

Lord Auchinleck's Fingal

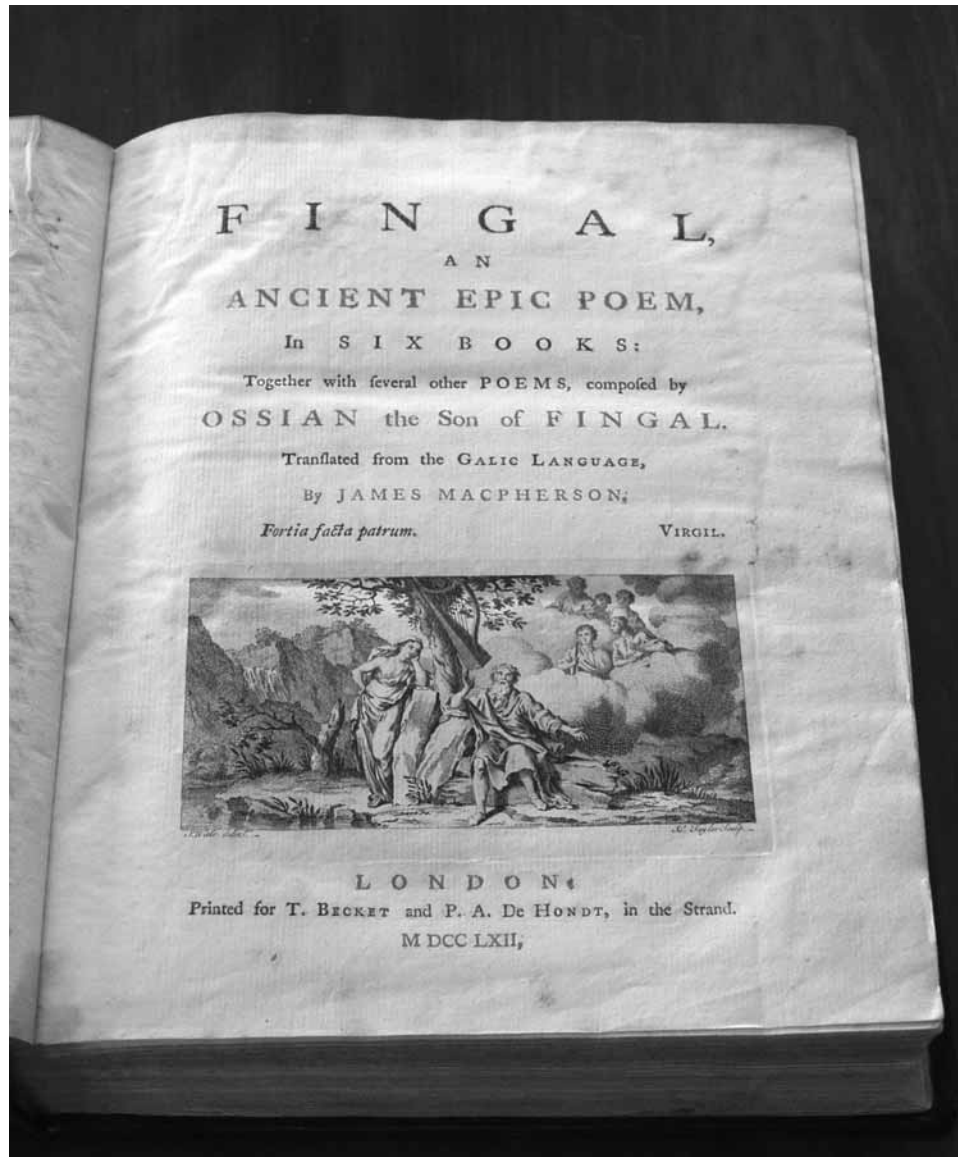
Association copy with a point of view

Paul Ruxin

There are many ways to categorize book collectors; one way is to divide them into the “books-are-sacred-objects” camp, those who would never deface a book, even with a personal bookplate on the end-papers. The others regard books as an invitation to fill in the white space with the owner’s comments and reactions to the text. There have been famous owner-annotators, for example, Hester Thrale Piozzi, whose “marginalia” in her copies of Johnson, Boswell, the Bible, and virtually every book she owned often give us a deeper insight to her world and her place in it than did the books themselves.

One pleasure provided by “association” copies is the revelations often disclosed by similar marginal notes or comments from the owner with whom a particular copy is associated. For me nothing illustrates this better than a book from the library of Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck, the father of James Boswell and a man proud of his Scots heritage. The context that makes this volume interesting is one of the most controversial literary issues in the lively 18th century, when literature had a broad significance in the world of culture and ideas it now must share with movies and television and other diversions.

The remains of James Macpherson (1736-96) lie in Westminster Abbey, perpetrating on the casual visitor the last hoax of a life now remembered—at least among Johnsonians—only for a greater one. The presence of his bones near those of the great literary figures in the Poets’ Corner was not the result, as in the case of his now-eternal neighbors, of popular recognition of his literary immortality, but came instead at his own request, and was



achieved at his own expense.

Born in rural Inverness-shire, Macpherson became a schoolmaster and then worked as a private tutor. Ambitious to write, he recognized the growing taste in Britain for ancient poetry, later to reach its peak with Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* in 1765. In Scotland

interest in ancient or bardic verse was heightened by post-1745 nostalgic romanticization of all things relating to the Highlands, and in 1758 Macpherson took advantage of it to publish an “epic” poem, *The Highlander*. Attracting the attention and encouragement of such notables as the distinguished Edinburgh scholar and rector See AUCHINLECK, page 6



CAXTONIAN

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The Land of Caxton Beckons

Book-related events each year in Britain

Junie Sinson

Each year, there occur in Britain three events which are equal to any activities conducted for those interested in the Book, its history, its production and its enjoyment. During the last decade, I have attended most of these events. As a Caxtonian, I am compelled to report that I have yet to meet a fellow Caxtonian whom I believe would not be enchanted by attendance at one or more of them.

With the hope of enticing some of you to participate in one or more of the events, I will share with you the special nature of each celebration.

