

Beethoven and George Thomson: A New Letter Fragment from 1816

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*****Note: Figures may be missing from this format of the document**

In his 1956 summary of the correspondence between Ludwig van Beethoven and George Thomson, Donald MacArdle noted parenthetically that Thomson's letter of October 20, 1816, to Beethoven "... as it appears in Thomson's Letterbook is apparently incomplete."¹ Thomson's biographer James Cuthbert Hadden made a similar observation in his lengthy chapter on Thomson's correspondence with Beethoven: "... it seems probable that by some accident the copying of the letter was interrupted and the intention of completing it never carried out."² The letter is also incomplete in the two most recent editions of Beethoven's correspondence.³ Despite its incomplete state in the manuscript source, neither MacArdle nor Hadden expressed any doubt about Beethoven receiving the October 20 letter, and from later missives they were able to infer some of the contents of the missing portion of the letter. With the discovery of a new letter fragment—British Library Additional 35269, f. 154 (see Figures 1a and 1b), hereafter "folio 154"—I will complete, in part, that entry in Thomson's Letterbook and add some clarification to the Beethoven-Thomson relationship. (For an outline of the correspondence, see Table 1.)

George Thomson of Edinburgh was a civil servant, amateur musician, folksong collector, and publisher who commissioned 179 folksong arrangements from Beethoven. David Fraser Harris described Thomson as a "most indispensable person" in writing the history of musical life in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Edinburgh; Harris observed that Thomson was the "self-appointed honorary secretary to the Scottish Muses."⁴ Roger Fiske praised Thomson's efforts—long, arduous and without financial remuneration—to contribute to the Scottish national inheritance, noting that his ambitions were greater "than any of his rivals. He saw the publishing of Scotch Songs as an act of patriotism."⁵ A meticulous record-keeper, Thomson filed and annotated his received correspondence and made copies of his outgoing letters regarding his folksong publications. In addition to being valuable sources for Harris's study, his papers have enabled scholars to reconstruct most of his correspondence with Beethoven.

Barry Cooper and Petra Weber-Bockholdt have published monographs on Beethoven's seventeen-year relationship (1803-1820) with Thomson. Both authors provide background on the sources, the correspondence, and musical life in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland, and they offer stylistic analyses of the works and their relation to Beethoven's oeuvre as well as to settings by the other composers Thomson commissioned, such as Haydn, Weber, Hummel, Kozeluch,

Table 1. A Brief Chronology of the Beethoven-Thomson Correspondence

July 20, 1803: Thomson's first letter to Beethoven (lost)
October 5, 1803: Beethoven's first letter to Thomson
[November 8, 1803 – January 1, 1816: 30 letters exchanged]

July 8, 1816: Thomson to Beethoven
*Sent 7 melodies (Group X)

October 20, 1816: Thomson to Beethoven
Existing fragment ("October 20 fragment"), Add. 35267, ff. 178r-179
* Request for 6 potpourri overtures (out of 19 Continental folksongs [Group IX & Group VIII/6])
* No mention of *The Jolly Beggars*

New fragment ("folio 154"), Add. 35269, f. 154
* Request for overture to *The Jolly Beggars*
* Reference to the 19th Continental melody ("Cossack" [Group VIII/6])
* Of the 7 melodies sent in July, arrange only "Les Montagnards Ecossois"
* "They bid me sleep" (?)

December 20, 1816: Thomson to Beethoven
* Change request of overture for *The Jolly Beggars* to one for a collection of songs
* Reiteration of "Les Montagnards Ecossois" and "They bid me sleep"
* No melodies copied in Letterbook

January 18, 1817: Beethoven to Thomson
January 24, 1817: Thomson to Beethoven
* Reiteration of "Les Montagnards Ecossois" and "They bid me sleep"
* This time, both melodies included

[February 15, 1817 – November 23, 1819: 11 letters exchanged]
June 14, 1820: Thomson's last letter to Beethoven

