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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

LUXURY ROMANTICISM:

THE QUARTO BOOK

IN THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

BY

MATTHEW CLARKE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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INTRODUCTION:

LUXURY ROMANTICISM

In March of 1815, *The Scourge* ran a short article denouncing in the harshest terms a recent fad in British publishing:

[s]ince the age of Elizabeth, the rewards of literary labor and poetical skill appear to have been a proportion directly inverse to the quantity of desert, and while it is yet recorded that the pitiful remuneration of ten pounds was regarded as no inadequate compensation for the *Paradise Lost* of Milton, the Scotts, the Wordsworths, and the Southneys, come forth in all the pomposity of ponderous quartos, beautiful to the eye, and expensive to the pocket. (“The Spoils of Literature” 221)

The steep rise in the production of such “ponderous quartos” marked a troubling trend, in which public attention was increasingly diverted away from literary merit and toward bibliographic display. The consequences of this trend were both numerous and disturbing. Sky-rocketing book prices threatened to fracture the republic of letters, bringing about a crisis in which “[t]he really deserving portion of the literary community is left to pine in necessity and despair while the manufacturers of quartos absorb the attention of the public, and the money of the bookseller” (222). Meanwhile, the quarto format, whose flashily ornamental trappings allowed publishers to pawn off work of inferior quality to benighted book buyers, enabled a species of robbery that had grown so severe that “the trade of a poetical pick-pocket only [differed] from that of his brother pedestrian by the greater extent of its atrocity” (222). Indeed, such “mercenary dealers in tales of sympathy, and scenes of chivalrous generosity” (222) had grown cunning enough to swindle “[t]he

admirer of poetical talent, and the critical friends whose expectations have been excited by the promise displayed in the first effusion” into sacrificing “their dinners or their places at the theatre, to the anticipated luxury of enjoying a *second Lay ...*” (223) in quarto. Finally, the magnificently high prices of recent verse quartos hinted at an uneasy relationship between certain of the literary ideologies defining the new poetic schools and the commercial context in which these ideologies were materialized and circulated.

Writing of the quarto publication of Wordsworth’s monumental *Excursion*, *The Scourge* expressed its confusion that “this immaculate and virtuous enthusiast has ventured upon a mercantile speculation that would scarcely have become the character of his own pedlar, and has published ‘The *Excursion*, a Portion of the Recluse’, a poem, price £2 2s. 0.” (224). Impacting writers, readers, and the status of the poetic text itself, the quarto was envisioned by *The Scourge* as situated solidly, if unsettlingly, at the center of Romantic-period literary culture.

But *The Scourge* was not alone in fixating on the prevalence of the quarto book. Indeed, such diatribes were widespread, and they serve to register the changing conditions of the British book market in the Romantic period, during which there occurred not only an explosion in the production of inexpensive small-format books but also the emergence of a specialty market for luxurious verse publications in quarto. My argument in this dissertation is that the luxurious quarto profoundly shaped the reception of Romantic-era verse, and that it did so in ways that have been hitherto neglected. As the period’s preeminent luxury book, “beautiful to the eye, and expensive to the pocket,” the format’s reputation as an “unnecessary expense” and a “bibliographic ornament” classed

the poetic ideologies it embodied, configuring for the era's readers a set of literary discourses—from sentimentalism, to liberalism, to Wordsworthian Romanticism, to orientalism—as luxuries meant exclusively for the wealthiest consumers. The quarto's power to convert these aesthetic and political ideologies into cultural capital was out of all proportion to the actual number of quarto books, for the format's massive prestige meant that its texts, more than any others, absorbed “the attention of the public” and its major reviewing organs. Consequently, the luxurious quarto helped define Romantic-period literature as it was received by most Romantic-period readers, who were far more familiar with quarto authors like Byron, Scott and Southey, than with small-format authors like Shelley or Keats. Yet the quarto's status as a bibliographic ornament also generated a host of related anxieties about the format's effects on British readers, who were both drawn to and repelled by the book's lavish but useless ornamentation. Even while it served to render polite the vulgar poetic subjects—wandering vagrants, urban workers, rural laborers, “orientals”—upon which much of its poetry relied, the Romantic-period quarto also threatened to corrupt its readers by bringing such subjects too close for comfort. More directly, it was worried worried that the luxuriousness of the quarto itself would contaminate British consumers, turning them away from the edifying activity of useful reading and toward the status-oriented gesture of bibliographic display, thus endangering their moral purity and jeopardizing the nation by moving it closer to the sort of decadence thought to hasten the downfall of empires.

In identifying the quarto as a “luxury” book, I seek to place Romantic-period literary culture in a new light meant to foreground its material luxury. For a term forming

the focus of “the keynote debate of the Enlightenment” (Berg and Eger 5), luxury has been curiously neglected by scholars of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature. Drawing on an ancient tradition that figured the excess it named as morally contaminating, eighteenth-century commentators located in the luxury of an increasingly commercialized Britain a host of gathering anxieties about the nation’s rapidly changing social codes. Luxury’s spread threatened British masculinity, as John Brown suggested when in 1757 he cautioned that the character of eighteenth-century England would “on a fair Examination . . . probably appear to be that of a ‘*vain, luxurious and selfish EFFEMINACY*’” (*Estimate* 29). Observing that “[a]ll our petty *Clerks* in Offices, Noblemen’s *Butlers*, *Valets* and *Grooms of Chambers*, are become such *fine Gentlemen* that there is not one in eight without his *Gold-Watch* and *Velvet-Breeches*, &c (*Luxury, Pride and Vanity* 16), Erasmus Jones worried that “[t]he prodigious Spirit of *Pride, Luxury, Profuseness, Vanity and Corruption*” (1) emanating from the profusion of cheaper luxury goods would destabilize the sartorial signifiers constituting the country’s class order. Likewise, Britain’s growing anxieties of empire were triggered by the deluge of silks, porcelains and other oriental treasures flooding London markets from an Orient where, according to James Bruce, all was once “power, splendour, and riches, attended by the luxury which was the necessary consequence” (*Travels* 366). Even so, luxury also saw a growing share of defenders. In *The Fable of the Bees*, for example, Bernard Mandeville praised luxury by arguing that its private vices translated into public—and particularly economic—benefits: “Luxury / Employ’d a Million of the Poor, / And odious Price a Million more. / Envy it self and Vanity / Were ministers of Industry . . . / Thus

Vice and Ingenuity, / Which join'd with Time, and Industry / Had carry'd Life's
 Conveniences, / It's real Pleasures, Comforts, Ease, / To such a Height, the very Poor /
 Lived better than the Rich before; / And nothing could be added more" (*The Fable of the
 Bees* 180-4; 198-204). By mid-century, Hume could remark that "[l]uxury is a word of
 very uncertain signification, and may be taken in a good as well as a bad sense" (*Political
 Discourses* 23). Hume's conclusion was borne out by the discourse's vicissitudes during
 the latter half of the century: veering between competing figurations—moral threat and
 commercial boon, oriental scourge and imperial prize, disease of the aristocracy and life-
 blood of the middle class—luxury was by the last decade of the eighteenth century a
 sensitive cultural pressure point.

But, as Romantic-period readers knew, the debate on luxury was always grounded
 in the production, exchange and consumption of luxury goods, including those books
 used to materialize the debate itself. Lavishing praise throughout the period on the
 luxurious materiality of their books, many readers agreed with one writer for the *Monthly
 Magazine*, who confessed that "[t]o cut open the leaves, to inhale the fragrance of the
 scarcely-dry paper, to examine the type, to see who is the printer (which is some clue to
 the value that is set upon the work), to launch out into regions of thought and invention
 never trod until now, and to explore characters that never met a human eye before—this
 is a luxury worth sacrificing a dinner-party, or a few hours of a spare morning to" ("On
 Reading New Books," *Monthly Magazine* IV.19: 17). A "luxury worth sacrificing a
 dinner-party," the book as commodity materialized the luxury of the leisured escape
 offered by reading, its power to "launch [the reader] out into regions of thought and

invention never trod until now.” Yet more than any other Romantic-period format, it was the quarto that was acknowledged for its luxuriousness.¹ With its relatively high price, superfluous additions, and spacious page—described by Sheridan as a “neat rivulet of text meandering through a meadow of margin”—the “luxurious quarto” (*Monthly Review* 83: 299) was the era’s luxury book *par excellence*.²

But as the preeminent luxury book of the period, the quarto’s appeal was always double-edged. On the one hand, quarto publication established the polite status and prestigious reputation of a text, its author, and its publishing house, as Southey suggested when he declared of his oriental epic *The Curse of Kehama* that it “is to be printed in quarto for the sake of my dignity” (*CLRS* 1731). However, the luxuriousness of the quarto book also threatened to erode interest in reading. Desired especially for its material beauty, the quarto was a book meant to serve as a piece of ornamental furniture, to be exhibited as much as read, as hinted by one writer who complained of the “expensive quarto that can only be purchased by the rich, and read by the studious, which

¹ Certainly, any book—a small duodecimo or even a shoddily printed chapbook—could qualify as a luxury to some reader. Yet the quarto was recognized as a luxury by *all* Romantic readers, from those members of the gentry who lost half a week’s income in the purchase of one, to those laborers for whom the quarto—and even access to those circulating libraries that sometimes carried them—was prohibitively expensive.

² Throughout the period, the quarto is referred to repeatedly as a luxury. See, for example, the *Gentleman’s Magazine* review of “Illustrations of Japan,” which refers to the format as a “luxury book” (433). More explicitly, see the *Monthly Magazine*’s 1825 review of J. Britton’s quarto “The History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Wells”: “Adding to judicious compilation and arrangement appropriate splendour of embellishment, [Britton] has placed the generality of his publications among the enviable luxuries of the library . . . We find eight guineas, ten guineas, twelve guineas, thirty-two pounds, among the prices of the superb editions of the other individual works enumerated in the catalogue. This may give some of our simple readers, who look into books only for the information they can derive from them, some idea of the expense at which the luxury of a literary taste is sometimes to be indulged . . . The paper, of course, is beautiful, and the typographical execution elegant throughout; and the embellishments of the first and second . . . are splendidly picturesque” (410: 448-9).

having had its day on the drawing-room table, is consigned to its destined shelf in the library; however valuable the contents may be” (*A Letter to the Author of Waverley* 6-7). Both massively prestigious and troublingly ornamental, the quarto format embodied the conflicted appeal of luxury even while its luxury status established the format as a class marker. Romantic readers in turn consistently recognized the quarto as a book meant for the wealthiest members of British society. Castigating the quarto format of the recent publications of “Lord Byron, Mr. Walter Scott, and others,” one writer articulated in simple terms what everybody knew: that “[t]he high price of the writings of the poets I have named, places them out of the reach of the many” (“Essay on the Art of Book-Making,” *The Satirist*, 12: 203).³ To some commentators, the format’s reputation for restricted circulation was cause for praise, as William Godwin suggested in speculating of his massive quarto *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* that William Pitt had refrained from pursuing prosecution against the writer because “a three guinea book could never do much harm among those who had not three shillings to spare” (ctd. in St. Clair 85). But the quarto’s luxury drew condemnation from most commentators. As one writer exclaimed in an 1809 review of Thomas Campbell’s *Gertrude of Wyoming* quarto, “£1. 5s! One hundred and thirty four quarto pages for one pound five shillings! To be sure, the paper is drawing paper, the ink as beautiful as Indian ink, and the type symmetry itself.

³ Certainly, increases in the prices of smaller format books also exasperated critics, as *The Satirist* admitted when claiming of Byron’s *Giaour* that “[t]he noble lord appears to have an aristocratical solicitude to be read only by the opulent” before complaining “[m]y good Lord Byron, while you are revelling in all the sensual and intellectual luxury which the successful sale of Newstead Abbey has procured for you, you little think of the privations to which you have subjected us unfortunate Reviewers, ... in order to enable us to purchase your lordship’s expensive publication” (*The Satirist* 13: 88). But if octavos like the 4 shilling 6 pence *Giaour* were already expensive, quartos like *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*—which entered the market at 30 shillings unbound—were magnificently priced.

But one pound five shillings! ... Book-making now has made his master-piece ... A greater poet than Mr. Campbell must now print with a large golden letter on satin folio (*Cabinet* 5: 417).⁴ Prestigious, pompous, and classed, the luxury of the Romantic-period quarto quickened consumer desire even while drawing the disgust of many of the era's readers.

Such ambivalence is evident in the conflicted attitude of many Romantic-period poets toward the quarto. Describing the quarto as a book intended for “gentlemen, persons of fortune, professional men, ladies, persons who can afford to buy, or can easily procure, books of half-a-guinea price, hot-pressed and printed on super fine paper” (ctd. St. Clair 201), William Wordsworth still arranged for the quarto publication of his *The White Doe of Rylestone* in order, as he put it, “[t]o express my own opinion of it” (Haydon 2: 470). Likewise, the quarto's status as an expensive luxury, meant as an ornament for drawing-room tables rather than simply as a readable text, was seen by some poets as an economic stimulant. Robert Southey, for example, could complain in 1805 that “books are now so dear that they are becoming rather articles of fashionable furniture than any thing else” even while praising *Madoc's* “size & cost” for its power to “recommend it among these gentry—*libros consumere nati*,—born to buy quartos & help the revenue” (*CLRS*: 1075). Some poets even sought to use the format for the expressly political purpose of targeting wealthy readers, as Shelley suggested when he ordered of

⁴ Campbell's quarto so incensed the reviewer that he confessed “that it gratifies our spleen to see his verses take the humble form into which our coarse paper and brevier type unceremoniously draws them. Our comfort is, that, the principal poem being a Pennsylvanian Tale, a copy of the work will certainly find its way to America, and that an edition of it will be printed there! May Mr. Campbell see it! We ask no dearer revenge” (418). See also, among other numerous examples, *The Satirist's* complaint that “[o]f all the attempts at literary swindling which have fallen beneath our notice ... [*Gertrude*] is decidedly the most disgraceful, as well as most impudent” (4: 499).

Queen Mab that “only 250 copies be printed” in “[a] small neat Quarto on fine paper & so as to catch the aristocrats: They will not read it, but their sons & daughters may” (*Letters* 1: 361). Even Byron, notoriously dismissive of the format as a “cursed unsaleable size” (*Letters and Journals* II: 113), could still admire the “[g]ood paper, clear type, & vast margin” of the first quarto edition of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (*Letters and Journals* II: 130). Like the period’s reviewers, many Romantic poets harbored divided feelings about quarto luxury.

The quarto’s ambivalent status as a bibliographic luxury—discussed in Chapter 1—also shaped the reception of the poetry it embodied, as subsequent chapters show. Examining the early publication history of Oliver Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village,” Chapter 2 argues that the quarto format served to class as the unique privilege of a readerly elite the sympathetic feeling at the heart of Goldsmith’s poem, thus exemplifying the ways in which sentimentalism’s political alignments were shaped by the formats of its major texts as much as the changing political contexts of the late eighteenth century. Two cases in particular show how the poem was politically appropriated and repurposed through changes in its formatting. By reprinting “The Deserted Village” in a chapbook and distributing it to peasants during a period of widespread agrarian revolt, the Irish Catholic printer Patrick Wogan sought to promote inter-denominational unity among peasants by redirecting hostility towards enclosure and the landlords whose pursuit of luxury purportedly hastened it. Similarly, by excerpting “The Deserted Village” in his penny weekly pamphlet *Pigs’ Meat*, the English radical Thomas Spence redefined the poem as a piece of revolutionary political propaganda meant to advance his Land Plan.

Turning from the “luxury of woe” to the “luxury of democratic converse,” Chapter 3 delineates the quarto’s constitutive place in the material infrastructure of the bourgeois public sphere of the 1790s, arguing that the Crown’s refusal to prosecute relatively expensive quarto publications meant that the format came to possess a protected status that was exploited by the era’s major publisher of respectably radical political literature, Joseph Johnson. By publishing the anti-monarchical poems of Blake, Barlow, Wordsworth, and Coleridge in quarto, Johnson curbed their seditious tendencies and configured them as respectably radical works whose textual appeals to middle-class audiences were reinforced by their material forms. Chapter 4 shifts the focus to the Romantic imagination, arguing that the quarto publication of *The Excursion* was not only intended to mitigate Wordsworth’s own anxieties of influence and declare a newly Royalist political alliance but was also understood by contemporaries as materializing the “luxury of the imagination.” Entering the market at the magnificently high price of 42 shillings, Wordsworth’s career-defining work was recognized by readers as a luxury book whose lavish format problematized its lowly contents. If, as one contemporary put it, *The Excursion* was “a mine / Of Poesy’s true lore divine, / Rich veins of thought affording” (“Verses to Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown *on their Publication of Wordsworth’s Excursion* IN OCTAVO” 7-9), then the wealth of its poetry shone especially in the form of the book embodying it, whose rarity and high price rendered it “half inaccessible, / By means of that forbidding spell / Which lurks in quarto boarding” (“Verses” 10-12). Finally, Chapter 5 explores the uniquely Romantic frisson associated with the luxury of the East, arguing that “the luxury commodity of orientalism” (Leask

22) was not just a discursive construction but also a material good whose shape was determined by that format conventionally used to publish it, the “luxurious quarto” book. The quarto format of Romantic-period travel literature in particular drew both the desire of consumers and the objections of readers, reinforcing the ambivalent appeal of its descriptions of oriental luxury. Likewise, the reception of Regency-period oriental verse quartos like Robert Southey’s *The Curse of Kehama* and Thomas Moore’s *Lalla Rookh* displayed the luxurious material contours of Romantic-period orientalism and demonstrated that the anxieties of empire unsettling Romantic writers were materialized in the form of the quarto.

The arguments advanced in the following chapters are meant to contribute to a number of critical and scholarly discussions by showing how attention to the physical form of the book alters these conversations. Chapter 2 shows that debates about the politics of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century sentimentalism must acknowledge the ways in which sentimental texts were politicized by their bibliographic embodiments. While the quarto encouraged readers to focus on the sentimental subject’s “luxury of woe,” smaller-format reissues brought sentimental texts to audiences more likely to concentrate on the woes caused by luxury. Chapter 3 demonstrates that discussions of Romantic public spheres and counter-public spheres need to take into account the ways in which book format—as much as publishing house, author, audience or literary style—defined such spheres, arguing in particular that the Johnson circle’s “respectability” was shaped by Johnson’s formatting choices. Chapter 4 shows that what Lucy Newlyn calls the “anxiety of reception” was as much a material problem as a

literary preoccupation for Wordsworth, who sought to mitigate his anxieties about literary survival by publishing *The Excursion* in quarto. Meanwhile, Wordsworth's reliance on the durable form of the quarto to materialize the most ambitious statement of his Romantic ideology foregrounds the contradictions of its aesthetic program, strengthening Jerome McGann's contention that Romantic gestures toward transcendence are always grounded by the inescapable constraints of history and materiality. Moving from anxieties of reception to "anxieties of empire," Chapter 5 delineates the ways in which those fears of the Orient's power to contaminate British culture described by Nigel Leask found a material focus in the form of the luxurious quarto book.

The following chapters owe their primary theoretical and methodological commitments to the book historical scholarship associated with British Cultural Studies. In general, my aim is to map an important pattern in the early transmission of British Romanticism, and, specifically, to show that a set of aesthetic ideologies associated with the Romantic period were politicized by their embodiments in the form of the luxurious quarto book. Methodologically, my argument is advanced along empirical lines. In many ways this is a reception history, insofar as I use the evidence of readers—especially as documented in reviews, diaries, marginalia, letters and other writings—to show that the quarto book was understood by contemporaries as a luxury good and that its status as a luxury good shaped early interpretations of the poetry it embodied. In so doing, I make a few important assumptions. First, I assume that concepts like "intention," "belief," and "anxiety" are stable enough to make claims about and interesting enough to justify them, and that such states are accessible through the evidence of written report. Second, I rely

on an array of verbs—e.g., “shape,” “lead,” “encourage,”—meant to specify a causal though not deterministic relationship between the technology of the quarto book and the mental states of historical readers. Rather than claiming that the quarto medium was the historical message, or that the quarto invariably produced in its readers a certain set of interpretations, I argue that the quarto’s bibliographic codes led many Romantic-period readers to interpret the literary codes of quarto texts as displaying a luxurious species of cultural capital. To be sure, not all Romantic readers cared about the luxuriousness of the quarto or saw it as relevant to their interpretations of quarto literature. Yet, as the evidence of historical reception shows, a significant number did.

A few other qualifications are necessary. First, as Chapter 1 makes clear, I understand luxury as a relational property; correspondingly, I claim not that the quarto was the *only* luxury book or format of the Romantic period but rather that the quarto was acknowledged as the *preeminent* luxury book, insofar as quarto texts in almost all cases represented the highest grade of bibliographic production.⁵ Second, and relatedly, I understand quarto luxury as primarily a matter of format and relative price. As Chapters 2 and 3 show, 2 shilling quarto pamphlets were luxuries, just as two guinea quarto books were. Though a two guinea quarto book was usually seen as a greater luxury than a shilling pamphlet, my focus is on the luxuriousness of the quarto text—in book or pamphlet—relative to other publications of that same text. Hence, my argument concentrates on the quarto *qua* format. Third, I tend to examine quarto texts while tending (with the exception of Chapter 2) to ignore their small-format reprints, as well as

⁵ Of course, as a larger format, the folio superseded the quarto as a luxury format. However, folios—especially verse folios—were very rare in the period. See Chapter 1.

the “tranching down” process described by William St. Clair. It might thus be objected that the tranching down of quarto texts into markedly less luxurious formats complicates claims about the power of the quarto to render these texts luxuries for readers. Yet a text’s initial publication in quarto almost always lingered in the public memory, even after it had been trached down, and quarto authors—from Scott and Southey to Byron and Moore—were seen as belonging to the same publishing category, even after tranching had altered the shapes of their texts. Hence, even if tranching down altered the potential readership of a text, it usually failed to dislodge that text’s initial reputation for luxuriousness. Fourth, it should be acknowledged that quartos were generally, in terms of print run, fewer in number and, in terms of authorship, relatively rarer than small-format texts. For example, a very great number of now-canonical Romantic texts—from *Lyrical Ballads*, to Byron’s Oriental tales, to much of the poetry of Keats and Shelley—were published in the supposedly more functional octavo format. Yet because the quarto was the period’s preeminent luxury format and therefore absorbed the most public attention, its texts were seen as disproportionately representative of the period’s new literature, drawing numerous reviews and defining the parameters of public conversation about the new literary “schools” of the era. When it was first issued in quarto in 1810, for example, Southey’s *The Curse of Kehama* was reviewed by *The Critical Review*, the *Monthly Review*, *The Satirist*, *The Quarterly Review*, *The Edinburgh Review*, *La Belle Assemblee*, *The Literary Panorama*, and *The Eclectic Review*. Even an (initially) unknown poet like Byron—parliamentary speeches and advertising puffs aside—could depend on the quarto

to stir up public interest.⁶ Even if quarto books were actually few in number, their impact on the British reading nation and its reception of Romantic-period literature was massive and memorable. Classing its associated literary discourses as luxuries meant especially for wealthy readers, the Romantic-period quarto was the basic mechanism in the production of luxury romanticism, as this dissertation aims to show.

⁶ The *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* quarto was reviewed by the *British*, the *Monthly Review*, the *Edinburgh*, the *Critical*, the *Quarterly*, and the *Gentleman's*. The first issue of *Lyrical Ballads*, on the other hand, was reviewed by *The New London Review*, *The Analytical Review*, and *The Critical Review*, while extracts were also printed in a few other periodicals. The situation was not very different during the Regency: Shelley's *Alastor* (1816) and Keats's *Poems* (1817) both received virtually no attention in the press.

CHAPTER 1

THE LUXURY QUARTO IN THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

In early April 1816, a book auction was held at the house of the auctioneer R. H. Evans in the fashionable London district of Pall Mall. The auction catalogue advertised “A Collection of Books Late the Property of a Nobleman About to Leave England on a Tour” and listed on its title page a number of the library’s treasures: “the Large Plates to Boydell’s Shakespeare, 2 vol. PROOF IMPRESSIONS, *red morocco* ... Dryden’s Works, 18 vol. LARGE PAPER, *russia* ... And some *Romaic* books of which no other Copies are in this Country.” The library was a large one: on the first day, the catalogue listed one hundred and thirty seven entries under “octavo et. infra,” with many entries including a number of different books or collections, as well as multi-volume sets. Meanwhile, the catalogue listed fifty quartos, mostly works of poetry, travel, and history, and only seven folios. Most of the books listed for sale on the first day had been published relatively recently: of the quartos, for example, only eight had appeared before 1800, and of these eight, only two before 1790. The proceeds of the auction were magnificent, bringing in about £730, a number which would have been doubled, according to one attendee, if each book had been signed by the library’s owner, Lord Byron (“Byron’s Library” 2).

The great number of octavos, duodecimos, and pamphlets included in Byron’s library indexes a fundamental change in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century book production and consumption: the move away from larger, more cumbersome books like

quartos and folios and towards smaller, more portable formats. However, even while the majority of new books published during the Romantic period were issued in small formats, the quarto gained a reputation as a luxury format adopted especially for the publication of new poetry. Among those of Byron's quartos sold during the two-day sale, the majority were newly composed and recently published books of verse. Such books were lavishly produced and highly priced, being sold at rates that precluded almost all British readers of the period—with the exception of wealthy purchasers like Byron—from the possibility of buying them. The commercial conditions and material form of the verse quarto fixed the format's profile as a luxury commodity, as this chapter shows, and this profile shaped the reception of the poetry it embodied. Focusing on the luxury debates of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Part 1 documents the discursive context that shaped Romantic understandings of the quarto book, whereas Part 2 describes the cultural presence of the Romantic-period quarto book, uncovering the format's status as the era's predominant luxury book. By tracing a history of the luxury quarto in the Romantic period, this chapter reveals how material format, as often as literary form, contributed to the construction of social meaning for Romantic readers.

The Discourse on Luxury in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

According to many economic and cultural historians, eighteenth-century Britain witnessed a commercial revolution of unprecedented scope. Exponential growth in the number, kinds and accessibility of available commodities occurred alongside—and may have been caused by—the “birth of a consumer society” (McKendrick 9).¹ Studies by

¹ According to Neil McKendrick, a relatively open social structure (19-21), the growing cultural sway of London (21), wage increases (23), and a developing intellectual culture that praised the virtues of

Carol Shammas, Niels Steensgaard, Peter Earle, and Lorna Weatherill provide quantitative accounts of rising production and consumption in Britain, serving to justify Neil McKendrick's claim that during the third quarter of the eighteenth century Britain "saw such a convulsion of getting and spending, such an eruption of new prosperity, and such an explosion of new production and marketing techniques, that a greater proportion of the population than in any previous society in human history was able to enjoy the pleasures of buying consumer goods" (9).² Growth was registered not only in terms of the total number of consumer goods: new kinds of commodities were increasingly available to British consumers. When in July of 1791 an angry mob attacked and burned the

luxury (15-19) provided the preconditions for the growth of consumption across all classes (10-11; 21-2). Simultaneously, "the emulative spending bred by social mobility, [and] the compulsive power of fashion begotten by social competition ... combined with the widespread ability to spend (offered by new levels of prosperity) to produce an unprecedented propensity to consume ..." (11). McKendrick's basic thesis—that "the consumer revolution was the necessary analogue to the industrial revolution" (9)—is not universally agreed upon. De Vries argues that McKendrick equivocates about the causal relationship between consumer and industrial revolutions ("between Purchasing Power" 88-9); others dispute the assertion that consumerism was born in Britain (see, e.g., Jan de Vries, "Luxury in the Dutch Golden Age in Theory and Practice"; Richard Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300-1600*; and Cissie Fairchild, "The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris") or in *eighteenth-century* Britain (see, e.g., Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption* and Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor*); still others note methodological problems in the use of probate inventories and trade records (see, e.g., de Vries, "Purchasing Power" 102); and Mokyr argues that demand theses like McKendrick's are circular ("Demand v. Supply in the Industrial Revolution"). Whether or not McKendrick is correct in locating the "birth" of consumer society in eighteenth century England, his argument draws attention to the indisputable fact, attested to by probate inventories, official trade records, and contemporary observation, that ownership of durable and non-durable goods among English households grew exponentially over the course of the century.

² Carole Shammas uses trade records to map the growth in the importation of non-durable commodities like sugar and tea (*The PreIndustrial Consumer*); Niels Steensgaard charts the increase in importation of durable goods by the English East India Company during the first half of the eighteenth century ("The Growth and Composition of the Long Distance Trade"); Peter Earle documents a rapid increase in clothing and domestic consumption among members of London's business and professional classes between 1660 and 1730 (*The Making of the English Middle Class*); and Lorna Weatherill analyzes inventories to demonstrate increases in English ownership of an array of "key" domestic durable goods—like books, clocks, and mirrors—between 1675 and 1725 (*Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain*).

Birmingham home of scientist, minister, and religious dissenter Joseph Priestley, an inventory of lost household possessions reflects the diversity of new goods:

His possessions included large quantities of mahogany and japanned furniture, cotton window curtains, carpets, pier and swing looking glasses, tea urns and other tea equipment, large amounts of chinaware, silver-plated table, dessert, and tea spoons, cut glass, as well as smaller modern or fashionable items of ornament and display ... colossal amounts of chinaware: valuable china ornaments in the parlour, a set of Nankeen table china of 108 pieces valued at £16 2s ... three sets of Wedgewood ware, green edged valued at £5 9s., blue-edged valued at £4 4s., and a yellow set at £3 13s ... there were special branded goods and recent inventions: a Magellan timepiece, Wedgewood black inkstands, and a Boulton & Watt copying machine. There were new forms of ornamental ware and medallions: plated buckles, mourning buckles, and knee buckles. (Berg 2-3)

Nor was the growth in consumption exclusive to members of the wealthier classes, like Priestley: ownership of commodities was growing even among the poorest orders of British society.³ So extensive and conspicuous was British consumerism that domestic and foreign observers began to view Britain as a country defined by its trade—“a nation of shopkeepers,” as Napoleon, echoing Adam Smith, would soon put it (McKendrick 10; 26).⁴

³ McKendrick observes that “the decencies owned by the poorest man who figures in the probate inventories of Sedgley in Staffordshire included the following: fireshovel, coal hammer, toasting iron, house bellows, a copper can, wooden furniture, a tun dish, scissors, a warming pan, a brass kettle, two iron pots, one pail, a search (sieve), two old candlesticks, glass bottles and earthenware, linen of all sorts in a chamber, a pair of bedsteads, a 'coverlid', a rug, a blanket, a kneading tub, two barrels, two coffers, a box, some trenchers, pewter, a brass skimmer, a brass basting spoon, an iron flesh fork, a tin calendar, and so on” (McKendrick 26, citing Dudley).

⁴ Contemporary observers corroborate McKendrick’s contention that increasing consumption was driven at least in part by emulative desire, as Nicolas Barbon suggests in 1690 in explaining that “[t]he Wants of the mind are infinite, Man naturally Aspires, and as his Mind is elevated, his Senses grow more refined, and more capable of Delight; his Desires are enlarged, and his Wants increase with his Wishes, which is for every thing that is rare, can gratifie his Senses, adorn his body, and promote the Ease, Pleasure, and Pomp of Life” (*A Discourse of Trade* 14). Even if, to certain English writers, the changes being wrought by increasing commercialization were cause for concern (see, e.g., Samuel Fawconer, *An Essay on Modern Luxury*; Jonathan Swift, *The History of the Four Last Years of the Queen*; and Henry Fielding, “On the Changes which have Taken Place in the Constitution of England”), contemporaries

One result of this commercial revolution was the reshaping of older cultural categories and the introduction of new ones. In particular, with the deluge of new commodities, contemporary observers were increasingly driven to distinguish the good from the bad, those that satisfied needs from those that stimulated wants, the necessary from the extravagantly luxurious. Increasing commercialization motivated a new discourse attempting to make sense of it, and this new discourse took shape around the ancient concept of luxury. Maxine Berg writes that “[w]hether an analytical category of political economy, a constantly recurring theme of moral discourse or a literary trope, luxury was at the heart of eighteenth-century debate over consumption, production and trade” (“Consumption” 363).⁵ In participating in this debate, eighteenth-century

were inescapably preoccupied by the increasing rates of the production and consumption of commodities.

⁵ Berg reiterates this point insistently: insofar as the eighteenth-century was marked uniquely as the age of emerging consumerism, “luxury was no less than the keyword of the period, a central term in the language of cultural transformation” and a “catalyst and signpost of social and intellectual change” (*Luxury* 1), and the debate about the term—and specifically its meaning and its economic and moral value—was “the keynote debate of the Enlightenment” (*Luxury* 5). Contemporary commentators agree with Berg. Writing of London in 1761, Thomas Cole warned in his *Discourse on Luxury, Infidelity and Enthusiasm* that “[a]n ostentatious extravagance is continually displaying itself in every part of this voluptuous city, and amongst all ranks and conditions of men. An emulous endeavour to outvie each other in all the elegant accommodations of life, seems to be, not only the ruling principle of a few, but the main ambition of a vast majority; the characteristic and almost universal passion of the age . . . In vain are [the wealthy] possessed of a fortune, which is more than sufficient to procure them all the real conveniences of life, whilst a luxurious taste is for ever enlarging their desires beyond the extent of their abilities” (*Discourses on Luxury* 11). Others shared Cole's view. Samuel Fawcener wrote in *An Essay on Modern Luxury* (1765) that “[i]t is natural to imagine, that a prosperous and opulent people, flourishing in conquests, and secure from the apprehension of foreign invasions, would indulge themselves in the gratification of all such pleasurable objects, as affluence enables them to procure, and ease prompts them to enjoy. But late experience convinces us, that even an unsuccessful war . . . was not able to damp the spirit of our national luxury . . .” (3-4). In *The Way to be Rich and Respectable* (1776), John Trusler wrote that “[t]he great degree of luxury to which this country has arrived, within a few years, is not only astonishing but almost dreadful to think of” (*The Way to be Rich and Respectable* 3). Erasmus Jones (1736) found himself preoccupied with the luxurious clothes newly available to large segments of the population, asking “[c]an there be a more provoking Sight in the Streets of a rich trading City, than for a little Quill-pushing Fellow, with a Salary of fifty Pounds a Year, a laced hat, a yard of Steel at his A--e, and perhaps a Cl--p into the bargain, to take the Wall of an eminent Merchant?” (*Luxury, Pride and Vanity* 16). Such sights drove Jones to claim that “[t]he prodigious

commentators drew on an already well-established discursive tradition that damned luxury as perniciously destructive. According to Linda Levy Peck, “[t]he ancients and early Christians subjected luxury and luxury goods to withering attacks as the scourge of virtue: decadent, effeminate, sinful, and subversive”; the Stoics saw luxury as a threat emanating from the East in the form of goods imported during times of peace; and Pliny the Elder claimed that luxury was the consequence of goods taken during wartime conquests (Levy Peck 6). Luxury consumption was seen as the “product of extreme inequality, the sacrifice of the countryside for the cities, the cause of depopulation, the nemesis of courage, honour, and love of country” (Hont 380). Moreover, it was identified as a vice of corrupt, extravagant, and decadent elites (Berg *Luxury* 9). Due to its class significance, luxury was frequently the target of legal regulation: “[b]ecause luxury raised fears of both social mobility and the corruption of the state, sumptuary legislation from the Romans to the Elizabethans sought to maintain sharp distinctions between status groups” (Levy Peck 6).⁶ The traditional conception of luxury, which damned it as a morally corrupting and socially dangerous force requiring careful legal regulation, gained its strongest eighteenth-century defender in the Archbishop Francois Fenelon, whose wildly popular *Les aventures de Telemaque, fils d’Ulysse* cast luxury along with

Spirit of *Pride, Luxury, Profuseness, Vanity* and *Corruption*, that hath shewn itself in this Kingdom for some Years past, (and which if not speedily remedied, will inevitably put an end to the *Name, Trade, and Constitution of the British Nation*) begins now to be felt by every honest and thinking Subject: Nothing but Extravagance, Voluptuousness and Idleness, with all their direful Consequences, being seen in every Corner of the Kingdom” (1). Hence, as Berg concludes, contemporary responses to increasing consumption “were expressed at the time in terms of an intellectual debate over the political, economic, moral and aesthetic effects of the production and consumption of luxury goods” (*Consumers* 3).

