Paratextual Reading in the Romantic Period

by

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Abstract

*Paratextual Reading in the Romantic Period* demonstrates that Maria Edgeworth, Robert Southey, and Walter Scott used paratext as a formal strategy to disrupt established relationships among readers, texts, and an increasingly global sense of context. Referring to this interrupted reading process as “paratextual reading,” this study shifts its attention towards paratext’s use as a tool to discipline the public’s reading habits for a new information age. As British imperial expansion brought distant cultural and geographical spaces closer to metropolitan readers, Romantic writers developed new genres – such as the “footnote novel” and the annotated long poem – to make representations of these spaces accessible to the British reading public. By grafting the knowledge produced by antiquarian and Orientalist scholarship onto popular narrative forms, these annotated texts reframe pleasure reading as an opportunity to gather information about the expanding world beyond the book. Alongside their newly referential paratexts, however, Edgeworth, Southey, and Scott also adapt eighteenth-century traditions of metafictional annotation, calling deliberate attention to their notes’ disruption of readers’ progress
through their fictional narratives. Beginning with Edgeworth’s use of paratext to improve her “lazy” English readers’ capacity for intellectual labour in time for Ireland’s imminent Union with Britain, *Paratextual Reading* then turns its attention to Southey’s and Samuel Henley’s various efforts to use Orientalist annotation to discipline the perversities of readerly desire. Finally, focusing on Scott’s paratextual incorporation of his anecdotal source materials into his Magnum Opus edition of the wildly popular Waverley novels, this thesis concludes by considering the commercial impact of paratextual strategies of rereading. By documenting paratext’s participation in efforts to reform lazy, curious, or otherwise unauthorized readers, *Paratextual Reading* shows how Romantic writers worked to cultivate a reading public fit to cope with information overload in a new age of British imperial expansion.
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Introduction

Romantic readers were fluent in paratext. They were schooled in the protocols of referential reading by the work of antiquaries, literary historians, and Orientalist scholars, and their familiarity with factual footnotes and endnotes became legible in the emergence and the popular success of a variety of new paratextual genres between 1789 and 1832. Using prefaces, notes, glossaries, and “all the paraphernalia of modern learning” to centre their fictions, Romantic annotated novels and long poems blur the boundaries between fictional and nonfictional genres, expanding the geographical, historical, and cultural scope of popular narrative for British audiences.¹ As the twin processes of imperial expansion and consolidation brought the English-speaking metropolis into more intimate contact with other cultures and polities throughout the Romantic period, paratext reframed pleasure reading as an opportunity to encounter and to digest the ever-expanding world beyond the book. While these annotated genres attempted to legitimize fiction through reference to more factual discourses, they also adapted many of the metadiscursive paratextual strategies pioneered by the poets, historians, and novelists of the previous century.² Like Alexander Pope, Edward Gibbon, and Laurence Sterne before them, Romantic writers from Maria Edgeworth to Sir Walter Scott continued to use ironic

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² While I will argue that Romantic paratext deploys both “referential” and “self-referential” annotative strategies, I am indebted to Elaine Freedgood for her distinction between the “self-referential hilarity” of eighteenth-century paratexts and the more “solid” and “referential” notes appended to Sir Walter Scott’s Magnum Opus edition of the Waverley novels. See Elaine Freedgood, “Fictional Settlements: Footnotes, Metalepsis, the Colonial Effect,” New Literary History 41, no. 2 (2010): 400-401.
footnotes and faux-editorial prefacades to pose complex questions about the location of literary authority in their rapidly expanding print culture. By integrating referential annotative strategies with more playful paratextual traditions, however, these writers also demonstrate a uniquely Romantic reflexivity about the implications and the value of the act of documentation. As we shall see, this development indexes larger changes in reading habits, in generic norms, and in strategies for organizing information in a rapidly globalizing world.

The form of Romantic annotated narratives confronts readers with the epistemological gap between fiction and fact in an effort to transform the frustrations of interrupted reading into more robust, attentive habits of reading and information management. As I will show, many Romantic writers deploy annotation to deliberately disturb the reader’s progression through the narrative. In so doing, they inscribe the political and intellectual upheaval of their own historical moment as a series of paratextual interruptions. Grafting referential, ironic, and critical asides onto the body of the centred text, the paratextual apparatus challenges readers to integrate fiction with fact, even as the notes’ position on the margins of the text insists on their incommensurability. As a result, the dialogic structure of the Romantic paratext often confounds the very distinctions it aims to perpetuate. For instance, these paratexts frequently deliver the results of assiduous research in the voice of a fictional persona – the antiquarian “editor,” for example, whose risible preoccupation with finely grained details is at once the target of satire and a cover story for further indulgence in historical or cultural digression. While they carefully document the historical and cultural “originals” of imaginary characters, places, and plots, many Romantic-period notes and prefacades also call their reader’s attention,
repeatedly and insistently, to the entanglement of fictional narrative with matters of fact.

Furthermore, in locating contextual explanations of particular details on the margins of the page, notes both formalize and challenge the boundaries between what merits clarification and what can be assumed to be common knowledge. On the one hand, by centering the familiar at the expense of the strange, notes reproduce the distance that separates “home” from “away” – but on the other, by glossing archaic and regional dialect words, describing obscure cultural practices, and referring readers to relevant non-fictional texts, Romantic paratexts also aim to translate the unintelligible into the intelligible, inviting their readers to bridge the very gaps that the text has observed or created. This dialectical movement between centred text and paratextual commentary frames the scene of reading as a site where these oppositional categories need, ultimately, to be negotiated – and, in so doing, confers an unprecedented degree of autonomy, even power, upon paratextual readers.

As paratext became institutionalized as a technology of mediation, its practitioners began to pay closer attention to the phenomenology of paratextual reading. While early eighteenth-century critics often conflate the use of paratextual “helps” with a regrettable lack of readerly labour, for instance, later writers are more responsive to the unique challenges posed by paratextual reading. In one early example, Samuel Johnson prefaces his 1765 edition of Shakespeare by arguing that explanatory notes strain the attention and so diminish the pleasure of readers experiencing the text for the first time. By repeatedly

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3 For a discussion of footnotes as part of a larger effort to describe and document the threatening alterity of “the stranger” in the Romantic period, see David Simpson, *Romanticism and the Question of the Stranger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 109-144.

interrupting the reader’s progress through the work with minute contextual details, he
claims, notes are liable to “refrigerat[e]” the mind, rather than to enlarge the
understanding. For Johnson, therefore, notes to a work of literature are a “necessary
evil” – best kept in reserve for those readers for whom the powerful “pleasures of
novelty” have already dwindled to the more minute thrills of critical “exactness” (lxix-
lxx). Edgeworth’s Practical Education (1798) also presents notes as more a hindrance
than a help to new readers of literary texts, who tend to lack the extensive “ancient and
modern knowledge” required to understand densely allusive works like Gray’s “Elegy"
or Milton’s Comus. Supplying illustrations that are “almost always too formal, or too
obscure,” she argues, notes either “explain what was understood more plainly before any
illustration was attempted, or they leave us in the dark the moment we want to be
enlightened.” Both writers are troubled, in other words, by the ways in which the
editorial apparatus threatens to interfere with the reader’s imaginative encounter with the
literary text. In substituting chilly exactitude for the more robust “pleasures of novelty,”
or in bombarding new readers with irrelevant, arcane details, they argue, notes exhaust
readers, turning them away from the text with the very tools that promise to draw them
in.

Both of these accounts, however, criticize paratextual supplements applied after the fact,
by later generations of textual critics seeking to bridge the historical gaps between the
moment of the text’s composition and its present-day reception. While the first decades

of the nineteenth century also mark a period of dramatic change in the theory and practice of textual editing, this study turns its attention to those annotated Romantic novels and narrative poems that, to use Herbert Tucker’s phrase, “came into the world” already “wrapped in apparatus appropriate to learned editions of classics.”

Despite having dismissed notes in *Practical Education* as “too formal, or too obscure” to be useful to non-specialist readers, Edgeworth became a crucial figure in the rise of Romantic annotated fiction shortly thereafter. Two years later, she published her first novel, *Castle Rackrent* (1800), complete with detailed antiquarian footnotes and an endnoted glossary.

Where *Castle Rackrent* is concerned, there is no “pleasure of novelty” prior to or separate from the enjoyment of critical exactitude. Rather, the friction between dialect narrative and ironic annotation is a constitutive part of the experience of reading the text, and was from the first moment of its publication. Furthermore, in a significant departure from the philosophy of notes she had espoused in *Practical Education*, the novel transforms paratextual interruption from an inconvenience to a fully-fledged pedagogical program.

As we will see in chapter 1, Edgeworth’s apparatus applies deliberate pressure to its “lazy English readers” in an effort to improve their capacity for attentive, politically engaged intellectual labour. Already acutely sensitive in *Practical Education* to the ways in which this additional cognitive load transforms the relationships that might otherwise link

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reader, text, and context, the Edgeworth who crafted *Castle Rackrent* had come to understand paratext as a tool that could be deliberately applied to challenge her readers to achieve greater heights of attention, critical judgment, and political acuity.

This thesis will place Edgeworth’s work in dialogue with the poetry of Robert Southey and the historical novels of Scott – two writers who, like Edgeworth, consistently deploy paratext as a tool to disrupt and to reorganize existing reading relations. While their acute sensitivity to the rhythms of paratextual interruption represents an unusually sophisticated effort to transform the social relations of reading, many other Romantic writers also experimented with the regulatory effects of paratext. As Gary Kelly has shown, for instance, female novelists like Elizabeth Hamilton and Sydney Owenson used notes and prefaces to frame their political novels, manipulating the authority associated with paratextual forms in order to claim their right to speak on political subjects. Scott remains indebted to these novelists, whose national tales laid the groundwork for his historical novels’ playful manipulation of the trappings of literary and historical authority. Paratext found its way into the poetry of the Romantic period as well. For instance, struck by the “dazzling manner” of Erasmus Darwin’s annotated long poem, *The Botanic Garden* (1791), Samuel Taylor Coleridge aspired to write a “philosophical poem” like Darwin’s early in his poetic career; while he came to “absolutely nauseate” Darwin’s poetics by the mid-1790s, later versions of his own “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” deftly manipulate the lingering associations of the marginal gloss with archaic

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forms of philological scholarship.\(^9\) Even William Wordsworth, whose “declared antipathy to prefatory apologetics … is … well-known,” used notes strategically to gloss regional dialect words in certain of his poems.\(^10\) Famously, in the case of “The Thorn,” he poses complex questions about the effects of repetitive, “apparent[ly] tautolog[ical]” language on reading subjects in a detailed, discursive note.\(^11\) Charlotte Smith, Lord Byron, and Thomas Moore published annotated long poems of their own in the first two decades of the nineteenth century – and if Southey’s “commonplace-book[s] versified” failed to secure him lasting literary fame, his five annotated epic romances, from Joan of Arc (1796) to Roderick the Last of the Goths (1814), nevertheless left a mark on the generic landscape of the Romantic period.\(^12\)

In investigating paratext’s role as a relay point between text and reader, I build upon Genette’s Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation, which defines “paratext” as an umbrella term for any form of textual “[adorn]ment” located on the “fringes” of the text: all the titles, authors’ names, dedications, prefaces, notes, and appendices that “surround” the text in order to mediate its introduction to “the world at large.”\(^13\) Paratexts do not draw a clear boundary between “text and off-text,” Genette insists (2). Instead, they

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establish on the fringes of the text an ambiguous “threshold” or “vestibule,” a liminal space that plays host to a range of “transition[s]” and “transaction[s]” between the text and its readers (2). While the sheer miscellaneity of paratextual forms makes any statement about the significance of particular “transactions” difficult to generalize, Genette argues that all paratexts share a common rhetorical purpose. From title pages to endnotes, he claims, all forms of paratext attempt to modify the reader’s interactions with the text in deliberate, strategic ways. Addressing the reader from the margins, in other words, paratext advocates for a “better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading of it” – “more pertinent,” that is, in the eyes of “the author and his allies,” the editors, publishers, and other mediating figures who help to make the text “present” to the public as a material book (2).

Genette’s decision to locate the power to influence textual reception in these representatives of the book trade presents paratext as a mediating technology specific to modern print culture – an expansive period that, his examples suggest, might be said to range from the early seventeenth century to his own late twentieth-century moment.

The broad sweep of Genette’s examples is in keeping with his methodological subordination of the historical to the structural. While acknowledging that “period,

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14 Where Genette understands paratext as an ambiguous threshold between “texte” and “hors-text” (translated by Jane Lewin as “text” and “off-text”), I follow Alex Watson in referring to the parts of the text mediated by the paratext as the “centred text.” Watson’s term makes visible the work that paratext performs to centre the text, and suggests that both paratext and centred text are necessary parts of a textual whole. For Watson’s definition of the term, see Alex Watson, *Romantic Marginality: Nation and Empire on the Borders of the Page* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), 3-4.

15 While Genette acknowledges that the manuscript or oral texts that circulated prior to the invention of the printing press incorporate paratextual elements, such as titles, authors’ names, and handwritten glosses, he argues that “our ‘media’ age has seen the proliferation of a type of discourse around texts that was unknown in the classical world and a fortiori in antiquity and the Middle Ages.” *Paratexts*, 3.
culture, [and] genre” play an important role in “defin[ing] the status of a[ny] paratextual message” (3), the central goal of Paratexts, he writes, is to provide “a general picture, not a history of paratext” (13). In creating a comprehensive taxonomy of paratextual effects, in other words, Genette offers a vocabulary and a method to help define the precise “situation of communication” of any paratext, whether it hails from Don Quixote or Ulysses. With this accomplished, he leaves it to others to “stud[y] the evolution” and the historical significance of particular paratextual strategies (13).

Thus far, few critics have taken up Genette’s call. For the most part, the range and variety of paratextual strategies at work in even a single text have resisted critical efforts to trace their “evolution,” even within the parameters of a single historical period. As a result, many of the most effective, nuanced accounts of Romantic paratext to date can be found in studies of related literary phenomena. Katie Trumpener, for instance, reads Edgeworth’s and Lady Morgan’s marginal notes as forms of cultural nationalist discourse: while Morgan’s enthusiastic citation of the work of Irish antiquaries looks to Ireland’s history as a site of anticolonial resistance, Edgeworth’s more ironic apparatus suggests that glorifying the nation’s past will not offer concrete solutions to its more modern political problems. Alex Broadhead has shown how Robert Burns’ glossaries to editions of his Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect articulate an evolving relationship between vernacular Scots and Standard English. By contrast, scholars of Scott’s poetic career have documented his efforts, in both his prefaces and the meticulous, sprawling footnotes to his poems, to claim an integral role for ballad collection and modern imitations of bardic poetry in preserving an oral culture that he imagines as already

vanished. Finally, multiple studies of Romantic imperialism have shown how poets like Southey, Byron, and Moore drew upon the forms as well as the content of Orientalist scholarship in an effort to negotiate linguistic and cultural alterity beyond the borders of the British nation-state.

The few efforts to survey paratextual interactions across a variety of texts and genres focus on questions of authorship and literary authority, rather than on the ways in which paratext mediates the relationships linking texts with their readers. For example, Alex Watson’s *Romantic Marginality: Nation and Empire on the Borders of the Page* explores the ways in which some writers use paratext to “marginalize” those “forms of political and regional identity that conflicted with the interests of the nation state,” while others “us[e] the margins as a covert location in which to present contestatory histories, identities[,] and traditions.” While Watson’s focus on the relationship between textual and political forms of “marginality” yields valuable insight into paratext’s variety of rhetorical functions in the Romantic period, he does not theorize the significance of the Romantic fascination with paratext or consider its implications in relation to contemporary ideas about reading and information management. Additionally, while Elaine Freedgood and Cannon Schmitt’s recent work on referential and denotative

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reading begins to articulate “a methodology for putting the literal, denotative, or technical in connection with other (figural, narrative, structural, ideological) elements of the text in which it appears,” they do so in relation to the more rigorously naturalistic fiction of the late nineteenth century rather than engaging the Romantic moment when writers first began to wrap their fictional texts in a “thickening web of connotations, consequences, implications, and associated denotations.”

By focusing on the reading relations unique to Romantic paratext, this thesis builds upon existing studies in two ways. First, in centring my analysis on the emergence and the popular success of new forms of annotated fiction and narrative poetry in the Romantic period, I take up Genette’s invitation to historicize specific paratextual forms, paying critical attention to the operations of “period, culture, and genre” in shaping their meanings (3). Romantic paratext takes shape as a technology for transforming readers’ dispositions towards texts within a specific reading formation – the “set of intersecting discourses” that, according to Tony Bennett, “regulate the encounters between texts and readers” in order to bring them into particular kinds of relationships with one another. Therefore, my thesis tracks how Romantic writers used paratext to locate their texts and their readers in relation to revolutionary upheaval, the pressures of an expanding and ever more fragmented print market, and the consolidation of the British Empire at home and abroad. In so doing, I show how paratext makes the network of cultural and institutional relationships that “co-produce” these relative positions uniquely visible to the critical

Because annotation’s miscellaneous range of reference disrupts firm disciplinary distinctions as well as the act of reading, I also situate paratextual reading within the wider context of Romantic-era changes in the organization of knowledge. Inspired by Ina Ferris’ claim that “the innovations of romantic fiction are a direct consequence of [a] new reciprocity of encounter with nonfictional genres” such as history and political economy, then, this thesis also explores how annotated novels and poems mobilize new disciplinary methods for knowledge production and dissemination developing in the Romantic period.

Second, where Genette seeks to describe and to classify different kinds of paratext into “more narrowly defined” and precise categories than those we have “inherited from tradition” (13-14), this study shifts its attention from the object to the experience: from paratext itself, in other words, to the phenomenology of paratextual reading. Piping up from the margins of the text to provide supplementary commentary and contextual information, notes and prefases seek to intervene in and redirect the ongoing process of reading. Furthermore, as my analysis of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century texts will demonstrate, these paratextual “transactions” do not stop simply because a particular text has secured a “more pertinent reading” for itself (2). Instead, imagining paratext as a technology for regulating reading relations, Maria Edgeworth, Robert Southey, and Sir Walter Scott treat notes, prefaces, glossaries, and indexes as if they have the capacity to leave more lasting impressions on readers’ dispositions towards texts and their social world. By showing how these three writers manipulate paratextual

22 Tony Bennett and Jane Woollacott, Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero (New York: Macmillan Education, 1987), 64.
conventions in an effort to manage and to transform the relationships between texts and their readers at a moment of rapid sociopolitical change, I will argue that paratextual reading played a crucial role in shaping reading practices and political dispositions in the early nineteenth century.

This newfound interest in the phenomenology of paratextual reading takes shape within a print culture acutely sensitive to the political implications of emerging reading practices. As Jon Klancher and William St. Clair have shown, the political upheaval of the Romantic period transformed the social relations of reading into a subject of urgent public debate.24 Figuring the nation’s reading habits as a crucial site of social and cultural reproduction, Klancher argues, poets and critics writing in the wake of the French Revolution aimed to short-circuit existing networks through which tastes were formed and ideas transmitted, hoping to install new and more politically productive dispositions in their place.25 Further, the rapid expansion of the market for print in the final decades of the eighteenth century intensified public interest in the political consequences of literacy. As an influx of newly literate readers joined the liberal, consensual, and bounded eighteenth-century public sphere, it began to split along the fault lines of class and gender, yielding to the divergent and competing interests of multiple reading

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25 See Klancher’s discussion of Wordsworth’s efforts to “transform the effects of the habitus by means of remaking the reading habit” in *The Making of English Reading Audiences*, 37.
constituencies.\textsuperscript{26} In an effort to produce a new “mental map” of the reading public (Klancher 15), Romantic critics worked to reclassify readers based on their choices of texts and assumed habits of reading, elevating practices associated with habits of intellectual and critical refinement while dismissing those associated with absorption in sensual pleasure. Such efforts to categorize new reading audiences proved prescriptive as well as descriptive, of course: as commentators repeatedly associated female or laboring-class readers with disorderly, antisocial, and reflexive habits of consumption, they reinforced the distinctions between the reading habits of “the middling classes” and those associated with an emerging mass readership.\textsuperscript{27} Operating as a “juridical space of judgment and discipline,” as Ina Ferris has shown, new periodicals like the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review took it upon themselves to define and to discipline their audiences, attempting “to forge a diverse and unstable group of the newly literate into the civic coherence of a ‘reading public’.”\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{26} Book historians have questioned the degree to which the perceived expansion of the reading public in the Romantic period overlapped with a corresponding spike in literacy rates. While Ina Ferris allows that “the period is filled with signs of an urgent, widespread sense that large numbers of new and diverse readers had appeared on the scene,” she also notes that “the empirical data on literacy … are notoriously problematic.” The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 22. Heather Jackson, too, seeks to reframe the Romantic “reading revolution” as a “reading boom” – a temporary intensification of the “desire to exercise the ability to read” that she attributes to “competitive commercial activity, especially advertising and reviewing,” rather than to the advent of true mass publishing or readership. Romantic Readers: The Evidence of Marginalia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 7, 9.

\textsuperscript{27} For a discussion of critical efforts to marginalize young women’s reading, see Ina Ferris, The Achievement of Literary Authority, 19-45. For an account of the supposed “mania” critics ascribed to antiquaries, bibliomaniacs, and circulating-library readers, see Paul Keen, Literature, Commerce, and the Spectacle of Modernity, 1750-1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

While the periodical reviews may constitute our most explicit record of Romantic critical efforts to reform the reading public, however, paratextual interventions both enact and encode similar disciplinary relationships at the level of literary form. Like the antiquarian and the bibliomaniac, figures mocked for their fixation on the material surfaces of texts and artifacts at the expense of their contents and broader significance, the paratextual reader offered a focal point for an ongoing critical effort to define and to authorize productive reading practices at a moment of shifting disciplinary and cultural norms.29 Revising and extending early eighteenth-century Scriblerian invective against “index-learners,” criticisms of paratextual readers often censured their propensity simply to use – and thus, to misuse – books without bothering to read or to understand them in culturally authorized ways. Paratextual readers depart from other figures of textual misuse, however, in that the very thickets of notes that enable their deviance are ultimately positioned as the means of their deliverance. By interrupting readers in the act of consuming the text, the writers profiled in this study deploy marginal discourse deliberately, using it as a tool to cultivate new, more politically desirable habits of reading in their desired audiences.

Of course, any paratext can be skipped. While the learned antiquarian and Orientalist notes that swell the margins of Romantic novels and long poems certainly appealed to those select readers with the specialized knowledge needed to evaluate and appreciate

29 For more on how the charge of pedantry was used to banish antiquaries from “serious knowledge genres” like history, see Ina Ferris, “Pedantry and the Question of Enlightenment History: The Figure of the Antiquary in Scott,” European Romantic Review 13, no. 3 (2002): 273-83. For a concise overview of how the bibliomaniac served as a scapegoat for nineteenth-century critical anxieties about the expansion and commercialization of the literary field, as well as a deeper exploration of the bibliophile’s symbolic relationship to the history of reading and of intimacy, see Deidre Lynch, Loving Literature: A Cultural History (University of Chicago Press, 2015), 103-147.
them, readers with different habits or tastes were equally welcome to ignore the textual apparatus. Even when left unread, though, paratext retains its power to discipline reading relations. While it is tempting to assume that every preface, footnote, or appendix needs to provoke a detailed response in order to participate in the production of textual meaning, “reading” has always encompassed a range of activities – including, but not limited to, the diligent, focused attention to textual particulars that we have learned to associate with the practice of critical reading. Indeed, as Leah Price’s work on the anthology has shown, the practices of skipping and skimming emerged in tandem with more immersive, culturally legitimate forms of reading. Distinguishing passages “to be quoted, memorized, republished, and reread” from “passages to be read once and immediately forgotten,” anthologies “trained readers to pace themselves through an unmanageable bulk of print by sensing when to skip and where to linger.”

In much the same way as the anthology format trained readers to separate timeless “beauties” from disposable plot (4), then, notes and prefaces mark particular kinds of information as supplementary by virtue of their spatial location on the margins of the text. As Elaine Freedgood and Cannon Schmitt have argued, this convention has only solidified over time, training contemporary critics and novel readers to prioritize the figurative meanings of the centred text over the non-figurative ones more likely to be found in footnotes. In returning to a historical moment when the secondary status of paratextual commentary was not yet guaranteed, however, this dissertation seeks to highlight the range of alternative interpretative possibilities and readerly practices made possible by the dynamic interplay, rather than the hierarchical relationship, between centred text and

paratext.

I begin by reading Edgeworth’s first novel, the Irish national tale *Castle Rackrent*, as a creative extension of the pedagogy of attention that the Edgeworths had defined two years earlier in *Practical Education*. Chapter 1 presents the novel’s mock-editorial Glossary as an effort to promote stronger habits of intellectual labour in an audience it hails as its “lazy English reader[s].” Considering the national tale’s relationships to the non-fictional genres of improvement – both the pedagogical and agricultural manuals admired by Edgeworth herself and English texts, like Spenser’s *Views on the Present State of Ireland* (1633), that recommended the transformation of native Irish culture through repressive colonial violence – I argue that Edgeworth’s novel uses paratextual strategies to empower its readers to gather, process, and retain the information that will guide them towards more responsible political judgments and more nuanced methods of knowledge production. By juxtaposing the habits of pleasurable attention required of responsible intellectual labourers with the grim reality of labour relations on the Irish estate, *Castle Rackrent*’s ironic Glossary stages a necessary intervention into Anglo-Irish labour relations on the eve of Ireland’s political and economic incorporation into the United Kingdom. Further, in training “lazy” readers to experience acts of focused, deliberate concentration as pleasurable exercises of their intellectual faculties, rather than painful “mental labour,” *Castle Rackrent* locates the potential for Ireland’s political and economic transformation within reformed English and Anglo-Irish reading subjects – rather than in the violent rebellion that had swept the Irish countryside in 1798, on the one hand, or in dramatic structural change on the other. As we shall see, by encouraging educated, middle-class readers to exercise their own reason instead of outsourcing their
thought and labour to exploitative colonial agents, Edgeworth’s paratexts hope to heal the persistent divisions of class and nation standing in the way of Ireland’s political and cultural Union with Britain.

How might these reader relations change, though, when paratext calls attention to forms of cultural difference that remain stubbornly unreconstructed by the stabilizing relations of property ownership or national affiliation? Shifting its focus to another generic invention of the Romantic period, the annotated Orientalist romance in prose or verse, chapter 2 considers paratextual efforts to regulate readerly curiosity about more distant, exotic others – specifically, the Islamic cultures of the Middle East. Reframing paratextual interruption as the Romantic Oriental romance’s primary strategy for disciplining “perverted” forms of readerly desire, this chapter shows how this emerging genre worked to stabilize the rational, masculine, and self-contained British reading subject at a moment of rapid imperial expansion.32 Prior studies of the Romantic Orientalist annotated romance have read its paratexts as a scholarly rebuke to unfettered indulgence in readerly desire. According to Nigel Leask, for instance, the Orientalist footnote disrupts readers’ immersion in the alluring exoticism of the Eastern image, rendering the exotic pleasures of romance safe for British consumption.33 By comparing the paratextual apparatus Samuel Henley wrote for William Beckford’s Vathek (1786) to Southey’s voluminous annotations to Thalaba the Destroyer (1801), chapter 2 both builds upon and contests Leask’s model, which would locate the transgressive appeal of the exotic exclusively within the centred text. While Henley’s detached, scholarly endnotes to Vathek successfully reframed Beckford’s narrative of unregulated, transgressive, and

32 Jeffrey, “Unsigned review, Edinburgh Review October 1802, 1, 63-83,” 84.
33 See Leask, “Wandering Through Eblis.”
queer forms of desire as an unambiguous moral tale, I contend that Southey’s elaborate footnotes to *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1800) instead dramatize the possibility that paratext might tantalize curious readers with illicit thrills of its own. As we shall see, *Thalaba’s* apparatus initially hails paratextual reading as a strategy for disrupting British readers’ deeply engrained assumptions about Islamic belief and religious practice. However, the notes that Southey actually provides to gloss the poem quickly and deliberately strain this framework to its breaking point, calling critical attention to the role of the scholar’s disavowed bookish desires in perpetuating outmoded methods of cross-cultural comparison. In so doing, I suggest, Southey undermines the implicit claims to detachment and objectivity on which the enterprise of Orientalist annotation rests, revealing the limitations of purely scholarly and discursive efforts to consolidate Britain’s imperial power in the East.

While chapters 1 and 2 assert that annotated literature helped to produce normative reading subjects at crucial moments of imperial expansion and national reconfiguration, my third and final chapter considers editorial efforts to capitalize upon late Romantic readers’ newfound familiarity with the protocols of paratextual reading. To do so, I turn my attention in this chapter to one of the most profitable publishing initiatives in the Romantic period: the notes and prefaces Walter Scott wrote to illustrate the Magnum Opus, his fifty-volume master edition of the Waverley novels (published between 1829 and 1832). As a collection, the Magnum Opus derives much of its editorial authority and its value as a commercial enterprise from its close identification with its mysterious author and his practices. Having long concealed his identity as the Author of Waverley behind a revolving cast of fictional editors, collectors, and antiquarians, Scott styles the
Magnum paratexts as an opportunity to speak at last in his own person. In so doing, he
tells a proprietary story about how he, as author, had single-handedly transformed the raw
materials of anecdote, local lore, and antiquarian detail into coherent strands of fiction.
Chapter 3, however, problematizes Scott’s paratextual assertion of the author’s property
in his source materials. Taking the Magnum edition of The Heart of Midlothian (1830) as
a case study, I read Scott’s newly referential paratexts as a direct response to his readers’
efforts, over the previous decade, to annotate the novels themselves – researching,
publishing, and debating unauthorized illustrations of the real-life “prototypes” and
“originals” that were supposed to have inspired the “Characters, Scenes, and Incidents”
described in Scott’s fiction.34 By using anecdote and local history to reopen his novel’s
well-worn plot to the sense of novelty, contingency, and surprise fostered by first
readings, I suggest, Scott attempts to claim on behalf of the author a venture initially
pioneered by his most curious readers. In reframing the Magnum’s editorial project in
this way, this chapter argues for paratextual reading’s reciprocal influence on the edition
eventually institutionalized as the author’s definitive version of the Waverley novels.
Long before the Magnum was published, in other words, readers who had first learned to
hold the elements of fictional narrative in tension with their factual ‘originals’ from
annotated novels and poetry were willing to create their own apparatus, even where there
was none to begin with. Paratextual reading had, briefly, come to define its own market.

Scott’s attempt to claim his anecdotal materials as the property of the author may have
worked too well, effectively putting an end to paratextual readings of this kind. As

34 Robert Chambers, Illustrations of the Author of Waverley: Being Notes and Anecdotes of Real
Characters, Scenes, and Incidents Supposed to be Described in His Works, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh:
John Anderson, 1825), title page.
chapter 3 will demonstrate, readers continued to swap Waverley anecdotes into the early twentieth century. However, after the Magnum’s publication, the details they shared with one another were far more likely to be the ones authorized by Scott’s paratextual record than the results of their own research. The Magnum’s consolidation of the right to illustrate in the figure of the author is a fitting end to the story of paratextual reading in the Romantic period – a moment marked, as this dissertation will argue, by its emphasis on the scene of reading as a site where crucial epistemological and political conflicts could be negotiated. By charting the ways in which the Romantic paratext sought to intervene in and to regulate the relationships between texts and their readers, I trace a broader cultural effort to stabilize the shifting boundaries between different cultures, histories, and bodies of knowledge at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, by calling attention to the recalcitrance of the lazy, curious, or otherwise unauthorized audiences imagined as the beneficiaries of paratextual reading, this thesis exposes the form’s participation in cultivating a reading public fit for a new information age.
Chapter 1

The pains of attention: paratextual reading in Maria Edgeworth’s *Practical Education* (1798) and *Castle Rackrent* (1800)

1.1 Paratextual reading as pedagogy

Shortly after Maria Edgeworth published her first novel, *Castle Rackrent* (1800), one of its first reviewers defined its appeal by comparing it to a portrait gallery. “In these Hibernian Memoirs,” the *Monthly Review* explains, “we have been highly entertained with the exhibition of some admirable pictures, delineated . . . with perfect accuracy and truth of character.”¹ The image reimagines a tale spanning four generations of family and estate history as a static, synchronic “exhibition” – a space to walk about and to admire, not a text to read in time. In *Castle Rackrent*, the portraits hang on the wall, acquiring political meaning through their spatial juxtaposition: “from a due contemplation of these portraits, many striking conclusions may be drawn, and applications made, respecting the necessity and probable consequences of an union between the two kingdoms” (91). In this context, the phrase “due contemplation” seems to refer to the mental effort of

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dialectical reasoning, or synthesizing meaning from stark contrasts: in order for the reader’s “conclusions . . . respecting the necessity and probable consequences of an union” between Britain and Ireland to be “striking,” after all, they cannot have been clearly located or displayed in any one “portrait.” Indeed, the novel’s political “conclusions” seem to “strik[e]” only after they have been assembled in the reader’s mind over a period of sustained attention.

I open this chapter with the Monthly’s review because it locates Castle Rackrent’s unusual staging of its own reading relations at the core of its political critique. Famously, Edgeworth’s groundbreaking first novel addresses its reader with two voices. Its dialect narrative, told by Thady, the Rackrent family’s comically loyal Irish servant, is repeatedly interrupted by arch, ironic explanatory footnotes written by a mock-English “Editor” and intended to make Thady’s dialect “intelligible” to the novel’s “ignorant

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2 Although Castle Rackrent is widely acknowledged as a genre-defining text, the question of which genre(s) it inaugurates has proven more difficult for critics to agree upon. The novel is occasionally identified as the “first and most famous national tale”; for an example of this gesture, see Miranda Burgess, “Maria Edgeworth,” in The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature, ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1:237. However, while Ina Ferris recognizes Edgeworth’s novel as “the conventional starting point of Irish fiction as a distinctive mode of writing in English,” she also argues that its rhetorical construction of the “Irish question” as a case to be judged rather than a plea to be heard distinguishes Castle Rackrent from the national tales published in its wake. Emphasizing the national tale’s unique relation to national grievance, Ferris cites Sydney Owenson’s The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale (1806) as a more appropriate early example of the genre. See The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50. Building on Katie Trumpener’s work on the genre, however, Ian Duncan identifies a political and formal division within the national tale that splits it into two related but distinct branches: on the one hand, the “‘Bardic,’ sentimental, philo-Jacobin branch of national fiction inaugurated by … Owenson in The Wild Irish Girl,” and on the other, “the satirical, reformist, liberal-conservative branch inaugurated by … Edgeworth in Castle Rackrent.” See Scott’s Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 73. See also Katie Trumpener, Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
English reader[s].” Thady’s narrative is also bookended by an editorial preface and a glossary added late in the novel’s composition. The novel’s two speakers – annotator and annotated, English and Irish – seem to demand comparative reading: however, as the many different critical responses to Castle Rackrent might suggest, Thady and his Editor continue to resist efforts to resolve the novel’s structural tensions into a stable account of its political aims and content. Neither of the novel’s voices can be readily aligned with a clear-cut ethical norm or endorsed as Edgeworth’s authorial perspective. Instead, ironic potshots are fired from both sides. The Editor’s pedantic commentary recasts many of Thady’s dialect phrases as evidence of Celtic Irish superstition, laziness, and general backwardness – but at almost every turn, Thady’s apparently naive narration subverts the Editor’s scathing assumptions.

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4 Noting that the Glossary was not part of the original manuscript that Edgeworth prepared for the press in October 1798, Marilyn Butler has suggested that Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth composed the Glossary in 1799 in a hasty effort to make the novel more palatable to English readers. Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 355. Michael Gamer’s more recent discussion of the novel also emphasizes the Glossary’s hasty composition, dismissing “the instabilities of its material text” in order to focus on what he sees as its “more powerful and directed ironies.” As I argue in this chapter, however, the Glossary’s structural function resonates too closely with the pedagogical techniques that the Edgeworths had outlined two years earlier in Practical Education (1798) to be dismissed as a textual afterthought. Therefore, I treat the ironies generated by the paratext as deliberate, and just as “powerful and directed” as the ironies internal to the centred text that Gamer discusses. “Maria Edgeworth and the Romance of Real Life,” NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction 34.2 (2001): 248.

5 Edgeworth’s politics concurred in many respects with the Editor’s (and her father’s) liberal economic interest in “improvement,” but they were also complicated by her sympathies with the rural Irish and her precarious position as a woman writer. This biographical account of Edgeworth’s internally divided, “uncomfortable” sense of her own authority informs much of the novel’s criticism. For a selection of essays examining this tendency in Edgeworth’s writing, see An Uncomfortable Authority: Maria Edgeworth and Her Contexts, ed. Heidi Kaufman and Chris Fauske (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004).
Annotated novels like *Castle Rackrent* often resist ideological closure in this way. As Gary Kelly’s work on the “footnote novel” has shown, female novelists like Elizabeth Hamilton and Sydney Owenson used footnotes to adopt some of the authority afforded public, “masculine” discourses, such as history and political economy, while evading accusations of generic pretension. By charting a course between the extremes of “fictional fantasy” and political or philosophical commentary, he argues, these “quasi-novel[s]” “redeem the novel from mere narrativity,” the defining characteristic of the sentimental fiction fast losing currency in the revolutionary 1790s.6 Like much writing on Romantic paratextuality, then, Kelly’s concept of the “footnote novel” invites us to think of annotation as a formal strategy that writers use to claim authority for their work, or to incorporate public and political information beyond the domestic novelist’s limited purview. Less often discussed, however, are the ways in which this hybrid genre might act, or has been imagined to act, upon its readers. As Ina Ferris has shown, early-nineteenth-century critical discourse on “mere narrativity” linked form and physiological response, condemning feminine absorption in the twists and turns of novelistic plot as a selfish surrender to sensual pleasure.7 By formalizing the separation between narrative and contextual material, I suggest, footnotes both diversify and intensify a novel’s claims on its reader’s attention. Furthermore, *Castle Rackrent* deploys its paratextual apparatus with a high degree of self-awareness and irony. In so doing, I argue, the novel represents an ideal case study to focus my thesis’ investigation of the phenomenology of paratextual

reading in the Romantic period. By casting attentive reading as a potentially productive form of intellectual labour, Edgeworth’s novel invites us to consider the unique forms of work that annotated novels required of their readers – and to ask how paratextual reading relations might be put to use in service of broader projects of political and cultural critique.

The subjective resonances of reader experience certainly preoccupied some of Castle Rackrent’s first readers. Indeed, the Monthly review cited above dilates upon the reading strategies of juxtaposition and extratextual “application” at the expense of more familiar critical moves in the period, such as quoting from the novel or even summarizing its plot: “The Memoirs of the Rackrents are not of a nature to admit of extracts, without injury to the whole; the structure of which is of so peculiar and singular a cast, that the reader, to be himself pleased, and to do justice to the author, must be enabled to judge of the connection and dependencies of the several parts” (91). Contemporary critics have also identified the difficulty of “judg[ing] . . . connections and dependencies” as a crucial component of the novel. As Susan Glover points out, “[t]he repeated interruptions of Thady’s story require the reader to transfer attention to another discourse, to the bottom of the page or to the back of the book, creating both physical and interpretive breaks in the act of reading Thady’s story and making quite explicit the conflicting demands.”

These “conflicting demands,” I suggest, establish an active dialectic between Thady’s centred text and the Editor’s marginal notes. However, because the footnote form

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literalizes its own refusal to integrate with the centred text, the novel’s dialectic struggles to find its synthesis in any equivalent to the “middle way” that György Lukács has identified in the plots of Walter Scott’s historical novels.\footnote{For Lukács, Scott’s novels narrate historical change as a process of dialectical synthesis, through which “the most violent vicissitudes of class struggle have always finally calmed down into a glorious ‘middle way.’” \textit{The Historical Novel}, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 32.} Instead, \textit{Castle Rackrent} offers a version of recent Irish history patterned on an ongoing, interminable oscillation between extremes. Any synthesis that is to occur must happen extratextually, either in the attentive contemplation of the reader or in the deferred possibility of a more united kingdom.

Although Glover shares the \textit{Monthly Review}’s interest in how \textit{Castle Rackrent}’s “peculiar and singular” form might intensify its claims upon its reader’s attention, neither critic links their provocative observations about the text to emerging eighteenth-century debates over how to define, nurture, and apply the cognitive faculty of attention.\footnote{As Margaret Koehler has shown, eighteenth-century debates over how to define and to cultivate the faculty of attention were far more sustained and complex than modern historians of the mind have often acknowledged. Existing histories of attention, she suggests, tend to begin with the scientific efforts of late nineteenth-century experimental psychologists to define and measure the faculty of attention – omitting earlier, less systematic efforts of eighteenth-century writers, artists, and philosophers to grapple with similar issues. See \textit{Poetry of Attention in the Eighteenth Century} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 15-60.} As her pedagogical writing suggests, however, Edgeworth took a particular interest in these debates. She devotes an entire chapter of \textit{Practical Education} (1798) to the subject, arguing that the child’s ability to “fix” his or her attention must form “our first object in the early cultivation of the understanding” and explaining how educators might apply
emerging theories of attention to solve common problems in the schoolroom.¹¹ In this text, Edgeworth draws upon the work of two theorists of attention in particular. First, in constructing attention as an acquired habit of mental discipline, she builds on the associationist principles of John Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). Proposing that the repeated association of particular ideas with sensations of pleasure or pain fixes them in the mind, Locke recommends teaching productive habits by associating studious behavior with play and reward.¹² Additionally, as James Chandler has noted, *Practical Education*’s pedagogy of attention was influenced by Erasmus Darwin’s scientific work on “physiological stimulation, excitability, and ennui” in his *Zoonomia; Or, The Laws of Organic Life* (1794).¹³ Citing Darwin’s claim that all of the mind’s “ideas” originate in “animal motions, or configurations of the organs of sense,” Edgeworth conceives of attention as a physiological response to external stimulation as well as an abstract operation of the mind (72). When our “organs of sense” respond to sensations of “pleasure or pain” excited by external stimuli, Darwin had argued, we interpret the “animal motions” of those organs as our minds “attend[ing]” to a particular

¹¹ Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, ed. Susan Manly, vol. 11, *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), 40. Subsequent references to the text are to this edition. Edgeworth wrote *Practical Education* in collaboration with her father, R.L. Edgeworth, and stepmother, Honora Sneyd. When discussing *Practical Education* as a whole, then, I refer to “the Edgeworths” as a collective; following Edgeworth’s prefatory claim to the authorship of the chapters “On Attention” and “On Books,” however, I cite her as the text’s author when discussing material from these chapters.


“idea.” Edgeworth was particularly struck by his suggestion that acts of attention depend upon the “fibrous” motions of the body’s organs and muscles: by grounding Lockeian notions of habit in the muscular “motions” of the body, this physiological account of attention appears to have reinforced her conviction that the attention could be strengthened through practice and repetition. Weaving Lockean pedagogy together with Darwinian physiology, Practical Education presents attention as an embodied as well as a cognitive process – as a habit of mind that, like the habits of the body, can and should be strengthened over time.

Beginning with an overview of Practical Education’s account of attention, then, this chapter will show how Castle Rackrent’s notes and Glossary invert Edgeworth’s prescriptions for cultivating strong habits of attention in children in order to enact them. By demanding that its “lazy” English readers labour to interpret its unfamiliar Irish content (56), the novel’s paratextual interruptions and abrupt transitions initially appear to flout Practical Education’s insistence “that we can attend to but one thing at a time” – an observation that Edgeworth insists “should never be forgotten by those who expect to succeed in the art of teaching” (52). However, when we reframe the paratext’s interruptions as deliberate challenges to the adult reader’s stunted attention span rather than barriers to early learning, we reveal the novel to be a sustained exercise in learning.

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15 Edgeworth cites Darwin’s experiments on how to relieve the symptoms of sensory fatigue with particular enthusiasm, recognizing in this work the suggestion that a greater understanding of the structures of the human brain could be used to push human intellectual potential to new heights: “If we could exactly discover how to arrange mental employments so as to induce actions in the antagonist faculties of the mind, we might relieve it from fatigue in the same manner as the eye is relieved by change of colour. By pursuing this idea, might we not hope to cultivate the general power of attention to a degree of perfection hitherto unknown?” Practical Education, 72.
to pay attention. Like Practical Education, I suggest, Castle Rackrent aims to empower readers to gather, to process, and to retain the information that will guide them toward more responsible political judgments and more nuanced methods of knowledge production. Moreover, by juxtaposing the habits of pleasurable attention required of responsible intellectual labourers with the realities of labour relations on the Irish estate, Edgeworth presents the novel’s pedagogy as a necessary intervention into Anglo-Irish labour relations at the critical moment of Union.

1.2 Attentive reading strategies for a new information age

What does it mean, though, for a person to “pay attention,” and how does Edgeworth propose to teach children to “attend”? For Edgeworth as for other theorists of attention, the former question proves more difficult to answer with precision than the latter. Surveying attention’s history, Lily Gurton-Wachter notes that it has long confounded the conceptual categories used to distinguish acts of sensory perception from acts of deliberate cognition: “[n]either fully active nor passive, neither wholly voluntary nor involuntary, attention again and again evades definition … and thus escapes our attention.”16 As an educator, however, Edgeworth is more interested in disciplining attention than in “defin[ing]” it – and, as a result, remains untroubled by the apparent paradox at the centre of her efforts to cultivate attention as an involuntary habit of “vigorous voluntary exertion” (40). In Practical Education, as we shall see, Edgeworth understands attention’s relationship to the will as less a conceptual paradox that “evade[s] definition” than it is the circumstantial outcome of education. Furthermore, by outlining a

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method through which “vigorous” – and painful – acts of “voluntary exertion” can be internalized as the pleasurable repetition of established habit, Edgeworth offers her own system of education as the supplement required to transform deliberate acts of attention into automatic behavioural processes.

Fundamentally, *Practical Education*’s pedagogy of attention operates by converting the pains of attention into sensations of pleasure. Throughout the text, Edgeworth characterizes moments of focused attention as a form of strenuous “mental labour” (73), an experience every bit as exhausting as hard physical labour: indeed, for children unused to such exertion, she observes, paying close attention is genuinely “fatigu[ing]” and “pain[ful]” (55). Further, when attention is sustained too long, or divided among too many objects, she observes, these unpleasant sensations of pain and fatigue are likely to discourage the child from further application. Viewing the pains of “mental labour” as the price of any “useful knowledge,” however, Edgeworth proposes a method to reduce that labour’s cost. Noting that “repetition makes all operations easy” and “even the fatigue of thinking diminishes by habit” (54), she recommends that educators employ “small, certain, regularly recurring motives” to encourage their students to perform ever-greater feats of mental activity (57). One must “exercise attention but during very short periods” (53), in the service of attainable goals, and in association with a variety of pleasurable and proportional rewards: “[w]hen sympathy fails, try curiosity; when curiosity fails, try praise; when praise begins to lose its effect, try blame; and when you go back again to sympathy, you will find that, after this interval, it will have recovered all its original power” (58). In these ways, Edgeworth suggests, a careful educator can cement the
association between pleasure and attention in the child’s mind such that its original discomfort is forgotten.