Pleyel, et al.⁶ Cooper provides a comprehensive chronology of the settings and a foundation for further research; in so doing, he uses the two primary sets of correspondence that MacArdle used for his 1956 article: British Library Add. 35263-5, the volumes of which are bound as "Geo. Thomson of Edinburgh. Correspondence," and Add. 35266-9, bound as "Geo. Thomson of Edinburgh Letterbooks." (See Table 2.) Each of the seven bound manuscripts is a multi-year volume. The Correspondence volumes contain hundreds of letters to Thomson from the various poets, publishers, collectors, and composers involved in his publications. The Letterbooks are copybooks: they are essentially large diaries, with from 141 to 188 blank folios on which Thomson copied his replies to those letters in the Correspondence volumes. The Letterbook that is of concern presently, Add. 35269, dates from 1829 to 1851—that is, from two years after Beethoven's death until the year of Thomson's death. This Letterbook has hitherto been out of the public ken regarding Thomson's dealings with Beethoven.

Thomson's final Letterbook entry is at the end of Add. 35269. The long letter (ff. 146v-153v), entitled "Copy of the Vindication sent to Capt. Grey," is dated January 30, 1851, less than three weeks before Thomson's death on February 18. Towards the end of this letter, Thomson summarized his life-long endeavor, namely his

... commendable literary task, that of purifying our national Songs, by removing from an [*sic*] union with the Scottish Melodies, such songs of a wide age as could no longer be sung in good Society and by introducing in their places, appropriate & Beautiful Songs written by Burns, and by Sir Walter Scott, Wm Smyth, Joanna Baillie, the Authors of the pleasures of Hope, &c &c giving to the Public a Collection of Three hundred Songs ancient and Modern, and containing one hundred and twenty additional songs purely English, adapted to that number of the Scottish Melodies, not one song of the 420 being such as could raise a blush in the cheek of the most delicate female, not one such as dying I could wish to blot — the Symphonies & Accompaniments to such Melody are every way mostly of the songs, being composed by the very greatest Musicians of Germany, the first in Europe — viz. Pleyel, Haydn, Beethoven, Weber, &c.⁷

**Table 2. Thomson's Papers
in the British Library**

Geo. Thomson of Edinburgh. Correspondence
[letters received]

Additional 35263 (Vol. I): 1793-1810

Additional 35264 (Vol. II): 1811-1817

Additional 35265 (Vol. III): 1818-1847

Geo. Thomson of Edinburgh Letterbooks
[copies of letters sent]

Additional 35266 (Vol. I): 1803-1809

Additional 35267 (Vol. II): 1809-1817

Additional 35268 (Vol. III): 1817-1828

Additional 35269 (Vol. IV): 1829-1851

My present concern, however, is not with Thomson's final Letterbook entry but with what the British Museum inserted after it: folio 154, the once missing fragment of Thomson's October 20, 1816, letter to Beethoven.

When the British Museum acquired Thomson's papers in 1899,⁸ a librarian tipped-in folio 154 after the 1851 "Vindication" Letterbook entry.⁹ The librarian added in pencil at the top "[Thomson to Beethoven: 1814-15?]" and paginated it as folio 154. (See Figure 1a.) Contrary to this procedure—and rather counter-intuitively—the librarians usually placed drafts of Thomson's responses in the Correspondence manuscripts (i.e. they placed outgoing letters in the manuscript that otherwise contained incoming letters). In the case of folio 154, however, they more logically inserted it into the Letterbook (i.e., the copybook of outgoing letters). Perhaps folio 154 was loose when Thomson's estate sold the materials to the British Museum, and the executors simply inserted the page into the end of the last volume because it had no date. Then, when the librarians found it they decided to keep it there, even though their tentative dating should have placed it in an earlier volume.

Evidence in support of this speculation is that Hadden had access to Thomson's papers before they were sold to the British Museum (he published his biography of Thomson the year before the Museum purchased the manuscripts). Hadden was not aware of what eventually became folio 154, even though he had every reason to make use of all the manuscript materials, unlike most Beethoven scholars who have focused on the volumes likely to contain Beethoven material (i.e., those volumes that date from the composer's lifetime, hence excluding Add. 35269). Thus, the folio must have been misplaced until the transfer of the papers to the British Museum, whereupon it resurfaced and was placed in the end of the last volume, where it remained unnoticed for a century. The librarian's tentative dating of 1814-15 was remarkably close to the actual date of October 20, 1816.