HAY-ON-WYE FESTIVAL

This event occurs each year in a small town in Wales whose bookstores approach in number the seeming population of the entire community. It generally occurs during the last week in May and the first week in June. It is conducted in what would be the equivalent of a Disneyland for those who love literature and the Book.

The lectures run daily for two weeks from

morning to early evening. An immersion in books and literature is available for every visitor. The negative related to the Fair is the problem of getting there. Driving the backroads from London or Heathrow can be challenging. If courageous, you will find the experience to be extraordinary. This year's Fair is scheduled for May 27 through June 5, 2005.

THE INTERNATIONAL ANTIQUARIAN BOOK FAIR

Is conducted at a time which corresponds with the Hay-on-Wye Festival. The locale is in London. It occurs at the time and place of the unparalleled Spring London Olympia Antique Fair. The Book Fair's dealers are some of the most prestigious in

England, the United States and Europe.

It runs for approximately three days and you can count on seeing old friends from the U.S. book trade. You may also meet friendly faces whom you may know from the book world and kindred clubs such as the Grolier Club. This year's Fair will run from June 9 through June 12, 2005.

THE ANNUAL UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, BIRKBECK CONFERENCE INVOLVING THE BOOK AND THE BOOK TRADE IN THE ENGLISH SPEAKING WORLD

For twenty-six years, this seminar has been presented annually for two days at the University of London. It has also utilized the libraries and facilities in London, which have created and nourished the book trade in the English speaking world.

The speakers are world-renowned scholars who know and can report on the book and its history. Although attendees are small in number, their interest and knowledge is unequalled. Each year's conference has a single subject which has

ranged from Aspects of Printing from 1600 (1987) to Crime, Sharp Practice and the Control of Print (2003).

The sponsorship of the event is being transferred in 2005 from the University. This year's event been tentatively set for what is Thanksgiving

weekend in the US, Friday and Saturday, November 25 and 26.

It would be wonderful to share the experience of any of the events with a fellow Caxtonian.

The major negative against participating is the current value

of the dollar against the pound. That exchange rate obviously discourages travel to Great Britain. If that does not deter you, I hope to see you at one of the festivals in 2005.



Hay Festival scenes, from the festival's web site.

Talking with Audrey

A conversation with the best-selling author and Caxton speaker

Robert McCamant

Audrey Niffenegger had a nice life. She was doing excellent work as a book artist and teacher of budding book artists at Columbia College Center for the Book. But then, in her mid-thirties, she got the idea that she could write a novel, and write one she did: *The Time Traveler's Wife*, now an international best-seller, translated into 17 languages and published in 22 countries. I took the excuse of her speaking to the Caxton Club in February to chat with her about her extraordinary dual career.

Audrey is a child of the Chicago area. She grew up in Evanston, went to Evanston High School, got her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and her MFA from Northwestern. She was drawn to books as an art form almost from the beginning; she still has an accordion-fold book she constructed in a high school art class. In high school, Becky Heydeman (a fellow student) saw her drawings and told her that she should try making etchings. "She also took me to Aiko's [art materials] for the first time," Audrey exclaims.

At SAIC, Audrey embarked on a sizable book project: *The Adventuress*, a story of her own, told in brief chunks of text and 68 etchings. She made ten copies. "It was an ideal training project for me," she says. "The etching part played to my previously-developed strength, while having to learn letterpress extended me into a new area." As a teacher, she frequently urges students to look for projects that do the same thing.

On graduating from SAIC, Audrey found herself in need of a studio. She made the same decision countless artists have over the years: she enrolled in some additional classes, in this case, at the Evanston Art Center (EAC), in part to have a place to work. She took courses there from Caxtonian Caryl Seidenberg, who was scheduled to go on sabbatical the following year; she suggested Audrey as her replacement. That was the start of 15 years

See NIFFENEGGER, page 4



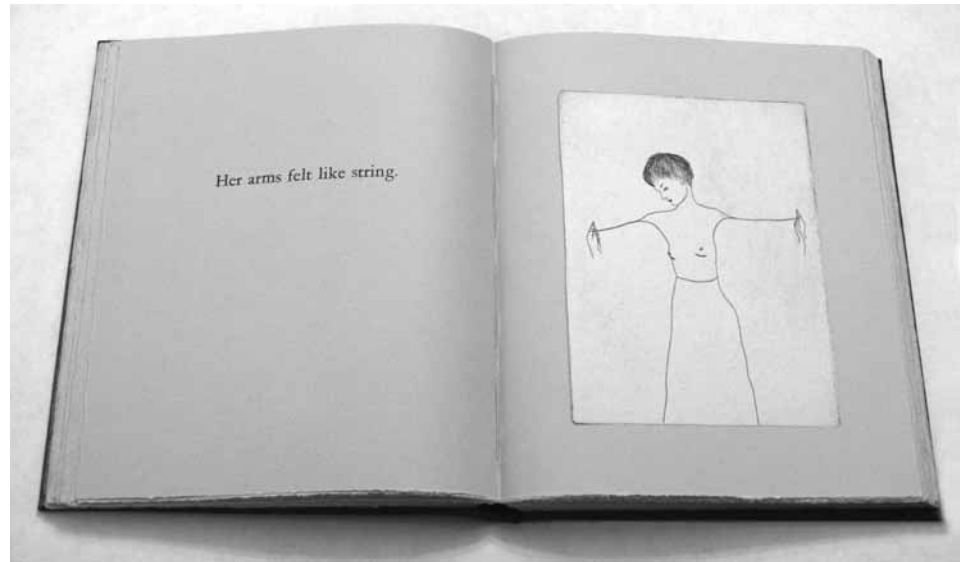
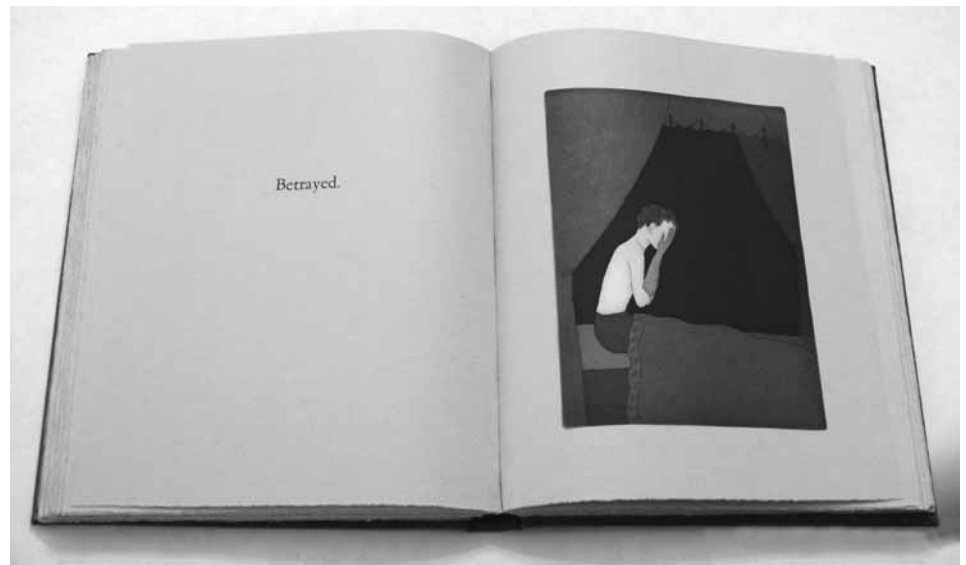
Audrey Niffenegger with the etching press in the basement of her northside home