Most importantly, once attention becomes involuntary, it can then be reclaimed as a desirable choice. The final paragraphs of “On Attention” figure the “voluntary” attention required for adults to “mix in the active business of life” (72) as the natural successor to “the habit of associated attention” found in children still under the watchful eyes of a tutor. Edgeworth imagines adulthood as a new and responsive arena in which to exercise the will, but one that nevertheless conforms to the same general relations between cause and effect, investment and return, as the rational nursery. The successful student eventually “discovers … that all the habits of attention which he has acquired, are those which are useful to men as well as to children, and he feels the advantage of his cultivated powers on every fresh occasion” (73). To facilitate this transition into mature habits of attention, though, the tutor must consciously withdraw the “temporary excitements” used to motivate youth, adopting the Rousseauvian pose of “partner,” rather than “master” (72). By sharing in the accomplished student’s intellectual efforts, Edgeworth explains, the teacher’s sympathy “diminishes the pain of attention” to the point where the student “loses all suspicion that he is compelled to mental labour” (73) – and so performs it willingly.17 In other words, attention matures at the moment when the tutor’s habitual discipline is internalized as the student’s own desire; once this goal is

17 Ian Hunter has shown how the modern concept of literary education provided a medium to reproduce this intimate (yet nevertheless disciplinary) relationship on the mass scale made possible by government-sponsored public education. The “birth of literary education,” he writes, occurred later in the nineteenth century, when “the erstwhile caste practice of aesthetic self-culture, or criticism, was redeployed as a discipline in an apparatus aimed at the cultural transformation of whole populations.” Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education (London: MacMillan Press, 1987), 5.
accomplished, the student is ready to enter the marketplace, a man amongst “men.”

Having learned to experience feats of tiresome intellectual labour as an independent source of pleasure and reward, students have acquired the habit of mind “requisite to prepare [them] for a profession,” for “literature, or science” (194, 72). In this way, by constructing learning to pay attention as a process of learning to take pleasure in acts of “mental labour,” Edgeworth’s pedagogy promises to cultivate attention and a professional affective orientation toward intellectual labour at the same time.

In “On Books,” a later chapter of Practical Education, Edgeworth applies her general theory of attention to the process of teaching children to read. Much as in “On Attention,” as we shall see, learning how to read proves to be far less important to Edgeworth than learning how to desire to read. Within Edgeworth’s system, though, learning to desire to read is not the same thing as learning to love literature: in Practical Education, the book authorizes further thought and action, rather than acts of consumption, internalization, or emotional exchange. Indeed, for the Edgeworths in general, as Marilyn Butler observes, “books [are] there to consult, rather than to be read through or learnt.”

To foster this disposition toward reading for use, Edgeworth’s chapter “On Books” deploys the associationist principles first established by Locke and reinforced by Darwinian physiology. By “seizing the happy moments for instruction” when a child’s mind is already pleasurably invested in a particular object and pairing them with an appropriate extract from a longer text for him or her to read or listen to, parents can “preserve the connexion of their [children’s] ideas without fatiguing their attention” (196). Over time,

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she explains, this web of associations between exciting extratextual “amusements” and relevant textual extracts will inscribe attentive reading as an involuntary – even pleasurable – habit of perceiving the relations between texts and the world outside them.

Most importantly, Edgeworth suggests that developing strong associations between reading, utility, and pleasure in childhood will forestall the possibility that reading will ever be recognized as “mental labour.” “If they are *never* forced to read what is tiresome, they will anxiously desire to have passages selected for them” (196), she explains – an enthusiasm much to be preferred over the “book-saunterers” who “yawn over a work, and count the number of tiresome pages” until it is finished (61, 197). Like Locke, from whom she borrows the epithet, Edgeworth believes that even the most inveterate book-saunterers can be reformed by going back to basics and strengthening their habits of attention.19 Faced with a student “[i]n this state of literary dereliction,” she argues, “we should . . . watch him when he is eager at amusements of his own selection, observe to what his attention turns, and cultivate his attention upon that subject, whatever it may be” (61). Once students begin to experience attention as pleasurable rather than tiresome, she implies, they will return to the laborious task of “literary application” with relish (61).

Edgeworth presents habits of attentive reading as a possible solution to the uncomfortable sensation of information overload that marks print modernity.20 Her exemplary “book-saunterer,” for example, registers an anxiety impossible prior to the invention of the

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19 For Locke’s discussion of how best to reform sauntering children, see *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 141-148.

20 In this respect, we should view Edgeworth’s concept of attentive reading as heir to a host of early modern reading strategies for coping with information overload. See Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).
printing press – which, “by multiplying copies so as to put them within the easy reference of all classes of people” brought more people than ever before into contact with more books than they could ever hope to read in a lifetime (313). Complaining of overwork, the “sauntering” child exclaims: “what must I read when I have done this? I believe I never shall have read all I am to read! What a number of tiresome books there are in the world!” (197). To circumvent this frustration, Edgeworth argues, “the common modes of education” must adapt to the changing material conditions of knowledge production.

Repetition and rote learning might have been vital techniques for orators and medieval scholastics, she allows; however, the ease and efficiency with which printed information is organized and exchanged in print culture has since made their “retentive” memories obsolete (199). Unfortunately, too many educators remain trapped in the feudal knowledge economies of the pre-print past, which conceive of the mind as “a storehouse, in which we should early lay up facts,” regardless of how “useless these may appear at the time when they are layed up [sic]” (199). All too often, she argues, this attitude leads pupils to mistake the goals of their education, teaching them to behave as fact-hoarding “pedants and misers” who “learn habitually to set a value upon the coin itself” – upon “facts, and names, and dates” (199). Rote learners, Edgeworth implies, have not learned how to put that knowledge back into circulation, where it might function as intellectual capital, generating new wealth through productive exchange.
Instead of rote learning, the ubiquity of modern print technology demands newly
catalogical methods of dividing and conquering the text.\(^{21}\) Now that “knowledge is . . .
ready classed for use, and it is safely stored up in the great common-place books of
public libraries” (317), Edgeworth writes, the mental labour previously devoted to
cultivating “the powers of retentive memory” must be recuperated for other, more
synthetic reading strategies, which she associates with the “faculty of recollective
memory” (199). The modern “man of literature,” she argues, “need not encumber his
memory with whole passages from the authors he wants to quote; he need only mark
down the page, and the words are safe” (314). Modern students, therefore, should be
taught to “arrange facts so that they shall be ready for use, as materials for the
imagination, or the judgment, to select and combine” into new knowledge at some point
in the future (199). Unlike the more conservative Scriblerians, who had responded to
earlier shifts in “the definition of what constituted worthwhile knowledge” by
condemning similarly utilitarian approaches to reading the classics as mere “index-
learning,” Edgeworth celebrates the analytical potential of learning to read for use.\(^{22}\)

Considered in this light, we might expect that the novel’s Horatian mandate to “join both
profit and delight in one” would make it an especially suitable medium for teaching

\(^{21}\) Susan David Bernstein defines “catalogical knowledge” as the information recorded in an
archive’s official catalogues, indexes, and other descriptive tools used to order its collections. By
attending to the systems of classification that an archive uses to organize itself and to discipline
its users (“catalogical reading”), Bernstein aims to reveal institutional values and practices that
might otherwise remain obscure. *Roomscape: Women Writers in the British Museum from
Bernstein explores how particular texts, material objects, and users might *resist* ready
classification within the archive’s systems of catalogical knowledge, Edgeworth’s Enlightened
faith in the taxonomies developed to “clas[s]” knowledge “for use” informs her endorsement of
modern methods of catalogical reading over older strategies of memorization, repetition, and rote
learning.

\(^{22}\) Roger D. Lund, “The Eel of Science: Index Learning, Scriblerian Satire, and the Rise of
Edgeworthian habits of attentive reading. In *Practical Education*, however, Edgeworth assigns little pedagogical value to popular fiction, observing that “[t]he history of realities written in an entertaining manner appears not only to be better suited to the purposes of education, but also more agreeable to young people than improbable fictions” (195). As mentioned above, however, Edgeworth’s first novel deviates from this pedagogical prescription from its first pages. *Practical Education* proceeds as if the probable and improbable are discrete categories, obvious even to children. Unlike sentimental stories or adventure fiction, “[t]he histories of the bee, the ant, the caterpillar, the butterfly, the silk worm, are the first things that please the taste of children, and these are the histories of realities” (195). By contrast, *Castle Rackrent*’s editorial preface begins from the relativistic premise that the difference between probable realities and improbable fictions depends on one’s point of view: “[t]hose who were acquainted with the manners of a certain class of the gentry of Ireland some years ago will want no evidence of the truth of honest Thady’s narrative,” the Editor explains – but “to those who are totally unacquainted with Ireland, the following Memoirs will perhaps be scarcely intelligible, or probably they may appear perfectly incredible.” Reading this prefatory statement through the lens of “On Books” points us toward *Castle Rackrent*’s central pedagogical question: can fiction prompt readers to orient themselves differently in the world, or does it merely confirm us in our prejudices? Put differently, if readers familiar with Irish manners are the only ones likely to respond to Thady’s narrative as an instructive “history of realities written in an entertaining manner,” then how could the same novel hope to

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reach “the ignorant English reader” – the very reader who seems most likely to dismiss the novel as an improbable and useless fiction (6)?

To address this conundrum, the Editor claims, he has “subjoined” his notes and a glossary as a factual corrective to Thady’s narrative (6). By translating “many of the terms and idiomatic phrases, with which it abounds,” and illustrating them with anecdotes of landlord-tenant relationships and scraps of Irish cultural history, he promises the “further explanation” required to make the novel “intelligible to the English reader” (55). By framing the editorial apparatus as a response to English readers’ cultural illiteracy, Edgeworth highlights the exclusion of the rural Irish from the British public sphere. Additionally, this comment also positions the Editor’s notes as an explicitly pedagogical device intended to reform English readers by informing them. Offering this information in supplementary notes, however, flouts many of the recommendations for teaching attention set down in Practical Education. There, as I have mentioned above, Edgeworth had warned that “the common observation, that we can attend to but one thing at a time, should never be forgotten by those who expect to succeed in the art of teaching” (52).

Here, though, the Editor’s complicated apparatus attempts to teach by doubling the text’s claims upon the reader’s attention. Further, it does so by mobilizing a form that Edgeworth elsewhere presents as a barrier to attentive reading: the explanatory footnote.

In Practical Education, Edgeworth describes the failings of footnotes in terms that could just as easily critique Castle Rackrent’s antiquarian apparatus. By underestimating

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*25 Although Edgeworth does not explicitly gender the novel’s editorial voice, I have followed some of the novel’s early readers in my decision to use male pronouns for the Editor: referring to the paratext, for example, the critic in the Monthly Review cited above mentions “his preface,” “his title-page,” “his readers.” “Rev. of Castle Rackrent,” Monthly Review, 91. Emphasis added.*
readers’ abilities, she argues, notes hamper interpretation: they “are almost always too formal, or too obscure; they explain what was understood more plainly before any illustration was attempted, or they leave us in the dark the moment we want to be enlightened” (215). This argument against annotation was practically an eighteenth-century commonplace. Alexander Pope’s parodic notes to The Dunciad (1728) present annotation as a vehicle for the “modern” philologist’s obsession with mindless, decontextualized detail; similarly, as we will recall from the Introduction, Samuel Johnson’s 1765 preface to his edition of Shakespeare condemns excessive annotation as a cause of book-sauntering.26 “The mind is refrigerated by interruption,” Johnson observes; “the thoughts are diverted from the principal subject; the reader is weary, he suspects not why; and at last throws away the book, which he has too diligently studied.”27

Read alongside “On Books,” though, Edgeworth’s rejection of footnotes also amounts to a rejection of paratextual reading, a reading strategy opposed on almost every count to the attentive reading she praises. These two styles of reading share superficial similarities. Both engage with complete texts through quotation and synecdoche, for example, rather than consuming and digesting them whole. But if the well-chosen extract reinforces associations between attentive reading and pleasure by cementing connections between the text and the world, then footnotes pipe up with “obscure” and needlessly


27 Samuel Johnson, The Plays of William Shakespeare, lxx (see intro., n.5).
“formal” interruptions; instead of encouraging readers to apply their ideas to the world, footnotes point back at a web of other texts, at reading already completed. Furthermore, instead of empowering students to seek or produce supplementary knowledge on their own, notes teach them to depend on the records of other people’s research and analyses.

Furthermore, as we shall see, this model for intellectual labour relations resembles rackrenting, the Irish gentry’s habit of leasing out their property to unscrupulous middle managers that forms the primary target of Castle Rackrent’s political and economic critique. In making this connection, Edgeworth uses the annotated novel form to blur the boundaries between landowners who refuse to manage their own estates and readers who rely on the Editor to digest the literary tradition of commentary on Ireland for them: neither group, it seems, is willing to undergo the pains of "mental labour” at the expense of their own comfort. In light of these objections, the Editor’s paratextual explanations seem unlikely to teach the novel’s “ignorant English reader[s]” anything useful about their relationship to Irish estate culture and customs. Indeed, by encouraging readers to place their trust in the Editor’s authority rather than their own judgment, the notes seem more likely to reproduce the asymmetrical labour relations that they describe than to transform them.

1.3 Transforming the “lazy” English readers of Castle Rackrent

If notes are as pedagogically useless to Edgeworth as she suggests in Practical Education, we must ask ourselves why she includes so many of them in Castle Rackrent. We could dismiss this gap between theory and practice as a function of the shift in audience between Edgeworth’s writing about children and this novel for adults. Adult
readers, we might assume, should have already acquired the well-developed habits of attention required to compare dissenting perspectives and to judge this divided text for themselves. This assumption, however, would be at odds with the Editor’s repeated references to his English audience as “ignorant” and “lazy readers, who would rather read a page than walk a yard.” Where Ireland is concerned, these references playfully suggest, English readers are too “lazy” to bother performing their own research. Worse, all the explanatory devices of modern literature seem only to have enabled this intellectual languor. Instead of seeking out multiple sources and commentaries, weighing them against one another, and exercising their own judgment, Edgeworth implies, the novel’s paratextual readers are happy to consume the predigested editorial commentary served in the Glossary. Annotation, in other words, promotes passive, sedentary reading relations. By allowing readers to consume at their leisure the carefully curated thoughts of others, notes discourage their audience from reading for use.

In his influential essay “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?”, Immanuel Kant had presented similar reading strategies as a sign of intellectual “immaturity.” Readers who passively allow “a book to have understanding in place of [them],” he argues, will “lack resolution and courage to use [their understanding] without the guidance of another” (54). Like Kant’s indictment of readerly “laziness and cowardice,” I argue, the Editor’s reference to his “lazy readers” functions as an exhortation to further effort as well as a blanket condemnation of intellectual idleness. The Editor’s indulgent asides may not address the rational professional, secure in his or her habits of focused

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28 Edgeworth, Castle Rackrent, 56.
attention, but they do construct an audience of potential thinkers – readers who currently manage to be both bookish and ill-informed, both highly educated and in dire need of further instruction. The novel’s preface, for example, addresses the text to “those who are used to literary manufacture,” offering Thady’s “plain unvarnished tale” as a refreshing change of pace for a public presumed to be burnt out on the carefully rounded periods and pointed antitheses of the “professed historian” (5-6). This crash course in critical thinking is unlikely to come from the apparatus itself, however. As we will see, throughout the text, the Editor’s notes on Thady’s narrative often record responses just as oblivious as the ones he attributes to his readers.

Consider his first footnote. On the novel’s first page, Thady introduces himself to the reader: “I have always been known by no other [name] than ‘honest Thady,’” he claims – except for his other nicknames, “old Thady” and, most recently, “poor Thady,” a name he has earned by wearing the same “long great coat” buttoned around his neck like a cloak for nearly seven years, “winter and summer” (9). In other words, Thady is known not by one name, as he initially claims, but three: not by his integrity, but by his age and poverty. By the novel’s second sentence, Edgeworth has already opened a suggestive gap between what Thady says and what he means. The Editor, in contrast, zeroes in on the “high antiquity” of Thady’s fashion sense as the point most in need of further explanation here, invoking Edmund Spenser’s account of the mantle’s ancient provenance as the context most likely to make Thady’s costume intelligible to the English reader (9). The note goes on to quote verbatim from Spenser’s “A View of the Present State of Ireland” (1633), reproducing a passage that denounces the mantle as “a fit house for an outlaw, a meet bed for a rebel, and an apt cloak for a thief” – three cloaked criminals whose efforts
to disguise themselves could, in theory, taint by association the reliability of “poor Thady” (9). Ultimately, the Editor seems more interested in Spenser’s list of ancient civilizations than in exploring the implications of what he has quoted directly. Indeed, his quick summary of the passage empties the mantle of its radical potential, stating only that Spenser “knew the convenience of the said mantle, as housing, bedding, and clothing” (9).

While the Editor’s tendency to get locked in the storehouse of his own facts may leave him blithely unaware of the implications of the material he cites, this footnote hardly “leave[s] us in the dark the moment we want to be enlightened,” as the Edgeworth of Practical Education would have it. Instead, as Glover has suggested, the Editor’s initial allusion to Spenser acts as a covert cue to attention – it “serve[s] to further heighten our sense of caution and our awareness of competing voices in the text.”30 As several critics have observed, this early reference to Spenser’s account of the political potential of the mantle suggests to us from the novel’s first pages that Thady might not be quite as honest, loyal, or naive as he would have us believe him to be. We read Thady’s statement, we read the Editor’s note, we return to Thady again more attentive to signs of his (un)reliability as a narrator – but also with our faith somewhat shaken in the Editor’s claims to make the narrative intelligible. As I will argue now, though, by interrupting Castle Rackrent’s narrative with pointed reminders of the complexities of the political and social world beyond its covers, the Editor’s notes also demand that readers find an extratextual way to try to integrate these two “conflicting demands.” Paradoxically, Castle Rackrent uses paratext – previously identified as a vehicle for “formal” and

“obscure” detail – to enact the very program that Edgeworth had identified in *Practical Education* as a way to cultivate strong habits of attention in the developing mind. Throughout *Castle Rackrent*, as we shall see, Edgeworth strategically deploys the paratextual reading relations she had previously disparaged in *Practical Education* in a deliberate and concerted effort to push her “lazy” English audience to develop more attentive, responsible, and enlightened habits of reading.

Using Spenser to kick-start this interpretative process also situates the novel’s apparatus within the larger context of English knowledge production about “Ireland” since the Conquest. Michael Neill presents Edgeworth’s choice of citation as deliberate, even polemical: Spenser’s tirade against the mantle “is repeated, with an almost paranoid insistence, in virtually every late Elizabethan and Jacobean text on the Irish question.”

By enlisting Spenser to cast doubt on Thady’s claims to honest representation, Edgeworth positions Thady’s narrative – and the twists and turns of what the Editor calls his untranslatable “idiom” (6) – against the long textual record of English colonial fears of native Irish resistance. This textual record, the note implies, is a product of centuries of something very like the English public’s habits of paratextual reading. In other words, from Spenser down to Edgeworth’s own Editor, Anglo-Irish scholarship has relied on an unbroken chain of citation, reinforced at each link by anti-Irish sentiment and rarely augmented by original reflections or research. By burying the reference in a footnote, Edgeworth drives her critique of paratextual reading home. As Anthony Grafton reminds us, annotated texts wear an awareness of their own limitations on their sleeves – or, rather, in their notes: “In documenting the thought and research that underpin the

narrative above them, footnotes prove that it is a historically contingent product. … Like an engineer’s diagram of a splendid building, the footnote reveals the occasionally crude braces, the unavoidable weak points, and the hidden stresses that an elevation of the facade would conceal.”

The Editor’s mindless repetition of Spenser’s observations in this note suggests that English writing about Ireland had long since ossified into the habitual restatement of established prejudices as “facts,” a form of intellectual sloth so entrenched as to render acts of attentive observation, comparison, and judgment next to impossible. This tradition, Edgeworth implies, can neither create nor perceive anything new. If English readers are “ignorant” and “lazy,” it is because they have learned to “read” Ireland through a series of teleological colonial comparisons – and, as a result, have become both unwilling and unable to think beyond them.

Edgeworth breaks the chain of citation, however, by concluding her novel with a reference to Arthur Young. Castle Rackrent’s final paragraphs praise A Tour in Ireland (1780), Young’s handbook for liberal agricultural and economic reform, as “the first faithful portrait of its inhabitants”; like the Tour, the novel claims to “sketch” Irish “manners and characters” “from the life,” rather than gleaning them secondhand from other texts (54). In his preface to A Tour in Ireland, Young defines his methodology against the armchair speculations of his predecessors in similar terms. Although “the greater number” of men who had proposed plans for Ireland’s economic future had “been confined to their own farms, – perhaps to their fire sides,” his recommendations, he claims, will stem from accounts “taken on the spot, from the mouths of gentlemen or

farmers who reside in the districts.” To unify the English and Irish economies, Young implies, there must be many more cross-class conversations like these. English policymakers and Anglo-Irish landlords alike must learn to speak *with* the Irish, in other words, instead of evaluating them from a safe and literary distance – or, to use Edgeworth’s own phrase, through the intellectual lens of “rackrenting middlemen” like Spenser.

As the Editor has already stated, however, Thady’s “vernacular idiom” cannot be translated. While the Glossary might be able to make his speech less “incredible” (and even “intelligible”) to English readers (6), it cannot sustain the Youngian dialogue required to respond to the Irish question. However, by performing the “mental labour” of negotiating between Thady’s idiom and the scholarly apparatus of modern learning, *Castle Rackrent*’s readers can learn to gather and to retain relevant information toward sharper, more responsible political judgments. By acknowledging the novel’s methodological debt to Young, Edgeworth links its efforts to teach habits of attentive reading with emerging national projects for political and economic reform. Further, because *A Tour in Ireland* grounds its contributions to political economic theory in the lived experience of agricultural labourers, the allusion also provides a valuable reminder of the material and social context in which that reading will take place. The novel’s conclusion thus gestures outwards from Edgeworth’s efforts to transform her “lazy”

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34 For further work on the relationship between linguistic and economic exchange in Young’s political economy, see Jon P. Klancher’s discussion of the concept of “circulation” in Young’s *Travels in France* (1792). *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 34-36.
readers into attentive ones, implicating them within the larger economy of labour relations on the Anglo-Irish estate.

Although *Castle Rackrent* calls for its readers to raise their standards for knowledge production about Ireland, Edgeworth remains aware that professional habits of attention alone are an insufficient guarantee of responsible judgment. Thady’s account of life under his second master, the litigious, self-aggrandizing Murtagh Rackrent, provides a valuable case in point. Instead of maintaining or improving the estate in partnership with his tenants, Sir Murtagh uses his superior learning in the law to threaten and to exploit them into working for free:

> he made a good living of trespassing cattle; there was always some tenant’s pig, or horse, or cow, or calf, or goose, trespassing, which was so great a gain to sir Murtagh, that he did not like to hear me talk of repairing fences. . . . in short, all the work about his house [was] done for nothing; for in all our leases there were strict clauses heavy with penalties, which sir Murtagh knew well how to enforce. (12-13)

Having summarized the methods his master used to secure a “good living” from his tenants, Thady then slyly mentions Sir Murtagh’s favorite proverb, “learning is better than house or land” (13). As this example suggests, however, Murtagh values learning because it *reinforces* his ownership of house and land. As far from the itinerant scholar-gypsy as he is from the enlightened Youngian landlord, this “learned man in the law” is a powerful agent of the legal and political corruption that makes exploitative landlord-tenant relationships possible in the first place (14).
By contrast, the Editor offers a far more equivocal account of the relationship between landowners and their tenants than Thady. On the one hand, several of his Glossary notes directly acknowledge the “petty tyranny and oppression” sustained under the feudal system of “duty work” (59), abandoning the fussily antiquarian tones of the note on the mantle to do so. Terry Eagleton has suggested that these sentiments push the novel toward an endorsement of “the old Gaelic dream of popular repossession of the land.”

Yet the Editor also qualifies his critique of “duty work” by insisting that the historical distance of Ireland’s past from its present guarantees their absolute difference from one another. Following the title page’s claim that the novel only represents “the manners of the Irish squires before the year 1782” (3), the Editor locates the last of this “tyranny and oppression” a generation earlier – before 1782, the year that Grattan’s Parliament reintroduced the possibility of limited self-governance to the island. “Duty fowls, and duty turkies, and duty geese” are described as the poultry that Irish tenants were “formerly bound” to supply to their landlords in “inordinate quantit[ies]” and for free (58); similarly, provisions legalizing “duty work” were “formerly common” in Irish leases (59). While the Editor avoids describing the present day’s improvements over the past in detail, his repetition of “formerly” implies the absence of such exploitative labour relations from contemporary Ireland.

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36 “Grattan’s Parliament” refers to the period between 1783 and the 1800 Act of Union, during which the Irish House of Commons enjoyed a short-lived legislative independence from English control before being incorporated into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. This period takes its name from Henry Grattan, an Anglo-Irish statesman who led the Patriot movement that first campaigned for Irish parliamentary independence. For a comprehensive overview of this period in Ireland’s colonial history, see Thomas Bartlett, “Ireland, Empire, and Union, 1670-1801,” in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 77-88.
Far less ambivalent than the Editor’s discussion of the changing norms of estate management, though, are his sarcastic descriptions of Irish shiftlessness, laziness, or native simplicity. For example, his note on the “whillaluh,” or Irish funeral song, pins responsibility for the country’s abysmal labour relations on the last remnants of a Celtic Irish cultural tradition, rather than the system of duty work and corrupt landlords like Sir Murtagh who have historically profited from it. This same note, we will recall, is explicitly addressed to those “lazy readers, who would rather read a page than walk a yard” – a pointed reminder, yet again, of the hierarchical relationships between different forms of labour relations in this changing Ireland. Citing several passages from “the fourth volume of the transactions of the Royal Irish Academy” as his evidence (56), the Editor praises twelfth-century bardic performances of the “whillaluh” for their rare harmonies and metrical complexity. “On the decline of the Irish bards,” the note explains, however, the song’s metrical “feet were gradually neglected,” and Irish funeral song “fell into a sort of slipshod metre amongst women” (56). The note identifies this emasculating cultural descent into “cri[es]” and “howl[s]” with Ireland’s economic stagnation, implying that labouring men seem to enjoy the brief holiday from their occupations every bit as much as elderly women enjoy the opportunity for “extempore performance” (57). As a result, wailing takes the place of working – but all it manufactures is grief:

The time spent in attending funerals may be safely valued at half a million to the Irish nation; the Editor thinks that double that sum would not be too high an estimate. . . . When a labourer, a carpenter, or a smith, is not at his work, which frequently happens, ask where he is gone, and ten to one the answer is—“Oh
faith, please your honour, he couldn’t do a stroke to-day, for he’s gone to the funeral.” (57)

The Editor’s disdain for the indolence of Irish labourers sounds especially harsh next to his prior admission of “compassion” and “sympathy” for the novel’s “lazy readers” (56). Lazy readers can be indulged, it seems, but lazy labourers, carpenters, and smiths could spell the end of the Irish economy – and the British economy, too, should a Union with Ireland merge their economic as well as their political interests. The note ends, however, with a smug reference to “some alarming symptoms, which seem to prognosticate the declining taste for the Ullaloo in Ireland” (58). Should “Ireland los[e] her identity by an union with Great Britain” (7) the Editor implies, she might gain a modernized and more productive economy by the exchange.

While the Editor might be comfortable with these neat dichotomies – between intellectual and manual labour, between the idleness of the English and the idleness of the Irish, between the noble Celtic past and the howling indignity of the present – Edgeworth herself is not. As we shall see, in this long, densely allusive Glossary note, the Editor’s own erudition gets the best of him, undermining his indulgent assumption that the “lazy” habits of English readers pose no danger to anyone but themselves. In a textbook appeal to the classically educated and genteel reader, the Editor frames his remarks on the “whillaluh” with two short Latin tags, each one lifted from a much longer poem. The first, “Magnoque ululante tumultu,” comes from Virgil’s Aeneid; the second, “Ululatibus
“Ululatibus omne / Iplevere nemus,” is from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses.* The Editor identifies their authors by name, but he does not give their titles or translate them, implying that he has assumed his audience will be able to identify and to understand these passages on sight. Their brevity, however, strips these fragments of their narrative context, making them difficult for even the most attentive readers to identify. Both quotations describe loud ululations using little more than the Latin noun *ululatus,* providing next to nothing on which to hang our interpretive hats. These tags confirm that people howled in the classical past as in the Irish present, and little else. Upon first glance, then, the Editor’s references to Virgil and Ovid add little more than a learned veneer of classical literary precedent to his subsequent discussion of funeral rites. They adorn the text, in other words, but they do little to explain it. Like the fact-hoarding “pedants and misers” mentioned in *Practical Education,* it seems, the Editor has “learn[ed] habitually to set a value upon the coin itself.” In this Glossary note, he stakes his claims upon the “nominal wealth” of impressive quotations instead of the use-value of their cultural capital.

We could dismiss these quotations as pompous but innocuous ornamentation; however, in doing so, we would have to take the Editor’s understanding of the relationship between the literary material that he has selected and the present state of the Irish economy on trust. Once we go behind the Editor’s back and return these quotations to their original context, though, it is more difficult to agree with his assessment of the “whillaluh” as proof of a defect in the Irish character. Although *ululatus* is a common term for the sound of mourning in Latin literature after Virgil, neither of these tags have been lifted from

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37 The Latin “*Magnoque ululante tumultu*” translates to “a great tumult and howl,” while “*Ululatibus omne / Iplevere nemus*” translates to “the howlings filled all the grove.” My translations.
scenes describing loss or funereal mourning – from the *Aeneid*‘s lament for the death of Dido in Book 4, say, or the Trojan women’s keening for the fall of Troy in Book 2.  

Instead, Edgeworth has pulled these lines from passages that describe the outraged cries of powerful, warlike women. The “great tumult and howl” mentioned in the first quotation comes from Book 7 of the *Aeneid*, and, in context, it identifies the tumultuous howling of the maids of the warrior princess Camilla with the battle cries of Amazon women from older myths. Like the Amazons, Virgil implies, Camilla is fierce and intimidating, a force to be reckoned with; like the Amazons, however, she also fights on behalf of a doomed cause. Fatally, Camilla allies herself with the Italian prince Turnus against Aeneas’s invading army, and her defeat helps to secure the foundation of the Roman Empire. By comparing the wailing Irish mourners to Camilla and her howling maidens, then, the Editor inadvertently allies their “extempore performance” with a classical precedent of dignified – if doomed – anticolonial resistance.

More importantly, the second tag’s reference to Ovid’s tale of Diana and Actaeon the hunter identifies the Editor himself as the likely target of this Amazonian resistance. In the original poem, Actaeon stumbles upon Diana and her attendants bathing naked in the forest. As punishment for violating her chastity, she turns him into a stag, and he is quickly hunted down and eaten by his own dogs. The “howlings” that “filled all the grove” are the cries of Diana’s attendants, surprised and outraged upon catching Actaeon

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39 For line references to an edition of the *Aeneid* that might have been available to Edgeworth, see *The Works of Virgil in Latin and English*, trans. Rev. Christopher Pitt (London: Dodsley, 1778), 4:232, book 2, line 662.
40 Homeric tradition holds that the Amazons joined with Troy against Greece; their queen, Penthesileia, was slain by Achilles after the fall of Troy. See Josine H. Blok, *The Early Amazons: Modern and Ancient Perspectives on a Persistent Myth* (Köln: E. J. Brill, 1995), 147.
in his transgressive act of looking. In Ovid’s telling, it is unclear whether Actaeon invades Diana’s privacy (and so violates her chastity) deliberately or by accident. This is a myth, then, that refuses to decide whether the power to wound resides in the gazer or in the object of his gaze, or whether an act of specular, interpretative violence justifies an act of violent physical aggression. These are troubling questions to ask of the Editor. Like Actaeon the voyeur, the Glossary gazes upon Irish language and customs from a detached, scholarly distance: it observes, records, and evaluates with all the authority of omniscience. By identifying the Editor with Actaeon, though, these tags also gesture toward the vulnerability of that perspective. The carelessness of the Editor’s gaze – and the habits of “lazy” reading he both identifies with and stands for – guarantees his complicity in whatever violence might be leveled against him.

As we have seen, the Editor’s readings of the Irish social landscape repeatedly fail to uphold the standards for attentive reading Edgeworth had established in Practical Education. When he is not outsourcing the intellectual labour of interpretation to rackrenting middlemen like Spenser, he is recycling classical quotations from his factual “storehouse” without considering their implications for his broader intellectual project. If these habits color the apparatus as a whole, then the Glossary note on the “whillaluh” records his failures of reading in particular detail. The Editor seems blissfully unaware

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42 In 1799, the year of the Glossary’s composition, the thread of anticolonial violence was not as abstract as the obscurity of the reference might imply. Barely a year after the British military’s brutal suppression of the United Irish Rebellion, the Irish Parliament voted down the first proposal for a Union with England. With no legal guarantee of compromise yet in place, the threat of violent resistance persisted: indeed, small groups of United Irishmen continued to wage guerrilla warfare in the countryside as late as 1804. See Thomas Bartlett, “Clemency and Compensation: The Treatment of Defeated Rebels and Suffering Loyalists after the 1798 Rebellion,” in Revolution, Counter-Revolution, and Union: Ireland in the 1790s, ed. Jim Smyth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 102.
that he has cited classical examples of anticolonial violence to justify his attack on the cultural roots of Ireland’s economic inferiority. In addition, his easy distinction between the harmless laziness of his English readers and the “half a million” pounds per year threat of Irish idleness presents the work of interpretation as if it operated independently from the work of labourers, carpenters, and smiths – a position decidedly at odds with the Edgeworths’ commitment to enlightened estate stewardship.

Although these dynamics elude the Editor, trapped as he is within the “lazy” reading relations promoted by paratextual reading, attentive reading of Edgeworth’s apparatus brings them to the surface. It is significant that Edgeworth refuses to connect these dots for her readers. In order to grasp this passage’s embedded critique of the scholarly norms of Irish writing, it is necessary to do a little sleuthing on one’s own. To read this note with attention, in other words, we must double-check the Editor’s references, both here and elsewhere. It is unlikely that Edgeworth actually intends for us to recognize these obscure quotations on sight: we will recall, for instance, her argument in *Practical Education* that “the great common-place books of public libraries” had already made the painstaking memorization of classical texts obsolete (317). With the advantage of ready access to books, she claimed, modern readers need not “encumber [their] memor[ies] with whole passages” from important authors before navigating through the voluminous world of print. Instead, readers “need only mark down the page” to ensure “the words [would be] safe” (314). For this strategy to work, however, as *Castle Rackrent’s* paratext makes plain, readers also need to be willing to perform the “mental labour” of locating, categorizing, and returning to relevant information in the first place. In other words, the note on the “whillaluh” calls upon readers to “read a page” in the Glossary and to “walk a
yard” to the bookshelf to confirm or deny that page with their own research. In doing so, readers will transcend the Glossary’s limitations in the same moment that they discover them. As Edgeworth claims throughout *Practical Education*, acts of attentive reading strengthen readers’ overall capacity for attention, preparing them to engage with a greater variety of texts more productively in the future.

It is important to note that representing the political rapprochement between England and Ireland as a process of learning to read more attentively is not a particularly radical response. Edgeworth’s vision for a United Kingdom is politically moderate. Like her father, she strongly favored Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform, but she also imagined these improvements in the context of continued Anglo-Irish stewardship of the land. As a result, *Castle Rackrent* does not call for property redistribution or economic equality. Edgeworth is interested in improving the labour relations between landlords and tenants on the Irish estate, not in doing away with Anglo-Irish landlords entirely. The novel’s structure also insists, however, that the intellectual labour of enlightened estate management is accomplished (or not accomplished) in dynamic relation to the work performed (or not performed) by the Irish labouring classes. The laziness of readers “who would rather read a page than walk a yard,” whether they are reading Spenser or a short novel, is not a harmless habit to be indulged. Rather, it is inseparable from the idleness of labourers, carpenters, and smiths who would rather howl at a funeral than engage in productive labour. For Edgeworth, then, learning to read more attentively is the first step toward disseminating a Youngian commitment to bringing knowledge out of the “storehouse” and into “active use” on behalf of enlightened estate reform.
Much of Castle Rackrent’s editorial apparatus radiates confidence that this transition is already well under way, and that the feudal excesses of the Irish estate are already a thing of the past. As the Editor would have it, “the race of the Rackrements has long since been extinct in Ireland” (7). By contrast, the novel’s conclusion offers a more cautious assessment of the nation’s future. The feudal excesses of the Rackrements may be “extinct,” but it is not yet clear who – or what – will arise to take their place if Union is accomplished. Although “it is a problem of difficult solution to determine, whether an Union will hasten or retard the melioration of this country,” one thing seems certain: “[t]he few gentlemen of education, who now reside in this country, will resort to England,” and “[t]he best that can happen will be the introduction of British manufacturers in their places” (54). Young’s A Tour in Ireland had eagerly anticipated a similar possibility, arguing that Ireland would lose “an idle race of country gentlemen” by a Union, “and in exchange their ports would fill with ships and commerce, and all the consequences of commerce.”43 Castle Rackrent’s conclusion, in contrast, refuses to endorse this exchange of educated “gentlemen” for “British manufacturers” as a straightforward process of commercial modernization and improvement. Instead, Edgeworth concludes the novel with a gnomic rhetorical question that casts the Union as an opportunity for mutual education – in one another’s vices: “Did the Warwickshire militia, who were chiefly artisans, teach the Irish to drink beer? or did they learn from the Irish to drink whiskey?” (54).

With the Union between the English and Irish parliaments complete, Edgeworth suggests, the arrival of “British manufacturers” will transform Ireland’s agrarian economy into a

43 Young, A Tour in Ireland, 65.
commercial and industrial one. Edgeworth is less optimistic about this shift than Young, however. For the bulk of the Irish people, there is no guarantee that labouring in the mills of “British manufacturers” will be any less exploitative than labouring on the estates of Anglo-Irish “gentlemen.” Indeed, the comparison implies that industrialization is likely to swap one form of “duty work” for another, and that the nation will be no more prosperous for the exchange. In this way, the possibility of unregulated industrial development puts a finer point on Edgeworth’s efforts in both Practical Education and Castle Rackrent to cultivate professional habits of attention among the middle classes. Importing “lazy” habits of paratexual reading alongside British manufactures, she suggests, would only continue the line of the Rackrents. For Ireland to gain by the introduction of English industries, lazy readers, English or Anglo-Irish, cannot be at the helm.

In this chapter, I have argued that Edgeworth’s Castle Rackrent uses paratextual interruption as a pedagogical strategy to cultivate stronger habits of attentive reading and political judgment in its English and Anglo-Irish middle-class audience. As we have seen, Edgeworth harnesses her novel’s unusual reading relations to her broader political and economic vision for the recently United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. By pushing her readers to develop both their desire and their capacity to engage in meaningful acts of “mental labour” without needing to rely on “rackrenting” intellectual middlemen to formulate their judgments for them, Edgeworth attempts to lay the groundwork for more egalitarian labour relations to flourish on the Anglo-Irish estate. In her efforts to recuperate the union of Ireland and Great Britain, however, Edgeworth’s sophisticated critique of paratextual reading relations also participates in ongoing efforts
to incorporate colonies like Ireland into the modern British imperial state. Shifting focus from editorial engagements with Ireland to the broader push to annotate the emerging genre of Orientalist romance, however, my next chapter seeks to explore the broader, global context in which paratextual reading strategies flourished during the Romantic period. Where Edgeworth’s apparatus had sought to cultivate its audience’s cognitive capacity to read texts and circumstances with focused attention, the annotated Orientalist romances I discuss in chapter 2 deploy similar techniques in order to interrupt and to restructure their readers’ present patterns of desire. In so doing, as we shall see, writers like Samuel Henley and Robert Southey sought in different ways to define a reading subject fit for a newly global and expansionist age of empire.
Chapter 2

Paratextual “perversity”: the regulation of bookish desire in Vathek (1786) and Thalaba the Destroyer (1801)

2.1 Towards a queer reading of the annotated Orientalist romance

Like the rhythm of readers’ attention to the text, the ebb and flow of readerly desire is as difficult to track as it is to regulate.¹ As we have seen so far, however, this difficulty did not prevent Maria Edgeworth from using paratext as a tool to cultivate her “lazy English readers”’ cognitive capacity for attention – and, as I will argue now, it did not stop Romantic Orientalist annotators like Samuel Henley and Robert Southey from deploying similar strategies in an effort to interrupt and to redirect the intimate relationships developing between British readers and exotic Eastern texts. Indeed, the powerful associations forged at this moment between readerly desire, deviance, and strategies of paratextual annotation have yet to be acknowledged. Despite their absence from the critical conversation, though, these associations continue to inform the ways in which modern critics understand paratextual operations. Indeed, as I will begin this chapter by demonstrating, the spectre of readerly desire and deviance even troubles the heart of Paratexts, Gerard Genette’s groundbreaking effort to establish a unified theory of how

¹ While his focus on readers’ pleasures rather than their desires differs from my own, William B. Warner makes a similar observation about the fundamental untraceability of readers’ experiences when he asks: “From what do readers get pleasure? What do they see when they read? What are the ethical effects of this pleasure? Because reading may be surmised to be somewhat different in each reader, and because it leaves no traces, these questions become a nexus of cultural strife.” Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 213.
paratexts participate in the production of textual meaning. On multiple occasions, Genette deploys erotic metaphors in an effort to capture the ways in which literary form seeks to discipline the unruly operations of readerly desire. However, because he relies upon heteronormative scripts to crystallize his descriptions of productive, successfully regulated forms of readerly desire, Genette disavows textual deviance and excess as a sign of wayward, unruly, and queer relationships between readers, texts, and paratexts. In so doing, I contend, Genette misses an important opportunity to recognize how particular kinds of annotative excess have, historically, tried to capitalize upon their own queer potential.

I open this chapter, then, by moving the spectre of readerly deviance from the margins to the centre of Genette’s Paratexts. I do so to lay the groundwork for queer readings of William Beckford and Samuel Henley’s The History of Caliph Vathek (1786) and Robert Southey’s Thalaba the Destroyer (1801) – two annotated Orientalist romances that helped to establish the generic norms of this uniquely Romantic literary form. To locate this reading in its historical context, I show how the homo- and Islamophobic tropes deployed in eighteenth-century British writing about the East recur in contemporary critical commentary on romance reading. As the imperial relations between Britain and its Eastern territories became ever more intimate and interdependent during this period, British writers sought new ways to understand and to regulate readerly desire for exotic texts. Working to define a robust, disinterested, and masculine reading subjectivity suitable for a new age of imperial rule, I argue, these writers began to position particular kinds of desire as excessive, “perverse,” and potentially queer. Paratextual annotation, as a strategy for interrupting and redirecting the flows of readerly desire, played an integral
role in this process. My concluding analyses of Vathek and Thalaba demonstrate that the different ends that Henley and Southey imagine for their notes, and the different ways in which these editorial decisions were received by the reading public, index an imperial reading subject undergoing a period of rapid transition. Although Henley initially deployed his paratextual apparatus as a tool to contain the threatening excesses of readerly desire, Southey’s notes to Thalaba turn similar annotative techniques back on themselves, transforming annotation from a scholarly tool of containment to a parodic, performative strategy that indicts the very epistemological norms on which Orientalist scholarship claims to rest.

Before we turn our attention to the Romantic Orientalist annotated romance, we should recall that while Genette acknowledges the reader’s agency in shaping the meaning of any text, he also aims to limit the reader’s power to determine the text’s meaning, reserving that right instead for “the author and his allies.” This dynamic becomes apparent from Paratext’s first pages, in which Genette defines paratextual space as a liminal, semi-autonomous interpretative “threshold.” Located neither “inside” nor wholly “outside” the bounds of the text, he asserts, title pages, prefaces, glossaries, and notes serve to demarcate its “fringes.” From this “transition[al]” position, Genette argues, paratext facilitates a variety of “transaction[s]” between the text and its (potential) publics. Like a “vestibule” that passersby can enter and exit at will, in other words, paratext “offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back” according to the dictates of their own desire.² Within this model, paratextual commentary can entice readers to step inside the text, or it can repulse them; in either

case, though, the “commentary” that paratext “convey[s]” remains strictly “authorial or more or less legitimated by the author” (2). In arguing that paratext best serves its purpose when it *facilitates* the transmission of authorial “commentary” to the public, rather than when it “impede[s]” or “block[s]” the text’s reception (94), Genette’s model endows the unidirectional flow of information across the paratextual “threshold” with normative force.

What happens, though, when paratext fails – or refuses – to serve as a supplement to the centred text, or to provide a willing vehicle for authorial “commentary”? Alluding to Jupien, the upwardly mobile tailor in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Genette terms this reversal of established textual hierarchies the “Jupien effect.” When a lengthy preface or overly-detailed note “go[es] beyond its function and turn[s] itself into an impediment, … playing its own game to the detriment of the text’s game,” Genette elaborates, the effect is “perverse” (410) – as perverse, we are meant to understand, as Jupien’s rise from obscurity to a position of power over his ailing aristocratic lover, the Baron de Charlus, over the last three books of Proust’s series. Like Jupien, such a comparison might suggest, the “impediment[ary]” paratext puts on airs above its station – and, in so doing, threatens to expose the logic by which its supplementarity secures the apparent unity and centrality of the text.