Despite his normal fastidiousness, Thomson made occasional mistakes in his Letterbooks, such as forgetting to include musical examples or forgetting to copy a letter before sending it and thus only including a summary.¹⁰ Folio 154 can be traced to a similar mistake. The Letterbook entry for October 20, 1816 (Add. 35267, ff.178r-179v, hereafter the "October 20 fragment") stops without a formal closing even though Thomson regularly signed and concluded his Letterbook copies. The last words of this letter, "pour me les rendre utiles" ("in order to make them useful to me"), are at the end of a full page of text (f. 179r); on the verso (f. 179v), four-fifths of the page is blank, and a new letter begins in the last fifth of the page. Unfortunately, there is no evidence as to whether or not folio 154 begins immediately where the Letterbook copy stops in the October 20 fragment (on Add. 35267, f. 179r). Regardless, based on the contents of both sources—folio 154 and the October 20 fragment, which together form most (although not all) of the original letter sent to Beethoven—it is entirely plausible that the contents of folio 154 were destined for that blank space after the October 20 fragment (on Add. 35267, f. 179v).

Without any room for salutation, folio 154 begins in medias res with the description of a commission, indicating that it is a second (or third or following) page:¹¹

Je souhait aussi que vous composiez une Ouverture originale, poco à la Scozzese, pour être mise à la tête d'un Opera Ecossois, (per la Camera) nominé Les Gueux Enjoués, – ouvrage plein d'humeur la plus comique, & de saillies les plus vives. La troupe est composée de Soldats reformés, de Chaudronniers de Campagne, d'Egyptiennes, de Chanteurs errantes, et autre vagabonds jovials; qui se reunissant avec leurs femmes dans un Cabaret un soir d'hiver, le passant à faire bonne chere, à chanter leurs amours, à danser, et à noyer dans l'eau de vie, tous leurs chagrins. C'est pourquoi que votre Ouverture doit être joyeux, animé, et scherzose au possible.

Ceci vous vaudra douze ducats de plus; de sorte que Mssrs. Fries vous en feront toucher 48 ducats desque vous leur remettiez entre les mains les manuscrits.

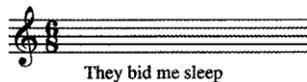
originale

Vous aurez la bonté de composer cette Ouverture ^ le plutot que vos propres affaires le permettront.

Sans doute vous avez conservé la copie originale des 19 Airs. On m'en a envoyé 18 dans un paquet: – et l'autre, (Air Cosaque) est le sixieme d'un autre paquet, et commence



Si vous n'avez pas encore harmonisé les 7 Airs, que je vous envoyai au mois de Juillet passé je vous prie de n'en harmoniser aucun, excepté No. 7, c'est à dire, "Les Montagnards Ecossois," comme c'est le seul dont je pourrai faire usage. Il me faut aussi un autre Airs dans vos mains qui commence



Translation

I would also like you to compose an original overture, *poco it la Scozzese*, to be put at the beginning of a Scottish opera (for the chamber) called The Jolly Beggars, a work full of the most comical humor and the liveliest action. The troupe is made up of former soldiers, country tinkers, gypsy women, wandering singers, and other jovial vagabonds; who getting together with their wives in a cabaret¹² on a winter evening, spend their time eating well, singing their loves, dancing, and drowning their sorrows in *eau de vie* [whiskey].¹³ This is why your overture must be as joyous, animated, and *scherzo* as possible.

This will be worth an additional twelve ducats for you; such that Messrs. Fries will give you 48 ducats as soon as you give them the manuscripts.¹⁴

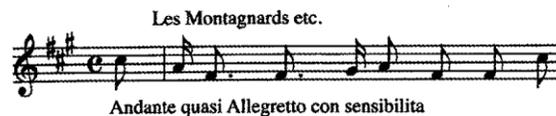
Please have the goodness to compose this ^ (original) overture as soon as your own affairs permit you to do so.

No doubt you have kept the original copy of the 19 Airs. I was sent 18 of them [Group IX] in a package: — and the other, (the Cossack Air) is the sixth of another package [Group VIII],¹⁵ and begins

standing existence of the October 20 fragment, which has been published in the two recent editions of Beethoven's correspondence, and folio 154, which is published here for the first time.