⁶ For example, as Levy-Peck notes, “in 1337 no man was allowed 'to wear any facings of silk or furs but such as could expend an hundred pounds a year'. Two centuries later in 1566 'No man under the degree of a knight or of a lord's room ... shall wear any hat or upper cap of velvet ... on pain to forfeit ten shillings'.” (6, citing Frank Warner 626).

despotism as one of the two vices afflicting monarchies. Defining luxury as superfluous consumption, Fenelon argued that though despotism vitiated a king's ability to govern his kingdom, luxury was the more serious of the two vices, for rather than being confined to the practices of kings, it tended to pervade entire nations. Luxury's danger was located in its power to enable a morally corrupting degree of dissimulation which threatened the stability of social hierarchy, creating a situation in which "all ranks are confounded [and] all live above their rank and income, some from vanity and ostentation, and to display their wealth; others from false shame, and to hide their poverty" (Hont 383, citing Fenelon 297-8).

But the ancient concept of luxury and its modern opponents both came under attack in Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* (1714), which used the microcosmic figure of a beehive to represent a state that embraced the pursuit of luxury rather than the practice of frugality. In such a state, Mandeville argued,

Luxury
 Employ'd a Million of the Poor,
 And odious Price a Million more.
 Envy it self and Vanity
 Were ministers of Industry;
 Their darling Folly, Fickleness
 In Diet, Furniture and Dress,
 That Strange ridic'ulous Vice, was made
 The very Wheel, that turn'd the Trade ...
 Thus Vice and Ingenuity,
 Which join'd with Time, and Industry
 Had carry'd Life's Conveniences,
 It's real Pleasures, Comforts, Ease,
 To such a Height, the very Poor
 Lived better than the Rich before;
 And nothing could be added more.

(*The Fable of the Bees*, l. 180-88; 198-204)

Mandeville's contribution to the developing debates over luxury was distinctive insofar as it accepted the ancient association of luxury with moral vice but still endorsed its pursuit. The basic argument of *The Fable of the Bees* was summarized in its sub-title, "*Private Vices Publick Benefits.*" By encouraging the private vices—envy, vanity, folly, fickleness—associated with luxury, and thereby encouraging lavish spending among its populace, a state would reap the public benefits of increased commerce and augmented trade. Commercial growth would translate into increased employment for the state's poorer subjects and thus bring about an increase in average wealth among all subjects, regardless of class. Mandeville's trickle-down argument depended in part on his redefinition of luxury: instead of using the term to refer to ostentatious extravagance or excessive superfluity, as Fenelon and others had, Mandeville claimed that "[w]hatever has contributed since to make Life more Comfortable, as it must have been the Result of Thought, Experience, and some Labour, so it more or less serves the Name of Luxury, the more or less trouble it required and deviated from the primitive Simplicity" (p. 141). Mandeville further challenged the traditional distinction between luxury and necessity by suggesting the relative nature of both concepts:

By what I have said hitherto I would only shew, that if once we depart from calling every thing Luxury that is not absolutely necessary to keep a Man alive, that then there is no Luxury at all, for if the wants of Men are innumerable, then what ought to supply them has no bounds; what is call'd superfluous to some degree of People will be thought requisite to those of higher Quality; and neither the World nor the Skill of Man can produce any thing so curious or extravagant, but some most Gracious Sovereign or other if it either eases or diverts him, will reckon it among the Necessaries of Life. (81)

By relativizing luxury to individual perspective, which in turn was determined by class position, Mandeville was able to undermine any stable distinction between luxury and

necessity. Without such a distinction, moral arguments against luxury were weakened, for if luxury and necessity could only be defined in relation to individual cases, then normative claims about luxury and necessity were likewise relative to individual cases. But if this was true, then absolute normative claims about luxury were impossible. In casting doubt on the very possibility of absolute moral accounts of luxury, Mandeville was able to redirect the luxury debates away from questions about moral worth and towards questions of economic practice.

The subsequent eighteenth-century luxury debate in Britain was structured by the opposition between Fenelon and Mandeville, with proponents of luxury echoing Mandeville and emphasizing the supposed economic benefits of luxury, and opponents adopting Fenelon's traditional and morally charged line of attack (Hont 382). Mandeville's unorthodox argument in particular motivated fierce counterattack, usually along Fenelonian lines. James Raven writes that "[i]n the fall-out from *The Fable of the Bees*, disgusted scholars, moralists, and hacks raced to condemn what was regarded as a reversal of truths—that frugality or 'necessity' was an abomination, that luxury was a prerequisite for national greatness and prosperity, and that self-interest might become public benefit" (*Judging New Wealth* 167). This fall out manifested itself in a rash of publications: "[i]n the five years after the appearance in 1724 of [Mandeville's] final version of *The Fable* ... no less than ten books attacking it were published" (McKendrick 15-6). Some writers expressed polite bafflement; others worried about the social consequences of Mandeville's argument; still others proposed reasoned rebuttals.⁷

⁷ In *A Short Examination of the Notions advanc'd in a book intitl'd The Fable of the Bees*, John Thorold admitted that "[t]is above my Capacity, I frankly confess, to apprehend the Truth of this Assertion: How

Existing alongside the philosophical response to Mandeville was also a more violent strain of reaction.⁸ Mandeville's very name became the object of punning attacks in the popular press. By the time that one anonymous poet wrote in 1732 that "Who Vice commends, MAN-DEVIL be his name" (*The Character of the Times Delineated* 10), Mandeville had become for many the very figurehead of immorality.

Thus, *The Fable of the Bees* succeeded in initiating a new debate about luxury, which revolved around two core questions. First, participants sought to define luxury, thereby distinguishing it from necessity or decency; second, they sought to determine its economic and moral worth. By relativizing luxury, Mandeville had cast doubt on the traditional meaning of the concept, and contemporary contributors to the debate repeatedly acknowledged the centrality of the new definitional problem. In the *Political Discourses*, David Hume put the matter succinctly, remarking that "[l]uxury is a word of very uncertain signification, and may be taken in a good as well as a bad sense" (*Political*

any human society can subsist without Humanity, is to me a Mystery: Or how those Qualities, which render Men odious to each other, can ever be the most beneficial ones of all others to Society, is not so easily to be comprehended by vulgar Capacities" (95). Meanwhile, in *Vice and Luxury, Publick Mischiefs*, John Dennis claimed that "nothing is more certain, than that [*The Fable*] has done, and will do Mischief, by Debauching the Minds and Principles of such of its Readers as are qualified to distinguish Right from Wrong and the Artifice of Sophistry from the Justness of Reason, which are Nine Parts in Twenty of them" (1-2). Finally, Thomas Bluett professed to have read Mandeville "thoroughly and thoroughly" and "at length found, that when he says *private Vices are publick Benefits*, he means *private Vices are private Benefits*, or in other Words, that Vice is a Benefit to some particular sorts of People; and that whenever he affirms Vice is a Benefit to the *Publick*, the *Society*, the *Nation*, the *Whole*, &c. he does not mean that it is a Benefit to the Many but to the Few" (*The True Meaning of the Fable of the Bees* 5).

⁸ Writing in 1743, John Brown referred to Mandeville in the same breath as Thomas Hobbes, calling them both "Detested Names! Yet sentenc'd ne'er to die; / Snatched from Oblivion's Grave by Infamy" (*Humour; a Poem* 178-9). John Wesley wrote that while he had "imagined there had never appeared in the world such a book as the works of Machiaval ... de Mandeville goes far beyond them in wickedness" (*Journal* IV: 157). Nor were responses confined to England. McKendrick notes that in France "the book was ordered to be hanged by the common hangman, and Mandeville was burned in effigy" (16-7).

Discourses 23).⁹ Meanwhile, participants in the debate struggled to determine whether or not luxury might produce positive effects. While initial reaction to Mandeville's defense of luxury was negative, as the "debate developed over the century, it was dissociated from a moral framework, and was increasingly seen in terms of economic advantages ..." (Berg, *Consumers* 5). This tendency was most marked in the response among philosophers and economists, especially those of the Scottish Enlightenment, who strove to introduce new distinctions in the notion of luxury. Rather than accepting the traditional association between luxury and vice, as Mandeville had done, a new attempt was made to distinguish between "'unregulated' and 'well-ordered' luxury" (Hont 380). In his *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy*, James Steuart proposed a new definition of the term, stating that he would "set out by distinguishing luxury, as it affects our different interest, by producing hurtful consequences, from luxury, as it regards the moderate gratification of our natural or rational desires" (307). David Hume argued that luxury could be either beneficial or harmful depending on its contribution to social progress (*Political Discourses* 23-4). Adam Smith defended a new, economically beneficial concept of luxury by relativizing the concept and then distinguishing it from socially beneficial "opulence" (*Wealth of Nations* 15; see also *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* I:

⁹ The Neapolitan writer Ferdinando Galiani wrote in 1751 that luxury "wanders among us never seen in its true light, or recognised for its efficacy and it, perhaps never occurs to the virtuous," concluding that "no one knows or dares to say what luxury might properly be" (Galiani 214). In his discussion of the term in the *Encyclopedia*, Diderot asked "[b]ut what is this luxury that we so infallibly attribute to so many objects?" and urged a "discussion among those who show the most discrimination in their use of the term luxury: a discussion which has yet to take place, and which even they cannot bring to a satisfactory conclusion" (*Encyclopedie* 635). Nathaniel Forster complained that "[l]uxury is a word of the most vague and indeterminate signification, and admits of almost infinite degrees" (*Enquiry* 36). The frequency with which participants expressed confusion over the definition of the term justifies Berg's suggestion that "[t]he debate ... fundamentally turned on problems of defining the term" (*Luxury* 10).

50-2). Meanwhile, accounts of luxury shifted in Britain's popular magazines. James Raven writes that "[f]rom the mid-1750s, popular essayists and magazine writers had taken a revived interest in the ambiguous luxury debate" (*Judging New Wealth* 171). Though "[f]requent essays on luxury in mid-century journals such as the *London Magazine* concentrated upon the dangers of the vice to the lower orders," by the last decades of the century "a genuine debate was opened up" (169; 171), with many contributors accepting of luxury that "though in theory the common opinion is against it; in practice, the world is for it: though moralists inveigh against it, wise statesmen have encouraged it" (Trusler, *Luxury* 2).¹⁰ As in the discussion among philosophers, the luxury debate in periodical literature had developed two opposing positions, one attacking luxury for its immorality, the other praising it for its economic benefits.

Just as the meaning of luxury and assessments of its worth shifted over the course of the eighteenth century, so did its cultural connotations. Traditionally, luxury had been associated with an array of abject qualities. First, from its origins, luxury had been identified with the foreign, and specifically with the exotic Orient. As Berg writes, "Eastern or oriental imports were part of the classical, western definition of luxury. Livy argued that Rome had been contaminated with Asiatic luxuries imported from Greece and the East ... The trade with China was also well-established during the Roman Empire, via

¹⁰ Similarly, *The Monthly Review* argued that "luxury produces vice, and vice misery; but luxury is, notwithstanding, essentially necessary to national greatness" ("The Deserted Village; a Poem," *MR* 42: 440). Conversely, an excerpt from Voltaire entitled "On Luxury" reminded readers that "in its ample field [luxury] eventually must ruin the community" (*T&C* 14:31). According to Raven, "[t]he most common argument was that the availability of new comforts was necessary to promote industry, but that sumptuary laws had to be revived as safeguards against luxury's over-development. The search was for standards of legitimate personal consumption ... " (*Judging New Wealth* 175).

the silk route through Samarkand and sea-borne trade from China to the Indian Ocean. Not just silks, but mirrors, paper, pottery and some porcelain were exported to the Persian Gulf from the seventh to the tenth centuries” (*Luxuries* 8). As already noted, European anxieties about luxury were motivated in part by the fear that imported goods would destabilize social hierarchies and upset Western economies. Such anxieties manifested themselves throughout British culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, shaping representations of eastern goods from Marvell to Milton to Pope.¹¹ Second, luxury was understood as a mark of effeminacy. In *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (1757), John Brown observed that “vast Wealth naturally produces Avarice, Luxury, or Effeminacy” (154), such that the manner of eighteenth-century England would “on a fair Examination ... probably appear to be that of a ‘*vain, luxurious and selfish EFFEMINACY*’” (29). The luxury-producing market itself was frequently figured as a woman, as when Defoe wrote that “Trade is a mystery which will never be completely discovered or understood. It suffers convulsive fits, hysterical disorders, and the most unaccountable emotions” (ctd. in Hundert 209). Likewise, insofar as “the classical debate on luxury associated women with excess and female desire” and identified “luxury ... with effeminacy and weakness,” women began to take on

¹¹ Examples of the anxiety about eastern luxury are rife throughout the period's literature. In “Bermudas,” Marvell's hypocritically profit-driven Puritans seek “pomegranates [which] close / Jewels more rich than Ormus shows” (19-20); Book 2 of *Paradise Lost* opens with a description of Satanic wealth: “High on a Throne of Royal State, which far / Outshon the wealth of *Ormus* and of *Ind*, / Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand / Showrs on her Kings *Barbaric* Pearl and Gold, / Satan exalted sat ...” (II: 1-5); and the rape of Belinda's lock occurs not only in a scene of great luxury but as a direct consequence of the effect of a luxury product (coffee) on the Baron, and by means of his use of another luxury good, scissors. By this time, the Baron has already prayed on an altar of luxury books, having “implor'd / Propitious Heav'n, and ev'ry Power ador'd, / But chiefly *Love*—to *Love* an Altar built, / Of twelve vast *French* Romances, neatly gilt” (2: 35-38).

characteristics of the market, being “depicted as capricious, inconstant, the slaves of fashion” (Berg, *Luxury* 18). Third, luxury was associated with the upper classes, an association which remained strong in the eighteenth century, with many attacks on luxury focusing on the “extravagantly wealthy” (Raven, *Judging New Wealth* 178) or the “corruption of wealthy elites” (Berg, *Luxury* 9). On the one hand, luxury products were usually only available to the wealthy, given their expensive prices and conspicuous uselessness; on the other hand, and in consequence, the ravages of luxury were seen as especially a scourge of the upper classes. Finally, luxury was identified with the city, the epicenter of trade, fashion and lavish expenditure. In *Luxury, Pride and Vanity*, Erasmus Jones saw the luxury of the age as leading to a socially deleterious urbanization, wondering “[is] it not an ungrateful spectacle to see so many noble and ancient Families Houses mouldring into Ruin, and dropping down for want of Inhabitants; and then to behold the prodigious Growth and Encrease of this unwieldy City” (2). Similarly, Raven cites “a parable from 1790, [in which] a genteel but doomed country lady arrives in town and, ‘as it were, in a moment she was seized with the contagion of fashion; elated by the consciousness of dignity, and hurried into the folly, affectation and expense of modish life’. Soon she ‘glories in the design she has formed of introducing folly, fashion and luxury, into the circle of her provincial acquaintance’” (Raven 164, citing ‘The Fortunate Sequel; or the Adventures of Ella Worthy’). If “classical and biblical sources associated luxury with the subversive influence of the ‘other’: women, favorites, foreigners, upstarts” (Levy Peck 6), then such associations were still strong throughout the eighteenth century.

This traditional cultural profile appears in one of the most emphatic indictments of luxury published during the eighteenth century, *The Tryal of Lady Allurea Luxury* (1757). There, the foreigner Lady Allurea Luxury is charged by a Mr. Manly with having “most wickedly and maliciously plotted and conspired the Destruction of this Land by corrupting the Morals of our People” (6). According to Manly, Lady Allurea has attempted to convince the nation that “Modesty is a joke and Virtue a Phantom. That a short-life is most eligible, and Self-Murder the best Privilege of a great Soul; and that Gaming, fine Cloaths, Equipage, high and poignant Sauces, Infidelity, soft Beds, Dalliance, midnight Debaucheries, and the letting loose of all our Passions, are the true Springs from whence we are to draw every earthly Felicity” (7-8). A parade of witnesses testifies against Lady Allurea. Henry True-Briton alleges that she arrived in England with the Restoration (8-9); Lord Good-Mind claims that under her influence “my old *English* hospitable Table was covered with nothing but Frenchified disguised Dishes ... My chairs were all converted into Couches; my strong Beer and roast Beef were sent to the Dog-Boy. My Wife ... lolled on a couch most of the Time that she was not in Bed, at Cards, or at her Toilet” (13); and General Fusileer alleges that he has found his “young Officers employed in drinking tea, playing at Cards or Dice, or lolling on a downy Bed or a soft Couch: And when I upbraided them for their Slothfulness, their Answer was, That Lady ALLUREA, the Prisoner at the Bar, had sent these Things to them and that surely, they could not reject them without being ill-bred” (23). John Type, Printer and Bookseller, is called, and he claims that Lady Allurea is “Author of all the Books that have been published these last fifty Years in favour of Self-Murder, Gaming, Atheism,

and every Kind of Vice, public as well as private” (29).¹² Meanwhile, in Lady Allurea’s defense, a bishop argues that “she has refined our Taste, enlarged our Commerce, and perfected our politics and Religion” (36); the Jewish arts dealer and merchant Moses Cappadocia claims that “by an unwearied Zeal for the Welfare of this Nation, [Lady Allurea] hath brought all the Arts to Perfection—We knew not what Elegance and true Taste were, till she came amongst us” (42); and a set of noblemen and women are called on to testify in her defense. Though the jury finds against her, with Mr. Manly urging its members to “Be Britons” (91), Lady Allurea is rescued before sentencing “by a Mob of Nobility and Gentry, who now entertain and caress her in defiance of all Law and Justice” (92). *The Tryall of Lady Allurea* thus presents in concentrated form the entire set of associations attached to the idea of luxury in early eighteenth-century Britain: Allurea Luxury is a foreigner, a member of the upper class, and a woman; she is urbane to the extreme, a lover of delicacies, the friend of aristocratic Bishops, Jewish merchants, and the French nobility; and against her are aligned the representatives of Britishness, embodied in the figures of her prosecutor, Mr Manly, the head of the jury, Sir Oliver Roastbeef, and the witnesses, from Lord Good-Mind to Henry True Briton.

But, as Berg observes and the *Tryal* hints, during the course of the eighteenth-century the cultural profile of luxury began to shift along with changing ideas about its effects. With the introduction of a new conception of luxury as economically beneficial,

¹² Indeed, according to John Type, “[s]he wrote the Fable of the Bees, and published it under the name of Mandeville—She likewise wrote the Book on Self-Murder, which goes under Count Passeran’s name—All the Books under the names of Toland and Tindal, were likewise wrote by her. Nay, I am morally certain that Meursius was one of her Productions—Not to mention the Nun in her Smock—the new Atalantis, and the Poems said to be wrote by Lord Rochester” (29).

attacks on “[t]he luxury of aristocratic profligacy and associations with wealth, status and power shifted to a discussion of commerce, utility, taste and comfort [and the] language of luxury evolved to redefine ‘excess’ as ‘surplus’, ‘vanity’ as ‘refinement’” (Berg, *Luxury* 9). Even so, both strains of thought—that of moral condemnation and that of economically inspired praise—continued to exist in tandem throughout the century. Berg writes that “[o]n the one hand, Enlightenment culture adapted itself to luxury as a positive social force, viewing it with confidence as an instrument (and indication) of the progress of civilization [while on] the other hand, it feared luxury as a debilitating and corrosive social evil, clinging to classical critiques of excessive indulgence and wanton profligacy, urban chaos and plebeian idleness” (*Luxury* 2). Increasingly, however, a morally perfidious “old luxury”—a luxury of extravagance, excess, and ostentation—came to be attached to the set of associations embodied in Lady Allurea, while an economically beneficial “new luxury,” frequently associated with terms like “refinement” and “opulence” rather than “luxury,” came to define a new British identity, characterized by masculine simplicity over feminine ostentatiousness, by middle-class prosperity instead of upper-class extravagance, by healthy British commerce rather than the diseases of Gallic or Oriental excess, and by Sir Oliver Roastbeef and Henry True-Briton rather than Lady Allurea.

Even so, while “new luxury” gained ideological ground during the eighteenth century, the early Romantic discourse on luxury tended to use the word in its older, negative sense. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke associated the term with the excesses not of the French aristocracy but rather of the “monied interest” and the lower orders, condemned by Burke for their socially dangerous ability to outshine

the upper ranks in “ostentatious luxury” (Burke 163).¹³ Meanwhile, Burke’s opponents shared his condemnation of luxury, though they tended to use the concept in different ways according to the distinctive aims of their arguments. In *Rights of Man* Part 2, Thomas Paine followed Mandeville in relativizing luxury but also offered a unique contribution to the debate by suggesting that “the real luxury does not consist in the article, but in the means of procuring it, and this is always kept out of sight” (141).¹⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft castigated luxury’s tendency to feminize men in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.¹⁵ Finally, William Godwin targeted luxury in his attack on monarchical interference in the public sphere in *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*.¹⁶

¹³ Burke’s most direct engagement with the luxury debate takes place in his discussion of the revolutionary French state’s seizure and redistribution of monastic property and wealth. In distinguishing the expenditure of surplus wealth on monastic libraries from its expenditure on “the painted booths and sordid sties of vice and luxury,” Burke employs the eighteenth-century distinction between socially beneficial opulence and socially deleterious luxury, praising one as the preserve of the upper classes and clergy and damning the other as the vulgar pursuit of the lower orders (236-8).

¹⁴ Like Mandeville, Paine assumes that “[o]ne thing is called a luxury at one time, and something else at another” (141). Because Paine’s account of luxury concentrates on the means of procuring a good rather than the good itself, he defines the concept in terms of financial sums: “[a]dmitting that any annual sum, say, for instance, one thousand pounds, is necessary or sufficient for the support of a family, consequently the second thousand is of the nature of a luxury, the third still more so, and by proceeding on, we shall at last arrive at a sum that may not improperly be called a prohibitable luxury” (141).

¹⁵ Wollstonecraft assumes the association between luxury and effeminacy only to apply the first term to men, writing that “[m]en are certainly more under the influence of their appetites than women; and their appetites are more depraved by unbridled indulgence and the fastidious contrivances of satiety” (312); that “luxury has introduced a refinement in eating, that destroys the constitution” (313); that “[w]omen are, *in common with men*, rendered weak and luxurious by the relaxing pleasures which wealth procures” (330 [italics added]); and that certain classes of men—especially that “luxurious set of men . . . the pedantic tyrants who reside in colleges and preside at public schools”—are the product of excessive luxury (370). Like the pedantic tyrants, Wollstonecraft accuses political tyrants of having succumbed to a destructive degree of luxury, asking “[i]n France, and in how many other countries, have men been the luxurious despots, and women the crafty ministers?” (385).

¹⁶ Godwin writes that “[a]ll kings have possessed such a portion of luxury and ease, have been so far surrounded with servility and falsehood, and to such a degree exempt from personal responsibility, as to destroy the natural and wholesome complexion of the human mind. Being placed so high, they find but one step between them and the summit of social authority, and they cannot but eagerly desire to pass that step. Having so frequent occasions of seeing their commands implicitly obeyed, being trained in so long a scene of adulation and servility, it is impossible they should not feel some indignation, at the

Thus, even while inhabiting different ideological worlds, Burke and his opponents all employed luxury in its older, pejorative sense.

Just as conceptions of luxury changed over the course of the eighteenth century in Britain, evolving various distinctions between “new” and “old” and “good” and bad,” so did conceptions of what qualified as a luxury good. Berg credits Adam Smith as being the first to suggest a rough distinction between the properties distinguishing luxury objects from other kinds of objects (*Luxury* 13). In his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Smith observes that “Man alone of all animals on this globe is the only one who regards the differences of things which no way affect their real substance or give them no superior advantage in supplying the wants of nature” (“Lectures on Jurisprudence” 337). In particular, Smith identifies four “distinctions”—colour, form, variety or rarity, and imitation—that “seem to be the foundation of all the minute and, to more thoughtful persons, frivolous distinctions and preferences in things otherwise equal, which give in the pursuit more distress and uneasiness to mankind than all the others, and to gratify

honest firmness that sets limits to their omnipotence. But to say, ‘that every king is a despot in his heart’, will presently be shown to be the same thing, as to say, that every king is, by unavoidable necessity, the enemy of the human race” (399). Slipping easily from luxury to falsehood, and from falsehood to tyranny, kings are at the greatest epistemological risk and hence represent the greatest political threat to a political community. Godwin also seeks to defend his argument from pro-luxury objections. In Chapter VII, “Objection to this System from the Benefits of Luxury,” Godwin responds to potential Mandevillean attacks on his “system of equality” which accept luxury as a private vice but point to its desirable public benefits and argue that “[i]t is luxury, by which palaces are built, and cities people” (815) and which produces “elegance of taste, refinement of sentiment, depth of penetration, and largeness of science” (489). Godwin’s response is to point out the contradiction inherent to this line of thought: because luxury depends on inequality, a luxuriously opulent and refined state is inconsistent with a system of equality (493-4). Godwin thus concludes that “a state of equality need not be a state of Stoical simplicity, but is compatible with considerable accommodation, and even, in some sense, with splendour; at least, if by splendour we understand copiousness of accommodation, and variety of invention for the purposes of accommodation” (494).

which a thousand arts have been invented” (335).¹⁷ Not surprisingly, those objects picked out by Smith to represent superior examples of color, form, variety, and rarity or imitation—gems, estates, art objects and precious metals—were already strongly associated with luxury in the works of Mandeville, Melon, *The Tryall of Lady Allurea*, and elsewhere.¹⁸ So were, especially, Asian imports—porcelain, lacquered ware, calico, tea tables, and, most famously, silk—which qualified as quintessential luxury goods. But such Asian commodities and their British imitations were considered luxury products primarily because they embodied a set of perceived qualities: beautiful uselessness, conspicuous craftsmanship, superfluous extravagance, foreign provenance, and above all an extraordinary rarity which justified an extremely high price.

Books were commodities as much as were coffee, calico, or clocks, and eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century commentators consequently understood them

¹⁷ While in *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Smith appears to focus on the aesthetic value of physical properties of objects, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith supplements this object-oriented account of beauty with one focusing on the discursive construction of beauty by stressing the importance of custom, fashion, elegance and fitness in inciting the desire of consumers for an object (371-3; 172-4; 158-9).

¹⁸ Though, as Berg observes, “it is notable that there was little discussion by the key players in the luxury debates of actual objects” (*Consumers* 5), certain goods reappear in the discourse as exemplars of luxury. In *The Tryal Of Lady Allurea*, for example, “fine Cloaths, Equipage, high and poignant Sauces, and soft Beds” are associated with Lady Allurea, as are “downy Beds,” “Frenchified disguised Dishes” and the “curious Pictures and Statues from Rome, Florence, and other Cities of Italy” imported by Moses Cappadocia. Berg notes that “Mandeville referred to buildings, furniture, equipages and clothes” and Melon to “foodstuffs and raw materials—sugar, coffee, tobacco, and silk—but also ... rich stuffs, works of gold and silver and foreign laces and diamonds” as examples of luxury goods (Berg, *Luxury* 13). The list of potential luxury goods was extensive: “To some extent they were exotic foods and drink, especially tea, chocolate and coffee. They were the next textile fabrics, especially printed calicoes, imported initially from India, then manufactured at home. They were also useful and decorative objects, light furnishings, ceramics and glass, metalwares, and clocks and watches ... These new commodities were perceived by their consumers as luxuries; they were sometimes substitutes for elite luxury goods, but more often they were new products inspired by exotic, foreign, or classical associations” (Berg, *Luxury* 65).

within the context of the luxury debates. In most cases, a book's status as a luxury, convenience, or necessity was determined by its relation to its purchasers and readers: a shabby duodecimo book of verse could be a prohibitively expensive luxury to one buyer and a convenience, decency, or even necessity to another. Luxury was never an absolute concept but always a relational property, with commodities existing on a scale of luxury that was different for individuals depending upon their economic and social conditions. Yet even if luxury existed only in the eye of the beholder, certain goods—gems, silks, and imported porcelains, for example—were always deemed more luxurious than others. And when it came to new books, one format in particular was such a commodity: the quarto. Characterized by its exorbitant price, its rarity, and its superfluous bibliographic ornament, the quarto was the Romantic period's preeminent bibliographic luxury. As such, the quarto came to embody for readers those traits identified by the debates of the eighteenth century as characteristic of luxury, thereby shaping interpretations of texts appearing in the format.¹⁹

The Romantic Luxury Quarto

It's important to remember that the quarto's profile as the period's major luxury book was always determined by its relative position in the rapidly changing book

¹⁹ Certainly, the folio was viewed as more luxurious than the quarto, but the format was for all intents and purposes moribund by the beginning of the period, as anecdotal observation attests. Moreover, quantitative data suggests that the relatively few folios published during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were overwhelmingly functional rather than ornamental, being used to publish governmental documents, for example. To be sure, the occasional folio edition of verse or history—for example, of Thomson's *The Seasons* or Hume's *The History of England*—was generally accepted as more luxurious than a quarto edition, but such publications were few and far between. Moreover, the folio was almost never used to publish *new* verse in the Romantic period.

industry of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain.²⁰ Probate inventories and short-title catalogues demonstrate the extent to which the book trade participated in

²⁰ An important clarification is in order: for the purposes of my argument, I assume that a book was a quarto if and only if it was referred to as such in the discourse of the period. Hence, if, hypothetically, *The Curse of Kehama* was discovered to be a folio according to a physical definition, such a discovery would not change the fact that during the Romantic period the book was thought and spoken of as a quarto and therefore *was*, for the purposes of this argument, a quarto. Modern-day bibliographical analysis might determine that a book referred to in the Romantic period as a “quarto” is not a quarto according to modern-day definitions; likewise, modern-day bibliography might show that such a “quarto” was not a quarto according to consensus definitions of the format during the Romantic period. However, such discoveries would not bear on the fact that, historically, such a book was published as a quarto, read as a quarto, and understood according to the bibliographic codes attached to the quarto. Consequently, if Romantic readers in general agreed with the *Quarterly's* assertion that Keats's *Endymion* was a quarto book, then this agreement would justify treating the book as a quarto, even though, according to Romantic and modern-day physical definitions, *Endymion* was published in octavo. Of course, any book's material qualities were hugely significant insofar as, in general, they did ground designations of format. But in cases in which a book's physical format in fact diverged from its discursively understood format, this dissertation privileges the discursively understood format. Regarding definitions of format, it should also be noted that modern-day accounts were not necessarily shared by Romantic-period commentators (Tanselle 72). Indeed, not until 1840 was the word used with anything like its modern meaning (Tanselle 69). Even so, Romantic-period book producers and consumers did distinguish particular book formats, like the folio, the quarto, the octavo and the duodecimo (Tanselle 71). Tanselle writes that “[t]he long line of English printers' manuals in the two centuries after Moxon, often repeating each other verbatim, followed the same plan. John Smith's *The Printer's Grammar* (1755), Philip Luckombe's *The History of the Art of Printing* (1771), Caleb Stower's *The Printer's Grammar* (1808), C. S. Van Winkle's *The Printer's Guide* (1818), John Johnson's *Typographia* (1824) ... —all of these (and no doubt the others) are similar in that they do not use the word 'format' and, under headings like 'Of Imposing,' they present diagrams (or 'schemes') with such titles as 'A Sheet of Folio.' When a term on the order of 'format' is needed, it tends to be 'size,' as when Luckombe speaks of schemes 'for imposing all the Sizes that regularly descend from Folio'" (72, citing Luckombe 474). In displaying diagrams for “sheets of folio” and “sheets of quarto,” such manuals suggest that any given book format was understood in terms of the sheet type used to produce the book: folio books were made of folio sheets, in which each side of each leaf was imprinted with two pages; quarto books were made of quarto sheets, in which each side of each leaf was imprinted with four pages, and so on. (See, e.g., *The Printer's Grammar* 184.) Because books made of folio sheets of a single size of once-folded paper were larger than quarto books (which were made of quarto sheets of twice-folded paper), book types were often thought of in terms of size. However, because sheets of paper came in different sizes—from super royal sheets of 70 by 49 cms to pot sheets of 39.5 by 31.5 cms—cases existed in which a folio was smaller in actual dimensions than a quarto or an octavo. According to Tanselle, such confusions motivated Romantic-period bibliographers to begin thinking about books in terms of structure (74). But, either way, while Romantic-era book producers and consumers seem not to have had a concept of format *per se*, they do seem to have understood particular book types—folio, quarto, octavo—in terms of dimension and, to some degree, structure. The Romantic quarto was thus recognized as a book of relatively large size—generally between 31 by 19.5 cms (with pot paper) and 46 by 30 cms (with royal paper)—and composed of twice-folded quarto sheets of four pages a leaf. In general, Tanselle and others take issue with traditional definitions of format (Tanselle 68; 112-4; Gaskell 80).

the era's commercial boom.²¹ In particular, catalogues like the *Wing*, the *Short Title Catalogue (STC)* and the *English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC)* record exponential growth in book production over the 1600s and 1700s.²² Michael Suarez documents such growth in detail. Basing his study on data drawn from more than 34,000 *ESTC* records, Suarez demonstrates a slow increase in absolute book production during the first half of the eighteenth century, followed by a steep rise in its latter half (Suarez 42-4). However, “[t]he most significant trend we observe is the sharp rise in the number of imprints in 1763-93. Between 1763 and 1773, there is a 19 per cent increase; between 1773 and 1783, a 15 per cent increase; and, most remarkably of all, between 1783 and 1793, a 42 per cent increase” (44).²³ Such rates continued into the early nineteenth century, with

²¹ Weatherill and others provide records of increasing book ownership during the early eighteenth-century based on probate inventories. Weatherill, for example, treats the book as one of the “key” domestic durables whose ownership her study tracks between 1675 and 1725. She finds that just as ownership frequencies of other key domestic durables rose over the period, so did those of books. In England, the frequency with which books were found in probate inventories rose from 18% in 1675, to 19% in 1705, to 22% in 1725. A more marked increase was evident in London, where frequencies rose from 60% in 1675, to 90% in 1705, to 94% in 1725 (26-7).

²² Short-title catalogues are useful sources for gathering quantitative information regarding book production, but their use is limited in important ways. As Michael Suarez notes in a discussion of eighteenth-century book production, short-title catalogues include shifting data sets, as databases are often continually being updated (39); they record only surviving books (40); and they record only titles, rather than total number of editions or pages produced (44). Hence, a single title could index a small print run of 250 editions of a 50 pages pamphlet, or a massive run of 1,000 editions of a 500 page tome. Moreover, short-title catalogues likely exaggerate the relative ratios of sturdier, large-format books to ephemeral, small-format books (41). William St. Clair agrees, observing that book production measurements are “fraught with practical and definitional difficulties, for example, whether to include dictionaries, religious books, school textbooks, occasional sermons, and pamphlets ...” (88). But while short-title catalogues cannot be used to justify specific quantitative claims about book production rates in a given year, they can provide relatively reliable accounts of general tendencies in production rates over long periods.