Because Jupien’s relationship with the Baron challenges sexual norms as well as class hierarchies, however, it is important to consider the broader implications of Genette’s choice of metaphor. His conflation of Jupien’s queerness with paratextual “perversity” appears to be deliberate; indeed, most of *Paratext’s* references to the “Jupien effect” emphasize the homoerotic, rather than the classed, connotations of the allusion.
Considering the problem of the too-clever title, for example, Genette uses an episode from *A la recherche* to suggest that the “Jupien effect” transforms the paratextual “threshold” into an insuperable barrier, inverting the normative transactional relationship between paratextual “procurer” and textual “protege.” His discussion uses the language of the brothel to present the paratextual “transaction” as a sexual one:

If the title is indeed the procurer for the book and not for itself, what one must necessarily fear and avoid is the possibility that its seductiveness will work too much in its own favor, at the expense of its text. ... The procurer must not overshadow its protege. ... To Mme Verdurin, who asked him if he couldn’t unearth some penniless baron as a doorman for her, Charlus answered, roughly speaking, that too distinguished a concierge might deter her guests from going further than the porter’s lodge, and we know why he himself preferred to stop at Jupien’s shop. (94)

In its original context, Charlus’ remark is intended as cutting commentary on Mme. Verdurin’s flighty nouveaux riches guests, who (he sneers) would transfer their attentions to a representative of the nobility in a heartbeat, even if he should appear in the guise of a humble porter.³ If Genette only wanted to invoke paratext’s capacity to challenge established hierarchies, then, it is reasonable to suggest that “the Verdurin effect” might have done just as well. However, it is Genette, not Proust, who forces the transition from Mme. Verdurin’s porter’s lodge to Charlus’ trips to visit the sex workers at “Jupien’s shop,” summoning the image of Mme Verdurin’s social climbing only to banish it with a

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deliberate reference to Charlus’ sexual preferences. For Genette, it seems, there is something unmistakably queer about paratextual excess – something that Charlus’ visits to Jupien’s brothel capture more succinctly than the Verdurins’ nouveau riche challenge to established class hierarchies. As the above example suggests, Genette’s “Jupien effect” describes more than just the “impediment” inflicted upon the reader by too glib a title, too long a preface, or too-thorough footnotes. It is readerly desire that makes the difference: certainly, paratexts-in-excess might block the reader’s passage across the threshold of the text, but the opposite possibility – that they might prove a little too inviting, “lur[ing]” one in and “deter[ring]” one from reading the text that follows it (234) – seems to trouble Genette far more. The “perverse effect” of paratext (293, 327, 410), then, inheres in the possibility that it might divert the normative channels of reader response into an inappropriate interest in a bad object. To avoid such dangerous liaisons, he recommends that authors “use a light touch” to “neutralize [the] danger” of their paratextual embellishments. Authors and readers both, he warns, should “Watch out for the paratext!” (410).

Arguing that Genette’s hierarchical formulation reinscribes eighteenth-century hostilities towards paratext as formal facts, Alex Watson’s recent study of the paratext as a Romantic literary form seeks to “contes[t] the Jupien effect” by historicizing it. By problematizing Genette’s automatic association of paratextual excess with poor editorial judgment, Watson aims to show that “the margins became a locus for a number of important literary interactions” and practices in the Romantic period (29). Instead of simply “contesting” the Jupien effect, however, I wish to reactivate the latent queerness

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of Genette’s metaphor. Genette’s phobic conflation of paratextual excess with a specifically queer mode of failure serves to erase paratextual reading – and the forms of desire that paratextual proliferation both authorizes and encodes – from the horizon of available readerly possibilities. By reframing the paratextual impediments of the Romantic Orientalist annotated romance as a deliberate strategy of readerly interruption, however, this chapter aims to bring these unconventional reading relations to light. I also return these reading relations to their historical context, showing how their repression worked to solidify British imperial masculinities in an age of rapid and destabilizing global expansion.

Several recent critical treatments of the “poetic affect” associated with the Romantic Orientalist annotated romance understand its scholarly notes as an attempt to contain more rarefied readerly pleasures within acceptable limits. Such readings help to make sense of the otherwise counterintuitive pairing of the modern device of annotation with the traditional narrative forms of the romance: after all, if “romance” usually connotes “pleasure without instruction,” as Ian Duncan has written, annotation often implies the opposite – instruction without pleasure. Nigel Leask, for instance, has argued that the notes to annotated Orientalist poetry “inscribe [the reader] in a position of epistemological power; nothing other than the commanding vision of imperialist objectivity.” By dismissing unfamiliar customs and beliefs as the product of despotic, sensual, and superstitious Eastern cultures, Leask suggests, Orientalist notes allow

6 Ian Duncan, Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 12.
readers to indulge themselves in the pleasures of the exotic without fearing their own absorption by the Oriental image.\(^8\) Similarly, Herbert Tucker has argued that Orientalist footnotes “inoculate [the text] against itself, … purchas[ing] immunity from the infection of Arabia and its unbridled fancifulness” for both text and reader.\(^9\) Models like Leask’s and Tucker’s position the annotated Oriental romance as a normative check upon the attractions of fictional invention: Orientalist notes, in their view, enforce a turn towards something approximating the duties of ‘real life,’ corroborated by empirical detail and upheld by British cultural and moral norms.\(^10\) As this chapter will demonstrate, these models provide useful context for appreciating Henley’s paratextual efforts to reframe and recontextualize the exotic – and (homo)erotic – undertones of Beckford’s *Vathek*. I also argue that the assumption that scholarly notes can provide a safe container for the transgressive appeal of the exotic tends to inscribe annotators like Southey in a more stable position than their complex, deliberately contradictory systems of paratext could otherwise sustain. Furthermore, because models like Leask’s and Tucker’s imply that

\(^8\) To be “absorbed” by an image, in the Friedian sense that Leask intends, is to be “annihilated” as a subject. Leask’s discussion of the immersive Oriental panorama treats this fragmentation of the self as a disconcerting experience for the European spectator contemplating the image of the exotic other; however, it is important to note that Michael Fried describes the absorption of the subject in the image as a *liberatory* process, not a destructive one – even in the case of the “secondary” genres, like landscape painting or panorama, that Leask also examines. According to Fried, the “absorptive” painting disperses the viewer’s attention amongst multiple foci, requiring him or her to take the image in by roaming from focal point to focal point as a “wander[ing]” eye and shattering the illusion of the stable or omniscient gaze. Losing oneself in a painting in this way frees the viewer from the burden of sympathetic witness: as Fried explains, “in the process [of absorption], the condition of spectatordom is transformed and thereby redeemed.” *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 227, 132.


\(^10\) In this respect, we might draw a useful parallel between the annotated Orientalist romance and the developing corpus of anti-romance literature aimed at reforming the too-sensual appetites of quixotic female novel-readers in the Romantic period. Cf. Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority*, 19-45 (see intro., n. 28).
readers could only derive illicit thrills from the *centred* text, they cannot account for the unusual sense of pleasure that Southey appears to take in researching and arranging his meticulous notes.

Southey’s notorious bookishness, I contend, invites us to ask an important but hitherto unanswered question. What happens when studious detachment gives way to immoderate curiosity, and Orientalist scholars – themselves dedicated readers of exotic material – are seduced by the exotic details of their subject matter? As my comparison of *Vathek* and *Thalaba* will confirm, Southey’s paratextual interruptions encourage readers to ask precisely this question. More importantly, they do so by design. Southey’s footnotes to *Thalaba* do not articulate a “commanding vision of imperialist objectivity”; rather, by allying Southey’s idiosyncratic editorial desires with the reading practices of his British audience, the notes undermine their own bombastic claims to such objectivity. In so doing, I argue, Southey questions the capacity of Orientalist scholarship to produce valuable knowledge about the East and to forge a meaningful sense of imperial community linking British readers with Eastern subjects. By *Thalaba*’s end, as we shall see, the impotent collapse of Southey’s own annotative logic leaves him few alternatives but to anticipate more apocalyptic – if also more suggestive – forms of imperial transformation still to come.

To show how the Romantic Orientalist annotated romance aims both to harness and to regulate readerly desire, this chapter contrasts two important moments in the genre’s development. First, I examine Samuel Henley’s fêted – but unauthorized and uncredited – publication of William Beckford’s “Arabian tale” *The History of the Caliph Vathek* in 1786; afterwards, I contrast Henley’s success with the disastrous reception that greeted
Southey’s first edition of *Thalaba the Destroyer* upon its release in 1801. While the Romantic reading public responded to these texts in divergent ways, *Vathek* and *Thalaba* appear upon first glance to share a great deal in common. Many of Henley’s and Southey’s source texts overlap, their notes make similarly syncretic comparisons between their exotic subject matter and more familiar literary and cultural traditions, and, on occasion, their paratextual commentaries go to extravagant lengths in an effort to contextualize their centred texts. Jupien-like, their voluminous annotation inverts the logic that would consign paratext to merely supplementary status: Henley’s endnotes to *Vathek*’s first edition occupy a full third of the book, while Southey’s footnotes to *Thalaba* are famous for crowding out, on a number of the pages of the poem’s first edition, all but two or three lines of verse. These texts diverge from one another, however, in terms of how both editors use annotation to record and to redirect the flow of readerly curiosity. As we shall see, *Vathek* and *Thalaba* thematize in different ways the unstable relations between knowledge and desire that made the annotated Oriental romance so compelling for its readers. As a result, these texts establish different positions for Orientalist scholarship – and for its dark mirror, bookish curiosity – in the establishment, extension, and maintenance of British imperial power.

Curiosity, as a form of intellectual desire, links the errant pleasures of romance with the spirit of scholarly inquiry that drives Orientalist annotation. However, as Leask has observed, the delicate balance required to keep curiosity separate from other, hungrier kinds of desire often proves to be its undoing – hence curiosity’s “long and ambivalent history in European culture as the disposition of mind which desires knowledge of the world, but one which easily oversteps the boundaries set by God in a Faustian show of
intellectual pride.” As we shall see, the distinction between useful and dangerous forms of curiosity proved particularly murky where readers’ hunger for knowledge about the sensual, exoticized Orient was concerned. In different ways, Henley’s efforts to reframe Beckford’s Oriental fantasia and Southey’s “perverted taste” for scholarly “scraps” illustrate how transgressions of this distinction acquired a queer erotic charge in the Romantic period – and how they were disciplined accordingly. While Henley initially published his edition of *Vathek* in an effort to contain the scandal of Beckford’s pederastic exploits at Powderham Castle, Southey’s notes to *Thalaba* take up and exaggerate Henley’s dilatory style for ironic effect, calling their audience’s attention to the lengths to which Southey himself – and Orientalist scholars more generally – will go in an effort to indulge and to legitimate their own idiosyncratic forms of intellectual desire.

In sum, this chapter presents Orientalist annotation as a deliberate and occasionally performative strategy for rewiring the relationships developing between Romantic readers and the Eastern romances they enthusiastically consumed. By reframing the genre’s apparent excesses as strategic interventions into established reading relations, I question Genette’s assumption that the “Jupien effect” indexes a queer lapse in editorial taste or judgment – an assumption that, I argue, also informs Francis Jeffrey’s 1802 critique of Southey’s reading practices in the *Edinburgh Review*. Before we discuss the Romantic genre of annotated Orientalist romance, however, I first wish to explore its scholarly origins in the romance revival of the eighteenth century. First, I establish how

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the scholars of the British romance revival worked to vindicate the genre’s European origins; then, I discuss how their newly historicized account of the dynamics of literary transmission helped to position the romance and its history as an important part of the Romantic imperial project. I situate the scholarship of the romance revival in relation to key changes in British imperial policy in the East, arguing that this scholarship used the global peregrinations of the romance as an opportunity to theorize Britain’s newly imperial relationships with the East. Additionally, by highlighting the ways in which these scholars used paratext as a strategy of interruption and argument, I offer a prehistory of the paratextual reading relations that Henley and Southey would manipulate in order to thematize and to regulate the flows of readerly desire.

2.2 The romance revivalists’ debate over the genre’s “Arabian” origins

Over the second half of the eighteenth century, the scholarly recovery of ancient ballads and romances helped to establish an English literary canon – and, through it, a collective identity grounded in a shared sense of history. This sudden interest in primitive literary forms was fuelled by Britain’s rapid modernization and imperial expansion in the wake of the Seven Years’ War: by “nostalgically revalu[ing]” romance “as an enchanted and sublime contrast to the secular and rational present,” scholars like Richard Hurd, Joseph Ritson, Thomas Percy, and Thomas Warton sought to stabilize a national identity in continual flux.13 Traces of transnational transmission, however, dogged the midcentury revivalists’ efforts to claim the genre as a symbol of a purer English past. As many of

them recognized, the Crusades had brought Western Europe into contact with the Islamic world at roughly the same time as the chivalric romance emerged as a popular narrative form, raising the possibility that romance was an “Arabia[n]” import rather than a narrative tradition native to Europe.¹⁴ In response, the revivalists debated the geographical origins of the form with an often “breathtaking acrimony,” marshaling cutting-edge theories of environmental influence and historical change in service of their arguments – and, at the same time, developing a new scholarly consensus on the dynamics of cross-cultural contact and change.¹⁵

Although most scholars of the romance revival saw the Crusades as the primary moment of contact between East and West, they strongly disagreed over whether this contact had had a meaningful impact on the history of chivalric romance. As Monica Santini has shown, there were two schools of thought on the subject. On one side of the debate, William Warburton and Thomas Warton contended that the warm, sultry climate of the East was far more likely to have bred “the excessive imaginativeness of medieval romance” than cold, dry Europe.¹⁶ Struggling to account for romance’s willing embrace of narrative improbability, they concluded that the genre must have been an Eastern

¹⁴ Thomas Warton makes this claim in the first paragraph of his essay “On the Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe”: “That peculiar and arbitrary species of Fiction which we commonly call Romantic … is generally supposed to have been borrowed from the Arabians.” *The History of English Poetry, From the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1 (London: J. Dodsley, 1774), n.p.


¹⁶ Monica Santini, *The Impetus of Amateur Scholarship: Discussing and Editing Medieval Romances in Late-Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 55.
import, first introduced to Spain by the “Moors” during the Crusades.\footnote{While Warton and others may not have been correct in crediting Moorish Spain with introducing the “Arabian tale” to Western Europe, current scholarly consensus holds that many of the individual tales later collected as the \textit{Arabian Nights’ Entertainment} (in Arabic, \textit{Alf layla wa layla}) entered medieval European culture through \textit{Al-Andalus} (Andalusia, or Muslim Spain). See Madeleine Dobie, “Translation in the Contact Zone: Antoine Galland’s \textit{Mille et Une Nuits: Contes Arabes},” in \textit{The Arabian Nights in Historical Context}, ed. Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.} On the other side, literary historicists – represented in England by Richard Hurd, Joseph Ritson, and Thomas Percy – argued that the chivalric romance encoded the manners of medieval Europe’s feudal system in literary form. While they acknowledged superficial similarities between texts in the European and “Arabian” romance traditions, they marshalled evidence from literary history to prove that the two traditions had evolved separately from one another.\footnote{Percy attributes the invention of the chivalric romance to the “Gothic nations” of northern Europe in his essay “On the Ancient Metrical Romances.” Thomas Percy, \textit{Reliques of English Poetry, Consisting of Old Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces of Our Earlier Poets, (Chiefly of the Lyric Kind), Together With Some Few of Later Date} (London: J. Dodsley, 1765), 3:ii. Instead of disproving Percy’s claim, however, Warton tried to absorb it within his own system. As Clara Reeve would later summarize in \textit{The Progress of Romance,} Warton allowed that the fictions of the Northern bards may have “prepared the way for the Arabian fables which were introduced in the ninth Century” – but he nevertheless believed that “their Gothic inventions were in a great measure superseded” upon the arrival of the Eastern romances. \textit{The Progress of Romance Through Times, Countries, and Manners; With Remarks on the Good and Bad Effects of It, On Them Respectively; In a Course of Evening Conversations} (London: W. Keymer, 1785), x.} Although climatic determinism would later reemerge as a strategy for interpreting racial and cultural difference in the guise of Victorian scientific racism, Ritson’s and Percy’s rigorous historicism soon trumped Warburton and Warton’s arguments for the Eastern origins of the genre.

The loudest objections to the notion of romance’s “Arabian” origins came from the pugnacious Joseph Ritson, whose “Observations on the \textit{History of English Poetry}” uses a variety of paratextual forms to make his historicist argument for the genre’s European roots. Having printed the pamphlet in the same size and font as Warton’s \textit{History}, Ritson
prefaces his argument by inviting his readers to “b[i]nd [it] up with that celebrated work” as a “very useful” – though wholly unauthorized – “APPENDIX.” By formatting his commentary in this way, Ritson appropriates editorial authority over Warton’s text and materials for himself. Further, in the scathing set of notes that make up the body of the “Observations,” he cites specific passages from the History and refutes each one point by point. For instance, citing Warton’s claim that early chronicles of King Arthur and Charlemagne were quickly and summarily replaced by the romances of “Solyman, Nouraddin, the Caliphs, the Souldans, and the cities of Aegypt and Syria” after the Crusades, Ritson mocks Warton’s failure to date this wholesale replacement, wondering “what time” he might be “pleased to call the fashionable aera of the Crusade” (7-8)? In the same note, Ritson argues that there are not enough romances extant in the literary record to demonstrate the Westward movement of “Arabian” romance that Warton has assumed, dismissing his account of cross-cultural contact and exchange as a work of fiction, rather than scholarship – a “sublime Eastern flight” in itself (8). In so doing, Ritson deploys emerging techniques of historicist literary analysis in an effort to defend romance’s origins from allegations of cultural cross-pollination.

By contrast, Thomas Percy’s rejoinder to Warton’s History of English Poetry marks a more sustained engagement with the latter’s “untenable” claims for romance’s Eastern origins, and a more complex meditation on the dynamics of cultural exchange in the

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imperial contact zone.\textsuperscript{20} In the third edition of “On the Ancient Metrical Romances,” his preatory essay to the third volume of his Reliques of English Poetry (1775), Percy addresses Warton’s argument directly, arguing that literary forms cannot be so simply abstracted from the larger system of cultural norms, values, and practices that produced them.\textsuperscript{21} For medieval Europeans to have “borrow[ed]” the fanciful forms of “Arabian” narrative in the way that “learned and ingenious men” like Warton and Warburton imagined, Percy claims, they would have had to “borro[w] at the same time” something of “their particular stories or fables, … their heroes, history, laws, and religion” (ix). According to Percy, however, European literature written after the Crusades shows no traces of such cross-pollination.\textsuperscript{22} Rather, from the “Northern nations” south to Spain, medieval writers appear to be “grossly ignorant of the customs, language, and opinions of every branch” of the “Mahometan nations” (ix-x) – even going so far as to denigrate Muslims’ worship of the Prophet as mere idolatry. For Percy, in other words, the sheer vehemence and persistence of European Islamophobia proves that the chivalric romance

\textsuperscript{20} Mary Louise Pratt defines the “contact zone” as “the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with one another, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.” Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, 2nd ed. (New York City: Routledge, 2008), 8.


\textsuperscript{22} Madeleine Dobie has suggested that cultural contact between the “Arabic-speaking, predominantly Muslim world and the Romance-speaking, predominantly Christian world” is “less a history of co-presence than a vanishing point or line of infinite regression” – a model that seems to be better suited to the romance revivalists’ ongoing disagreements over the precise origins of romance literature. “Translation in the Contact Zone,” 27.
could not have originated in the East. Had Europeans acquired a “taste” for the chivalric “species of romantic fiction” during the Crusades, he implies, they would have developed more refined palates in the centuries that followed.

To illustrate how the transplantation of narrative modes catalyzes broader cultural changes, Percy contrasts the spread of “Arabian” romance with the familiar example of captive Greece taking captive her savage conqueror. After colonizing Greece, he reminds us, imperial Rome “naturalized all the Grecian fables, histories, and religious stories” until they became “as familiar to the poets of Rome as of Greece itself.” From this point forward, Greek “fables, histories, and religious stories” operated as a Trojan horse: once their narratives were “adopt[ed]” by the Romans, he implies, Greek customs, manners, and opinions stealthily remade metropolitan culture from within (ix). By citing a Classical example of imperial contact instead of a more contemporary one, Percy might appear to banish the threat of cultural transformation to the distant past. However, for good or ill, eighteenth-century Britons often positioned themselves as the modern heirs to the Roman imperium – and so Percy’s reference to the swift Hellenization of imperial Rome also poses a pointed question about the future of the British Empire. As I will demonstrate, contemporary colonial policy in British India fuelled interest in, and patronage of, Orientalist scholarship, making “Oriental” romances and poetry in English

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23 In his 1794 edition of this essay, Percy takes Warburton to task for his participation in, and extension of, this long tradition of European ignorance of Eastern “customs, languages, and opinions”: “under the general term ORIENTAL [Warburton] seems to consider the ancient inhabitants of the North and South of Asia as having all the same manners, traditions, and fables … With as much reason, under the world OCCIDENTAL, we might represent the early traditions and fables of the North and South of Europe to have been the same; and that the Gothic mythology of Scandinavia, the Druidic or Celtic of Gaul and Britain, differed not from the classic of Greece and Rome.” Thomas Percy, *Reliques of English Poetry, Consisting of Old Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces of Our Earlier Poets, (Chiefly of the Lyric Kind), Together With Some Few of Later Date.* 4th ed. (London: J. Nichols, 1794), 3:xiii-xiv.

translation ever more accessible to the British reading public. As a result, Britons’ widespread ignorance of “the fables, histories, and religious stories” of the “Mahometan nations” could no longer be so readily assumed (ix-x). Should the vogue for Eastern literature in translation continue, Percy implies, it would raise an important question. Would British society be transformed by its newfound tastes in the same ways that the taste for Grecian art and culture had transformed Rome?

When Percy first posed this question in the third edition of the Reliques, he did so at a crucial moment in the history of British imperial expansion and consolidation. A year earlier, in 1774, Warren Hastings’ appointment to the Governor Generalship of the East India Company’s Indian territories marked the beginning of a newly “Orientalist” phase in British colonial rule. Seeking to govern their Indian subjects through policy rather than through further military violence, colonial administrators under Hastings supported the efforts of Orientalist scholars to gather as much information as possible about the languages, laws, and customs native to the subcontinent. Furthermore, by supporting scholarly efforts to reconstruct Hindu laws and religious traditions as they had existed prior to the Mughal conquest of India, the Company also found a benevolent justification for its continued presence as a governing body in its Indian territories. As a result, throughout the 1770s and 1780s, Sir William Jones and his fellows in the Asiatic Society, which Jones helped to found and which Hastings patronized, enjoyed institutional support for their efforts to translate the “fables, histories, and religious stories” of “the Mahometan nations” directly into English.

For further discussion of the “Orientalist” policies of the Hastings administration, see Javed Majeed, Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill’s The History of India (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
While Percy had confined his analysis of imperial contact and cultural change to the distant Classical past, Jones openly hoped that his reconstructive scholarship would transform metropolitan culture, freeing present-day Europe from the burden of its literary traditions. Concerned that “our European poetry has subsisted too long on the perpetual repetition of the same images, and incessant allusions” to the fables of Classical antiquity, Jones wished to disseminate “the principal writings of the Asiaticks” more widely amongst the English-speaking public, and eagerly anticipated a moment when greater cultural fluency in Oriental literature would help to furnish British literature “with a new set of images and similitudes” borrowed from Persian and Hindu poetry.26 On the one hand, Percy had described a British culture unfamiliar with “Mahometan” customs and manners and therefore impervious to its literary forms; on the other, Jones hoped to rejuvenate British literature by infusing it with exotic and unfamiliar images. It is important to note, though, that for Jones, such an infusion would not effect a cultural transformation of West by East so much as a return to a state of primal unity. Unlike the scholars of the romance revival, who – as we have seen – treated the Crusades as the primary moment of contact and exchange between East and West, Jones accounted for cultural similarities by theorizing that English, Sanskrit, and Arabic had all descended from a single “Indo-European” language and culture.27 In this way, Jones’s syncretic philology offered an alternative way to imagine cultural exchange between East and West. Instead of seeing imperial transculturation as the penetration and consequent transformation of one distinct semiotic system by another, he tried to reframe reciprocal

cultural influence in the imperial contact zone as a return to a shared heritage, one fractured by time and lost to history.28

Crucially, Jones saw annotation as a timely tool to accelerate Britain’s cultural *rapprochement* with the East. Noting that Britons were unlikely to embrace the “images and similitudes” of Asiatic poetry until “the languages of the Eastern nations” were more widely spoken and studied in “our great seminaries of learning,” Jones recommends paratextual “illustrations” as an interim solution to bridge the gaps between divergent religious and cultural traditions (548). In “On the Poetry of the Eastern Nations,” for instance, he suggests that the “the principal writings of the Asiaticks, which are reposited in our publick libraries” be “printed with the usual advantage of notes and illustrations.”29 If they were able to condense the sprawling volumes of Orientalist scholarship into concise and illustrative notes, Jones proposed, editors and translators could guide the efforts of lay readers in the present. Even better, by making unfamiliar material more accessible, careful annotation might also encourage readers to acquire the language skills

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28 While Jones’s philological syncretism characterized a more complex and culturally-sensitive colonial regime than that of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century British Raj, it is important to note that the syncretic union Jones imagines did not lead to the egalitarian exchange of “image” for image, “similitude” for similitude. Instead, as Javed Majeed has argued, Jones was driven by “the desire to legitimize British rule in an Indian idiom” as well as his desire to recover that idiom. For Jones, as for the East India Company during the period of Hastings’ “Orientalist” governorship, colonial rule secures the political and economic stability required to restore a lost traditional Hindu culture for Hindus; in exchange, Britain gains new images and a breath of cultural fresh air – as well as, in practice, the subcontinent’s land, labour, and material resources. See Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 24.

29 Although Jones relied more on prefatory statements than annotative interjections, his published poetry follows a similar paratextual practice to the one outlined here. For instance, see the hymns to Hindu deities collected in *The Works of William Jones* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1799), 6:313-414.
necessary to study translated texts in their original forms. In this way, Jones makes the revitalization of Western culture contingent upon paratextual reading practices – at least during this relatively early phase of British imperial dominion in the East.

Like Maria Edgeworth, who would turn to paratext as a pedagogical tool to cultivate stronger habits of attention in her English and Anglo-Irish readers, Jones presents “notes and illustrations” as a strategy for altering readers’ dispositions towards texts – at first, towards Eastern works in translation, and eventually, towards the field of Orientalist scholarship as a whole. By producing more annotated editions of the “poetry of the Eastern nations,” Jones aims to fan the flames of readerly curiosity, substituting the desire to know the languages, customs, and histories of the “Eastern nations” for the “gros[s] ignorance” earlier lamented by Thomas Percy. Through judicious annotation, in other words, he hopes to transform paratextual readers into Orientalists themselves – and, in the process, to create a new generation of scholars and civil servants to assist in the ongoing administration of Britain’s Eastern empire. In this way, the scholarship of William Jones and the Asiatick Society positions annotated literature as the form best suited to an imperial culture in transition.

When Jones calls for Oriental texts to be published with helpful “notes and illustrations,” of course, he has translations of works of Persian, Arabic, or Hindu literature in mind. At

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30 Jones was not the only British Orientalist to present annotation as a semi-autonomous space for cultural critique and transformation. George Sale’s 1734 translation of the Qu’ran, coupled with his extensive notes and “Preliminary Discourse,” shaped British ideas about Islam into the nineteenth century. See George Sale, trans., *The Koran, Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed* (London: C. Ackers, 1734). As Mohammed Sharafuddin argues, the “clear division of purpose” between Sale’s stated belief in the inferiority of Islam and his thoughtful editorial and annotative practices laid the groundwork for later practitioners of annotated narrative, such as Beckford, Southey, and Byron. *Islam and Romantic Orientalism* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 1994), xxix.
the time he wrote “On the Poetry of the Eastern Nations,” he could only gesture towards the possible future influence of such translations on British letters. However, before long, poets and prose writers alike had taken up Jones’s call. The annotated Oriental tales and long poetry composed by British writers in Jones’s wake inaugurated what Mohammed Sharafuddin calls a more “realistic” Orientalism, predicated on a more detailed and intimate acquaintance with the manners and traditions of the East than the philosophical Oriental tales penned by the previous generation. Earlier texts like Voltaire’s *Zadig* (1749) or Johnson’s *Rasselas* (1759) had used their exotic settings to license the satirical or didactic critique of European norms, rendering supplementary glosses largely unnecessary. By grafting documentary annotation onto an original narrative written in the “Arabian” style, however, Beckford and Henley’s *The History of the Caliph Vathek* (1786) soon began to transform the representational codes and generic norms of British literary Orientalism. The friction between notes and text established there proved unusually generative for later poets. Over the first two decades of the nineteenth century, for example, Romantic poets from Walter Savage Landor and Robert Southey to Lord Byron and Thomas Moore would exploit the tension between scholarly notes and exotic “images and similitudes” to create popular works of annotated Orientalist poetry, often

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31 Sharafuddin defines “realistic orientalism” as “the recognition by English culture of the reality and value of a radically foreign form of life.” *Islam and Romantic Orientalism*, xxxiv.
citing *Vathek* as a foundational text for their own work.\(^{33}\)

Less often discussed, though, are the ways that *Vathek*’s effort to ground the “wild” fictionality of the Arabian romance in documentary notes on Islamic history and culture was also shaped by a broader cultural backlash against forms of curiosity and desire coded as unauthorized, excessive, and queer. As I will show in my next section, Beckford and Henley’s uneasy collaboration established paratextual reading as a strategy for reinforcing masculine ideals that seemed to be threatened by Britain’s increasing proximity to Eastern culture. While Beckford’s narrative draws suggestive parallels between queer erotic desire and Orientalist curiosity, Henley’s “notes and illustrations” to *Vathek* seek to redirect our attention towards more abstract scholarly debates – especially about literature’s role as a tool of imperial expansion in the East. In this way, I argue, Henley presents paratextual embellishment as a strategy for reinforcing normative readerly dispositions towards the exotic “images and similitudes” of Eastern romance.

### 2.3 Redirecting readerly desire in Beckford and Henley’s *Vathek*

Returning to the transitional moment of *Vathek*’s publication in the mid-1780s, this section explores the role of Henley’s editorial paratext in creating, sustaining, and

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regulating readerly curiosity about Oriental cultures and their histories. Additionally, in looking to *Vathek* as a foundational text in the genre of Romantic annotated romance, I aim to illuminate the role that the scandal of Beckford’s queerness played in establishing the fledgling genre’s norms and central concerns. Noting the rise of particular homo- and Islamophobic tropes in eighteenth-century writing about empire, I demonstrate that similar metaphors recur in contemporary critical discussions of romance reading and other presumed challenges to imperial masculinity, including the arts of collection and display. In an effort to deflect attention from Beckford’s studied, repeated alignment of his own Orientalist curiosity with practices of queer self-fashioning, Henley’s paratextual apparatus recasts *Vathek* as a moral tale amalgamated from a wealth of scholarly research – and, in so doing, redirects his readers towards curiosities more compatible with the goals of Britain’s expanding empire.

For many decades leading up to *Vathek’s* publication, British writers had turned repeatedly to sexually violent metaphors to imagine the geopolitical relations between Britain and its imperial rivals in the Islamic world. Generally speaking, these metaphors rely upon normative assumptions about gender and power, equating penetration with femininity, passivity, and political weakness. However, as the tenor of British-Ottoman relations evolved over the course of the century, their metaphoric vehicles adapted, too. As Linda Colley has shown, prior to 1750, writers of captivity narratives used metaphors of sodomy and rape to process “the fear and insecurity that [they] continued to feel in the
face of Islamic power and, as they saw it, aggression.” In the decade of British imperial consolidation that followed the Seven Years’ War, though, the trope of Muslim hypermasculinity changed its shape. As Ottoman and Mughal power waned across the Mediterranean and the Indian subcontinent, “the Islamic world … [seemed] to be losing its power to frighten” (41). If previous generations of Britons had defined their discursive identities against a sexually violent Islam, the expansion of the British empire over the second half of the eighteenth century produced a far more passive antagonist – the indolent, sensual prince, who was more likely to wield his tyrannical power against his own people than against British captives. As a result, British captivity narratives began to focus instead on the heterosexual seraglio, aiming to produce “titillation rather than terror” (41). Britons also used queer sexuality as a trope to express and exploit anxieties about the integrity of their nation-state at moments of political crisis: as Louis Crompton has shown, anxieties about sodomy on British soil tended to erupt during periods of increased national vulnerability and transition, peaking during the Napoleonic Wars.

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34 Worried that “[i]t was they who might be penetrated and invaded,” “[t]hey who might be forced into the passive role,” Linda Colley argues, seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Britons “gave vent to their insecurities and … ancient fears that Islam might in the end use its strength to reduce them to submission” by agonizing over the possibility that European captives might fall victim to nefarious Ottoman sodomites. Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850 (New York: Anchor Books, 2007), 129-130.

35 Crompton’s analysis of Georgian homophobia and the prevalence of sodomy trials was one of the first of its kind, and remains useful even after nearly thirty years of further work on transatlantic queer history. However, while Crompton uses the nineteenth-century euphemism “Greek love” rather than anachronistic modern terms like “homosexual” or “gay,” he also tends to treat male homosexuality as an essential identity. See, for example, his use of “modern statistics” regarding the proportion of gay to straight men in the general population to conclude that “England’s gay male minority” between 1800-1830 “must have numbered several hundred thousand.” Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in Nineteenth-Century Britain (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 18. For more recent work on queerness in the long eighteenth century, see the essays collected in Queer People: Negotiations and Expressions of Homosexuality, 1700-1800, ed. Chris Mounsey and Caroline Gonda (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007). See also Queer Romanticisms: Past, Present, and Future, ed. Michael O’Rourke and David Collings, Romanticism on the Net 36-7 (2004-2005), doi:10.7202/011132ar.
sodomy had once stood for the threat of intercultural violence in strange lands, the sudden spike in trials and executions of accused sodomites in turn-of-the-century Britain suggests that those anxieties had come home to roost.

William Beckford, famously, numbered among the early victims of Georgian homophobia. Discovered in a compromising position with his sixteen-year-old cousin William Courtenay on a visit to Powderham Castle in October 1784, Beckford had been smeared as a sodomite in the press, ostracized from polite society – and, by mid-1785, forced to flee England for the Continent. What became known as the “Powderham scandal” had abated somewhat by 1786, the year of Vathek’s publication. However, as Hester Thrale Piozzi’s snide observation that “Mr Beckford’s favourite Propensity is all along visible [in Vathek] … particularly in the luscious Descriptions given of Gulchenrouz” might suggest, the relationship between his life and his fiction remained a subject of gossip for years afterwards. Then as now, the social expulsion – and occasionally, the violent repression – of accused “sodomites” offered a shortcut to national cohesion: not only did pillorying and hanging the “guilty” parties offer a public spectacle to rally around, it also helped to establish and to reinforce a reasonable, self-contained, and impenetrable masculinity as an embattled British ideal.

The frequent recurrence of such homo- and Islamophobic tropes in late eighteenth-century discussions of Oriental romance-reading reveals the important role that reading and other practices of self-fashioning played in producing and maintaining an idealized British imperial masculinity. Untethered from the mimetic or didactic imperatives associated with more realistic modes of representation, romance’s flights of fictional fancy appeared to challenge the rational detachment of this emerging reading subject. However, if romance-reading represented a form of “pleasure without instruction,” the improbabilities and invention of Oriental romance-reading proved far too stimulating to count as “reading” at all. For example, in his essay “On Fable and Romance” (1783), published three years before Vathek, the Scottish moral philosopher and historian of romance James Beattie pairs the “fabulous narrative[s]” of Oriental romance with the passive consumption of oral story, a pleasure he associates intimately with the forbidden delectations of the harem. Made “indolent” by “the genial climates of Asia, and the luxurious life the kings and other great men, of those countries, lead in their seraglios,” he argues, the “Eastern prince” passes his time by “commanding his Grand Vizir, or his favourite, to tell him stories” (508). However, since Eastern princes rarely know enough of “nature” to desire their own “moral improvement,” Beattie contends, they are content so long as the stories are “astonishing” (509). In this account, sexual desire and the desire for story are practically interchangeable. Both appeal to the enervated “indolence” of the Oriental body (508), even if both prove unable to rouse that body to the pursuit of intellectual pleasure or self-cultivation. The act of storytelling also seems to foster a form of homosocial intimacy between this hypothetical prince and his “Grand Vizir, or his

38 Duncan, Modern Romance, 12.
favourite” that Beattie finds particularly unsettling. Hoping to be “astonished” by the men (and “favourit[e]” boys) of his court, the Eastern prince seeks a form of sensual stimulation, rather than moral or intellectual improvement, from the narratives he consumes; in this way, his consumption of romance threatens the cerebral, detached posture adopted by scholars like Beattie.

Such a posture, of course, is primarily rhetorical. As we shall see, the rational containment of the masculine reading subject must be carefully produced through his denial of bookish desire. For his part, Beattie claims not to feel any curiosity of his own about a genre as dissipated as Eastern romance beyond what is strictly necessary to discharge his descriptive duties as a scholar. He denies the charge of ever having consumed such enervating material himself, admitting that the “the only collection, that I am acquainted with, of Oriental fables, is the Thousand and one tales, commonly called the Arabian Nights Entertainment” – and that in Antoine Galland’s French translation, translated from the Arabic with what he admits is “unwarrantable latitude” (509). Lastly, while Beattie praises the “fables in the Eastern manner … of a moral tendency” written by authors like Johnson and Hawkesworth (511), he denies that tales written in imitation of “the figurative style, and wild invention of the Asiaticks” have had any impact upon him at all (510). Having “read some of [these tales] in my younger days,” he retains a general impression of their preoccupation with “gold and jewels, and eunuchs, slaves, and necromancers in abundance … but as they have left no trace in the memory, I cannot now give any account of them” (511). Offering a more detailed description of popular Oriental romances, it seems, would require Beattie to admit that he had ever been on sufficiently intimate terms with those texts to have been impressed by them in the first
place. Unlike the “Eastern prince” he imagines as the audience for such stories, Beattie denies that he has ever allowed an Oriental romance to “astonish him” – an anxious defense of his bodily integrity and his intellectual superiority to the fantastic Eastern fables he condescends to describe.

As an English author of an original Orientalist romance, however, Beckford could not pretend to be so unmoved by the “figurative style, and wild invention” of the “Asiaticks” as Beattie had been. Indeed, the “Caliph of Fonthill” actively cultivated a sensual and experiential relationship with the material Orient, stocking his grandiose home with Eastern objets d’art at the same time as he immersed himself intellectually in Orientalist researches. Several critics have interpreted Beckford’s interest in the culture and history of the East as a form of queer fantasia: by immersing himself in Oriental texts and objects, they argue, Beckford tried to claim the imaginative space to define and inhabit a queer subjectivity avant la lettre. For Beckford as for many European writers, in other words, the Orient seems to have represented a safe space to indulge in what Edward Said has called “the escapism of sexual fantasy.”40 Elaborating on this idea, Mohammed Sharafuddin suggests that Beckford’s more “realistic” and detailed treatment of Islamic history and culture offered him unprecedented “opportunities for experience” and “personal identification,” drawing a deliberate parallel between Beckford’s demonstrated intellectual curiosity about the Orient and his unconventional affective and sexual life. For Beckford, he argues, the Orient represented a site of “intense personal fantasy and gratification”: Vathek formed “a part of his inner world,” “a projection of an amoral, secret life into the public domain [that gave] the rein for the first time to what could well

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be called the outlawed self.” Donna Landry, too, treats Beckford’s curiosity about Islamic history and culture as a form of queer self-fashioning. In an effort to imaginatively estrange himself from the repressive and homophobic England that had hounded him to the Continent, she argues, Beckford looked to the East for “structures of feeling that would embody his imaginings” and give voice to his “self-consciously transgressive and melancholic subjectivity.” Lastly, Andrew Elfenbein argues that Beckford’s preferred method for “embody[ing] his imaginings” was the queer art of collection. Scorning masculine norms and the expectations laid upon him by his wealthy plantation-owning father, Beckford expended his inherited wealth on vast collections of paintings, priceless ornamental objects, and Oriental manuscripts. By “pluck[ing these] objects from their original, useful context and fr[eezing] them into tasteful arrangements,” Elfenbein argues, the man Byron hailed as “England’s wealthiest son” tried to project a fantasy of utter self-sufficiency and superiority to the whims of the marketplace.

While Beckford’s contemporaries may have lacked the language to describe Beckford’s Orientalist curiosity as a form of queer self-fashioning, they nevertheless observed the connections between his unconventional desires and his enthusiasm for the East with a critical eye, dismissing his opulent collections as an offensive, effeminate waste of

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valuable national resources. By attributing Beckford’s effeminacy to his affinity for Eastern objects, furthermore, these critics normalize and defend a more robust, productive vision of British imperial masculinity, articulated through individual taste and well-regulated consumer desire.\textsuperscript{44} These attitudes persisted long after the Powderham scandal had receded from public consciousness. For instance, in 1822, when the failure of his family’s Jamaican sugar plantations forced Beckford to put Fonthill Abbey and much of its contents up for sale, William Hazlitt attended the public auction, describing Fonthill’s “finical, polished, petty, perfect, modernised air” for the readers of the \textit{London Magazine}.\textsuperscript{45} Noting with bemusement Beckford’s scholarly chops and his wide experience as traveller, antiquarian, and art critic, Hazlitt is disappointed to discover that his collections consist of little more than useless “frippery” (406, 409). Beckford’s immense wealth and talent, he argues, would have been better spent on accumulating works of national interest than on gratifying his own peculiar proclivities. In place of the “ostentatious magnificence” of Japanned furniture, jade vases, and Oriental sculpture, Hazlitt would have preferred a single Titian (405) – which, he sighs, Beckford certainly “had power to carry … away” from its home on the recently defeated Continent (406). Had Beckford done so, Hazlitt implies, he would have put his wealth to work consolidating postwar Britain’s cultural power, transforming Fonthill into a national institution in its own right: “what a trail of glory would it [the Titian] have left behind it! for what a length of way would it have haunted the imagination! how often should we have wished to revisit it, and how fondly would the eye have turned back to the stately

\textsuperscript{44} Louis Crompton notes that Hester Thrale Piozzi’s social circle “referred to sodomites as ‘finger twirlers’” in private discourse, suggesting an association between effeminacy and sexual deviancy even at this early moment in the history of sexuality. \textit{Byron and Greek Love}, 36.

tower of Fonthill Abbey, that from the western horizon gives the setting sun to other climes, as the beacon and guide to the knowledge and the love of high Art!” (408).

Instead of turning “the stately tower of Fonthill Abbey” into a suitably phallic beacon for British arts and culture, in other words, Beckford’s famous collections amount to little more than an onanistic jumble of “empty jars and caskets,” “all in the same mimminée-pimminée taste” (409).

Hazlitt’s attack on Beckford’s collections aligns effeminacy, an affinity for Oriental bijoux, and French decadence into a recognizable and potent constellation, first made familiar during the eighteenth century’s ongoing luxury debates.\(^{46}\) Vathek put similarly “mimminée-pimminée” tastes on display. Its protagonist, the Caliph Vathek, shares Beckford’s propensity to “immers[e]” himself in the sensual “pleasure[s]” of collection.\(^{47}\) Each of his five palaces houses a vast collection designed to “indulg[e]” a different sense: in the palace of taste, for instance, he has assembled “exquisite dainties” and “fine wines” for his guests to enjoy, while the final palace (“the Retreat of Joy, or the Dangerous”) houses “troops of young females beautiful as the houris” – for a similar purpose (2-5). At the level of language, too, Henley’s English translation of Beckford’s French manuscript preserves the original’s decadent French sensibilities. For instance, the first edition retains the French names for certain exotic dishes, even to comic effect. When the Caliph’s retinue tries to cater to his gourmet tastes while wandering in the desert, he is


said to subsist on “boiled thistles,” “rotten truffles,” and “vultures a la daube” (87); later, relieved to find more palatable fare at the home of the Emir Fakreddin, he indulges himself in a meal of “lamb a la crème” (99). Similarly, reviewers who doubted Henley’s claim to have translated the tale from an Arabic manuscript cited “the acute turns of modern composition, so easily learned in the school of Voltaire” as proof of the story’s European origins. The Critical Review, for example, identified Vathec’s efforts to apply reason to “theological controvers[ies]” as a telltale sign that the story could have originated no further afield than the “fertile banks of the Seine.”

While the narrator’s refined French tastes may have raised some eyebrows, though, the text’s representation of Vathec’s unregulated appetites poses far more unsettling questions about the curious desires that fuel Beckford’s Orientalist imagination. Throughout the novella, as we shall see, Beckford uses Vathec’s gnawing hunger for forbidden knowledge as a polite shorthand for more sensual and transgressive longings. From Vathec’s first pages, we are told that the insatiability of the Caliph’s curiosity sets him apart from ordinary men – and, as such, from normative experiences of desire. While his vast collections of “rarities” “omi[t] nothing … that might gratify the curiosity of those who resorted to [them],” they nevertheless prove unable to “satisfy his own, for he was of all men the most curious” (4). Furthermore, Vathec’s Faustian craving “to know every thing; even sciences that do not exist” quickly makes him vulnerable to the machinations of the Giaour (5), an “Indian … from a region wholly unknown” who tantalizes him throughout the narrative with the prospect of unlimited power and

knowledge (26).

Although Vathek’s intellectual curiosity frequently takes on the force of a physical craving, it is also eclipsed repeatedly by the insistent, extravagant cravings of his body – cravings that the Giaour, himself a “black” and “hideous” personification of the Caliph’s repressed desires (9), skillfully manipulates in an attempt to ensnare his soul for all eternity. At the outset of the story, for example, Vathek is celebrated as “one of the greatest eaters” in Samarah (22), and habitually tucks into “three hundred” dishes per day (12). Once the Giaour’s curse spoils his appetite, however, he becomes “as distinguished for drinking” as he had previously been for eating (22). “[T]orment[ed]” with an “insatiable” “thirst,” the Caliph begs his attendants to pour “various liquors” into his “funnel”-like mouth – but, unfortunately, as long he remains in the Giaour’s thrall, “his avidity exceed[s] their zeal” (22). Moreover, as the Giaour’s influence over Vathek increases, it quickly becomes difficult to tell where Vathek’s ravenous appetites – to know, to eat, to drink – leave off, and where the Giaour’s darker longings begin. In a memorably homoerotic early scene that marks Vathek’s complete submission to the Giaour’s nefarious will, the Caliph shoves fifty of his kingdom’s most “handsom[e]” and “suppl[e]” boys into a chasm to try to quench the Giaour’s own overpowering “thirst” (42, 45) – this time, for boys’ blood. Within the first fifty pages of the novella, in other words, Vathek’s struggle to satisfy his own “insatiable curiosity” devolves rapidly into a futile attempt to fulfill the Giaour’s pedophilic desires. Stating his terms to Vathek, the Giaour goes so far as to frame these two pet “thirsts” as functionally interchangeable: “I require the blood of fifty of the most beautiful sons of thy vizirs and great men,” he insists, “or neither can my thirst nor thy curiosity be satisfied” (41). By juxtaposing the
Giaour’s violent, sexualized “thirst” with the Caliph’s intellectual “curiosity” in this way, Beckford invites us to view these two kinds of desire as equivalent to one another. Indeed, such a comparison reveals the Caliph’s desire for knowledge to be a displaced or disavowed form of the Giaour’s queer erotic desire – imagined here as always already violent and predatory, if readily undermined by its own hyperbole. The desire to know the other, Beckford implies in this scene, proves difficult to distinguish from the “thirst” to devour him; in both cases, however, the consequences for pursuing such outlandish appetites are easy to undermine, ironize, and defer. 49

While the novella’s final lines eventually damn Vathek for “transgress[ing] those bounds which the Creator hath proscribed to human knowledge” (210), the punishment assigned to his insatiable curiosity appears to be more conventional than sincere. Having ignored the final warnings of his “Genius” to repent, the Caliph is condemned “to wander in an eternity of unabating anguish” through the fiery realms of Eblis (183) – a fitting punishment, the narrator insists, for a life devoted to such “unrestrained passions, and atrocious actions!” (210). However, the conclusion’s abrupt tonal shift from wry worldliness to Biblical elevation suggests that the narrator’s sanctimonious outburst may not be entirely genuine. Having spent the previous two hundred pages describing Vathek’s increasingly “atrocious actions” with exuberant, campy irony, the last-minute didacticism of the novella’s last paragraphs reads like a strategic concession to the demands of its Faustian plot rather than a particularly earnest moral judgment.