NIFFENEGGER, from page 3

teaching etching at EAC. She still teaches a weekly etching class, but now it is at the North Shore Art League. "You make progress yourself by teaching things to people. To have a student is to have an independent researcher out there doing things you would never do yourself. When they learn something, you learn or re-learn it, too. It's as if the knowledge is contagious."

While at EAC, she did another visual novel called *Three Incestuous Sisters*. Again she made 10 copies—but this one you will be able to buy come September, when Abrams brings out a trade edition. In an interview on *artcritical.com*, Chicagoan Diane Thodos asked Audrey about the relationship between *The Adventuress*, *Three Adventurous Sisters*, and *The Time Traveler's Wife*. Her reply: "The two visual books by necessity tell simpler stories, because when you are trying to tell something in pictures you can't load on the detail the same way you can when you write everything. To some extent all three of them use the idea of lovers who can't be together. All of them ask for suspension of disbelief. They all involve something implausible or impossible as their basic premise. The paranormal is a common thread."

The Time Traveler's Wife tells the story of a woman (Clare) who falls in love with a time traveler (Henry). They "meet" in real time (when he is not time traveling) when she is a young adult, in 1991. He works at the Newberry Library, and she comes in looking for a copy of the Kelmscott Press Chaucer. As Niffenegger explained to Mark Flanagan [on the "contemporary lit" section of *About.com*], "I needed a book the Newberry Library actually owns, and that's a very famous and beautiful book, something I often call up to show my students when we visit the Newberry." The Newberry ends up as more than the setting for many scenes. As a repository of history, it can confirm the truth of Henry's discoveries in other times; as a big hulking limestone building it serves as a rock in Clare and Henry's lives; as a social center it provides Henry's otherwise rather unbelievable life



Two openings from *The Adventuress*, which Niffenegger created as an undergraduate at the School of the Art Institute.

with a realistic side. (I leave you to decide for yourself whether any Caxtonians have been used as models in the book. The publisher's note says, "Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.")

In the book, time traveling Henry visits Clare as a girl in southern Michigan, which is a place that Audrey spent time as a child, visiting relatives. Again talking to Mark Flanagan, she said, "First novels are often said to be thinly disguised autobiography. This one uses my places and things I know something about (libraries, paper making) but, alas, this is not my life, and these char-

acters are not me. I dyed my hair red as a way of saying goodbye to Clare, as I was finishing the book. She makes very different art from mine, and she's much quieter and more patient. Henry and I share a quirky sense of humor and a taste for punk, but not much else."

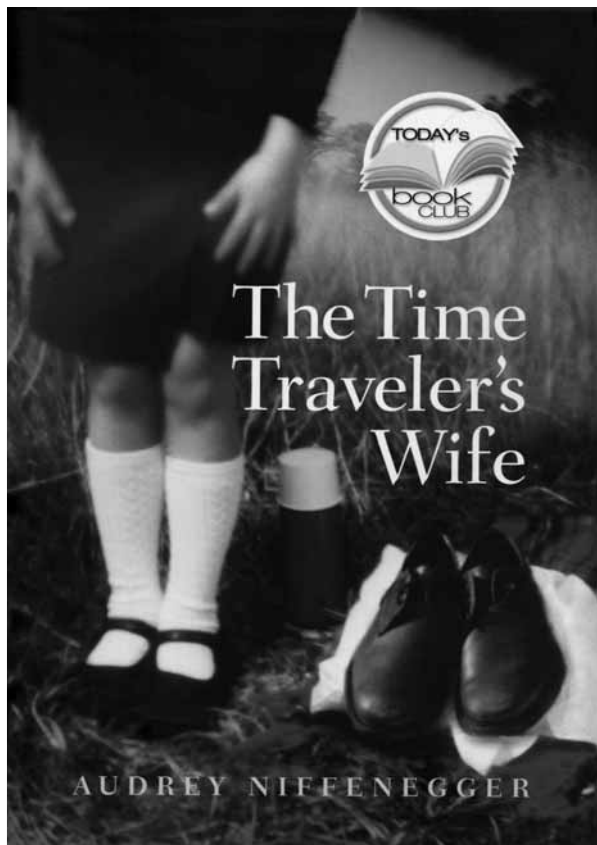
How did she manage to write her masterful book? Partly in homage to her grandparents, who had a wonderful marriage until her grandfather died suddenly of a brain tumor in his early forties, she "wanted to write about a perfect marriage that is tested by something outside of the control of the couple. The title came to me



Above, a book Niffenegger created in high school. At right, the cover of the hardback edition of her best-seller.

out of the blue, and from the title sprang the characters, and from the characters came the story," she told BookBrowse.com. "[The book] was written in a completely different order than the one it finally took... it has a rather chaotic feel to it, especially at the beginning, and that is deliberate: there is a slow piecing together, a gradual accumulation of story, that mimics the experience of the characters. I made a lot of notes about the characters. I had two timelines to help me stay organized, but no outline of the plot," she told Flanagan. "In my regular life, it got written at nights and weekends or whenever I wasn't teaching. Its episodic quality is actually good because you can write one scene in an evening," she elaborated to Carol George of the *Australian Women's Weekly*.