Having made what I believe to be a clear case for including folio 154 in the Thomson-Beethoven correspondence, I would like to discuss in greater detail three aspects of the content of this new letter fragment.

First, in the penultimate paragraph of folio 154, Thomson turned his attention back to the nineteen continental folk songs that he had discussed in the portion of the missive preserved in the October 20 fragment. Beethoven had collected and arranged eighteen continental folksongs (Group IX) and sent them to Thomson in January of 1816; Thomson assumed Beethoven had the original eighteen melodies and was here referring to the nineteenth that Thomson had provided. As Cooper explains, a receipt for twenty-four settings (six of which are described as Scottish) is dated May 2, 1816, and Thomson's letter of July 8, 1816, confirms his receipt of the songs. The six Scottish songs (Group VIII) comprise five Scottish songs and a sixth "Cossack" (actually Ukrainian) melody. Beethoven may have mistakenly substituted a continental melody for a Scottish one that Thomson sent him, but Cooper posits that it was Thomson who supplied the Cossack melody because the heading on the manuscript with the melody is in English while Beethoven's headings were usually in French. Also,



**Example 1a. "The Highland Watch" (Opus 108, no. 22),
originally entitled "Les Montagnards Ecossois"
("The Scottish Highlanders"),
from Thomson's January 24, 1817, letter to Beethoven**



**Example 1b. "The Highland Watch" (Opus 108, no. 22),
as published.**

Beethoven described them all as Scottish, which is further evidence that Thomson sent it.²² In the end, because Thomson could not fit English texts to the melodies, he asked Beethoven (in the October 20 fragment) to compose six potpourri overtures using all nineteen melodies. At this point in folio 154, Thomson is referring back to the October 20 fragment to complete his thought and clarify the "19 Airs" when, more specifically, it was a group of eighteen plus one other from a separate group.

Second, in the final paragraph of folio 154, Thomson mentions the "seven airs ... sent last July" (Group X). Thomson is referring to July 8, 1816, the only time he sent seven—or any, for that matter—melodies in the month of July (that July letter immediately preceded the missive of October 20).²³ In folio 154 Thomson asks for an arrangement of only one of those seven melodies, "Les Montagnards Ecossois" ("The Scottish Highlanders"); by the end of September, however, Beethoven had already arranged all seven.²⁴ In Cooper's chronological listing of the songs, the title of the seventh melody of Group X is "The Highland Watch," which opens with the words "Old Scotia, Wake thy Mountain Strain" (Opus 108, no. 22);²⁵ no other titles approximate the one Thomson gives in folio 154. While it might seem that Thomson erred in translation or transcription of these titles, they could be synonymous. Both titles—"The Highland Watch" and "The Scottish Highlanders" ("Les Montagnards Ecossois")—could refer to names of an army regiment, such as The Black Watch or The Seaforth Highlanders.²⁶ The tune suggests a military march—with its 2/4 time signature, pick-ups, and dotted figures—that would accentuate the army connections. The published setting made clear this connection with the marking "Spiritoso e marziale" instead of Thomson's original "Andante quasi Allegretto con sensibilita." (See Example 1a for the melody as sent to Beethoven and Example 1b for the tune as eventually published.²⁷) Another possibility is that, after a few subsequent transactions, Thomson simply changed the title of the piece between

October 20, 1816, and its publication in June of 1818. In a letter to Walter Scott in September 1816, Thomson asked for two verses, a Tyrolese and "The Highland Watch," about which he inquired again on March 3, 1817.²⁸ For its 1818 publication, however, Thomson used a text by James Hogg, to whom he sent the melody on November 23, 1817;²⁹ thus, the new title may have been Hogg's emendation. Regardless of its slightly shifting title, the tune in folio 154 is what eventually became Beethoven's Opus 108, no. 22, "The Highland Watch."

Finally, Thomson did not finish writing folio 154; in fact, he did even finish his final thought on paper. In the last line of folio 154, Thomson asked Beethoven to set another melody already sent; although he never wrote out the melody, he did provide the text incipit ("They Bid Me Sleep") and the time signature (6/8). Such a song does not exist in the Beethoven oeuvre. This situation that leaves us with a partially unanswered question: What song did Thomson intend to have Beethoven set to the words "They Bid Me Sleep"? The tune can be identified confidently, and I will proffer a text that is likely the one Thomson intended.