49 In practice, of course, the Giaour’s gnawing “thirst” exceeds even Vathek’s dutiful efforts to “appease” it. As soon as Vathek sacrifices the fiftieth boy, the Giaour disappears, gleefully flouting his promise to admit the Caliph to the “portal of ebony” that leads to Soliman’s mystical palace. Beckford and Henley, *History of the Caliph Vathek*, 45. For a provocative discussion of the “proto-Freudian” anal eroticism of the Caliph’s desire to “penetrate the Giaour’s chasm,” see Andrew Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius*, 54.
Ultimately, Vathek’s last-minute damnation appears to have been a toll Beckford is willing to pay in order to have gleefully indulged his protagonist’s appetites up until the novella’s final moments.

Despite the frequency with which Oriental space functioned as a site of homophobic anxiety in eighteenth-century British imperialist discourse, however, Vathek’s early reviewers do not seem to have been troubled by the narrative’s salacious exploration of forbidden desires, or by the conclusion’s sudden, self-ironizing shift in tone. The Critical Review’s summary of the novella’s plot, for instance, accepts the narrator’s summary indictment of human “ignoranc[e]” and “hum[ility]” at face value: refusing to summarize the “incidents” of the plot beyond its central “moral,” he claims that the tale depicts “[a] man in pursuit of unlawful gratifications, and those inconsistent with the tenets of religion and morality, [who] invariably sacrifices his present and eternal happiness; [and whose] … enjoyment … affords but a temporary and precarious pleasure.”

50 I contend that Henley’s paratextual apparatus played a major role in the text’s surprising ability to pass as a moral tale. As we shall see, by framing Beckford’s unusual narrative as a translation of an anonymous Arabian manuscript, Henley’s notes and preface modeled a strategy of scholarly reading that secured a warm critical reception for the novella’s first edition.

Tensions between Beckford’s authorial and Henley’s editorial priorities structured the text from its inception. In 1783, three years before the novella’s first edition was printed, William Beckford engaged the Rev. Samuel Henley, tutor to two of his younger cousins

at Harrow, to translate his French manuscript of *Vathek* into English. At Henley’s suggestion, Beckford agreed that without a “preliminary dissertation on the Fable and Machinery” and “notes to illustrate the costume,” “a very considerable part of [the story’s] merit must be lost to 999 readers of a thousand” – and midway through 1785, he charged Henley with the task. Dividing his labour with Henley in this way allowed Beckford to preserve a careful, aristocratic distance between the unstudied effusions of his fancy and the secondary labours of translation and editing – knowledge that he has Carathis, Vathek’s monstrous mother, dismiss early in the novel as “a trifle at best, and the accomplishment of none but a pedant.” However, after nearly three years of ongoing editorial correspondence and negotiation, Henley published the tale and notes without Beckford’s consent. His editorial preface identifies the text a translation of an “Arabick” manuscript “collected in the East by a Man of Letters,” rather than an original composition by a British author (iii). Henley’s unauthorized publication of the novel has often been attributed to his frustration with Beckford’s dithering: having finally finished a draft of *Vathek*, Beckford refused to publish it until he had also completed the “Episodes of *Vathek*,” three additional tales of hubris and damnation alluded to in the

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54 Early in their working relationship, Beckford and Henley corresponded frequently between Fonthill and Henley’s residence at Rendlesham; however, after Beckford’s exile to the Continent in the wake of the Powderham scandal, their correspondence was often slowed down by the need to forward all letters through Mr. Foxhall, Beckford’s agent in London.
final pages of the narrative. 55 “I would not have him [Vathek] on any account come forth without his companions,” he pleads in a letter to Henley written in August 1786. 56 By August, however, it was already too late: Henley had sent his version of the text to the printer in June. Noting that Beckford had been working on the story for five years with no conclusion in sight, Lewis Melville speculates that Henley “may well have thought that perhaps Beckford might abandon the completion of his task, and that if he waited for permissions, he might never be able to issue his version” (137).

While Beckford’s reluctance to publish Vathek may have prompted his editor to act on his behalf, a letter from Henley to Thomas Wildman, Beckford’s solicitor, suggests that he was more worried about the impact of Beckford’s infamy on the text’s reception than he was about losing three years of his own labour. When asked to justify what Melville calls his “breach of faith” with Beckford in late 1786 (137), Henley implies that he may have passed Vathek off as an Arabic manuscript in order to keep its author’s reputation from rubbing off on the text. In this letter, Henley defends his decision to publish the text as an effort to vindicate Beckford’s character, rather than a selfish attempt to deny him his authorial due: “In consideration of a late unhappy occurrence,” he explains, “it was my own wish to have intirely [sic] suppressed the work.” Unfortunately, as his status as

55 Thomas Keymer suggests that Beckford may have used the notes as a strategy of deferral: “[i]t may be the case that Beckford encouraged Henley’s arduous background researches in part as a delaying tactic, or for the sheer fun of sending his translator on a wild-good chase through the ill-lit world of early modern scholarship about Islam.” “Introduction,” Vathek, ed. Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xxiv-xxv. Andrew Elfenbein understands Beckford’s lifelong efforts to delay publication of his written work as the result of an irresolvable contradiction between his two pet roles, the brilliant consumer and the autonomous genius: “the paradox of wanting and not wanting attention led Beckford to act as if he wanted to publish and not publish at the same time. … It was as if his ideal would be for everyone to know that he had written something, but for no one to know what it was.” Romantic Genius, 50.
editor and translator of the volume was already known amongst his friends “prior to that event,” he claims, he “could not decline [to publish] it without favouring a charge that I was unwilling to countenance, and therefore sacrificed my own inclination to what I considered as a positive engagement to Mr. Beckford.”

To have suppressed the text any longer, in other words, would confirm that there was something to suppress – which, in Henley’s book, would be tantamount to “countenanc[ing]” the unpleasant rumours swirling about his patron in the wake of the Powderham scandal. In this way, Henley reframes his scholarly edition of *Vathek* as a bulwark against the rumours of Beckford’s pederasty. While he may have first undertaken the notes in the spirit of disinterested scholarly collaboration, then, he *published* them in an attempt to keep Beckford’s besmirched name out of the press.

Early reviews of the first edition of *Vathek* indicate that Henley’s scholarly apparatus successfully recast Beckford’s novella as an effort to showcase his deep learning in Orientalist scholarship. Indeed, not only did Henley’s notes supplant Beckford’s notoriety as the occasion for *Vathek*’s publication, they were hailed by many of the novella’s first readers as the catalyst for its composition, too. In a letter to the *Gentleman’s Magazine* (1786), for example, the antiquarian and Orientalist scholar Stephen Weston famously enthused that the story “ha[d] been composed as a text, for the purpose of giving to the publick the information contained in the notes” – and, although most reviewers did not go quite so far as to treat the centred text as the supplement, Weston’s enthusiasm for the

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57 Henley, “The Rev. Samuel Henley to Thomas Wildman, [23 October 1786],” quoted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, 138. While it is certainly possible that this reference to “a late unhappy occurrence” refers to the recent death of Beckford’s wife Margaret (née Gordon; she died in May of 1786, one month before the unauthorized translation was published), Margaret Beckford’s entirely factual death seems much less likely to engender the distasteful rumours Henley alludes to in this letter.
notes was hardly a minority opinion. The European Magazine and London Review, for instance, concluded that “[t]he notes … display a considerable share of learning, and critical knowledge and acumen.” Indeed, this reviewer saw Henley’s notes as grounds for overturning the prevailing opinion regarding the frivolity and intellectual pretense of annotation: “the observation, which was at first ironically made, may in this instance be literally applied, ‘Notes upon Books outdo the Books themselves’” (104). The Critical Review’s only complaint about the tale was that “the notes, though extensive, [were] … too short” – no small compliment, given that Henley’s notes to the first edition ran to over 110 pages, taking up approximately one-third of the text. Similarly, the Monthly Review found them to contain “many learned quotations, elegant criticisms, and judicious remarks.” To borrow a phrase from Genette, in the eyes of Vathek’s first reviewers, Henley’s notes “play[ed] their own game to the detriment of the text’s game.” More importantly, they played it well enough to reverse the Derridean logic of the supplement, presenting Beckford’s narrative as the miscellaneous illustration required to make the text palatable to the reading public.

58 Stephen Weston, “Conjectural Criticism on a Famous Passage in Virgil, Jan. 6, 1787,” The Gentleman’s Magazine: and Historical Chronicle 61 (1787): 55. In his lifetime, Weston would publish translations of Arabic, Chinese, and Persian texts, as well as works of Classical and Biblical commentary.
60 The poetic tag that concludes the review comes from James Bramston’s satirical poem The Man of Taste (1733), an ironic send-up of the notion of untutored natural taste and ability. See James Bramston, The Man of Taste, Occasion’d by an Epistle of Mr. Pope’s On that Subject. (London: G. Faulkner, 1733).
Prior to the professionalization of literary criticism in the early nineteenth century, the participatory nature of periodicals like the Gentleman’s Magazine allowed niche-interest letters like Weston’s to be published alongside (and in advance of) more formal taste-making reviews. As a result, the voices of antiquarians and other private citizens had a larger hand in Vathek’s initial reception than they might have after the rise of the professional reviews. While some of the early critical enthusiasm for Henley’s learned notes to Vathek reflects the erudition (and the pedantry) of the text’s antiquarian audience, however, the consistency of reader response across these initial reviews also suggests that Henley’s voluminous, miscellaneous notes modeled a style of paratextual reading that resonated with Vathek’s early readership. Henley’s paratextual reading of Vathek resonated with these readers so much, in fact, that they replicated it. As we shall see, Henley’s notes seek to divert the plot’s forward motion down cul-de-sacs of cross-reference and scholarly meditation; likewise, his reviewers took up the invitation to debate or embellish upon Henley’s commentary, wandering far away from the task of critical evaluation in the process. For instance, in one of the first published reviews of the novella, the Gentleman’s Magazine devotes a scant page to its review of the text – but, unexpectedly, gives more than half of that page to discussing a lengthy digression on a throwaway remark made by Henley in a footnote comparing Vathek’s Eblis to Dante’s Hell. Quoting William Hayley’s translation of Dante (“Quit every hope, all ye who enter here”), Henley’s note laments – in an aside within a paratextual aside, separated from the rest of his notes by asterisks and square brackets – Hayley’s inability to finish the translation: “how much … the public [have] to regret, after the Specimen given, that

Mr. Hayley does not compleat the Inferno!” While Henley’s reviewer agrees that such a translation is a “‘consummation’ eagerly to be desired,” he regrets that, due to the difficulty of adapting the metre of the original for English ears, it is unlikely that “such a translation of the Inferno would ever become popular,” and goes on to suggest Dryden’s heroic measure as a more suitable vehicle for Hayley’s translation. After concluding these reflections, the reviewer seems at last to remember “to return to the article before us” to wrap up his review of the text at hand. Critical peregrinations like this one continued to characterize the early response to Vathek, especially in the pages of the Gentleman’s Magazine. As we shall see, over the months that followed, antiquarian readers – including Stephen Weston (mentioned above) and Henley himself – wrote in to the magazine’s proprietor, “Sylvanus Urban,” several times, offering “conjectural criticism” and counterpoints to the scholarship in the notes while barely mentioning the centred text or its suggestive conflation of curiosity with queer erotic desire.

Despite their inability to respond to the novella’s more transgressive themes, Henley’s first reviewers were astute readers of his annotations. Their responses to his notes cluster around his more political interventions into the text, calling attention to the ways that Vathek’s paratextual apparatus works to reposition the text as an instrument of empire. Several of the reviews concentrate upon a single note in which Henley cites a passage from Virgil’s Georgics as justification for the imperial appropriation of foreign poetic traditions: Henley’s analysis of Virgil takes centre stage in his epistolary debate with Stephen Weston, for instance, and the anonymous Critical Reviewer singles it out for

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64 Beckford and Henley, The History of the Caliph Vathek, 333.
66 Weston, “Conjectural Criticism on a Famous Passage in Virgil,” 55.
special attention, too. Because this note was so central to the novella’s early reception, it is worth reviewing the structure and content of Henley’s argument in some detail here. The note uses Beckford’s brief description of the “vast wood of palm-trees” in the Emir Fakreddin’s valley as an opportunity to resolve an ongoing dispute in Virgilian textual scholarship.67 This annotative strategy, which interrupts readerly immersion in the narrative to divert our attention to a series of scholarly digressions and debates, characterizes many of Henley’s paratextual interventions into Beckford’s text. Even for Henley, however, the note on palm trees is unusually digressive. Swerving briefly aside from Latin textual controversy to discuss associationist theories of mind, for instance, Henley manages to interrupt his own note six times with supplementary notes offering citations and cross-references to Propertius, Tacitus, a “Tract intituled [sic] ‘On the Delicacy of Friendship’,” and more (269). All this erudition is bent upon explaining a contested line from Virgil’s Georgics, in which the poet uses the image of gathering “Idumaeas … palmas” (roughly translated as “palms from Idumaea”) to describe the next step he intends to take in his poetic career.68 Influential commentators like the romance revivalist Richard Hurd and French translator Francois Catrou (famous for his carefully-annotated prose translation of Virgil [1716], as well as his History of the Mogul Dynasty [1715]) had offered their interpretations of the line elsewhere, but neither had yet glossed the passage to Henley’s satisfaction.

By correcting these competing critical explanations of the “palmas” passage, Henley seeks to make space for his own theories about the role poetry plays in imperial

68 “Idumaea” is a Greek word used in the New Testament to refer the Biblical kingdom of Edom, in what is now southwestern Jordan. Although Idumaea and Judaea are two distinct (but contiguous) regions, Henley appears to use them somewhat interchangeably.
expansion and cultural change. He begins his analysis of the contested passage by rejecting Catrou’s interpretation as too literal, scoffing at his suggestion that Virgil’s reference to gathering Idumean palms meant that he had “actually projected a voyage to the Levant”: “– to fetch palms, no doubt!” (270). He engages more carefully with Hurd’s more figurative interpretation of the passage, however. Since military victors were given palm leaves upon their return from the battlefield, Hurd had argued, Virgil must have called for “Idumean palms” to crown his triumph as a poet of empire. Earlier in the poem, the speaker had announced that “as the usual themes of the Roman poets were all become trite, it would be his aim to seek fame from foreign acquisitions” (272): therefore, Hurd suggests, the palms must celebrate Virgil’s success in “bringing the Muses captive from Greece” back to Rome (271). While Henley accepts the basic premises of Hurd’s interpretation, he remains troubled by the incongruity of using “Idumean palms” to invoke Rome’s triumph over Greece. Why would Virgil call for palms from a Hebrew-speaking country, after all, if he was trying to represent the theft of the Muses from Mount Olympus? Applying Ockham’s razor, Henley contends that Virgil’s reference to “Idumean palms” must instead symbolize the theft of poetic inspiration from Idumaea itself. In the remainder of the note, he argues that the image represents a forceful declaration of Virgil’s intent to “aggrandiz[e] the glory of his country” by “subjecting to his language the poetical beauties of Greece and Judaea,” appropriating both “the loftiest flights of GRECIAN POETRY, or the EPICK” and the “PROPHETICK STRAINS of the Hebrews” on behalf of Roman poetry (272). To prove this theory, Henley identifies a “close … agreement” between image-patterns found only in the Hebrew Book of Isaiah and in Virgil’s fourth Eclogue; he concludes by
demonstrating that the *Aeneid* repurposes images from Hebrew messianic prophecy to announce the birth of Caesar Augustus and the dawn of a new Golden Age.

We will recall that Thomas Percy had presented the same historical circumstances with some caution, describing Greek poetry as having successfully remade Roman culture in its own image. However, unlike Percy’s notion of poetry as a Trojan horse, capable of smuggling new values and beliefs across imperial lines, Henley’s note gives Greece – and Idumaea – little credit for taking captive her savage conqueror. Instead, he credits Virgil with annexing both the poetry of Greece *and* the prophecy of Israel, claiming both traditions as legitimate spoils of imperial war. In broadening the scope of Virgil’s known “acquisitions” to include “the poetical beauties of … Judaea,” Henley transforms a historical commonplace into a typological forerunner for his own historical moment. The argument is timely. While Henley’s note looks forward to a glorious imperial future rather than the resurrection of primordial unities, his claim that the exhaustion of the “usual themes” of one’s own poetic tradition justifies the appropriation of exotic imagery from Oriental cultures might just as easily have come from the syncretic pen of William Jones. By presenting Virgil’s imperial epic as a precursor to the contemporary vogue for Orientalist imitations of Eastern romance literature in this way, Henley’s note reframes Beckford’s idiosyncratic, onanistic, and often savagely ironic romance as a heroic “aggrandize[ment]” of a valuable narrative commodity. If Virgil had successfully revitalized Roman literature by appropriating the prophetic strains of Hebrew poetry, the note implies, then *Vathek*’s carefully-researched approximation of an “Arabian manuscript” could do the same for European letters.

Roundabout though it may be, Henley’s assertion of *Vathek*’s political potential comes
just in time to rebrand some of the narrative’s juicier and more transgressive images as “foreign acquisitions.” As mentioned above, the first half of the novella describes the Caliph’s infantile despotism at home in Samarah and establishes his fatal attraction to the Giaour, while the second sends him abroad in search of the treasures that the Giaour promised him. While the ravenous appetites that Vathek struggles to sate in the first half of the narrative certainly carry an erotic charge, their relationship to queer eroticism remains implied, rather than explicit. However, once Vathek enters the palmy bower of the Emir Fakreddin’s valley, his desires reorient themselves towards the human form, prompting the series of “luscious descriptions” of young boys that would prompt Hester Piozzi to raise her eyebrows. Upon his arrival in the valley, for instance, the Caliph is greeted by “nine pages, beautiful as the day”; shortly thereafter, he becomes fixated upon princess Nouronihar – whose beauty, we learn, is only surpassed by the beauty of her exquisite cousin Gulchenrouz, a prepubescent boy who often “appear[s] in the dress of his cousin” and “seemed to be more feminine than even herself.” 

Henley’s invocation of Virgil’s heroic example contains any threat that these descriptions might pose twice over: not only does it return any homoerotic imagery to an appropriation of an Oriental influence, it justifies said appropriation by citing Classical and imperial precedent.

Even though Henley was unable to win every reviewer over to his interpretation of the “palmas” passage, notes like this one successfully modeled paratextual reading as a

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70 Of course, in order to present such a warlike, heteronormative version of Classical precedent, Henley has to choose his examples carefully. As Byron would put it in *Don Juan*, “Virgil’s Songs are pure – except that horrid one, beginning with ‘Formosum Pastor Corydon.’” Byron, *The Major Works*, 388, canto 1, st. 42, line 336. Written at a moment far less hostile to “filthy loves” than the Georgian present, Virgil’s second *Eclogue* celebrates the shepherd Corydon’s love for the beautiful boy Alexis.
strategy of containment for the novella’s early readers. Almost all of the novella’s early critics discussed Henley’s notes in equal or greater proportion to the centred text – and by engaging with the “palmas” note in particular, they took up Henley’s endorsement of poetic imperialism as an invitation to further debate. For example, as mentioned above, the Critical Review engages with the centred text enough to recognize the broad outlines of its moral argument, but declines to summarize its plot, claiming “the incidents we cannot abridge” (39). By contrast, when it is time to confront the far more variegated and digressive notes – which are, he admits, “so miscellaneous [that one] can only convey a very imperfect idea of them” – the reviewer gives “abridge[ment]” his best shot (39). The review reproduces in full one long note, complete with cross-references, on the custom of “painting the eyes of the Circassians,” as well as two slightly shorter notes – one on the 91st Psalm and one on Cervantes’ allusions to Dante in Don Quixote (40-41). Moreover, while he describes “the whole” of Henley’s note on Virgil’s Idumaean palms as “too long to transcribe” in detail, the reviewer gives his seal of approval to the general premises of his argument, praising the novelty of his interpretation: “we mention this note,” he explains, because “we believe” Henley’s identification of the “prophetic strains” in Virgil’s oeuvre “to be new” (41).

If the Critical Review endorsed Henley’s argument about Virgil’s “aggrandization” of Hebrew poetry, however, Stephen Weston – a more erudite antiquarian and philologist, perhaps, than the Critical reviewer – strongly disagreed with it. In his letter to the Gentleman’s Magazine, Weston flatly states that he could “no more subscribe to the notion, that by Idumeas palmas Virgil meant to characterize the prophetic strains of the Hebrews, than [he could] suppose, with Catrou, that the Roman poet meditated a voyage
to the Levant.”71 To summarize, Weston is not persuaded that the echoes of Hebrew scripture Henley identifies in Virgil’s poetry prove that the poet made a deliberate attempt to claim the voice of Idumaean prophecy for Rome. Although he acknowledges that “many beauties and many sublimities have been transplanted into the Roman and Grecian soils from the sacred gardens of the East,” he does not believe that the fact that transplantation has occurred proves that Virgil himself was the gardener (55). Instead, Weston deploys his philological training to argue that any allusion to Idumaea is more likely to have occurred by accident than it is to be symbolically significant. Weston responds to Henley’s syncretic comparison of Virgil’s poetry to the Book of Isaiah by arguing that the “palmas … Idumaeas” here mentioned are merely a textual corruption of “Ithonaea,” a city in Greece, than they are to be a deliberate allusion to the prophetic poetry of the Hebrews. Indeed, Weston is more willing to allow Virgil to have written an “idle epithet … of no use but to complete the metre, and to confound the interpreters” than to have made an intentional allusion to Idumaea (56). While Weston does not go so far as to deny that Eastern “transplant[s]” have had any influence on the foundational texts of Western literature, he nevertheless refuses to allow that Virgil himself could have had anything to do with their importation. Whether his discomfort stems from the suggestion that a poet as prominent as Virgil might have deliberately modeled his work after Levantine poetry or, more obliquely, from Henley’s implicit claim of Virgilian precedent for his own “Arabian” manuscript, Weston nevertheless refuses to admit that

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71 Weston, “Conjectural Criticism on a Famous Passage in Virgil,” 55.
Virgil might have borrowed much of value from Hebrew books of prophecy.\footnote{Although Henley’s reply (written on 4 February, 1787) admits that his efforts to rush the notes to press may have resulted in an “inaccurate expression” or two, he reasserts nonetheless that “Mr. W. hath not comprehended the full scope of the note itself, nor the extent of its reference to the AEneid.” Instead of correcting his “inaccurate expressions” in the pages of The Gentleman’s Magazine, however, Henley refers Weston to George Gregory’s forthcoming translation of Bishop Lowth’s Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews for further confirmation of his theory. Samuel Henley, “Conjectures Concerning the History of Vathek Obviated,” The Gentleman’s Magazine: and Historical Chronicle 61 (1787): 120.}

The success of Henley’s effort to claim Virgilian precedent for his imperialist apparatus, however, is less significant than Weston’s demonstrable interest in disputing his paratextual point. Weston’s highly specialized reply reveals the extent to which Vathek’s positive early reception depended upon the antiquarian sensibilities of its early interlocutors, as well as the capacity of the late-eighteenth century magazine format to elicit and entertain a variety of amateur critical contributions from the educated, middle-class, and male reading public. As the reviewers’ enthusiasm for the first edition suggests, the miscellaneity and philological erudition of Henley’s notes profitably repackaged Beckford’s romance as a constellation of texts of primarily scholarly interest – a gesture that encouraged his audience to read for the paratext, rather than attending particularly closely to the themes of the narrative. His reviewers’ willingness to follow Henley’s lead indicates their genuine pleasure in examining the complex cabinet of literary and philological “curiosities” made available in the notes, and implies their broad endorsement of that hermeneutic strategy as an appropriate way to read Orientalist romance.

In the years that followed, of course, Beckford tried to undo what Henley had done, rebranding their erudite collaboration as an unstudied effusion of his own youthful genius.
and personality. In conversation with his biographer, Cyrus Redding, for instance, Beckford later offered an account of the novel’s composition that recalls Horace Walpole’s oneiric inspiration to write *The Castle of Otranto*: inspired by a particularly vivid dream the night after his phantasmagoric twenty-first birthday party at Fonthill, he claimed to have dashed the whole thing off “at one sitting,” in “three days and two nights of hard labour.”\(^3\) Linking the structure of the story with his own subconscious in this way laid the groundwork for biographical readings collapsing Beckford with his spoiled protagonist – a strategy that contemporaries like Hester Thrale Piozzi and Byron would gleefully repeat. Although Beckford’s notoriety has, in the long run, successfully obscured much of the success of Henley’s first edition, even his efforts to reclaim *Vathek* as his own literary property proved unable to resist Henley’s invitations to read the narrative in this way completely. As Tom Keymer observes, in the major editions of 1816 and 1823, Beckford “pared the notes back to a less crushing scale, removed their intermittent effects of Scriblerian obtuseness or Coleridgean misdirection, and even explicitly quarreled” with many of Henley’s first-edition observations.\(^4\) These interventions are generally understood as an effort to reassert his ownership over the text by purging the most telling signs of Henley’s collaboration from its pages. However, read alongside Weston’s query of Henley’s Virgilian scholarship in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, Beckford’s interventions seem to differ in degree, rather than in kind. His authorship may have given him the power to ensure that he got the last word – but he did so, nevertheless, in the margins.

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\(^3\) Beckford, quoted in Melville, *Life and Letters*, 124.
2.4 The “patch-work” poetics of Southey’s *Thalaba the Destroyer*

As we have seen so far, Henley’s learned apparatus to *Vathek* profitably reframed Beckford’s transgressive novella as a vehicle for his own Orientalist scholarship, earning a chorus of enthusiastic praise from the antiquarian readers who were the novella’s first reviewers. Fifteen years later, however, the publication of Robert Southey’s annotated romance *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) prompted howls of critical outrage. If Henley’s paratext had successfully deflected attention from Beckford’s queerer themes, Southey’s notes to *Thalaba* were condemned as evidence of their author’s effeminacy and perversion. This section of my chapter explores how two texts deploying such similar paratextual strategies could have prompted such wildly different critical responses. Invoking Francis Jeffrey’s famous condemnation of *Thalaba* in the *Edinburgh Review*, I trace the politics of sexuality and gender as they inform Jeffrey’s critical response to Southey’s unrestrained appetite for books.

Despite the close parallels between Southey’s *Thalaba* and Beckford and Henley’s *Vathek*, the texts prompted very different critical responses. Although Southey admired Beckford’s capacity for “invention” and understood his own poetic experimentation with Eastern religions as a participant in the same tradition of Orientalist imitation, his reading strategies and compositional style bore a much closer resemblance to Henley’s. Like Henley, Southey’s knowledge of Islamic history, literature, and manners was more

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textual than experiential. Both men drew on similar scholarship, too: Henley’s and Southey’s supplementary notes both cite Barthelemy d’Herbelot’s *Bibliotheque Orientale* (1697), Jean Frédéric Bernard and Bernard Picart’s *Ceremonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (1723), and George Sale’s translation and “Preliminary Discourse” to the Koran (1764) in roughly equal measure. Similarly, both annotators use their notes to bring different mythological and religious traditions into conversation, exposing structural and stylistic similarities between the holy books of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Despite Southey’s efforts to build upon *Vathek*’s success, though, *Thalaba*’s early reviews tend to single out for blame many of the features that earned its predecessor praise. As a vehicle for its author’s Orientalist learning, Southey’s poem was found especially wanting. Stephen Weston, we will recall, had been so taken with Henley’s paratext that he assumed *Vathek* “ha[d] been composed as a text, for the purpose of giving to the publick the information contained in the notes.” Francis Jeffrey, too, wrote that “[i]t is impossible to peruse this poem [*Thalaba*], with the notes, without feeling that it is the fruit of much reading, undertaken for the express purpose of fabricating some such performance”; unlike Weston, however, Jeffrey did not intend the remark as a compliment.

Jeffrey’s difficulty in “perus[ing]” Southey’s poem highlights key distinctions between how *Vathek* and *Thalaba* use paratext to structure the relationships between text, author, and readers. First, each text uses a slightly different paratextual strategy to manage

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76 The bookishness of Southey’s knowledge of the East distinguishes him from more worldly and well-traveled Romantic Orientalists like Byron. However, it is worth noting that Southey did encounter numerous remnants of “Moorish” architecture and culture during his two journeys to Spain and Portugal in 1795 and 1800. See Southey, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman and Rees, 1799).

readers’ access to information. While Henley’s endnotes to *Vathek* were printed at the end of the volume and can be encountered by choice and at one’s own pace, the layout of *Thalaba*’s first edition makes the “fruit[s]” of Southey’s “reading” much more difficult to avoid. Due to a miscommunication between Southey and his publisher, *Thalaba*’s annotations were accidentally typeset as footnotes – and, as a result, on many pages, columns of closely-printed paratextual commentary crowd out all but two or three lines of Southey’s verse, impeding the reader’s forward progress through the narrative. While these formatting issues may account for some of the difference between the critical enthusiasm for Henley’s edition of *Vathek* and Jeffrey’s opprobrium towards *Thalaba*, however, much can also be attributed to the gap in their generic expectations. Poetry’s greater cultural capital in the period brought with it the expectation of more careful attention to decorum and precedent than was required of prose fiction – and Southey, unfortunately, had made the grave error of combining exotic material with formal experimentation. As an “Arabian tale” in prose, however, *Vathek* was less constrained by formal conventions: Beckford’s narrative could sacrifice “unity [and] order” to the wild excesses of romance in a way that a poem could not. As we have seen above, the narrator’s Voltairean irony encouraged readers to group *Vathek* alongside other Enlightenment oriental tales in translation, making its genre legible even as its documentary authenticity radically altered the form. As an exotic twist on the traditional narrative structures of the Christian quest romance, however, *Thalaba* proved less resonant with the reading public.

78 Playing on the metaphor of reading as digestion, David Simpson coins the term “impacted reading” to describe how Southey’s notes seem to “sto[p] us in our tracks before we have even settled into them … overpowering the lyrical sweep of the verse … by the seemingly dry apparatus of small print.” *Romanticism and the Question of the Stranger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 114.
Aside from its irregular metre, its Islamic machinery and its “thickets of learned annotations,” Thalaba’s plot is surprisingly conventional in structure. While Vathek had imitated the form of the “Arabian romance,” Southey took the European chivalric tradition as his model: as Stuart Curran observes, Thalaba’s plot is “marked with all the traditional features of medieval quest romances” (134). Much like Spenser’s Faerie Queene, which Southey so admired, the poem stages a battle between the forces of good and evil, and concludes with a symbolic second coming that obliterates distinctions and exalts the faith of its hero. After his father is slain by a cabal of evil magicians, a “Death-Angel” informs Thalaba that he has been “chosen forth” to avenge his father and “do the will of Heaven” by destroying them. Though tried by obstacles and briefly seduced by temptation, Thalaba’s faith in the Prophet Mohammed guides him to victory in a series of one-on-one encounters with individual magicians, culminating in an apocalyptic final battle that ends when he resigns himself to the will of God. By pulling down the magicians’ cavern upon his own head, Thalaba rids the world of evil at the same time as he earns himself and his loved ones a place in eternal Paradise. As Fulford, White, and Bolton note in their introduction to Thalaba, however, the familiar outlines of the poem’s narrative structure proved difficult for its first readers to discern. Because romance

79 Stuart Curran, Poetic Form and British Romanticism, 133.
81 Thalaba’s self-sacrifice echoes Samson’s destruction of the Philistines at the end of Milton’s Samson Agonistes. However, while Samson’s holy reward must be inferred by the poem’s Chorus and Semichorus, Thalaba’s is confirmed by the speaker of the poem: at the “same moment” that the cavern is destroyed, we are told, Thalaba’s wife Oneiza appears at the “gate of Paradise” to welcome him to “eternal bliss.” Thalaba the Destroyer, 192, 12.501-503. Cf. John Milton, Samson Agonistes, in The Major Works, ed. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 713-15, lines 1660-1758.
depends on a reader’s ability to recognize – and feel deeply – the allegorical structure linking the literal with the symbolic, readers unfamiliar with the cultural traditions described and documented in the poem found it difficult to recognize or appreciate their allegorical significance. Instead of seamlessly incorporating his exotic materials into the familiar affective structures of Christian romance, in other words, the unusually dense annotation affixed to Southey’s poem seemed only to draw attention to their incompatibilities. As we shall see, the poem’s early critics seized upon the notes as proof of their author’s failure to take full possession of his Orientalist source material.

If Vathek’s positive early reception reflected the looser, more participatory standards around critical professionalism that characterized late-eighteenth century periodicals like the Gentleman’s Magazine, Francis Jeffrey’s denunciation of Thalaba in the pages of the first number of the Edinburgh Review announced a new era of specialist expertise in British reviewing culture. Seeking to establish the Edinburgh as a tastemaker for the middling classes, Jeffrey’s review turns Southey’s annotated poem into an icon of sheer tastelessness. While the piece is ostensibly a critique of Thalaba itself, the real target of Jeffrey’s piece is the “perverted taste” he attributes to the entire “sect” of Lake Poets, whose departure from established standards of poetic decorum he scorns as both

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82 As Fulford, White, and Bolton explain, “Milton … had the advantage that his readers were steeped in the biblical narrative, and believed it true. Southey’s knew little of the Dom Daniel, and believed less – but he hoped to educate them.” Regardless, “[h]is hopes were naïve. An epic romance … is no place for giving a basic course in complicated foreign traditions.” “Introduction,” Robert Southey, Thalaba the Destroyer, ed. Tim Fulford, with Daniel White and Carol Bolton, vol. 3 of Robert Southey: Poetical Works 1793-1810 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004), x.

83 For a concise account of the Edinburgh Review’s role in transforming the cultural status of reviewing, see Ina Ferris, The Achievement of Literary Authority, 19-20 (see also intro., n. 28).
“affected” and “disastrous.”84 At the time Thalaba was published, Britain had already been embroiled in the French revolutionary wars for nearly a decade. In this context, Southey’s prefatory dismissal of the “heroic measure” used by Pope and Dryden as a “regular Jews-harp twang-twang” reeked of subversion, dissent, and Rousseauvian radicalism, making Thalaba a convenient target for critics like Jeffrey who were concerned with national cohesion.85 As Jeffrey himself acknowledges, however, Southey’s poem makes a relatively poor emblem for his fellow poets’ “perverted taste for simplicity”: in its irregular metre, its adoption of exotic Arabian “costume,” and its dozens of closely-printed footnotes, Thalaba seems worlds away from the plain language of rural England celebrated in the Lyrical Ballads. Whereas his peers have merely affected a taste for simplicity, Jeffrey claims, Southey’s poetry offends because he has no taste at all. Rather, in composing Thalaba, he has simply copied down “every incident … and description … that appeared to him susceptible of poetical embellishment,” and “adopt[ed] such a fable and plan of composition, as might enable him to work up all his materials, and interweave every one of his quotations, without any extraordinary violation of unity or order.” Instead of a finished poem, he declares, Southey has

84 Jeffrey, “Unsigned review, Edinburgh Review October 1802,” 73, 75.
85 Southey, Thalaba the Destroyer, 3. While Jeffrey’s evisceration of Thalaba in the Edinburgh was certainly the most influential of the poem’s early reviews, he was not alone in taking offense to Southey’s metrical innovations. Behold the conservative British Critic’s breathless response to Thalaba’s irregular metre: “This is really chirping like a lizard! – and the writer of this wretched stuff has the vanity to censure the approved verse of his country!” “Unsigned review, British Critic, September 1801,” in Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage, ed. Lionel Madden (London: Routledge, 1972), 64.
published “little else than his common-place book versified.” Where a true poet would have chosen his “materials” carefully and reworked them to produce a particular effect, in other words, Southey has given his Orientalist sources free rein to dictate the style and structure of his poem. The result, Jeffrey sneers, is a feast of “scraps, borrowed from the oriental tale-books, and travels into the Mahometan countries, seasoned up for the English reader with some fragments of our own ballads, and shreds of our elder sermons.” Unappetizing to anyone but their author, Thalaba’s miscellaneous annotations stand as ample proof of Southey’s “perverted taste.”

As when Hazlitt criticized Beckford’s exotic collections for their “mimminèe-pimminèe” taste, Jeffrey uses Southey’s tastelessness to challenge his masculinity. The review’s next sentence tropes further on the same theme, turning “scraps” of food into “scraps” of fabric. As Jeffrey dryly observes, Southey has “merely … cut out each of his figures from the piece where its inventor had placed it, and stitch[ed] them down together in … judicious combinations”; as a result, the poem’s “composition and harmony … is much like the pattern of that patch-work drapery that is sometimes to be met with in the mansions of the industrious, where a blue tree overshadows a shell-fish, and a gigantic

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86 Jeffrey, “Unsigned review, Edinburgh Review October 1802,” 84. Dahlia Porter describes Southey’s poetics in terms of Coleridge’s famous distinction between the “imagination” and the “fancy”: “Southey was … a poet of fancy, not (like Shakespeare or Wordsworth) a poet of imagination: Southey was adept at collecting, arranging, aggregating, associating, disposing, embellishing, mixing …, but lacked the predominant attribute of poetic genius.” “Poetics of the Commonplace: Composing Robert Southey,” Wordsworth Circle 42, no. 1 (2011): 29.

87 Jeffrey’s review set the terms on which Southey’s poem has continued to be evaluated by more recent critics. Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch’s assessment of the poem, for instance, follows Jeffrey’s almost exactly, concluding that “the antiquarian impulse” to “cram” the text “with excerpts from leading eighteenth-century Arabists and travelers” overloaded the plot with more detail than it could reasonably accommodate: “[a]s a result, too many different things happen to the hero, and we tire of his quest before it is over.” Robert Southey (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1977), 92.
butterfly seems ready to swallow up Palemon and Lavinia.”

88 Pivoting from one symbol of tawdry domesticity to another – from a poorly seasoned meal of “scraps” to garish hand-stitched curtains – Jeffrey recasts Southey as a misguided housewife, rather than a poet of genius. In place of taste, judgment, and a sense of proportion, the masculine intellectual virtues praised by the Neoclassical poets he scorns, Southey’s “patch-work” poetics have only blind “industrious[ness]” to recommend them, a charge often levied at the genres of quotation and compilation in the period. 89 Because these genres mediated the original work of others, the assembly of anthologies, miscellanies, and personal scrapbooks was treated as a mechanical, rather than an intellectual, pursuit – as mere “book-making,” rather than a form of legitimate intellectual labour. Jeffrey sharpens the point of this common criticism, however, by comparing Southey’s “industr[y]” to gendered forms of domestic labour. While scrapbooking and album-making served as an elegant method of self-fashioning for many middle-class women in the Romantic period, “cutting” and “stitching” remained an overwhelmingly feminine (and feminizing) activity. 90 Jeffrey’s comparison of Thalaba to a painstakingly-assembled “patch-work draper[y]” deploys these associations as a weapon, positioning Southey in passive,

89 For more on the status of anthologies and miscellanies in eighteenth-century generic hierarchies, see Leah Price, The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). These genres did have their champions, however: Isaac D’Israeli, for instance, defended the taste, elegance, and “judicious reflectio[n]” required to select and present anecdotes that “gratif[y] curiosity” and “impres[s] upon the mind some interesting conclusion in the affairs of human life.” A Dissertation Upon Anecdotes; by the author of Curiosities of Literature (London: C. and G. Kearsley, 1793), 3.
90 For a rich discussion of scrapbooking as a feminine strategy of literary appreciation in the Romantic period, see Deidre Lynch, Loving Literature: A Cultural History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 137-144.
feminine relation to his subject matter. By rearranging rather than remaking his Oriental (and Orientalist) sources, he suggests, the poet becomes a conduit for the thoughts, images, and fictional incidents common to the “Mahometan countries,” rather than their triumphant proprietor. At best, Southey’s stated enthusiasm for those “passages in D’Herbelot, Sale, Volney, etc. which appeared to him to have great capabilities for poetry” puts him in dependent and secondary relation to the pathbreaking efforts of previous historians and translators; at worst, it indicates submission to his exotic subject matter in ways that are incompatible with emergent models of British masculinity and authorship.

Although Jeffrey’s “Thalabacide” was politically motivated, his depiction of Southey as a perverse, effeminate scavenger of source materials nevertheless resonates with the

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91 For more on the middle-class politics of Southey’s representation of the labour of poetic composition, see Claire A. Simmons, “‘Useful and Wasteful Both’: Southey’s Thalaba the Destroyer and the Function of Annotation in the Romantic Oriental Poem,” Genre 27 (1994): 83-104.

92 Jeffrey, “Unsigned review, Edinburgh Review October 1802,” 84. In one of his notes to “The Giaour,” Byron describes Southey in similar terms, presenting his notes to Thalaba as a vessel for other men’s research, rather than a source of original commentary. Explaining that the vampire superstitions he alludes to in “The Giaour” are “still general in the Levant,” for example, he mentions that “Honest Tournefort tells a long story, which Mr Southey, in the notes to Thalaba, quotes about these ‘Vroucolachas,’ as he calls them.” The content of that “long story,” however, seems less important to Byron’s note than the fact that Southey’s careless reproduction of Tournefort has reproduced inaccurate information: “The Romaic term is ‘Vardoulacha’,” Byron explains, indulging in a rare moment of philological pedantry justified by his firsthand experience of modern Greece. “I find that ‘Broucolokas’ is an old legitimate Hellenic appellation … The moderns, however, use the word I mention.” Once again, Southey is figured as a besotted, bookish vessel for his source material, rather than the active agent of its reproduction and poetic transformation. Byron, “Byron’s Notes to ‘The Giaour,’” in The Major Works, ed. Jerome McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 245.
author’s own accounts of his reading and writing habits. Like Henley, who had also described himself as “sift[ing]” and “ransack[ing]” volumes of Orientalist learning in search of illustrative materials, Southey does not identify himself as a reader of books so much as a stockpiler of potential notes. In a letter to Joseph Cottle written in September 1799, for instance, Southey explains that he has been hard at work “gutting the circulating libraries here [in Exeter], & laying in a good stock of notes & materials, arranged in a way so methodical that it would do honour to any old Batchelor [sic]”: Thalaba, he is proud to say, “will be very rich in notes.” Southey, of course, was laughably far from an “old Batchelor”: his home at Greta Hall housed himself, his wife Edith, their seven children, and eventually, after Coleridge left England for Malta, the entire Coleridge family. By recasting the Exeter library as a cloister removed from regular heterosexual domesticity, though, Southey acknowledges the potential “pervert[ity]” of his loving collection and rearrangement of other men’s writing.

Similarly, writing to Coleridge from Lisbon a year and a half later, Southey describes the act of composition as secondary to the workmanlike task of “hunting out … ample materials” for poetry. Having spent his time in Portugal gathering images and references

94 In a 1785 letter to Beckford, Henley notes that “Herbelot and Richardson I have already sifted. Several other volumes (all within my reach) I have ransacked and with no small success; insomuch that you will be yourself surprised to find how accurate you have in most instances been.” Henley, “The Rev. Samuel Henley to William Beckford, [26 April, 1785],” quoted in Melville, Life and Letters, 130.
for a projected “Hindoo romance” – eventually published as *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) – the only work left for him to do upon his return to England “will be chiefly to arrange and tack together; here, I have been glutting, and go home to digest.” While Jeffrey leveraged Southey’s “perverted taste[s]” against him, in other words, Southey wryly acknowledges his own “batchelor” appetite for Orientalist scholarship as the driving force behind *Thalaba*’s composition.

Prior to the publication of the poem and of Jeffrey’s review, Southey used similarly gastronomic language to explain why he thought *Thalaba* would appeal to the reading public. His correspondence from this period suggests that he overestimated his readers’ *appetites* for paratextual commentary as much or more than he did their familiarity with Islamic tradition. Unsurprisingly, he believed that his poem made a much tastier meal than the jumble of “scraps” that Jeffrey describes in his review, and assumed his readers would agree. For instance, in a letter to Coleridge written on July 25th, 1801, he refers to his “stimulant tale” as a “turtle soup, highly seasoned, but with a flavor of its own predominant.” Here, he is referring to the thrilling narrative of the poem, rather than the

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notes themselves; however, in a letter written the year before to his friend Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, he also describes his notes in terms that resemble Isaac D’Israeli’s comparison of well-selected anecdotes to a “delicious dessert.”

“My notes will be too numerous and too entertaining to print at the bottom of the page,” Southey explains at the end of the letter, which discusses Wynn’s revisions to the poem; “this would be letting the mutton grow cold while they eat the currant jelly.” If readers were given a taste of the notes too soon, in other words, he worried they might abandon the comparatively bland fare of the poem to gorge themselves upon sweetmeats. In so doing, he universalizes his own antiquarian (or, as Jeffrey would have it, “perverted”) tastes: a voracious reader of notes himself, Southey naturally assumed that the reading public would be equally taken with his curious researches. Unfortunately, his assumption that Thalaba’s readers would lack the self-possession to regulate their own reading in the presence of a rich banquet of footnotes proved unfounded, and in retrospect, Southey was forced to admit that his readership had not been quite so enamoured of the “currant jelly” as he had hoped. Even when preparing the poem for its second edition, though, he continued to pin the blame on the notes’ location, rather than their content, style, or volume. If his apparatus served as more impediment than incitement to further reading, he wrote, it was because the printer had produced “an unpleasant effect by the manner of placing the notes; … many pages have only a line of text, and so the eye runs faster than

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98 Isaac D’Israeli, A Dissertation On Anecdotes, 2.
the fingers can turn them over.” Instead of serving as a sweet sauce to draw out the complex flavours of his poetry, in other words, Thalaba’s footnotes were more likely to give Southey’s readers indigestion.