²³ Suarez's study documents an increase from 1,916 imprint titles listed in 1703; to 2,285 in 1713; to 1,744 in 1723; to 2,171 in 1733; to 2,069 in 1743; to 2,566 in 1753; to 2,701 in 1763; to 3,333 in 1773; to 3,924 in 1783; to 6,801 in 1793. Because during his time of research—between 2002 and 2004—the *ESTC* contained an unmanageably high number of eighteenth-century titles (about 335,000), Suarez elected to use a sampling method, examining only those records from years ending in “3” (1703, 1713, 1723, etc.) in his study and including in this sample group only those books apparently published in

book production continuing its steep rise in absolute terms during the first few decades, as Simon Eliot has shown.²⁴ Eliot's *NSTC* statistics are mirrored by a comparable growth in the number of master printers employed in London during the Romantic period (from 124 in 1785, to 216 in 1808, to 306 in 1824) (St. Clair 456), as well as a steady increase in London-based book-binders (from 69 master binders in 1794, to 121 in 1808, to 151 in 1813) (St. Clair 456-7). According to all estimates, then, book production and ownership underwent exponential increases during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

Changes in production and ownership rates were mirrored by changes in genre and formatting patterns. On the one hand, "from the point of view by subject, the quantitative, overall increase in published production was accompanied by a restructuring of the composition of the total printed production" (Veylit 190), resulting in a relative increase in the number of literary publications.²⁵ Such an increase seems to have

England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Suarez's findings are corroborated by Alain Veylit's quantitative study of the *ESTC*, as Suarez himself observes (42). See also Veylit (*A Statistical Survey*), Raven ("The book as commodity" 92), and St. Clair (*The Reading Nation* 455).

²⁴ Eliot's findings demonstrate that, in general, absolute book production continued to increase throughout the Romantic period, with the number of imprints rising from 45,851 between 1801-10, to 68,214 between 1811-20, to 91,792 between 1821-30. (The relative decline in total numbers between Veylit's and Suarez's data from the 1790s and Eliot's data from the Romantic period should not be taken as indicating an actual decline but rather as reflecting the differences between the *ESTC* database [which records titles from over two thousand libraries] and the *NSTC* database [which includes titles from just eight libraries].) The *NSTC*'s methodological complications are well-known, and Eliot acknowledges that they render the *NSTC* powerful as a tool only for identifying broad patterns and long-term trends rather than for producing detailed quantitative surveys ("*Patterns and Trends* and the *NSTC*" 80-5).

²⁵ See, e.g., Veylit, Figures XXXVI-XLIII, 301-308. According to Veylit, while "literature, religion, and politics make the most progress in absolute numbers and represent the largest segments of the publishing industry," still "in the cases of economics and literature ... the rate of increase seems to be significantly higher than on average" (189). Literature in particular progresses "from about 5% of the total to about 20% at the end, and economy from about 5% to 10%" (189). Suarez's findings both confirm in part and contradict in part those of Veylit. On the one hand, Suarez finds that the number of book titles belonging to the generic category of 'politics, government, and law' "more than triples from

continued well into the nineteenth century, with production rates of verse growing at especially high rates relative to those of other genres.²⁶ Likewise, the production rates of different book formats also changed over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Though “[t]he principle bibliographical formats—folio, quarto, octavo, and duodecimo—dominated the book market,” making up between 70 and 80 per cent of the surviving printed output” between 1713 and 1783 (Suarez 56), the relative numbers of each format altered over the course of the century:

The winning formats in the eighteenth century are the octavo and duodecimo. The percentage of octavos in the total output at the beginning of the century is about 35%. That percentage peaks at almost 50% and declines back to about 35% towards the end. Duodecimo, however, grows steadily from 8.5% to 23% at the end of the century. Quartos and folios, that together formed almost 40% of the total output, see their importance

1703 to 1793, but stays essentially the same in terms of its ratio to the whole for each year” at approximately 25 per cent (46-7). Meanwhile, an “upward trend in medicine, mathematics and science publications” (47) over the same period was matched by a decrease in titles belonging to ‘religion, philosophy and ethics’, from 34 per cent of total books produced to 16 per cent. Of particular interest are Suarez’s findings regarding the production rates of titles belonging to the “classification of ‘literature, classics, and belle-lettres.’” At “never more than 20 per cent of the total,” Suarez finds that the production rate of literary books “starts and ends the century at approximately 11 per cent” (48), and that while the eighteenth century is commonly assumed to be the age of the novel, only “a small portion of the market”—2 per cent in the first half of the century, rising to 3.5 per cent in its last few years—was comprised of fiction publications (48).

²⁶ Eliot provides a detailed estimate of the changing patterns and trends in genre during the century’s three decades. Referring to the period 1801-10, he writes that “[t]he most striking thing is the clear distribution pattern that emerges. Four classes are predominant, together taking 78.21 % of the total entries: Religion (19.22%), Social Sciences (19.09%), Literature (21.09%), and History (18.81%). Not only this, but during the first three decades, the genre with the highest percentage of books published is Literature” (XXX; see “Table 4”). Moreover, of those books belonging to the generic category Literature, by far the highest percentage belonged to the category English poetry. From 1801-10, verse, drama and fiction publications comprised 8,365 of 10,766 total titles in the category of Literature, with 3,519 (or 42%) of these being verse. From 1811-20, verse, drama and fiction titles constituted 12,997 of 18,484 total publication in the category of Literature, with 4,737 (or 36%) of these being verse. From 1821-30, verse, drama and fiction titles comprised 14,875 of 24,632 total titles in the category of Literature, with 6,363 (or 45%) of these being verse. St. Clair gives a corroborating picture of the overall production of literary texts measured in terms of edition size during this period, claiming that “[f]or the period between the 1780s and the 1830s, we have records of about 5,000 new books of verse, 10,000 new editions, written by about 2,000 living poets, as well as of a vast amount of reprinting of old-canon poetry written earlier” (St. Clair 172). The evidence of Eliot and St. Clair provides ample quantitative justification for the common conception of the Romantic age as one defined by its poetry.

reduced to a bare 13% at the end of the century and even further reduced if we consider that both formats, as noted above, sustained increased specialization, so that their share of the market was not only reduced in number but limited to very specific segments of the reading population ... ” (Veylit 179; see also Suarez 56-9)

Quartos in particular underwent a modest decline in relative number as the century came to a close. Whereas the format was used to issue 36.4% of titles in 1703, it sunk to 13.4% of titles in 1783 and 13.2% in 1793 (Suarez 56-7). If short-title catalogues overestimate the production rates of large-format books and underestimate those of small-format books, then the relative number of quartos at the end of the century was even lower. Quantitative evidence shows that the eighteenth century came to a close, the quarto format was becoming increasingly rare.

Associations between genre and format—and especially those of verse and quarto—also changed over the course of the century. Traditionally associated with dramatic publications, “[d]uring the first half of the [eighteenth] century ... quartos became increasingly popular in a closely allied sector of the market” (Suarez 28), with “[m]any works of poetry, especially separately printed original works and translations that would have formerly been published as folios early in the century, [coming] more and more to be issued as quartos” (58; see also Veylit 182). While during the first fifteen years of the eighteenth century, 63% of all quartos were religious or political works, by the last decade of the century, religious and political writings in quarto had shrunk to about 35%, while publications of literary works in quarto had grown from just a few percentage points to about 10% of total production, with verse quartos becoming especially common (Veylit 292; Fig XVIIb; 177; Fig. XXIXb, 294). Though quartos in

general became rarer over the eighteenth century, the use of the format to publish verse was becoming more common at the advent of the Romantic period.²⁷

William St. Clair provides a compelling explanation for such shifts in formatting practices in his account of the “high monopoly period” of eighteenth-century London publishing. After the lapsing of licensing in 1695, St. Clair argues, members of London’s industry—“a changing association of publishing firms, some large, some small, together covering all aspects of publishing, printing, and wholesale bookselling” (St. Clair 93)—succeeded in monopolizing book production in Britain. In order to preserve their monopoly, members of this association relied on “every restrictive practice known to modern regulators,” including “cartel, conspiracy, price-fixing, predatory pricing, rent seeking, repetitive and baseless litigation, entry barriers, market division, credit-fixing, collective refusal to deal, exclusionary joint ventures, resale price restrictions, tying, and vertical non-price constraints” (101). Price-fixing became especially common, as did the widespread adoption of publishing practices likely to drive up the costs of books (98). In particular, publishers manipulated the material properties of books in order to justify increasingly exorbitant prices.²⁸ Taking advantage of technological developments in

²⁷ The following (very incomplete) list of new Romantic-period verse quartos shows just how many of the age's canonical poems were published, at least initially, in quarto or quarto pamphlet: Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*; Robert Bloomfield's *The Farmer's Boy*; Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, and later *The Excursion* and *The White Doe of Rylestone*; Coleridge's *Fears in Solitude*; Barbauld's *England in Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*; Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (which used quarto-sized pages in its first copies); Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Cantos I and II* and *Don Juan, Cantos I and II*; Southey's *Madoc* and *The Curse of Kehama*; Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, *Lady of the Lake*, *Rokeby*, and *The Lord of the Isles*; Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh*; Campbell's *Gertrude of Wyoming*; and Shelley's *Queen Mab* (first edition).

²⁸ The London book industry's monopoly led to other important consequences, both positive and negative. On the one hand, the monopoly supported the publication of “an impressive range of innovative texts, some very long, in philosophy, history, travel, political economy, and many branches of learning and imaginative literature” (99). But it also encouraged the wasting of stocks which otherwise could have

eighteenth-century book-making, the London industry issued progressively more lavish books, and consequently “in the high monopoly period, the typefaces of English books grew larger, paper became whiter and thicker, and the margins on the page widened . . . ” (100).²⁹ Large-format books and pamphlets like the quarto were especially useful to the London monopolists. On the one hand, “[l]arge and heavy books” like the quarto “which remained immobilised in aristocratic and institutional libraries had slow velocities of circulation both new and second-hand, an arrangement which kept second-hand prices high and access restricted” (St. Clair 100). On the other hand, the quarto was ideally suited to an industry in which “unnecessary luxury [was offered] as a way of justifying high prices” (St. Clair 100). In particular, the verse quarto was found to be a reliably profitable speculation, for while the relatively little labor necessary for composing type and the small quantity of ink required per page kept production costs low, the high-

been remaindered (99); it discouraged abridgments and the renting of books from coffee houses and book shops (99); and it provided incentives for the industry to ignore technological innovations like stereotyping (100), or to reject new works, because “investment in the older intellectual properties often proved more profitable than new publications” (101).

²⁹ Such changes drew on a number of eighteenth-century developments in paper and ink production, typesets, and binding techniques. Because British paper-making had undergone drastic improvements in quality during the eighteenth century—a process marked especially by the development of the exceptionally fine wove paper by James Whatman at Turkey Mill in 1757 (Bidwell 203)—publishers were able to justify higher prices for newly published books by using more and more expensive paper. Likewise, after British typographers like John Baskerville cast new types especially designed for luxury publications, like that of Baskerville's 1757 quarto *Virgil* (Barker 260), and created new forms of ink and printing techniques, like the “hot press” method, for distributing it (260), publishers were able to hike up prices even more by employing such fashionable new types and techniques. The London monopolists were also able to exploit developments in the binding industry, which while in 1760 “had changed little in its essentials since the mid-sixteenth century” had by 1830 undergone massive alterations, affecting not only the market for cheaper publications but the luxury market as well, with “a distinct movement toward greater precision in both forwarding and finishing” encouraged by the work of master binders like James Fraser (Pickwood 273). London publishers drew on all of these developments in their attempts to justify high prices with increasingly lavish commodities (St. Clair 100).

quality of the finished product could be used to justify ever-rising prices (Erickson 894).³⁰

Even after the London publishing monopoly was broken in 1774, following the House of Lord’s decision in the landmark case *Donaldson v. Beckett*, quarto production continued at a relatively high rate.³¹ Likewise, the quarto’s reputation as a high-end format was only strengthened within the context of the explosion of book production—and especially small-format reprints of what St. Clair calls the “old canon”—that followed *Donaldson v. Beckett*. As such small-format reprints flooded the market—octavos and duodecimos, but also sextodecimos, vicesimo-quartos, and even tricesimo-

³⁰ On the basis of economic incentive, publishers sought to issue first editions of new verse in quarto, only later making such texts available in cheaper formats like octavo and duodecimo. By adopting this commercial strategy, which St. Clair calls “tranching down,” publishers were able to increase profits on the sale of a text by producing books for a market which was differentiated according to wealth: the first quarto edition was meant to appeal to the wealthiest buyers, the second octavo edition to slightly less wealthy buyers, and so on. Tranching down allowed publishers to realize the greatest possible profits on a new text by exhausting the different tranches of the consumer market, but the policy also tended to divide the nation into layers which were differentiated by the length of time which had passed since first publication of a text, as well as by socio-economic class. Those at the top of the income scale had access to the newest titles, but those at the bottom of the income scale had to wait—often for quite extended lengths of time (198)—until texts were trached down to affordable formats.

³¹ In *Donaldson v. Beckett*, the House of Lords voted to overturn the reigning *de facto* intellectual property regime of perpetual copyright and replace it with a regime of limited copyright, thereby restructuring the British book trade and radically altering the production rates of books, and especially those of cheap reprints. (See St. Clair 93 for an account of the decision and its context.) In the fall-out from *Donaldson v. Beckett*, Britain saw an “explosion in reading,” for by resurrecting the Statute of Anne, which had restricted copyrights to twenty one years, *Donaldson v Beckett* rendered thousands of previously protected texts available for reprinting, and members of the English and Scottish book trade made the most of the newly relaxed regulations. The consequence was “[a] revolution in the production, selling, and in the reading of books in Great Britain” (St. Clair 115), indicated by an increase in bankruptcies among members of the book trade (116), a doubling in the size of the binding industry over a generation (116) and “a sharp rise in the annual growth rate of book titles published nationally, much of it accounted for by reprints of older titles, as well as a rise in the rate of growth of provincial book publishing, provincial bookshops, and provincial circulating libraries” (118). The numbers cited by Suarez support St. Clair’s claim: the 42 percent increase in book production between 1783 and 1793, when *Donaldson v. Beckett* had begun to fully register its effects, demonstrates just how radical was the growth in British book production and consumption during the late-eighteenth century (Suarez 44). Various scholars have taken issue with St. Clair’s argument about *Donaldson v. Beckett*’s effect on the reprint trade. See Suarez 62, and especially Bonnell 2006.

secundos—the prices attached to out-of-copyright texts plummeted (St. Clair 16). Yet those new, copyright-protected texts over whose publication the London industry could still maintain legal control continued to be issued in expensive formats like the quarto, before they were tranced down to octavo and duodecimo editions. The late eighteenth-century British book market consequently evolved two sub-markets: one offering unprecedentedly cheap editions of small-format reprints of older texts, and the other offering unprecedentedly expensive editions of new works—especially works of verse—often issued in quarto. Such a market division persisted throughout the Romantic period.³²

As a result, the high-end quarto format occupied a place at the center of Romantic-era literary discourse, structuring for many readers their reception of the era's new literature. Advertisements and reviews repeatedly reminded Romantic readers of the quarto's lavish beauty. An 1807 *La Belle Assemblée* review of Cumberland and Burgess's *The Exodiad* draws representative attention to the format's extravagance, offering qualified praise for the poem's publication "in the shape of a ponderous quarto, printed on very excellent paper, WIRE-WOVE, and hot-pressed" (*Supplement* 42).³³

³² St. Clair, for example, notes that even while cheap books flooded the Regency market, a Parliamentary Select Committee could note that in 1818 "books were more expensive at that time than they had even been in the history of British books" (196). Many texts were of course available in both luxury and reprint markets. St. Clair writes that "as far as the older out-of-copyright authors were concerned, all could be legally reprinted by any publisher willing to take the commercial risk. Many were available in a wide variety of formats at widely different prices. Expensive versions were on sale, but also cheaper versions with small type and utility bindings" (St. Clair 202). This was true during the 1810s and 1820s of Thomson's *The Seasons*, for example, the text at the center of the struggle in *Donaldson v Beckett*, with a quarto "luxury" edition on sale before rebinding for the grossly high price of 84 shillings even while an octavo edition of the same work was available for 13 shillings and smaller formats for 2.5 to 1.5 shillings (St. Clair 204). Even so, when it came to publishing new texts, and especially longer works of poetry, the quarto was often the preferred format.

³³ Such qualities were not exclusive to new books, nor were they only characteristic of quartos. An

Such properties were expected to mark the quality of the quarto text and the reputation of its author, as Byron suggests in writing of the progress of a “scribbler’s” verses from periodical publication to book that while “[i]n Morning Post, or Monthly Magazine . . . [t]here lurked his early lays; . . . soon, hot-pressed / Behold a quarto” (“Hints from Horace” 726-8). Even so, commentators frequently recognized a disparity between material form and textual quality, as when in a “Dialogue Betwixt a Somebody and a Nobody” (1807), “Somebody” asserts that wretchedly bad texts are read by “Nobody” even if they are “printed on wire-wove paper, hot-pressed, bound in morocco, and elegantly gilt” (*BA* XXIII.III: 238).³⁴ Nor did readers suffer any delusions about the reasons motivating publishers to publish in quarto. As one reviewer exclaimed, “[w]e cannot here but exclaim, not so much against authors as against booksellers, who, for their own advantage, have introduced a practice of publishing all travels, light or heavy,

advertisement for the 1810 reprint of Thomson's *The Seasons* announces, for example, “This day is published, elegantly printed on super royal folio, and Imperial quarto. / THOMSON'S SEASONS; illustrated with fine Engravings, by Bartolozzi and Tomkins, Historical Engravers to their Magesties, from original Pictures, painted for the Work by W. Hamilton, R. R. Imperial 4to. price 4l. 4s. in boards. / The same Book, with the addition of four large Engravings, by the same Artist, royal folio, price 6l. 6s. in boards. / Ditto super royal, with proof plates, price 16l. 16s. Boards. / A few copies of the Imperial 4to. edit. May be had, with the plates finely coloured, price 15l. 15s. in boards” (*BA* V.III:44). Likewise, an announcement of Combe and Rowlandson's satire “A Tour in Search of the Picturesque” is listed as being “printed with a new Type, on a large Royal Octavo Vellum Paper, and hot-pressed, price, with Thirty coloured Engravings, 21s. or without Engravings, 10s. 6d.” (*BA* XXXIII.XXXI: 32). But the quarto's superiority over other finely made small format books was evident in the structure of book listings, which typically contrasted high-quality octavos with augmented quartos. See, for example, *Belle Assemblée's* notice of an “Octavo Edition [of the *British Academy*], printed on a Royal Paper, with original criticisms, and narratives respecting the above PLATES, [which] will be charged 1s. 6d. per Number [and a] Quarto Edition, on beautiful Royal Paper, and elegant type, and with Proof Impressions of all this Plates, [which] will be charged 2s. 6d.” (*BA* XXII: 56).

³⁴ See also, for example, *La Belle Assemblée* XI.64 (1830): “[e]ven at this moment, there are hundreds and hundreds of volumes of sweet and harmonious verse, in manuscript, which not a bookseller in the kingdom would look at, for the best of all possible reasons—that, were they to be printed and published, even upon super-fine, wire-wove, hot pressed, gilt-edged vellum paper, with splendid embellishments to boot, they would remain a dead and undiminishing weight upon his shelves” (144).

in this quarto size. The profit of the bookseller is thus doubled, at the expence both of the public and the author” (“The Stranger in Ireland,” *Supplement* 1: 35).³⁵ But whether or not the quarto text’s quality was always found to justify the book’s material extravagance, its bibliographic properties were understood by Romantic readers as signifying the pretensions of its text.

Yet a constellation of other associations—both generic and material—also gathered around the quarto during the Romantic period. On the one hand, the quarto was understood as a format associated especially with well-respected genres, like those of verse and travel literature. So strong was the equation between verse romance and the quarto that Byron could satirize it in Canto III of *Don Juan*, writing of his “sad trimmer” that “[i]n France, for instance, he would write a chanson; / In England a six canto quarto tale . . . ” (III: 681-2). The quarto was also the format most strongly associated with travel literature, as Byron again suggests in *Don Juan* Canto V, where he explains that “I won’t describe; description is my forte, / But every fool describes in these bright days / His wondrous journey to some foreign court, / And spawns his quarto, and demands your praise— / Death to his publisher, to him ‘t is sport” (V: 409-13).³⁶ On the other hand,

³⁵ The reviewer continues: “The public is thus often duped by a most worthless commodity. With regard to the author, his suffering from this avarice of the trade is of a different kind, but he suffers equally; he suffers in his reputation. Many a trifle might pass unnoticed in the common form of an octavo, or a twelves, which produced in the more pompous promise of a heavy quarto, disgusts from the disproportion between the expectation excited and the actual reality; a quarto is too serious a personage to be allowed to play the fool; no one would give, with his eyes open, 2l. 5s. for this string of commonplace and buffooneries” (35). The quarto’s function as an expensive, money-making format was widely recognized. In “Irregular Odes, Or, The Poet and the Publisher” (1825), Charles Dibdin writes of a “Maecenas, whose spirit / Was far more excited by money than merit: / Whose head on good bargains for ever was running; / Whose folly was *folio*; *quarto* his cunning; / *Octavo* his blund’ring; his modesty *twelves*; / And he’d more bound in calf than the books on his shelves” (38-43).

³⁶ The expectation that travel narratives would be published in quarto was so strong that when it was violated readers were deeply chagrined. In an 1808 review of *A Journal of the Voyages and Travels of a*

other genres were thought to be beneath the dignity of the quarto, as John Wilson Croker suggested in an 1822 letter to John Murray regarding the publication of his edition of the letters of the Countess of Suffolk:

What shape will you adopt? I think the correspondence of a nature rather too light for a quarto, and yet it would look well on the same shelf with Horace Walpole's works. If you should prefer an octavo, like Lady Hervey's letters, the papers would furnish two volumes. I, for my part, should prefer the quarto size, which is a great favourite with me, and the letters of such persons as Pope, Swift, and Gay, the Duchesses of Buckingham, Queensberry, and Marlbro', Lords Peterborough, Chesterfield, Bathurst, and Lansdowne, Messrs. Pitt, Pulteney, Pelham, Grenville, and Horace Walpole, seem to me almost to justify the magnificence of the quarto; though, in truth, all their epistles are, in its narrowest sense, familiar, and treat chiefly of tittle-tattle. (*A Publisher and his Friends* 92)³⁷

Just as readers came to associate the quarto with works of weight and magnitude, they also expected a high degree of decorum from its texts, as suggested by a reviewer of Leigh Hunt's *Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries*, who, after complaining of Hunt's accusation that Byron was "niggardly in his rewards" to his mistresses, avers that "[i]t is a truly loathsome subject to be treated of in a three-guinea quarto; but we venture to affirm, that Hunt is the first person of the male sex that ever publicly accused a friend, living or dead, of having, to his knowledge, behaved shabbily in money matters to

Corps of Discovery published in the *Quarterly*, one reviewer voices particular dissatisfaction with the text's publication in octavo, complaining that "[o]ur hopes were somewhat checked in the outset, when instead of sitting down to a magnificent quarto, with maps, plates, and 'all appliances and means to boot', as we had a right to expect from a plan executed under such auspices, we took up a shabby octavo, the production of a mere underling, and without one chart to guide the eye, or assist the memory" (*QR* 1.11: 258). See also Chapter 5.

³⁷ The quarto's reputation as a high status format had other generic consequences. For example, it probably motivated academics and publishers to use the format to publish scholarly works, as implied in "Hogmanay and New-Year's Day" (1822), when a *Blackwoods* writer suggests, perhaps satirically, that "[i]t would ill become a writer in small printed octavo to compete in point of knowledge or erudition with an author of large type quarto ... " (*XI.LX*: 31).

women” (*Blackwoods* CXXXVI.XXIII: 391). From genre to decorum, Romantic readers maintained high expectations about the textual content of the quarto book.

Readers also developed expectations about the quarto’s bibliographic properties, which helped establish the book’s reputation as a visually beautiful object. In particular, readers sought out quarto books for their illustrations and the wide margins of their pages. Partly because of its size, the quarto was recognized as the format most suitable for the inclusion of engravings, and many quarto listings draw special attention to the visual components of the advertised book.³⁸ Even more than its illustrations, the quarto’s margins appealed to readers, insofar as they highlighted the quality of the format’s paper, provided space for scholarly annotation, and in general marked its extravagance.³⁹ In a line quoted repeatedly throughout the period, Sheridan documented the appeal of the verse quarto’s margin when in *The School for Scandal* Sir Benjamin Backbite promises Maria that he will immortalize her by publishing the love poetry he dedicates to her “on a beautiful quarto type, where a neat rivulet of text shall murmur through a meadow of margin; —’foregad they’ll be the most elegant things of their kind” (12).⁴⁰ So strong was the quarto’s reputation for broad margins that it was satirized in the Byronic “Daniel

³⁸ A listing in *Blackwoods* for *Lacunar Strevelinense* (1817) is typical, advertising a “Collection of Heads etched and engraved after the Carved World which formerly decorated the Roof of the King’s Room in Stirling Castle. Splendidly printed, imperial quarto, with *forty* plates. £2, 12s. 6d.” (1.5: 530).

³⁹ The folio offered the widest margin of any format, as Samuel Johnson suggests in his “Preface” to Pope when he refers to “extent of margin” as constituting one of the attractions of Lintot royal paper folio edition of Pope’s *Iliad* (*Prefaces VII* 54). However, because the quarto had for all intents and purposes replaced the folio as the largest format by the late eighteenth century, the quarto was viewed as format most commonly capable of providing the ample margin prized by many book buyers.

⁴⁰ See also, e.g., “Ode XVI: Wit on the Wing” (1813), in which Horace Smith describes a young “quarto-building wight” who “[f]or wit ... Invokes the Gods; the jilt in spite Eludes the man of letters. / Wit thro’ the wire-wove margin glides, / And all the gilded pomp derides / Of red morocco fetters” (7-12).

O'Rourke: An Epic Poem in Six Cantos," whose author explains that "I should like to take / A trip 'around the world like Captain Cook.' / It would be just a pretty sort of freak, / And then I could endite a handsome book. / Some dozen leaves of manuscript would make / A good sized quarto, if we only took / Some pains to put a type, round, tall, and large in, / And leave about a half a foot of margin" (*Blackwoods* XLIV.VIII: 433). As the poem's closing couplet suggests, the quarto was widely perceived as a book of exaggeratedly extravagant margins.⁴¹ Together, the quarto's margins and its illustrations strengthened the book's reputation for visual beauty.

Readers also associated the quarto with exquisite forwarding materials and ornate finishing techniques. Maria Edgeworth suggests the quarto's reputation as a book to be bound in the finest leathers when, in "Ennui, or Memoirs of The Earl of Glenthorn," Lady Geraldine exclaims to her cousin Craiglethorpe that after he has filled his "little note-book, which will soon, heigh! presto! turn to a ponderous quarto, I shall have a copy, bound in Morocco, no doubt, *from the author*" (157).⁴² In fact, as Edgeworth hints,

⁴¹ See also, e.g., the *Edinburgh Review*'s piece on James Gray Jackson's *An Account of the Empire of Marocco* (1809), which complains that "we must remark, that [Jackson's] book, though written without any affectation of authorship, is certainly too bulky, and too much ornamented, in proportion to the quantity of its materials. It is eked out with some useless chapters (already hinted at), with broad margins, and wide spaces, and with exceeding bad daubs of aquatinta, until that which should have been a small octavo, has assumed the imposing shape of a quarto with plates" (14.28: 306).

⁴² See also the *Biographia Literaria* (158), where Coleridge writes that "if the pedant of the cloyster, and the pedant of the lobby, both *smell equally of the shop*, yet the odour from the Russian binding of good old *authentic-looking* folios and quartos is less annoying than the steams from the tavern or bagnio." Similarly, in *The Antiquary* Scott describes his protagonist's excitement over an exotically bound quarto: "'Pr'ythee, undo this button,' said he, as he observed Lovel fumbling at the clasp;—he did so, the lid opened, and discovered a thin quarto curiously bound in black shagreen—"There, Mr Lovel—there is the work I mentioned to you last night—the rare quarto of the Augsburg Confession, the foundation at once and the bulwark of the Reformation, drawn up by the learned and venerable Melancthon ... " (154).

quartos, like octavos and duodecimos, were usually sold unbound and were only given to a binder to forward and finish after their sale.⁴³ But because “[i]t was low tone for a gentleman to have unbound books on his shelves,” those books, like the quarto, whose prices made them exclusively available to wealthier purchasers were almost always immediately bound and in many cases decorated (St. Clair 292). Such books were usually bound in the most expensive leathers—morocco or Russia—and decorated with inessential decorative additions, like silk headbands, marbled boards, and the gold embossing and gilt edges often used to embellish the spine and pages (Pickwoad 278; 276). While such materials and techniques were also frequently used to decorate smaller format octavos and duodecimos, they were virtually required for the extravagant quarto.

Contemporary readers also show a preoccupation with the quarto’s size, and the manner in which its length, weight, and immobility rendered the book an ornamental object.⁴⁴ In part a component of its reputation as a format meant for serious—often

⁴³ Pickwoad (268) notes that during the late-Romantic period books began to be sold already bound.

⁴⁴ Quartos are referred to repeatedly as “heavy,” “thick,” and “large” during the Romantic period. For token examples, see the *British Critic’s* review of “Don Juan” (12: 198); the *Satirist’s* “Anecdotes, Epigrams, &c.” (8: 333); and *Monthly magazine’s* “Varieties, Literary and Philosophical” (8.51: 807). The association between the quarto and length is suggested, for example, in Jeffrey’s famous reviews of Wordsworth’s *Excursion* and *White Doe of Rylestone* quartos. In his review of *The Excursion*, Jeffrey damns the work partly on the basis of its length, complaining that while it already “fairly fills four hundred and twenty good quarto pages, without note, vignette, or any sort of extraneous assistance, it is stated in the title—with something of an imprudent candour—to be but ‘a portion’ of a larger work” (ER 47.24:1). Jeffrey makes a similar claim of *The White Doe of Rylestone*, claiming that “[t]his, we think, has the merit of being the very worst poem we ever saw imprinted in a quarto volume . . .” before allowing that “the story of the poem, though not capable of furnishing out matter for a quarto volume, might yet have made an interesting ballad” (ER 25.50: 469; 470). See also *Blackwoods’* review of Southey’s *Life of Wesley*, which attacks “all his bulky historical works [as] comparatively speaking, failures. His History of Brazil is the most unreadable production of our time. Two or three elephant quartos about a single Portuguese colony!” (LXXXV.XV: 209). Likewise, in his *Letters to a Young Man*, De Quincey writes of the volume of printed material in Europe that even after “subtracting all merely professional books—books of reference, as dictionaries, &c. &c. &c.—from the universal library of Europe, there would still remain a total of not less than twelve hundred thousand books over and above what the presses of Europe are still disembodying into the ocean of literature, many of them

understood as lengthy—works, the quarto’s conventional length also led many readers to revile the format. Its length in particular was recognized as precluding many readers from attempting complete readings, as a *Blackwoods* review of Irving’s *Sketch-Book* suggested. Pouring abuse on the work’s publication in two “fashionable octavos,” the reviewer exclaims that “[p]eople, who never study; never think—are quite amazed, when they come to find how easy a thing it is, after all, to read entirely through so vast a work as that, which has come to them in two octavos” while noting that “they think better of themselves; their capacity; their diligence; less of those, whom they have hitherto looked upon with a sort of awe—the readers of a quarto” (“American Writers” XCVI.XVII: 59). Because of its length, the quarto was strongly associated with an obnoxious weight and consequent immobility.⁴⁵ In a letter to her sister written in 1813, Jane Austen complained that “[l]adies who read those enormous great stupid thick quarto volumes which one

immense folios or quartos” (38). Hazlitt also implies the quarto’s association with length in his essay on Scott in *The Spirit of the Age*, when he recollects how the author “poured out quarto upon quarto, as if they had been drops of water” (128), as well as in his account of Godwin, when he suggests that the writer’s “*Life of Chaucer* would have given celebrity to any man of letters possessed of three thousand a year, with leisure to write quartos” (48). See also, among very many other examples, *ER* 3.2: 49-50.

⁴⁵ Byron plays on the reputed weight of the quarto to damn Southey and *The Curse of Kehama* in a note appended to his unpublished “Hints from Horace”: “A literary friend of mine, walking out one lovely evening last summer, on the eleventh bridge of the Paddington canal, was alarmed by the cry of ‘one in jeopardy:’ he rushed along, collected a body of Irish haymakers (supping on buttermilk in an adjacent paddock), procured three rakes, one eel spear and a landing-net, and at last (*horresco referens*) pulled out—his own publisher. The unfortunate man was gone for ever, and so was a large quarto wherewith he had taken the leap, which proved, on inquiry, to have been Mr. Southey’s last work. Its ‘alacrity of sinking’ was so great, that it has never since been heard of; though some maintain that it is at this moment concealed at Alderman Birch’s pastry-premises, Cornhill. Be this as it may, the coroner’s inquest brought in a verdict of ‘*Felo de Bibliopola*’ against a quarto unknown, and circumstantial evidence being since strong against the *Curse of Kehama* (of which the above words are an exact description), it will be tried by its peers next session, in Grub Street—Arthur, Alfred, Davideis, Richard Coeur de Lion, Exodus, Exodiad, Epigoniad, Calvary, Fall of Cambria, Siege of Acre, Don Roderick, and Tom Thumb the Great, are the names of the twelve jurors. The judges are Pye, Bowles, and the bell-man of St. Sepulchre’s” (n. l. 657).

always sees in the breakfast parlour there must be acquainted with everything in the world. I detest a quarto. Capt. Pasley's book is too good for their society. They will not understand a man who condenses his thoughts into an octavo" (*Letters* 185).⁴⁶

Contemporaries recognized that the cumbersome immobility of the quarto made the book especially resistant to circulation, as one reviewer suggested in writing of Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* that "[a]s, however, a two-guinea quarto must have a comparatively slow circulation, it is probable that many of our readers have not yet seen this delightful romance" (*Blackwoods* 5.1: 503). Consequently, the book was seen as an ornamental object, meant not so much to be read as to be displayed on parlor tables and in libraries.⁴⁷ As one writer concluded in an essay "On the Nothingness of Good Works" (1828), "[i]n these days one would no more think of reading through a 'respectable' quarto than of not buying it. Our libraries must have it, but we ourselves are satisfied with the cream which has been skimmed off it and dished up in the Reviews" (*Blackwoods* CXLVI.XXIV: 872). The length and immobility of the Romantic-period quarto distinguished it as a book meant to be seen as much as to be read.

Partly on the basis of its reputation as a visually enticing book, the quarto also possessed a status as a classed format, meant especially to appeal to those wealthier

⁴⁶ See also, e.g., Leigh Hunt, who locates the quarto in a domestic space when he speaks of "[e]very lover of books, scholar or not, who knows what it is to have his quarto open against a loaf at his tea, to carry his duodecimo about in his pocket, to read along country roads or even streets" (*Examiner* 720: 666).