Thomson reiterated his request for this same song in two subsequent letters, and eventually he provided a copy of the melody in his Letterbook. The first reiteration was in his letter of December 20, 1816,³⁰ in which he did not copy the musical example into his archives. Thomson then wrote to Beethoven on January 24, 1817, and after some other business he said, "Of the airs that were sent to you last July, I have notified you to harmonize only the two that begin with these notes:"³¹—and this time (with this verbatim quote from his December 20, 1816, letter) Thomson finally included the melodies in the Letterbook. The first of the melodies is "Les Montagnards etc.," which is the same "Scottish Highlanders" (i.e. "The Highland Watch," Opus 108, no. 22) that Thomson mentioned in the last paragraph of folio 154.³² The second melody is labeled 'Andante espress^o,' and like the empty staff in folio 154, it is in 6/8 and in the key of A Minor. (See Example 2.) This melody is almost certainly the one that Thomson forgot to copy into folio 154. Cooper has been unable to identify it and hitherto thought that it "seems never to have been sent [previous to January 24, 1817] or set [by Beethoven]."³³ To the best of the scholarly community's knowledge, Beethoven indeed never arranged it, but folio 154 provides the evidence that Thomson had previously sent it to Beethoven.

The text incipit "They Bid Me Sleep" provided in folio 154 (which is not included in the later January 24, 1817, letter) does not match exactly any song in Cooper's index of titles and first lines.³⁴ It is an unknown commodity in the Beethoven Thomson correspondence and one Beethoven



Andante espress^o

Example 2. Unidentified melody from Thomson's January 24, 1817, letter to Beethoven

never set. The text seems to come from Walter Scott's "The Lady of the Lake" (canto 4, section 22)³⁵:

They bid me sleep, they bid me pray,
 They say my brain is warp'd and wrung –
 I cannot sleep on Highland brae,
 I cannot pray in Highland tongue.
 But were I now where Allan glides,
 Or heard my native Devan's tides,
 So sweetly would I rest, and pray
 That Heaven would close my wintry day!

The second verse is in the same meter, and overall this canto is the type of text (wholesome and not bawdy, by a famous poet Thomson had employed before,³⁶ with potential for musical expression) that Thomson would have wanted to marry to a folk tune with a setting by Beethoven:

'Twas thus my hair they bade me braid,
They made me to the church repair;
It was my bridal morn, they said,
And my true love would meet me there.
But woe betide the cruel guile,
That drown'd in blood the morning smile!
And woe betide the fairy dream!
I only waked to sob and scream.

The iambic meter fits perfectly the tune in folio 154 (Example 2). Moreover, the word "sleep" would be set nicely with the tonic grace note leading to a strong beat leading tone, and the rhetorical shift in second half of the first line of the first verse would be emphasized with the tonic avoidance, fast octave leap and subsequent descent with grace notes; the second verse works similarly. Given the poet, the subject matter and the compatibility of the text and melody, it seems certain that Scott's "The Lady of the Lake" was the intended source for the text of the blank staff in folio 154.

Cooper has illustrated some of Thomson's habits of collecting melodies and trying to find texts to fit them, collecting texts and trying to find melodies for them, and changing titles³⁷ Lacking other possibilities, it could be that the song aborted in folio 154 and mentioned in subsequent letters was one of those songs lost in such a shuffle (much like the changed title and poet for what eventually became "The Highland Watch"). Thomson surely sent it to Beethoven, as demonstrated by his subsequent requests, but either Beethoven did not set "They Bid Me Sleep" for some reason or he did but it has been lost without any other trace.