As we have seen so far, Southey’s overestimation of the public’s appetite for paratext had disastrous consequences for his poem’s initial reception. Not only did his dense “patchwork” of notes impede readers’ progress through his verse narrative, it also signaled his inability to take full possession of his Orientalist materials – or, as Henley had put it when speaking of Virgil, to “subjec[t] to his language the poetical beauties” of Eastern literature. Furthermore, framing Southey’s poem as a “disastrous” threat to the sanctity of national tradition, Francis Jeffrey mobilized homophobic tropes similar to those Hazlitt used to dismiss William Beckford’s exotic collections, treating Thalaba’s “commonplace-book” poetics as legible proof of its author’s effeminate submission to his Orientalist source materials. Furthermore, the review uses Southey’s “perverse” bookishness in order to define a more normatively masculine reader, one capable of building upon “D’Herbelot, Sale, and Volney”’s accounts of the East rather than simply rearranging them.

2.5 In the mouths of “modern Arabs”: the performative failure of paratextual reading in Southey’s Thalaba the Destroyer

In the final section of this chapter, I seek to recuperate Southey’s paratextual

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“pervers[ity]”, and to reframe his apparent failure to transform his source materials as a studied performance of the idiosyncrasies of bookish desire. Building upon recent reappraisals of Southey’s long poems that understand his miscellaneous annotation as a complex, often contradictory act of cultural mediation, I contend that Southey’s notes to *Thalaba* articulate an incisive, self-reflexive critique of the ways in which long-entrenched habits of reading, association, and desire might impede Britain’s long-term imperial interests in the East. ¹⁰¹ Although Southey’s footnotes begin by positioning paratextual reading as a valuable strategy for intervening in and correcting his readers’ Islamophobic assumptions, the notes’ associative structure soon comes to participate in, and to perpetuate, the very logic they set out to critique. By mobilizing strategies of citation, juxtaposition, and internal contradiction, Southey’s voluminous notes repeatedly call attention to the excesses of his own bookish desire. Furthermore, as the poem’s paratextual framework begins to creak under the weight of evidence that Southey heaps upon it, so does the posture of disinterest and detachment on which Orientalist scholarship bases its claims to educate its readers. Instead of making space for new forms of British imperial community, Southey’s parodic notes imply that such scholarship may

¹⁰¹ Dahlia Porter, for instance, has argued that the notes’ refusal to cohere functions as an implicit critique of the Baconian belief that empirical methods could lead to comprehensive knowledge about the world. See “Poetics of the Commonplace”; see also “Formal Relocations: The Method of Southey’s Thalaba the Destroyer (1801),” *European Romantic Review* 20, no. 5 (2009): 671-679. For Daniel White, the “novelistic” interplay between poem and notes complicates Southey’s portrayal of Thalaba’s religious fanaticism. The notes’ syncretic comparisons amongst religious traditions puncture the “unified heroism of the romance,” while their skeptical, self-reflexive commentary “reveal[s] Southey’s profound sense of the hazards of enthusiasm raised by his own hero.” See *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 176. Both Porter and White read the contradictions within Southey’s text as part of an inconsistently ironized but nevertheless deliberate performance of an Orientalist “editorial” persona, redeeming the notes from Jeffrey’s charge of automatic transcription while acknowledging the role that Southey’s digressive and often inconsistent annotation played in obscuring the argument of his poem.
simply restage outmoded chains of cultural association and assumption in ways that are incompatible with the long-term goals of Britain’s Eastern empire. As we shall see, the failure of Southey’s paratextual apparatus to accomplish its own stated goals prepares the way for Thalaba’s concluding turn towards more apocalyptic narrative modes. Forced to abandon hope in his own capacity to transcend his own habits of reading, Southey gestures instead towards the possibility that more sweeping, transformative strategies of imperial intervention are yet to come.

Like Henley’s endnoted essay on Virgil and the Idumaean palms, Southey’s first note to Thalaba uses a comparison between Eastern and Western prophetic texts to articulate his text’s imperial poetics. As we recall, Henley’s note had considered the relationships between texts, presenting Virgil’s bold “aggrandizement” of the “prophetic strains” of Hebrew poetry as a meaningful precedent for Vathek’s adoption of Eastern forms. Southey’s note focuses instead on the interactions between religious texts and their Protestant readers. In so doing, the note identifies the present English scene of reading as a significant obstacle to similar feats of imperial translation. By reframing his readers’ incomplete sympathies as a product of habitual association, rather than as a historical inevitability, Southey identifies his readers’ “religious ideas” as a productive site for further paratextual intervention. His first note to the poem glosses an early speech delivered by Zeinab, Thalaba’s mother, in the wake of her husband Hodeirah’s murder. As she grieves her loss, she reminds herself that even his untimely death must be an expression of God’s will, “exclaiming, ‘praised be the Lord! / He gave, he takes away, / The Lord our God is good!’” (7, 1.40-42). In the accompanying footnote, Southey calls the reader’s attention to the close resemblance between Zeinab’s exclamation and the
language of the Book of Job, explaining that he has “placed a scripture phrase … in the mouth of a Mohammedan” on purpose in an effort to overcome his readers’ assumed distaste for her style of worship (193). “[R]esignation” like Zeinab’s, he explains, “is particularly inculcated by Mohammed,” to the point where “it is even the vice of the East” (193). However, because British Protestant readers do not valourize resignation in quite the same way, Southey implies, they are likely to reject Zeinab’s celebration of God’s will as alien – even immoral. To encourage his readers to sympathize with Zeinab despite this difference in religious practice, then, he has chosen “to express a feeling of religion in that language with which our religious ideas are connected” (193).

As the note implies and Zeinab’s echo of Job confirms, Southey believes this familiar “language” to be that of the King James Bible, rather than the “dull tautology” that he associates with the Quran (193). Critics like David Simpson have suggested that notes like this one expose the artificiality of Thalaba’s representations of Islam and of “Arabian” culture, inviting readers to consider the poem as an experimental hybrid created in Southey’s “laboratory of cultures” and thus subject to the exigencies of translation and poetic intelligibility. In this note, Southey justifies his cross-cultural tinkering by reminding his audience that Christianity, like Islam, originated in the Levant:

103 Andrew Warren calls Thalaba’s “projected gap between the skeptical, self-critical West and the fanatical, belief-ridden East” into question, arguing that Southey’s representation of “resignation” as an exclusively Eastern “vice” serves not only to “divid[e] the East from the West, but also [to] secretly soothe[e] High Romantic anxieties concerning revolution and custom.” The Orient and the Young Romantics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 58, 81.
104 David Simpson, Romanticism and the Question of the Stranger, 115. Javed Majeed uses the phrase “laboratory of cultures” to describe the deliberately experimental attitude Southey adopted while pursuing his youthful dream of composing an epic on each of the world’s major religions. Ungoverned Imaginings, 53.
as a result, he asserts, there can be “no impropriety in making a modern Arab [Zeinab] speak like an ancient one [Job]” (193). However, what has gone thus far unnoticed by scholars, and what I hope to highlight here, are the ways in which this note also draws upon ongoing debates in the Romantic theory of Scriptural translation. As we shall see, Southey uses Bishop Robert Lowth’s philological work on Hebrew poetry to explain how the sympathies of his British readers might be profitably extended across existing linguistic, cultural, and religious barriers.

While Southey’s identification of the language of Job as the “language with which our religious feelings are connected” initially seems to echo Bishop Lowth’s pathbreaking claims for the unique “sublimity” and “divinity” of Hebrew scripture, he ultimately advances a more relativistic view of religious community than Lowth.\textsuperscript{105} In his Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews (1787), Lowth had claimed that the poetry of the Hebrew Old Testament was far superior to “the poetry of all other nations” written to exalt “the greatness, the power, the justice, [and] the immensity of God” (1:348). Praising “the dignity of that inspiration, which proceeds from higher causes,” Lowth had also implied that the genuine religious feeling that animated the Scriptures could transcend translation, asserting that the Bible’s exalted “subjects and sentiments” would “yet retain some part at least of their native force and dignity” no matter how they were expressed.

\textsuperscript{105} Robert Lowth, Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, trans. George Gregory (London: J. Johnson, 1787), 1:348. Lowth first delivered these lectures in Latin at Oxford in 1741. He published the lectures in Latin in 1753; however, they did not appear in English until George Gregory published his Latin-to-English translation, the Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, in 1787.
(1:348). Southeys substitution of passages from the Book of Job for the “dull tautolog[ies]” of Islam may initially appear to suggest that the Old Testament is more closely connected with authentic “religious ideas” than the Quran – to imply, in other words, that the former text was divinely inspired and universally understood, while the latter remained unfortunately confined to its original idiom and audience. It is important to note, however, that Southeys does not claim that the Book of Job is more representative of “religious ideas” writ large; instead, he makes a far more moderate and relative claim. By referring to the connections between the language of the Old Testament and “our religious ideas,” Southeys circumscribes the influence of Job’s phrasing to the relatively select community made up of his own English Protestant readers. The language of the Old Testament has become associated with “our religious ideas” over generations of religious practice, he suggests, rather than through the divinity or transcendence of its poetry. Indeed, the echoes of Job that Southeys has “placed in the mouth of a Mohammedan” are themselves mediated through the early modern English of the King James Bible – a language that his intended audience may hold close to their hearts, but which nevertheless represents a translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic in which the Old Testament was first composed. According to Southeys, in other words, the King James translation of the Book of Job has become bound to English readers’ “religious ideas” through repetition and the accumulative logic of association. Most importantly, over the several hundred years that this translation has been central to British religious life, the

106 Since the sound of the original spoken Hebrew had been irrecoverably lost, Lowth was forced to devise alternate strategies for modern readers to understand and appreciate the poetry of the Old Testament. As a result, Lowths Lectures identify the Scriptures’ structural parallelism (rather than their aural qualities, such as rhyme or metre) as their fundamental poetic characteristic. Prose translations that preserved the structure of this parallelism, he argued, would retain much of the sublime force of the original, even if they made no attempt to reproduce its metrical form.
language of the King James Bible has become so entwined with English readerly sympathies that Southey believes its echoes alone – even when heard out of their usual context – will prompt his readers to enlarge their sympathies beyond their ordinary limits. By placing Job’s words in Zeinab’s mouth, then, Southey seeks to expand their present web of religious associations, forging a new kind of imperial community that could encompass both British readers and “modern [Arabs]” like Zeinab and Thalaba.107

Southey’s substitution of Job’s sublime phrases for the Quran’s “tame language” appears to position his poetic verse as the primary vehicle of this change. After all, it is the poetry of the King James Bible, rather than any prose work of scholarship, that speaks most directly to his readers’ accumulated “religious ideas.” However, his attempt to justify his reasoning in the poem’s first footnote also frames paratextual reading as a potentially valuable tool for intervening in and restructuring his readers’ present habits of association. Anticipating that his audience might bristle at the supposed “impropriety” of his decision to “[make] a modern Arab speak like an ancient one,” Southey inserts an explanatory note, a gesture that disrupts his verse and the train of their religious associations at the same time. By interrupting wary readers’ progress through the poem in this way, notes like this one invite them to pause and reflect on the validity of his poetic substitution – to take a moment, in other words, to question whether Zeinab’s resignation to the will of her Lord resembles their own “religious ideas” more closely than conventional wisdom might allow. Although his first note represents Southey’s clearest and most forceful statement of the associative logic that drives his poem, subsequent

107 It is important to note that Southey’s vision of a multifaith community of sympathy remains an imperialist fantasy: in presenting his readers with an Anglicized version of Islam, Southey does not invite them to confront or to respect his “modern Arabs” in their religious or cultural singularity.
footnotes offer readers additional opportunities to interrogate their sympathies in this way. For instance, in Book III, which depicts Thalaba’s idyllic youth with his adoptive family, Southey interrupts a description of his foster father Moath’s delight in his daughter’s performance of her domestic duties in order to alert us to another strategic allusion to the Book of Job: “‘If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbour’s door / Then let my wife grind unto another’ – JOB XXXI.9.10.”\textsuperscript{108} The note withholds explicit editorial commentary, but read as an extension of Southey’s first footnote, its implications are clear. If readers are unwilling to recognize themselves in the pleasure Moath takes in his daughter’s grinding of their family’s grain, the note implies, they need look no further than the Book of Job for reassurance. In its sacred poetry, they will find an authoritative reminder that this image of “Arabian” domestic harmony is as familiar as the Old Testament itself.

Of course, if all of Southey’s annotations to \textit{Thalaba} made such straightforward attempts to intervene in and to expand upon their readers’ present sympathies, Jeffrey’s scornful dismissal of his “patch-work” poetics would be difficult to imagine. While the poem’s critics might have objected to the political implications of Southey’s strategic deployment of the language of Job, they would have had little grounds to excoriate the poem as little else than its author’s “commonplace-book versified.” Had he included only those notes that supported his syncretic argument, in other words, the significance of their repeated and deliberate citation of Old Testament precedent would have been much harder to mistake. As we shall see, however, Southey’s paratextual apparatus does not exempt him, as author and editor, from the charge of reflexively reproducing long-entrenched habits of

\textsuperscript{108} Southey, \textit{Thalaba the Destroyer}, 217.
association of his own. Rather, by interrupting the progress of his poem to pursue ever more elliptical and contradictory strings of examples, Southey pushes his comparative framework to its explanatory limits – and, in so doing, deliberately exposes his own readerly and editorial desires to a similar process of revision and critique.

Shortly after establishing the logic of sympathetic substitution that governs Thalaba’s early allusions to the Old Testament, Southey’s footnotes begin to wander down other paths. In Book 3, for instance, Thalaba and his adoptive father Moath discuss the unexpected “expos[ure]” of the “corpse” of the evil magician Abdaldar, killed by a hot desert wind and buried “[u]nder the desert sands” the night before. To make sense of this surprising turn of events, Moath mentions that he has “heard that there are places by the abode / Of holy men, so holily possessed / That if a corpse be buried there, the ground / With a convulsive effort shakes it out, / Impatient of pollution” (41, 3.83-7). Southey’s footnote assures us that this speech alludes to the miracles witnessed at the grave of Elisha as described in the second Book of Kings. After quoting the Biblical passage in full, Southey concludes the note in his own editorial voice, “remind[ing his] readers” that his earlier claim that “an allusion to the Old Testament is in no ways improper in a Mohammedan” still stands (243). In this case, however, the relationship between the events Southey describes in the poem and the ones recorded in the Bible proves to be far more tenuous than in the two examples we have already discussed. Where previous notes had used Biblical language to domesticate ordinary acts of “Arabian” devotion for Southey’s skeptical British audience, this one juxtaposes the desert’s bathetic rejection of Abdaldar’s “pollut[ed]” “corpse” with a very different image – an Old Testament scene

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109 Southey, Thalaba the Destroyer, 41, 3.69.
of miraculous resurrection. In the II Kings passage that the note presents for our consideration, a band of Moabite raiders attack an Israelite burial ceremony; in an effort to protect the body, the Israelites “cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha.” Upon touching Elisha’s holy bones, however, the body is immediately “revived,” and the man “[stands] up on his feet” (213). While the Arabian sands had forcefully ejected Abdaldar’s evil and “pollut[ed]” body from its grave, then, Elisha’s tomb gives a righteous man new life (41, 3.84). While similar notes had pushed readers to expand their “religious ideas” to include the “modern [Arab]” characters represented in the poem, this one reinforces the very hierarchy of belief that Southey had earlier dismantled. Should we take up the note’s invitation to compare Moath’s description of the “holily possessed” desert sands to the Biblical story of Elisha’s tomb, we are left to confront the inferiority of what Southey’s “modern [Arab]” would recognize as a holy miracle. Almost as soon as it is established, then, Southey’s syncretic paratextual framework begins to creak under the weight of the very prejudices it seeks to restructure. By reinforcing rather than challenging its readers’ existing beliefs about Christianity’s privileged relationship to divine truth and revelation, this note positions “modern” Islam as a related yet inferior religious tradition. While Moath’s “allusion to the Old Testament” might protect him and Thalaba from spiritual “pollution,” Southey implies, it will not guarantee their holy “resurrection.”

Like Francis Jeffrey, we could attribute Southey’s failure to execute his poem’s avowed paratextual program to its author’s “perverse” editorial proclivities. Always eager to stuff his annotated poems with as much reference material as they could be made to hold, in other words, Southey may have simply been led astray by his own bookishness. Despite
the relative weakness of the correspondence between Abdaldar’s abrupt disinterment and the Biblical story of Elisha’s tomb, he may have found the parallel too delicious to omit. Indeed, had the note concluded with such an inexact comparison, we could credit the jarring note it strikes to authorial error, rather than to any deliberate or ironic intention on Southey’s part. It is important to note, however, that this note does not end with this reference to the Old Testament. Instead, Southey tacks yet another “scrap” of learning onto the end of the note, deviating still further from his avowed paratextual mandate. As I will demonstrate, after citing the story of Elisha’s tomb from the venerable II Kings, the note proceeds to a lengthy extract from Richard Burton’s much more apocryphal miscellany of early modern miracles, the *Admirable Curiosities, Rarities, and Wonders in England* (1684). In so doing, I argue, Southey starts to use the margins of his poem to stage an ironic performance of his own readerly “pervers[ions],” dramatizing the errancy of his archival curiosity in an effort to ironize his own implicit claim, as Thalaba’s learned editor, to a sufficiently scholarly position of detachment and omniscience.

As a motley collection of pre-Reformation English superstitions, Burton’s *Admirable Curiosities* can wield little of the religious and textual authority usually ascribed to the Old Testament Book of Kings. It should unsettle us, then, that Moath’s description of the exposure of Abdaldar’s corpse resembles the Burton passage Southey quotes here much more closely than it resembled the story of Elisha’s holy tomb. Like Moath’s reference to “places” too holy for evil men to rest, Burton’s anecdote also describes a sinner’s repeated ejections from consecrated ground – not in the distant desert, but in Chatham churchyard, a geographical site much closer to home. As Burton’s speaker explains, Our Lady of Chatham, “an image” of the Virgin Mary, came alive to warn Chatham’s monks
“that a sinful person was buried near the place where she was worshipped, who offended her eyes with his ghastly grinning” (213). Threatening to “work no more miracles” unless this person was removed, Our Lady of Chatham convinces the monks to dig up the body and cast it out to sea. “[S]oon after,” though, “the body floated again, and was taken up and buried in the Church yard” – and from that point forward, Burton’s speaker tells us, “all miracles” at Chatham abruptly “ceased” (213). If Southey’s first comparison between the desert’s exposure of Abdaldar’s corpse and Elisha’s resurrection of a righteous man falls flat, then, this additional example further complicates the comparative framework clearly outlined in Southey’s first note. Although the note’s initial reference to the Book of Kings seems meant to stoke our sympathies for “modern [Arabian]” characters like Moath and Thalaba, its subsequent citation of Burton’s *Admirable Curiosities* only pushes them further away from us. By inviting readers to view Moath as a mouthpiece for the idolatrous belief in “images” and miracles usually associated with Catholic priestcraft and superstition, in other words, this note flouts the very logic of sympathetic substitution that Southey’s annotations are supposed to enforce.

Dahlia Porter has argued that gestures like this one link the “present Islamic world” to “Britain’s ‘barbaric’ past,” rather than to its Romantic present. In so doing, she contends, Southey marshals the stadial logic of uneven development in service of his poem’s “imperialist and nationalist” ideology. While Porter’s analysis of Southey’s...
allusion to Burton calls productive attention to the limitations of his poem’s representation of “Arabian” modernity, her reading may also attribute a more “securely imperialist and nationalist” ideology to notes like this one than their internal contradictions would otherwise support (675). While readers may begin this footnote by carefully weighing the claims of the “ancient” Israelites of II Kings in the balance with more “modern” ones like Moath and Thalaba, its diffuse conclusion abandons them to juggle the authority of the Old Testament along with pre-Reformation Catholic superstition, post-Reformation Protestant belief, and the “modern Arabs” of Southey’s imagination. All three of these belief systems may indeed be traced back to the Old Testament; however, Southey does not emphasize their shared roots as a reason for their juxtaposition, nor does he attempt to triangulate between his various examples in anything other than relative terms. Indeed, by note’s end, the only rationale left to explain these emergent relationships is the impressionistic, associative logic of editorial whim. In his next note to Book 3, Southey exaggerates this associative logic even further, producing an absurd excess of supplementary material in an attempt to push the poem’s paratextual framework towards complete parodic collapse. Still glossing the same speech over Abdaldar’s exposed body, the poem’s next note introduces three more examples of sudden exhumation; however, none of these additional examples proves quite as miraculous as the tale of Elisha’s tomb, and none of them possesses quite the same explanatory power. Instead, each additional example introduced in this note marks a more ludicrous deviation from the logic of sympathetic substitution Southey had worked so hard to establish and to justify at the outset of his poem. Moreover, in calling attention to his own role in selecting these particular examples, Southey structures this note in a way
that turns his earlier criticism of his readers’ habits of association back upon the editor himself.

Breaking with his usual strategy of “patch-work” annotation, which stitches together several direct quotations from source texts while providing minimal commentary to orient the reader, Southey opens this pivotal note by paraphrasing its illustrative material in his own editorial voice. As though he has been meditating upon the scholarly precedents for his present attempt to rationalize Moath’s superstitious belief in sacred burial grounds, he summons up “Matthew of Westminster,” a medieval historian who had made a similar effort to explain the English folktale of “the Old Woman of Berkeley” in the Flores Historiarum (a Latin chronicle first assembled in the 13th century, and printed in 1570). Southey condenses Matthew of Westminster’s argument as follows:

“Matthew of Westminster says the History of the Old Woman of Berkeley, will not appear incredible, if we read the dialogue of St. Gregory in which he relates how the body of a man buried in the church was thrown out by the Devils” (213-14).

Summarizing this source from memory instead of quoting the passage directly, Southey

112 After more than sixty years of philological controversy, “Matthew of Westminster” was in 1890 finally proven to be a composite figure, rather than a historical personage; likewise, his Flores Historiarum was eventually revealed to be a medieval collation of manuscripts by multiple authors, rather than the work of a single historian. Southey’s reference to the Flores Historiarum precedes the beginnings of this debate by a quarter of a century, and so it is unlikely that this citation represents a deliberate nod to the slipperiness of scholarly authority. The note remained unchanged until Southey’s last edition of the poem was published in 1838, however, and so it may have acquired these additional connotations over the course of the poet’s lifetime.

113 Southey’s personal interest in the folktale of the Old Woman of Berkeley, wherein a witch sells her soul to the Devil and then tries to trick him out of carrying her body away after death, predates this note to Thalaba. In the same year, he published his own version of the legend, entitled “A Ballad, shewing how an old woman rode double, and who rode before her,” in the fourth edition of Poems (1800); eventually, the poem became known as “The Old Witch of Berkeley.” See Southey, “A Ballad …,” in Selected Shorter Poems, c. 1793-1805, ed. Lynda Pratt, Tim Fulford, and Daniel Sanjiv Roberts, vol. 5, Robert Southey: Poetical Works 1793-1810 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004), 294-297.
briefly redirects his reader’s attention away from his illustrative materials and towards his own role as editor of the text – inviting us to turn aside from what “Matthew of Westminster says” and to wonder instead what the annotator who selected the references might have *thought*. This brief reminder of Southey’s agential role as author of both the poem and its apparatus recentres his editorial selections as a meaningful object of readerly scrutiny – a significant gesture for Southey to perform at the precise moment that he inserts a second footnote elaborating still further on a subject he has already glossed at length. Considering the temporality of *Thalaba*’s paratextual apparatus as it unfolds alongside the centred poetic text, we see lines of affiliation emerging between these two notes, linked as they are by Southey’s notoriously “perverse” habits of reading and scholarly association. At this point in the text, it is as though the passage from Burton’s *Admirable Curiosities* has set off a pleasurable train of thought in its author’s mind. Once Southey begins to recall related examples, he proves either unwilling or unable to stop himself from pursuing this line of inquiry to its eventual conclusion – no matter how far away from his original destination this errant pathway might take him.

After calling his audience’s attention to his own habits of association at the beginning of this note, Southey gives his mind free rein to wander towards yet another story of spontaneous exhumation. This time, he supplies an anecdote of Eastern superstition drawn from Morgan’s *History of Algiers* (1728), a “general history of Barbary” interspersed with “many curious remarks and passages, not touched on by any writer whatever.” Southey quotes Morgan directly: “The Turks report, as a certain truth, that the corps of Heyradin Barbarossa was found, four or five times out of the ground, … after he had been there inhumed: nor could they possibly make him lie quiet in his grave, til a
Greek wizzard [sic] counseled them to bury a black dog together with the body” (214). At this mention of the dog, however, the note hurtles down a strange new path of its own, one that has even less to do with Moath’s poetic exclamations or with Southey’s prior efforts to domesticate Muslim beliefs for his English readers. Inspired by the mention of the black dog buried with Barbarossa, the editor shifts his focus from unsuccessful efforts to bury wicked men like Abdaldar to the story of another famous dog, buried alive at the bottom of a dyke in Holland. “In supernatural affairs dogs seem to possess a sedative virtue,” Southey muses; then, he launches into another long passage unearthed from an early modern compendium (214).114 This additional anecdote makes no mention of cursed corpses; instead, the “supernatural affair” requiring resolution involves the sudden appearance of an irreparable breach in a Flemish dam, “whereby the country [sic] was drowned round about at every high sea; the which the Flemings could by no means fill up … for all that sunk in a gulf without any bottome.” Throwing the body of a “Sea-dog” into the bottomless pit, the speaker tells us, the townspeople were delighted to discover that its “sedative virtue[s]” had calmed the waters, making it possible for the hole to be filled at last (214).

In the course of a single note, in other words, we have strayed so far from Moath’s speech about Abdaldar’s body as to wind up weighing multiple instances of the “supernatural” properties of dogs. The poem’s paratextual framework, which had initially invited readers to negotiate the complex relationship between Moath’s speech and the familiar language of Protestant religious devotion, has finally crumbled. Indeed, Southey’s discussion of the “sedative virtues” of dogs turns out to be the straw that

114 Southey identifies this source as “Grasmine’s Historie of the Netherlands 1608.”
finally breaks cultural comparison’s back, turning the merely chaotic into the inescapably parodic.¹¹⁵ Led astray by the unexpected pleasures of archival correspondence, Southey, the voracious reader in Orientalist scholarship, struggles to maintain a detachment sufficient for him to either supervise or enforce the program of paratextual reading that he himself had created. Even if his readers’ entrenched associations regarding Islamic religious practices should turn out to be the major barrier to the further expansion of their imperial sympathies, notes like these emphasize the Orientalist editor’s inadequacy to the task of transforming them. After all, the more detailed and thoroughly researched the poem’s scholarly explanations become, the further they wander from the verse narrative; the more his notes try to illustrate, in other words, the less they are able to clarify.

It is worth acknowledging, of course, that many of Southey’s notes to the poem are shorter and less bizarre than this paean to the “sedative virtues” of dogs in “supernatural affairs.” Indeed, many of Thalaba’s footnotes manage to quote from only one source at a time without plunging into the deep waters of free association. Nevertheless, the associative logic of footnotes like this one is repeated often enough elsewhere in Southey’s paratextual apparatus to form a significant structural pattern. Readers seeking further examples of this dilatory phenomenon could compare this note’s commentary on canine burial to a later footnote laden with multiple examples of the “inflammability of saints” (273). Ostensibly an effort to explicate a moment in Book IX when the witch Khawla starts a fire by simply “lay[ing] her finger to [a] pile” of wood, this note lists five

¹¹⁵ Dahlia Porter also singles out this note on the “sedative virtues” of dogs as one that “toppl[es] the structure that it was, perhaps, intended to support”; for Porter, however, the logic that the note destabilizes is the “hierarchy of cultures supported by conjectural history,” rather than the iterative and disruptive logic of paratextual reading. See Porter, “Poetics of the Commonplace,” 31.
successive “example[s]” of the igniferous powers of saints and demons, drawn from a total of four different texts. The first passage Southey includes tells the story of St. Elfled, who was said to be able to shine a light bright enough to read by from the “fingers of her right hand” (274). As before, however, this brief reference to a saintly miracle soon triggers another bathetic slide – this time, into a more scientific register. Rounding out St. Elfled’s story with a reference to “the great light” that appeared over the tomb of another saint, St. Bridget of Ireland, Southey remarks (again in his editorial voice) that “Dead Saints have frequently possessed this phosphoric quality like rotten wood or dead fish” (274). In so doing, he conflates saintly phosphorescence with natural decay in a manner that makes it exceedingly difficult to take the remainder of the note’s litany of examples seriously. Moreover, he draws this parallel at precisely the moment that his own editorial voice intrudes, claiming full credit for the strangeness of this footnote’s archival trajectory on his own behalf. The footnote’s subsequent reference to the “coruscating splendour, which was the light of the infant prophet [Mohammed]” is likewise tainted by its immediate proximity to Southey’s reference to the phosphorescence of “rotten wood” and “dead fish” (274). Similarly, the next passage that Southey quotes tells the story of the “great glory” observed playing around the severed head of Hosein, grandson of the Prophet. The light is meant to indicate Hosein’s holiness, but by introducing the story as “[a]nother Mohammedan miracle of the same genus,” “in no ways improbable,” Southey forges a further metonymic link between Hosein’s head, the Prophet’s infant body, and the “rotten wood” and “dead fish” that preceded them, ironizing each example in turn (274). First confronting readers with a list of Catholic and Muslim “miracle[s],” Southey then deploys modern scientific language – a far cry, certainly, from the Biblical
“language with which our religious feelings are connected” – in an effort to condemn both religions as equally obsolete remnants of a pre-modern age of superstition. By the time the note finally reaches a conclusion, in other words, Southey’s chain of scholarly association has made its case for readers to contract, rather than to extend, their sympathies. He has, once again, failed to disrupt the readerly assumptions he initially set out to correct. Rather, in this note as before, Southey’s odd bricolage of source materials exposes his own bookish desire as the unacknowledged principle on which his annotative practice rests, undermining the very objectivity on which his reasoned, deliberate logic of sympathetic substitution – and, by extension, the enterprise of Orientalist cultural comparison more generally – claims to depend.

For the most part, the cumulative argument of Southey’s notes unfolds alongside the poem, if not quite in dialogue with it: while his notes comment upon the centred text, the verse narrative does not respond to the notes in its turn. Tracing the associative logic of Southey’s paratextual apparatus as it gradually unravels throughout *Thalaba the Destroyer* as we have done, however, can also help us to contextualize the apocalyptic turn that marks the poem’s conclusion. We will recall that after defeating the cabal of evil magicians and pardoning Okba, their ringleader and his father’s murderer, Thalaba repeats his mother’s initial act of resignation to the will of her God. Reaffirming that his only “earthly wish” is to “work” his Prophet’s “will” (192, 12.471-4), Thalaba plunges his father’s sword “Hilt-deep” into the heart of the magicians’ powerful Idol (192, 12.498), pulling the Domdaniel caverns down upon his own and his enemies’ heads:
“The Ocean-Vault fell in, and all were crushed” (192, 12.503). At a single stroke, then, Southey sweeps away all the slow, deliberate, often contradictory work of paratextual intervention that his notes have struggled the whole poem to accomplish, collapsing the complex sequence of distinctions that his annotations have proliferated in the margins of the text. It is reasonable to ask ourselves, then, why Southey would bother to pair an apparatus that aims to disrupt and to gradually extend the readerly sympathies of the British public with as dramatic and decisive a clearing of the slate as the one he stages in Thalaba’s final lines. If Southey had indeed crafted his footnotes to amplify the resonance of “plac[ing] … scripture phrase[s] … in the mouth[s]” of his “Mohammedan” characters, interrupting his readers’ longstanding habits of association in an attempt to apply brief but persistent and cumulative corrections, why abandon that model in favour of a sudden, singular apocalyptic event like the destruction of the Domdaniel? Reading the notes, again, as an argument that evolves over the course of the poem, I will conclude by reframing the poem’s final turn as a response to the ironic, performative failure of its apparatus to achieve its stated goals.

As we have seen, Southey’s notes first turn the associative reasoning of British readers

\[116\] The final scenes of Southey’s published poem traffic in the tropes of “apocalyptic fulfillment” that Patricia Parker associates with the conclusion of Christian romance, preoccupied as they are with the “recovery of identity” and “the attainment of an end.” Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 5. However, in the initial sketches of the poem that he recorded in his commonplace book, Southey outlines a far less definite conclusion to Thalaba’s quest, proposing to save Thalaba from dying along with the magicians in the crumbling Domdaniel via \textit{deus ex machina}. After thrusting his sword into the Idol at the centre of the cavern, the note proposes, “the waters burst in – but an egg of air surrounds him, and buoys him to the surface of the sea.” Later on, he muses that “Perhaps the death of Thamama [sic] should conclude the poem, as the only adequate reward. Besides, he must sacrifice so much as to make it the only desirable one.” This alternate conclusion reminds us that the apocalyptic conclusion of the published poem does not represent an inevitable concession to the generic imperatives of romance; rather, Southey appears to have made a conscious choice to heighten the “reward” of Thalaba’s final act of self-sacrifice. Southey’s Common-Place Book, Fourth Series, 182.
into a meaningful structural pattern; having done so, however, the notes begin to exaggerate that pattern until it is neither recognizable nor useful, calling his readers’ attention at every step to the sheer “perversity” of his own editorial impulses. By staging the collection and display of source material as a practice of wandering wherever the thread of association may lead, then, Southey’s paratexts model a style of scholarly documentation that cannot help but collapse into self-parody. No matter how detached and disinterested noted Orientalist scholars – like Sir William Jones, perhaps, or even Samuel Henley – might claim themselves to be, Southey’s notes insist that scholars and editors like himself are British readers, too. As a result, they cannot hope to simply read their way out of the established reading relations that link scholars, texts, and their subjects into particular patterns of association in their shared historical present. Indeed, as Southey’s paratexts so artfully remind us, such an objective standpoint remains unthinkable within the system of Orientalist knowledge production as presently constituted, shaped as it is by the same network of established associations that it might otherwise endeavour to disrupt. It is precisely because Thalaba the Destroyer tries and fails so spectacularly to position the annotated Orientalist long poem as a generic vehicle to gradually enlarge its readers’ sympathies that its abrupt and apocalyptic conclusion becomes necessary.

Unable, in the end, to think his way out of the labyrinthine network of assumptions and associations that he has rehearsed for his audience’s consumption by the poem’s close, Southey instead endorses an apocalyptic fantasy of union in destruction. When the “Ocean-Vault f[a]ll[s] in, and all [are] crushed,” in other words, Thalaba the Destroyer abandons its gradualist logic of sympathetic substitution once and for all, appealing in its
place to the ecstatic possibility of utter collapse and consequent transformation still to follow. Ultimately, while the paratextual form of Southey’s notes may be ideally suited to diagnose readerly habits of association as a problem, marginal annotation’s long associations with scholarly traditions of ironic or antagonistic commentary render it a relatively ineffective tool to address the epistemological concerns it so capably highlights. Notably, the poem itself does not specify an extrapoetic political analogue for such an apocalyptic event; as I have mentioned above, its final lines confirm Thalaba’s arrival in Paradise and his reunion with Oneiza in an afterlife of “eternal bliss,” but do not go on to explain or even to hypothesize how the world outside the Domdaniel would be changed by the magicians’ defeat. In earlier stages of the poem’s composition, Southey appears to have considered imputing more universal consequences to Thalaba’s heroic destruction of the Domdaniel caverns. In a letter written to Coleridge in January 1800, for instance, he proposed to explore the “the effects produced in our globe by the destruction of the Dom Daniel” in a “Darwinish note” to Thalaba’s final lines: “Imprimis … the cold of the north is accounted for by the water that rushed into the caverns, putting out a great part of the central fire; the sudden generation of steam shattered the southern and south-east continents into archipelagos of islands; also the boiling spring of Geyser has its source here, – who knows what it did not occasion?”117 The published poem’s conclusion is suggestive where this “Darwinish note” is specific, scientific, and detailed.

However, in its final turn towards the heavenly possibilities that follow in the wake of sweeping, transformative destruction, the poem nevertheless appears to anticipate a more straightforwardly imperial “aggrandiz[ement]” of Eastern traditions and materials yet to come – a future moment when, as Thalaba’s speaker imagines it, “the Crescent” that adorns their mosques may “one day … Be pluck’d by Wisdom, when the enlightened arm

/ Of Europe conquers to redeem the East” (76, 5.84-6).118

Like Henley’s notes to Vathek, in other words, Southey’s notes to Thalaba imply that more aggressive forms of imperial intervention might be required in order to complete the work of cultural description, comparison, and administration that the Orientalist scholars of the previous century had begun. While Henley’s endorsement of Virgil’s triumphalist appropriation of the Hebrew prophetic tradition used the strategies of philological analysis to clamp down on Vathek’s queerer energies, however, Southey’s rapidly proliferating notes deliberately stage editorial caprice as a pleasurable but ultimately futile pursuit, putting the eccentric curiosity of the Orientalist-cum-antiquarian editor at the centre of the scholarly enterprise. Indeed, by undermining the position of epistemological detachment on which Orientalist annotation is based, Southey’s paratextual apparatus calls the methods of earlier commentators like Henley into question as well. While subsequent attacks upon the unwieldiness of these heavily annotated

118 We might link this suggestive endorsement of transformative change to Southey’s subsequent journalism, over a decade later, arguing for the legalization of Christian missionary activity in British India. As the Orientalist policies that distinguished the Hastings administration gradually gave way to a new era of Anglicist rule on the subcontinent in the first decades of the nineteenth century, British missionary efforts to convert Hindu subjects to Christianity and to teach them English supplanted the former administration’s efforts to use India’s own laws and languages as tools of governance. For a brief account of Southey’s participation in the British imperial policy debates that culminated in the Charter Act of 1813, see Tim Fulford, The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets: Romanticism Revised (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 71-73.
romances – pioneered by a wounded Beckford, but certainly perpetuated by critics like Francis Jeffrey – may have obscured the interest of these annotated texts in both regulating and yielding to the excesses of readerly desire, my chapter has explored the ways in which, in their structure and in their reception, *Vathek* and *Thalaba the Destroyer* reveal a reading subject in rapid transition. Although readily accepted as a form of detached intellectual pleasure in the early years of Britain’s Asian empire, paratextual reading soon began to indicate a feminized, even queer relationship to the body of Orientalist scholarship. These relations shifted so quickly, in fact, that Southey’s intricate, deeply ironic paratextual strategy could prove almost wholly illegible to his contemporaries as such a mere fifteen years after *Vathek*’s learned apparatus had been so widely celebrated. Rather, in Southey’s hands, paratextual reading came to connote a “perverse[ly]” bookish form of desire for his exotic source materials – an inappropriately intimate relationship between text and reader that critics like Francis Jeffrey recast as a negative image of the imperial reading subject.

While Jeffrey’s scathing “Thalabacide” may have succeeded in containing some of the more “perverse” tendencies of Southey’s footnotes, the fate of paratextual reading in the Romantic period was hardly decided by *Thalaba*’s critical failure. As my third chapter will demonstrate, Sir Walter Scott’s meticulous notes and prefaces for the Magnum Opus edition of his *Waverley* novels flaunted their author’s antiquarian appetite for obscure historical detail in much the same way as Southey’s had previously done. Unlike *Thalaba*, though, the Magnum managed to elude the charges of authorial “perversity” that had so dogged Southey upon his poem’s publication. Southey’s notes had reassembled the contents of the Exeter library into a bewildering bricolage of Orientalist
scholarship and early modern superstition; however, as we shall see, Scott’s notes to the Magnum Opus temper their bookishness by invoking the authority of oral testimony, using anecdote and local tradition to illuminate the historical origins of Scott’s most beloved fictional characters, places, and events. As a result, the public embraced Scott’s new authorial paratexts as “genuine illustrations” of his beloved fictions. For many Romantic readers, the new notes were received as sufficient justification for rereading – and repurchasing – the texts in their newly embellished form. To repurpose Southey’s culinary metaphor for his ill-fated Orientalist notes, in other words, the new contextual material provided in Scott’s authorial notes and prefaces proved to be the perfect “currant jelly” to enliven the Waverley novels’ familiar leg of lamb. Exploring the ways in which Scott positions his Magnum Opus notes to take advantage of his readers’ appetites for annotation will be our task in this thesis’ third and final chapter.
Chapter 3

Paratextual rereading: Waverley anecdotes and the secret history of Scott’s Magnum Opus

3.1 Rereading the Waverley novels

Shortly after the 1829 debut of Sir Walter Scott’s Magnum Opus edition of his collected novels, Scott’s friend, the abolitionist and poet Thomas Pringle, wrote to him to offer “a few slight remarks” of critique. Embedding the most popular novels of the Romantic period in what Jane Millgate has called “a massive apparatus of introductions and annotations,” the Magnum Opus linked the novels’ familiar fictional plots and characters back to their “original” sources in anecdote and local lore, marking a newly referential turn in Scott’s paratextual practice. Pringle, however, found himself struggling to absorb this welter of additional contextual information. In his letter, he attributes his confusion to the notes’ location in the paratextual space between chapters, which – despite their tiny type – made their contents too conspicuous to ignore:

2 Elaine Freedgood identifies the Magnum Opus as a significant turning point in Scott’s paratextual career, as well as a “radical if anomalous moment for the fictional footnote” more generally. In abandoning the playful self-referentiality of his earlier work and offering readers “solid referential information” about the real people and places supposedly described in his fiction instead, she argues, Scott “open[s] … a circuit between fact and fiction” with far-reaching implications for the nineteenth-century realist novel. “Fictional Settlements: Footnotes, Metalepsis, the Colonial Effect.” New Literary History 41 (2010): 401.
when [the notes] occur at the foot of a page or at the end of a chapter they
tend to dissipate … the illusion of reality which the story had acquired
over the reader’s imagination, by exhibiting somewhat abruptly traces of
the groundwork of the fiction. I do not feel this effect when such
illustrations are introduced into the introduction – but … when they occur
… in the middle of a volume I am sensible, even in a 3d or 4th perusal of
the novel, of a rather unwelcome disenchantment. ⁴

Pringle is not opposed to Scott’s “exhibit[ion]” … of the groundwork of [his] fiction” on
principle: indeed, prior to the Magnum’s publication, he himself had published anecdotes
describing the “originals” of Scott’s characters in periodicals like Blackwood’s and
Constable’s Edinburgh Magazine. ⁵ Rather, Pringle’s objection to the Magnum notes
responds to their formal location within the body of the text, presenting their insistent
factual interruptions as a barrier to the willing suspension of disbelief. By piping up at the
end of every chapter to remind readers of the novels’ basis in reality, he suggests, the
notes dispel the pleasurable “illusion of reality” cast by the Wizard of the North. For
readers to become “[e]nchant[ed],” in other words, demystification should take place
prior to – not partway through – their immersion in the text.

In his careful distinction between the impact of prefaces and end-of-chapter notes on
readers’ consumption of the novel, Pringle demonstrates a remarkable sensitivity to the
dynamics of paratextual reading. So far, this project has shown how Romantic writers
used paratext to intervene in and to regulate reader attitudes and practices during the

⁵ Pringle alludes to these publications in the letter of 23 October. Ibid., 12, 13.
ongoing act of reading. In chapter 1, for instance, we saw how Maria Edgeworth used foot- and endnotes as a pedagogical tool to cultivate her audience’s capacity for attention and productive intellectual labour. In chapter 2, I argued that Romantic Orientalist annotators like Samuel Henley and Robert Southey relied on similar strategies to disrupt – and, in Southey’s case, to ironize and critique – bookish desires that were becoming legible as queer and “perverse.” Taking its cue from Pringle’s difficulty remaining “enchant[ed]” “even in a 3d or 4th perusal” of Scott’s newly-annotated novels, this chapter suggests that the Magnum Opus leveraged its Romantic audience’s familiarity with the protocols of paratextual reading in an effort to stoke readers’ desires to revisit – and repurchase – the Waverley novels. To illustrate how Scott’s new paratexts worked to revitalize even his most established narratives, my analysis will focus on his Magnum revisions to one of his most popular and widely adapted novels, *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818, 1830). As we shall see, by inviting readers to synthesize new historical and contextual information with fictional plots and characters remembered from their previous encounters with his novels, Scott’s Magnum additions to this novel model an alternative method of rereading to the simple re-“[e]nchantment” that Pringle pursues. Instead of casting the same old spells, in other words, Scott’s new preface and notes to the novel invite readers to engage with the anecdotal “prototypes” on which many of his best-beloved fictions were based. In so doing, however, Scott does not devise a new strategy of rereading so much as he sets his proprietary seal upon a practice that his own readers had already pursued for over a decade. To motivate a second reading of the novel, Scott’s Magnum preface invites its audience to compare his characterization of Jeanie Deans, *The Heart of Midlothian*’s central character, with a series of anecdotes from the
life of Helen Walker, her historical “prototype.” Although this prefatory gesture might seem to reopen the text to readerly research, speculation, and further embellishment, Scott’s end-of-chapter notes to the same novel showcase his anecdotal source materials to different ends. Interrupting the text to provide regular reminders of the ephemerality of oral history and local lore, these notes aim to limit the novel’s anecdotal archive to only those sources authorized by Scott himself. In the process, I argue, Scott seeks to transfer epistemological authority from his anecdotal source materials to the hybrid form of his historical romance, and to shore up the novel’s claims to historical representativeness even as the events it describes grew ever further removed from future generations of Waverley readers. While the form of Scott’s Magnum Opus edition indicates his late-Romantic readers’ preexisting familiarity with paratextual reading strategies, then, it also deploys these strategies in an effort to reclaim the role of true historian for the Author of Waverley himself.