⁴⁷ The library was seen as one of the few proper places for the quarto. In a "Noctes Ambrosianae" from 1829, John Wilson's alias "Christopher North" claims that "[f]ormerly, when [philosophical] disquisitions were confined to quarto or octavo volumes, in which there was nothing else, the author made one great effort, and died in book-birth—his offspring sharing often the doom of its unhappy parent. It it lived it was forthwith immured in a prison called a library—an uncirculating library—and was heard no more of in this world, but by certain worms" (*Blackwoods* 25.XLII: 542).

readers and purchasers constituting the British upper classes. This status is evident in the literary rankings that appear consistently in periodicals during the period. Presenting one such ranking in “A Literary Dinner” (1824), Washington Irving recounts an evening during which

[a] popular poet had the post of honour, opposite to whom was a hot pressed traveller in quarto, with plates. A grave looking antiquarian, who had produced several solid works, which were much quoted and little read, was treated with great respect, and seated next to a neat dressy gentleman in black, who had written a thin, genteel, hot pressed octavo on political economy, that was getting into fashion. Several three volume duo-decimo men of fair currency were placed about the centre of the table; while the lower end was taken up with small poets, translators, and authors, who had not as yet risen into much notice. (*Tales of a Traveler* 186)

Irving’s ranking is mirrored in John Wolcott’s “Bozzy and Piozzi Or the British Biographers, a Town Eclogue,” which imagines how upon a bookshelf “High plac’d the venerable *quarto* sits, / Superior frowning o’er *octavo wits* / And *duodecimos*, ignoble scum! / Poor prostitutes to ev’ry vulgar thumb! / Whilst undefil’d by literary rage, / *He* bears a *spotless* leaf from age to age” (75-80).⁴⁸ But the quarto was also explicitly defined

⁴⁸ Such rankings are conventional during the period. See also, for example, the “Scale of Literary Merit,” which tells the story “of a learned gentleman who, in his anxiety to be esteemed a Maecenas of literature, made it a practice to entertain all writers of the day at his table, which mode of patronage was not unpleasant to the objects of it. In order, however, to prevent all unpleasantness, this patron judged it proper to arrange his guests according to etiquette; he therefore gave the highest place to those who had written a folio; after these came the quarto authors, the octavo, &c. This may be the reason why some authors are so anxious to sport their quartos and broad margins when twelves or eighteens would contain all they produce worth reading” (*Lady’s Monthly Museum* 9: 110). Keats also ranks format according to status in a letter to Charles Wentworth Dilke (*Selected Letters* 143). Opening the letter by asking “how can I with any face begin without a dissertation on letter-writing?,” he continues: “as you have seen the history of the world stamped as it were by a diminishing glass in the form of a chronological Map, so will I ‘with retractile claws’ draw this into the form of a table—whereby it will occupy merely the remainder of this first page—

Folio—Parsons, Lawyers, Statesmen, Physicians out of place—ut—Eustace—Thornton
—out of practice or on their travels.

Foolscap—1. Superfine—Rich or noble poets—ut Byron. 2. common ut egomet.

Quarto—Projectors, Patentees, Presidents, Potato growers.

Bath—Boarding schools, and suburbans in general.

Gilt edge—Dandies in general, male, female, and literary.

in terms of its upper class readership. Speaking of his verse quarto *Madoc*, for example, Robert Southey noted that “[i]f *Madoc* obtain any celebrity its size and cost will recommend it among these gentry—*libros consumeri nati*—born to buy quartos and to help the revenue” (*CLRS*: 1075). To be sure, the quarto’s reputation as an upper class format had much to do with its relatively high cost: whether a 2 shilling pamphlet or a 42 shilling book, the format was almost always the most expensive choice for readers interested in purchasing a new text. But the quarto’s class status was also a function of its size and material extravagance, which configured the book as an ornamental object. Consequently, as Southey noted of such quartos, “books are now so dear that they are becoming rather articles of fashionable furniture more than anything else; they who buy them do not read them, and they who read them do not buy them” (*CLRS*: 1075). Recognized as a piece of expensive bibliographic furniture rather than simply a readable text, the quarto was meant to appeal to those “men born to buy books” who made up the British upper classes.

Such associations coalesce in Washington Irving’s “The Mutability of Literature.” The story begins with the narrator “loitering about the old gray cloisters of Westminster Abbey, enjoying that luxury of wandering thought which one is apt to dignify with the name of reflection” (207), when a group of boys breaks the silence and leads him to retire to the Abbey’s library. Once in the library, the narrator takes down a “thick quarto, curiously bound in parchment, with brass clasps” (209). While meditating on the tragic

Octavo or tears—All who make use of a lascivious seal.

Duodec.—May be found for the most part on Milliners’ and Dressmakers’ Parlour tables ...”

nature of scholarly exertion, the narrator's thrumming fingers awaken the quarto. Though "at first its voice was very hoarse and broken, being much troubled by a cobweb that some studious spider had woven across it; and having probably contracted a cold from long exposure to the chills and damps of the abbey . . ." the quarto quickly becomes "an exceedingly fluent conversable little tome. Its language, to be sure, was rather quaint and obsolete, and its pronunciation, what, in the present day, would be deemed barbarous . . ." (210-11). The quarto is preoccupied with the fact that it is no longer read: "'What a plague do they mean,' said the little quarto, which I began to perceive was somewhat choleric, 'what a plague do they mean by keeping several thousand volumes of us shut up here, and watched by a set of old vergers like so many beauties in a harem, merely to be looked at now and then by the dean. Books were written to give pleasure and to be enjoyed . . .'" (211). The quarto's desire is to return into circulation, but the narrator suggests that its age and necessary location in the library prevents this possibility (212-3). The conversation is ultimately interrupted, but not before Irving is able to figure the quarto in terms of that set of associations that became standardized during the Romantic period and which together fixed the book's reputation as a format meant for the wealthier classes. Large, heavy, ponderous, and pompous; antiquated and genteel; resistant to circulation among the masses, its proper place being in libraries of the gentry and aristocracy; lavishly crafted, with quality paper, fine types, wide margins, exotic bindings, and gilded pages; magnificently expensive; most of all, an object to be seen rather than read: the Romantic-period quarto was a book of extravagance, beauty, and rarity whose material form made it available only to a very few readers—those "twice two thousand for whom the world is made."

Above all, the quarto's cluster of particular associations fixed the format as the period's predominant luxury book.⁴⁹ Book luxury in general provided a common focus for discussion among Romantic readers and writers.⁵⁰ But the material properties of the quarto book defined its status as the most luxurious of all commonly used formats during the period, leading many commentators to speak of the quarto and book luxury in the same breath. Such an equation is easily understandable. First, relative to other cheaper and more frequently produced formats, the quarto edition of a text was luxuriously rare. Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* was published and sold in an expensive quarto edition of 2,500 copies (itself much higher than the usual 500) before being trached down to octavo, in which format 18,000 copies were produced between 1817 and 1827 alone. Second, the bibliographic codes of the quarto book's usual bindings were often

⁴⁹ St. Clair and others have referred to the quarto as a "luxury book," though in general without historicizing "luxury" or providing evidence of the quarto's designation by Romantic readers as a "luxury." See St. Clair 100; 192-6; Raven "The book" 86; 98-9; Sutherland 677; Suarez 28; and Mosley 191.

⁵⁰ Examples of this preoccupation abound. Shelley puts the book in the context of the discourse on luxury in writing of his lodgings in York during 1811 that "[e]very useless ornament the pillars, the iron ceilings, the juttings of the wainscot . . . —how many things could we do without, how unnecessary are mahogany tables, silver vases, myriads of viands and liquors, expensive printing that worst of all" (*Letters* 144); "W. H." praises book luxury in the *Monthly Magazine*, writing that "[t]o cut open the leaves, to inhale the fragrance of the scarcely-dry paper, to examine the type, to see who is the printer (which is some clue to the value that is set upon the work), to launch out into the regions of thought and invention never trod till now, and to explore characters that never met a human eye before—this is a luxury worth sacrificing a dinner-party, or a few hours of a spare morning to" ("On Reading New Books" *MM* IV.19: 17); writing of Bulmer, an American visitor to Britain remembers how "[t]he luxury of the age, and other circumstances, such as the printing for the Shakespeare Gallery in England, introduced a rage for fine printing upon vellum and hot pressing" (ctd. in Barker 265); John Aikin castigates the "typographical luxury which, joined to the necessary increase of expence in printing, has so much enhanced the price of new books as to be a material obstacle to the indulgence of a laudable and reasonable curiosity by the reading Publick" (ctd. in Raven, "The book" 98); Wordsworth writes to Edward Moxon concerning his 1838 *Sonnets* that "[y]ou somewhat surprize me in purposing to print one Son[net] on a page, the whole number being I believe 415. Your plan and consequent price would make it a book of luxury, and tho' I have no objection to that, yet still my wish is, to be read as widely as is consistent with reasonable pecuniary return" (*Letters* VI: 518); and so on. See also Thomas Frognall Dibdin's *Bibliomania* for numerous passages describing the luxury of antiquarian books.

luxuriously oriental. Quartos were almost always encased in the highest quality leathers, which frequently possessed exotic or Oriental names and provenances—Russia, Turkey, morocco, occasionally shagreen. Indeed, such leathers were often in fact imported eastern luxury commodities. Marbled boards and pages, as well as silk headbands and gold embossing and gilding, rendered the book a virtual repository of Eastern textiles and precious metals. Third, the book’s reputation as a format meant for gentry and noble readers established its status as luxuriously aristocratic. Practically speaking, this status was especially apparent in the verse quarto’s exorbitant price. In a period when the average gentleman could expect an income of 5 pounds (or 100 shillings) a week (St. Clair 195), the Regency verse quartos were lavish expenditures, in some cases costing almost half a gentleman’s weekly income. When *Lalla Rookh* entered the market at 42 shillings a copy, few of Moore’s countrymen or women would have been able to afford the book; likewise, Wordsworth’s *The Excursion* was so expensive that Wordsworth himself would likely have been unable to afford a copy (St. Clair 195). Many readers located the format’s luxury especially in the power of its rising price to increase—rather than reduce—demand.⁵¹ But the quarto’s aristocratic luxury was also suggested by its conventional figuration during the period as a pompously upper-class format. Finally, the quarto book was recognized by most readers as luxuriously useless. An 1824 *London Magazine* review of *Captain Smyth’s Memoir of Sicily and its Islands* explicitly contrasted the luxurious uselessness of the quarto with the functionality of the duodecimo

⁵¹ Southey, for example, observed of the inclusion of prints in his *Madoc* quarto that they were meant to make “the book sell, which prints do by making it expensive, for the rich think whatever is dear must be good” (CLRS: 904). See also Chapter 5.

in confessing that “[h]ow legitimately the ‘use and interest’ of this quarto volume on duodecimo matter, may be alleged in excuse of its length, expensiveness, and shamefully, inaccurate typography, we have some doubt” (9: 397). With its imposing size, beautiful paper, fine types, and characteristically wide margins, the value of the quarto book lay not in the readability of its text but rather in the ostentatious ornament of its material form. Rare, vaguely eastern, aristocratic, exorbitantly priced, superfluously material, the quarto book more than any other Romantic-period format flaunted its status as a luxury.

Contemporary readers and writers attested to the quarto’s desirability as a luxury even while admitting to deep conflicts about this status. Reviewing Thomas Walsh’s quarto *Journal of the Campaign in Egypt* (1803), one reader exclaimed that while “[t]oo much praise cannot be given to the elegance and perspicuity of his topographical charts, and military plans,” still “[t]he book itself is a good specimen of the effect, of luxury, in raising the price of knowledge. In its present state, it cannot sell for less than three or four guineas, though all the narrative might be printed on good paper and in legible type, for tenpence” (“Accounts of the Egyptian Expedition” *ER* 14.28: 54). *The Scourge*, on the other hand, attacked publishers who used the format to pass off low-quality texts by issuing them as high-quality quartos, thereby convincing “[t]he admirer of poetical talent, and the critical friends whose expectations have been excited by the promise displayed in [a] first effusion, [to] pay the additional price for conveyance by the mail, sacrifice their dinners or their places at the theatre, to the anticipated luxury of enjoying a *second Lay*” (“Spoils of Literature” IX: 223). Not only an instrument of fraud, the luxurious quarto threatened to turn readers away from useful instruction and towards superfluous luxury,

as one reviewer suggested in asking of Thomas Moore's exorbitantly priced *Lalla Rookh* quarto

[w]hat head is set right in one erroneous notion, what heart is softened in one obdurate feeling, by this luxurious quarto? Alas! with the exception which we have made, not one. O! that the author 'Would stoop to truth, and moralize his song;' would disdain the dull dislike of the times for all dignified and instructive writing; would chain their unwilling attention to a thoughtful and ennobling strain; and (as we before intimated) would redeem our country from the disgrace of yet wanting a legitimate epic poem! (*MR* 83: 299).

Benjamin Disraeli was even clearer in *Vivian Grey* (1826-7), when he complained that

[t]here is nothing like a fall of stocks to affect what it is the fashion to style the Literature of the present day—a fungus production, which has flourished from the artificial state of our society—the mere creature of our imaginary wealth. Every body being very rich, has afforded to be very literary—books being considered a luxury almost as elegant and necessary as Ottomans, bonbons, and pier glasses ... The Stock brokers' ladies took off the quarto travels, and the hot-pressed poetry. They were the patronesses of your patent ink, and your wire wove paper. (II: 160-1)

Quarto luxury was a national problem, and it was also a new problem in the Romantic era. Referring to a 1671 duodecimo edition of Collins's *The Present State of Russia, in a letter to a Friend at London*, the *Retrospective Review* made this clear in 1826:

The change in the time, between the date of the publication of this little volume and the present year, is scarcely shewn in any thing more conspicuously than in the outward form and appearance of this book. Had the materials of this work been imported from Russia by a learned physician of the year 1826, his notes and memoranda would have been put into the hands of a fashionable publisher, and by him into those of a professional arranger and digester of chapters, indices, and prefaces. The paper manufacturer and printer would then have been required to perform their parts; engravers and artists would have been set to work; and just as the winter was commencing, the result of their labours would have been ushered into the world, amidst a well-maintained fire of puffs and advertisements, in the shape of a huge bulk of hotpressed paper, brilliant type, and luculent pictures, price six guineas ... If the real information usually contained in these two forms were to be compared, we rather

imagine the balance would not be found so decidedly in favour of the luxurious quarto. (*Retrospective Review* 14: 32)

Threatening individual readers, damaging national health, a “fungus production” manifesting the moribund state of the empire, the “luxurious quarto” was a peculiarly Romantic affliction.

The quarto’s status as the preeminent bibliographic luxury of the Romantic period shaped the reception of those texts that were issued in the format, as subsequent chapters of this dissertation show. Configuring those discourses associated with the format—from sentimentalism and liberal-radicalism to Wordsworthian Romanticism and orientalism—as luxury ideologies by virtue of the appearance of their exemplary instances in the luxurious quarto form, the format classed as the exclusive privilege of Britain’s wealthiest readers the aesthetic doctrines defining the new Romantic schools. Though clearly not definitive of Romantic-period literature, the luxury Romanticism associated with the quarto book was among the period’s most glitteringly high-profile literary facets, encouraging many Romantic readers to interpret the poetry of the new schools along heavily classed and often anxiety-provoking lines. Emblematic of Romantic luxury, the prevalence of the quarto book in the Romantic period complicates many common assumptions about the political alignments of that period’s literary ideologies, thereby necessitating the reconsideration of Romantic literary culture undertaken in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 2

THE “LUXURY OF WOE”: SYMPATHY AND FORMAT IN *THE DESERTED*

VILLAGE

In regretting the depopulation of the country, I inveigh
against the increase of our luxuries.

(The Deserted Village i)

Bless'd be those feasts with simple plenty crown'd,
Where all the ruddy family around
... sigh with pity at some mournful tale,
Or press the bashful stranger to his food,
And learn the luxury of doing good.

(The Traveller 17-22).

Eighteenth-century British sentimental poetry expresses a conflicted relationship toward luxury. For even while it repeatedly attacks luxury for its destructive effects, at its heart is a disconcerting suggestion: sympathy is a luxury that not everyone can afford. Over and over again, sentimental poetry figures sympathy and its many expressions—grief, woe, tears, charity—as forms of luxury. In particular, phrases like “the luxury of grief” and “the luxury of woe” recur often enough to become stock epithets of sentimentalism. The prominence of such phrases has been seen as providing warrant for theories of sentimentalism that stress the movement’s connections to an emerging and strongly consumerist middle-class in eighteenth-century Britain, yet such accounts tend to neglect the material dimension of sentimental luxury. For not only did sentimental poetry figure as a luxury the sympathetic feeling it glorified, but the books embodying

this literature were themselves often luxury goods. Because sentimental poetry blossomed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, many of its texts—both minor and major—were initially published in the luxurious quarto format. Recognized for the beauty of its page and the extravagance of its price, the sentimental quarto materialized the “luxury of woe,” thereby shaping the reception of sentimental quarto poetry by eighteenth-century readers.¹

This process had important consequences. Most significantly, the sentimental quarto classed the ideology of sympathy that formed the core of sentimental literature. Just as sentimental poetry cast sympathetic feeling as the exclusive possession of the polite classes, so did the quarto format limit access to this poetry to those very classes whose capacity for refined feeling it celebrated. Not only emblemizing the luxury of woe, the sentimental quarto materially constrained the transmission of sentimental ideology, at least initially, to the wealthy men and women composing British society’s middling classes and upper ranks. In thus shaping the readership of sentimental poetry, the quarto framed the reception of this poetry, and especially interpretations of its

¹ Canonically representative sentimental attacks on luxury appear in, e.g., Gray’s “Elegy” (71); Book 1 of Cowper’s *The Task*; and Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village.” But numerous cases also exist in which sentimental sympathy is figured in terms of luxury: Goldsmith refers in “The Traveller” to “the luxury of doing good” (22); Thomas Warton suggests in *The pleasure of melancholy* that “Few know that elegance of soul refin’d, / Whose soft sensation feels quicker joy / From Melancholy’s scenes” (92-4); Young writes in *Night Thoughts* of “a luxury in tears” (*Night the eighth* 565); John Langhorne bemoans “the luxury of lonely pain” (“Owen of Carron,” 374); and Richard Polwhele refers to the “precious luxury of tears” (“Lines on the Death of a Young Lady,” 4). (The list grows exponentially longer when novels, reviews, and other prose forms are taken into account.) Two constructions in particular—the “luxury of woe” and the “luxury of grief”—appear with especially great frequency. (See, e.g., Hofland, “The Rhapsody of Sorrow,” 51; Hurdis, *Tears of Affection*, 190; Lloyd, “Titus and Gissipus,” 649; and Langhorne, *Verses in memory of a lady* 62). Such figurations continue deep into the Romantic period. Though not completely overlooked—see, e.g., Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, 141; and G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, 69—sentimental sympathy’s representation as a luxury has been under-examined.

political alignment. In particular, readers of sentimental quartos tended to ignore the political ramifications of sentimental poetry, celebrating sentimentalism instead for its aesthetic beauty. Changes in format led to changes in reception, such that small-format reprints of sentimental texts originally printed in quarto reached readerships more likely to interpret sentimental poetry along more starkly political lines. The cultural politics of sentimentalism were thus shaped by book format as much as political context.²

The publication history of Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" exemplifies this process. In particular, as this chapter argues, changing interpretations of the poem's politics over the latter half of the eighteenth-century were conditioned by changes in its format, as the poem was tranced down from quarto to increasingly cheap small-format

² The politics of sentimentalism are hotly debated. In *Virtue in Distress*, R. F. Brissenden gave voice to the position, dominant during much of the twentieth century, that while sentimentalism appeared initially as a fundamentally progressive aesthetic movement insofar as it emphasized egalitarianism and natural benevolence, by the 1790s it had lost its progressive force and degenerated into solipsistic escapism. Recent critics tend to disagree with Brissenden, arguing instead that sentimentalism served the aims of eighteenth-century political reaction. (See, e.g., Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* and Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*.) Others suggest that sentimentalism possessed no stable ideological agenda. In *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s*, for example, Chris Jones argues that "[s]ensibility is a Janus-faced concept" whose political profile was never unified or determined but rather changed over time and on the basis of its appropriators (Jones 7). Though initially "a theoretical construction which owed much to the code of behaviour in free aristocratic society" (8), sentimentalism became "a site of contention between radical and conservative discourses" (6) during the 1790s, as individuals and groups with rival political visions sought to forge sentimental literature into an ideological weapon. Jones is right to reject accounts of sentimentalism which see the movement as a unified formation with a pre-determined politics, yet his account is problematic in two respects. First, it adopts a "history of ideas" approach (10), attempting to show how "[c]onceptual formations change under the stress of history" (11). In emphasizing ideas, however, Jones neglects the objects that embodied these ideas. As a conceptual formation, sentimentalism changed not only under the stress of political history but also under the stress of its *material* history—and especially its book history. As this chapter suggests, the ideological contours of sentimental texts like *The Deserted Village* were shaped not only by their appropriators or their contexts of appropriation but also by their specific material appropriations in the forms of books, pamphlets and other material objects. Second, Jones assumes that sentimental literature only became politicized during the 1790s, and only in the hands of English radicals (13). But it didn't take the political agitation of the 1790s to politicize sentimentalism; rather, sentimentalism was politicized from its inception, for the material forms used to embody sentimental texts shaped the emphases of these texts and limited or expanded their accessibility. By so doing, their material forms altered both the texts themselves and their readerships and contexts of reading, changing the conditions under which these texts were decoded and therefore politicized.

editions. Confronted with the luxurious quarto edition, the first readers of Goldsmith's poem praised its poetry while reviling its politics. Evidenced in early reviews of "The Deserted Village," this reception was encouraged by the poem's quarto format, which both emphasized the poem's depictions of the luxury of woe and limited its accessibility to those very members of the middling and upper ranks whose sympathetic remove the quarto was meant to glorify. But the quarto's success in foregrounding the text's status as poem rather than political diatribe still served the ends of reactionary Toryism insofar as it sentimentalized and therefore attempted to legitimate the quasi-feudal agrarian arrangements undergirding Tory power. Formatting changes during the subsequent decades led to changes in the reception of the poem's politics. As quarto editions disappeared from the market, "The Deserted Village" was reprinted by politically motivated printers in smaller and cheaper editions whose altered texts and increased accessibility to radically different audiences encouraged new interpretations of its politics. In Ireland, the appropriation of Goldsmith's poem was exemplified by the actions of Irish Catholic printer Patrick Wogan. By reprinting Goldsmith's poem in a chapbook and distributing it to peasants during a period of widespread agrarian revolt, Wogan sought to re-channel sectarian hostility among peasants towards enclosure and the landlords whose pursuit of luxury purportedly increased it, thereby pursuing his aim of promoting inter-denominational unity in Ireland. In England, Thomas Spence adopted the penny pamphlet to radicalize "The Deserted Village." By excerpting "The Deserted Village" in his penny weekly *Pigs' Meat*, Spence redefined the poem as a piece of revolutionary political propaganda meant to advance his Land Plan. Spence's success in

converting “The Deserted Village” into a radical text is suggested by the evidence of readers and writers throughout the Romantic period, for whom Goldsmith’s poem became synonymous with the cause of radicalism.³

***The Deserted Village* Quarto and the “luxury of woe”**

When it appeared in 1770, Goldsmith’s *The Deserted Village* was hailed as a work of sentimental poetry, and for understandable reasons: the poem is narrated from the perspective of a melancholic wanderer; its villagers are destitute and downtrodden objects of his sympathy; images of hearts, tears, and weeping flood the text; and its entire rhetorical apparatus aims to elicit the “grief” and “woe” of its readers.⁴ Yet the poem also

³ In tracing the transformation of *The Deserted Village* from luxury commodity into radical weapon, I make a causal claim—about the relationship between formatting changes and changing patterns of reception—that calls for clarification. My argument is not that such formatting changes determined changes in reception or were sufficient to bring them about. Instead, I argue that formatting changes were a necessary but over-looked condition in the changing reception of Goldsmith’s poem. Very likely, some quarto readers found in *The Deserted Village* a brilliant attack on the economic arrangements of the English countryside; likewise, many readers of the pamphlet version probably read the poem solely for its sentimentalism. If a small-format edition had been sufficient to radicalize the poem, then the 12mo piracies of the 1770s would have done so at a relatively early point in the poem’s history. In fact, especially given that the changing political climate of the 1790s increased the number of radical appropriations of Goldsmith’s poem, it would be wrong-headed to suppose that such political changes had only a small effect on the transformation in the reception of *The Deserted Village*. Nevertheless, this transformation also required a change in formatting, which conditioned the widespread dissemination of Goldsmith’s poem and thus increased its accessibility to those readers most likely to identify and exploit its latent radicalism. Within the context of the British 1790s, quarto editions of *The Deserted Village* would have limited the poem’s accessibility to those readers generally secure from economic woe, excluding from its readership many of those readers suffering the effects of Britain’s changing economic landscape. The availability of small-format editions like Spence’s pamphlet meant that the poem could be disseminated widely among readers who had experienced the effects of increased enclosure, rising rents, and the general growth in luxury and were therefore inclined to read the poem for its attack on these changes. Simultaneously, and as this essay explains, the quarto and small-format editions of *The Deserted Village* each emphasized different aspects of Goldsmith’s poem, thus reinforcing those differences in audience already encouraged by the poem’s different formats.

⁴ Throughout this section, references to “The Deserted Village” are to the second quarto edition (*Q2*) unless otherwise specified. In “The Problem of Indifferent Readings in the Eighteenth Century, with a Solution from ‘The Deserted Village,’” Arthur Friedman shows that changes in substantives first appearing in *Q2* and continuing in subsequent editions were introduced by Goldsmith himself and thereby warrant the use of *Q2* as a copytext (147). Quarto editions subsequent to *Q2* show almost no textual variation.

addressed itself to the century's luxury debates. Evoking ancient and modern conceptions of luxury in the "Dedication," Goldsmith aligned himself firmly with the traditionalist moral assault on luxury. His particular targets in this assault were two: enclosure and the rural displacement it caused. According to Goldsmith, these changes were a direct consequence of "the increase in our luxuries," which allowed the newly wealthy to purchase rural land and divide up the ancient estates. But the poem's combination of high sentimentalism and political polemic resulted in an unstable generic identity. Goldsmith himself noted its opposition between "poetry" and "politics" in the "Dedication," confessing publicly to his dedicatee Joseph Reynolds that "[h]ow far you may be pleased with the versification and mere mechanical parts of this attempt, I don't pretend to enquire; but I know you will object ... that the depopulation it deplures is no where to be seen, and the disorders it laments are only to be found in the poet's own imagination" (vi). Though the "Dedication" allowed Goldsmith to pre-empt anticipated objections to his attack on luxury, it also was meant to suggest that readers could still appreciate the work's poetry even if they rejected its politics.

Periodical reviewers of *The Deserted Village* were quick to follow Goldsmith's lead in this regard, choosing in general "not [to] read the poem in the context of the debate" about enclosure or luxury's role in generating it (Lutz 177). Instead, and almost unanimously, the leading magazines of the era praised *The Deserted Village* as a work of inspired imagination, whose historical inaccuracies were justified by its poetic beauty. In a position adopted by other contemporaries, *Town and Country Magazine* called the poem "a most beautiful structure, though we think it is built upon very sandy foundation; or

rather, it is a rainbow castle in the air, raised and adorned solely by the strength of the author's imagination; for we cannot believe that this country is depopulating, or that commerce is destructive of the real strength and greatness of a nation" (*TC* 2: 268). Even so, the reviewer acknowledged that "though we do not agree with the Doctor's politics, we most admire his poetry" (268). The *Critical Review* agreed:

[w]hether the argument of this piece, taken in all its latitude, is as just as the imagery is beautiful; whether [Goldsmith] here shows himself as accurate a politician and philosopher, as he is a poet of rich and elegant fancy, may, perhaps, be doubted by the most dispassionate and unprejudiced mind . . . He who reads the *Deserted Village*, and is not acquainted with the face of our country, may imagine, that there are many deserted villages to be found in it, and many more tracts of uncultivated land than formerly. England wears now a more smiling aspect than she ever did; and few ruined villages are to be met with except on poetical ground. (*CR* 29: 436)

Concluding that "[a] fine poem may be written upon a false hypothesis: as a poet is not confined to historical fact, neither is he bound by the strictness of political and philosophical truth" (437), the *Critical* specified as qualities that made *The Deserted Village*—or any work—fine as the "just, affecting, ardent images, and sentiments" that dignify poetry. In the case of Goldsmith's poem, these ardent images and sentiments were found especially in its portraits—of the village evening, of the parish priest, and especially of "the melancholy life of the sad historian of this rural desolation" (438)—thus justifying the conclusion that "[w]e rarely see a poem in which there are fewer instances of improper sentiment, or expression, than in this" (438). Goldsmith's depiction of "the ruined country-girl" also came in for particular praise on the basis of its power to affect "the sentimental reader" (440), as did the poem's closing account of the departure of the Rural Virtues, which was found "beautiful, but mere imagination and romance"

(441). The *Monthly Review* presented a more direct consideration of Goldsmith's views on luxury, agreeing with his account of luxury's role in encouraging vice but disputing his assertion that its increase led to emigration. Even so, the reviewer admitted that "we do not therefore read [Goldsmith's] poem with the less pleasure. As a picture of fancy it has great beauty; and if we shall occasionally remark that it is nothing more, we shall very little derogate from its merit" (*MR* 42: 441). Like the *Critical*, the *Monthly Review* praised *The Deserted Village* for its oddly misplaced sympathy: "it may be remarked, that our pity is here principally excited for what cannot suffer, for a brook that is choaked with sedges, a glade that is become the solitary haunt of the bittern, a walk deserted to the lapwing, and a wall that is half hidden by grass. We commiserate the village as a sailor does his ship, and perhaps we never contemplate the ruins of any thing magnificent of beautiful without enjoying a tender and mournful pleasure from this fanciful association of ideas" (442). Such early reviews coalesced into a consensus judgment: while *The Deserted Village* was commendable for the sentimental power of its vision, its political message—that the growth of luxury had led to the depopulation of the countryside—was to be rejected as pure fancy.

But the tendency of early readers to praise Goldsmith's poem as a work of sentimental poetry while resisting its political agenda was likely shaped by facts about its publication history, and specifically by its luxurious quarto printing.⁵ The quarto's

⁵ Each of these periodicals—*Town and Country*, the *Critical*, and the *Monthly*—cited the quarto (and specifically the *Q1*) text rather than any of the pirated duodecimo texts. Both the *Critical* and *Monthly* list the "4to" edition in their title line, while *Town and Country* lists in its title line the quarto price of "2s." Moreover, both the *Critical* and the *Monthly* reprint passages directly from *Q1*. (*Town and Country* reprints none of the poem.)

publisher, William Griffin, was located in a fashionable district of London, on Catharine Street in the Strand, and his shop was marked with a sign depicting “Garrick’s Head,” suggesting the distinctive focus of his business, which specialized in printing quality editions of recent dramatic works.⁶ Its text was printed in Caslon, a typeface whose creator was acknowledged even by John Baskerville as the preeminent typesetter of the age (Reed 243), and its pages were defined by their careful print work and wide margins, thereby signaling its anticipated place of exhibition on parlor tables and in libraries, where it could be seen as much as read. Most of all, the large and prominently placed vignette appearing on the title page strengthened the quarto’s status as an aesthetic object. Engraved by Isaac Taylor specifically for the quarto edition, the vignette foregrounds the toga-clad, bearded speaker in conversation with an old peasant woman—the “wretched matron” of line 138—while behind the two figures lies a village, deserted and in partial ruin; in the distance, two ships can be seen, evoking the emigration of the villagers to

⁶ *The English Short Title Catalogue* suggests that Griffin would have been known as a publisher of newly produced dramatic and operatic works, thus justifying the designation of his shop. He published works by John Gay (e.g. *The Beggar's Opera* and *Achilles in Petticoats*); Richard Cumberland (e.g. *The Fashionable Lover* and *The Brothers*); John Dryden (*All for Love*); Wycherley (*The Plain Dealer*); Nicholas Rowe (*The Fair Lover*); David Garrick (*King Arthur*), and others. Also notable was Griffin's apparent specialization in untranslated Italian drama and opera: he published, among other texts, Goldoni's *Il Filosofo di Campagna* and *La Buona Figliuola*; Giovan Bottarelli's *Tamerlano*, *I Viaggiatori*, and *Il Cid*; and Metastasio's *L'eroe Cinese*, *L'olimpiade*, and *Artaserse*. As a publisher of English literature, Griffin seemed to serve as the printer of Swift's pseudonymous Isaac Bickerstaff, as well as of Goldsmith, much of whose work, from his poetry (*The Traveller* and *The Good Natur'd Man*) to his essays and histories (*The Present State of the British Empire* and *The Roman Empire*), was published by Griffin. Also significant was Griffin's apparent position as publisher to the Royal Academy, and the high number of gardening books his house published in the late 1770s and early 1770s (William Chambers' *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*; John Abercrombie's *Every Man his Own Gardener*; Philip Miller's *The Gardener's Dictionary*; and Colin Milne's *Institutes of Botany*). As a publisher of polite English comedy, untranslated Italian drama, Tory satire, expensive art books and guides to gardening—the last genre especially fertile in relation to “The Deserted Village”—Griffin was most likely recognized as a publisher specializing in luxury books meant for an educated, leisured, upper class audience, and his clientele likely reflected these expectations.

America.⁷ Together, the quarto's characteristics emphasized the poem's luxurious sentimentalism rather than its politics: the quarto's relatively high, two-shilling price limited its accessibility to readers who were more apt to identify with the poem's speaker than with the villagers whose fate he bemoans, while its material and paratextual properties focused attention on the speaker and his sentimental luxury of woe rather than the villagers' suffering at luxury's spread. In these ways, the quarto edition of *The Deserted Village* concentrated attention on its speaker's—and by extension readers'—luxury of woe.

Such an emphasis is hardly surprising, for throughout *The Deserted Village*, sympathy is depicted as a mode of luxury exclusive to the upper classes. As early as the “Dedication,” Goldsmith frames feeling as a luxury, asking in regard to his decision to dedicate the poem to Joshua Reynolds that he be “indulged at present in following my affections. The only dedication I ever made was to my brother, because I loved him better than most other men. He is since dead. Permit me to inscribe this Poem to you” (v). Rehearsing familiar sentimental tropes, Goldsmith also figures affect itself as an “indulgence,” a depiction that the text of the poem everywhere strengthens, going so far in its final passage as to attack luxury by warning that “Kingdoms by thee, to sickly greatness grown, / Boast of a florid vigour not their own. / At every draught more large and large they grow, / A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe” (389-396). While “woe”

⁷ A small signature to the lower left of the picture marks the vignette as Taylor's. Because Taylor had made his reputation as an engraver of vignettes for prominent works of sentimental literature—he had created a frontispiece used for John Langhorne's *Poetical Works* in 1766 and would soon complete plates for Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*—the placement of a Taylor vignette on the title page of “The Deserted Village” served to associate the poem with this body of literature. More generally, however, the incorporation of a vignette on the title-page also would have emphasized the book's status as an aesthetic object while justifying its relatively high price.

names the misery caused by luxury, the passage also configures that “woe” as a luxury, thus exemplifying the dynamic at the core of *The Deserted Village*. For throughout the poem, sympathy exhibits a distinct class profile as the luxurious possession of the village’s former elite, of which the speaker considers himself a member. Though beginning in revery and observation, the speaker’s focus soon turns to his own responsiveness to now-deserted Auburn, recording how “Remembrance wakes with all her busy train, / Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain” (75-84). Such a movement—from the speaker’s observation of the cares besetting the villagers to reflection on the strength of his feelings of sympathy for them—occurs with regularity throughout the poem’s defining passages. Yet unlike the villagers—and as he goes to great lengths to show—the speaker knows no similar cares. Instead, he suffers only from the apparent loss of his place of intended retirement, an imagined location that “[r]etreats from care that never must be mine” (99-100). The speaker’s position is shared by the “village preacher,” a man whose title and relatively comfortable economic status—“passing rich with forty pounds a year” (144)—establish his place, along with the school master, as a member of the village’s modest elite. Even if the preacher is deeply moved by the plights of his parishioners—his “house was known to all the vagrant train,” and though he “chid their wanderings,” he “relieved their pain” (151-2) and out of “pity gave ere charity began” (164)—he remains safely distanced from the woes he attempts to redress through his charitable activities (187-190). Though distressed by the cares of the poor, those cares are manifestly not his own, serving instead to activate his ennobling grief. As men of refined feeling, sensitive to the cares of the villagers and tearfully

devoted to their welfare, the speaker and preacher remain secure from their troubles.