One other, considerably less likely possibility is that the final word of the incipit is a mistake: it could be "slight" instead of "sleep," thus indicating the text by William Smyth, "They Bid Me Slight my Dermot Dear," which Beethoven set as WoO 152, no. 18 (see Example 3). Yet, despite some superficial similarities,³⁸ this text has nothing in common with the more likely candidate, Scott's "They Bid Me Sleep." In the end, the simplest and most likely explanation for why Thomson never finished folio 154 is that Thomson made some sort of simple error: either he made a mistake in content (as with a tune or text) or he



Example 3. "They bid me slight my Dermot dear"
(WoO 152, no. 18)

misplaced this folio and later rewrote it (one might even wonder if Thomson was thinking "sleep" and went to do just that — thus leaving the letter unfinished). In the latter case, he may have kept the ultimately discovered draft in order to provide some semblance of completion in the Letterbook.

Did Beethoven receive what Thomson wrote on folio 154? While there is no direct proof—Beethoven did not respond to it directly—it seems most likely that he did. At the very least, Beethoven was familiar with most of its contents because Thomson later referred back to the missive of October 20, and Beethoven responded to those repeated entreaties. One cannot rule out the possibility, however, that the final version of the letter of October 20, 1816, that Thomson sent was either lost in the post or even that other information was included in the missive Beethoven received. Regardless, Beethoven does not seem to have preserved that letter, so we will likely never know with certainty. Folio 154 has, at least, confirmed some previous inferences about the correspondence, and it is one small step towards a more complete understanding of the Beethoven-Thomson relationship and the music that resulted.

Acknowledgments

This research is from a larger study, and for their kind assistance and advice on the entire project I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Theodore Albrecht, John Baron, Anthony Cummings, Valerie Greenberg, John Joyce, Erec Koch, Lewis Lockwood, and David Montgomery. Additional thanks go to Aaron Girard, Alyson Prude, Jan Philipp Sprick, Kailan Rubinoff, and the kind librarians in the Rare Books, Music & Manuscripts Division of the British Library. Research funding was provided by Tulane and Harvard Universities. Finally, I am grateful for the many detailed comments that Barry Cooper offered; his perspicacity greatly improved this article.

Notes

1. Donald W. MacArdle, "Beethoven and George Thomson," *Music & Letters* 37 (1956): 43; the October 20 letter is in British Library Additional 35267, ff. 178r-179v.
2. James Cuthbert Hadden, *George Thomson, the Friend of Burns* (London: J. C. Nimmo, 1898), 339.
3. Theodore Albrecht, trans. and ed., *Letters to Beethoven and Other Correspondence*, 3 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 2:110-11, letter no. 233; Sieghard Brandenburg, ed., *Briefwechsel: Gesamtausgabe*, 7 vols. to date (Munich: G. Henle, 1996), 3:308-09, letter no. 984.
4. David Fraser Harris, *Saint Cecilia's Hall in the Niddry Wynd* (1911; repr., New York: Da Capo, 1984), 52.
5. Roger Fiske, *Scotland in Music: A European Enthusiasm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 55, 58.
6. Barry Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings: Chronology, Sources, Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Petra WeberBockholdt, *Beethoven Bearbeitungen britischer Lieder* (Munich: W. Fink, 1994). In addition to the excellent bibliographies of those two monographs, other noteworthy publications on the Beethoven-Thomson relationship include: Pamela J. Willetts, *Beethoven & England. An Account of Sources in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1970); Richard Aldrich, "Beethoven and George Thomson," in *The Beethoven Companion*, ed. Thomas K. Scherman and Louis Biancolli, 792-801 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1972) (see also the subsequent entries in *The Beethoven Companion* on the Irish, Scottish and other arrangements); Barry Cooper, "Beethoven's Folksong Settings as Sources of Irish Folk Music," *Irish Musical Studies* 10 (1996): 65-81; Barry Cooper, "The Welsh Folk-song Melodies Set by Beethoven: A Preliminary Investigation," *Welsh Music History / Hanes cerddoriaeth Cymru* 1 (1996): 5-41; and Petra Weber-Bockholdt, ed., *Beethoven Werke: Schottische and walisische Lieder* [Opus 108, WoO 156, and WoO 155], Abteilung 11, Band 1 (Munich: Henle, 1999).