No question, the book has made a big difference in Audrey's life. "I was doing the broke thing until last year," she explained to me. She framed pictures. She sold art.



Sometimes she taught as many as five classes at a time. Things got somewhat more organized after the founding of the Columbia College Center for the book in 1994. She has taught there—and written the lively course descriptions in the public-class catalog—full time since 1995. But even then she had to do her own art, write

her own books, in stolen time. Now she has an assistant to help her with editing, and money to spend on travel to research her next book, *Her Fearful Symmetry*, set in London in a flat next to Highgate Cemetery.

And when she goes to book signings, the question she is most frequently asked is, has she ever met Brad Pitt? This is not an off-the-wall question. Brad and Jennifer Aniston's film company, Plan B, is planning to make a movie of *The Time Traveler's Wife*. Gus Van Sant has been hired to direct. According to the *Toronto Globe*, just over a year ago, the answer is no, she has not met Brad Pitt. Forgive me. I didn't ask if the answer is still no. But she gave the *Globe* writer, Rebecca Caldwell, a good quote, one worth repeating: "At best, I thought I was writing a small cult novel for a few librarians. I've worked so long in the visual-arts world where the audience is small... It amazes me to no end the extent to which regular people seem to be willing to take the book up and read it."

If you're interested in Audrey's limited editions, you should visit Printworks Gallery. If you want to read her book, it's in just about every library or bookstore in the land. If you want to hear her talk, come to the Midday Club on February 15.

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Photographs by the author.

AUCHINLECK, from page 1 of the High Church of St. Giles, Hugh Blair, Macpherson next published, in 1760, scraps of Gaelic or Erse poetry, titled *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland*, with an introduction by Blair. Blair suggested there that the fragments presented might be “episodes” of a larger work relating to the legendary third century Celtic hero Fingal:

It is believed that by a careful inquiry, many more remains of ancient genius... might be found in the same country where these have been collected. In particular there is reason to hope that one work of considerable length, and which deserves to be styled an heroic poem, might be recovered and translated if encouragement were given to such an undertaking.

Blair, John Home (the author of *Douglas*), and others organized a dinner for Macpherson in 1760 and raised some £60 from 40 or so subscribers, including the young James Boswell, in order to provide just such encouragement. That same year the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh joined the subscribers and commissioned Macpherson to tour the Highlands and search for more “remains” of ancient genius. Claiming to have found them, Macpherson published *Fingal, An Ancient Epic Poem*, in 1762. According to its title page, the work was “composed” by “Ossian, the son of Fingal,” and “translated” from the “Galic” language by James Macpherson. Hailed by many in Scotland as the Scottish equivalent and near-contemporary of Virgil, in time Ossian was much imitated and admired by as diverse a group as Goethe, Coleridge, Byron, and even Napoleon and Thomas Jefferson.

Enthusiasm in Scotland, on the continent, and in the colonies, however, was



Auchinleck House today. It was built about 1760 by Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck. This image is courtesy of the Landmark Trust, from whom it is available to rent as well as tour.

matched by skepticism in England. The self-identified translator’s “Advertisement” at the front of *Fingal* itself raised suspicion, at least for readers predisposed to be skeptical. In it Macpherson apologized for departing from his original scheme of either simply publishing by subscription the whole of the original manuscripts, or depositing them in a public library for examination. He had found, however, that there were no subscribers, or any present necessity for a public display. He therefore offered his translation, with the promise that “there is a design on foot to print the Originals, as soon as the translator shall have time to transcribe them for the press...” If this did not happen, he assured the reader, he would *then* deposit copies in a public library. It might be noted that, by the time of his death thirty-four years later in 1796, he had neither published the originals, nor displayed them in a library, or anywhere else, even to his most fervent Scottish supporters, with one disputed exception.

Samuel Johnson—a sensitive reader if ever there was one—was suspicious from the start. Johnson loved truth as much as he did literature, if not more, and he detected not only the 18th century in what was represented as the third, but fantasy in what paraded as history. Asked by Blair if “any man of a modern age could have written such poems,” Johnson replied, “Yes, Sir,

many men, many women, and many children.” Yet Johnson was always open to evidence, and when he and Boswell made their tour of the Hebrides in 1773, Johnson made a point of looking for old Erse or Gaelic manuscripts or texts to settle the dispute. Because Macpherson had failed earlier to produce the so-called “Originals” of Ossian’s poems, Johnson wrote, in his 1775 *Journey to the Western Islands*, of the

confirmation of his suspicions:

I suppose my opinion of the poems of Ossian is already discovered. I believe they never existed in any other form than that which we have seen. The editor, or author, never could shew the original; nor can it be shewn by any other; to revenge reasonable incredulity, by refusing evidence, is a degree of insolence, with which the world is not yet acquainted: and stubborn audacity is the last refuge of guilt.

Macpherson learned of this passage before its publication and wrote to Johnson demanding that it be deleted, asking an apology, and threatening him with harm. Some accounts suggest he even challenged Johnson to a duel. In 1775 Macpherson was a young man 39 nine years old, and Johnson sixty-six. But Johnson, like Macpherson, large and powerful, was also a former boxer, still a strong swimmer, and not to be intimidated. His reply is famous, and worth repeating:

Mr. James Macpherson—I received your foolish and impudent note. Whatever insult is offered me I will do my best to repel, and what I cannot do for myself the law will do for me. I will not desist from detecting what I think a cheat, from any fear of the menaces of a Ruffian.

You want me to retract. What shall I retract? I thought your book an imposture from the beginning, I think it upon yet surer reasons an imposture still. For this opinion I give the publick my reasons which I here dare you to refute.

But however I may despise you, I reverence truth and if you can prove the genuineness of the work I will confess it. Your rage I defy, your abilities... are not so formidable, and what I have heard of your morals disposes me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you can prove.