The poem's emphasis on the refined feeling of figures like the speaker and preacher corresponds to a lack of attention to the miseries of the villagers. Instead, the villagers are either imagined nostalgically, as inhabiting a vanished utopia of blissful happiness, or left out of the poem altogether. The first and most detailed account of the villagers represents Auburn's past in terms of leisure and abundance (16-34): the speaker evokes a village in perpetual celebration, with the "young contending [in games] as the old surveyed" (20), a "dancing pair that simply sought renown / By holding out to tire each other down," a "swain mistrustless of his smutted face," "bashful virgins" and reproving matrons (25-7; 29-30). Later, the village is cast in a similarly idyllic light, when, after detailing his present travails, the speaker remembers the goings-on of the village, recalling "[t]he swain responsive as the milk-maid sung, / The sober herd that lowed to meet their young; / The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool, / The playful children just let loose from school; / The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whispering wind, / And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind" (119-24). The parade of conventional sentimental figures reinforces the degree to which, in a poem ostensibly dedicated to the desertion of a village, there is conspicuously little focus on the deserting villagers themselves. Indeed, as much attention is given to the animals of the village as to its men and women. In cases where the villagers are represented, they tend to be abstracted away into personifications, as in the tavern portrait and the description of the Rural Virtues, or ignored entirely (as the *Monthly* observed) in favor of picturesque descriptions of the landscape. In those few instances in which the villagers' grief is

represented, it is cast as a consequence not of their cares but rather of their exposure to stories of the griefs of others, as when, in his description of the “poor houseless shivering female,” the speaker depicts his subject as worthy of readerly sympathy on the basis of the possibility that “[s]he once, perhaps, in village plenty blest, / Has wept at tales of innocence distrest” (330-1).

The sympathetic grief of the polite characters in *The Deserted Village* is conditioned by their remove from the suffering for which they feel sympathy, and, more than anything else, remove constitutes the luxury of sentimental sympathy. But if the text of *The Deserted Village* glorified the comfortably removed speaker’s “luxury of woe,” then the quarto format materialized its readers’ own sympathetic remove by providing the physical mechanism signifying their distance from suffering of the sort experienced by the villagers. First, the quarto guaranteed its readers’ remove through its price, for quarto copies of *The Deserted Village* were relatively expensive. At two shillings a copy, the short quarto pamphlet was intended for well-heeled purchasers.⁸ The price of the quarto fixed the purchaser as one who, like the speaker and the village preacher, was removed enough from the cares afflicting the villagers to be able to spend superfluously on a luxury product like the quarto edition of the poem. By restricting access to a wealthier readership, the quarto’s high price signified its readers’ distance from want while aligning them with those figures represented by the poem as capable of experiencing genuine sympathy. Yet the high price of *The Deserted Village* quarto may also have materialized

⁸ The quarto edition does appear in circulating libraries of the period and so would also have been available to members of such libraries. However, membership required a substantial fee, limiting the accessibility of the library quarto to readers just as the accessibility of the purchasable quarto was limited.

its purchasers' luxury of woe in another sense as well. As Gillian Skinner observes, "[t]he classic sentimental tableau ... in which the spectator weeps at another's distress, is based not simply on feeling, but on feeling and *money*: money which the spectator generally has, and which the object of his or her gaze does not," and whose charitable disposal "becomes a measure of personal worth" (1; 4). Though Skinner's observation applies primarily to literary representation, it also scripted reader behavior, for like the characters in the texts they read, readers could demonstrate the refinement of their feeling through their willingness to give charitably, and, by extension, through their purchase of sentimental books. Such a purchase functioned as a form of vicarious charity: if the reader's sympathy didn't result directly in charitable giving, it did result in sentimental purchasing, through which the reader proved his or her affective refinement by demonstrating sympathy with figures such as those appearing in *The Deserted Village*.

But material characteristics specific to the quarto edition of *The Deserted Village* also served to emphasize the poem's depiction of sympathetic remove.⁹ In particular, the vignette and caption displayed on the quarto's title page enacted the transfer of feeling from the suffering villagers to the sympathetic speaker. In the text of the poem, the captioned line—"the sad historian of the pensive plain" (138)—refers unambiguously to the matron. Beneath the vignette on the title page, though, the line refers either to the matron, who appears to be in the process of relating her story to the speaker, or to the speaker, who listens to the matron's story and then presumably transforms it into the

⁹ It might be objected that the quarto's vignette and compositorial features were textual rather than material characteristics. Yet both features were conditioned by the quarto format. The vignette was created specifically to fit the legitimate quarto's page and never appeared in any duodecimo, and its size would have made it too large for a small-format edition, anyway. Likewise, the presence of participial and terminal 'e's was enabled by the quarto's wide margins.

subsequent poem. The ambiguity of reference in the caption transforms the suffering of the matron into the sentiment of the speaker, and by implication of the reader, who listens to the speaker as the speaker does to the matron. By focusing the reader's attention on the speaker and his luxurious sympathy, the vignette defines this sympathy, as much as the misery of the villagers, as the theme of the poem. The quarto's typography also enacted the comfortably secure leisure of its readers, inscribing into the material artifact of the quarto poem its status as a luxury. The quarto's refusal to elide participial and terminal 'e's is significant in this regard. While duodecimo piracies from the period elided such 'e's due to the constraints of the small duodecimo page, the quarto's large, spacious page allowed composers to retain them. On the one hand, the duodecimo piracies tended to refer to the "good old sire" as

the first prepar'd to go
To new-found worlds, and wept for other's wo
(331-2)

Likewise, the apostrophe to luxury in many of the duodecimos reads

O luxury! Thou curst by heaven's decree,
How ill exchang'd are things like these for thee!
How do thy potions with insidious joy,
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!
Kingdoms by thee to sickly greatness grown,
Boast of a florid vigour not their own.
At every draught more large and large they grow,
A bloated mass of rank unwieldy wo ...
(385-92)

And in the poem's concluding apostrophe to Poetry, the duodecimo's speaker claims of poetry that it is his

shame in crowds, my solitary pride;

Thou source of all my bliss and all my wo,
 That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so
 (412-14)

On the other hand, the quarto always retains the terminal “e”, printing

To new-found worlds, and wept for other's woe ...
 (332)

A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe
 (392)

Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe ...
 (413)

In refusing to elide the terminal “e” in “woe,” the typography of the quarto edition literalized the “luxury of woe” by drawing attention to the luxuriously superfluous spaciousness of the format’s page, which in turn served as a reminder of the material distance separating the poem’s secure readers from those wandering, destitute figures, displaced from their homes by the spread of luxury, who populate its pages. Materializing the poem’s “luxury of woe” through its price, vignette, and typography, *The Deserted Village* quarto thus emphasized the poem’s luxurious sentimentalism over its attack on luxury.

Yet even while emphasizing the luxury of woe over the grief caused by luxury, the quarto succeeded in politicizing the poem. As Earl Miner observes, Goldsmith was likely motivated in “The Deserted Village” not so much by a concern for the plight of what remained of the English peasantry but rather by his Toryism, for his attitude toward luxury was grounded in “familiar Tory assumptions: an anti-Rousseauan reverence for civilization, tradition, and all that Burke meant by ‘prescription’; class distinctions based upon the inheritance by blood of real property; and an antipathy to trade, commercialism,

and the rise of a new class wealthy with fluid capital” (129). By presenting a past defined by freehold tenure, bountiful production, widespread leisure and stable community, Goldsmith presented an image of England meant to idealize the agrarian arrangements that formed the basis of Tory power in rural England.¹⁰ If, as Miner observes, Goldsmith’s sentimental vision of England was meant in part to suggest that “Whiggish mercantile luxury threatened a traditional, agrarian society with which so many [Tory] values were associated” (130), then the quarto format reinforced this vision by emphasizing the sentimentalism of *The Deserted Village*. However, over the course of the next fifty years, the political alignment of Goldsmith’s poem was to change radically, as its material embodiments transformed, becoming smaller, cheaper, and far less luxurious.¹¹

¹⁰ Goldsmith's Toryism expressed itself in more subtle ways throughout the poem as well, as in the description of the tavern's "twelve rules." There, Goldsmith writes of the tavern that on its walls were "pictures placed for ornament and use, / The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose" (231-2). The reference to the "twelve good rules" suggests the royalism of the poem as a whole, for the "rules" referred to "a broadside showing a rough cut of the execution of Charles I with the following 'rules' printed below:—1. Urge no healths; 2. Profane no divine ordinances; 3. Touch no state matters; 4. Reveal no secrets; 5. Pick no quarrels; 6. Make no comparisons; 7. Maintain no ill opinions; 8. Keep no bad company; 9. Encourage no vice; 10. Make no long meals; 11. Repeat no grievances; 12. Lay no wagers" (Brewer 493). Apparently, the rules had been "found in the study of King Charles the First, of Blessed Memory" and were ascribed to the executed king (493). Though the "rules" were found in many taverns during the period (493), Goldsmith's explicit reference to them, especially in conjunction with the "royal game of goose," helps crystallize the poem's Tory ideology.

¹¹ In "The Politics of Reception: The Case of Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village,'" Alfred Lutz argues that Goldsmith's poem could be easily transformed into a radical tract (181). Yet Lutz neglects the ways in which the transformation of the poem from Tory apologia to radical weapon depended on material changes, which altered its text, widened its readership, and redefined its context of interpretation. John Barrell goes further in recognizing the decisive importance of the poem's changing material embodiments in determining its political commitments. In a tangential discussion in *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, Barrell asks about "The Deserted Village" "at what point was the radical potential of its agrarian egalitarianism recognised?" suggesting that question requires determining in turn "at what point ... was the pastoral vision of society appropriated as a radical ideology?" (81). Barrell observes that "the first reviews of the poem suggest that the threat [its apparently radical] elements might have represented was at the time not so much emphasized as diffused by the idealising, pastoral aspect of the poem. In fact, approving discussions of an egalitarian distribution of land—confined as they were to works destined for a polite readership—were more acceptable at this time that they later became ..."

Patrick Wogan and the *Battle of Aughrim* Chapbook

The final authorized quarto edition of *The Deserted Village* was published by the Rivington-Carnan-Cadell consortium in 1783. After its copyright elapsed the next year, the poem was subsequently published in octavo, duodecimo or smaller formats, but the original quarto form fell by the wayside. Perhaps because of the disappearance of its copyright, 1784 in particular seems to have been a particularly active year in the publication history of *The Deserted Village*, with various printers in London re-printing cheaper, smaller and no longer illegitimate copies. Over the course of the next fifteen years, the poem continued to be re-printed in various small formats, from the octavo edition produced in Glasgow in 1796 to the 24mo version printed in Manchester in 1793. Meanwhile, small format anthologies of poetry, like the octavo *Collection of Poems, Containing Goldsmith's Deserted Village* produced in Bath in 1796, and the duodecimo edition of Roach's *Beauties of the Poets*, printed in London in 1795, also frequently included the poem. "The Deserted Village" was especially popular in Britain's former colonies. In America, numerous pirated reprints had appeared early on, with editions

(81-82). However, the decisive change took place in the 1790s: while "[i]t seems in fact that the polite classes in the eighteenth century had no fear of such notions making much headway among the poor until the 1790s ... only from about 1790 could *The Deserted Village* be read as a radical poem which pointed (by implication) to the future as well as to the past" (82). In attempting to account for this shift, Barrell is vague, yet he does hint strongly at the agent of the transformation: "[w]hen Godwin advocated [a redistribution of property] in *Political Justice* (1793) he attracted more attention, and escaped arrest probably on the ground only that his book was too expensive to be circulated widely; Thomas Spence, at the centre of whose political programme was a redistribution of the rent of land to be achieved by revolutionary means, and whose pamphlets were dangerously cheap, was imprisoned in 1794 and again in 1801" (82). According to Barrell, "The Deserted Village" was radicalized in the 1790s through its transformation from polite text into radical polemic, and this transformation owed something to its radical appropriators and their means of appropriation. Yet he fails to specify the means of this appropriation. This chapter's argument is that the transformation in the poem's political commitments was determined by changes in its material form, as it was tranced down from quarto, to chapbook, to penny pamphlet.

published, for example, in Philadelphia and New York in 1771, and Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1773. The poem's popularity evidently continued during the 1780s and 1790s, with small format editions produced in Springfield, Massachusetts (1783), Providence (1784), Philadelphia (1786), Boston (1793), and Litchfield, Connecticut (1799).

Goldsmith's poem was popular in Ireland as well. Two pirated octavo editions had been published in Dublin by two different consortiums of printers in 1770, and a duodecimo edition was published by a third consortium in 1784. However, the poem likely reached its widest circulation in the form of a cheap chapbook published by Patrick Wogan, an Irish Catholic printer with a shop in Dublin. As early as 1783, Wogan had begun to include "The Deserted Village" in his chapbook editions of two massively popular Irish plays, Robert Ashton's "The Battle of Aughrim, or The Fall of Monsieur St. Ruth" and John Michelbourne's "Ireland Preserv'd, or The Siege of London-Derry." According to *ESTC* records, Wogan published four editions of the *Battle* chapbook, the first in 1783, the second in 1784, the third in 1785, and the final fourth edition in 1786.¹² Of these four editions, the first and fourth included full texts of Ashton's "The Battle of Aughrim," Michelbourne's "Ireland Preserv'd," Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village," and

¹² The only printed record of a publication date in any of the four editions is provided on the title-page of the "The Deserted Village" of the sixteenth edition, which announced its date as 1783, justifying to some extent the claim that Wogan's first chapbook edition of "The Battle of Aughrim" was published in that year. The *ESTC*'s claim that the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth Wogan editions were published in 1784, 1785, and 1786, respectively, seems to be based on the supposition that Wogan issued a new version of the chapbook during every succeeding year after the first printing in 1783. However, without printed records of these publication dates, the *ESTC* account of the publication dates is purely speculative. Even so, it is possible to ascribe a range of possible publication dates for the four editions on the basis of annotation evidence, which suggests that the chapbooks were produced and initially distributed between 1783 and 1795. On page 5 of the British Library copy of the seventeenth Wogan edition is written in longhand "Robt Martin ... June 11, 1791"; similarly, on the title page of the Trinity College Library nineteenth edition is written "Francis Breen ... July 5th, 1795").

John Philips's "The Splendid Shilling."¹³ The second and third included the Ashton and Michelbourne plays but printed only excerpts from "The Deserted Village," along with a collection of other short poems.

Of Wogan's career as a publisher and printer there is relatively little evidence. By 1773, he seems to have begun selling mostly Catholic texts from a shop on Church Street, near the "hub of Catholic printing and bookselling activity" in Cook Street (Wall 7).

Because of the proximity of his shop to a number of Catholic chapels, Wogan probably established himself as a chapel printer, producing versions of standard Catholic works to sell to chapel visitors and clergy (Wall 5-6). However, during this time Wogan seems also to have developed an interest in political writing, especially political writing dealing with religious issues. Between 1779 and 1785, he published works attacking the penal laws and woolen ware-houses, in praise of parliamentary reform and the American Revolution, and anti-Gallic tracts warning Irish Catholics of the dangers of French invasion.¹⁴

Perhaps most significantly, Wogan worked with Patrick Byrne to publish the 1784 edition of Thomas Sheridan's *Dictionary of the English Language*, which was marked by its

¹³ In the first of these editions, "The Battle of Aughrim," "Ireland Preserv'd," and "The Deserted Village" and "The Splendid Shilling" included separate title pages and paginations; apparently, Wogan combined three different editions into a single, long chapbook. That Wogan and not some other compiler combined the different chapbooks into a single edition is clear from the title-pages of each, which advertise both the plays and the poems. Moreover, the sixteenth and seventeenth editions, though not the eighteenth and nineteenth, included both a "Prologue" and a woodcut of a figure with a sword and with a four-line caption, attributed to Sarsfield, the Irish general and a hero of the Battle of Aughrim, printed underneath the image. (The absence of a woodcut and prologue in the eighteenth edition has been corroborated by Christian Algar of the British Library [Private Correspondence, 30 Nov. 2012].)

¹⁴ See, for example, *An Answer to Mr. W. A. D.'s Letters to G. H; Thoughts on the Inexpediency of Continuing the Irish Woollen Ware-House, as a Retail Shop; A Speech of Mr. Edmund Burke, Esq ... Upon Certain Points Relative to his Parliamentary Conduct; Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution and the Means of Making it a Benefit to the World; Letter Addressed to the Abbe Raynal on the Affairs of North-America; and An Address to the Common People of the Roman Catholic Religion, Concerning the Apprehended French Invasion.*

dedication to “the Volunteers of Ireland.” In a lengthy and effusive letter to the “lords and Gentlemen of the Volunteers Associations of Ireland,” the work’s editors praise the Volunteers for their patriotic efforts, their liberal constitutionalism, and their willingness to work with the British toward parliamentary reform (*Dictionary* 2-3). Together, Wogan’s publishing and printing work and his work on the “Dedication” to Sheridan’s *Dictionary* suggest some tentative conclusions about his political commitments, which seem to have involved liberal constitutionalism, anti-Gallicism, inter-denominationalism, and a willingness to work with the British toward parliamentary reform.

The four *Battle* chapbooks and their versions of “The Deserted Village” were published in the years immediately surrounding Wogan’s work on Sheridan’s *Dictionary* and likely saw large circulations due both to the inter-denominational popularity of their contents and the accessibility of their material form. Though the poetic contents of the four chapbooks differed, each included both dramatic works, and each advertised *The Battle of Aughrim* as its title work. Little is known of its author, Robert Ashton, but there exist numerous accounts of the central place of *Battle* in eighteenth-century Irish culture. Even while it celebrates an Irish defeat, Ashton’s tragedy became massively popular with Irish Catholic peasants due to its sympathetic portrayal of the courage of the Irish soldiers (Wheatley 53).¹⁵ This ideological duality meant that it appealed to an extremely wide and

¹⁵ The play takes its title from the decisive battle of the Williamite war, which in 1691 effectively ended Jacobitism in Ireland. After offering fierce resistance to an attack on its lines, an Irish force supporting James II and led by Charles Chalmont, the Marquis de St. Ruth, was slaughtered by an English-led army. With more than 7,000 Irish foot soldiers killed, Aughrim is thought to have been the bloodiest battle ever fought on Irish soil (Wheatley 1). Even so, as Christopher Wheatley observes, “the battle became the occasion for the creation of an heroic Irish past, one in which both Protestants and Catholics shared, and the subject of one of the most popular plays written in Ireland prior to the twentieth century, particularly amongst the lower classes who suffered most grievously from the consequences of the battle” (53). Wheatley explains this popularity on the basis of two factors: “[f]irst, [*Battle*] is a

inter-denominational readership. According to J. R. R. Adams, *The Battle of Aughrim* became “the Ulster folk play par excellence” (70), a claim supported by many contemporaries.¹⁶ In fact, the play was so massively popular throughout Ireland that its chapbook texts were frequently used to script actual performances, often with inter-denominational casts, enabling an even wider dissemination.¹⁷ But *Battle*’s wide readership was only partly a function of its inter-denominational popularity: the play was only accessible to the Irish peasantry to the extent that it was because of its frequent

celebration of the Williamite victory, modelled after heroic drama and reflecting the continuing anxieties of the 'Protestant interest.' Second, it is a lament for catholic patriotism, influenced by Addison's *Cato*, and suggesting the increased awareness of the Protestants that they are now, if not Irish, no longer English” (54).

- ¹⁶ For example, a writer identifying himself as “C. J.” writes in an 1804 issue of “Ireland's Mirror” that “[p]erhaps a more popular Production never appeared in Ireland; it is in the hands of every Peasant who can read English; and like the Songs or Poems of the Bards, in Scotland, is committed to memory, and occasionally recited” (ctd. in Wheatley 56). Charles Gavan Duffy reports a similar memory. Writing of his youth in Ulster, Duffy remembers that “[t]here were no regular bookseller's shops in Monaghan, but a couple of printers sold school-books; and at a weekly market there was always a peddler who supplied, at a few pence, cheap books printed at Belfast, of which the most popular were the 'Battle of Aughrim' and 'Billy Bluff.' The drama of the battle was in the hands of every intelligent schoolboy of Ulster, who strode an imaginary stage as Sarsfield or Ginkel, according to his sympathies” (*My Life in Two Hemispheres* 11).
- ¹⁷ In his *Life*, William Carleton writes that “[a] usual amusement at the time was to reproduce the 'Battle of Aughrim', in some spacious barn, with a winnowing cloth for the curtain. This play, bound up with the 'Siege of Londonderry', was one of the reading books in the hedge schools of that day, and circulated largely among the people of all religions; it had, indeed, a most extraordinary influence among the lower classes. 'The Battle of Aughrim', however, because it was written in heroic verse, became so popular that it was rehearsed at almost every Irish hearth, both catholic and protestant, in the north. The spirit it evoked was irresistible. The whole country became dramatic. To repeat it at the fireside in winter nights was nothing: the Orangemen should act it, and show the whole world how the field of Aughrim was so gloriously won. The consequence was that frequent rehearsals took place. The largest and most spacious barns and kilns were fitted up, the night of representation was given out, and crowds, even to suffocation, as they say, assembled to witness the celebrated 'Battle of Aughrim.'” However, the popularity of “The Battle of Aughrim” was double-edged: though the play glorified both the English and the Irish Jacobite opposition and seems to have promoted inter-denominational unity insofar as it brought members of each denomination together to perform it, such performances sometimes ended in actual sectarian violence. Carleton writes that “[i]n the town of Augher, this stupid play was acted by Catholics and Protestants, each party of course sustaining their own principles. The consequence was, that when they came to the conflict with which the play is made to close, armed as they were on both sides with real swords, political and religious resentment could not be restrained, and they would have hacked each other's souls out had not the audience interfered and prevented them. As it was, some of them were severely if not dangerously wounded” (28).

publication as a chapbook intended for rural audiences. Such chapbooks saw relatively high print-runs (often including approximately 2,000 copies per edition), relatively low prices (approximately 6d. for a 144-page duodecimo), and largely rural circulation patterns (through country chapmen and other pedlars).¹⁸

The *Battle* chapbook and its text of Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" probably circulated widely among rural audiences, assuming the kind of "itinerant" form Humphrey Newcomb identifies as capable of traveling freely through "social,

¹⁸ The format itself is difficult to define. (See Humphrey Newcomb 473; Adams 32; and Neuberg 3-6.) Chapbooks generally saw large print runs: Humphrey Newcomb remarks, for example, that "[m]ore than other brief printed works, chapbooks were calculated for mass production *and* mass distribution: their set page format and page count fit the confines of a pedlar's pack for rural sale (or a hawker's tray for urban sale), then allowed for reprints to be set page-for-page" (472). Before the English Civil War, for example, "[c]hapbooks, intended for long-standing distribution, presumably were issued in the maximum edition size of 1,500 (or, after 1635, 2,000) allowed by the Stationers" (482). On this basis, Humphrey Newcomb suggests that chapbooks be understood especially in terms of their intended readership, arguing that the term itself "remains heuristically useful because it insists that material form suitable for sale by chapmen—itinerant dealers in small goods—was the defining characteristic of a growing category of cheap print . . ." (472). The agent of distribution was the chapman, who provided "the most intimate link with the unsophisticated readers of the small towns and countryside, travelling from door to door and from market stall to market stall, selling many different items, which had only one thing in common: they were cheap" (Adams 3). Accounts of chapmen and their trade are relatively numerous, and common advertising methods tended to extend the accessibility of chapbooks beyond their purchasers and readers. Though generally chapbooks "sold themselves," chapmen would frequently advertise their products through public performance (Humphrey Newcomb 487). Moreover, chapbooks were often made briefly available to readers who had no intention of purchasing them: their appeal was "viral, drawing bystanders and encouraging less confident readers to try out their skills and make future purchases" (Humphrey Newcomb 482). Most of all, though, the low price of the chapbook increased its accessibility. At 1d. a sheet, a 144 page duodecimo could be purchased for the relatively low price of 6d. (Adams 32). Given that late-eighteenth century market reports suggest prices ranging between 3d. and 4 ½ d. for a stone of potatoes, Adams concludes that "the price of cheap printed material compares very favorably with the price of a staple food, given the quantity of potatoes consumed at a sitting" (41). Prices would drop even from this low rate in the second-hand market for a typical chapbook, for "as it got older and more tattered, a book originally costing 6d., or even more, could end up selling for 1d. or less" (Adams 41). The typical eighteenth-century Irish chapbook would thus have achieved a very large readership, and Wogan's *Battle* chapbook was likely no exception. As Thomas Wall notes, chapmen were of special use to Catholic printers like Wogan, and "[s]pecial terms were offered to these hawkers of literature who, by foot or on horseback, set out with well filled packs to tempt the country reader to purchase their wares" (109). Moreover, "from 1770 onwards Dublin printers were accustomed to announce these special terms in their publications and seem to have relied a good deal on the chapmen to sell their books in the country" (109). Finally, the fact that the Catholic Wogan's *Battle* chapbook explicitly states its availability at a shop carrying "a Variety of Books of all Kinds for Country Chapmen and others" goes a great distance in establishing its probable readership as the Irish Catholic peasantry in the surrounding counties.

generational and geographic space” (489). But what sort of social space did Wogan’s *Battle* chapbook pass through? By virtue of its material form, a typical copy of Wogan’s chapbook edition of “The Deserted Village” was released into a vastly different political landscape than the English quarto editions of the poem: Irish rather than English; rural rather than urban; impoverished rather than wealthy. Moreover, Ireland was experiencing seismic political shifts during the last quarter of the eighteenth-century. On the one hand, the era was one of relatively progressive reform and a gradual increase in the legal toleration of Catholics (Kelly 39-41). In particular, the formation of the Volunteers advanced the Catholic cause, especially by virtue of its inter-denominational composition. Kelly writes that even after the disappearance of the threat of French invasion, which the Volunteers was created to counteract, “catholics continued to take advantage of the opportunity offered by liberal Volunteer corps to array in arms and, according to a secret report prepared for Dublin Castle, they accounted for between 33% and 44% of the total force of 18,469 men in late 1784” (42). Ultimately, the Volunteers transformed itself into the primary organ involved in the move for parliamentary reform during the early 1780s, during which time religious toleration continued to find a place in the organization’s agenda.

Yet the period was not one of unqualified progressive reform. Though the legal situation of Irish Catholics tended to improve during the final decades of the eighteenth century, the condition of the peasantry was far more tenuous (McDowell 119). Nor were these problems confined to the Catholic underclass. Throughout the eighteenth century in Ireland, rural populations of both denominations were beset by extreme poverty,

exacerbating dormant tensions which finally broke out in the latter half of the century in a series of agrarian uprisings (Clark and Donnelly, Jr. 145). Beginning with the Whiteboy and Steelboy movements of the 1760s and early '70s, Irish peasants sought to counteract expanding enclosure, rising rents and increased tithes by means of progressively more organized and sometimes violent protest.¹⁹ Finally, in the mid-1780s, the country saw a third wave of agrarian disturbance with the emergence of Rightboyism. To a great extent, this movement formed in response to the same conditions that had generated Whiteboyism and Steelboyism a few decades earlier (Bric 100). Though sporadic outbursts had occurred throughout the early '80s, by 1785 the disturbances had coalesced into a movement that spread from Munster to Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Queen's, and Kilkenny counties (Kelly 44-45). These counties "played host to bands, sometimes several thousand strong, of armed and organized peasants" whose initial "objective was to moderate the sums demanded by and paid to both the catholic and protestant churches" (Kelly 45). To bring about this objective, Rightboys of both denominations masked and armed themselves, forming into wandering bands which spread throughout the

¹⁹ Beginning in 1761 in Munster and Leinster, Whiteboyism developed in order to protest worsening agrarian conditions. Originating in Tipperary in 1761 but quickly spreading to Cork, Kilkenny, and Waterford, the movement was "principally concerned with the reduction of tithes and with opposition to the enclosure of common lands, access to which had eased the burden of increasing rents" (Bric n. 100). Whiteboyism also generated a degree of inter-denominational unity, insofar as it elicited "a certain, though largely muted, support from some of the Catholic clergy" (Bric n. 100). Though relatively short-lived—Whiteboyism had been suppressed by 1766 (Bric n. 100)—it lingered in popular Irish memory, for as Bric writes "until the late nineteenth century, the word 'Whiteboy' continued to be used as a generic name for all types of agrarian protest in Ireland" (n. 100). Yet only a few years later, a second series of protests occurred. Between 1769-72, the Steelboy movement sought in particular "to reduce rents and to stop evictions," though in general it formed as a protest against the "landlord elite for appropriating too large a share of the rural surplus" (145). The waves of agrarian protest resulting in the Whiteboy and Steelboy movements not only installed the related issues of high rents and increasing evictions in the popular discourse of eighteenth-century Ireland but also indicate how inter-denominational strife in the period was complicated and sometimes supplanted by conflict between the landlord elite and the Irish peasantry.

countryside in order to convince and sometimes force the rural population to swear fidelity to the Rightboy cause (Kelly 45; Bric 100-1; 114). In consequence of increasingly aggressive tactics and an unprecedented degree of organization, by the first months of 1786 the “rule of Captain Right prevailed over a large part of the southern half of the country” (Bric 111). Yet over the course of the next two years, Rightboyism was gradually suppressed, primarily by breaking the inter-denominational unity that rendered it so effective. This was achieved during the winter of 1786-7 with the publication of a wave of pamphlets which “deliberately and decisively galvanized the deep-laid suspicions of catholicism among Irish protestants” (Kelly 52; see also McDowell 119). As a result of such successful attacks on the inter-denominational unity of the movement, Rightboyism had been broken by the late ‘80s.

Set against the background of this political landscape, Wogan’s *Battle of Aughrim* chapbook and its version of Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village” re-aligned the poem’s political commitments. The popularity of *The Battle of Aughrim* among the Irish peasantry assured a wide circulation of the chapbook; its material form likewise made it inexpensive and widely accessible. Together, these factors altered the readership of “The Deserted Village,” generating a new set of readers with an urgently political context of interpretation. Instead of the wealthy, urban, English reader of the luxury quarto, Wogan’s edition of the poem was widely read and probably heard by members of Ireland’s impoverished, rural population. Printed and distributed to such a population during a time of wide-scale and often violent protest over high rents and rising evictions, the poem’s attack on luxury was likely politicized in novel ways. Its readers could well have been

Rightboys; if not, they were certainly familiar with Rightboyism, its aims, and its methods. Readings and recitations of the poem took place within a landscape which likely registered signs of recent Rightboy activity. The poem's wandering bands of displaced villagers might have evoked the groups of Rightboys spreading out across the countryside. Its grievances—enclosure, high rents, luxury—were also those motivating Rightboyism. Insofar as Wogan's chapbook fixed the readers of "The Deserted Village" as those rural workers suffering the effects of enclosure, high rents and luxury rather than enjoying their products, the material form of the chapbook appropriated the poem, politicizing its text in ways that would have been impossible had the poem been published within the same context in the quarto format.

Of course, readers of Goldsmith's poem had always recognized the poem's political implications, but early reviewers of the quarto edition had dismissed such implications, instead emphasizing the "versification and mere mechanical parts" of its poetry and celebrating the poet's sentimental imagination. But the poem's strident opposition to enclosure could be politically appropriated by shifting the material format of its embodiment and thus altering both its readership and contexts of interpretation, and the chapbook format accomplished such an appropriation. Wogan's intentions in repurposing the poem in this manner are indicated by the abridgments made in the seventeenth and eighteenth editions.²⁰ Rather than presenting the entire poem, Wogan

²⁰ The abridgments—as well as the excerpting and anthologizing practices—of Wogan and Spence may seem like textual or editorial rather than material alterations. After all, when Wogan and Spence cut certain lines to *The Deserted Village*, or when they re-situated those lines within potentially radical textual contexts, they made changes to the text of *The Deserted Village* that seem to have had little to do with the physical form of the chapbook or pamphlet. Yet the editorial conventions that allowed for such changes were conditioned by the physical forms of the chapbook and the quarto. Neither form was used to publish single, complete poems, as the quarto was. Instead, chapbooks and pamphlets were used to

included in these editions only the overtly political final section of Goldsmith's poem under the name of "The Deserted Village." The text of these editions begins *in media res* with the attack on luxury beginning at line 295: "Thus fares the land, by luxury betray'd, / In nature's simplest charms at first array'd / But verging to decline, its splendours rise; / Its vistas strike, its places surprise; / While scourg'd by famine from the smiling land, / The mournful peasant leads his humble band, / And while he sinks without one arm to save, / The country blooms—a garden and a grave" (295-302). Read in quarto format by a relatively wealthy London purchaser, such lines might evoke pity or sympathy but would have probably represented a reality that was safely distant, somewhere outside of the city—if it existed at all. Similarly, a gentry reader, securely ensconced in his library or study, might have recognized such figures but likely would not have identified with them but rather imaginatively with the wandering poet who records their plight and bemoans their travails. But rural peasant readers in the 1780s would have encountered the passage within a very different context and interpreted it through a very different set of experiences. The poem's descriptions of enclosed commons, divided lands, and "humble bands" of peasants would have been especially evocative within the context of Rightboyism.

Yet the chapbook format also altered the political alignment of the poem by providing a material incentive to include other texts along with "The Deserted Village," thus further altering the interpretive context of the poem. Because chapbooks usually included a pre-determined number of pages, publishers of a chapbook frequently were

circulate collections of texts unified by their popularity or by their relevance to a single subject or position.

forced to find and print additional texts to fill out its pages. In the case of the *Battle* chapbook, Wogan chose poems whose radical potential in the context of agrarian disturbance was immediately evident. What unifies all of the texts in the *Battle* chapbook—as well as those other texts included in the seventeenth and eighteenth editions of the *Battle* chapbook—is their potentially radical political tenor. Each of the editions of Wogan’s chapbook includes the two dramas, some version of “The Deserted Village” and Phillip’s “The Splendid Shilling.” As noted above, both *The Battle of Aughrim* and *Ireland Preserv’d* were popular with Irish Catholic peasants because they presented the Irish rebels of the Williamite wars in a sympathetic light. Similarly, “The Splendid Shilling” was a polite text with radical implications. On one level, the poem was a well-known satire of Miltonic diction: Goldsmith himself wrote of it that it was “reckoned the best parody of Milton in our language: it has been an hundred times imitated, without success” (*Beauties of English Poesy* 255). But the poem’s speaker is also a poverty-stricken poet at the mercy of a “Dunn,” or debt-collector, and a “Catch-pole” who together seek to arrest and imprison him for failing to pay off his debts. Consequently, the speaker warns the reader to “Beware, ye Debtors, when ye walk, beware, / Be circumspect; oft with insidious Ken, / This Caitiff eyes your steps aloof, and oft / Lies perdue in a Creek or gloomy Cave, / Prompt to enchant some inadvertant wretch / With his unhallow’d Touch” (66-71). Though “The Splendid Shilling” was originally meant for polite audiences, its publication in chapbook form made it available to a population of peasants during a period in which purportedly unfair tax-collection practices had produced violent agrarian protest. Peasant readers would likely have seen

something of themselves in the poem's speaker.