Thomson's interactions with other composers is elaborated in recent scholarship as well. Regarding Haydn, see the various articles in *Haydn-Studien* 8, no. 4 (2004), and the recent edition of the complete works edition, Marjorie Rycroft, et al., eds., *Volkliedbearbeitungen Nr. 151-268: Schottische Lieder Für George Thomson* (Munich: Henle, 2001). Regarding Weber, see Kirsteen McCue, "Weber's Ten Scottish Folksongs," *Weber-Studien* 1 (1993): 163-172. Regarding Hummel, see Joel Sachs, "Hummel and George Thomson of Edinburgh," *The Musical Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (1970): 270-87. Thomson has been discussed in Kirsteen McCue, "The Most Intricate Bibliographical Enigma: Understanding George Thomson (1757/1851) and His Collections of National Airs," in *Music Librarianship in the United Kingdom*, ed. Richard Tubet (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 99-120. Fiske, *Scotland in Music*, 55-79, focuses on Thomson's collections of Scottish music and treats all the composers involved; his book as a whole provides an excellent context for the interest—both by the public and the composers involved—in such music. Further

context for the types of nationalistic publications that Thomson produced is found in Claire Nelson, "Tea-Table Miscellanies: The Development of Scotland's Song Culture, 1720-1800," *Early Music* 28, no. 4 (2000): 596-618.

7. This passage appears on ff. 153r-v of Add. 35269. A similar sentiment is expressed in the introduction to the first volume of Thomson's 1804 *Original Scottish Airs*. As Cooper reports, Thomson aimed "'to substitute congenial and interesting Songs, every way worthy of the Music, in the room of insipid or exceptionable Verses.' He did not replace all the original texts, but claimed to be 'scrupulously careful to remove those doggerel rhymes only by which the Music has been debased; giving place to none inconsistent with that delicacy of the [female] Sex, which in too many publications of this sort has been shamefully disregarded.'" (Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 69.) Fiske emphasizes Thomson's patriotism and notes that Thomson "slogged on at his self-imposed task for half a century, and at the end of it all he saw he had failed, financially without a doubt and perhaps artistically too. Yet after his death in 1851 (he was over ninety) he achieved his own curious brand of immortality. In Beethoven's Collected Works, in any edition of Beethoven's letters, and in any book about his life Thomson's name occurs more often than the names of all other Britons put together." (Fiske, *Scotland in Music*, 58).
8. The provenance of Add. 35266 (and by extension of the entire collection) is given on the inside cover of the volume: "Purchd. of Mrs. Sinclair-Thomson 14 March 1899." Mrs. Sinclair-Thomson was the widow of George Thomson's grandson William. The collection was foliated by "J.J.P." in May 1899.
9. Originally folio 154 was folded top-to-bottom at its midway point; for inclusion in Add. 35269, however, the librarians folded in approximately 4.5 cm. on the right side so that it would fit in the volume because its width was exaggerated due to the paperboard used to secure it in the manuscript. Approximately 50 mm. on the right of folio 154 are discolored, but only on the verso, indicating that it may have been inserted into the Letterbook with other papers on top of it and with their edges protruding. If such a situation indeed occurred, these other papers may have been discarded or, if they had dates, they may have been placed accordingly. C. A. Banks, Curator of Manuscript Music and Deputy Head of Music Collections at the British Library, said, "It looks as though the fragment now at Add. MS 35269, f. 154 did not get tied up with the remainder of the letter in Add. MS 35267, ff. 178r-179v at the time of the original cataloguing. This would explain its placement right at the end of the sequence of letters in the final volume" (personal communication, February 15, 2000).
10. For example, the December 20, 1816, letter to Beethoven (Albrecht, *Letters to Beethoven*, 2:117-18, letter no. 236), which did not include examples; and the letter of September 6, 1822, to London professor of music William Shield (Add. 35268, f. 101v), in which Thomson provided only a precis.
11. Beethoven and Thomson usually communicated in French, occasionally in Italian. This transcription does not attempt to correct Thomson's French. My thanks to Erec Koch, Alyson Prude, and Kailan Rubinoff for translation assistance.
12. A rustic inn with food and music.
13. Thomson's use of the French "eau de vie" is an attempt to render the sense of the Gaelic word *usquebae*, literally "water of life" (i.e., whisky); Burns uses the Gaelic term in *The Jolly Beggars*. (My thanks to Barry Cooper for clarifying this.)
14. Thomson offered Beethoven twelve ducats for the overture, payable through their Viennese banking connection, Fries & Co.; the remaining thirty-six ducats were for the six potpourri overtures mentioned and priced earlier in the entry preserved in the October 20 fragment.
15. The groups refer to the chronological list in Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 211-20.
16. The paper was used primarily as annotated cover sheets for letters Thomson received. I made this observation after perusing Thomson's Letterbooks and Correspondence and examining chain and wire markings, color, size and watermarks, and I concluded that, barring some improbable coincidence, the paper of folio 154 is the same type as numerous other folios in the collection.
17. Thomson proposed six sonatas in 1803, and Beethoven briefly sketched three using some of the melodies but never finished any; see Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 11 (note 4), and Fiske, *Scotland in Music*, 72-73. The sets of variations are Opuses 105 and 107, discussed in C. B. Oldman, "Beethoven's Variations on National Themes: Their Composition and First Publication," *Music Review* 12 (1951): 45-51; and Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 1, 44, 98-100, and numerous other pages.