By calling attention to the “prototypical” reading practices modeled by the more antiquarian-minded members of Scott’s reading public, this chapter provides a counterpoint to influential critical and cultural narratives surrounding the popularity of the Waverley novels. Prominent Romantic readers of Scott, such as Coleridge and Byron, shared Pringle’s conviction that the soothing ritual of “[re-e]nchantment” was the end goal of rereading. In a letter to Thomas Allsop, for example, Coleridge claimed to “have read the far greater part of Scott’s novels twice, and several three times over, with undiminished pleasure.”6 Byron, too, took pleasure in habitually rereading the *Waverley*

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novels, turning to them as a balm for his homesickness while living abroad on the Continent. In an 1822 letter to Scott, for instance, he admitted that “to me those novels have so much of ‘Auld Lang Syne’ … that I never move without them, and when I moved from Ravenna to Pisa the other day, and sent on my library before, they were the only books that I kept by me, although I already have them by heart.” These reflections on readerly devotion emphasize the delights of repetition at the expense of (re)interpretation: according to both poets, one does not reread old novels to have new thoughts about them, but to reactivate and to re-inhabit familiar pleasures. Coleridge and Byron made these claims nearly a decade before the Magnum’s publication (1829-33), however, and so they can paint only a partial picture of how readers engaged with Scott’s novels in the long nineteenth century. From 1829 until the copyright expired in the 1870s, all new editions of the novels also included the notes and prefaces Scott wrote for the Magnum edition. As Scott’s final, authorized edition of his own work, then, the Magnum established the material and cultural conditions under which British and global

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8 Annika Bautz notes that “until the Magnum copyright expired” in the early 1870s, “[n]o publishers except the copyright holders [brought] out Scott editions.” Even after the copyrights on the first editions of the novels began to expire in 1856, making it technically possible for an aspiring publisher to reprint new novels based on first-edition copy texts, almost no-one bothered to do so: “Scott’s novels [were] marketed as a collected entity only.” The Reception of Jane Austen and Walter Scott: A Comparative Longitudinal Study (London: Continuum Books, 2007), 87.
audiences would encounter the Waverley novels for the next hundred years. To fill in the rest of the picture sketched by Coleridge and Byron’s fond recollections, then, we must consider how and why the Magnum paratexts sought to reshape the novels’ existing reading relations.

Understanding why Scott chose to republish the novels is relatively simple. At bottom, he needed the money, and writing a suite of new paratexts helped to differentiate the Magnum Opus from the first editions of the novels enough to establish a new market. Archibald Constable, Scott’s first publisher, had proposed an annotated master edition of the Waverley novels “in handsome octavo” as early as 1823; however, nothing concrete came of the idea until the financial crisis of 1825-26 left Scott liable for over £130,000 of his and his publishers’ debts. Refusing to declare himself bankrupt, Scott famously set about writing his way back to solvency, churning out at least one new work of fiction or

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9 As Jane Millgate demonstrates in *Scott’s Last Edition*, the Magnum’s publication reframed each individual Waverley novel as components of Walter Scott’s cohesive body of work – a marketing strategy that shaped how readers interacted with his novels (and novels in general) throughout the nineteenth century. Furthermore, as Richard Maxwell notes, the Magnum’s “summa-like aura of scholarly definitiveness and artistic authority” proved an attractive model for later standardized collections of contemporary novels, such as Richard Bentley’s Novelist’s Library – and, seventy-five years later, Henry James’ New York Edition. “The Historiography of Fiction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Fiction in the Romantic Period*, ed. Richard Maxwell and Katie Trumpener (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11.

10 J.H. Alexander, P.D. Garside, and Claire Lamont, “Introduction,” in *Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus: Waverley to A Legend of the Wars of Montrose*, ed. J.H. Alexander, Peter Garside, and Claire Lamont, vol. 25a, *The Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), xix. For the definitive history of the legal and financial maneuverings that made the Magnum’s publication possible, as well as an analysis of Scott’s editorial interventions, see Jane Millgate, *Scott’s Last Edition*. More recently, Matthew Rowlinson has attributed Scott’s thematic interest in anonymity and authorial personae to the complex system of debt exchange that imbricated his financial interest with his publishers’. Scott’s struggle to know when he had been paid or when he had effectively cleared his debts, Rowlinson argues, explains why “the Waverley novels […] com[e] hedged about with disguises and proxies in the form of prefaces, frames, and apparent narrative dead ends”, making it “difficult to specify where they begin and end.” *Real Money and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 61.
history every year between 1826 and 1832. In 1827, after some prodding from his savvy new business partner Robert Cadell, Scott began to revise and annotate his novels for the Magnum Opus – which Cadell, hoping for a “speedy return of Capital,” had reimagined as a cheaper octodecimo edition, printed from stereotyped plates and bound in red cloth.\textsuperscript{11} From 1827 until 1832, then, Scott laboured continuously to refashion his novels for the new edition, “turning capes and cuffs for Waverley” with rare interruptions until his death in 1832.\textsuperscript{12} Cadell released a new Magnum volume (amounting to about half a novel) almost every month between mid-1829 and 1833, totaling fifty volumes in the end. Within this short period, the Magnum Opus met with “sensational” success, raking in enough profit to repay the last of Ballantyne and Co.’s lingering debts within a year of Scott’s death.\textsuperscript{13}

While the small size and low cost of individual Magnum volumes was intended to make the novels available for the first time to readers who could not have afforded them in their original triple-decker format, Scott’s new notes and prefaces also worked to add value to the novels, incentivizing rereading as well as repurchase. Scott acknowledges the latter motive in a journal entry of 1827, asserting that “I alone can by Notes and the like give these works a new value and in fact make a new edition.”\textsuperscript{14} Collapsing editorial and commercial motives into a single word, “value,” he presents his authorial illustrations as the hook that might convince even longstanding readers to buy — and to read — the novels.

\textsuperscript{12} Walter Scott, “[Letter to John Richardson of 27 August 1829],” quoted in Alexander, Garside, and Lamont, “Introduction,” xi.
\textsuperscript{13} Maxwell, “The Historiography of Fiction,” 11.
\textsuperscript{14} Walter Scott, “[Journal entry for 30 November 1827],” quoted in Alexander, Garside, and Lamont, “Introduction,” xviii.
again in a new format. Indeed, even readers who already owned earlier editions of the novels or were otherwise uninterested in purchasing the Magnum volumes could be counted on to be sufficiently interested in Scott’s paratextual additions to purchase them separately. Shortly after the release of the fiftieth and final volume of the Magnum, Cadell reprinted all of the new material Scott had written for the edition as *The Introductions, and Notes and Illustrations, to the Novels, Tales, and Romances of the Author of Waverley*, a three-volume set marketed independently from the complete Magnum edition.

For the notes and prefaces to command the “handsome sum” that Cadell projected, however, the details they recorded had to remain proprietary. Constable had suggested as much in 1823, when he first proposed the edition in a letter to Scott. Since the popularity of the novels practically guaranteed that competitors would make “attempts at illustrations and notes of all sorts, … full of absurdities and blunders,” Constable argued, it was all the more important that the “Author” step in to provide “genuine illustration[s]” of the novels, delineating the origins of their “Characters Incidents and descriptions … in what may be termed reality” or in “sources but little known.”

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15 As Richard Maxwell notes, in the late eighteenth century, the concept of verbal “illustration” – understood as a synonym for “the action of making something clear, typically by … [using] one text to shed light on another” in historical or antiquarian writing – was gradually supplanted by pictorial illustration, in which “a picture [is] used as an example, substantiating a text roughly the same way that notes do.” For Maxwell, Scott’s Magnum Opus, which illustrates the Waverley novels through a combination of authorial annotations and visual illustrations, “occupies a preliminary place in this story.” “Walter Scott, Historical Fiction, and the Genesis of the Victorian Illustrated Book,” in *The Victorian Illustrated Book*, ed. Richard Maxwell (Richmond: The University Press of Virginia, 2002), 1, 28.

16 Walter Scott, *The Introductions, and Notes and Illustrations, to the Novels, Tales, and Romances of the Author of Waverley*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: R. Cadell, 1833).


become to collected editions and directors’ cuts, Constable’s assumption that the Author of Waverley would also be the novels’ natural annotator might not surprise us. Who, after all, would know more about the process by which Scott fashioned his raw materials into fully-fledged fictions than Scott himself? However, when he claims that authorial annotation is the only “acceptable” form of “illustration,” Constable makes a more charged claim than we might initially realize. By 1823, readers like Thomas Pringle had been publishing unauthorized accounts of Scott’s fictional “prototypes” for years, debating the origins of the novels’ “Characters Incidents and descriptions” in periodicals both local and national since as early as 1818. This chapter puts Scott’s officially sanctioned notes and prefaces in conversation with these parallel readerly efforts to gloss the Waverley novels, demonstrating that Scott’s Magnum Opus paratexts take control of a practice his readers had already been engaged in for over a decade.

How, then, does Scott theorize his own rereading of the Waverley novels in the Magnum edition, and how does he distinguish his own illustrative practices from those pursued by his readers? By comparing the Magnum Opus to one of its nearest successors, Henry James’s New York edition of his collected novels (1907-1909), I suggest, we can illuminate the extent to which Scott’s vision of rereading in the age of the collected edition seeks to rebrand his audience’s strategies of rereading as uniquely authorial

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19 Scott naturalizes the authorial privilege of annotation in similar terms in his “Advertisement” for the Magnum Opus. Having regained “a sort of parental control over these Works” in revealing his authorship, “he is naturally induced to give them to the press in a corrected, and, he hopes, an improved form.” _Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus: Waverley to A Legend of the Wars of Montrose_, ed. J.H. Alexander, Peter Garside, and Claire Lamont (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 6.
ones.\textsuperscript{20} In his prefaces to the New York edition, James theorizes rereading as a process of recording what the author’s “further ‘experience’ has revealed to him about the meaning of his original writing.”\textsuperscript{21} In the time between the novels’ original composition and the subsequent moment of retrospective analysis, James notes, he had amassed an “immense array” of new “terms, perceptual and expressional,” to interpret the inner workings of each text; the New York prefaces, then, seek to bring this new interpretative language to bear on the “standing terms” of the original novels.\textsuperscript{22} Scott, too, hoped that his new Magnum paratexts would reveal what was only implicit in the original texts. However, while James makes this revelation contingent upon the “growth” of his own aesthetic vocabulary – which arises spontaneously, like so many “alert winged creatures” (110), out of the “standing terms” of the published novels as he rereads them – Scott describes his collected edition as an act of exposure, rather than exegesis. In the final paragraphs of his “General Preface” to the new edition, for example, he wonders, with characteristic self-deprecation, “whether the public (like a child to whom a watch is shown) will, after having been satiated with looking at the outside, acquire some new interest in the object when it is opened and the internal machinery displayed to them.”\textsuperscript{23} Rather than reinterpreting the novels from the vantage point of greater wisdom and experience, in other words, the Magnum notes aim to pry the cover off the text as only an author could, revealing its source materials whirring away undisturbed within.

\textsuperscript{22} Henry James, \textit{The Golden Bowl}, quoted in McGann, “Revision, Rewriting, Rereading,” 110.
\textsuperscript{23} Walter Scott, \textit{Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus: Waverley to A Legend of the Wars of Montrose}, 21.
Furthermore, unlike James’s account of rereading as an ongoing, even multigenerational process, wherein the discovery of new terms within “standing” ones implies the existence of further new terms yet to be discovered, Scott envisions the Magnum as a monumental act of rereading – as if, in bearing witness to his original intentions in adapting his source materials, he could fix the meanings of his novels in the public mind once and for all.24 Much like his public avowal of his authorship at a fundraising dinner in 1827, Scott’s dramatic revelation of “the nature of my materials, and the use I have made of them” could only happen once. Indeed, his desire “rather to exceed in the portion of new and explanatory matter which is added to this edition” than to give readers reason to complain that he had left too much unsaid practically ensured that no further “explanatory matter” would be necessary or forthcoming.25 Much of his reasoning here was practical in nature: Scott laboured over the Magnum from 1825 until his death in 1832, and even in 1827, as he wrote in his “General Preface” to the edition, he did not “think it probable that [he

24 As McGann notes, in practice, the New York edition ultimately acquired a similarly monumental authority: if James managed to sustain a dialectical, evolving relation to his texts while he was rereading and revising, the 1909 publication of his magisterial edition fixed his “newly fledged ‘alert winged creatures’” as the “standing terms” bequeathed unto future generations of readers and editors. McGann, “Revision, Rewriting, Rereading,” 110. This is not to suggest, however, that either Scott or James desired to determine (or succeeded in determining) the content of future readings of their own work. As Ann Rigney has argued, texts are inevitably more “portable” than traditional monuments with fixed locations, “and hence they may be recycled among various groups of readers living in different parts of the globe and at different historical moments,” “carried over into new situations” as readers see fit to use them. “Portable Monuments: Literature, Cultural Memory, and the Case of Jeanie Deans,” Poetics Today 25, no. 2 (2004): 383.

25 Scott, “General Preface to the Waverley Novels,” 21. Publishers certainly tried to replicate this revelatory gesture as a marketing strategy, however. Later in the century, for instance, A. & C. Black returned to the interleaved volumes Scott used to draft his manuscript additions, identified “several annotations of considerable interest” that hadn’t made the cut for the Magnum edition, and tried to leverage this newly discovered material to extend their claim to the novels’ copyright. The Centenary edition was published in 1870-71, but the unpublished notes were not deemed sufficiently original to preserve their claim. Alexander, Garside, and Lamont, “Introduction,” Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus, xli.
should] again revise or even read these tales” once he was finished (30-31). Implicit in that practicality, though, is the assumption that Scott’s raw “materials” – rather than, say, his critical remarks on the texts themselves – would be the most fitting capstone to secure his literary achievement for future novel-readers. In this final, definitive act of exposure, in other words, Scott stakes his legacy as author on the “use [he has] made” of his sources – and encourages the reading public to do the same.

How, then, does the “internal machinery” of Scott’s novels function once he pries open their covers, and what kinds of “new interest” might a glimpse of that machinery make available to his rereaders? Taking the Magnum edition of The Heart of Midlothian (1830) as its case study, this chapter will show how Scott’s paratextual additions use the literary and historiographical form of the anecdote to reopen an established, much-beloved narrative to the readerly experience of novelty and surprise. As we shall see, by linking particular fictional characters and events from the text to their anecdotal “prototypes,” the novel’s Magnum preface and notes capitalize upon the anecdote’s emerging role as a narrative form that expresses the dynamism of historical contingency. Prompted, in part, by what James Chandler calls an “effort to find forms of representation for a new sense of culture” as historically situated and therefore subject to change, the “literary anecdote [rose] quickly in popularity and begins to appear all over the culture of early British

Further, the anecdote’s longstanding association with “things yet unpublished” also made it an ideal vessel for things unprinted – for snippets of conversation, gossip, local tradition, and other evanescent oral forms transmitted without recourse to print. In a nostalgic effort to preserve vanishing forms of social life for posterity, the antiquarians and ballad collectors of the late eighteenth century turned to anecdote to try to capture some of the sociability and situatedness of speech in writing. The presence of anecdote, then, both indexed and assuaged Romantic-period anxieties about the authenticity of print as a mode of cultural transmission. Similarly, as we shall see in sections three and four of this chapter, the Magnum’s efforts to return the Waverley novels to their anecdotal sources work to legitimize Scott’s printed representations of collective national pasts that had vanished beyond the reach of memory and oral history.

The horological metaphor at the end of the “General Preface” to the Magnum edition reveals Scott’s close attention to the Romantic rise of anecdotal historiography. In comparing the anecdotal and archival sources of the Waverley novels to the inner workings of a watch, Scott echoes Isaac D’Israeli’s defense, in his *Dissertation on Anecdotes* (1793), of the particularity and detail of anecdote as an antidote to the more

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27 James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, 166, 283. As April London has recently suggested, while the spike in collections of biographical anecdotes represented the most visible manifestation of the genre’s popularity, the anecdote also found its way into history, geography, antiquarianism, music, painting, the law, sporting culture, and even the novel. “Austen’s Anecdotal Inheritance” (Paper presented to the Toronto Eighteenth-Century Group, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, 9 February 2015).

28 Scott registers the cultural power of anecdote with some trepidation in the first lines of the “Ashestiel manuscript,” his fragmentary memoir begun in 1808: “The present age has discovered a desire, or perhaps a rage, for literary anecdote and private history, that may well be permitted to alarm one who has engaged to a certain degree the attention of the public.” Scott, quoted in J.G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.* (Edinburgh: R. Cadell, 1845), 1.
sweeping scope of traditional narrative history. “Human nature,” D’Israeli had argued, “is not to be understood by looking on its superficies, but by dwelling on its minute springs and little wheels.” To historicize Scott’s exposure of the “minute springs and little wheels” of his source materials, it is important to consider the broader cultural currency of the anecdote at the moment of the Magnum’s composition, as James Chandler has done. In locating the representative anecdote at the heart of Romantic historical consciousness, Chandler makes a powerful argument for the historiographical significance of the anecdote’s ephemeral form. However, to appreciate how Scott’s Magnum notes use the anecdote to promote paratextual rereading, we must also situate the Romantic anecdote within a history of reading, rather than that of historicism more generally. To begin such a history, I suggest, we must first recognize the centrality of reading relations to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century discussions of the anecdote. Second, we must consider the undertheorized role of the anecdote collection in these discussions and defenses of the form’s broader cultural significance.

The anecdote’s unusual ability to invoke a sense of narrative totality entirely disproportionate to its formal brevity prompted the form’s detractors and defenders alike

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30 Ann Rigney offers a cogent definition of the concept of “Romantic historicism” in her introduction to *Imperfect Histories*. Romantic historicism, she suggests, refers to “the historical culture” of “the closing decades of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth,” as well as the “convergence of influences by which it was characterized: a radicalized awareness of the alterity of the past and the historicity of experience [that] picked up on the Enlightenment interest in culture and eighteenth-century antiquarianism and fed into emergent nationalism with its ‘identity politics’ and interest in folk-culture.” *Imperfect Histories* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 8.
to theorize its reading relations in considerable detail. For instance, defending the genre from the *British Critic*’s charge that collections of anecdotes glut and enervate the “appetite for reading,” encouraging the idle “minds accustomed to them [to] reject severer diet,” D’Israeli emphasizes anecdote’s power to *stimulate* the reading mind.32 “[I]n an ingenious observer,” he remarks, anecdotes “produce those leading thoughts which throw the mind into an agreeable train of thinking. A skilful [sic] writer of anecdotes … throws unperceivably seeds, and we see those flowers start up, which we believe to be of our own creation” (30-31). Furthermore, as D’Israeli’s insistent use of the plural in passages like these should remind us, anecdotes are social creatures. Their unique power to provoke creative thought inheres in their “ski[l]ful” collection and arrangement, and depends upon their location in a relevant constellation of related anecdotes. Although the form is often treated as a “little unconnected story that is heard, that pleases, and is forgotten” (3), D’Israeli argues, the anecdote’s meaning is not only singular; it is also relational and cumulative. When “animated by judicious reflections,” he suggests, the “relations in anecdotes,” although they might “not [be] immediately perceived” by a casual onlooker, reveal themselves (74): “like the concord of notes, one depends on the other, and the whole forms a perfect harmony” (3). This musical metaphor locates meaning in the spaces between anecdotes within a collection. In anecdotal as in musical composition, it is the arrangement of the notes, as much as the tonal quality of individual notes themselves, that makes a particular work “harmon[ious].”

In his attention to the significance of anecdotes in relationship, D’Israeli anticipates one

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of the most influential commentaries on the form in our own time, Joel Fineman’s “History of the Anecdote.” Fineman attributes the anecdote’s unique historiographical power to its dialectical relationship to more linear forms of narrative, rather than to its collaboration with other anecdotes. However, both he and D’Israeli emphasize the capacity of the anecdote’s formal compression to disrupt and transform the reading relations fostered by more linear forms of narrative. To build a bridge between these two theories of anecdote, I will discuss “The History of the Anecdote” in some detail before proceeding. In this piece, Fineman seeks to explain how the anecdote, defined as a “narration of a singular event” (56), has acquired its privileged epistemological status as the “literary form or genre that uniquely refers to the real” (56) – a referential stability that the Magnum paratexts trade upon, I argue, when they reveal the anecdotal sources of Scott’s fictional plots and characters. Unlike “non-literary forms of reference (e.g. direct description, ostention, definition, etc.),” Fineman argues, anecdotal form occupies a refractory, mutually-constitutive relationship to its own “narrative context” (53). In its capacity to narrate a “singular event” in isolation from the sequence of events that have, in retrospect, come to signify its causes and effects, the anecdote “introduces a hole into the teleological, and therefore timeless, narration of beginning, middle, and end” (61). By separating the event from the mechanically retrospective logic of historical sequence, in other words, the anecdote replicates, at the level of form, the operations of chance. In so doing, Fineman claims, “the anecdote is the literary form that uniquely lets history happen” – or, at the very least, “produces the effect of the real, the occurrence of contingency” within the broader framing context of historical narrative (61). Anecdotal

briefly, of course, ensures that “the opening of history that is effected by the anecdote … within the totalizing whole of history” remains similarly brief. As soon as the anecdotal event opens a “hole” in the steady plod of historical sequence, revealing a momentary glimpse of a “reality” that is contingent rather than predetermined, that “hole” is itself “plugged up by a teleological narration” that reasserts the logic of cause and effect, of “beginning, middle, and end” (61). However, any “new narration” summoned up by anecdote itself becomes subject to the possibility that it “will be itself opened up by a further anecdotal operation … and so, so on and so forth” (61). For Fineman, in other words, the “formal play” between event and context is dialectical, iterative, and immensely productive. The “ongoing anecdotal dilation and contraction of the entrance into history” (61), he argues, cuts to the heart of Western historiographic consciousness,“energizing the writing of history from Thucydides to Stephen Greenblatt (52).34

Fineman’s dialectical account of how history “happens” resonates with both Scott’s fictional practice and his politics. As Michael Gamer has shown, Scott’s famously “mediocre,” “insipid” protagonists represent one solution to a similar problem: how can a novelist hope to “let history happen” at the level of plot – or, put differently, how is one to craft an engaging narrative about fictional actors without challenging the established

logic of historical circumstance? Lukács, too, has argued that Scott’s plots follow a similarly dialectical pattern of rupture and resolution, wherein “the violent vicissitudes of class struggle have always finally calmed down into a glorious middle way” traceable to the present. Although Gamer and Lukács do not discuss Scott’s Magnum paratexts as a significant component of his practice, their notes and prefaces, as we shall see, rely on the anecdote to reinsert a sense of dynamism and contingency into established narratives. In order to reactivate reader interest in familiar plots and characters, Scott’s Magnum paratexts capitalize upon the anecdote’s unique formal relationship to what Fineman calls the sense of contingency and the “effect of the real” – a relationship that, as we shall see, proved particularly compelling to Scott’s early readers. By pegging concise, localized annotations to particular narrative details, the Magnum paratexts reintroduce Scott’s source material into the body of the text, reclaiming the privilege of illustration on behalf of the figure of the author. Furthermore, by staging this confrontation between established fictions and originary anecdotes, the Magnum notes insert a brief reminder of the contingencies of history into the settled patterns of beloved narratives, refashioning the reading process as a dialectical movement between the narrative coherence of fiction and...

35 According to Gamer, Scott resolves this problem by yielding the contest to the forces of history: “[a]miable but passive, [Scott’s protagonists] are always acted on, whether by historical events or by the twists and turns of plot, which then produce an inevitable ‘sacrificing [of] the character of the hero’ to the agency of history. This conflation of historical change and novelistic plotting is key in Scott’s analysis: if Waverley’s hero is ‘mediocre,’ it is because Scott’s historical plot and setting demand it.” “Waverley and the Object of (Literary) History,” Modern Language Quarterly 70, no. 4 (2009): 508-9.


37 Indeed, Lukács dismisses Scott’s interest in detail and particularity as merely a means to the larger end of “making concretely clear the historical necessity of a concrete situation”: “[m]easured against this authentic reproduction of the real components of historical necessity, it matters little whether individual details, individual facts are historically correct or not. … Detail for Scott is only a means for achieving the historical faithfulness here described[.]” The Historical Novel, 65.
and the at times illegible, at times unsettling “truths” of history. In this way, Scott’s Magnum Opus constructs its own rereading as both an act of unification and as a space where it might be briefly possible for these two epistemologically incompatible discourses to merge with one another. In adapting existing readerly practices, in other words, Scott authorizes his own paratextual re-mediation of the histories represented in the Waverley novels, securing their claims to historically representative status through much of the long nineteenth century.

3.2 From metafiction to referentiality: Scott’s paratextual strategies

Scott’s paratextual career begins and ends with the referential. When he is writing in his own person, first as a poet and, much later, as the august editor of the Magnum Opus, his notes are voluminous and antiquarian in nature, tracing particular fictional characters and incidents to their sources in history, anecdote, and local superstition. When writing in the guise of the anonymous Author of Waverley, however, Scott trades referential annotation for self-referential play, explicitly interrogating the fundamental distinctions between history and fiction in a string of metafictional prefaces, postscripts, and

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38 Scott’s popular ballad collections and metrical romances came with a full complement of endnotes, some of which also included multiple sub-notes on notes. On their own, for instance, the notes to The Lay of the Last Minstrel (1805) fill more than one-third of the volume’s total pages. See Scott, The Lay of the Last Minstrel: A Poem (Edinburgh: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1805). Furthermore, Scott expanded his notes to the poems with each successive printing, interlarding existing notes with additional details, explanations, and references to primary and secondary sources that he had discovered between editions. By comparison, the first editions of the Waverley novels are relatively unencumbered by referential annotation. Only a few short footnotes, usually glossing unfamiliar Scots terms or explaining unfamiliar customs, grace the bottom of their pages.
While these two strategies may seem to be at odds with one another, they share a fundamental concern with the relationship of Scott’s fiction to its anecdotal and historical sources, as well as an effort to defend his own creative departures from those raw materials. This concern, as we shall see, emerged in response to a series of loosely connected readerly initiatives to illustrate the Waverley novels throughout the first decade or so of their production. To appreciate this relationship, a brief overview of Scott’s first-edition paratexts is in order.

While the prefaces to the first three Waverley novels briefly address the reader in Scott’s capacity as the Author of Waverley, explaining his intentions for each text, his prefaces to most of the novels published after *The Antiquary* (1816) are narrated by a collection of eccentric personae: fictional collectors (Peter Pattieson), editors (Jedediah Cleishbotham) and antiquarians (Laurence Templeton, Dr. Jonas Dryasdust, and Captain Clutterbuck). After Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (1820) announced his newfound interest in plumbing the deep past of British history, however, his fictional antiquarians acquired a new prominence amongst this stable of paratextual personalities. In an epistolary debate sprawling across the prefaces of novels from *The Monastery* (1820) and *The Abbot* (1820) to *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822) and *Peveril of the Peak* (1822), Scott pits the “Author of Waverley”

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39 For the distinction between the “self-referential” footnotes of Scott’s first-edition novels and the “referential” footnotes of the Magnum Opus, which I draw upon throughout this chapter, I am indebted to Elaine Freedgood. However, as Freedgood’s work on “fictional footnotes” concerns itself with the history of the annotated novel, rather than novels and narrative poetry, I have reformulated her periodization of Scott’s career to account for his early career as a poet. See “Fictional Settlements: Footnotes, Metalepsis, the Colonial Effect,” 400-1.

40 For prefaces written in the voices of Pattieson and Cleishbotham, see the novels of the Tales of My Landlord series: *Old Mortality* (1816), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), *The Legend of Montrose* (1819), *Count Robert of Paris* (1832), and *Castle Dangerous* (1832). For Laurence Templeton, see the preface to *Ivanhoe* (1820); for Captain Clutterbuck, see the prefaces to *The Monastery* (1820), *The Abbot* (1820), and *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822); lastly, for Dr. Dryasdust, see the preface to *Peveril of the Peak* (1822).
against this cast of comic pedants. Corresponding with one another through a series of “Introductory Epistles,” they debate the relative merits of novelistic and antiquarian protocols for making use of the fragments of history. As Scott began to probe beyond the reach of living memory for the manners and materials of his novels – turning antiquarian himself, in some ways, as he attempted to access and to represent Britain’s more distant, murky past – he began to legitimize his own work as a historical novelist through its contrast with the “pleasing career of busy idleness” enjoyed by the antiquary.41

Preferring to gather and arrange rather than to invent and compose, Scott’s antiquaries tend to hold a fairly low opinion of the novel as a literary form. As Captain Clutterbuck puts it in his “Introductory Epistle” to The Monastery, he finds “fictitious composition” boring at best (3), and “trashy” fare fit only for “half-bred milliner’s miss[es]” at worst (7). In their introductory “epistles” to the Author of Waverley, Scott’s antiquaries politely yet repeatedly take him to task for what they see as his careless “intermingling of fiction with truth,” and his subordination of “severer and more accurate sources of information” to fictional expediency and the demands of the marketplace.42 In so doing, Clutterbuck and Dryasdust often repeat criticisms of the Waverley novels made publicly by reviewers.

and by real-life antiquarian annotators of Scott’s *oeuvre*. Unlike their non-fictional counterparts, however, Scott’s antiquarians occasionally betray a striking self-consciousness about their own reliance on similar forms of historical embellishment. For example, in his “Introductory Epistle” to *The Monastery*, Captain Clutterbuck laments what he sees as the recent incursions of state-sponsored official history into the antiquary’s traditional domain. Far from preserving valuable traces of the past for future generations, he complains, the “indefatigable research” of the “Deputy Register of Scotland” “into the national records” “is like to destroy my trade, and that of all local antiquaries, by substituting truth instead of legend and romance” (11). Despite the dialogic, occasionally combative structure of these “Introductory Epistles,” in other words, the historical novelist and the antiquary turn out to be similarly interested in the passage of history into “fable,” in the gradual processes by which “the truth of to-day” becomes the “lie” of “to-morrow” (11) – leaving only fragmentary evidence, either

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43 For instance, the Rev. Richard Warner’s *Illustrations Critical, Historical, Biographical, and Miscellaneous, of Novels By the Author of Waverley* (1824) sought to “separat[e] truth from fiction, by presenting to its readers the actual realities of those persons and things” who “the Author of Waverley ... [has] so adorned by his genius, or distorted by his fancy, as to [have] robbed [them] of much of their resemblance to their historical prototypes.” Richard Warner, *Illustrations, Critical, Historical, Biographical, and Miscellaneous, of Novels By the Author of Waverley* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1824), 1:3.

44 As Rosemary Sweet points out, the distinctions between eighteenth-century antiquaries and historians were often assumed to stem from both epistemology and from method: “Antiquaries were widely assumed to be obsessed with minutiae, with the recovery of particular facts and insignificant events; details which could have no bearing upon the grand narrative and indeed served to detract from it ... The antiquary was caught up in a morass of facts and points of technical proof, whereas the gentleman [historian] aspired to the lofty overview, unencumbered by an excess of specialist knowledge or undigested information.” *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 4. However, in the preface to *Reliquiae Trotcosienses*, a satirical catalogue of his Abbotsford library and collections, Scott separates antiquaries from historians on the basis of their accrued literary authority, rather than their distinct relationships to the “truth” of historical experience. “[A]n antiquary,” he argues, “is the owner of a small trade in literature ridiculed by those who occupy shops in the same trade upon a more grand and liberal scale.” *Reliquiae Trotcosienses: Or, The Gabions of the Late Jonathan Oldbuck, Esq. of Monkbarns*, ed. Gerard Carruthers and Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press and the Abbotsford Library Trust, 2004), 24.
material or textual, in its wake. As it turns out, the Author of Waverley and his bookish interlocutors are closer allies than the gentle satire of the prefaces would initially suggest. Left with only the fragmentary ruins of an otherwise inaccessible past, Scott implies, the antiquary and the historical novelist alike rely on the resources of fiction, “legend,” and “romance” to invest meaning, rather than simply to reveal it, in the stubbornly material traces of history that persist in the present.

Because Scott rarely wrote substantive footnotes in the voices of his fictional personae, though, the relationship between antiquarian labour and fictional composition remains implicit and largely confined to the prefaces of the novels’ first editions. When Scott does draw attention to the connection in his first-edition footnotes, he parodies it. The supplementary information these notes offer tends to disperse the historiographical authority usually implicit in the footnote form. For instance, when Jedediah Cleishbotham interrupts Peter Pattieson’s introduction to *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818) to reveal that a “good-humoured visitor” Pattieson mentions in passing was actually “His Honour Gilbert Goslinn of Gandercleugh,” his efforts “to be precise in matters of importance” seem misguided and parochial at best.\(^{45}\) Similarly, a later interruption, confirming (“by dint of assiduous research”) that the “honest clown” who delivered Reuben Butler’s message to David Deans was actually “Saunders Broadfoot” (270), a local buttermilk salesman who lived and died nearly a hundred years before the novel was published, mocks the antiquary’s indiscriminate enthusiasm for the obscure details of local history. While admitting that “assiduous research” might be enough to retrieve the

names of certain characters’ real-life counterparts from the detritus of local history, Scott’s sardonic notes also question the value of such painstaking editorial labour.

Although it is possible to read these notes as a broad satire on antiquarian myopia, I wish to suggest that Scott’s irony may also have a more specific target in view. In his pompous attempts to “certiorate” the identities of characters in Pattieson’s narrative (270), Cleishbotham parodies an approach to rereading Scott’s novels that emerged in the eighteen-teens and twenties – namely, the ongoing effort by Waverley enthusiasts to publish descriptions of the real-life “originals” of striking characters, events, and places described in Scott’s fiction. Unlike earlier efforts to generate “Further Adventures” for beloved eighteenth-century characters like Gulliver and Robinson Crusoe, these “illustrations” claim to reveal the factual architecture of Scott’s immensely popular novels. While the eighteenth-century readers-turned-authors of fictional sequels seek to extend the adventures of beloved characters, the Waverley illustrators of the early nineteenth century appeal to anecdote, tradition, and antiquarian history in an effort to deepen their understanding of existing characters as Scott has written them. By the time Scott wrote The Heart of Midlothian, these short essays documenting possible real-life “prototypes” for Waverley characters and locations had already become a regular feature in periodicals and literary miscellanies. In the words of one admirer writing in 1818, “[a] passion seems at present to prevail pretty generally, for bringing forward to view the ground-work, in actual history, of those professedly fictitious narratives with which an

unknown and most self-denied author has lately entertained the public.” Occasionally, these periodicals even played host to minor controversies amongst readers. As quickly as one prototype could be identified in print, readers would write in to suggest alternate candidates for even “nearer,” more authentic originals.

While the first Waverley illustrations appeared in literary periodicals like Blackwood’s and Constable’s Edinburgh Magazine, enthusiasm for the “actual history” behind the novels ran high enough in the early 1820s to encourage several of Scott’s readers to turn authors themselves, publishing freestanding collections such as Robert Chambers’ *Illustrations of the Author of Waverley: Being Notices and Anecdotes of Real Characters, Scenes, and Incidents Supposed to be Described in his Works* (1822) and Rev. Richard Warner’s three-volume *Illustrations, Critical, Historical, Biographical, and Miscellaneous, of Novels by the Author of Waverley* (1824). Loosely organized by title, these illustration books identify anecdotal “originals” for the novels’ most striking

47 “Some Account of Andrew Gemmels, A Scottish Beggar, Supposed to be the Original of Edie Ochiltree,” The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany (September 1 1817): 103.
48 See, for example, the dispute in the pages of the Edinburgh Magazine over which Scottish castle might have inspired Tully-Veolan, the Baron Bradwardine’s ancestral home in Waverley (1814). One writer, identifying himself only as “E.”, submitted a “Border Sketch” describing Traquair House’s “wonderful resemblance … to the semi-gothic bear-guarded mansion of Tully-Veolan, as described by the author of Waverley.” However, only a month later, a reader (“D.”) wrote in the next month to make the case for Murthly Castle instead, arguing that its “local situation … just below the entrance into the Highlands” made it a more suitable candidate to have been “the Study of Tully-Veolan” than Traquair-House. E., “Border Sketches,” The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany (August 1 1817): 43; D., “Murthly Castle, The Supposed Original of Tully-Veolan,” The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany (October 1 1817): 230. Other Waverley “originals” documented in periodical literature included Andrew Gemmels, the supposed original of Edie Ochiltree, The Antiquary’s blue-coated beggar, and Bowed Davie, presented as the “probable prototype and original” of the Black Dwarf in an early number of Blackwood’s. “Some Account of ‘Bowed Davie,’ the Supposed Original of the ‘Black Dwarf,’” Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine (June 1817): 235-6.
“characters, incidents, allusions, descriptions, &c. connected with real existences, and historical notices” (Warner 5-6), drawing attention to significant points of departure between Scott’s fictional version and its real-life “prototype” where they arise. In gathering multiple anecdotal “originals” together and publishing them as a collection, these books confer a greater sense of permanence on what had so far remained relatively ephemeral periodical pieces. Indeed, even after the Magnum’s publication promised to saturate the market on “illustrations and notes of all sorts,” a small but steady market for extratextual commentaries on the anecdotal and archival sources of the Waverley novels persisted into the early decades of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{50} As the admirer cited above suggests, however, these diligent efforts to “brin[g] forward … the ground-work” of Scott’s novels were sustained in large part by their author’s stubborn anonymity. Once the Magnum Opus laid claim to the final word on Scott’s sources in 1829, Waverley illustrators tended to recycle its sanctioned narratives of origin and inspiration, rather than continuing to research, debate, and publish their own as they had throughout the 1820s.\textsuperscript{51}

In their ironic dismissal of “prototypical” rereadings of the Waverley novels, then,


\textsuperscript{51} Paul Westover reads this search for “originals” as an effort to produce an “indirect literary biography” of the novels’ elusive and anonymous author: “through the scholarly illumination of the novels’ contexts and sources,” prototype-seekers “will follow in the tracks of the Author of Waverley, seeing places he has seen, inhabiting places he has visited, and conversing with people he has known, as if the process will lend the ghostly author a body.” \textit{Necromanticism: Traveling to Meet the Dead, 1750-1860} (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 150.
Cleishbotham’s notes to *The Heart of Midlothian* foreshadow a sweeping transfer of editorial privilege from readers to author – a shift first announced in Scott’s autobiographical preface to the *Chronicles of the Canongate* (1827) and eventually consolidated by the commercial success of the Magnum Opus. For the most part, the success of Scott’s last edition has obscured the lively debate over the Waverley “originals” that occurred in the early 1820s, as well as Scott’s concerted effort to distinguish his own annotations from readers’ ongoing and unauthorized efforts to illustrate the novels themselves. In linking the characters, places, and events of the Waverley novels to their “prototypes” in “actual history,” in other words, Scott annexes for the author a venture that his enterprising readers had already begun. By tracing the Magnum’s roots back to a moment when the privilege of “illustration” was not yet assumed to be the exclusive property of the author, then, this section shows how that the edition’s new paratexts worked to intervene in and to reshape existing practices of rereading for the use of future generations of readers.

While Scott’s annotators usually adopted an attitude of cheerful supplementarity towards their “great prototype,” upholding a clear distinction between Scott’s “originality, manifestation, or method” and their own humble acts of “gather[ing]” (Forsyth xii), their rereadings seek to restore the novels’ mixture of fact and fiction to a position of greater epistemological stability. The genre as a whole rests on two interlocking assumptions. First, assuming an absolute distinction between historical “truth” and fictional embellishment, the illustration books attempt to separate the historical novel into its constituent parts. In his introduction to the *Illustrations*, for example, Rev. Warner promises to “presen[t] to [his] readers the actual realities of those persons and things,
which have furnished the Author of Waverley with the leading characters and events of his different Novels; but which have been so adorned by his genius, or distorted by his fancy, as to be robbed of much of their resemblance to their historical prototypes.”

Second, having separated Scott’s fictional “adorn[ment]s” from history’s “actual realities,” the illustrative anecdote assumes the epistemological superiority of “realities” – however insubstantial – to fictional representations. For instance, glossing *The Heart of Midlothian*, Chambers dismisses Scott’s dramatic compression of the historical timeline of the Porteous Riots from five days into one as “a flagrant aberration from the truth” – a term that, for Chambers, denotes the “truth” of historical experience (135). Presented with the “plain statement of the facts” of the uprising, Chambers suggests, “[n]ot even the most romantic reader of novels … would deceive himself with so incredible an absurdity; but would think with us that, according to the natural course of things, it would take *all the time it did take* (five days), before so well-laid and eventually so successful a scheme could be projected, organized, and accomplished” (136). Comparing Scott’s creations with their “prototypes” in this way serves, for Chambers, as a basis for critique. In suggesting that such an insurrection could be executed in a single day, he pronounces, the novel’s version of events “does not agree either with truth, or, what [is] to [the Author of Waverley] ten times more important, *vraisemblance*” (135).

Although Chambers and Warner both claim to reveal the “real existences” behind the Waverley novels’ fictional characters and events, they use different historiographical methods to construct that sense of “reality.” Chambers, who grew up in the same Border country so well known to Scott, relies upon that region’s oral traditions to illuminate the

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52 Warner, *Illustrations, Critical, Historical, Biographical, and Miscellaneous, of Novels By the Author of Waverley*, 3.
novels, tracing particular characters and incidents to their presumed origins in scraps of anecdote, hearsay, and local tradition. Occasionally, the Illustrations cites excerpts from print histories to supplement this oral material; however, as Chambers’ brother William explains in his Memoir of Robert Chambers (1872), he gleaned most of the anecdotal “information” published in the Illustrations of the Author of Waverley from conversations with “the south-country people who came about us – one of them a retired parish minister given to gossip.”

Seeking the novels’ origins in oral testimony required Chambers to limit his focus to the novels published before 1820, the year that Scott began, with Ivanhoe, to probe “beyond the memory of a culture whose oral recollection seldom went back beyond the later seventeenth century” for the materials of his fiction.\footnote{William Chambers, Memoir of Robert Chambers, With Autobiographic Reminiscences of William Chambers (Edinburgh: W. &. R. Chambers, 1872), 169.} While Chambers’ approach worked well enough for novels set in the long eighteenth century (like Waverley, The Heart of Midlothian, or even, at a stretch, Old Mortality), in other words, living memory was no longer a reliable resource when it came to annotating novels set several centuries before.

To help readers make sense of Scott’s later, more historically removed novels – Ivanhoe, Quentin Durward, and Kenilworth, for instance – Rev. Warner’s Illustrations, Critical, Historical, Biographical, and Miscellaneous turns to the authority of print history, rather than oral testimony. “[B]eing of a curious and somewhat recondite nature,” Warner argues, the novels of the 1820s required much more extensive illustration before they could hope to be legible to the average modern reader (6). To empower these hapless readers to “track [Scott] … through the snow of the ancients” (6), then, Warner seeks to

\footnote{Alexander, Garside, and Lamont, “Introduction,” Ivii.}
replicate the “deep research into English antiquarianism” that informs each novel (38), assembling passages from existing print histories into a series of miscellaneous essays detailing each novel’s most relevant contexts. Following Scott “six hundred years back, into the obscure ages of romance and chivalry” (36), for instance, Warner’s essay on *Ivanhoe* stitches together relevant passages from texts as various as Blackstone’s legal commentaries, Richard Hurd’s *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, and Holinshed’s *Chronicles* into a narrative “Illustration” of the Norman conquest.

In their faith in “plain … facts” (Chambers 136), *Waverley* illustrators like Chambers and Warner sometimes seem to have missed the point of Scott’s strategic blend of fact and fiction, which repeatedly prioritizes the production of sympathy above strict adherence to the recorded facts in its representation of the past.55 However, in their efforts to return the constituent parts of the Waverley novels to their origins in “actual realities,” I suggest, these illustrators and anecdote-collections take a meaningful position within an ongoing debate over the ideal ratio of empirical description to instructive exempla in realist fiction. Calling attention to the ongoing productivity of this tension throughout the long history of realist narrative, Richard Maxwell traces its origins to the careful distinction between “la vraisemblance” and “le vrai” drawn in seventeenth-century French historical nouvelles: “[t]he term ‘la vraisemblance’ was intended to evoke not merely plausibility

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55 Taken together, Scott’s prefaces articulate a theory of the historical novel that sees strict historical accuracy as a barrier to the production of readerly sympathy across historical distance. For instance, in the “Introductory Epistle” to *The Abbot*, the Author of Waverley justifies his excision of supernatural machinery from the novel on the grounds that “we do not feel deep sympathy at this period with what was once the most powerful and animating principle in Europe.” Explaining the nature of this obsolete belief, Scott suggests, would make the characters seem alien to the modern reader; thus, “it is better … that the reader should have to suppose what may easily be inferred, than be obliged to creep through pages of dull explanation.” *The Abbot*, ed. Christopher Johnson, vol. 10, *The Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 3.
by the expectations of everyday life, but a kind of higher appropriateness: an idealization of how life should be, according to a universal standard. Contrastingly, ‘le vrai,’ referring to the truths of history, was often thought inadmissible in dramatic representations – especially when it took a violent, sordid, or awkward form.”

Scott’s annotators adopt a similar language for themselves. For instance, writing in Constable’s *Edinburgh Magazine*, one anecdotalist identifies the drive to annotate Scott’s novels with the longing to make contact with the unwieldy “truth” of history: “Not satisfied with the *vraisemblable* only, which this admirable writer has so well communicated to his fancy details, his readers have begun to look out curiously for the corresponding facts and characters which he must have set before him in their manufacture.”

In their efforts to return Scott’s verisimilar novels to their origins in “actual reality,” then, the annotators articulate a new sense of value for the inadmissible details of historical experience that the novelist’s sense of “higher appropriateness” has required him to excise.

In valuing the raw data points of historical experience as much or more as the abstractions of “the *vraisemblable*,” however, these readers dissent from an emerging critical consensus that saw hewing to the rules of “general probability” as a hallmark of realistic fiction. Scott and his contemporaries often distinguished between historical and fictional strategies of representation based on each genre’s treatment of contingencies – those “accidents” and “chance occurrences” that either “could not have been, or [were]

57 “Some Account of Andrew Gemmels, A Scottish Beggar,” 103.
not, foreseen” by a reasonable observer.\textsuperscript{58} According to this critical discourse, both
fictional romance and the “real” of history deal in the full range of \textit{possible} events, rather
than restricting themselves to the merely probable.\textsuperscript{59} The charge of improbability was
often leveled at the romance narratives of “former times” – which, as Scott famously
argues in his unsigned review of Austen’s \textit{Emma} (1815), compensated for their
confinement to the realm of possibility by “almost always” transgressing the bounds of
probability.\textsuperscript{60} Even as the generic gap between romance and history widened over the
latter half of the eighteenth century, however, history was increasingly assumed to be full
of improbability and accident – albeit accidents less likely to prove convenient or

\textsuperscript{58} “contingency, n.” \textit{OED Online}. September 2014. Oxford University Press.
http://www.oed.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/Entry/40247, accessed November 16,
2014.