By altering its readership, inviting abridgments which focused its specific political message, and encouraging the inclusion of additional contextually significant texts, the material form of Wogan's *Battle* chapbook altered the political alignment of "The Deserted Village." But what were Wogan's specific motivations in printing and distributing the *Battle* chapbook? Due to the dearth of information about Wogan, it is impossible to settle the question with any certainty. To some extent, he might have been motivated by commercial considerations.²¹ Yet, as shown above, Wogan's printing activity during the late 1770s and early 1780s suggests that he was inclined towards a moderate republicanism which might have motivated a degree of anti-Gallicism, partly in consequence of the fear that French invasion would stall proto-nationalist and therefore inter-denominational advances in Ireland. Though he published tract after tract defending Catholics, he tended also to issue explicit attacks on France and its apparent intention to invade Ireland.²² Wogan's anti-Gallicism might explain to some degree his decision to publish the *Battle* chapbook, which more than anything else suggests that the failure of the Irish Catholic cause was the consequence of French intervention. The play's subtitle—"The Fall of Monsieur St. Ruth"—foregrounds this theme, and throughout the

²¹ For evidence of this possibility, see Wall 14 and Humphrey Newcomb 483. Because, during the early to mid-1780s, Wogan was apparently busy printing Sheridan's *Dictionary*, his decision to print and issue *The Battle of Aughrim* chapbook might ultimately have been profit-driven. Yet while this desire might explain Wogan's choice of the massively popular Irish political plays for printing and distribution, it does not account for Wogan's inclusion of Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" or Phillip's "The Splendid Shilling" in the *Battle* chapbook. Instead, these inclusions suggest that the *Battle* chapbook was intended to serve as a political instrument as much as a profit-producing device.

²² As noted above, he asserted his loyalty in his 1781 edition of *An Address to the Common People of the Roman Catholic Religion, Concerning the Apprehended French Invasion*. Likewise, the "Dedication" included in his edition of Sheridan's *Dictionary* appears to have demonstrated his support for the Irish Volunteers, an organization formed with the explicit aim of opposing an anticipated French invasion.

play St. Ruth is portrayed in strongly negative terms—by turns as mercilessly cruel, idiotically bumbling, and blinded by his commitment to an extreme Papist ideology. The attack on luxury advanced by “The Deserted Village” can also be interpreted along these lines, especially within the context of the other excerpts included in the second and third editions of Wogan’s *Battle*. Rather than the complete text of “The Deserted Village,” these editions foreground only the final, fiercely political anti-luxury passage, substituting for the rest of the poem a number of other excerpts, many developing straightforwardly satirical attacks on luxury.²³ Given Wogan’s evident anti-Gallicism, the *Battle* chapbook can be read as a weapon in Wogan’s ideological attack on the French, and his inclusion of “The Deserted Village” may have been motivated by the text’s attack on luxury, whose insidious growth could have been understood as a likely consequence of French invasion. Alternatively, however, the *Battle* chapbook and its text of “The Deserted Village” might have been meant to target a parasitical upper class for the destruction it was causing the Irish peasantry through the expanding enclosure, rising

²³ See, for example, the seventeenth and eighteenth editions, which contain a version of Pope’s “The Town and Country Mice.” By representing the foppish Town mouse as a Frenchman, the poem nationalizes its attack on luxury in a manner consistent with much eighteenth-century writing on luxury, in which luxury—at least as understood in the vilified form of ‘old luxury’—was presented as especially characteristic of the French. The Gallicization of luxury is strengthened in another passage included in the seventeenth and eighteenth editions of the *Battle* chapbook, an excerpt taken from *Henry IV, Part 1* and entitled “Hotspurs Description of a Fop.” The passage derisively describes “a certain lord; neat; trimly dressed; / Fresh as a bridegroom; and his chin new reap’d ... / ... He was perfum’d like a milliner. / And, ’twixt his finger and his thumb, he held / A pouncet box, which ever and anon, / He gave his nose—” (5-6; 8-11). According to Hotspur, the fop “smiled, and talk’d: / And as the soldiers bear dead bodies by, / He called them ‘untaught knaves, unmannerly, / To bring a slovenly unhandsome corse / Betwixt the wind and his nobility’—” (12-16). Like the town mouse, the figure of the fop embodies many of the stereotypes of French luxury: effeminacy, self-indulgence, and possession of high-end luxury products. Meanwhile, Hotspur’s reaction to him is one which over the course of the eighteenth century had become increasingly scripted as British: bluff, manly, simple. Along with its inclusion of *The Battle of Aughrim, or The Fall of Monsieur St. Ruth*, the presence of these excerpts in the *Battle* chapbook configured its attack on luxury as an attack on the French.

rents, and the growing tithes brought about by the increasing luxury of landlords.

Certainly, the additional texts included in the seventeenth and eighteenth editions of the chapbook suggest this interpretation.²⁴ In particular, the inclusion in these editions of “The Emigrants,” whose subject is a shepherd driven from his home by “hard oppression,” serves to suggest that the real focus of the chapbook is the destructive luxury of landlords—either an Anglo-Irish class, foreign-born planters, or a domestic class supported by the foreign English—which threatens both to decimate the Irish countryside and to weaken the empire by exposing it to the threat of French invasion.

The *Battle* chapbook thus foregrounds two political attacks in particular: one against the French and the other against landlords. The common denominator in each is the attack on luxury, first as a possible consequence of French invasion, and second as a

²⁴ Both the fop and the town mouse are “lords” characterized by their appetite for luxury and their blithe dismissal of the quintessentially British figures of Hotspur and the country mouse. Such depictions fall easily in line with those images of luxury and their imputed causes seen throughout “The Deserted Village,” from the “tyrant’s hand” to the “courtier [glittering] in brocade” to the “long drawn poms” displayed in the opulent city. Yet even if “The Deserted Village” were not explicitly a poem encoding an attack on luxurious landlords, the presence of the chapbook’s final poem would serve to emphasize its attack on the landlord elite. Importantly, the seventeenth and eighteenth editions of the *Battle* chapbook conclude with a poem entitled “The Emigrants” and falsely ascribed to Goldsmith. (In fact, it was written by Henry Erskine.) In many ways a more concise version of “The Deserted Village,” “The Emigrants” records the sufferings of an “ancient shepherd . . . oppress’d with woe” (3) who is “by hard oppression driven” (23) from his native home. Like “The Deserted Village,” this oppression is foreign in origin: as the shepherd explains, “Another lord now rules these wide domains, / The avaricious tyrant of the plains. / Far, far from hence, he revels life away, / In guilty pleasure our poor means must pay” (38-41). In particular, the shepherd has lost his pasture to foreign agricultural projects, for as he notes, “[t]he mossy plains, the mountains barren brow, / Must now be tortur’d, by the tearing plough, / And, spite of nature, corpse be taught to rise . . .” (42-44). As such, the poem’s warning echoes the threat in “The Deserted Village” that the spread of luxury will decimate the country’s “bold peasantry.” In “The Emigrants,” this threat is specified more exactly: “If, in some future hour, the foe shall land / His hostile legions on Britannia’s strand, / May she not, then, th’alarm sound in vain, / Nor miss her banish’d thousands on the plain” (48-51). And in the shepherd’s final apostrophe to those animals and streams which he must leave, he tells his goats to “FEED on . . . another now shall drain / Your streams, alas, that heal disease and soften pain. / No streams, alas! Shall ever, ever flow, / To heal thy master’s heart, or sooth his woe” (52-55). Read within its chapbook context, the poem’s final emphasis on the master’s “woe” is especially forceful, the word’s use acquiring a deep bitterness when its position within the stock lexicon of the sentimental canon is taken into account.

cause of enclosure and rural upheaval. The anti-Gallicism of the *Battle* chapbook can be read in a number of ways.²⁵ But Wogan's possible motivations in using the chapbook to advance an attack on landlordism are potentially more difficult to understand. According to what scant evidence exists, Wogan seems to have been moderate in his politics, inclining, as suggested above, toward liberal constitutionalism. What would have incited an apparently cautious and increasingly polite printer like Wogan to send a radical chapbook into the Irish countryside during a time of widespread peasant revolt against landlords, especially when the Rightboy movement threatened to derail the move toward the very reforms he seemed committed to bringing about? Perhaps Wogan believed that the chapbook could turn attention to the conflict between the peasantry and landlords and away from the recently ameliorated but still lingering tensions between Catholics and Protestants. By figuring landlords as land-hungry tyrants whose addiction to luxury threatened rural laborers regardless of denomination, Wogan may have sought to use the chapbook to generate inter-denominational unity among the peasantry. Certainly, the popularity of *The Battle of Aughrim* would have helped this aim along, even if

²⁵ First, it might have been intended to prove the loyalty of an Irish Catholic Dubliner to a British state that seemed, for a time at least, to be willing to consider instituting real changes in its policies towards Catholics. Alternatively, Wogan might have meant the *Battle* chapbook to demonstrate a commitment to the territorial integrity of the nascent Irish republic against any foreign interlopers, French or, potentially, English. Finally, and perhaps most likely, Wogan might have intended to incite his readers' anti-Gallicism in order to motivate them to join the Volunteers. Because according to widespread public perception during the 1780s, the Volunteers were to be credited with Ireland's move toward republicanism insofar as they provided a militant wing capable of enforcing Irish nationalism, any attempt to strengthen the Volunteers was equally an attempt to advance the cause of liberal constitutionalism in Ireland. And Wogan may have been especially supportive of the Volunteers because of the organization's inter-denominationalism. By incorporating Catholics as well as Protestants into its rank, the Volunteers was seen by many Irish Catholics as an organization with tremendous promise in terms of alleviating sectarian conflict and anti-Catholicism in Ireland. In printing and distributing an anti-Gallic chapbook, Wogan may well have been attempting to advance the cause of the Volunteers and thereby strengthen the position of Irish Catholics in late eighteenth-century Ireland.

performances of the play did sometimes degenerate into bloodshed. By promoting inter-denominational unity, Wogan may have been attempting to advance simultaneously the Catholic cause and the cause of liberal constitutionalism, which seemed to promise greater religious toleration for Catholics. That Wogan was intent on using his occupation as a printer to strengthen the position of Catholics seems likely, given his established identity as a major Catholic printer whose shop at “Dr. Hay’s head” was virtually synonymous with persecuted Catholicism. The anti-Gallicism and the anti-landlordism of the *Battle* chapbook and its text of “The Deserted Village” therefore may have represented an attempt to unify readers through the creation of an opposing figure—the Frenchman, or the landlord, or more generally, Luxury itself—which threatened its readers. By othering such figures, the *Battle* chapbook attempted to create a solidarity among its peasant readers meant to further the cause of inter-denominational unity and therefore Catholic emancipation. Ultimately, of course, Wogan’s actual motivations are inaccessible. But regardless of this inaccessibility, the *Battle* chapbook altered the political alignment of Goldsmith’s poem. Through its embodiment in a chapbook, Wogan’s edition of “The Deserted Village” reached newly radicalized readerships, transformed the text of the poem in significant ways, and introduced new contexts of interpretation, transforming Goldsmith’s poem from a sentimental evocation of the “luxury of woe” into an indictment of luxury and its effects.

***Figs’ Meat* and “A Lamentation for the Oppressed”**

Wogan’s *Battle* chapbook altered the political alignment of “The Deserted Village” by expanding the accessibility of the text to poor, rural Irish audiences during a

time of widespread agrarian disturbance. But Goldsmith's poem didn't have to travel overseas to reach audiences whose vastly different reading contexts politicized it. "The Deserted Village" was also politicized by the material forms and political contexts that shaped its reception in London. Certainly, the poem had been appearing in small-format editions in London from virtually the date of its first publication, in 1770. However, it took both a further change in format and the political developments of the late eighteenth century to politicize its English as Wogan's chapbook had its Irish instantiations. Such developments had occurred by the early 1790s, when the English radical Thomas Spence printed and circulated a version of the poem in his penny weekly pamphlet *Pigs' Meat*.

By 1792, when he relocated from his native Newcastle to London in order to establish himself as a saloop seller and a publisher of radical political pamphlets, Spence had been propounding the same argument for over fifteen years. First publicly articulated in a Newcastle Philosophical Society lecture found so objectionable that it contributed to his expulsion from the organization, Spence's plan for agrarian reform was based on a simple argument. Proceeding from the assumption that every person possessed a right to life whose satisfaction required an equal share of the means of living, Spence contended that current agrarian arrangements were flagrantly unjust insofar as they concentrated land ownership and therefore the means of living in the hands of a few landlords.²⁶ To

²⁶ According to Spence, every person possesses a self-evident right to life; because the right to life requires that every person have equal access to the "means of living," "property in land and liberty among men, in a state of nature, ought to be equal" (*The rights of man* 3-4); and because "society ought properly to be nothing but a mutual agreement among the inhabitants of a country, to maintain the natural rights and privileges of one another against all opposers" (7), a social arrangement is justified only if it preserves every person's right to an equal share in property, therefore guaranteeing every person's right to life. However, Spence argued, existing social arrangements had repeatedly failed to protect the universal right to life (7-9).

Spence, the unlawful expropriation of common land had shaped both material and social relations, generating a quasi-feudal society in which inequality was sanctified through inheritance law. In place of such social arrangements, Spence proposed his so-called Land Plan, which was meant to satisfy every person's right to life by erasing rural poverty.²⁷

Spence's attack on British landlordism was also an attack on the luxury of the upper classes, which he disparaged repeatedly but nowhere so bluntly as in *The Restorer of Society to Its Natural State* (1801). There, Spence relied on the image of old luxury in assaulting those who had unfairly privatized land, figuring the aristocrat as "[a] worm [who] pays no rent: the earth while he lives is his portion, and he riots in untaxed luxuries" (21). Yet to Spence luxury was not universally objectionable, and in a refinement of his plan he identified libraries and literacy as productive of a socially

²⁷ Spence's plan was as follows: "a day is appointed on which the inhabitants of each parish meet, in their respective parishes, to take their long lost Rights into possession, and to form themselves into corporations" (*The rights of man* 11); "all men who are inhabitants become members or burghers" (11); "the land with all that appertains to it, is in every parish, made the property of the corporation or parish with as ample power to let, repair or alter all ..." (11-12); "the rent, which the people have paid into the parish treasuries [is] employed by each parish in paying the government its share of the sum, which the parliament of national congress at any time grants; in maintaining and relieving its poor, and people out of work; in paying the necessary officers their salaries" and in funding any necessary public works, and "not as formerly, to support and spread luxury, pride and all manner of vice" (12-3); "all affairs [are] to be determined by voting either in a full meeting of a parish, its committees, or in the house of Representatives ... by balloting" (13); "[a] certain number of neighboring parishes, as those in a town or county, have each an equal vote in the election of persons to represent them in Parliament, Senate or Congress; and each of them pays equally toward their maintenance" (13); among the parishes "government does not meddle in every trifle, but on the contrary, allows to each parish the power of putting the laws in force in all cases, and does not interfere, but when they act manifestly to the prejudice of society" (14); every person belongs to a single parish (14-5); every parish forms a militia to guarantee self-protection (15-6); "the land is let in very small farms, which makes employment for a greater number of hands, and makes more victualing of all kinds be raised" (16); "there are no tolls or taxes of any kind paid among them, by native or foreigner, but the aforesaid rent, which in every person pays to the parish, according to the quantity, quality, and conveniences of the land, housing, &c. which he occupies in it" (17). So was Spence's plan meant to provide an alternative arrangement to the existing arrangements of British society, replacing an illegitimate and quasi-feudal structure with one in which the rights of all were preserved against the depredations of the few.

beneficial trade in luxuries among parishioners in his utopian society.²⁸ Yet while luxury goods were not inherently reprehensible, their unequal distribution was. As Spence observed later in the *Restorer*,

But we, God help us! have fallen under the power of the hardest set of masters that ever existed. After swallowing up every species of common property and what belonged to religious societies and townships, they now begrudge us every comfort of life. Everything almost is reckoned an unbecoming luxury to such scum of the earth, to such a swinish multitude. They are always preaching up temperance, labour, patience and submission, and that education only tends to render us unhappy, by refining our feelings, exalting our ideas, and spoiling us for our low avocations. (9)

Alluding to the conviction that education—and by implication reading—would promote luxury, Spence claimed that landlords opposed working-class education because it “only tends to render us unhappy, by refining our feelings.” Such affective refinement represented a threat insofar as its growth disturbed the social order by spoiling the men and women of the lower orders for their “low avocations.” By restricting access to education and luxuries like books, Spence believed, the upper classes were able to forestall the refinement of lower class feeling and thereby reinforce the social relations legitimating the material inequalities of British society.

²⁸ Spence claimed both that every person was naturally inclined towards luxury and that luxury was productive of socially beneficially wealth, as long as this wealth was fairly distributed. Libraries and reading would create an interest in luxuries among parishioners and should therefore be encouraged: “[i]n the first place they will be all well educated, having schools, and perhaps libraries, at the expense of the parishes. Reading promotes refinement and sensibility, and a taste for elegance in clothes, furniture and every department in life. Now, it is only labour, industry and ingenuity that can administer gratification to this multiplication of refined desires; therefore trade, manufactures, and the arts must needs be greatly encouraged. And as all nations, however barbarous or civilized, have naturally a taste for foreign productions and luxuries, and will do anything they can to acquire them, so may we expect this people” (23-4). Because reading promotes “refinement”—or, as it was commonly known by its eighteenth-century opponents, “luxury”—the availability of books to literate parishioners would generate those “refined desires” that could only be satisfied by luxury goods. Because these luxury goods would require “labour, industry and ingenuity,” their appeal would generate “trade, manufactures, and the arts” whose exercise was productive of wealth.

Spence's work as a printer was shaped by this belief. While he sought to disseminate his plan for agrarian reform by embodying it in the cheapest, most widely accessible, and most un-luxurious material forms possible, he also attempted to break down the social hierarchy whose ideological mystifications prevented his plan from being accepted by redistributing those texts whose unequal distribution in part helped constitute it, thereby divesting such texts of their polite status and allowing Spence to repurpose them on behalf of his own agenda. In pursuit of these goals, Spence showed immense versatility. As Iain McCalman observes, "[i]n much of his propaganda, Spence deliberately and successfully sought to use the language and literary forms of the vulgar, poor and semi-literate (including chapbooks, ballads, posters and almanacs)" (46-7). Spence was especially adept in adopting the bibliographic forms of the poor, transforming his Plan into a memorable ballad and publishing it as a cheap and widely accessible broadsheet, as well as encouraging his followers to cover London in chalk graffiti advertising "Spence's Plan" and manufacturing tokens whose radical images and slogans shocked his political opponents into histrionic denunciations.²⁹

²⁹ See "The Rights of Man" broadsheet, as well as William Cobbett's observation that "[w]e have all seen years past written on the walls in and near London these words 'Spence's Plan'" (*PR* VI.23: 749). The tokens, in particular, were the target of much vitriol. "Contemptible in execution, and infamous in representation," one writer remarked, "beyond the revolutions of ages, and the decay of empires, they will carry the marks of his infamy to the final dissolution of the world" ("Essay V," *Gentleman's Magazine* 68: 830). Contemporaries tended to view the tokens as a means through which Spence might increase the circulation of his plan, as suggested by a record of a shop visit during which were encountered "many many thousands of different tokens lying in heaps, and selling at what struck me to be very great prices. These, therefore, could not be considered as struck for limited sale. I confess, considering the number I saw struck, and what the subjects of them were, I thought myself justified in supposing that it was the intention to circulate them very widely" (*Gentleman's Magazine* 67: 269). Barrell disagrees, arguing that the tokens were not meant to circulate widely but rather intended for coin collectors and ultimately as a strictly commercial venture on Spence's part ("Radicalism" 17-18). But the mere fact that most of Spence's still extant coins seem to have belonged to wealthier collectors doesn't prove that they were intended for such collectors; in fact, many might have circulated widely, while others were hidden away in collections.

Yet Spence also relied on the more conventional form of the penny weekly to advance his Plan. Beginning in 1793, he began publishing *Pigs' Meat*, a widely available and cheaply priced penny pamphlet that excerpted the political writings of classical and modern authors, as well as Spence's own work. Significantly, Spence turned not to "levelling tracts, but to the great Whig canon for support" (Robbins 351), appropriating the texts constituting that tradition—from those of Harrington and Locke to Milton, Swift, Barlow and Price—and repurposing them to serve the radical cause. Appearing in large print runs and at the extremely low price of 1 pence, the 12-page *Pigs' Meat* pamphlet made accessible an array of texts not previously available to a majority of readers, for "[w]ith *Pigs' Meat* people did not need to buy Voltaire, Locke or Volney even in abridged versions" (Worrall 23).³⁰ By increasing the accessibility of such texts, Spence meant the collection to embody a "School of Man's Rights" (*The meridian sun of liberty* 1) and its individual extracts to serve as "Lessons for the Swinish multitude" (*Pigs' Meat* 1). Such lessons were intended to promote "among the Labouring Part of Mankind proper Ideas of their situation, of their Importance, and of their Rights. / AND TO CONVINCe THEM / That their forlorn Condition has not been entirely overlooked and forgotten ..."

³⁰ Spence's publications almost certainly saw large print runs and sales. If Spence is to be trusted, he had "been diligently publishing [his scheme] these Five and Twenty Years in great variety of Shapes, and have sold many Thousands of copies" (*Restorer* 34). Rudkin finds archival support for Spence's claim, observing that "[i]n the Home Office Papers there is a letter dated May 17, 1797 [in which] [a]ccording to the deposition of the small boy employed by Spence, he was allowed 1s. 3d. of the takings. On an average he made 4s. per day. It is not clear whether this 4s. represents his net gains. If they are the gross takings, he must have sold ninety-six copies a day. He had been employed in this manner for two months. Another boy was similarly employed, presumably on the same terms. If one of them sold at this rate for six days per week, the number of copies sold would run into thousands" (248-9). The little evidence available thus suggests that Spence sold a relatively large number of pamphlets. At the very least, Spence did become especially well-known—or at least sought to become well-known—as the publisher of *Pigs' Meat*. The title page of *The End of Oppression* (1795), for example, advertises its author as the "Patriotic bookseller and publisher of Pigs' Meat," as does *A Fragment of an Ancient Prophecy*, which also identifies Spence as a "Patriotic Bookseller; and Publisher of Pig's Meat."

(*Pigs' Meat* 1). The work's title exemplified this goal, for in co-opting Burke's notorious warning in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* that amidst the revolutionary changes shaking Europe "[l]earning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a Swinish Multitude" (117), Spence appropriated, neutralized, and repurposed Burke's text, materializing cultural education as a form of nourishment and thereby figuring it as one of the means of living conditioning every person's right to life. Such was Spence's strategy when he reprinted a version of Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* entitled "A Lamentation for the Oppressed" in his third *Pigs' Meat* pamphlet.

The material form of Spence's *Pigs' Meat* version of *The Deserted Village* and its contexts of distribution distinguished it markedly from the quarto edition of the poem. Spence's pamphlets were printed on low-quality paper—thick, dark, and poorly made. The margins of the pamphlets were thin, the printing frequently rushed, the typography variable, and the compositor's work inconsistent.³¹ Whereas the quarto edition was durable and meant to be bound, Spence's pamphlet bore all the marks of an ephemeral publication.³² Moreover, the pamphlet's buying conditions distinguished it from the quarto. While Griffin and the legitimate purveyors of the quarto edition of Goldsmith's poem were well-respected distributors of a luxury product, Spence was seen by many as a disreputable figure, especially given his apparent political extremism. Though debate exists concerning whether or not he was a physical force revolutionary, Spence

³¹ While the quarto was printed meticulously, with large type, few lines to the page, carefully applied ink, and few spelling mistakes, Spence's penny weekly edition was printed with little care to material presentation. Likewise, the small page size required miniscule types, and each page printed 40 lines, rendering the text of the poem extremely compressed.

³² The pamphlet's ephemerality is suggested by the absence of known copies of extant pamphlets apart from those gathered together in the compilation volume.

apparently did call for violent rebellion. Either way, the Pitt ministry took his threats seriously, fearing in particular the potential of Spence's publications—and especially *Pigs' Meat*—to incite revolutionary violence. Indeed, as David Worrall observes, “[t]he connection between Spence's bookshop ‘The Hive of Liberty’ 8, Little Turn Stile, reportedly being used as a place for training to insurrectionary arms, and Spence's selling of inexpensive political tracts was enough to have him arrested for high treason” (19).³³

Such material differences altered *The Deserted Village*'s readership, changed its contexts of interpretation, and reshaped its very text, ultimately serving to de-emphasize the poem's sentimentalism and redefine it as a political polemic. First, by virtue of its low price and large print run, Spence's *Pigs' Meat* pamphlet was widely available, rendering its texts accessible to a large number of readers. Given Spence's reputation as a London-based radical printer and revolutionary, the bulk of these readers were probably members of London's laboring classes—artisans, tradespeople, shopkeepers—as well as those occupying more tenuous positions. McCalman writes that Spence “united in his person, organisation and programme the contradictory impulses and aspirations of this marginal middling sort during the early Regency years. He was a man so personally ragged, socially unexclusive, ideologically revolutionary and culturally plebeian that he attracted

³³ See, for example, *The End of Oppression* (8), which seemingly advocates violent rebellion. Writing in 1794 of the London Corresponding Society and its propaganda instruments, the government informant John Reeves stated that “there are two other Engines that are constantly kept at work by the Members of this Society. One is the Lectures of Mr Thelwall, the other is, the printing of seditious Pamphlets at a small price” (“Mr. Reeves's Report on Sedition &c,” ctd. in Worrall 19). According to Reeves, such pamphlets were especially dangerous “because what is in print may be bought by any body, and speak for itself” (ctd. in Worrall 19). Spence was picked out as one such “seditious pamphlet seller” by Reeves. However, Spence's threat extended beyond the dissemination of propaganda, for, according to Reeves, Spence also armed and trained potential revolutionaries: “it appears that People are trained at Mr. Spence's a seditious Pamphlet seller in Turn Stile, and at one or two houses in the Borough” (“Report,” ctd. in Worrall 19). In particular, Reeves identified *Pigs' Meat* as a potentially seditious pamphlet.

the insecure and declining, the casualised, pauperised, and criminalised ...” (49). *Pigs’ Meat* and its version of Goldsmith’s poem were likely read especially by “the marginal artisan, shopkeeper or professional who felt himself slipping into degradation” (49) and for whom “Spence’s plan promised a chance to regain cherished ideals of independent self-sufficiency and a respectable living-standard” (49). In social and economic terms, such readers were a far cry from the likely readers of the quarto edition of Goldsmith’s poem. The material form of the *Pigs’ Meat* pamphlet thus created a readership likely to interpret “Lamentation” as a strident call for revolutionary change.

But Spence’s pamphlet also altered the contexts influencing the interpretation of Goldsmith’s poem. Readers of Spence’s version almost certainly read it with the Land Plan in mind. Because of his efforts to popularize his agrarian egalitarianism, Spence’s name was likely indistinguishable from his Land Plan, as suggested by the frequency of references to “Spence’s Plan” in graffiti and popular songs of the period. Rather than interpreting the poem within the sentimental context established by the quarto, Spence’s radically inclined readers would have received the poem as a “lesson for the swinish multitude” meant to present them with a history lesson about the transformation of England from a land of rural freeholders to one of dislocated urban workers. This inclination was likely strengthened by the presence of the pamphlet’s other excerpts, which reinforced the poem’s political context. Directly preceding Spence’s “Lamentation,” for example, was printed a passage from Richard Price entitled “On the Excellency of a Free Government, And its Tendency to Exalt the Nature of Man,” whose appearance in *Pigs’ Meat* redefined the text as another argument on behalf of the Land

Plan (*Pigs' Meat* 32).³⁴

Finally, *Pigs' Meat*'s material form reshaped Goldsmith's poem, for the pamphlet's brevity encouraged Spence to excerpt rather than reprint *The Deserted Village* in its entirety. Retitled "A Lamentation for the Oppressed," the version included in *Pigs' Meat* includes only 126 lines of the original quarto's 430, excising most of those passages identified by the quarto's reviewers as exemplary of the poem's sentimentalism and leaving only those whose main focus was the evil of luxury, thereby transforming the poem from an overtly sentimental text into a straightforwardly political attack on the depredations of landlordism.³⁵ Most notably, Goldsmith's sentimental speaker was almost wholly absent from "Lamentation." In fact, only once—in line 43: "To me more dear, congenial to my heart / One native charm than all the gloss of art"—does any reference to the speaker occur. Likewise, those passages—and especially the frequently excerpted portraits—identified by early reviewers as possessing sentimental force disappeared completely in "Lamentation." Lastly, Spence's version dropped the closing apostrophe to the figure of Poetry, depicted by the quarto as "Thou source of all [the speaker's] bliss,

³⁴ See also, for example, "A Lesson for Antigallicans: Extracts from a pamphlet, entitled a 'Tour through the Theatre of War, in the Months of November and December, 1792, and January 1793'" and, arguably, "On the Responsibility of Kings, From *The Candid Philosopher*."

³⁵ Spence's version excises the quarto's first 34 lines, in which the poem's wandering speaker introduces himself and recounts Auburn's idyllic past, and begins instead with the poem's description of the current condition of the village ("Sweet smiling Village, loveliest of the lawn" (35)). Spence's text then cuts lines 75-250, in which the poem's sentimental wanderer returns to take his "solitary rounds" and provides the poem's portraits of the wretched matron, the pastor, the school master, and the inn. Rather than including these portraits, Spence's text shifts directly to line 251 ("Yes! Let the rich deride, the proud disdain") and the poem's extended attack on the luxury conditioned by enclosure. The text then includes Goldsmith's claim that "Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth [sic] divide, / And even the bare-worn common is denied" (307-8) before concluding with lines 309-336 ("If to the city sped—What waits him there? (309)) and cutting the final lines of Goldsmith's original text. (Line numbers here refer to the Q2.)

and all my woe, / That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so." Instead of presenting a conclusion that emphasized the poem's speaker as its subject and thus stressed its sentimentalism, Spence concluded his version with the passage recounting the peasant girl's forced emigration to the city, thereby reframing the poem as an attack on luxury's urbanizing effects.

In place of its original sentimentalism, "Lamentation" printed only the poem's various attacks on luxury, an account of its origins, and a description of its disastrous consequences for England, opening by suggesting the relationship between luxury and landlordism:

SWEET smiling Village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all the green;
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain ...
(1-6)

before comparing the current state of England to its past state, in which

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintain'd its man,
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.
(23-8)

In thus editing Goldsmith's poem, Spence emphasized those passages corresponding to his vision of English history, as outlined in his Newcastle lecture, and that together served to justify his Land Plan. Though a time had existed in which property was held in common and according to natural right, landlords had expropriated large tracts of land for

themselves, thereby depriving laborers of the right to life and forcing them to emigrate. Yet while the original text of Goldsmith's poem presented the destination of this emigration as the New World, Spence's version substituted London for America, asking of one laborer "[i]f to the city sped—What waits him there? ... / To see ten thousand baneful arts combin'd / To pamper luxury and thin mankind" (102-4). By concluding the *Pigs' Meat* version with a description of the flight of displaced rural workers to the city, Spence redefined Goldsmith's sentimentalist Tory defense of ancient feudal arrangements as a radical tract advocating his own agrarian egalitarianism against the spread of luxury.

Yet the transformation of *The Deserted Village* was also conditioned by the material properties of Spence's pamphlet itself. Shoddily printed on low-quality paper and using variable types and fonts, Spence's "Lamentation" was conspicuously un-luxurious compared to the original quarto edition of Goldsmith's poem. "Lamentation"'s low quality is especially apparent in its numerous spelling and compositorial errors, as when it prints

Those fenceless fields the sons of *whealth* divide,
And even the bare-worn common is denied
(100-1; italics added)

and

Here, while the proud their long-*dawn* pomps display,
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
(110-11; italics added)

In misspelling "wealth" and "long-drawn pomps", "Lamentation" draws particular attention to the text's actual distance from wealth, pomp, and the high-quality of craftsmanship defining the period's luxury quartos. Instead, Spence's edition was meant

simply to satisfy the necessity of disseminating polite art to the urban lower orders.

The poem's un-luxurious form worked to re-contextualize the association between artificial ornament and luxury established throughout the poem. Whereas the quarto edition of *The Deserted Village* had flaunted its luxurious bibliographic codes, Spence's "Lamentation" replaced the quarto's codes with a set more consistent with the poem's attack on luxury. Repeatedly, the poem suggests an equation between artificial ornament and luxury. Art is figured as luxurious "gloss," as in lines 46-7:

To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art;
(44-7);

and as a form of deceptive fashion, as in lines 56-7:

And, even while fashions brightest arts decoy,
The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy?
(56-7)

Meanwhile, luxury is portrayed in terms of ornament (80-91) and personified in the figures of courtiers who "glitter in brocade" (107) and pursue their "long-drawn pomps" (110; 52) through midnight revels in palaces where pleasure is "richly deck'd" (113; 52). Finally, luxury is imaged especially in terms of extended space: according to the poem

The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
Space for his lake; his parks extended bounds;
Space for his horses equipage, and hounds ...
(68-71)

The quarto edition of the poem had materialized such lines in its luxurious format, which was marked by its glossy pages, its fashionability, its material splendor, its bibliographic dress, its glitter and its pomp, and its conspicuous spaciousness. Spence's version of

Goldsmith's poem dispensed with such bibliographic codes. Fundamentally, Spence's "Lamentation" was defined not in terms of its status as a luxury product but rather by its un-luxurious practicality as a piece of political propaganda intended to drum up support for a potentially violent revolution.

Conclusion

By shedding the luxurious trappings of the quarto format and reprinting *The Deserted Village* as a *Pigs' Meat* penny weekly, Spence helped radicalize Goldsmith's poem, using it to attack the increase in luxury that had allegedly aggrandized a landlord elite while displacing rural workers from the land that provided their means of living. Read as a penny pamphlet by politically radical readers in London during the 1790s, Goldsmith's poem began to be transformed from a work of high sentimentalism into a text forming part of a revolutionary agenda. In the context of *Pigs' Meat*, the depiction of a sentimentally idyllic England, which Goldsmith had used to glorify the agrarian arrangements constituting the power of Tory landlords, became a depiction of Spence's state of nature, in which land is held by all people in common. Indeed, *Pigs' Meat's* "Lamentation" seems to have helped initiate a general re-orientation towards Goldsmith's poem, for in the wake of its publication the reception of *The Deserted Village*—as well as Goldsmith's reputation itself—changed radically. The London Corresponding Society's *Moral and Political Magazine* cited Goldsmith approvingly in 1796 (*MPM* 1; 320); William Cobbett printed lines from *The Deserted Village* in the header of his *Weekly Political Register* in 1804 (VI.23: 865-6); John Thelwall quoted the poem in his "Third Lecture on the Causes of the Present dearth and Scarcity in Provisions" (*Tribune*

XVIII: 64), as did Thomas Wooler in the *Black Dwarf*, which exclaimed that “[n]othing can be more true than the lines—The man of wealth and pride / Takes up a space that many poor supplied” which, “at the period they were written, seem to have been prophetically inspired” (*BD* 11.VI: 360). Annotating his copy of *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, William Blake would remark of Reynold’s description of his Literary Club—which included “Dr. Johnson, Mr. Burke, Dr. Nugent, Mr. Langton, Mr. Antony Chamier, Sir John Hawkins, the Hon. Topham Beauclerk, and Dr. Goldsmith”—that “Oliver Goldsmith never should have known such knaves” (“Marginalia” 640). The degree to which Spence’s “Lamentation” itself triggered such a widespread radical appropriation is debatable, yet two lines in particular were seized on by Spence’s fellow radicals: “A time there was, ere England’s griefs began / When every rood of ground maintained its man.” Within the context of Spence’s initial appropriation, it should come as no surprise that more than any other lines from the poem, the couplet serves to summarize Spence’s appropriation of Goldsmith’s poem, in which its original Toryism was repurposed to advance Spence’s radical Land Plan. In reprinting Goldsmith’s poem in the form of the cheap, small-format editions, both Wogan and Spence succeeded in helping to initiate its transformation from a sentimental celebration of its readers’ luxury of woe into an explicit attack on the spread of luxury, re-aligning its political commitments in the process.