- Furthermore, Thomson proposed an oratorio and a cantata (*The Battle of the Baltic*, with words by Scottish poet Thomas Campbell), but Beethoven's prices were too high; see Fiske, *Scotland in Music*, 75.
18. Thomson's November 1816 letter to Sir Alexander Boswell, quoted in Hadden, *George Thomson*, 357.
 19. Hadden, *George Thomson*, 356-66, provides the details of the commission and composition of *The Jolly Beggars*. The cantata is in George Thomson, ed., *A Select Collection of Scottish Airs*, vol. 5 (London: Preston, 1818).
 20. Translated in Albrecht, *Letters to Beethoven*, 2:117-18, letter no. 236.
 21. Donald W. MacArdle and Ludwig Misch, "Minor Beethoveniana," *The Musical Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (1955): 446-448.
 22. Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 25-26.
 23. Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 36,
 24. Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 27.
 25. Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 218.
 26. My thanks to Barry Cooper for this observation.
 27. See also note 32.
 28. The September letter is Add. 35267, ff. 176v-177r, and the March letter is f. 188.
 29. Add. 35268, ff. 13v-14r.
 30. Albrecht, *Letters to Beethoven*, 2:117-18, letter no. 236.
 31. Translated in Albrecht, *Letters to Beethoven*, 2:120-21, letter no. 238. Even though Thomson said this melody was the only one he could use, he eventually used four of the seven. Two are in the 1839 publication of *Twenty Scottish Melodies* (WoO 156, no. 5 and 157, no. 1), and two are in the 1818 publication that eventually became Beethoven's Opus 108 (songs nos. 22 and 25); Thomson never published the other three (WoO 158/3/1, 158/3/2, and Hess 168). Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 218.
 32. Thomson also had mentioned it in the letter of December 20, but he did not include a melody. In the letter of January 24, the melody is in a different key and meter and has a different opening rhythm from its ultimate publication; compare Example 1a and Example 1b. (See Weber-Bockholdt, *Beethoven Bearbeitungen britischer Lieder*, 116-17.) Thomson might have altered or omitted an introductory ritornello and changed the rhythm to accommodate the poetic text. Regardless, the melodies are the same in both the letter and eventual publication.
 33. Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 27.
 34. Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 230-37.
 35. I am indebted to Barry Cooper for making this connection and sharing it with me. Walter Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, ed. William Minto (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891), 111.
 36. Scott had contributed nine texts to Thomson's endeavor (Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 69-70 and 238).
 37. Cooper, *Beethoven's Folksong Settings*, 30-31, 58-92, especially 70-73 and 81.
 38. "They Bid Me Slight My Dermot Dear" is also in a 6/8 time signature, uses similar rhythms, and has a similar melodic direction. But it is in the key of D Minor, and the staff in folio 154 has no room to add a single flat between the clef and the time signature (unless Thomson were to add it incorrectly after the signature or had planned on using accidentals only if necessary); moreover, the ambit of the melodies differs. More significantly, however, is that Beethoven arranged "They Bid Me Slight My Dermot Dear" in 1809-10—why would Thomson ask for a song that Beethoven had already arranged six or seven years earlier? That alone seems to negate any possibility that the song in folio 154 is "They Bid Me Slight My Dermot Dear."