You may print this if you will.
Sam: Johnson

Boswell had known of Johnson's thinking about Ossian for many years. The controversy was one in which Boswell, an early supporter of Macpherson's efforts, was never free from the tension that always held him taut between the views of his hero Johnson, and his father, Alexander Boswell, the eighth laird of Auchinleck. The Boswells' pride in their aristocratic and ancient Scots heritage was no less strong in Alexander the father than it was in James the son. Remember too that Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck, was one of the judges of the highest courts in Scotland. He was a man accustomed to sifting through evidence, separating objective indicia of facts from subjective wishes. Small details were not likely to be missed in his scrupulous review of any circumstances.

In the spring of 1761 James, then studying law under his father's personal direction, had accompanied his father on the Northern Circuit, where Lord Auchinleck not only heard cases but indulged his interest in Scottish history, visiting historic sites and meeting equally distinguished Scots. James had accompanied his father earlier on the Northern Circuit, in 1758, when he kept his first known journal (now lost). He also kept a journal of the 1761 trip. It tells us that on Wednesday 13 May 1761, the Boswells arrived at Dalwhinnie, near Aviemore, both in Inverness-shire, the ancestral home of the Macphersons.



James Macpherson © ST ANDREWS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY / SCRAN

Dalwhinnie, on the Truim, which feeds into the Spey, had been the home of Ewen Macpherson of Cluny, often called Cluny Macpherson, the hereditary chief of the Macpherson clan. He was a hero, leading the Jacobite forces with success at Falkirk, before the ultimate disaster at Culloden. After the defeat of the Young Pretender's forces, the humiliation heaped on the Highlanders included not only banning the kilt and the bagpipe, but the destruction of the Macpherson seat at Cluny. James Boswell wrote in his journal for that same day in 1761 that they rode on "to the burnt house of Cluny—it made my heart sore to see it."

With the Boswells that day was another Macpherson, Macpherson of Benchar. It was surely known to both James and his father that their guide was related to Cluny Macpherson, and it is clear that by that date in 1761, James, and probably his father also, knew of another cousin, the schoolmaster and poet, James Macpherson. We know that Lord Auchinleck made later tours of the Northern Circuit, stopping in many of the same places, and no doubt seeing many of the same people. In 1764, for example, his itinerary again took him to

Inverness-shire, and perhaps again to Macpherson of Benchar.

On one of these Northern Circuit tours (we do not know which) Macpherson of Benchar, an early amateur archaeologist, told Lord Auchinleck that between Dalwhinnie and Aviemore to the northwest there were tumuli, or grave mounds, several of which he had opened, thereby discovering two important facts: first, that the remains had been buried lying on a north/south axis, and second, that at right angles to, and above, each body was the horn of a red deer. The first suggests that the graves antedated the arrival of Christianity in the Highlands, and dated therefore to the Ossian era, because thereafter bodies were buried on the east/west axis, facing the Holy Land. And, according to Lord Auchinleck, the heroes in the

Ossian poems, when they are going to die, commonly say "make ready my Deers horn."

Lord Auchinleck might have had in mind at least two passages, one each in *Fingal* and *Temora* published first in 1762. In *Fingal*, Book IV, we find:

Raise, Oscar, rather raise my tomb.
I will not yield the war to thee. The first and bloodiest in the strife, my arm shall teach thee how to fight. But remember, my son, to place this sword, this bow, the horn of my deer, within that dark and narrow house, whose mark is one grey stone!

In a fragment from *Temora*, included in *Fingal*, we find:

Ossian, carry me to my hills! Raise the stones of my fame. Place the horn of the deer, and my sword within my narrow dwelling.

That Lord Auchinleck remembered lines such as these is clear from his brief account of a conversation with Macpherson of Benchar, written in his hand on the blank recto leaf after the free front fly leaf—which itself has his signature, "Alex. Boswel"—in a book from his own library.

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As some confirmation of the Authenticity of Ossian's Poems I must here note that in sundry places of Ossian when a Hero or great man is going to die the commonly says make ready my Deer's horn, the meaning of which I never understood till on going the West circuit, I met with Mr. Pherson of Benchar, at Dalohinrie, and inquiring at him if there were any old monuments in that Country, He told me that between Dalohinrie & Aricmore there was a place where there appeared several tumuli like graves, that he had open'd up two of them and found first below the heatheric turf that was upon it, a parcel of Stones laid in the form of a Causeway, that below it was some Earth & below it Stones in the form of a Causeway, very neatly laid, that these Causeways reached from end to end the whole length of the tumulus, and also the whole breadth, that below the undermost Causeway was some very fine earth, and under it the bones of a man lying in the direction of North & South, which Benchar said convinced him the person had been buried there before Christianity had been introduced to that Country, for that after it was introduced every where the custom was to bury with the Corps looking to the East, He in the last place inform'd me that at right angles with the bodies and above each of them there was a Red Deer's Horn.

AUCHINLECK, from page 7

This volume contains, bound together: *Fingal*, published in 1762; *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian*, published in 1763 (unattributed, but by Hugh Blair); and *Temora An Ancient Epic Poem*, published in 1763. *Fingal* and *Temora* are identified as having been “translated from the Galic language” by James Macpherson. *Temora* also contains “A Dissertation,” by Macpherson, and “A Specimen of the Original of *Temora*,” in Gaelic. This last was offered “for the satisfaction of those who doubt the authenticity of Ossian’s poems,” according to Macpherson’s explanatory note in *Temora*, to which he added: “To print any part of the former collection was unnecessary, as a copy of the originals lay, for many months, in the bookseller’s hands, for the inspection of the curious.” Note, the claim is that “a copy of the originals” had been in the bookseller’s hands.

We do not know when Lord Auchinleck acquired these books, whether he acquired them separately and had them bound together, or whether he bought the combined volume in its current form. The binding itself is distinctly mid-18th century. Nor, unfortunately, do we know when he wrote his essay.

In January 1775, twelve years after the appearance of *Temora*, some curious support for Macpherson’s claim that “a copy of the originals” had been on display appeared in a notice printed by the publisher of *Fingal* in the *London Chronicle* and the *St. James Chronicle*. The notice read:

To the Public. Doctor Johnson having asserted in his late publication [*A Journey to the Western Islands*], that the Translator of Ossian’s Poems “never could show the Original, nor can it be shown by any other,” I hereby declare, that the Originals of *Fingal* and other Poems of Ossian, lay in my shop for many months in the year 1762, for the inspection of the curious. The Public were not only apprized of their lying there, for inspection,

but even proposals for publishing the Originals of the Poems of Ossian were dispersed through the kingdom, and advertized in the news-papers. Upon finding that a number of Subscribers, sufficient to bear the expences, were not likely to appear, I returned the manuscripts to the Proprietor, in whose hands they still remain.