\textsuperscript{59} In \textit{The Progress of Romance}, for instance, Clara Reeve defends romance by blurring
the boundaries traditionally held to separate it from history. Not only were “the early Romances …
only taken from prose Histories … so that the same stories have appeared, and are still extant in
both forms,” their strategies of representation resembled one another closely enough to confuse
young or naïve readers: “in the days of Gothic ignorance, these Romances might perhaps, be read
by many young persons as true Histories.” \textit{The Progress of Romance Through Times, Countries,
and Manners; With Remarks on the Good and Bad Effects of It, On Them Respectively; In a
Course of Evening Conversations} (London: W. Keymer, 1785), 57. Anna Laetitia Barbauld
makes a similar claim in her essay “On the Origins and Progress of Novel-Writing” (1810) when
she argues that romance writing sprung “out of the histories of the [Gothic] times, enlarged and
exaggerated into fable.” While Barbauld’s essay presents improbable contingencies as the stuff of
“real life,” she does not explicitly associate them with the writing of history. By contrast with the
unified, considered “whole” of the “well written” novel, Barbauld’s “real life” as “a kind of
chance-medley,” in which “our reasonable expectations are often disappointed; many incidents
occur which are like ‘passages that lead to nothing,’ and characters occasionally turn out quite
different from what our fond expectations have led us to expect.” “On The Origin and Progress of
Novel-Writing,” in \textit{Clarissa; Or, The History of a Young Lady}, vol. 1 of \textit{The British Novelists,
With An Essay, and Prefaces Biographical and Critical, By Mrs. Barbauld} (London: F.C. and J.
Rivington \textit{et al.}, 1810), 7, 52.

\textsuperscript{60} Walter Scott, “Art. IV. Emma: A Novel. By the Author of Sense and Sensibility, Pride and
Prejudice, &c.,” \textit{Quarterly Review} 14, no. 27 (October 1815 and January 1816): 190.
instructive than those found in romance.\textsuperscript{61}

Expanding upon Scott’s account of the “new style” of realist novel in his 1821 review of Austen’s \textit{Persuasion} and \textit{Northanger Abbey}, for instance, Bishop Richard Whately argues that history is bound to detail “what has actually happened, of which many parts may chance to be exceptions to the general rules of probability.” As such, he concludes, history can “consequently illustrate no general principles.”\textsuperscript{62} Plotting the narrative treatment of contingency along a single axis, then, we might imagine a continuum stretching from romance narrative’s instructive coincidences at one pole towards those “violent, sordid, or awkward” accidents common to historical narrative at the other.\textsuperscript{63}

Between these two poles, we find the probabilistic discourse of realistic fiction – or, as Scott’s review of \textit{Emma} would define it, novels of “general experience” (292). These novels, as Whately would go on to suggest,

\begin{quote}
    present us . . . with the general, instead of the particular – the probable instead of the true; . . . by leaving out those accidental irregularities, and exceptions to general rules, which constitute the many improbabilities of real narrative, present us with a clear and \textit{abstracted} view of the general
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{61} Over the course of the eighteenth century, Mark Salber Phillips suggests, history gradually exchanged its traditional didactic function for a more mimetic one. If past generations had looked to historical narrative for heroic exemplars of how to behave in typical historical circumstances, in other words, new forms of historical writing, especially antiquarian histories, bound themselves instead to the empirical description of particulars. See Mark Salber Phillips, \textit{Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 21-24. Furthermore, as Michael Gamer has argued, critics claimed history’s power to convey “informational and empirical” truths rather than moral values by shunting the duty to inculcate normative ethical principles squarely onto the shoulders of romance. “Maria Edgeworth and the Romance of Real Life,” \textit{NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction} 34 (2001): 242.


\textsuperscript{63} Maxwell, \textit{The Historical Novel in Europe}, 12.
rules themselves; and thus concentrate, as it were, into a small compass, the net result of wide experience. (219)

In order to convey the universally applicable “general rules” and principles of the moral world with accuracy, Whately concludes, the truly realistic novelist must refine away all the “irregularities,” “exceptions,” and “improbabilities” that would otherwise clutter her “wide experience” of life.

The Waverley illustrators’ interest in Scott’s “originals,” I suggest, constitutes a meaningful counter-discourse to this set of developing assumptions about realism, one that also informed a strain of the critical response to the Waverley novels. Some critics assumed that the variety of characters and incidents described in the Waverley novels were the direct result of their author’s “wide experience” of life, rather than his artistic ability to “concentrate” that experience “into a small compass” (219). For instance, in a critical sketch of “The Author of the Scotch Novels” in the London Magazine, John Scott ascribes the Author of Waverley’s “universal” “feeling” to “a learning equal to his natural faculties” (17). The only way he could have “acquired [the] technical expertness” he displays in the Waverley novels, Scott enthuses, is through “actual experience” (17):

He seems to have lived every where and with every body; to have fought under Gustavus, and taken several trips with Dirk Hattaraick; – but then the wonder is, when he could have copied in the office under Mr. Pleydell, and serve his apprenticeship to a Glasgow weaver, both of which, it is quite clear, he has done . . . There is nowhere, in his writings, the least
indication visible of the common place book.[]^{64}

In pointed contrast to Francis Jeffrey’s description of Southey’s bookish *Thalaba* as “little else than his common-place book versified,” John Scott’s account of authorship imagines novel-writing as an ongoing labour of gathering lived experience more than as an abstract exercise of the imagination.^{65} By seeking out a wide range of experience, Scott suggests, the author stores up “treasures of appropriate terms and anecdotes” to enrich his or her fiction. However, because these “treasures” are mined from lived experience rather than from books, the labour of Scott’s authorship becomes relatively “[in]visible.” To a certain extent, this assessment was accurate: Scott’s most memorable characters and incidents *were* often rooted in lived experience, albeit not necessarily his own. Long before he revealed his authorship of the Waverley novels, Scott’s antiquarian enthusiasms had made him a hub for local “terms,” “anecdotes,” and traditions, and many of Scott’s Magnum notes acknowledge this debt to his informants, often mentioning specific correspondents by name.^{66} However, when constructing his own authorship, as

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^{66} Many notes, for instance, document his correspondence with Leonard Train, a Galloway antiquary and amateur poet who, at Scott’s request, spent years travelling the countryside gathering local anecdotes to illustrate and inspire his fiction. According to J.G. Lockhart, friendship with Train began at the same time as his career as a novelist. While *Waverley* was in the press, Scott read and enjoyed Train’s *Poems, With Notes Illustrative of Traditions in Galloway and Ayrshire* (1814), and wrote to him to “expres[s] the gratification he had received from several of his metrical pieces, but still more from his notes, and requesting him ... to communicate any matters of that order connected with Galloway which he might not himself think of turning to account; ‘for,’ said Scott, ‘nothing interests me so much as local anecdotes; and, as the applications for charity usually conclude, the smallest donation will be thankfully accepted.’” *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, 303. Train also supplied several stories of gypsy fortune-telling that Scott later used to illustrate *Guy Mannering, Or, The Astrologer* (1815; Magnum published 1829), as well as the anecdotes of Robert Paterson, known to many as “Old Mortality,” that Scott elaborates upon in his Magnum introduction to that novel (1829).
we shall see in the latter two sections of this chapter, Scott is more careful to insist upon
the *distance* between his fictional creations and their anecdotal sources, emphasizing his
narrative craft rather than the faithfulness of his novels’ reproductions of history.

The “referential turn” in Scott’s late-career paratexts, I argue, emerges in part as an effort
to reclaim his own source materials from prototypical rereadings of the Waverley novels.
Although this new phase did not coalesce into a deliberate program until Scott “laid aside
his incognito” and publicly acknowledged his authorship of the *Waverley* novels in 1827,
early impulses in this direction are visible as early as 1817.67 For instance, in his
anonymous review of his own *Tales of My Landlord* series, published in the *Quarterly
Review* in collaboration with William Erskine and William Gifford, Scott tantalizes
readers with several anecdotal accounts of the “originals” of memorable characters and
incidents depicted in the novels.68 However, while the review acknowledges that
incidents like “the mutual protection afforded by Waverley and Talbot” originated in
local tradition and anecdote, Scott is also careful to claim the lion’s share of the credit for
his most striking characters and incidents for himself, rather than attributing it to the
appeal of “real” history: “if any traits have been borrowed from real life, as in the
anecdote which we have quoted respecting Invernahyle, they have been carefully
disguised and blended with such as are purely imaginary” (441). Scott’s “Introduction” to
the *Chronicles of the Canongate* (1827), his first work of fiction published in his own
person, is similarly ambivalent towards his audience’s enthusiasm for the people, places,

68 See Walter Scott, William Gifford, and William Erskine, “[Review:] Art. VIII. Tales of My
Landlord,” review of *Old Mortality*, by Walter Scott, *Quarterly Review* 16 (January 1817): 430-
480.
and traditions that formed the groundwork for his fiction. In this introduction, Scott relays anecdotal sources in one breath while insisting in the next – against his own palpable “amusement” and his readers’ – that “there can be but little amusement in winnowing out the few grains of truth which are contained in this mass of empty fiction” (8).

Despite its coy refusal to legitimize his readers’ pleasure in discovering his source material for themselves, Scott’s “Introduction” to the *Chronicles of the Canongate* represents a watershed moment in the evolution of his authorial self-representation. As the first preface signed by “Walter Scott” of “Abbotsford,” rather than the “Author of Waverley” or one of his many alter egos, the *Chronicles’ “Introduction”* marks a shift in the epistemological status of Scott’s paratexts. Instead of asking us to interrogate the status of the fiction it extends for our consideration, we are encouraged to “believe that this simply-named author – making no allusion to his baronetcy – might actually be intending to tell us the truth.”69 Furthermore, the preface announces a corresponding outward turn – or return, we might say, recalling his early career as poet – in Scott’s annotative regime from the metafictional to the referential. Here, Scott has very little to say about “The Highland Widow,” “The Two Drovers,” or “The Surgeon’s Daughter,” the new stories published as part of this collection. Indeed, as he admits in the preface’s closing paragraphs, the collection “originally commenced with a declaration that it was neither to have introduction nor preface of any kind” (11). Instead, Scott uses his newly

69 J.H. Alexander, P.D. Garside, and Claire Lamont, “Introduction,” in *Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus: Waverley to A Legend of the Wars of Montrose*, xlvi. The editors of the Edinburgh edition make this comment in reference to Scott’s “General Preface” to the Magnum Opus, also signed by “Walter Scott” rather than the “Author of Waverley.” As Scott’s “Introduction” to the *Chronicles of the Canongate* makes a similar move towards the authenticity of plain speaking two years earlier, however, it is appropriate to quote them in this context.
public character as a platform to “acknowledge with gratitude hints of subjects and legends which I have received from various quarters, and have occasionally used as a foundation of my fictitious compositions, or woven up with them in the shape of episodes” (4). Citing anecdotes gleaned from conversations, correspondence, and “old and odd books” (5), he reveals the sources of episodes and characters in novels from *Waverley* (1814) up to *The Legend of Montrose* (1819) and *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819).

Scott’s new emphasis on referentiality in the introduction to the *Chronicles* announced a broader shift in his paratextual practice. Having publicly owned his authorship of the *Waverley* novels, Scott’s post-1827 paratexts abandon the elaborate fictional frames of the novels’ first editions in order to strategically reveal proprietary information about the author and his source materials. While the Magnum notes and prefaces sound an occasional note of wry commentary, as when Scott glosses Jedediah Cleishbotham’s claim to have inherited the trait of historical impartiality from his Quaker ancestors with a lengthy account of his own genealogy as well as an apology for that account’s unwieldy length and detail (“it is full time to conclude, lest the reader should remonstrate that his desire to know the Author of Waverley never included a wish to be acquainted with his whole ancestry” [*Midlothian* 512]), most of them are much more earnest in tone. Like the shorter notes to Scott’s first editions, some of the new notes retain a glossarial function – defining, for example, Scottish military and political jargon used by the characters. For the most part, though, the notes promise to give curious readers direct access to the historical sources for Scott’s fictional inventions, both oral and written, alongside authorial reflection in his own voice upon his composition process. On rare occasions, as
in his Magnum introduction to *The Monastery*, these paratexts rebuke illustrators like Chambers for having attempted to “explai[n]” details that “[could] be only known to another person” and for making “erroneous identifications” in the process – but, for the most part, Scott’s Magnum annotations proceed as if the edition is striking out into new territory, rather than entering into an ongoing dialogue that precedes them.\(^7\)

Broadly speaking, the Magnum succeeded in its effort to reclaim the act of illustration on behalf of the Author of Waverley. Although enthusiasts continued to publish collections of Waverley anecdotes after the edition solidified Scott’s claims upon his source material, they do so with greater deference to his authority. Indeed, to self-identified literary labourers like Robert Forsyth, anonymous author of *The Waverley Anecdotes* (1833), the entire point of displaying the anecdotal “counterparts” of the novelist’s finished “pictures” in their unrefined state was to illustrate “that elasticity of talent which has enabled the author to enter into the very soul, and to speak with the very tone and meaning of every individual actor, whom he has thought proper to introduce,” rather than to document their “accordance with any substantial originals.”\(^7\)

In demonstrating the skill with which “the author has interwoven with his narratives whatever remarkable characters, or incidents or scenes, his keen observation of life may have pointed out to him as proper for this purpose” (xiv), Forsyth seeks to showcase the extent of their author’s skill in fashioning them – and, in so doing, to “ad[d]” “another stone . . . to the cairn, the *mountain cairn*, of his literary honours” (xiii).


\(^7\) Robert Forsyth, *Waverley Anecdotes*, 1:xiv.
In publishing unauthorized accounts of Scott’s anecdotal sources, readers made visible the tension between “le vrai” and “le vraisemblable” within the Waverley novels. This tension continues to structure the Magnum Opus. Indeed, Bishop Whately’s distinction between those novels that fabricate improbable chains of events to enliven realistic characters and those that deploy realistic characterization to animate “a clear and abstracted view of the general rules” of probability raises difficult questions about the purpose of appending paratextual anecdotes to historical fiction in the first place (219). If the novel acquires moral utility by rounding off the corners of “those accidental irregularities, and exceptions to general rules, which constitute the many improbabilities of real narrative,” why smuggle those “irregularities” back into the novel in a preface or a footnote, as Scott does throughout the Magnum Opus? Put differently: what might Scott’s decision to use paratext as a vehicle for these irregularities tell us about how he wanted or expected his audience to reread the Waverley novels? More generally, which strategies of rereading might these paratexts have made available to Scott’s late Romantic readers?

3.3 From incident to character: Scott’s “Introduction to the Heart of Mid-Lothian”

Scott’s prefaces and his notes to the Magnum bring the body of the text into contact with his anecdotal and archival materials in different ways. Unlike his more granular foot- and end-of-chapter notes, which interrupt and elaborate upon the novels at irregular intervals, the length and position of the prefaces make it easier to isolate them from the body of the text, either to read after the rest of the novel has been finished or to ignore entirely. Scott acknowledges as much from the beginning of his career as a novelist, remarking in
Waverley’s “Postscript, That Should Have been a Preface” that readers interested primarily in the issue of the plot “are apt to be guilty of the sin of omission respecting . . . prefaces. 72 In their haste to reach the novel’s conclusion, in other words, many readers flip directly to the back of the book, leaving prefatory material behind along with the rest of the intervening chapters. If Scott presents this sly relocation of what “should have been” Waverley’s preface to the position of “Postscript” as an attempt to ambush readers before they have read the novel, however, the interest of the Magnum prefaces also depends on the reader’s prior familiarity with the text they profess to introduce. In extreme instances, as in the case of the Magnum edition of Rob Roy (1829), the preface offers itself as a salve for the wounds inflicted by the novel’s first edition. Misled by the apparently denotative title of the novel, which seemed to promise a narrative describing the life and exploits of famous highwayman Rob Roy, readers were famously dissatisfied with the novel Scott actually wrote – which focuses almost entirely on the adventures of its English narrator, Frank Osbaldistone, as he travels to the Highlands to collect a debt owed his father.73 In response, Scott’s Magnum introduction filled an entire fourth volume with all the historical detail and anecdotes about Rob Roy the highwayman that readers had been disappointed not to find in the first edition of the novel. The Magnum preface to Rob Roy seeks to supplement the narrative’s lack with the fullness of historical

72 Walter Scott, Waverley, 362-3 (see ch. 1, n.1).
73 In his Magnum Opus introduction to “The Betrothed,” Scott notes that publishers and booksellers prefer a “taking title” (such as Rob Roy) which clearly indicates the subject of the text from the title page, since such a title “often goes far to cover his risk, and sells an edition not unfrequently before the public have well seen it.” Authors, however, “wish that [their] work, when its leaves are first cut open, should at least be fairly judged of. Thus many of the best novelists have been anxious to give their works such titles as render it out of the readers’ power to conjecture their contents, until they should have an opportunity of reading them.” “Introduction to The Betrothed,” in Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus: Waverley to A Legend of the Wars of Montrose, 377.
anecdote, in other words – but to do so without making any substantive alterations to the plot of the novel. In this way, the Magnum text holds out the tantalizing prospect of a rereading capable of synthesizing these two forms of narrative into a single, complete entity. Because Rob Roy’s plot offers so few points of connection with the anecdotes of Rob Roy’s life as a highwayman, however, such a comprehensive rereading remains elusive.

Scott’s Magnum revisions to his next novel, The Heart of Midlothian (1830), offer a more nuanced account of the novel’s relationship to its anecdotal source material than the preface to Rob Roy. The novel, which pairs the story of Jeanie Deans’ trek to London to obtain her sister’s pardon after she is unjustly accused of child-murder with a gripping account of the Porteous riots and their aftermath in 1730s Edinburgh, is notable for its representation of spontaneous collective uprising against unjust civil authority. Beginning with his 1827 preface to The Chronicles of the Canongate, however, Scott gradually reframed The Heart of Midlothian as a dramatization of a series of anecdotes of individual character sent to him by a faithful reader – a centripetal effort reflected, as we shall see in section 3.4, in his relegation of his additional, more contested source material to the novel’s footnotes. As I have mentioned above, Scott’s Magnum revisions to many of his other novels make similar gestures, describing the “real-life” counterparts to particular events and characters. In the centrality of its originary anecdote to Scott’s account of the novel’s composition, however, The Heart of Midlothian is unique among his oeuvre. As a reviewer for Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine observed, Jeanie Deans, the novel’s protagonist, was “the creation which [was] certainly the least indebted to his
inventive faculty of the many that have flowed from his pen.” This unusually close relationship between prototype and fictional character, publicly avowed for the first time in Scott’s 1830 preface to his new edition of the novel, rewards closer examination. As this section will demonstrate, by shifting the focal point of the novel from the thrilling accidents of its plot to the depth of his representation of its central character, Scott’s Magnum preface successfully established the terms on which *The Heart of Midlothian* would be reread by a public already familiar with its catastrophes and conclusions.

In his 1827 preface to the *Chronicles of the Canongate*, Scott had mentioned that Jeanie Deans’ journey on foot from Edinburgh to London had been inspired by a letter from “an unknown correspondent (a lady)” (5). In a single paragraph, he summarizes the broad outlines of the woman’s encounter with the original of “that upright and high-principled female, whom [he had] termed Jeanie Deans” in the novel (5). He does so, though, without mentioning his correspondent, or even naming Deans’ prototype – a woman who, three years later in the Magnum preface to *The Heart of Midlothian*, he would eventually identify as one Helen Walker. Incorporating biographical information about the novel’s sources and composition into his prefatory material in this way marks a new, more strictly referential phase in Scott’s paratextual career, as outlined above. Before we can appreciate how the “Introduction” seeks to open the novel to new strategies of paratextual rereading, however, it is necessary to discuss the very different strategies Scott had employed in the text’s first-edition frames to present the text as a meditation on the relationship between historical fiction and its real-life “prototypes.”

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Scott’s first edition of *The Heart of Midlothian* had prefaced the novel’s eighteenth-century historical narrative with two introductory pieces. First, Jedediah Cleishbotham, the novel’s gleefully worldly fictional editor, mounts a brief defense of the “veracity and authenticity of [his] historical narratives” (10). Then, the novel’s “introductory” chapter offers an account of a fortuitous accident that introduced Peter Pattieson – schoolmaster, chronicler of local history, and Cleishbotham’s landlord – to a party of waggish young lawyers.75 After their carriage is suddenly overturned on the public road outside Gandercleugh, the advocates recover their composure at a nearby inn while engaging Pattieson in a witty back-and-forth on the staid conventionality of the novel form. Dismissing the modern romance as a formulaic assemblage of well-trodden tropes, one of the barristers, Hardie, argues that records of Scottish criminal trials would supply “the inventor of fictitious narratives” with far more original and compelling materials than anything he might come up with while “rack[ing]” his own “brains . . . for means to diversify his tale” (21). Seeking to thrill their readers with unexpected twists, Hardie claims, novelists have lapsed into the sterile repetition of a few stock incidents:

> [they] can hardly hit upon characters or incidents which have not been used again and again, until they are familiar to the eye of the reader, so that the development, *enlevement* [kidnapping], the desperate wound of which the hero never dies, the burning fever from which the heroine is sure to recover, become a mere matter of

75 Cleishbotham’s address to the “Courteous Reader” describes his efforts to protect himself from “cavillers” and other naysayers by being “cautelous” – a word that can mean either “cautious” or “crafty,” depending on context – in “quoting [his] authorities.” Because his defense addresses the periodical debate over *Old Mortality*’s representation of Cameronian enthusiasm rather than broader questions about the relationship between fiction and its historical “materials,” however, this section will focus on Pattieson’s “introductory” chapter, rather than Cleishbotham’s preface. *The Heart of Midlothian*, 10.
course. . . . The end of uncertainty . . . is the death of interest; and hence it happens that no one now reads novels. (21)

Hardie’s logic in this passage harkens back to Scott’s own review of *Emma*. In fashioning fiction out of the most unlikely materials, he suggests, the romancer spins the thrilling fictional contingencies of yesteryear into staid certainties. Far too many heroes of romance have survived their “desperate wound[s]” (and too many heroines their “burning fever[s]”), he suggests, for anyone to “now rea[d]” a novel with anything like serious attention.76

To restore a more productive sense of uncertainty to popular literature, Hardie calls for a turn away from fiction and towards something like true crime narrative. Seeking only to revive “interest,” not to instruct, he proposes that writers abandon the dry well of improbable imaginary incidents once and for all. Instead, he argues, writers should draw from those erratic exceptions to the general rules of probability found in historical experience – specifically, in the case records of the incarcerated populations of the Edinburgh Tolbooth, as set down in the “State Trials” and “Books of Adjournal” (21). Confident in his belief that “the true thing will triumph over the brightest inventions of the most ardent imagination” (22), Hardie then details his plans to publish a volume of “the *Causes Celebres* of Caledonia,” a compilation of all the “curious anomalous facts” attributable to the “long civil dissensions” that wracked Scotland throughout much of its history. The lawyers spend the rest of the evening regaling Pattieson with exemplary

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76 Hardie comes by his distaste for the genre’s stagnation honestly. Like many erstwhile critics of the novel form, he seems to have read a great many of them. (As his companion Halkit sneers, “you are likely to find the new novel most in repute lying on his table, – snugly intrenched” beneath his heavy law-books). *The Heart of Midlothian*, 21.
Causes – including, Pattieson implies, the very narrative of Effie Deans’s trial and Jeanie’s heroic trek south to London that we are now about to read. In so doing, Scott grounds the fictional narrative of *The Heart of Midlothian* in the epistemological authority of “the records of [Scotland’s] criminal jurisprudence” (23). Hardie’s learned companion Halkit might sneer that “the learned author” of the “Commentaries on Scottish Criminal Jurisprudence” would think very little of the idea that “the facts which his erudition and acuteness have accumulated for the illustration of legal doctrines, might be so arranged as to form an appendix to the half-bound and slip-shod volumes of the circulating library” (23) – but the novel itself profits by the juxtaposition, borrowing some of the masculine professional power and expertise encoded in the legal document for its fictional narrative (22).

Scott’s “introductory” chapter to *The Heart of Midlothian* is a preface fit for a first reading. Identifying a poverty of surprising incident as the major problem with the

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Halkit may speak more literally here than his tone might suggest. That same year, Archibald Constable and Company published a volume of *Criminal Trials, Illustrative of the Tale Entitled “The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1818). While the texts were not explicitly marketed together, they seem to have been intended to complement one another. The Preface, for instance, mentions that “the public curiosity [has been] probably much excited, respecting all the circumstances which attended the murder of Captain Porteous” of late. The compilation documents the trials of Andrew Davidson and George Robertson, John Porteous, and Nichol Muschett (whose murder of his wife in the 1720s provides a macabre backdrop for an early meeting between Jeanie Deans and George Staunton in the novel). Less formally, its preface also republishes extracts from a pamphlet contemporary with the Porteous riots, written “when many anecdotes touching the unhappy man were in circulation.” *Criminal Trials, Illustrative of the Tale Entitled “The Heart of Mid-Lothian,” Published from the Original Record: With a Prefatory Notice, Including Some Particulars of the Life of Captain John Porteous* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company, 1818), i. Much like Scott’s 1830 Magnum notes to the novel, however, the 1818 compilation makes no reference to the trial of Isobel Walker for child-murder, although her “misadventure ... is fully recorded in the legal records”: these “records were accessible to Scott,” but “he seems to have made no use of them” at any point in the novel’s composition or while editing. David Hewitt and Alison Lumsden, “Historical Note,” *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, ed. David Hewitt and Alison Lumsden, vol. 6, *The Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 588.
modern novel, Pattieson’s account of Hardie’s *Causes Celebres* primes readers to anticipate an authentic record of unique and thrilling contingencies, and to evaluate the novel’s success in similar terms. If we “perus[e]” the “deep, powerful, and agitating feelings” here recorded and find “a corresponding depth of deep, powerful, and agitating interest” excited in our turn (22), he suggests, then *The Heart of Midlothian* has accomplished everything that it set out to do. However, by 1830, when Scott sat down to write the preface for the Magnum edition, his priorities had changed. Accidents and shocking “turns of fortune” can elude our anticipation only once (22), after all. If Scott had previously encouraged readers to imagine the novel as a sequence of unprecedented criminal contingencies, meant to be devoured with an “agitating interest” (22), he now had to convince them to return to the narrative, and to consume it at a more meditative pace. To do so, as we shall see, Scott’s Magnum preface offers a new origin story for *The Heart of Midlothian*, locating the source of its narrative interest in its representation of character rather than its variety of surprising incident.

The Magnum “Introduction to the Heart of Mid-Lothian” picks up where the preface to the *Chronicles to the Canongate* had left off three years earlier. Writing in his own name and voice, Scott reveals further details about the life of Helen Walker, the “prototype of the fictitious Jeanie Deans” (5). In addition, having recently obtained permission to do so, he reveals the identity of his hitherto anonymous correspondent – Mrs. Helen Goldie, a “late amiable and ingenious lady, whose wit and power of remarking and judging of character still survive in the memory of her friends” (3). While many of Scott’s other

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78 Mrs. Goldie first wrote to Scott in 1817, but did not sign or date her letter; she died before Scott revealed his authorship to the public, and he did not learn her identity until October 1827. *The Heart of Midlothian*, ed. Claire Lamont, 541n.
Magnum prefaces dilate upon the autobiographical details of the novels’ initial composition, though, this “Introduction” yields the floor to Mrs. Goldie, quoting her entire “communication” with Helen Walker in her own words (4). Here, reading one woman’s anecdote about her encounter with an old peasant woman, we are a world away from the gripping legal drama of Hardie’s Causes Celebres, drawn from published trial records and recited by garrulous lawyers. By contrast, in the “Introduction,” Scott leverages the anecdote’s traditional associations with the feminized spheres of “biographical incident” and “the minute passage[s] of private life” to create a space for rereading within the familiar narrative of The Heart of Midlothian (D’Israeli vi).

Goldie’s anecdote describes her encounter with Walker, who sold her some chickens during a summer she spent lodging in a “cottage” in Dumfriesshire (3). Impressed by the “remarkably lively and intelligent” eyes of this labouring woman, Goldie “entered into conversation” with her about her livelihood and her life, finding herself “much . . . pleased” by her “sensible conversation, and the naïveté of her remarks” (4). The lion’s share of the conversation that Goldie reports has to do with Walker’s marital status, rather than her journey to London to secure her sister’s pardon. Noting Walker’s “cheerful disengaged countenance,” Goldie tells her with a smile that she “could venture to guess from her face that she had never been married” (4). Describing herself as “the puirest o’ puir bodies,” Walker wistfully replies that she has far less reason to be happy than her well-to-do interlocutor, blessed as she is with “a gude husband and a fine family o’ bairns, and plenty o’ every thing” (4). Only readers familiar with the plot of The Heart of Midlothian will recognize the pathos of such a comment, which reveals that the historical Walker was not rewarded with as happy an ending as the fictional Jeanie Deans
(who ends the novel married to her childhood sweetheart, Reuben Butler). When Goldie presses Walker for her name, she shyly alludes to her history and her reputation – “My name is Helen Walker; but your husband kens weel about me” (4) – and refuses to say anything further. The rest of Goldie’s letter details her struggle to learn more about Walker’s life from her husband and, after Walker’s death, from her elderly neighbor, emphasizing the modesty, privacy, and inwardness of Walker’s character rather than revealing any further details of her youthful journey to London. “[E]very answer I received,” she concludes, “only tended to increase my regret, and raise my opinion of Helen Walker, who could unite so much prudence with so much heroic virtue” (5).

Having tried unsuccessfully after Walker’s death to raise a funerary monument “to commemorate so remarkable a character,” Goldie had finally decided to write to Scott instead, leaving it to him “to perpetuate her memory in a more durable manner” (5).

Unlike Pattieson’s prefatory chapter, which presented The Heart of Midlothian’s interest and its relationship to the real as a function of its foundation in historical contingency, the Magnum “Introduction” uses Goldie’s letter to redefine the novel’s realism as a compelling realism of character. As we have seen, Hardie’s dissertation on criminal narrative had flagged the text’s abrupt “turns of fortune” as the chief source of its value, encouraging readers to evaluate it in terms of its ability to “agitat[e]” our interest (22).

Scott’s Magnum preface, however, closes with a more sober request. Describing himself as “much . . . obliged to his unknown correspondent, who thus supplied him with a theme affording such a pleasing view of the moral dignity of virtue, though unaided by birth, beauty, or talent,” he asks his readers to appraise the novel’s merits as a portrait of Helen Walker, the prototype of Jeanie Deans. “If the picture has suffered in the execution,” he
concludes, “it is from the failure of the author’s powers to present in detail the same simple and striking portrait, exhibited in Mrs. Goldie’s letter” (6). In their “simpl[ic]ity” and economy, Scott hopes – as well as their firm “knott[ing] to the real,” we might add, after Jane Gallop – these sketches of Helen Walker may “strik[e]” the reader in ways that The Heart of Midlothian cannot.79

Far from a humble apologia for any perceived “failure of the author’s powers,” this statement shrewdly deploys the developing discourse of the Romantic round character as an incitement to rereading. As Deidre Lynch has shown, the concept of the round character, whose whole seems to exceed the sum of his or her parts, emerged late in the eighteenth century in dialogue with the aggressively mediated experience of reading in an age of mass communications.80 Conjuring the “depth effects that we identify with personality” through emergent representational techniques such as free indirect discourse (221), rounded characters promise to reveal their secrets upon further (re)reading. In thus refusing the finality of complete explanation, Lynch notes, round characters “are accomplices of discourse. They keep us talking” (221). As the forces of Romantic consumer capitalism threatened an ever more homogenous and impersonal public sphere, the pursuit – if never quite the possession – of privileged access to a character’s elusive inner truths became a legible sign of individual distinction. As the Magnum Opus’ cheaper volumes brought down the cost of purchasing the Waverley novels, in other words, readers clamoured for a new language and a new set of practices to differentiate

79 In Anecdotal Theory, Jane Gallop describes the anecdote’s capacity to “interrupt what is too fixed, too abstract, too eternal and ahistorical” as a function of its location where “the literary is firmly knotted to the real. Anecdotal Theory (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 3.
their readings of Scott’s fiction from those of the supposedly less-sophisticated remainder of the reading public.

The force of Scott’s mass popularity had made itself felt years before he published the Magnum edition. As William Hazlitt notes with arch detachment in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825), reading and rereading the Waverley novels played a central role in more broadly Romantic practices of readerly self-fashioning. “It must be amusing to the Author of *Waverley* to hear his readers and admirers […] quarrelling which of his novels is the best, opposing character to character, quoting passage against passage, striving to surpass each other in the extravagance of their encomiums, and yet unable to settle the precedence, or to do the author’s writings justice – so various, so equal, so transcendant [sic] are their merits!” By rereading, memorizing, and debating beloved passages, in other words, “readers and admirers” of the Waverley novels confirmed their membership in the reading public at the same time as they attempted to distinguish themselves from less- or differently-devoted members of that public. As Cadell’s aggressive efforts to expand the market share of the Waverley novels swelled the “crowd” of Scott’s readers further, however, readers required new opportunities and new methods to claim the novels as their own. It is not difficult to imagine how the Magnum’s turn to the “materials” of Scott’s composition lent itself to similar devotional practices. As I have shown, even before the Magnum edition began to reclaim Scott’s sources as the sole property of their author, readers swapped historical prototype for prototype with an enthusiasm that closely resembled the debates over the relative merits of character that Hazlitt mocks here. Indeed, this preface combines these two activities, using Scott’s account of Deans’

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prototype to authorize a newly productive form of character rereading. Reframing the novel as a series of “portraits” of anecdotal “prototypes,” then, was one of the primary strategies the Magnum used to make rereading desirable – even necessary – at a moment of mass market saturation.

By introducing Mrs. Goldie’s letter as the novel’s point of origin, the Magnum preface’s collection of anecdotes situates the origins of Jeanie Deans’ character outside the matrix of fictional relationships and choices where she resides – both formally, in a preface located prior to and separate from the body of the novel, and conceptually, in the category of “real history” rather than fictional invention. To evaluate his success in “present[ing] in detail” Walker’s fictional “portrait” (6), as the preface invites us to do, we must reread the novel with Goldie’s scattered collection of anecdotes in mind, referring repeatedly back to her letter as Jeanie’s character develops. Paratextual reading, in this case, functions as a comparative strategy that “refus[es] the finality of complete explanation” even upon rereading. What the preface’s turn to the anecdotal “original” promises, Goldie’s actual letter – which describes her encounter with Helen Walker, rather than revealing new information about Walker’s life – revokes. At the same time that Scott’s revelation of Jeanie Deans’ “prototype” seems to give readers access to privileged information about the core truth of her character, in other words, Goldie’s letter insists on the ultimate inaccessibility of that core, on its burial beneath layers of virtuous reticence. Furthermore, in its construction of Walker as “pruden[t]” cipher, the preface transfers authority as well as additional depth to Scott’s fictional representation of Jeanie Deans. Readers seeking a plenitude of historical detail about Helen Walker in the

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82 Lynch, *The Economy of Character*, 221.
preface may find a consolatory abundance in *The Heart of Midlothian*’s unprecedented four volumes of historical romance.83

Linking *The Heart of Midlothian* to the life of Helen Walker in this way also allows Scott to assert the Magnum’s proprietary claim on materials that had long been a matter of public knowledge. Both the 1827 *Chronicles* preface and the 1830 Magnum preface frame their accounts of the origins of Jeanie Deans’ character as new information, revealed by an author whose recent acknowledgment of his work at last allowed him to repay old debts. The letter from Mrs. Goldie, however, had been circulating amongst Scott’s readers for almost a decade. In December 1818, scarcely four months after *The Heart of Midlothian* was first released, the *Dumfries and Galloway Courier* published an unsigned “extract from a memorandum, made by a lady,” asserting that “the celebrated tale … [was] founded on fact and that its heroines resided for the greater part of their lives in the immediate neighbourhood of Dumfries.”84 In this “memorandum,” the anonymous correspondent describes her brief encounter with the elderly Helen Walker in terms almost identical to the letter from Mrs. Goldie that Scott would eventually release

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84 Though this piece was originally published in the *Dumfries and Galloway Courier*, I have been unable to locate an exact copy. Therefore, all citations for the *Courier* piece refer to the piece republished shortly afterwards in the *Caledonian Mercury*. “Jeanie and Effie Deans,” *Caledonian Mercury* (December 14, 1818): n.p.
twelve years later. It is reasonable to assume, then, that she had sent a second copy of her letter to the newspaper after The Heart of Midlothian had been published. While the Dumfries and Galloway Courier was a small Border paper and cannot be expected to have reached a broad national audience, Goldie’s anecdote was quickly picked up by the Caledonian Mercury, too – and, judging by his repetition of key phrases and descriptions found in the Courier letter, Robert Chambers seems to have lifted content directly from its pages as he crafted his entry on “Jeanie Deans” for his Illustrations of the Author of Waverley. As much as Scott’s Magnum preface insists upon his deference to “the simple and striking portrait, exhibited in Mrs. Goldie’s letter,” then, it also reasserts his unique claim to ownership over literary materials that had long since circulated beyond his control. By enshrining Jeanie Deans’ anecdotal origins in the official format of the Magnum Opus, in other words, Scott also seeks to fortify his authority over his materials as both novelist and national figure, circumscribing the archive available to readers to include only those histories that he himself has chosen to sanction and to preserve.

The rest of Scott’s Magnum Introduction stakes a similar claim on behalf of the

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85 As an “extract,” of course, it is several paragraphs shorter than the full letter. Additionally, the Courier piece does not bother to refashion Walker’s quoted speech from Scots into the Standard English found in Scott’s Magnum version of the letter. In so doing, Scott extends Helen Walker a form of linguistic respectability that he does not confer upon the fictional Jeanie Deans, whose speech is reported in Scots dialect throughout the novel. By elevating Walker’s speech in this way, Scott may be trying to reinforce his and Mrs. Goldie’s claims for the “high principle” and “moral dignity” of her character – depths of character that may be more difficult to convey in a series of brief anecdotes than in a four-volume novel. The Heart of Midlothian, 6.

86 Chambers does not name the Courier as his source, but he does claim to have consulted a written “account” of Walker’s life, “so far as it was ever known,” that had been “taken down … in 1786” – the same year given in Goldie’s letter for her “interview” with Walker. Although Chambers makes an effort to reorder and refashion Goldie’s anecdote in his own words, he also repeats Goldie’s description of Walker as a “a little stout-looking woman, between 70 and 80 years of age, dressed in a long tartan plaid, and having over her white cap … a black silk hood tied under her chin,” among others, nearly verbatim. Illustrations of the Author of Waverley, 143-44.
anecdotes it cites, retailing several “further particulars of Helen Walker” gathered by Mrs. Goldie after *The Heart of Midlothian*’s publication while insisting at the same time that these “particulars” represent the limits of what can be known about her.

Significantly, these anecdotes are no longer of merely biographical interest, as was Mrs. Goldie’s original letter. Unknown to Scott or his correspondents at the time of the novel’s composition, these “fact[s]” of Walker’s life are assumed to be significant in their own right, independent of her status as the original of Jeanie Deans. Like the rest of Scott’s preface, however, these additional anecdotes insist on the “moral dignity” (6), privacy, and virtuous inwardness of Walker’s character, rather than dwelling on the external details of the very quest that made these particulars worth recording in the first place.

Indeed, as Mrs. Goldie’s daughter suggests in her 1827 letter to Scott, which he also cites in the Introduction, Walker’s resistance to further investigation is itself a fundamental characteristic of her personality. Although her mother had “endeavoured to collect further particulars of Helen Walker, particularly concerning her journey to London,” she had “found this nearly impossible; as the natural dignity of her character, and a high sense of family respectability, made her so indissolubly connect her sister’s disgrace with her own exertions, that none of her neighbours durst ever question her upon the subject” (6). If even the oral testimony of Walker’s gossipy neighbours and “distant relations” failed to yield further particulars of her journey, these scant “particulars” imply, what hope could there be of learning more about the original of Jeanie Deans than the diligent “endeavor[s]” of Scott’s direct informants could reveal?

The hasty, undated “Postscript” that Scott appended to the novel’s Magnum preface gives the lie to these assertions, suggesting that there were, in fact, other anecdotes of Walker’s
life available to those who knew where to look. Scott’s careful containment of those anecdotes, though, also works to contain their implicit challenge to his efforts to reframe *The Heart of Midlothian* as a “portrait” of Walker’s character. While asserting that “it would be impossible to add much to Mrs. Goldie’s picturesque and most interesting account of Helen Walker” (7), the “Postscript” nevertheless adds “two or three” further anecdotes gleaned from John McDiarmid’s *Sketches from Nature* (1830) to Mrs. Goldie’s collection. Unsurprisingly, he chose to include only those anecdotes that support the Magnum preface’s account of Helen’s “unassuming piety” and “strength of character,” rather than to dwell on the more gruesome details alluded to in McDiarmid’s “Real History of Jeanie Deans.”

McDiarmid, himself a longtime resident of Dumfriesshire and an acquaintance of Helen Goldie’s, was also the editor of the *Dumfries and Galloway Courier* – the paper, we will recall, that first went public with Goldie’s account of Walker’s life back in 1818, and that therefore posed an implicit challenge to Scott’s efforts to stake a proprietary claim upon the use of his anecdotal materials. Many of the anecdotes of local description collected in the *Sketches*, “The Real History of Jeanie Deans” among them, had already been published in the *Courier*. Judging by the “Postscript”’s formal separation from the rest of the Magnum preface, as well as Scott’s correspondence, however, it is likely that Scott did not discover McDiarmid’s further anecdotes of Helen Walker in time to integrate them into his own “Introduction” (dated 1

87 Had Scott wished to use the *Sketches* to hook new readers with juicier background details about the life and times of Helen Walker, after all, quoting from McDiarmid’s *Sketches from Nature* gave him ample opportunity to do so. “The Real History of Jeanie Deans,” for example, alludes to the discovery of Isabella Walker’s dead or stillborn infant “shortly after in the Cairn, or Clouden” river, and the subsequent parade of “the suspected person, and corpus delicti” before the authorities judging the case. John McDiarmid, *Sketches from Nature* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1830): 384. Scott’s “Postscript,” by contrast, simply refers readers back to the *Sketches* should they wish to learn more: “Mr McDiarmid mentions more particularly the misfortune of her sister, which he supposes to have taken place previous to 1736.” *The Heart of Midlothian*, 7.
April 1830). 88 Indeed, he appears to have added the “Postscript” after the fact to keep from being scooped by McDiarmid. If this was the case, citing the Sketches, even as an afterthought, still allowed him to confer his retroactive blessing upon the text, and to consecrate some of the anecdotes McDiarmid had collected as part of the Heart of Midlothian’s official archive, rather than allowing them to circulate as a competing or unauthorized account. 89 In this way, Scott’s subdivision of the Magnum preface constructs his effort to document the anecdotal sources of his fiction as an iterative process of discovery that quickly expands beyond his control.

While the split between “Introduction” and “Postscript” indicates the difficulty of setting the Magnum’s proprietary seal upon its unruly anecdotal archive, however, the fate of anecdotes of Helen Walker across the long nineteenth century suggests that Scott’s efforts were, for the most part, successful. McDiarmid’s “Real History of Jeanie Deans” proved readily detachable from its original context, and circulated widely as a stand-alone miscellany piece in periodicals on both sides of the Atlantic. In this form, Helen Walker reached very different audiences. For instance, in the same year that Sketches from Nature (1830) was first published, an uncredited version of McDiarmid’s sketch of

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88 Jane Millgate’s Union catalogue of Scott’s correspondence indicates that he exchanged letters with McDiarmid in late April and early May of that year – shortly after completing the Magnum preface, which is dated “April 1, 1830.” See John McDiarmid to Walter Scott, 23 April 1830, Walter Scott Correspondence, National Library of Scotland, MS 3913: 57-58; John McDiarmid to Walter Scott, 8 May 1830, Walter Scott Correspondence, National Library of Scotland, MS 3913: 81-82; Walter Scott to John McDiarmid, 10 May 1830, Brotherton Collection, Leeds University, BC Gen. q.: SCO.

89 In either case, McDiarmid seems to have respected Scott’s claim on the material – at least insofar as it concerned his own composition process. In the final paragraph of “The Real History of Jeanie Deans,” McDiarmid briefly alludes to Mrs. Goldie’s role in transmitting the tale to Scott. He concludes the “Sketch,” however, without elaborating further: “On this branch of the subject I would willingly enlarge were I not afraid of invading the province, or rather the “vested rights,” of one whom I should be sorry to offend in the smallest tittle.” Sketches from Nature, 388.
the “Original of Jeanie Deans” ran in the first volume of Godey’s Lady’s Book, the
American women’s magazine, between articles on lace-making and specimens of
sentimental poetry; similarly, the same biographical sketch appeared in an early number
of John Johnstone’s The Schoolmaster, an “avowed[ly] … political” Edinburgh
miscellany intended to politicize “the Many – for the great mass of the People.”
Local newspapers from Milledgeville, Georgia to Hobart, Tasmania picked up McDiarmid’s
account as well. Throughout the English-speaking world, nearly anywhere where Scott’s
novels were read, accounts of “prototypes” and “originals” like Walker found an
audience, too. Indeed, the frequency with which McDiarmid’s “Sketch” of Helen
Walker was reprinted in the first volumes of new publications suggests that editors could
count on Scott’s established appeal to help establish a new readership.

On those rare occasions when an interested reader tried to add to McDiarmid’s and
Scott’s anecdotal accounts of Walker’s life rather than simply to reprint them, though,
these efforts tended to fall flat, reiterating the preface’s insistence on the opacity of Helen
Walker’s character rather than revealing further detail about her exploits. One widely
circulated version, for example, prefaced excerpts from Scott’s and McDiarmid’s

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90 “Original of Jeanie Deans,” Godey’s Lady’s Book 1 (August 1, 1830): 83-4; “Biographic
Sketch of Helen Walker, A Gentlewoman of Heaven’s Making,” The Schoolmaster and
Edinburgh Magazine 1 (August-November 1832): 140. Later in the nineteenth century, the same
essay found a second life in didactic literature for young women, making (uncredited)
appearances in collections of “remarkable women” and “female heroines” as well as books of
moral and religious anecdotes. See, for example, Jeanne Darc, the Patriot Martyr: And Other
Narratives of Female Heroism in Peace and War (London: Blackie and Son, 1883); The Book of
Noble Englishwomen: Lives Made Illustrious by Heroism, Goodness, and Great Attainments, ed.
Charles Bruce (Edinburgh: Nimmo, Hay, and Mitchell, 1891); Representative Women: Queens,
Heroines, Peasants, Confessors, and Philanthropists, ed. Paxton Hood (London: Hodder and
Stoughton, 1853).