CHAPTER 3

THE “LUXURY OF DEMOCRATIC CONVERSE”:

JOSEPH JOHNSON, RESPECTABLE RADICALISM, AND THE QUARTO POETRY

PAMPHLET

In November of 1798, the publisher Joseph Johnson left his cell at King’s Bench Prison to attend a sentencing hearing on a conviction he had received the previous July for the distribution of a pamphlet deemed a seditious libel by authorities. Published amidst rapidly mounting fears of French invasion, the pamphlet—Gilbert Wakefield’s *A Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop of Landaff’s Address to the People of Great Britain*—had asserted, among other things, that the “poverty and wretchedness in the lower orders” would hasten the success of invading French armies (18). According to the Pitt Ministry, such pronouncements proved Wakefield and his publisher Johnson guilty of “contriving and intending to traduce vilify and bring into hatred and contempt among the liege subjects of our said lord the king the government and constitution of this kingdom” (*Howell’s State Trials* 680). During his hearing, however, Johnson defended himself by suggesting that the material properties of his publications established the innocence of his intentions, for “where he could take the liberty of doing it, he ha[d] uniformly recommended the Circulation of such publications as had a tendency to promote good morals instead of such as were calculated to mislead and inflame the Common people” (ctd. in Braithwaite 163-4). In the end, Johnson’s plea for leniency was unsuccessful, and

a few months later he was sentenced to an additional six months in prison and given a £50 fine. Yet Johnson's failure to avert punishment in what was in fact a rigged state trial was the result of political machinations rather than legal ineptitude. Indeed, Johnson's statement proves that the publisher was both intimately familiar with the discourse of seditious libel law and frankly intent on exploiting it for his own ends. In particular, and as this chapter argues, Johnson sought to manipulate the bibliographic properties of his publications in order to evade prosecution for seditious libel during the legally dangerous years of the 1790s.

Throughout the decade, seditious libel was understood in fundamentally bibliographic terms. Emphasizing social consequence rather than criminal intent as the essence of the crime, the dominant interpretation of the law held that a publication qualified as a seditious libel only if it possessed a "tendency" to encourage seditious activity. Tendency, in turn, was understood in terms of audience: supposedly speculative publications meant to appeal to middle and upper-class readerships were rarely thought to express seditious tendencies, while apparently inflammatory publications directed to the lower orders were heavily prosecuted. But because a publication's audience was determined in large part by its accessibility, the bibliographic determinants of this accessibility—such as format and price—became significant indicators of a publication's perceived criminality. Hence, while cheap and widely available penny pamphlets were routinely targeted, expensive, large-format publications with small print runs and low circulations were never prosecuted. In this sense, seditious libel was a bibliographic crime, and attempts to circumvent seditious libel charges involved bibliographic

strategies. These facts had significant consequences, as this chapter argues. First, as the period's predominant large-format book, the quarto in effect came to possess a legally protected status during the 1790s. As Part 1 shows, more than any other format in the period, the quarto resisted prosecution for seditious libel, earning it a reputation as a legally immune bibliographic form and making it both a constituent part of the infrastructure of the bourgeois public sphere and the material emblem of this sphere's hegemonic liberal-radical ideology. The quarto's reputation for legal security figured into the publishing strategies of Joseph Johnson, as Part 2 argues. On the one hand, as the period's major radical publisher, Johnson depended on the quarto to maintain a reputation for respectability intended to assure his protection from prosecution for seditious libel. On the other hand, by issuing potentially seditious political poems in the polite form of the quarto pamphlet, Johnson also managed to secure these particular poems against prosecution. Because of their high prices and low print runs, such publications were seen as incapable of expressing any seditious tendency and therefore qualified as respectably radical works whose verbal appeals to middle-class audiences were reinforced by their formats. As subsequent parts of the chapter show, Johnson's use of the quarto format to publish political poems by Blake, Barlow, Wordsworth and Coleridge precluded their prosecution for anti-monarchism, rendered respectably polite any potentially actionable radical content, and shaped their literary codes in interpretively significant ways.¹

¹ Basing its claims primarily on legal evidence and anecdote as well as Johnson's publishing output and his personal statements, this chapter argues (1) that the quarto's class status as a luxury format rendered it immune from prosecution for seditious libel; (2) that the format situated its texts within the bourgeois public sphere emblemized Johnson's respectable (or liberal) radicalism; and (3) that the format precluded certain anti-monarchical and therefore potentially seditious poems from prosecution by virtue of its status. Johnson's *intentions* regarding his use of the quarto are difficult to determine, primarily because very little documentary evidence of these intentions still exists. Indeed, it should be noted that I

In so doing, the quarto also helped configure that particular mode of enlightened political discussion associated with the Johnson circle—liberal, rational, respectable—as a luxury meant to be enjoyed exclusively by those comfortably leisured and suitably educated members of British society assumed to be capable of distinguishing thought from action and principle from practice. Robert Southey conveys a comprehension of this configuration in an April, 1794 letter to his friend John Horseman. Penned immediately on his return from a trip to Oxford, Southey declares to Horseman that “[t]he pointed sentence & the well rounded period my dear friend are proper & pretty in declamation, but the stile of letter writing should flow from the heart, not from the deliberate musing of the head. I remained at old Ball. Coll. til the Friday morning after your departure, & great part of my time passed in all the luxury of democratic converse. My friend Allen is an excellent republican. His manners urbane and liberal ...” (*CLRS*: 87). As Southey suggests, the “democratic converse” characterizing respectable radicalism was a classed behavior during the 1790s, premised on the urbanity, liberalism, and education of its practitioners and requiring the power to fashion “the pointed sentence and the well-rounded period.” Nor was Southey alone in figuring polite political discussion as a luxury, for throughout the Romantic period, both abstract thought and leisured discussion

have found no direct evidence that Johnson deliberately and explicitly used the format to forestall prosecution or to establish his respectability; Johnson's extant letters, for example, make no mention of this intended use. Yet certain of Johnson's statements (e.g., his affidavit) as well as his experience as a bookseller—i.e., as the seller of Cooper's *Reply*; as a printer of tracts on seditious libel; as a witness in trials for treason and libel; as an associate of Godwin's during the printing of *Enquiry*; as a man who clearly manipulated prices in order to direct his publications towards certain audiences, especially after 1798; and as a cautious, observant and legally endangered publisher—provide strong reason to conclude that Johnson did intend to use the quarto as such. At the very least, strong reason exists to conclude that the quarto's recognized status as a classed and therefore legally protected format would have prevented the prosecution of any of those poems discussed in the latter half of this chapter.

are figured in such terms.² Unlike other literary luxuries, the luxuries of thought and conversation were not construed as double-edged by middle-class audiences of the period, but rather they coded the classed parameters of the bourgeois public sphere. Both the bibliographic emblem of respectable radicalism and the period's predominant luxury format, the quarto made concrete the dependency of the Johnson Circle's liberal ideology on a fraught class politics and provided Johnson with a way to anchor himself to a legally secure class position during the turbulent years of the 1790s.

Seditious Libel and the Quarto Format in the 1790s

On May 21, 1792, the Crown declared a royal proclamation against seditious writings. Though issued as “a direct result of the recent establishment and rapid growth of radical societies that were publishing and encouraging discussion of Jacobin and Republican ideas on an unprecedented scale” (Phillips 266), and especially the publication of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man, Part 2* (Emsley, “Repression” 805), the proclamation also “signalled the advent of what would later become known as Pitt's ‘Reign of Terror’” (Phillips 266). Over the ensuing years, the government deployed a number of tactics designed to curb an emerging radical movement. It pursued a regulatory agenda meant to cripple popular political activity, passing the Gagging Acts in 1795, increasing stamp duties in 1797, introducing the Combination Acts in 1799 and 1800, and

² Phrases like “luxury of thought,” for example, appear repeatedly. See, e.g., among numerous examples, “Verses on the Death of a Dear Friend,” attributed to “Rugbeensis,” which speaks of “New schemes of bliss in luxury of thought” (*Gentleman's Magazine* (March, 1811): 263); Samuel Rogers's *An Epistle to a Friend*, which refers to a “calm retreat, so richly fraught / With mental light, and luxury of thought” (187-8); and the *Kaleidoscope's* “On the Retrospect of Life,” which recalls a moment of leisure in which the writer “was so comfortably seated, that I felt unwilling to move; and instead of rising to call for candles, I leaned back in my elbow chair to enjoy all the luxury of thought” (5.219: 78). See also *The Imperial Magazine's* “The Mohammedanism of the Koran” (5.57: 910); and “Rural Elegance” (*The General magazine* 62: 312).

suspending Habeas Corpus intermittently throughout the decade. It infiltrated popular organizations like the London Corresponding Society with spies and *agents provocateurs*. It disrupted the Edinburgh convention, transported its leaders, and stymied attempts to organize a convention in England. Perhaps most effectively, it sponsored and offered tactical support to national and local patriotic committees like John Reeves's Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers. Though the extent to which such measures constituted a true "reign of terror" is debatable, their efficacy is not: by the end of the decade, most of the radical organizations of the 1790s had been disbanded and their leaders imprisoned, transported or frightened into silence. British radicalism was not to reemerge with any force until the post-Napoleonic period.

Of those repressive tactics adopted by the Pitt Ministry, its campaign of prosecutions for treason and especially seditious libel represented its most focused attack on popular radicalism (Emsley, "Repression" 805). But though treason trials often provided the government with the chance to exhibit spectacular displays of its juridical strength, such trials were far outnumbered by prosecutions for seditious libel (Emsley, "Aspect" 157): between 1793 and 1801, for example, the provincial assizes saw 60 trials for seditious words or libel and only 13 for treason or conspiracy (Emsley "Aspect," "Appendix B"), and during the same period, there occurred 72 trials in the provincial quarterly sessions for seditious libel or words, and none for treason (Emsley "Aspect," "Appendix B").³ Meanwhile, between 1790 and 1799, there were filed 46 indictments or *ex officio* informations for seditious libel or blasphemy with the King's Bench alone, with

³ See Emsley, "Aspect" (156) for a summary of notable treason trials in the period.

the number of informations in particular rising exponentially during the first years of the decade, from a single case each in 1790 and 1791, to 10 in 1792, to 18 in 1793 (Harling “Table 1”). Such numbers represented “a substantial increase” in the number of prosecutions for the crime over previous eras—between 1702 and 1789, for example, there had been only about 190 prosecutions in total (Harling 108)—even while “[i]t is safe to assume that this approximation falls short of the total number of libel cases in which the crown played some role” (Harling 108). At the very least, the sharp increase in prosecutions for seditious libel indicated the Pitt Ministry’s growing reliance on libel law in its attempt to control the spread of radicalism during the 1790s.

Yet even while prosecutions for the crime increased dramatically, prosecutors often stumbled over a strange question: what exactly *was* seditious libel? Commentators in the period allude repeatedly to the troubling imprecision of the charge, and the formidable amount of tract literature disputing the nature of seditious libel during the 1790s suggests the degree to which its definition remained a lingering question.⁴ General characteristics of seditiously libelous publications were certainly identifiable: “Paineite exercises in king-bashing,” “incitements to mutiny,” and “published assaults on the characters of prominent public officials” were all commonly prosecuted (Harling 124),

⁴ A wide spectrum of jurists and writers was engaged by the question. For example, George Dyer confessed that “[i]n England, the doctrine of libels is still a subject of dispute and uncertainty . . .” (*An Address to the people of Great Britain, on the doctrine of libels* 33); John Bowles referred to “the important and much-agitated question of Libels, upon which uncommon powers of reasoning and ingenuity have been stretched to the utmost” (*Considerations on the Respective Rights of Judge and Jury: Particularly upon Trial for Libel* 21); and referring to the “[m]any Instances [that] have come to our Knowledge of Persons giving away, and selling at small prices and dropping in the streets, the works of Paine, and other incendiary Publications,” the Essex magistrate Thomas Kynaston worried that “it is as yet undetermined how far they are to be legally considered as treasonable, or libellous” (ctd. by Emsley 160). Such confusion was amplified by the fact that few guidelines were given to magistrates in Burn’s *Justice of the Peace*, and no instruction was ever provided to magistrates by the government (Emsley 161).

for example, as were texts displaying “[i]nflammatory language that was obviously intended for a plebeian audience” (Harling 124). But such patterns of prosecution hardly amounted to legal doctrine. Noting that “the customary legal definition ... was dangerously vague,” Philip Harling concludes of seditious libel that “what it meant in practice in this era was any form of printed matter *that the government chose to prosecute*, and whose content *it could convince a jury* had a tendency to provoke a breach of the peace ... ” (Harling 110; italics in original). Such pronouncements are only possible given the benefit of hindsight, of course: amidst the tumult of the 1790s, most parties remained confused about what constituted the crime of seditious libel.

By the last decade of the eighteenth century, two competing doctrines had emerged. Prosecutors, on the one hand, usually adopted a position known as the “Mansfield doctrine” after its major proponent, Chief Justice Lord Mansfield. According to advocates of the Mansfield doctrine, deciding cases of seditious libel required resolving three questions: first, whether or not the defendant had published a seditiously libelous publication; second, whether that seditiously libelous publication literally meant what the prosecution alleged it to mean; and third, whether the publication was in fact seditiously libelous and therefore criminal. The first two questions were thought to concern matters of fact—specifically, the facts of publication and meaning—while the third question concerned a matter of law—whether the meaning of what had been published made its publication a crime. According to proponents of the Mansfield doctrine, because juries were constitutionally limited to deciding matters of fact while judges alone were granted the right to determine matters of law, only the first two

questions—essentially, whether a libel had been *published*—were awarded to the jury, while the question of crime—whether a *libel* had been published—was reserved to the judge and the courts. The criminality of a publication, in turn, was understood not in terms of the “intention” of its author or printer to act criminally but rather its “tendency”—understood as the “likely consequences of an act” (Barrell 353)—to incite seditious activity.⁵ Defenders, meanwhile, tended to adopt a rival doctrine, promulgated throughout the period by the barrister Thomas Erskine. In particular, Erskine disputed the Mansfield doctrine’s definition of seditious criminality in terms of tendency: whereas proponents of the Mansfield doctrine “regarded the act, not the intention, as the crime, and the intention as an inference of law from the fact that the act had been committed” (Barrell 352), Erskine contended that “the question of guilt or innocence in any criminal trial depends not simply on whether or not a defendant performed the act alleged to be criminal, but also on the intent with which the act was committed” (Barrell 347). Erskine’s redefinition of the crime of seditious libel was meant to justify important procedural changes. For once the matter of fact of psychological intention was admitted as potential evidence of criminal wrongdoing, the question of criminal wrongdoing became a matter for the jury to decide. By arguing both that intention rather than tendency determined criminality in cases of seditious libel and that intention was a matter of fact to be determined by the jury, Erskine sought to overturn a key tenet of the

⁵ The barrister John Bowles, whose *Considerations on the Respective Rights of Judges and Juries* provided the clearest and most compelling late eighteenth-century formulation of the Mansfield doctrine, explains that “the offence in the eye of the law does not consist in the intent of the Libeller, but in the tendency of the publication, and the effect it is calculated to have on the minds of its readers” (*Considerations* 39).

Mansfield doctrine: that fact and law were distinct in seditious libel cases and therefore that the jury was constitutionally prohibited from deciding the matter of law in such cases. By defending the right of the jury to give a general verdict in cases of seditious libel, Erskine sought to shift power from judges to juries, thereby strengthening the chances of his defendants.

Thus, by the early 1790s, arguments about seditious libel often revolved around the question of whether intention or tendency constituted the crime, with defenders and opponents of the government favoring the former definition and prosecutors and supporters of the Crown generally adopting the latter definition. The hegemony of the Mansfield doctrine was evident in the period's most significant seditious libel trial: that of Thomas Paine for the publication of *Rights of Man* Part 2. Issued in February 1792, Part 2 was unique in that the comprehensive social agenda it presented was embodied in the inexpensive form of a sixpence octavo pamphlet and given a huge print run, thereby providing it with a massive audience (St. Clair 623). According to the Crown, the text's wide circulation proved the dangerous tendency of its anti-monarchism and therefore its seditious character. As Attorney General MacDonald explained, the problem with the pamphlet was that it informed "the lower" as well as the "better informed classes of ten or twelve millions of people" that "there is nothing binding on their conduct" (9). Part 1 of *Rights of Man* had evaded prosecution because "[r]eprehensible as [it] was, extremely so in my opinion, yet it was ushered into the world under circumstances that led me to conceive that it would be confined to the judicious reader, and when confined to the judicious reader, it appeared to me that such a man would refute as he went along" (*Trial*

47). The circumstances of Part 2's publication, however, were significantly different:

Gentlemen, when I found that another publication was ushered into the world still more reprehensible than the former, that in all shapes, in all sizes, with an industry incredible; it was either totally or partially thrust into the hands of all person in this country, of subjects of every description; when I found that even children's sweet-meats were wrapped up with parts of this, and delivered into their hands; in the hope that they would read it; when all industry was used, such as I describe to you, in order to obtrude and force this upon that part of the public whose minds cannot be supposed to be conversant with subjects of this sort, and who cannot therefore correct as they go along, I thought it behoved me upon the earliest occasion ... to put a charge upon record against its author. (*Trial 47*)

Whether or not Paine's intention was "to enlighten others with what his own reasons and conscience ... have dictated to him as truth," the text had been made available to an audience of readers who, unlike the "judicious reader" capable of refuting "as he went along," were possessed of uneducated minds not "conversant with subjects of this sort, and who cannot therefore correct as they go along." Moreover, this audience was dangerously disaffected. As MacDonald explained elsewhere, the book's arguments were addressed "to the ignorant, to the credulous, to the desperate; to the desperate all government is irksome, nothing can be so palatable to their ears as the comfortable doctrine that there is neither law nor government amongst us" (*Trial 50*). Because the pamphlet reached such audiences, *Rights of Man* Part 2 tended to inflame popular discontent and therefore required prosecution as a seditious libel. In the end, a packed jury sided with the prosecution, convicting Paine after almost no deliberation. Due to its publicity, the trial succeeded in further cementing the government's position on the crime and ensuring that subsequent prosecutions focused especially on questions of audience.⁶

⁶ Supporters of the crown repeatedly construed seditious tendency in terms of audience during the 1790s. In the trial of Archibald Rowan, for example, the judge confessed to the jury of the publication in

In determining a publication's audience, Crown prosecutors sought ultimately to identify its relationship to the carefully circumscribed social space of the late eighteenth-century bourgeois public sphere. Because a publication's seditious tendency was a function of its power to address an inflammable audience of the lower orders rather than a speculative, middle-class readership, seditious publications were understood as existing outside of the bourgeois public sphere. As Paul Keen has shown, only those "speculative" publications "designed to participate in an exchange of ideas" thought to be the exclusive

question that "I am unable to read it without being of opinion that the tendency of this paper is to excite to arms the persons to whom it was addressed, and for the purpose of making alterations in the government of this kingdom . . . If you believe that the general tendency of it was to excite tumult in the country, and to call to arms any description of men, no doubt can be entertained, that it is libelous" (*Report of the trial of Archibald Hamilton Rowan, Esq.* 86). In the trial of James Montgomery, the prosecution explained the jury's task as that of determining whether Montgomery's words "were a most gross and palpable libel, because they tended to render the people discontented with his Majesty's government, with the war, and the conduct of it" (*The Trial of James Montgomery for a libel on the war* 7). In concluding his statement during the trial of Daniel Eaton for selling Part 2 of *Rights of Man*, the prosecutor explained to the jury that "I leave it to you, whether this book is the work of a Philosopher, meant to instruct mankind, and written in such language as is calculated for persons of that description; or whether it is adapted to the lowest orders of the people—people who either cannot, from their education or situation in life, be supposed to understand the subject on which he writes; and whether, from those passages, which are selected here, and others, you will not find it rather adapted to the persons than the good sense of mankind, to induce them to be dissatisfied with the Government under which they live, and look for something more satisfactory than they find" (*The proceedings, on the trial of Daniel Isaac Eaton* 41). To the prosecution, the real problem with Eaton's behavior was that he had sought to circulate Paine's work among the "lowest orders" rather than addressing it to the "Philosophers" capable of reasoning through it. Likewise, in the 1795 trial of Henry Redhead Yorke, Joseph Gales and Richard Davison, the prosecution argued for convictions on the basis of the fact that the defendants had appealed to the lower orders, and that "when people have not the leisure to consider the subject, [such action as Yorke's] may carry the unwary to measures very dangerous to the public quiet, which if they had never been so acted upon, they would never have thought of" (ctd. in Lobban 323). The judge in the case agreed, stating that "the question will only be, whether those notions have been improperly and unreasonably uttered . . . not whether the notions themselves are improper" (ctd. in Lobban 323). Even Erskine himself occasionally advanced this argument. In prosecuting Paine's *Age of Reason* a few years after his defense of *Rights of Man* Part 2, he argued that "[a]n intellectual book, however, erroneous, addressed to the intellectual world upon so profound and complicated a subject, can never work the mischief which the Indictment was calculated to repress. —Such works will only incite the minds of men enlightened by study, to a closer investigation of a subject well worthy of their deepest and continued contemplation. —The powers of the mind are given for human improvement in the progress of human existence . . . But this book has no such object, and no such capacity:—it presents nor arguments to the wise and enlightened; on the contrary, it treats the faith and opinions of the wisest with the most shocking contempt, and stirs up men, without the advantages of learning, or sober thinking, to a total disbelief of every thing hitherto held sacred; and consequently to a rejection of all the laws and ordinances of the state, which stand only upon the assumption of their truth" (*Mr. Erskine's Speech* 12). To a certain extent, this was likely due to the power it gave judges.

prerogative of the educated classes were perceived as belonging to the public sphere during the 1790s (Keen 55). On the other hand, publications that were perceived as aiming to “inflare” their readers into political action rather than to encourage philosophical reflection were thought to lie outside this sphere and therefore require governmental regulation. Whether a publication was understood as speculative or inflammatory was determined by a number of factors: “[l]earned works whose composition required a considerable amount of time, and which targeted a selective audience through both their price and their writing style, and which were not therefore ‘liable to excite popular commotions’, were to be distinguished from those dangerous pamphlets, essays, and periodical publications that were ‘written in a short time ... circulated at a moderate expense, and [that had] an immediate action upon the public mind’ (Keen 55). Thus, while the content of a publication was relevant to its status as speculative or inflammatory, formal factors—especially those bearing on the determination of audience—were thought especially to fix its relationship to the public sphere. Publications whose formal characteristics indicated a tendency to appeal to “those rational individuals ... capable of exchanging ideas” qualified as speculative works belonging to the bourgeois public sphere, while publications whose formal characteristics indicated a tendency to appeal to the supposedly uneducated audiences of the lower orders fell outside of this sphere and were therefore seen as potentially seditious.

As the Paine trial proved, foremost among those formal characteristics seen as fixing a publication’s relationship to the public sphere was its format. Shoddily printed and cheaply priced small-format publications—penny pamphlets, chapbooks, most

handbills, and many newspapers—fell outside the public sphere insofar as they were perceived as appealing to the inflammable lower orders. As such, these small-format publications were seen by the government as especially capable of expressing seditious tendencies. Explaining that *Rights of Man* Part 1 had avoided prosecution because “it was ushered into the world under circumstances that led me to conceive that it would be confined to the judicious reader,” MacDonald explained that it was Part 2’s appearance “in all shapes, in all sizes” that had forced him to prosecute. Likewise, when Thomas Cooper sought to publish his *Reply* to an attack from Edmund Burke, “Cooper received a note from Sir John Scott, attorney-general, informing him that, although there was no exception to be taken to his pamphlet when in the hands of the upper classes, yet the government would not allow it to appear at a price which would insure its circulation among the people” (ctd. in Braithwaite 147). Non-governmental parties agreed with this line. Writing of the pamphlet *Revealed Knowledge*, for example, the *Gentleman’s Magazine* attacked its prophet-author Richard Brothers not only for having failed to write “in a more respectable manner” but also for having published a pamphlet “written for the understanding, and adapted to the purchase of the lower class” (ctd. in Keen 56). Throughout the 1790s, then, the material properties of inexpensive, small-format publications were believed to direct them away from the bourgeois public sphere and towards the lower orders, making them *ipso facto* suspicious.

On the other hand, luxurious and expensive large-format publications like the quarto book and quarto pamphlet were situated within the public sphere insofar as they were seen as addressing the “judicious readers” and “Philosophers” constituting middle-

and upper-class readerships. Consequently, these publications were thought to be incapable of expressing seditious tendencies and were therefore secure from prosecution. The reception of William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* exemplified this pattern. For all its anti-monarchical radicalism, Godwin's book resisted prosecution primarily because its format and price rendered it inaccessible to most readers: published as a massive quarto book and sold for the magnificently high price of £1 16s., *Enquiry* was safely removed from the hands of the lower orders. Evidence suggests that Godwin himself assumed that the book's format would render it safe. In the "Preface" to *Enquiry*, for example, he voiced his skepticism about the possibility that "a book is to fall under the arm of the civil power, which, beside the advantage of having for one of its express objects the dissuading from all tumult and violence, is by *its very nature* an appeal to men of study and reflexion" (xii) [italics added].⁷ Certainly, Godwin's contemporaries understood the power of the book's format to forestall prosecution. Writing of *Enquiry*'s prohibitively expensive and physically encumbering form, the *British Critic* admitted that

⁷ Godwin himself understood the English reading public in terms of those two classes distinguished by representatives of the Pitt Ministry, claiming on the one hand that "[s]ociety, as it presently exists in the world, will long be divided into two classes, those who have leisure for study, and those whose importunate necessities perpetually urge them to temporary industry" (*Enquiry* 206), and on the other that "[a] doctrine opposite to the maxims of the existing government may be dangerous in the hands of agitators, but it cannot produce very fatal consequences in the hands of philosophers" (*Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's Bills* 59). Indeed, not only did Godwin believe that the quarto format of *Enquiry* was likely to afford it protected status, but, as he suggested in the "Preface" to the book, he may even have sought to test the material determinants of the government's seditious libel law: "Every man, if we may believe the voice of rumour, is to be prosecuted who shall appeal to the people by the publication of any unconstitutional paper or pamphlet; and it is added, that men are to be prosecuted for any unguarded words that may be dropped in the warmth of conversation and debate. It is now to be tried whether, in addition to these alarming encroachments upon our liberty, a book is to fall under the arm of the civil power, which, beside the advantage of having for one of its express objects the dissuading from all tumult and violence, is by its very nature an appeal to men of study and reflexion. It is to be tried whether a project is formed for suppressing the activity of mind, and putting an end to the disquisitions of science" (xi-xii).

“[s]ecure in these great pledges of obscurity, full many a copy have we seen with its title page exposed in a window, with its leaves uncut, till flies and dust had defaced its open front, and many an one perhaps, shall we see descending from the flies above to those of subterranean London, guiltless of having seduced one wavering mind, or excited even a wish to prosecute, much less to persecute, the author” (1: 56).⁸ Indeed, if Godwin is to be trusted, *Enquiry*'s price did ultimately prevent its prosecution, for “[i]n later years Godwin liked to tell the story that William Pitt personally advised the Council that ‘a three guinea book could never do much harm among those who had not three shillings to spare’” (St. Clair 85).

But more than anecdotal remark, quantitative evidence establishes the relationship between bibliographic format and the crime of seditious libel during the 1790s. For of the nearly 200 prosecutions for seditious libel undertaken during the decade, none of those for which detailed records exist targeted a quarto publication. Instead, prosecutions invariably focused on those cheap, small-format publications whose material forms made them accessible to mass audiences.⁹ Prosecutions of cheap newspapers were very common, for example.¹⁰ Likewise, handbills and placards were often targeted by the Pitt

⁸ See also, e.g., Canning's “Translations of a Letter”: “[t]here was Beddoes, and Bruin, and Godwin, whose trust is, / He may part with his work on Political Justice / To some Imam or Bonze, or Judaical Rabbin; / So with huge quarto volumes he piles up the cabin” (12-15). The work's difficulty was also seen as an impediment to popular dissemination. In *Various Thoughts on Politics, Morality, and Literature*, William Burdon wrote that “Mr Godwin's is not a noisy, tumultuous address to the passions of men, calculated to set the world in an uproar, but a calm, rational system, intended to develop and improve the judgement, and therefore slow in its operation, and silent in its effects: it is addressed to the individual in his closet, and not to the multitude in camps, and courts, and crowds” (35).

⁹ Emsley's appendices in “An Aspect of Pitt's Terror” provide comprehensive lists of prosecutions undertaken in the quarter sessions and assizes between 1793 and 1801.

¹⁰ John Bell was convicted for printing a libel on foot guards in his newspaper the *Oracle* in July of 1792 (Timperley, *Dictionary of Printers and Printing* 776); Samson Perry was found guilty of publishing a

Ministry and provincial magistrates.¹¹ Inexpensive, small-format octavo pamphlets—especially works like Paine’s *Rights of Man Part 2* and his *Address to the Addressers*, and Charles Pigott’s *The Jockey Club*—were very heavily prosecuted.¹² Even unpublished writings were occasionally prosecuted, as Alexander White found in July of 1793 when he was convicted for writing a libel on a paper seized by a town sergeant in Newcastle-on-Tyne. More rarely, a particular publication was used to provide a pretext for the prosecution of some figure for some other publication—or group of publications—whose material characteristics in normal circumstances precluded their prosecution, as when

libel on the House of Commons in his newspaper the *Argus* in December of the same year (*DPP* 776); though acquitted, John Lambert was tried for publishing “An Address of the Society of Political Information” in his *Morning Chronicle*; and for publishing a libel on a colonel in his paper the *Sheffield Iris*, James Montgomery was sentenced to three months in prison and given a £20 fine in the West Riding Quarter Sessions in 1794.

¹¹ In January of 1793, for example, a bill-poster by the name of Carter was convicted and sentenced to six months in prison and sureties for posting an “Address from the London Corresponding Society in Great Britain” (*DPP* 777); James Tytler, a member of the Friends of the People and owner of *The Historical Register*, was convicted for posting a seditious placard in Edinburgh in January of 1793 (*DPP* 775); and in the Lent Assizes of 1794, Charles Handley was convicted for posting a libelous handbill (*Barrell* 545).

¹² *Rights of Man Part 2* was probably the octavo pamphlet most commonly targeted. In the Lent Assizes in Leicester in 1793, Richard Philips, owner of the *Leicester Herald*, was convicted for selling Paine’s pamphlet and sentenced to 18 months in prison (*DPP* 771; Emsley 180). Daniel Isaac Eaton was prosecuted at the Old Bailey for publishing Part 2 in June of 1793. In November 1793, an entire family of London booksellers was tried and convicted for selling three copies of Paine’s pamphlet (*DPP* 781). Likewise, octavo pamphlet editions of Paine’s *Address to the Addressers* were targeted by prosecutors. During the Lent Assizes in Nottingham in 1793, Daniel Holt, owner of the *Newark Herald*, was convicted and sentenced to 4 years and £100 and sureties for selling two octavo pamphlets—Paine’s *Address to the Addressers* and an *Address to the Tradesmen, Mechanics and other Inhabitants of Newcastle on the Subject of Parliamentary Reform* (Emsley 180). In the Warwickshire Summer Assizes, William Belcher and Richard Peart were both convicted of selling Paine’s *Address* pamphlet and both sentenced to three months and sureties (Emsley 180). In February of 1793, the bookseller William Holland was convicted and sentenced to a year in prison and a fine of £100 and sureties for selling Paine’s *Address*. Octavo pamphlet editions of Charles Pigott’s *The Jockey Club* were also prosecuted heavily. In May of 1793, H. D. Symonds and J. Ridgeway were convicted for selling Pigott’s pamphlet, as well as pamphlet editions of Paine’s *Rights of Man Part 2* and his *Address* (*DPP* 778). Edward Henry Liff’s octavo pamphlet *Summary of the Duties of Citizenship* was targeted by prosecutors later on in the decade: first John Burks, in November of 1796, and then John Smith, in February of 1796, were tried and convicted for selling pamphlet versions of Liff’s text.

Joseph Johnson, publisher of the anti-governmental but politely middle-class journal the *Analytic Review*, as well as many of the best-known political prose pamphlets of the 1790s, was tried and convicted for selling Wakefield's *Reply*. Without exception, however, actual prosecutions for seditious libel focused exclusively on cheap, small-format publications and never on quarto books or pamphlets.¹³

Anecdotal remark and documentary evidence thus show that the quarto format was a legally protected bibliographic format during the 1790s. Because its material properties limited the distribution of its texts to those wealthier and educated readers deemed capable of speculative thinking, the quarto publication was perceived as occupying a bourgeois public sphere whose audience was incapable of being incited to seditious activity. Indeed, insofar as “the virtual space of the public sphere ... remained dependent on a growing network of lending libraries, reading rooms, reading societies, coffee houses, [and] debating societies ... ” (Keen 37), the quarto format should be understood as part of the physical infrastructure constituting the British bourgeois public sphere in the 1790s. As a component of this infrastructure, the quarto offered politically oriented authors and publishers a protected space, free from legal regulation and potential

¹³ It should be noted that most of those publications prosecuted for seditious libel during the 1790s were politically oriented prose tracts or handbills. Yet political verse publications—especially those printing popular forms like the ballad—were also targeted by the Pitt Ministry and its provincial representatives. In 1795, for example, James Montgomery was tried in Doncaster for publishing a ballad song, probably on broadsheet, in praise of revolutionary France (*The Trial of James Montgomery*). Likewise, Thomas Lloyd and John Thacker Saxton were prosecuted for writing and publishing a seditious ballad in Liverpool (Emsley 161). But, especially in subsequent decades, other verse forms were also prosecuted. During the Regency period, Southey's *Wat Tyler*, Shelley's *Queen Mab*, Byron's *Don Juan*, and Hone's *Political House* were all deemed libelous. Even Goldsmith's “The Deserted Village” could be found libelous, as the editors of the *Carlisle Journal* found out when in 1821 they were tried and convicted for using lines from the poem to attack the Marquis of Queensbury (*Black Dwarf* 11.VI: 357-68). Hence, while political prose pamphlets and handbills were more frequently prosecuted, verse libels were also targeted by governmental authorities. As a genre, poetry was thus by no means immune to prosecution.

prosecution for seditious libel, in which to issue provocative political content.

Understandably, then, many of the period's publishers and writers—especially those whose radical politics put them at odds with the Pitt Ministry—sought to use the quarto to provide themselves with legal security when issuing potentially inflammatory texts. Such a strategy was adopted by Joseph Johnson, whose quarto pamphlets protected their poetic contents from prosecution and helped him maintain a legally beneficial reputation for respectability.