Adelphi, Jan. 19, 1775. Tho. Becket.

Note here the inconsistency between Becket’s 1775 claim that he had displayed the “Originals” for many months in 1762, and Macpherson’s own claim in the Advertisement to the 1762 printing of *Fingal* that there was no “present necessity” for a public display, but that he might consider one later, if he had not yet transcribed them for the press. Furthermore, with the printing of *Temora* in 1763, he claimed only that a copy of the originals had in fact been at the booksellers. Yet, in 1775, Becket claimed that he had displayed “the Originals” themselves in early 1762. Nor was Becket either a disinterested neutral in the question of the existence of the “Originals,” or particularly qualified to make a judgment about their authenticity. In fact, in a letter to David Garrick on 4 February 1775, after reading Becket’s notices, Boswell asked:

How could you let Honest Tom Becket put an Advertisement into the Newspapers gravely asserting that the *originals* of *Fingal* and other Poems of Ossian lay in his shop for the inspection of the curious, when for any thing that he knows those papers may have been muster rolls of the highland regiment, or receipts for brewing heathbeer, distilling whiskey, or baking oatmeal cakes; for, not a word of Erse does he understand.

Becket was Garrick’s—as well as Macpherson’s—publisher.

Boswell had asked Johnson, in an earlier letter of 27 January 1775, what Becket had meant by the “Originals” of *Fingal*. Although Johnson seems never to have replied directly to that inquiry, he did respond, testily, to an inquiry from Boswell dated 2 February 1775, relating current

gossip in Edinburgh that Macpherson had offered to let Johnson see the “originals in his possession.” Denying the existence of any Erse documents, Johnson wrote:

I am surprized that, knowing as you do the disposition of your countrymen to tell lies in favour of each other, you can be at all affected by any reports that circulate among them. . . . Where are the manuscripts? They can be shown if they exist, but they were never shown.

Whether or not they had been offered to Johnson for his review, Hugh Blair, referring in 1797 to Becket’s notice, stated that Becket had “found no one person had ever called to look at the originals.”

Lord Auchinleck’s essay begins: “As some confirmation of the Authenticity of Ossian’s Poems, I must here note that in sundry places of Ossian when a Hero or great man is going to die, He commonly says make ready my Deers horn, The meaning of which I never understood till on going the North Circuit. . . .” He had learned from Macpherson of Benchar of the pre-Christian era graves with deer horns. What are we to make of this? Has Lord Auchinleck’s memory and his legal training marshaled evidence supporting Macpherson’s claims of authenticity, a cause in which he, like many Scots, wanted to believe?

Lord Auchinleck’s essay, as we can observe, is undated. He lived until 1782, and we cannot connect with certainty the composition of the essay to any particular Northern Circuit trip. The chronology of Macpherson’s publications made clear that Lord Auchinleck wrote it sometime after the publication of *Fingal* and *Temora* in 1762 and 1763, and probably after his 1764 Northern Circuit. It appears that it was during that visit that Macpherson of Benchar told Lord Auchinleck of the contents of the tumuli. This must be so, since the purported poems of Ossian were not published until more than a year after the spring of 1761 Northern Circuit visit and meeting with Macpherson of Benchar memorialized by James Boswell. The 1762 and 1763 “translations” do, in fact, as we have noted, “in sundry places” mention

See AUCHINLECK, page 10

opposite page: Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck’s essay in the front of his copy of *Fingal*.

AUCHINLECK, from page 9

dying heroes asking for their deer horns. It is hardly a criticism of Lord Auchinleck that he appears to have forgotten a footnote near the very beginning of *Fingal*, and well before the references to deers horns, explaining that in “the manner of burial among ancient Scots...above [the body] they placed the horn of a deer, the symbol of hunting.” It is instead a tribute to his memory that he remembered the lines themselves.

Lord Auchinleck’s curiosity about the references to deer horns likely did not come from a reading of the Ossianic materials in their earliest form. The 1760 Macpherson *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* contains fragments (fifteen in the first edition of 1760, sixteen in a subsequent edition of the same year), some of which were alleged to have been written by Ossian, and to be part of a larger work. But there is no mention of entombed deer horns there, although there are references indeed to dying heroes, deer hunters and tombs.

Does Alexander Boswell’s brief argument indeed provide support for the “Authenticity of Ossian’s Poems” as he claims? In the first place, it is not obvious if he is suggesting that the references to deer horns merely confirm that the Ossian poems contain “authentic” ancient detail supported by archeological data, or whether he means to say that such data actually confirm the “authenticity” of the poems as “translations” of ancient Gaelic or Erse. Nor, of course, does he appear to consider the fact that the source of his information about the deer horns in the tombs, Macpherson of Benchar, could also have provided the same information to his cousin, James Macpherson, or that James Macpherson could have learned of their existence from others during his research journeys in the North.

In fairness to both sides it should be said that the arguments over “authenticity” and “originals” may be ships passing in the night. Johnson focused on (and ultimately was incensed by) Macpherson’s literal claim to be, and insistence on being recognized as, “translator,” rather than as transcriber or recreator or compiler of works from an ancient narrative tradition. While that tradition was originally, of course, oral rather

than written, Johnson, holding Macpherson to his own words, demanded to see documents, written words, from which the “translations” were made. Even Johnson, of course, did not believe Macpherson had original manuscripts from the 3rd century A.D., in no small part because there was never any claim that a written Gaelic or Erse existed in the third century, let alone some form of manuscript in which it could have survived.

Macpherson’s supporters, on the other hand, then and now, can be seen as arguing more for the existence of an historic line of epic Gaelic narrative, originally orally transmitted, and only much later, perhaps, transcribed. Johnson himself, in his *Journey*, recognizes that tradition of bards and *senachies*, or “men of talk,” and would not have denied the possibility of ancient legends handed down orally.

