged the idea of literary culture as much as

they helped create it: "The most significant function of printed miscellanies is to complicate certain established narratives about the history of seventeenth-century literature" (*Making the Modern Reader*, 49).

[41] Allan Ramsay, *The Ever Green, Being a Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious Before 1600* (Edinburgh: Printed by Mr. Thomas Ruddiman for the publisher Allan Ramsay, 1724), vi.

[42] See Steve Newman, "The Scots Songs of Allan Ramsay: 'Lyrick' Transformation, Popular Culture, and the Boundaries of the Scottish Enlightenment," *Modern Language Quarterly* 63 (2002): 277-314, and Murray Pittock, "Allan Ramsay and the Decolonization of Genre," *Review of English Studies* 58 (2007): 316-37.

[43] See, variously, Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1989); Murray Pittock, *The Invention of Scotland: The Stuart Myth and the Scottish Identity, 1638 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1991; and Katherine Haldane Grenier, *Tourism and Identity in Scotland, 1770-1914: Creating Caledonia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). For a critique of the criticism on Scotland and nostalgia, see Matthew Wickman, *The Ruins of Experience: Scotland's "Romantick" Highlands and the Birth of the Modern Witness* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania, 2006).