156-60.
accounts of Walker’s life with a brief description of the author’s frustrated efforts to learn
still more about “the original of Jeanie Deans.”\textsuperscript{92} However, while the anonymous author
gratefully acknowledges “the kind and willing exertions of a lady, whose near connexion
with Mrs. Goldie best qualifies her for the task, to furnish us with any fresh
circumstances which time might have brought to light, correcting, at the same time, the
misstatements which others have fallen into from the wish to amplify and enlarge on
insufficient data,” he is eventually forced to admit that his “[s]ubsequent inquiries have
added little that can be depended on to the original account” (133). Indeed, his only
contribution to the body of existing knowledge about Walker’s life seems to be a slightly
more precise location for her home in Dumfriesshire than was previously available. A
“recent letter” from a second correspondent had revealed “Helen Walker lived in one of
those cottages at the Chedar [sic] Mills which you and your sisters so much admired”
(135); unfortunately, this correspondent explained, Walker’s last remaining relative had
since passed away, and no further details seemed forthcoming.\textsuperscript{93}

This inquiry’s dead end, while disappointing, articulates one of the major problems
plaguing readerly efforts to further interrogate Scott’s use of local tradition and anecdote
after the Magnum’s publication. As an author and a public figure, Scott had long acted as

\textsuperscript{92} “Helen Walker: The Original of Sir Walter Scott’s Jeanie Deans,” The Eclectic Magazine, 11
(May-August 1847): 133. Given Robert Chambers’ documented interest in illustrating the
Waverley novels, he is a likely candidate for this piece’s author. The Eclectic Magazine’s
version of the piece, published in May 1847, cites Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal as its source; however, I
have thus far been unable to locate the same article in any of the Journal’s collected numbers
published prior to May 1847. In any case, the piece appears to have circulated fairly freely
amongst the popular periodical miscellanies on both sides of the Atlantic throughout the 1840s,
appearing also in Sharpe’s London Magazine and the Boston-based Littell’s Living Age.

\textsuperscript{93} The correspondent blames this lack of further information about Helen’s life on the death of
“Mr. Walker” – presumably her father: “He is since dead, or I might have got the particulars from
him that we wanted: he was a respectable farmer.” As Walker’s story passed beyond the reach of
living memory and oral history, in other words, reprinted anecdotal accounts like these took its
a magnet for such obscure materials. As Ann Rigney explains, even while he maintained his anonymity, Scott’s “status … as the channel through which a deserving story might be circulated more widely” ensured that, “from the publication of *Waverley* onwards, the Author of Waverley was at the receiving end of a lively correspondence with readers all over Scotland, particularly from interested parties who thought he might have use for certain details of family or local history.” By contrast, antiquaries and enthusiasts working several decades later without the benefits of such an extensive network as the Author of Waverley himself found themselves at a distinct disadvantage. Many anecdotes that had been common knowledge decades earlier had since passed out of the reach of living memory, leaving Scott’s Magnum preface as one of the few records of Helen Walker’s life that remained for future readers of the Waverley novels to depend upon.

3.4 Anecdotal rereading: Scott’s end-of-chapter notes to *The Heart of Midlothian*

As I have argued above, Scott’s Magnum preface to *The Heart of Midlothian* encouraged readers to revisit the text as a character study of Helen Walker, rather than to anticipate thrilling twists and “turns of fortune” from its plot (22). His end-of-chapter notes, on the other hand, tell a different story – or rather, they tell a number of different stories. Like the preface, the notes also draw together anecdotes from multiple informants, juxtaposing selections from print sources already accessible to the broader public with “things not yet published” (D’Israeli v) – information from private correspondence known only to Scott himself. Unlike the preface’s collection of anecdotes of the life of a single “original,” though, Scott’s notes to the novel are far more miscellaneous in their content, position,

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and purpose. We learn nothing further about the events of Helen Walker’s life, for instance. However, in an array of notes detailing Scott’s family history of religious persecution, anecdotes of the Porteous riots told him in his youth, records of the legal enquiries into the causes of the riots, accounts of local superstition, and descriptions of the “originals” of memorable characters David Deans and Madge Wildfire, Scott makes a wide swathe of his source materials available to his readers. While several of these notes provide factual glosses that lack even the basic narrative structure implied by D’Israeli’s “relation of detached and interesting particulars” (vi), many others retail short, detached micronarratives with no firm grounding in “official” history. Focusing on this latter subcategory within the novel’s end-of-chapter notes, this chapter concludes by arguing that Scott’s Magnum paratexts deploy his anecdotal “prototypes” strategically, drawing on the form’s long associations with the vagaries of oral history in an effort to destabilize competing claims – whether authorized or unauthorized – to illustrate his novels by means of further research. Scott’s end-of-chapter notes introduce repeated paratextual reminders of the elusive, complex, and unknowable nature of historical cause and effect into the body of the novel, using anecdote to reinforce the authority of his fictional narrative’s imagined solutions to archival aporiae. In so doing, as we shall see, Scott’s Magnum notes work to secure the representative status of The Heart of

95 Andrew Lang’s 1893 edition of the novel includes an additional note documenting the inscription Scott composed for Walker’s funeral monument. Otherwise, we learn nothing further about Helen Walker’s life from Scott’s notes, suggesting that he made a deliberate decision to gather all of the information he had received from the Goldies and McDiarmid together into the preface rather than distributing it amongst the notes. Walter Scott, The Heart of Midlothian, ed. Andrew Lang (London and Edinburgh: A. and C. Black, 1893), 539.

96 For example, some notes, like the note on “Cheverons,” or “gloves,” gloss dialect terms with a single word of Standard English, whereas others provide non-narrative descriptions of duties attached to obsolete or Scots-specific titles, such as the note explaining the privileges of the “Lord Provost,” or the semantic distinction between the “Lord of State” and the “Lords of Seat.” The Heart of Midlothian, 523, 512-13.
Midlothian’s brand of historical romance well into the nineteenth century.

By revealing the anecdotal sources of his fictional narratives in this way, Scott’s Magnum annotations to The Heart of Midlothian summon the anecdote’s longstanding associations with the genre of secret history. D’Israeli’s Dissertation, as we will recall, sought to vindicate the anecdote and the anecdote collection as a literary form with recognizable characteristics. However, Samuel Johnson’s earlier Dictionary definition of anecdote as “[s]omething yet unpublished; secret history” reminds us that eighteenth-century and Romantic thinkers also understood anecdote more generally as a vehicle capable of making public the “yet unpublished” details of historical experience – a task traditionally associated, as Johnson’s definition registers, with the genre of secret history.97 In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, secret history had used the formal “detach[ment]” of anecdote to offer alternate perspectives on established narratives of historical causation (D’Israeli vi), tracing large-scale events back to their supposed origins in the outrageous “personal idiosyncrasies” of historical actors.98 As Ina Ferris has recently shown, however, by the early nineteenth century, history’s “increasingly archival turn” had broadened the genre “to include informal first-person accounts of historical events, not simply scandalous revelations.”99 By publishing obscure historical documents previously housed in inaccessible collections and archives, she suggests, antiquarian editors raised provocative questions about the human capacity “to read the

98 Maxwell, The Historical Novel in Europe, 12.
‘remains’ of the past” across the chasm of historical distance and difference (268, 275). Equating archival inaccessibility with a form of privacy, D’Israeli himself acknowledges “anecdote” as “an appellation given by scholars to Mss. which they discovered in libraries, and afterwards published” (v), forging a suggestive connection between the form of the anecdote and the ongoing efforts of Romantic antiquarians to make the raw materials of history available to the wider reading public. Scott’s notes, I argue, seek to capitalize on this emergent relationship. By publishing anecdotal and archival sources that had remained to that point “yet unpublished,” the Magnum’s miscellaneous notes harmonize to tell the secret history of the novel’s composition, unraveling the process by which Scott had woven local tradition, anecdote, and hearsay into the fictional fabric of *The Heart of Midlothian*.

Even when these notes seek to authenticate fictional episodes or characters by exposing their origins in “reality,” the anecdotal nature of Scott’s evidence serves to unsettle the smooth surface of what had become, by virtue of their mass popularity, established fictions. By detaching specific characters and events from their established position within the novel’s plot and dilating upon their origins in the raw materials of “real history,” the notes open up anecdotal “holes” in the “totalizing whole” of *The Heart of Midlothian*.\(^\text{100}\) Lying in wait for the reader in the paratextual space between chapters, the notes interrupt the rhythms of rereading with regular reminders that the novel’s plot

\(^{100}\) Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote,” 61.
remains in tension with the dynamic force of historical contingency.\textsuperscript{101} In doing so, the Magnum notes absorb some of the energies displaced by the preface’s decisive turn to the discourse of character rereading, “let[ting] history happen” anew between the covers of one of Scott’s best-known novels without introducing a significant disturbance to the sequential logic of its fictional plot (61).\textsuperscript{102} Furthermore, this dialectical movement between anecdotal event and established narrative context is both aided and abetted by the protocols of paratextual reading. As we shall see, by inviting his audience to view fictional characters and events through the fractured and fracturing lens of their historical “originals” or “prototypes,” Scott invites his readers to hold two seemingly incompatible epistemological positions in tension with one another. By staging repeated collisions between the novel’s romance plot and its anecdotal source material, the end-of-chapter notes seek to legitimize The Heart of Midlothian’s imaginative solutions to the very archival and historiographical problems they expose, reinforcing the novel’s claims to historiographical authority in the process.

To unpack these dynamics, let us first turn to Scott’s end-of-chapter note glossing his account of the Porteous Riots, the explosive historical set piece that opens The Heart of Midlothian. In this famous scene, the “common people” of Edinburgh – already outraged by the public execution of Andrew Wilson, a Scottish smuggler sentenced to death for

\textsuperscript{101} Modern reprints of Magnum texts tend to obscure the unique physical architecture of the original, shifting his longer notes from the ends of chapters to the back of the book. See, for example, Claire Lamont’s Oxford edition of The Heart of Midlothian, which – unlike the Edinburgh edition of the text, based on the novel’s first edition – retains the Magnum notes but relocates them to an appendix positioned after the narrative proper.

\textsuperscript{102} Although the Magnum’s end-of-chapter notes disrupt the process of reading at regular intervals, they leave the style and structure of the original novels relatively undisturbed. While composing the notes for the new edition, Scott’s publishers provided him with interleaved copies of the novels’ first editions. The additional pages interspersed between pages of printed text allowed for many small embellishments and deletions, even as the physical form of the interleaved copies militated against longer or more comprehensive alterations.
robbing an English revenue officer – are pushed over the edge by John Porteous’ rash decision to order his City Guard to fire their weapons into the restless crowd. Scott’s note on “The Porteous Mob” documents the sources he used to craft his fictional account of the riots, but does so in order to problematize any effort to assign a clear motive or narrative causation to such a complex, contested historical event. Although the note begins with the claim that “the circumstances of that extraordinary riot and conspiracy . . . [were] given with as much accuracy as the author was able to collect them” (521), the note’s detailed overview of the official records of the case suggests that this notion of archival “accuracy” remains relative at best. As Scott explains, “no discovery was ever made concerning the purposes of the slaughter” (521), and the two men eventually brought to trial for the riots were ultimately pronounced not guilty. Consulting the extant legal and historical documents surrounding the investigation, in other words, can do little to dispel “the mystery attending this extraordinary conspiracy.” Even “till this day,” Scott concludes, “the secret history of the Porteous Mob” has remained “unravelled” (522). To bring “the secret history” of the event to light, the note implies, he must proceed by other means.

_The Heart of Midlothian_ solves this historical “mystery” by making a sharp turn to domestic romance. By imprisoning his fictional character Effie Deans in Edinburgh’s Tolbooth Prison alongside the historical figure of John Porteous, Scott weaves the novel’s domestic subplot together with its political one. In this way, the novel invites readers to consider both the riots and Effie’s imprisonment for child-murder as large- and small-scale manifestations of the same Scottish frustrations with arbitrary English jurisprudence in the decade leading up to the second Jacobite Rebellion. Instead of
pursuing these two strands in parallel throughout the novel, however, Scott narrates them in series, beginning with the Riots themselves and introducing the novel’s domestic plot seven chapters into the text. As a result, while The Heart of Midlothian’s famous opening sequence begins by representing the riots themselves as a spontaneous collective uprising – an eruption of pure contingency that, while “of a nature peculiarly characteristic of the Scottish people” (522), was every bit as unpremeditated as the historical record makes it out to be – the last three volumes of the novel’s domestic narrative work hard to qualify and contain these unruly energies. By shifting responsibility for the riots towards the private relationships between its central (fictional) characters, Scott’s novel minimizes the role that mass public unrest or political discontent might have played in their genesis. Indeed, midway through the novel, George Staunton’s feverish confession to Jeanie Deans reframes the riots as merely a cover for the domestic drama of Effie’s imprisonment and hoped-for escape. Struck by the advantageous coincidence of the “general rage excited among the citizens of Edinburgh on account of the reprieve of Porteous” (330), Staunton claims to have devised a plot to “forc[e] the jail,” to “carr[y] off [Effie] from the clutches of the law,” and, if possible, to bring Porteous, “a miscreant” and a “torment[or],” to “condign punishment” at the same time

103 In an unsigned review of Scott’s mid-career novels, Nassau Senior criticized this strategy as a “singularly careless” method of synthesizing The Heart of Midlothian’s multiple plots: “The author, in his premature anxiety to get in medias res, introduces us at the point where the different interests converge; and then, instead of floating down the united stream of events, we are forced separately to ascend each of its tributary branches, like Humboldt examining the bifurcations of the Oroonoko, until we forget, in exploring their sources, the manner in which they bear on one another.” Nassau Senior, “Art. VI. Rob Roy, Tales of my Landlord, 2d Series, (Heart of Midlothian), Tales of my Landlord, 3d Series, (Bride of Lammermoor, Montrose), Ivanhoe, Monastery, Abbot, Kenilworth,” review of Rob Roy, The Heart of Midlothian, The Bride of Lammermoor, A Legend of Montrose; Ivanhoe, The Monastery, The Abbot, and Kenilworth, by Walter Scott, Quarterly Review 26 (October and January 1822): 116-17.

104 Scott’s rioters themselves refer to their revolt as a typical expression of national character, calling upon “all true Scotsmen” to join them as they march down Edinburgh’s Royal Mile to the Tolbooth. The Heart of Midlothian, 60.
Although Staunton’s confession offers a clearer narrative of historical causation than Scott was able to substantiate through the archival record, then, it does so by subordinating the novel’s political subplot to its domestic one.

Given the “Introductory” chapter’s insistence on The Heart of Midlothian’s roots in the authentic experience of historical actors, we might expect Scott’s note on the “Porteous Mob” to single out a particular “prototype” or “prototypes” for Staunton’s conspiracy – to infuse his domestic romance, in other words, with some of the epistemological clarity of verifiable historical experience. This is the strategy pursued by Robert Chambers in his entry on the Porteous Riots in his Illustrations of the Author of Waverley, which purports to provide a “plain statement of the facts” of the case in place of Scott’s freehanded fictional embellishments (136). Claiming to have “been informed by a very old man, who was an apprentice in the Fleshmarket of Edinburgh about fifty years ago, that in his younger days it was well known among the butchers … that the leaders of this singular riot were two brothers of the name of Cumming” (137), Chambers substitutes the butcher’s anecdote for Scott’s fictional account of the riot’s causation, suggesting that the two accounts are structurally if not epistemologically equal. For Chambers, the historical authority of oral testimony, no matter how insubstantial, remains straightforwardly superior to Scott’s fictional version of events. Although Scott does not frame his Magnum gloss on the riots as an explicit rejoinder to Chambers’ claim to have uncovered

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105 The British Review criticized George Staunton’s lack of an “original” as a sign that Scott had taken too much liberty with history, remarking that while “[i]t is not easy to define poetical license, and it is perhaps not very generous to restrict it; … we are satisfied that, if the author had been aware that his publisher meant to print a volume of facts to illustrate his four volumes of fiction, he would have adhered more closely to historical truth.” “Art. XIV. Tales of My Landlord, Second Series,” review of The Heart of Midlothian, by Walter Scott, The British Review, and London Critical Journal 12 (November 1818): 398.
more accurate information, his account nevertheless positions itself against the brash epistemological certainty implicit in Chambers’ effort at illustration.106 Rather than claiming to possess a more accurate or authoritative “original” for his version of the riots, the rest of the note calls attention to Scott’s failed attempts to stop the holes in his “secret history” by making an appeal to the romantic authenticity of popular tradition. After he came to a dead end in the legal documents, Scott explains, a correspondent sent him a letter describing an elderly carpenter’s deathbed confession of his involvement in the uprising. Initially, the confession offers a tantalizing glimpse of a single historical “cause” for the riots; ultimately, however, it exposes their lack thereof. Outraged by Wilson’s execution, the old man supposedly claimed, he and twelve of his friends assembled in Portsburgh, a suburb just outside Edinburgh’s city walls that was “chiefly inhabited by the lower order of citizens and mechanics” (58). Once assembled, “their appearance in a body soon called numbers around them” (522) – and everything else, Scott’s correspondent explains, was history. “The public mind was in such a state of irritation, that it only wanted a single spark to create an explosion;” he writes, “and this was afforded by the exertions of the small and determined band of associates” (522). This confession proved particularly valuable, the note suggests, because it relieved Scott of the responsibility of identifying a “previous plan or conspiracy” behind the riots, allowing him to look instead to “the character of those who were engaged in it” for his cause (522).

By attributing the riots to the mood and “character” of the “public mind,” rather than to

106 According to C.E.S. Chambers, Robert Chambers’ eldest son, Scott sympathized with
Chambers as “a young and struggling literary aspirant”; he also admired his later work (especially
the Traditions of Edinburgh [1824], a collection of antiquarian anecdotes and local traditions of
the city). The Letters of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe to Robert Chambers,
1821-45 (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1904), 5.
the machinations of any specific person or group, the note appears to undermine the claims of competing commentators like Chambers to possess privileged knowledge of the events represented in his novel. Scott does not stop at simply correcting the record, however. As the note continues, he calls the carpenter’s confession into question, too. As he explains, the account of events given in the correspondent’s letter proved impossible to verify. When questioned, the son of the man concerned maintained that his father had “uniformly denied being present” at the riots. Further, when Scott’s correspondent attempted to confirm the account by re-interviewing “a person from whom he had formerly heard the story,” he found that his informant – “either from respect to an old friend’s memory or from failure of his own” – “happened to have forgotten that ever such a communication was made” (523). While the carpenter’s anecdote does not contradict the official legal records of the case, Scott concludes, all that one can finally say in its defense is “that it certainly once existed, and was generally believed” (523). In any case, it appears unlikely that any further investigation would yield new evidence for any theory. With the carpenter dead, his son denying the truth of his confession, and the suspicious “failure” of even the informant’s power to recall any further details, the Porteous riots appear to have passed out of the anecdote’s historical reach, leaving only rumour and hearsay behind.

Like the “Introduction”’s rehearsal of Scott’s piecemeal recovery of anecdotes of the life and character of Helen Walker, this note offers readers already familiar with The Heart of Midlothian’s plot privileged access to the Author of Waverley’s historical imagination at work. By comparing the authoritative inconclusiveness of the legal record with the carpenter’s plausible (yet unverifiable) anecdotal confession, the note suggests that print
and oral sources are similarly powerless to reveal a primary cause for the Porteous riots. While the former records the failure of the prosecution to secure a persuasive conviction, the latter rests on no stronger foundation than that of “genera[l] belie[f]” (523). Here, in a deliberate departure from Chambers’ air of epistemological certainty, Scott locates the novel’s inception in an encounter with what Carolyn Steedman calls the “archival sublime” – the “sublime moment” of the research process that “occurs when the historian knows that it (whatever it is) cannot be found, for it was never there in the first place.”

In its invocation of an archive of dead ends, however, Scott’s reference to the archival sublime also advances a theory of historical causation that carefully claims authority on behalf of the novel’s fictional account of events. Ultimately, the very unverifiability of all evidence for a “previous plan or conspiracy” confirms the Porteous Mob as a typical, even inevitable, expression of “the character of those who were engaged in it” (522). If any “spark” could have sufficed to “create an explosion” amongst the assembled citizens of Edinburgh, as the note suggests, it is reasonable to conclude that George Staunton’s fictional efforts to break Effie Deans out of prison could have incited mass mob violence just as easily as any “real” or proven cause.

In this way, the note’s introduction and revocation of the carpenter’s anecdotal narrative of the riots reintroduces the appearance of historical contingency into what might otherwise appear, upon rereading, to be a contrived and eminently novelistic coincidence. Staunton’s admission of his motives for guiding the rioters to the Tolbooth translates the

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107 Carolyn Steedman, “After the Archive,” *Comparative Critical Studies* 8, nos. 2-3 (2011): 340. Steedman’s concept of the “archival sublime” revises economic historian Emma Rothschild’s initial definition of the term, which refers to the moment of discovery, rather than the moment where loss is transcended. For Rothschild, Steedman explains, “[t]he ‘archival sublime’ ... has to do with the sublime moment (the moment of supreme satisfaction) of finding something from the past” in the archive. Ibid.
political into the personal, ascribing collective action to the strength of individual intention. By tracing a historical event as complex and multivalent as Porteous’ execution back to one man’s efforts to free his incarcerated lover, in other words, *The Heart of Midlothian* refashions history into a narrative of chivalric romance. By testifying to the unverifiability of the Porteous riots, then, the correspondent’s unverifiable anecdote authorizes Scott’s ongoing fictional investigation of the “character of those who were engaged” in the uprising – and, in so doing, infuses the narrative’s imaginary passions with the authority of more traditional modes of historical analysis. As long as this archival aporia makes strict verifiability impossible, the note concludes, the novel’s fictional verisimilitude offers the most viable alternative account of the uprising. Rereading the novel in dialogue with these ambiguously representative anecdotes, as the note’s separation from the main text encourages readers to do, reopens the historical problematic of the origins of the Porteous Mob that the narrative’s familiar explanation alone might otherwise close.

Where Scott’s note on the Porteous riots frames his novel’s fictional account of the uprising as a creative response to absence, undecidability, and the “archival sublime,” a later end-of-chapter note glossing the life of “Feckless Fannie (weak or feeble Fannie)” (533), the prototype of “Madge Wildfire,” supplies a plenitude of historical detail. As in the prefatory account of Helen Walker, the note proliferates rare biographical anecdotes of Fannie’s life, leveraging the form’s close epistemological relationship to the real in an effort to secure the authenticity and historical typicality of Madge’s character upon rereading. At the same time as he invites readers to compare Madge with Fannie, however, Scott also insists on the incompleteness of the existing anecdotal record, calling
attention to the persistent gaps and inconsistencies between the records of Fannie’s life that he and his correspondents have been able to collect. Unlike the preface, which used the trope of “portrait[ure]” to minimize the distance between Jeanie Deans and her virtuous “original,” Scott’s footnote on Madge Wildfire details his departures from the anecdotal record, insisting that these “alterations” were necessary in order to make “Feckless Fannie” sufficiently characteristic of the historical situation described in The Heart of Midlothian. In this way, Scott’s end-of-chapter note first opens and then closes the text to the operations of historical contingency, reintroducing the improbable, unwieldy elements of Fannie’s anecdotal history in an effort to solidify the novel’s claims to have captured the historical character of the 1730s.

As in the preface and the note on the Porteous Mob, the note on Madge Wildfire reveals Scott’s position at the centre of an expansive network of local observers and informants. Citing a letter from Mr. Joseph Train, the author’s longtime friend and collaborator, the note records the “history” of “Feckless Fannie,” an eccentric young woman who travelled the British countryside with a small flock of sheep between the late 1760s and early 1770s. Struck by how much Fannie’s “history” was “altogether so like a romance” – an observation that he makes twice, using the same phrase, in the course of this letter – Train put himself to “all possible pains to collect every particular that can be found relative to her in Galloway, or in Ayrshire” (533), and sent Scott the result of his labours to use as he saw fit. In the letter, Train relates a number of anecdotes from the life of a young woman who, like Madge Wildfire, suffered disappointments in love and wandered the hills of the Border country ever after, “demented” by loss and sorrow (533). Unlike Madge, whose fictional madness stems from her mother’s murder of the illegitimate child
she bears to George Staunton, the roguish aristocrat who later seduces Effie Deans, “Feckless Fannie” was driven to “mania” after her wealthy father murdered her lover, a poor shepherd on his estate (534). After his death, she resolved to care for his flock of sheep for the rest of her life, going to lengths usually reserved for the mad mothers of Romantic poetry to mourn the untimely deaths of her favourites. Regrettably, Train concludes, she was stoned to death by a pack of boys, and “terminate[d] her mortal career” somewhere on the road between Glasgow and Anderston (535).

Repeating the central gesture of the “Introduction,” Scott quotes the letter from Train in full and in Train’s own words. Emphasizing his mediating role in the translation of a vanishing archive of cultural memory into the more stable medium of print, Train presents himself as an heir to the eighteenth-century romantic revivalist discourse of ballad collection. Most of the anecdotes Train records were originally obtained from oral interviews with local residents, but at least one of his informants (the “late Dr. Fullarton of Rosemount,” who once offered Fannie shelter during “a severe season”) has since died. For the most part, all of “the real history of this singular individual”

108 “[W]ishing to pay a tribute” to the memory of “Charlie, her favourite ram,” for instance, “Feckless Fannie” was said to have “covered his grave with moss, and fenced it round with osiers, and annually returned to the same spot, and pulled the weeds from the grave and repaired the fence” (535). Cf. William Wordsworth, “The Thorn,” in Lyrical Ballads, 1798 and 1800, ed. Michael Gamer and Dahlia Porter (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2008), 103-110.

109 Perhaps the most striking sign of the unstable ground on which Train’s anecdotes rest, however, is his discussion of a ballad that may or may not describe Fannie’s “misfortunes.” Unlike the ballad collectors of a previous generation, whose published volumes claimed to preserve the dying embers of a pre-modern oral culture, Train’s informant tells him she learned the ballad she recites for him from a printed broadside. He mentions that he has copied down “eighty-four lines” of the ballad “from the recitation of an old woman ... who says she has seen it in print, with a plate on the title-page, representing Fannie with her sheep behind her.” As he explains, he has been unable to authenticate her recollection by finding an extant copy of the broadside, or a notice of the ballad in collector Robert Hartley Cromek’s Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song – and so, lamenting the “very little merit” he sees in the composition, he does not bother to recopy the substance of the ballad for Scott to read or reprint. The Heart of Midlothian, 534.
that persists are “several superstitious appendages” embellished by word of mouth and tradition (535). Like the carpenter’s confession discussed above, Fannie’s life had already passed out of the historical reach of local memory and oral culture by the time Train began to document it. In their repeated references to the deaths of their informants, Scott and Train present oral history as a nonrenewable resource, subject to the twin vagaries of human memory and “credulity” (535). As Scott reminds us while introducing Train’s letter, furthermore, the memory of Feckless Fannie has quickly faded from the countryside she roamed sixty years since. While acknowledging that many raised in the “pastoral districts” remember having heard of Feckless Fannie, in the days of their youth” (536, 533), he claims that the letter “contains probably all that can now be known,” in 1830, of the young woman’s “history” (533). To learn anything further about a woman who – because of her femininity, her vagrancy, and her mental illness – was unlikely to have been recorded in the official archive, the note suggests, one would have to travel back in time to interview her contemporaries. Alternatively, as we shall see, the note invites its audience to return to Scott’s novel. As in Scott’s earlier note on the Porteous riots, then, Train’s anecdotes of the elusive Feckless Fannie tend to reify the fictional Madge Wildfire at her original’s expense.

The rest of the note on “Feckless Fannie” claims historical authority for Scott’s fictional representation of his prototypical materials in two ways. First, even as he insists on the exhaustiveness of Train’s impressionistic account, Scott cannot resist the temptation to subject one of the letter’s anecdotes to further questioning. While he maintains that Train’s letter contains “probably” all there is to know about the life of “Feckless Fannie,” Scott nevertheless reserves the privilege of adding to his friend’s account for himself. In
the note’s final lines, he questions the accuracy of the anecdote describing Fannie’s brutal stoning. “[N]otwithstanding the preciseness of Mr. Train’s statement, there may be some hopes that the outrage on Feckless Fannie and her little flock was not carried to extremity,” he muses (536). Not only is there no record of her supposed murderers being brought to trial, but conflicting anecdotal reports place her last known whereabouts elsewhere: “the author has understood that it was on the Border she was last seen, about the skirts of the Cheviot hills, but without her little flock” (536). In reopening the case of Fannie’s murder in this way, Scott attempts to assert final authorial control over the information sent him by his correspondents, warding off the suggestion that he had grounded his novel in only a secondhand knowledge of local lore. Where Train had endorsed a single anecdote describing Fannie’s murder, Scott implies, his own position at the centre of a web of anecdotal exchange provides him with access to a wider and more up-to-date range of gossip and hearsay – ensuring in the process that he retains his right to the last word.

Ultimately, however, the question of what “really” happened to Fannie proves less important to Scott than the question of how Fannie “became” Madge Wildfire. While crediting the “first conception” of Madge’s character to Train’s collection of anecdotes, Scott is careful to call attention to the “grea[t] alter[ations]” her prototype required before

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110 A decade earlier, Scott’s first-edition preface to The Monastery had dramatized the Author of Waverley’s similar refusal to “gratify” the “literary ambition” of his supposed informant, the fictional Captain Clutterbuck, “by suffering [his] name to appear upon the title-page.” The preface’s lively attempt to defend Scott’s rights to his fiction presents his transformation of his historical sources as the basis of his claims upon his literary property. While Scott’s relations with Train remained far more cordial and respectful than the Author of Waverley’s relations with Clutterbuck, the question of who could be said to own the novels’ anecdotal sources appears to have posed a similar challenge to the stability of Scott’s authorship in both cases. The Monastery, 28, 29.
he could successfully “introduce such a character into fiction” in the nineteenth century (536). While the excessively “roman[tic]” nature of “Feckless Fannie”’s tragic “history” may have inspired Train’s “pains to collect every particular” of her life still extant in Scotland’s “pastoral districts” (533, 536), her close resemblance to the melancholy shepherdesses of sentimental convention made her seem out of place in a work of historical fiction set in the 1730s. Once recontextualized as fiction, Scott worried, Train’s “romantic” original would no longer seem original at all: in hewing too closely to his correspondent’s anecdotal material, “the author felt the risk of encountering a comparison with the Maria of Sterne” (536).111 Scott’s invocation of A Sentimental Journey (1769) complicates Train’s simpler binary between “history” and “romance.” The problem with “Feckless Fannie”’s “history” isn’t that it seems too eccentric to be true, he suggests. Rather, it’s that the very eccentricities that mark her as a historical subject are hopelessly identified with the period between “1767 and 1775,” the years that Fannie and her flock “travelled over all Scotland and England” (533). Instead of securing Madge’s historical typicality, the note implies, hewing too closely to Train’s anecdotes would make her character seem hopelessly anachronistic – a contemporary of the men and women of feeling of the sentimental 1760s and 70s, perhaps, but not the dogged Cameronians of

111 First introduced in Sterne’s Tristram Shandy (1759-67), Maria reappears in A Sentimental Journey (1768). When Yorick visits her at Moulines in the latter novel, he learns that she has recently lost her husband, her “senses,” and her pet goat. They mingle their tears in Yorick’s handkerchief with erotic abandon, prompting “such undescrivable (sic) emotions within [himself], as [he is] sure could not be accounted for from any combinations of matter and motion.” Laurence Sterne, A Sentimental Journey and Other Writings, ed. Ian Jack and Tim Parnell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 95.
three decades earlier.112 Where Train’s anecdotes of Fannie and her flock are concerned, Scott continues, insisting on fidelity for fidelity’s sake would “retar[d]” the “mechanism of the story” (536). By emphasizing the alterations he has made to Train’s anecdotes of “Feckless Fannie,” then, Scott claims Madge Wildfire as his rightful literary property.

Furthermore, in tracking her translation from anecdote into fiction, Scott claims for his characterization of Madge a form of historical representativeness that “Feckless Fannie” herself would otherwise lack.

The strategy of prototypical rereading that the Magnum Opus edition authorized persisted throughout the next century. Furthermore, the longevity and lability of certain “originals” speaks to the transnational nature of Scott’s nineteenth-century reception, as well as the transformative powers of both historical and geographical distance. In 1859, for instance, American newspapers from Washington, D.C. to Sacramento dutifully noted the death of a woman named Elizabeth Graham, “The Original of Madge Wildfire,” originally reported in the Scottish “Border Advertiser” (published in Galashiels).113 The fact that Scott himself had endorsed “Feckless Fannie” as Madge’s “original” in his notes to the Magnum, it seems, bothered readers not at all. More important than any particular prototype, ultimately, was the logic of prototypicality itself. As the much-republished

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112 By confining his discussion of the authorial changes made to Train’s prototype to Fannie’s “little flock,” the note implies that cutting her sheep out of the narrative – in other words, removing the most visible sign of her resemblance to the stock “disordered” shepherdess – was enough to secure Madge’s claim to historical typicality.

113 News of Elizabeth Graham’s death spread westward across the United States in the fall of 1859. See, for example, Daily National Intelligencer (Washington, DC), “Death of the Original of Walter Scott’s ‘Madge Wildfire’,” 20 September, 1859; Fayetteville (NC) Observer, “Death of the Original of Walter Scott’s ‘Madge Wildfire’,” 22 September, 1859; Sacramento (CA) Daily Union, “Death of the Original of Madge Wildfire,” 14 October 1859. The Sacramento Daily Union mentions the Border Advertiser as the source of Graham’s “interesting history”; however, the Daily National Intelligencer and Fayetteville Observer are less specific, referring only to “a Scottish paper.”
article reports, Graham, a former “rustic beauty” and survivor of sexual assault, had gone mad and “ta[k]en [her] dwelling place in a rude cave in the old Quarry Hill of Melrose.” These “particulars,” the author explains, conflating correlation with causation, “were quite well known to [Scott], residing in the neighbourhood; and the reader will observe that there is a striking coincidence between the real facts as we have briefly detailed them, and the incidents in the novel as pictured by the pen of the author of Waverly [sic].”

Even when readers depart from the official account Scott had endorsed in the Magnum, in other words, the “pen of the author of Waverly” remains sacrosanct.

Similarly, British periodicals like the Gentleman’s Magazine dignified the notice of Graham’s passing by publishing it in the “Obituaries” section as one noteworthy death amongst many. Although the article describes Graham as a “raving maniac” who “dwelt apart, living alone among […] humanity,” her inadvertent association with The Heart of Midlothian’s Madge Wildfire nevertheless made her life publicly grievable. In so doing, the Gentleman’s Magazine aligns the vagrant Graham more closely with the straightforwardly grievable lives of the surgeons, baronets, and wealthy West Indian landholders with whom she shares the obituary pages than it does with the beloved character herself; in the novel, as we may recall, the snatches of old ballads Madge Wildfire sings on her deathbed move Jeanie Deans and her attendants to tears, but she

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114 Fayetteville (NC) Observer, “Death of the Original of Walter Scott’s ‘Madge Wildfire,’” 22 September, 1859.
116 Defining a “grievable” life as a life deemed “worth noting, a live worth valuing and preserving, a life that qualifies for recognition,” Judith Butler singles out the obituary form as the “instrument by which grievability is publicly distributed”: as “the means by which a life becomes, or fails to become, […] noteworthy,” the obituary formalizes cultural recognition of the appropriate subjects for (and of) mourning. “Violence, Mourning, Politics,” Studies in Gender and Sexuality 4, no. 1 (2003): 9-37.
dies alone and unmourned in her hospital bed shortly thereafter. In the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in other words, Elizabeth Graham’s obituary becomes an “icon of national self-recognition” (Butler 23). By noting the death of a Scott prototype, in other words, British readers are meant to recognize themselves as mutual participants in the affective community forged through the shared experience of reading (and rereading) the *Waverley* novels. By contrast, the more miscellaneous format of the smaller American newspapers reframes this moment of solemn recognition as a merely curious conversation starter. The *Fayetteville Observer*, for instance, includes the obituary as one closely printed tidbit of “Interesting Information” amongst others, including anecdotes, aphorisms, advertisements, and short pieces on “the evils of knowing more than one’s neighbours.” Sandwiched between a discussion of invasive species and a witticism on alcohol consumption amongst authors, it is difficult to see Graham’s obituary in this context as an opportunity for imaginative communion, much less ritualized mourning. Instead, the *Observer* presents the notice of her death as a piece of consumable news from abroad – a striking fact, to be sure, but intended to measure the distance between

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117 Elizabeth Graham, of course, is not the only one of Scott’s “originals” to have been elevated to grievable status upon – or even after – her death. In 1831, Scott paid to erect a burial monument in Irongray cemetery to mark the grave of Helen Walker, “the humble individual [who] practiced in real life the virtues with which fiction has invested the imaginary character of Jeanie Deans” in *The Heart of Midlothian*. Furthermore, as Ann Rigney reminds us, in 1849 a local farmer raised a headstone to mark Andrew Gemmels’ (“Alias Edie Ochiltree,” of *The Antiquary*) grave at Roxburgh; in the 1860s, Scott’s publishers did the same for Robert Paterson (the namesake of *Old Mortality*) at his resting place in Caerlaverock. While these monuments serve as “concrete evidence of the fact that actual experience can be the source of fictitious stories and that fictions in turn can influence our memory of what was real,” Rigney notes, their inclusion of the prototype’s name alongside the character’s prevents them from wholly “abandon[ing] the distinction between what is actual and what is imaginary.” *Imperfect Histories*, 13, 15.

118 Similarly, the *Spectator* published a notice of Graham’s death under the heading of “Provincial News” from Scotland. While this decision does not present “Madge Wildfire” as a grievable human life in quite the same way as the *Gentleman’s Magazine*’s publication of the news as an obituary, it certainly elevates Graham’s death to the status of a significant national event in Scotland. *Spectator*, “‘Madge Wildfire’ has gone to her last home,” 3 September 1859: 896.
home and away, rather than to guarantee their proximity.

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, Scott’s Magnum preface and notes to *The Heart of Midlothian* deploy “prototypical” anecdotes in an effort to reopen the novel’s plot to the dynamic force of historical contingency; having accomplished this, the Author of Waverley himself steps in order to close the novel’s plot to further embellishment. In so doing, the edition capitalizes on the public’s fluency with paratext and the protocols of print in an effort to promote widespread rereading and repurchase. Building on paratext’s established power to interrupt and to restructure existing reading relations, the Magnum edition of the novel stages a deliberate confrontation between Scott’s fictional characters and incidents and the factual histories of their historical “prototypes.” By revealing the novel’s coincidence with – and, more importantly, its deliberate deviation from – the accidents and contingencies documented in its anecdotal source material, Scott’s notes and preface claim additional historical and cultural authority on behalf of his novel. Although his 1830 preface uses the Romantic discourse of character as a tonic to reframe and revitalize the novel’s familiar plot, his end-of-chapter notes offer more localized, particular interruptions, introducing the twin spectres of accident and archival aporiae in an effort to legitimize Scott’s fictional solutions to stubborn inconsistencies in the historical record. Furthermore, by incorporating popular anecdotes of Waverley “originals” into the structure of the novels themselves, Scott’s Magnum paratexts stake his claim on the raw materials of his fiction as an additional dimension of his vast literary property. Acknowledging the assistance of Helen Goldie and John McDiarmid in gathering anecdotes towards the “real history of Jeanie Deans,” for instance, Scott sets his proprietary seal upon their accounts of Helen Walker’s life, claiming them as source
material for *The Heart of Midlothian* even after the fact of the novel’s composition. Scott is similarly careful to pry open even Joseph Train’s near-exhaustive account of the life of “Feckless Fannie,” contradicting Train’s account of her untimely death even as he insists that significant alterations had to be made to the narrative of “Fannie’s” life before she could become intelligible – and, indeed, beloved – as the fictional character “Madge Wildfire.” Although readers would continue to suggest and to consume accounts of alternative prototypes for certain characters throughout the nineteenth century, the Magnum’s efforts to remediate Scott’s anecdotal sources to the reading public were for the most part successful. Ultimately, in presenting paratextual rereading as the preferred method for rereading the Waverley novels, the edition does not innovate so much as it adapts, transforming a strategy first pioneered by Scott’s readers into a lasting hallmark of the Author of Waverley.
Conclusion

Recognizing the intentional interruption of the relationships linking texts and readers as a formal strategy that acquires a new political and epistemological significance in the Romantic period, this thesis has worked to define “paratextual reading” as a distinct literary and historical phenomenon. At a moment where the reading habits of the British public were already understood to be a critical site of social and cultural reproduction, writers from Edgeworth to Scott used paratext in order to restructure the established relationships linking readers, texts, and their contexts. As I have shown, the expanding geographical and cultural range of Romantic literature strained these relationships to their breaking point. Throughout the period, the British imperial state continued to consolidate its power over geographical and cultural spaces unfamiliar to most metropolitan readers – and, as a result, writers were forced to devise new forms, such as the “footnote novel” and the annotated long poem, in order to make representations of these spaces accessible to the British reading public. These new genres, as we have seen, grafted the factual bodies of knowledge produced by Orientalist and antiquarian scholarship onto popular narrative forms. Through their incorporation of referential prefaces, footnotes, endnotes, and glossaries, these texts reimagine pleasure reading as an opportunity to gather valuable information about the cultures and histories of other parts of the world. More importantly, however, many Romantic writers of annotated literature also perform these paratextual interventions with a high degree of irony and editorial self-awareness, calling
repeated attention to their deliberate paratextual disruption of readerly efforts to immerse themselves in their fictions.

Broadly influenced by the tenets of associationist psychology, which held that ideas take root in the mind through their repeated association with sensations of pleasure or pain, Romantic annotated texts rely upon paratextual interruption to discipline the reading mind at work. By deploying footnotes and endnotes to disrupt their readers’ progress through poetry and prose narratives, many Romantic writers attempt to intervene in and to reform the public’s existing relationships to the texts they read for political as well as commercial ends. As we have seen, these writers capitalize on paratext’s established status as a supplement to the centred text, using marginal space to give voice to the submerged or implicit political conflicts that the centred text is unable to articulate openly. However, the dialectical interplay between centred text and paratext also allows these writers to construct synthesis as an extratextual activity – an approach that transfers the ultimate responsibility for resolving these political and epistemological conflicts from the text itself to the reading strategies pursued by its audience.

In shifting focus from the content of particular paratexts to the regulatory dynamics of paratextual reading, my thesis reveals broader shifts in how Romantic literary culture conceptualized the reading subject. In 1800, as we have seen, Edgeworth’s ironic, mock-editorial Glossary notes to Castle Rackrent exhort her “lazy” English readers to “walk a yard” to their bookshelves, inviting them to conduct independent research on the subject of Irish history and culture. ¹ By adapting Practical Education’s rationalist pedagogy of attention for an ignorant adult audience, the novel’s paratextual program presents the

¹ Edgeworth, Castle Rackrent, 56 (see ch. 1, n. 28).
cultivation of attentive, catalogical habits of reading as a pathway to more intellectually engaged and responsible methods of Anglo-Irish estate management, and to a more stable union between English and Irish economic interests. Henley, too, uses scholarly annotation as a tool to engage his audience’s attention. However, where Edgeworth attempts to stoke her “lazy” readers’ interest in subjects they find tiresome, Henley’s endnotes to *Vathek* aim to avert readers’ eyes from Beckford’s queer notoriety. In repackaging Beckford’s tale of unrestrained appetites as an anonymous “Arabian” manuscript, Henley’s scholarly apparatus found *Vathek* an enthusiastic reception amongst a specialist audience of antiquarian and Orientalist readers, drawing them into a periodical dialogue about literature’s role as a tool of imperial “aggrandizement.” While Southey’s notes to *Thalaba the Destroyer* later cite Henley’s learned edition of *Vathek* as a model, however, they also push established strategies of paratextual reading to their logical limits. Although Southey initially goes to great lengths to present his Orientalist footnotes to the poem as an effort to disrupt readers’ entrenched habits of thought about Islamic culture and religious practice, he quickly departs from his own paratextual program, calling performative attention to the “perverted” excesses of his own bookish desire instead of forging new associations for his readers.² In this way, *Thalaba’s* capricious paratexts seek to undermine the claims of annotators like Henley to view the East with rational detachment. Ultimately, by calling deliberate attention to paratext’s limitations as a strategy for transforming its readers’ longstanding habits of association, Southey questions the utility of purely discursive projects of imperial expansion.

Like Southey’s notes to *Thalaba* and Edgeworth’s notes to *Castle Rackrent*, Scott’s first-edition paratexts to the Waverley novels use playful, self-referential techniques to call attention to the epistemological tension between fact and fiction that drives their narratives. Scott’s metafictional prefaces also open the precise relationship between the novels’ historical “prototypes” and their fictional characters, places, and events to debate, prompting certain of his more enthusiastic readers to track down and to share anecdotes of the Waverley “originals” with one another through the periodical press. By the 1830s, however, Scott’s newly referential notes to the Magnum Opus edition of the novels began to discourage his readers’ efforts of independent research, seeking to reclaim the right to annotate the novels as the exclusive property of the Author of Waverley. In so doing, Scott’s new paratexts also manipulate the anecdote’s developing associations with historical contingency and what Joel Fineman has called “the effect of the real.”³ By grafting his anecdotal “prototypes” onto the body of the novel, as I have shown, Scott’s new notes and preface to *The Heart of Midlothian* seek to reopen even one of his most well-known and widely-adapted narratives to the eminently marketable readerly experience of novelty and surprise. In this way, the Magnum paratexts do not address their audience as potential collaborators in the ongoing work of intellectual labour and political or cultural life, as Edgeworth had done. Instead, Scott’s new apparatus hails its readers as the eager consumers of a favourite author’s last edition, an effort to restrict readerly autonomy that seeks to more profitably collapse rereading the novels with the act of repurchasing them.

³ Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote,” 61 (see ch. 3, n. 33).
In telling the story of how writers used paratext as a formal strategy to regulate the relationships between texts and their readers, my thesis documents how Romantic writers refashioned the reading subject in response to dramatic shifts in the boundaries that had traditionally separated different cultures, histories, and bodies of knowledge. By intervening in how their lazy, bookish, perverse, or otherwise unauthorized readers responded to the texts they read, these writers worked to cultivate a reading public fit to grapple with the information overload attendant on a new age of British imperial expansion.
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