Macpherson may well have drawn on transcriptions of those legends into Gaelic manuscripts, a few centuries old at most, as he did on other sources such as interviews with locals (including perhaps Macpherson of Benchar). But Johnson and Macpherson were both stubborn, proud men, and Macpherson’s refusal to characterize his work in a way that would have permitted Johnson to accept his sources collided with Johnson’s insistence that what was offered as “translation,” not recreation or transcription, should be tested against its alleged sources. If Macpherson may have claimed more than he needed, Johnson may have insisted on more than really mattered. Modern scholarship grants Macpherson credit for passing on and preserving remnants of the Highlands that might otherwise have been lost. Johnson just as certainly established that *Fingal* was something other than represented by Macpherson. While Lord Auchinleck’s essay can be seen as reframing the question of the authenticity of *Fingal*, it surely does not discredit Johnson’s better known, but entirely different point.

No matter, for our purposes. Lord Auchinleck’s copy of *Fingal* is more than just scarce first editions of several of the famous and controversial works of Macpherson. It is proof that Macpherson’s work mattered, intensely, and personally, to

a great man of Scottish jurisprudence, and the father of the remarkable author of both remarkable books and a remarkable life. We can feel that life, and the life of its progenitor, when we hold that book ourselves, and read thoughts written only for the owner’s satisfaction, in his own hand.

This volume, with Lord Auchinleck’s essay, provides more than its text alone could reveal. It gives us not only a contemporary comment on the famous debate the text initiated, but also a tangible connection of our own, the only physical connection possible, to those people, and their times, and places. We could not otherwise touch them, but we can, and do, through their books.

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This article has been published as a handsome keepsake volume by The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell, in which form it is available from Yale University. It was also part of a presentation to the Aldus Society of Columbus, Ohio in May of 2004.

Book photographs, of a book in the author’s collection, by Robert McCamant.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR DISBOUND AND DISPERSED: THE LEAF BOOK CONSIDERED

The Club has organized a major exhibition that will open in April 2005 coincident with our monthly meeting, to be held at the Newberry Library on April 20. The exhibition celebrates the centenary of publication of the Club’s 1905 leaf book (that broke an incomplete copy of the first edition of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*) with an exhibition of more than 60 leaf books from public and private collections. Joel Barry Silver, Curator of Books, Lilly Library, Indiana University, is the curator of the exhibition.

A 200-page illustrated catalogue will be published by the Club; Christopher de Hamel, Donnelley Fellow Librarian at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, will provide the introduction.

A public program on May 20 will discuss legal and ethical issues of book breaking and leaf book publication.

Caxtonians Collect: Ely Liebow

Third in a series of interviews with members

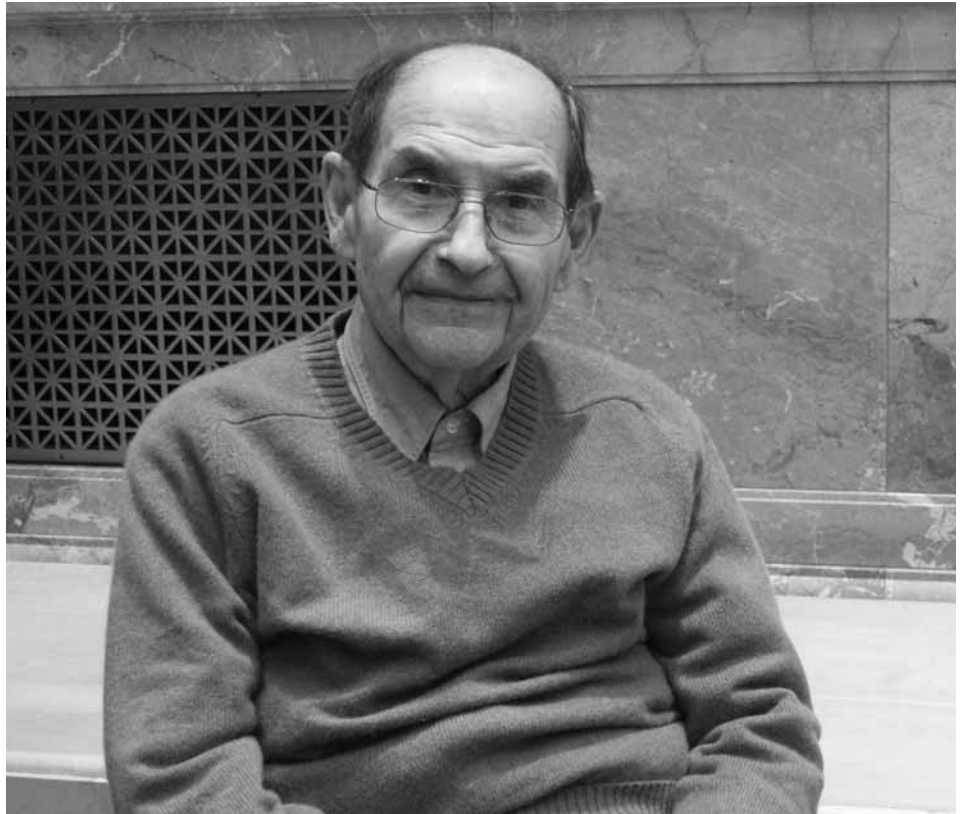
Interviewed by Kathryn R. J. Tutkus

Ely Liebow is listed in the Caxton directory as collecting 18th century English literature, detective fiction, and Yiddish literature. But when asked what he collects, he replies first with, "Holmes... Doyle. I've got a lot of Doyle." But then he admits, "Yiddish, too. It's hard to locate Yiddish books. And 18th Century English literature is how I began. My Ph.D. dissertation was on Henry Fielding. Back then I never thought I'd be collecting first editions of Doyle." Between my calling and our getting together for the interview, Liebow counted his Holmes: it turns out he has more than 70 first editions.

Liebow went to the University of Maryland just before WWII. He signed up for the Naval Reserve after his first semester, and soon his academic career was interrupted by three years in the Navy. "I became a medic. I saw two ships: one (full of Marines) that invaded Guam, and one that brought me home. We took care of Marines injured in the fighting at Guam, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. It was MASH with no breaks for commercials." A small monograph, *How I Took Guam With My 10cc Syringe*, was one outcome. After the war he went to American University to finish his B.A. and then the University of Chicago for his M.A. He went to Rutgers University to pursue a Ph.D. He is now an emeritus professor at Northeastern Illinois University. His wife, Phoebe, is a retired nurse and nurse supervisor. She collects books on medical topics.

Along the way he became interested in Yiddish. "All of a sudden I thought, I'm not doing anything with my Yiddish. My folks spoke Yiddish and English. I grew up listening to Yiddish. I can understand it mostly by ear. I used to teach Yiddish literature courses at Northeastern, and still teach Yiddish at Congregation Solel in Highland Park."

Liebow wrote one book: *Dr. Joe Bell, Model for Sherlock Holmes* (Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1982), and co-



edited two books on Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes. The book on Bell explains another collecting specialty: he has an extensive collection of books on the history of Scottish medicine, as well. He is also working on translating *The Hound of the Baskervilles* into Yiddish. He vividly recalls Caxtonian Fred Kittel's exhibit at the Newberry, which included one of Joe Bell's early surgical kits.

When Liebow started collecting, "it was mostly through the mail... mostly from book dealers in England." He joined the Caxton Club in 1983. He found out about it from a conversation with magician Jay Marshall. He also belongs to Sherlock Holmes groups, Hugo's Companions and the Baker Street Irregulars.

Liebow has just lately been reading *Words on Fire: The Unfinished Story of Yiddish* by Dovid Katz. I asked him if the current surge of interest in Yiddish amongst the younger generation who are becoming Orthodox has anything to do with its rise in popularity as a language to

be studied, spoken and collected in book form. "If you *become* Orthodox, it probably means you haven't been speaking Yiddish all the time. At the end of Katz's book, one of the observations he makes, and it is obviously true, the future of Yiddish is going to be with the Hassidim, the ultra-Orthodox, because they speak it at home, grow up with it. Printed books are still a small part of the Yiddish world."

I asked Liebow what were his favorite things in his collection, and he instead replied with one *not* in his collection: "I can certainly tell you one that got away that I would love to have. Long ago, when I was in Detroit, I saw a first edition of *Tom Jones*, a little thing, as I recall, but several volumes. It was Henry James' copy with his notes. It was selling for \$200. Unfortunately I didn't have anything like that back then. I couldn't buy it but I've thought about it ever since. I can still see it."

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Photograph by Robert McCamant.

Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program

February 11, 2005

Adrian Alexander

“Rediscovering an American Historical Giant”

Two significant events in America occurred in 1848: the discovery of gold in California, and the arrival of a coffee-laden Brazilian clipper ship into the Baltimore harbor 37 days ahead of schedule! The ship's speed was attributed to the captain's use of charts and sailing directions by Matthew Maury.

Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873) was a self-educated scientist and naval captain, whose writings single-handedly revolutionized world sea travel. Maury stated, “Belts of calm in the seas are like mountains on the land: they stand in the way of the voyager. But, like mountains, calm belts do have their passes, they do have their gaps.” Maury's innovative methods of collecting and reducing data on wind and ocean currents brought about a revolution in marine navigation. His work led to the founding of the Naval Observatory and later the Naval Academy at Annapolis. During the Civil War, his torn sympathies took him back to Virginia where he developed strategies for the Confederate Navy and invented a torpedo. Post Civil War, he was a man without a country for a while, but the recognition of his genius and past service to the country rehabilitated him, and he died a national hero.

Adrian Alexander, a retired University of Chicago staff member and currently a Special Collections volunteer at the Newberry, will tell us how this brilliant, far-sighted man was able to unlock the mysteries of the sea.

Beyond February...

MARCH LUNCHEON:

Friday, March 11, Ed Quattrocchi has been rescheduled to speak on “Selected Seminal Books in the Development of Early Modern Europe.”

MARCH DINNER:

Wednesday, March 16, Eric Holzenberg, Director of the Grolier Club, will speak about Sir Thomas Phillips, an eccentric, contentious and stingy 19th-century Englishman whose Middle Hill Press executed his grandiose printing schemes.

All luncheon and dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of BankOne, Madison & Clark, Chicago. Luncheon: buffet opens at 11:30; program 12:30-1:30. Dinner meetings: spirits at 5 pm, dinner at 6 pm, lecture at 7:30 pm.

Dinner Program

February 16, 2005

Audrey Niffenegger

Audrey Niffenegger, author of the best-selling novel *The Time Traveler's Wife*, will speak about her work as a book artist and as a novelist, comparing and contrasting her career trajectories in those fields. *The Time Traveler's Wife* is simultaneously a science fiction concept of “chrono displacement” and the highly original love story of Clare and Henry DeTamble. Chicago and the world of books and book collectors have a prominent role in the novel. The couple lives in Lincoln Park and Henry is a librarian at the Newberry Library. Filming of a movie derived from the novel appears imminent.

Audrey Niffenegger is a Professor at Columbia College's Center for Book and Paper Arts where she has taught printmaking, drawing, book design, letterpress and writing since 1993. She is represented in Chicago by Printworks Gallery.

Although *The Time Traveler's Wife* is her first novel, Audrey has produced several artist's books including the extraordinary *Three Incestuous Sisters*, which is hand bound, letterpress, and contains 80 color aquatint etchings. She recently wrote and illustrated a short story, “Prudence: The Cautionary Tale of a Picky Eater,” that is featured in *Poisonous Plants at Table*, the tongue-in-cheek book that is the next publication of Caxtonian Bob McCamant's Sherwin Beach Press. Audrey is presently at work on her second novel.

APRIL LUNCHEON:

Friday, April 8, Steven Tomashefsky will talk about his collection of books about birds, and specifically about his experience at a recent Christie's Audubon print sale.

APRIL DINNER:

Wednesday, April 20, Christopher de Hamel will give the opening lecture for the Leaf Book exhibit at the Newberry Library on the history of the leaf book genre and its cultural significance.

For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org. Members and guests: Lunch \$25, Dinner \$45. Discount parking available for evening meetings, with a stamped ticket, at Standard Self-Park, 172 W. Madison.