Joseph Johnson and the Quarto Poetry Pamphlet

When Paine was tried *in absentia* for seditious libel in December of 1792, MacDonald brought forth as evidence intended to prove the fact of publication a letter addressed from Paine to the publisher Jeremiah Jordan. Dated February 16, 1792, the letter informed Jordan that, in the case of any questions arising about the authorship of *Rights of Man* Part 2, he should “send a line for me undercover to Mr. Johnson, St. Paul’s Churchyard, who will forward it to me and answer personally for the work” (*Trial* 29-30). Yet even while such evidence made clear that “Paine depended on Johnson, not Jordan, to handle his business affairs while he was exiled in France” (Tyson 155), Johnson succeeded in escaping from the immediate fray of the trial—a considerable feat, given how deeply Johnson had in fact been involved in the production of the pamphlet. As a trusted friend and supporter of Paine, Johnson had lent the author money (probably for printing costs), helped to sell Paine’s pamphlet, and even advised Paine to flee London when its publication put him in danger (Braithwaite 116). At the same time, Johnson’s involvement in the production of *Rights of Man* Part 2 was hardly surprising, given that

he had also been a major force behind Part 1, having gone so far as to print and begin selling the work before backing out at the last moment.¹⁴ Yet even with such direct, albeit behind-the-scenes, involvement in the printing and distribution of the period's most notoriously seditious publication, Johnson managed to escape prosecution for most of the decade. In this achievement, Johnson was aided by shrewd commercial calculations as well as cautious legal maneuvering. For one thing, by publishing dangerously anti-monarchical poems in the form of the quarto pamphlet, Johnson issued his political poems in a material form that precluded them from possessing any seditious tendencies, thereby protecting his authors and himself from prosecution. More generally, Johnson also relied on his reputation as a respectable publisher with a middle-class audience to avoid prosecution during the 1790s. This reputation, in turn, was the direct (though not unique) result of his formatting and pricing decisions.¹⁵

¹⁴ As Braithwaite writes, “[i]f newspaper reports are to be believed, four hours after [Part 1] went on sale and around a hundred copies had been sold, all evidence of the work was removed from [Johnson's] shelves and responsibility for the unbound error-strewn sheets handed over to another publisher, Jeremiah Jordan on Fleet Street, with whom Paine had hastily managed to negotiate” (106). Theophilus Lindsey suggests that Johnson probably backed out after initially agreeing to print the pamphlet for fear of its radicalism, for it was “so intirely republican ... that Mr Johnson, for whom it is printed, is advised not to sell it” (ctd. in Braithwaite 106). In consequence, even while Johnson was recognized by several reviewers as the printer of Part I, Jordan ultimately gained a reputation as Paine's printer (see, e.g., Braithwaite 110). But even before giving up on the book, Johnson had sought to protect himself in the event of its sale, for “Paine initially had wanted a cheap edition but claimed he was advised that it would be more expedient to let the work come out first in 'the modern stile'. Johnson's edition was expensively printed and priced at half-a-crown (2s. 6d) which ... inevitably 'precluded the generality of people from purchasing'” (Braithwaite 110). In all likelihood, Jordan was only convinced to take over responsibility for the publication of Part 1 because he expected to profit from the sale of such a highly priced pamphlet (Tyson 124). Hence, though Johnson had been deeply involved in the production and distribution of period's most radically seditious book, he still managed to maintain a safe enough distance to protect his reputation as a publisher.

¹⁵ Regarding the notion of “respectable radicalism,” this chapter follows Saree Makdisi, who identifies “a strand of radicalism that sought to rise above the fray and to assert its own legitimacy, partly by making its own claims on 'respectable' political discourse, partly by denying, excluding, and disassociating itself from other forms and subcultures of radicalism (which it regarded as inarticulate, unrespectable, unenlightened, and hence illegitimate), and partly by working to assimilate as many grievances as

Establishing such an identity was essential for a man with a life-long reputation as a moderately anti-governmental publisher. Though his first publications in the 1760s had been “well-meaning and, for the most part, politically uncontentious sermons and divinity tracts, mostly by Protestant dissenting ministers” (Braithwaite 4), Johnson’s alignment with the movement for religious reform—and especially the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, which together legally barred dissenters from holding civil, military or crown offices—involved him in the great political battles of the day and brought him into contact with the period’s most vocal dissenters. Among these men was Joseph Priestley, whose publisher Johnson became in the 1770s and whose increasingly polemical publications both radicalized the Rational Dissent movement and fixed Johnson’s reputation as the publisher of “Gunpowder Joe” in the public mind during the 1780s (Braithwaite 60; 69). During the same period, Johnson’s output began to include greater numbers of overtly political tracts dedicated to causes like abolitionism, thus establishing

possible into its agenda for reform, rearticulating them when necessary—and thereby exercising, in effect, a form of hegemony” (*Impossible History* 21-2). Designating this tendency “liberal-radical” (22), Makdisi identifies it as primarily a political orientation, committed philosophically to the theory of possessive individualism and practically to two basic political demands: for “universal (male) suffrage and for annual parliaments” (22). Makdisi distinguishes liberal-radicals from “more radical antinomians and communists” (23), whose orientation was more generally economic and who sought “popular sovereignty and the abolition of private property” (23) but adhered to a number of different ideological positions (from antinomianism to forms of proto-communism). Yet, as Makdisi explains, the distinction between the “hegemonic liberal-radical tendency”—that is, what this chapter calls the “respectable radicalism” of the Johnson circle—and other strains of radicalism also “expresses a class valence” (26): “even when articulated by the artisans and small tradesmen who constituted the core of 1790s radicalism, this distinction expresses the difference between, on the one hand, an emergent bourgeois notion of political rights and private property that was still in the process of consolidation and, on the other, certain forms of sovereignty and power that, rightly or wrongly, would sometimes be associated with the disenfranchised and the ‘working class’” (26). In precise terms, “liberal-radicalism” or “respectable radicalism” was the ideology of “‘the respectable’, ‘the reflecting part of society’, ‘men of property’, ‘the polite’, and ‘persons of rank’” (27), while non-hegemonic radicalisms were associated with “‘the ‘numerous class’, ‘the uneducated’, ‘the unlettered’, ‘the people’, the ‘ordinary vulgar’, ‘the lower class’, ‘the poor’, and of course ‘the swinish multitude’” (27). In Makdisi’s terms, the argument of this chapter is that the quarto emblemized that hegemonic liberal-radicalism associated with both the Johnson circle and “the reflecting part of society” to which its texts were addressed.

even more strongly his reputation as a publisher with a reformist political agenda (Braithwaite 77). More than any other event, though, the French Revolution and the ensuing pamphlet war worked to shape Johnson's reputation as a radical publisher. In the wake of repeated failures to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, rational dissenters looked to revolutionary France to renew their hopes of achieving religious reform, and Johnson's shop in particular became "the focus for a dissenting campaign which was now turning to France explicitly to register its own grievances" (Braithwaite 101). This ideological reconfiguration was identified and attacked by Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Writing in direct response to a sermon delivered by leading dissenter Richard Price and attacking the "literary cabal" of which Price was supposedly a member, Burke succeeded in establishing "the notion of the dissenters as a definite party, intent on promoting levelling 'French' principles and with 'contention and power much more than Piety for its object'" (Braithwaite 102). Understandably, most of the responses to Burke were written by dissenters and "roughly a quarter of them were sold or published by their chief bookseller in London, Joseph Johnson, whose informal literary circle may well have qualified as another of Burke's 'petty cabals'" (Braithwaite 102). In this way, the Revolution controversy of the early 1790s succeeded in creating a reputation for Johnson as a radical—even potentially Jacobinical—publisher.

Yet Johnson's deepening associations with Jacobinism were tempered by a long-standing reputation as a polite, middle-class publisher that had been decades in the making. Though always committed to religious reform, Johnson's early alignment with Rational Dissent—and especially his personal commitment to "a genteel form of

Unitarianism”—had assured him a polite reading audience (Braithwaite 28). Many of his set of authors—which included, over the years, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, John Aikin, Erasmus Darwin, and Thomas Malthus—were associated with “the cradle of Unitarianism” and respectable dissent, Warrington Academy. Meanwhile, a specialization in medical and scientific books had provided him with an additional foothold among educated readerships (Braithwaite 61). Likewise, his willingness “to publish hazardously pro-Catholic, deist, and even atheistical views ... as well as those of traditional orthodox Calvinists,” and his publishing relationships with conservatives like Sarah Trimmer, William Cowper, and, later, James Hurdis, had earned for him a reputation as an exceptionally open-minded and unbiased bookseller whose commitment to the ideal of open debate was indicated by the range of ideologies represented in his catalogue (Braithwaite 29; 70; 139; Chard, “Bookseller” 150). Even the location of his shop—in the heart of London’s publishing and book-selling establishment at St. Paul’s Churchyard—strengthened his status as a polite bookseller. As Braithwaite observes, “the image of a man ‘generous, candid, and liberal’ in his dealings and outlook is one repeatedly conjured up by contemporary reminiscences and reports, where the one adjective that seems to cling to the bookseller above all is not ‘radical’ ... so much as ‘respectable’” (xiii; see also Tyson 135). By the early 1790s, Johnson had succeeded in cultivating a middle-class readership and a reputation as a respectable bookseller.

In the wake of the Revolution and the pamphlet war inspired by it, Johnson thus found himself in a tenuous position, with his moderately radical political commitments threatening to tarnish his reputation as a respectable bookseller and to endanger his trade.

As a result, Johnson sought to use his publications, friendships and political activities to brand himself as a bookseller whose work was situated firmly within the bourgeois public sphere and was therefore free of seditious tendencies. On the one hand, Johnson's role as the publisher of Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Paine, Joel Barlow and Joseph Priestley meant that his imprint was associated with many of the period's most notably "Jacobinical" political tracts.¹⁶ A number of these works were "potentially seditious" (Tyson 127), and while Johnson remained untouched by the law, at least in the early 1790s, "[w]ith his radical publications, [he] was, in fact, earning a measure of notoriety, some of it—among conservatives—negative" (Tyson 128). Meanwhile, Johnson's *Analytical Review* continued to attack the Pitt Ministry whenever possible (Tyson 154). On the other hand, Johnson's political publications tended to align him only with those radical projects that, like Godwin's anarchic atheism, Barlow's republicanism, and Priestley's deism, endorsed a polite species of speculative, Enlightenment-style rationalism that situated their work within the bourgeois public sphere. In particular,

¹⁶ Johnson's reputation for radicalism was most strongly supported by his publishing projects. Chard remarks that "[i]f literature was a major part of Johnson's trade in the 1790s, political reform was his obsession. The 118 political works of the decade (not counting dozens of works of a political bent that would be classified under such categories as literature, economics, or history) constitute 57% of all Johnson's political publications over the five decades of his career" (Chard "1790s" 97). He was deeply involved in the Revolution controversy: in addition to his role in printing Paine's *Rights of Man* Parts 1 and 2, he published Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, a book considered "daring because it was issued in octavo at the very low price of one shilling six pence" (Tyson 126), as well as Priestley's *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, Christie's *Letters on the Revolution of France*, Francis Stone's *Examination of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke's Reflections*, and Lofft's *Remarks on the Letter of Mr. Burke* (Tyson 122). Meanwhile, Johnson published "a number of works supporting Priestley after the Birmingham riots destroyed his laboratory" (Chard, "1790s," 95). Likewise, he published in February of 1792 Barlow's potentially seditious *Advice to the Privileged Orders*. Not all of those radical works issued by Johnson were in prose, as indicated by his publication of James Montgomery's *Prison Amusements*, a "potentially dangerous publication" in verse (Chard "1790s" 96). Finally, Johnson's reputation for radicalism was virtually assured after his conviction for the publication of Wakefield's *Reply*.

Johnson maintained his involvement with rational dissent, and especially the cause of Unitarianism, publishing works dealing “with the usual causes of a dissenting reformer in the 1790s: repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, slave-trade legislation, the legitimacy of the French Revolution, and the anti-war cause” (Chard, “1790s,” 97).¹⁷ And while many of Johnson’s social connections were involved in radical politics, they tended to be established writers, clerks, scientists, professors and painters.¹⁸ Finally, though Johnson’s political activities put him at the center of radical activity in the period, in most cases they aligned him with its more cautious expressions.¹⁹ Consequently, even though, as the

¹⁷ Even so, “in the eyes of Burke, Pitt, and later George III, Unitarianism was tantamount to treason [and] [t]his official suspicion was borne out by the fact that a very large number of so-called 'Jacobins' were also Unitarians or anti-Trinitarian Dissenters” (Tyson 154). At the same time, Johnson also continued to publish works across the ideological spectrum. Though Johnson published and supported Paine, Barlow and Priestley, he also issued reactionary sermons like *The Necessity and Expediency of an Inequality of Condition Among Mankind* in 1793 and *The Doctrine of Equality of Rank and Condition Examined and Supported* in 1795. Likewise, “between 1793 and 1798 he sold several poetic and topographical works by another fiercely conservative Anglican cleric,” Richard Polwhele (Braithwaite 141).

¹⁸ As the hub of the “Johnson circle,” Johnson’s shop had become a “meeting place for radicals” by 1791 (Tyson 121) and Johnson himself had become close to a number of his political authors. Tyson remarks that “[t]he full list of people who frequently called on Johnson will never be known” but included “Paine, Wakefield, Horne Tooke, Vaughan, Capel Lofft, and Priestley,” as well as “John Aikin, George Anderson, Anna Barbauld, Thomas Belsham, Joel Barlow, John Bonnycastle, Thomas Christie, Thomas Cooper, Erasmus Darwin, John Disney, George Dyer, R. L. Edgeworth, Thomas Erskine, John Frost, Henry Fuseli, George Fordyce, William Friend, Alexander Geddes, William Godwin, George Gregory, Mary Hays, James Hurdis ... Thomas Holcroft, John Hewlett, Thomas Henry, Theophilus Lindsey, John Newton ... Richard Price, Samuel Parr, Anthony Robinson, Samuel Heywood, James Foart Simmons, the Wedgewoods ... George Walker, and Mary Wollstonecraft” (121). Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge also had variously close relationships with Johnson, as is discussed below. In particular, Johnson offered unwavering support to Paine, printing his work, conducting his business while he was in exile, hiding him in his home when he was in danger, saving him from arrest for debt, and once even raising bail for him (Werkmeister 356, ctd. by Chard 95; Tyson 128).

¹⁹ For example, though Johnson was “active in ... the Society for Constitutional Information,” his attendance being “recorded by 'every newspaper' in London” (Chard, “1790s,” 95), and “his name, together with those of Paine, Barlow, Priestley, Horne Tooke and Christie [featuring] on a 'Collection List' for the SCI ... to buy boots for the French army” (Braithwaite 124), the SCI was relatively moderate and middle-class in composition when compared to other organizations, like the LCS. Likewise, Johnson was an early supporter of events in France, having been “so intrigued by the Revolution ... that he seriously considered going [to France] in 1792 with Fuseli and Wollstonecraft ...” (Chard “1790s” 97, citing Antal 105). Even so, in the end Johnson refrained from visiting the country.

decade progressed, “Johnson had grown increasingly conspicuous as a radical publisher” (Tyson 145), to the point of losing many of his more conservative acquaintances (Braithwaite 143) and even alienating some formerly sympathetic friends, he still managed to maintain both his reputation as a middle-class publisher of radical works and his associations “with the liberal but still respectable and predominately intellectual wing of ‘rational dissent’ ... despite his close association with several of France’s leading English and American sympathizers” (Braithwaite 153).²⁰

Above all, Johnson’s success in maintaining a reputation for respectability was a result of his ability to appeal consistently to the right audiences. To a degree, Johnson managed this through his choice of titles and authors, but he also carved out a readership for his business through pricing and formatting decisions. Even while he was recognized for the cheapness of many of his publications, Johnson also sought to appeal to “different audiences with his various imprints, and this entailed a wide range of quality and expense” (Chard, “Bookseller” 144), going so far as to publish “a good many luxury books, from such presses as Baskerville and Bensley” (Chard, “Bookseller” 144).²¹ Price

²⁰ Braithwaite cites the case of Sarah Trimmer, for example, who “increasingly appears to have entrusted her work to Longman and the Rivingtons” (143). Meanwhile, Chard notes that many of Johnson’s erstwhile political friends “considered leaving him, the Edgeworths for example, who thought that Johnson’s ‘radicalism’ was ‘a disadvantage’” (ctd. by Chard, “1790s” 97). By the late 1790s, Johnson’s reputation had suffered to the point that his “name (like Priestley’s) had probably already been added to the official list of ‘suspect persons’ ... and certainly there is the heavy suggestion from one of Priestley’s letters that, like several of his contemporaries within the trade ... he seriously considered going to America” (Braithwaite 143).

²¹ Chard observes that “the bulk of Johnson’s books” issued before the 1790s were octavos “printed without a printer’s mark and ... undistinguished in quality ... Many of his books were issued in extreme haste—responsive to some immediate controversy—and the result often is a work full of errata, cheaply printed and bound ... ” (Chard, “Bookseller” 144). Likewise, Johnson consistently published small-format, cheap editions of political tracts and was remarkably prolific as a publisher in this regard. He routinely published inexpensive versions of Priestley’s sermons (Braithwaite 96) and reprinted classics of liberal political philosophy like Milton’s *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes*, which he

in particular was a crucial determinant of readership. Though known as an economy publisher in the last years of his career, Johnson issued his pamphlets at a shilling, on average, and his books for four to six shillings during the early stages of his career (Braithwaite 19), allowing him to build a variety of readerships from early on. Even when his prices did drop in the 1790s—to an average of three shillings for books in 1791—the average price of his “more expensive form of publication when a choice was offered” remained high, at just over 12 shillings. Such variability indicates that rather than branding himself exclusively as a publisher of cheap pamphlets and political tracts, Johnson sought to appeal to a wide variety of readers from across the social spectrum.

In most cases, variability in pricing was linked to variability in format, with cheap octavo pamphlets selling for as little as a penny, and large-format books often for as much as a pound or more. But more than any other format (aside from the exceedingly rare folio, as I’ve been arguing), the quarto was associated most consistently with the high prices that destined a book for a middle- or an upper-class readership. Unlike almost every other so-called radical publisher of the late eighteenth century, Johnson issued a relatively large number of highly priced quartos: over the course of the 1790s, for

issued “in the form of a shilling pamphlet (inscribed to Richard Price)” (Braithwaite 97). Additionally, as Braithwaite notes, Johnson sold pamphlets against the Test and Corporation Acts (e.g., *An Appeal to Common Sense* and *Public Documents Declaratory of the Principles of the Protestant Dissenters*) for the low price of 6d. (Braithwaite 98) and even single sheets, like the *Test Against the Test*, for 2d. Whether or not Johnson was motivated by principle or profit, “[t]here can be no doubt, then, that Johnson consciously sacrificed fine printing for cheapness and popular consumption,” at least occasionally (Chard, “Bookseller” 144). Such practices have led several contemporary commentators to identify Johnson as a figure of seminal importance in the movement toward the production and circulation of cheaper books in the period. Chard argues, for example, that “Johnson and his generation helped lead the way into the nineteenth century by their advocacy of cheap books . . . His political idealism emerges here: publication for the people does not necessarily involve vulgarity and a compromise of all standards” (Chard, “Bookseller” 153; see also Braithwaite 41). Yet Johnson's publishing record contradicts such remarks, for as this chapter explains, Johnson also published a great number of luxurious quarto books and pamphlets.

example, he published 135 quarto imprints, or about 11% of his overall output of 1,242 publications. Such quartos ranged widely across subject matters and genres, from Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden* and William Cowper's *Poems*, to William Patterson's *A narrative of four journeys into the country of the Hottentots*, to James Bolton's *Filices Britannicæ; an history of the British proper ferns*, to Charles Hutton's *A Mathematical and Philosophical Dictionary*, Robert Willan's *Description and Treatment of Cutaneous Disease* (1798), and Maria Edgeworth's *Practical Education*.²² Johnson's quartos certainly varied widely in price and physical form, for though many of these imprints were books, a large percentage of them were also pamphlets.²³ But even in the form of the pamphlet, the quarto was a luxurious format, usually selling at a minimum price of one shilling sixpence during the 1790s for what was in fact a short publication with very little text. Sold at such relatively high costs and displaying its conspicuously

²² See, for example, Chard ("1790s," 100) for statistics regarding Johnson's format production during the decade.

²³ In 1793, for example, Johnson was involved in the production of 14 quarto publications: Wordsworth's *Descriptive sketches* and *An Evening Walk*; Geddes's *Address to the public, on the publication of the first volume of his new translation of the Bible*; Steele's *An essay upon gardening*; Alexander Monro's *Experiments on the nervous system*; Henry Gray Macnab's *Letters addressed to the Right Honourable William Pitt, Chancellor of the Exchequer of Great Britain; pointing out the inequality, oppression, and impolicy of the taxes on coal*; Smalpage's *The necessity and expediency of an inequality of condition among mankind: a sermon*; Nathan Drake's *Poems*; Samuel Clapham's *A sermon, preached at Knaresborough, for the benefit of the Sunday schools*; Robert Potter's *A sermon preached before the Right Worshipful the Mayor of Norwich, and the corporation, in the cathedral* [published in both London and Norwich]; Gresset's *Ver-vert* [two issues]; and William Lipscomb's *Beneficial effects of inoculation Verses on the beneficial effects of inoculation (ESTC)*. Of these imprints, however, only three (those of Steele, Macnab and Drake) were issued as books; the remaining eleven were all quarto pamphlets. To a certain extent, Johnson's tendency to issue quarto pamphlets mirrored a broader tendency. For while throughout his career "no contemporary bookseller came even close to Johnson in the fields in which he published" (Chard, "Bookseller" 149)—Chard notes that "[i]n all, Johnson published some 2,700 imprints in the forty-eight active years of his career, an average of fifty-six a year"—yet "[a]lmost half of [Johnson's publications] were properly not books but pamphlets—sermons, religious tracts, political leaflets, and the like; many others were reprints, so that he averaged at most about twenty to thirty new books a year" (Chard, "Bookseller" 150).

luxurious codes, Johnson's quarto pamphlets were directly addressed to upper- and middle-class audiences rather than the lower orders.

Among the subjects and genres constituting Johnson's output, new verse was most frequently issued in the form of the quarto pamphlet. In general, "literature was a major part of Johnson's trade" during the 1790s (Chard, "1790s" 97)—in fact, over the course of the decade, he issued 37% of the poetry of his entire career, or a total of 103 volumes (Chard, "1790s" 96). From reissues to first editions to translations, Johnson adopted a number of different formats—from duodecimo to quarto—for his poetry publications.²⁴ But though he tended to issue longer works of poetry in smaller formats like the octavo and duodecimo, a very high number of Johnson's poetry imprints—31 of a total of 103—were issued in quarto, meaning that while only 11% of Johnson's total number of imprints were issued in quarto during the 1790s, a much higher percentage—about 30%—of the decade's poetry imprints from him were quarto publications.²⁵ Of these quartos, some were issued as books but most were issued as pamphlets. On the one hand, Johnson tended to release established classics—from Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*, to an edition of *The Iliad and Odyssey*, to one of *The Aeneid*, to Nathan Drake's *Poems*—as

²⁴ These imprints ranged from reissues to first editions, with Johnson's annual output usually including a few reissues of Greek or Renaissance poetry (editions of Homer, Virgil, Tasso, and Shakespeare were consistently issued) and recent best-sellers from his list—Cowper's *Poems* and Darwin's *Botanic Garden*—as well as a number of first imprints of new works. Johnson also occasionally issued translations of foreign—especially German—authors, like Goethe (*Clavidgo* and *Iphigenia*), Schiller (*Fiesco*) and Gresset (*Ver-vert*).

²⁵ For example, Ogden's *The Revolution, an epic poem in twelve books* was issued in octavo, as were Aikin's *Poems* (136 pages), Cowper's two volume *Poems* (also issued in 12mo), Pointon's *Poems by Mrs. Pickering*, Milton's *Paradise Regained*, and Samuel Johnson's four volume *Lives of the English Poets*. Meanwhile, Johnson's four volume *Works of Virgil* was issued in duodecimo, as was Blair's *Night Thoughts*.

sumptuous quarto books.²⁶ On the other hand, the majority of Johnson's verse quarto publications during the 1790s —21 of a total of 31—were relatively short pamphlets of new poetry.²⁷ Such quarto pamphlet poems ranged widely in subject matter, including works of sentimentalism, satire, landscape and country house verse, and especially political poetry. They were also consistently short, usually printing either a single medium-length poem or a very short collection of poems making up fewer than fifty pages. In issuing these poems or collections as quarto pamphlets, Johnson followed conventional eighteenth-century practice.²⁸

This practice had significant consequences amidst the legal dangers of the 1790s.

²⁶ In fact, of these quarto books, half were editions of Darwin's poem.

²⁷ In 1790, for example, Johnson issued twelve works of poetry and five quartos: Darwin's *The Botanic Garden Part II* and Sayers's *Dramatic Sketches of the ancient northern mythology* (both books); and *Cheyt Sing*, by a "Young lady of fifteen," Geddes's *Epistola macaronica ad fratrem*, and William Bowles's *Verses on the benevolent institution of the Philanthropic Society* (all three pamphlets). In 1791, Johnson issued twelve works of poetry, and seven quartos: two editions of Darwin's complete *Botanic Garden* and one of *The Botanic Garden Part II*, and an edition of *The Iliad and Odyssey* (all books); and Bowles's *Elegy written at the Hot-Wells*, and two editions of Barbauld's *Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq.* (all in pamphlet). In 1792, he issued eleven works of poetry and four in quarto, and all in pamphlet: Geddes's *L'avocat du diable*; Syle's *That's your sort!*; George Dyer's *Poems*; and Barlow's *Conspiracy of Kings*. In 1793, Johnson issued eleven works of poetry, and four in quarto: Nathan Drake's *Poems* (as a book); and Gresset's *Ver-Vert* and Wordsworth's *Descriptive Sketches* and *An Evening Walk* (each in pamphlet). In 1794, there were ten works of poetry and two in quarto: an edition of Virgil's *The Aeneid* (as a book) and one of Geddes's *A Norfolk tale* (as a pamphlet). In 1795, Johnson published eleven works of poetry and three in quarto: another edition of *The Botanic Garden* (as a book); and Fawcett's *The art of war* and Hurdis's *A poem, written towards the close of the year 1794, Upon a Prospect of the Marriage of the Prince of Wales* (both in pamphlet). In 1796, Johnson issued twelve works of poetry and three in quarto: an edition of Juvenis's *The village muse* and one of Alexander Campbell's *Odes and miscellaneous poems* (as books); and John Fitchett's *Bewsey* (as a pamphlet). In 1797, there were issued fifteen works of poetry and two in quarto: an edition of Fawcett's *The art of poetry, accoding [sic] to the latest improvements*, and Edward Nairne's *The dog-Tax* (both as pamphlets). In 1798, Johnson issued eleven poems and only one in quarto: Coleridge's *Fears in Solitude* pamphlet. Finally, in 1799 Johnson issued only four works of poetry and none in quarto.

²⁸ Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, publishers often issued first editions of new poetry in the form of the quarto pamphlet. In doing so, they were likely motivated by a few different reasons: publishers sought to keep prices high by offering "unnecessary luxury" (St. Clair 100), especially by issuing poetry in the form of the luxurious quarto, but poetry was also recognized as a polite genre deserving a polite format, like that of the quarto (St. Clair 100).

Because topical poems—especially those responding to political developments—tended to be shorter, they were often issued in the form of the quarto pamphlet. And indeed, a great number of the quarto pamphlet poems published by Johnson during the 1790s were political in orientation: in 1791, for example, Johnson printed (though he did not publish) the first book of Blake’s *The French Revolution*; a year later he published Barlow’s *The Conspiracy of Kings*; in 1793 he issued Wordsworth’s *Descriptive Sketches*; and finally in 1798 he issued Coleridge’s *Fears in solitude* pamphlet. Such poems expressed potentially seditious—and in particular anti-monarchical—political visions, thus endangering them and opening their authors and publisher to the charge of seditious libel. However, in each case, their quarto format, low print run, and consequently high price restricted their circulation and directed them toward middle-class audiences.²⁹ At the same time, the quarto’s association with middle-class audiences served to indicate publicly the respectability of both Johnson and the poets whose works were published in the format. In each case, the material characteristics of the quarto pamphlet situated its text within the bourgeois public sphere, thereby securing its anti-monarchical pronouncements against potential prosecution and shoring up Johnson’s reputation as a respectable, middle-class publisher.

To a degree, these consequences were a matter of luck, for Johnson was only following common practice in issuing his short verse publications as quarto pamphlets. Yet he was also well aware that such formatting choices afforded him legal protection.

²⁹ According to Chard, though the “print run of most of Johnson’s publications was 750 copies,” his minimum print run—and that likely used for quarto publications—was usually 250 copies (Chard, “Bookseller” 144).

His experience as a publisher of a large number of tracts on seditious libel law certainly increased his awareness of the power of format to fix an audience and thus invite or preclude a charge of seditious libel (see Braithwaite 17; 109; 123). Johnson also knew first-hand that audience more than any other factor influenced the government's decision to prosecute.³⁰ Johnson's own publishing practice further shows that he was quick to use format and price to protect himself.³¹ And Johnson himself claimed publicly that he used format in this way, as his statement during the 1798 hearing suggests. His formatting choices show clearly that Johnson was "[b]oth lucky and shrewd" in managing "for a time to pick politically sensitive books that espoused radical sentiments while staying within the law against seditious writings" (Tyson 135). Indeed, Johnson's selection strategy shows that "as a bookseller, he was eminently responsible when it came to protecting his own interests in line with the law; that in politics as in theology, he predominately catered to the middle ranks . . ." (Braithwaite 110), and that finally, as he himself claimed in the statement at his hearing, his associations as a publisher were with "respectable and scientific Writers and his publications generally of a Moral, Philosophical, and Medical Nature, many of which [were] an honour to his Country" (ctd. in Braithwaite 163-4). As I'll demonstrate in what follows, by issuing the political poems

³⁰ As already noted, Sir John Scott had directly informed Thomas Cooper, whose publisher was Johnson, of the advisability of publishing his *Reply* to Burke in a format that would restrict the text's circulation (Chard, "Bookseller" 147).

³¹ In publishing Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Johnson issued "a large, almost 500-page volume costing 6s—a further signal that its primary obligations were to a relatively comfortable middle-class audience" (Braithwaite 115). Likewise, as the original publisher of Paine's *Rights of Man* Part 1, Johnson initially put the work on sale at the relatively expensive price of "half-a-crown (2s 6d), which enabled it to be bound up in a single volume with Burke's *Reflections* but inevitably 'precluded the generality of people from purchasing'" (Braithwaite 111). Likewise, after his prosecution, "the prices of his books increased dramatically," indicating to "the government that his audience was more respectable and therefore less of a threat to the state" (Chard, "1790s" 98).

of Blake, Barlow, Wordsworth and Coleridge in quarto pamphlets, Johnson directed each towards middle-class audiences, situating them in a bourgeois public sphere where they were safe from prosecution.

Blake and *The French Revolution*

William Blake's relationship with Joseph Johnson began sometime in 1779, when the poet began work for the publisher as an engraver, and lasted at least to the turn of the century.³² Apparently, Johnson thought highly of Blake's skill as an engraver, but he also offered support to Blake in his work as a poet, selling *For Children, Songs of Innocence* and other books in his shop in the early 1790s (Bentley 110).³³ Socially, too, Johnson and Blake were at least acquaintances, with the poet attending one and possibly more of Johnson's dinner parties (Gilchrist 40; Erdman 157). Either way, Blake maintained contacts with a number of those writers and artists—from Horne Tooke and Godwin to Fuseli—who were part of Johnson's circle, even if with some of them, like Godwin, he is said to have “got on ill” (ctd. in Bentley 111). Blake's social connections with the Johnson circle were most likely grounded in shared political commitments: referring to Johnson and his friends, Erdman writes, for example, “[t]hat Blake was among politically sympathetic friends when he wrote his revolutionary prophecies of 1790-1795” (153),

³² Though Blake's work for Johnson had begun relatively slowly—between 1779 and 1786, for example, Blake produced sixteen plates for seven books published by Johnson—from 1787, when Blake met Fuseli, until about 1801, Blake would produce 90 plates for Johnson (Bentley 108).

³³ Johnson remarked of Blake that “[h]e is capable of doing anything well” and suggested, among other things, that Blake be hired to engrave the Portland Vase that was to appear in Darwin's *The Botanic Garden* (Bentley 108). Even after the two suffered a falling out (Bentley 116), Johnson continued to praise Blake, writing to Blake's patron William Hayley in 1802 that “[e]ver since I have had a connection with Mr. Blake I have wished to serve him & on every occasion endeavoured to do so. I wish him to be paid for what he is now doing a fair & even liberal price ...” (4 January 1802, ctd. in Bentley 108).

and consequently that his work during the period “leaves no question as to his familiarity with the *ideas* of the Paine set” (161). As biographical anecdotes and his own marginal annotations and prophecies suggest, Blake was strongly supportive of at least aspects of Painite republicanism.³⁴

Yet for all their political similarities, Blake was also divided from Johnson and his friends by social and especially ideological factors. For not only did Blake’s social position as a tradesman prevent his full acceptance by the Johnson circle, but his enthusiastic republicanism put him at odds with most of its members, who were generally committed to variants of rational republicanism, or what Saree Makdisi calls the period’s hegemonic “liberal-radical tendency” (Mee 105; Makdisi 26).³⁵ Indeed, Blake’s “hostility to ‘fallen reason’ and insistence on apocalyptic transformation ... may have seemed disconcertingly old-fashioned and violently extreme to the radicals of the Johnson circle and many of the defenders of the old regime alike” (Mee 112). On the one hand, the existence of enthusiastic republicans like Blake tended to thwart the Johnson circle’s aim

³⁴ Blake and Paine seem to have known each other personally, as is suggested by the presence of a drawing of Paine in one of the engraver’s notebooks (Erdman 156). In fact, the two were perhaps acquainted closely enough to encourage Blake’s “friends, at least, [to believe] that he was responsible for Paine’s escape from England on 12 September 1792” (Bentley 113). At the very least, Blake’s associations with Painite radicalism influenced his behavior: according to Gilchrist, for example, Blake “courageously donned ... the bonnet rouge—in open day, and philosophically walked the streets with the same on his head. He is said to have been the only one of the set who had the courage to make that public profession of faith” (93). Likewise, in his marginalia to Bishop Watson’s *Apology for the Bible* (1798), for example, Blake wrote repeatedly in praise of Paine, indicating “that he had already read Paine with care” (Bentley 112). Finally, Blake praised Paine in prophetic works like *America* (see, e.g., Bentley 112).

³⁵ Mee writes, for example, that “[w]hile engravers would rise to public prominence and respectability ... they tended to be treated as tradesmen rather than artists ... It is likely that Johnson’s circle would have regarded Blake as a peripheral figure, a copy engraver who worked for Johnson, rather than a writer or artist published by him ... It is probable that the Johnson circle only ever really regarded him as a tradesman rather than as an intellectual like themselves” (*Dangerous Enthusiasm* 103).

of proving “the reasonableness of their radicalism” by refuting Burke’s contention that “the French Revolution was a species of fanaticism related to the radical enthusiasm of the seventeenth century” (Mee 103). More fundamentally, the anti-rational enthusiasm of Blake and other infidel prophets challenged the hegemony of the bourgeois public sphere occupied by members of the Johnson circle.³⁶ But in setting itself outside of the public sphere, Blake’s strain of visionary political prophecy put itself at legal risk, especially given its anti-monarchical tenor, as cases like those of the popular prophet Richard Brothers and Richard “Citizen” Lee were to show.³⁷ Acutely sensitive to this risk—he

³⁶ Whether understood as a kind of “marginal romantic-radical literati” (McCalman 24), a participant in or at least associate of participants in Worral’s “artisan public sphere” (200), a committed opponent of “hegemonic liberal-radicalism” and its philosophy of possessive individualism (Makdisi, *Impossible History* 22), or a member of Mee’s “millenarian public sphere” (*Dangerous Enthusiasm* 97), the anti-rational enthusiasm of Blake’s visionary prophecies set him outside the bourgeois public sphere, whose “authority lay in its appeal to reason (Mee 97), and apart from groups like the Johnson circle, whose republicanism was bound up with the project of advancing the cause of rational dissent. To a certain extent, Blake and other infidel prophets of the 1790s sought to challenge the hegemony of this public sphere, for, as Mee argues, “Blake’s ‘Everlasting Gospel’ is part of a counter-enlightenment, part of a response to the formation of the classical bourgeois public sphere whose own authority lay in its appeal to reason” (97). In particular, Mee explains that “[m]y understanding of Blake’s prophetic rhetoric, as it emerged amid other kinds of radical discourse in the 1790s, is that it represents a specific kind of critique of the bourgeois public sphere whose coming to hegemony Habermas chronicles. Blake and his fellow millenarians looked to the imminent fulfilment of an older communitarian vision, founded on the authority of the believer’s inner light and self-consciously hostile to polite learning and reason. The appeal to critical reasoning was always defined in terms of certain minimum educational and cultural requirements that guaranteed the exclusion of the unlearned and unlettered. Blake represents a tradition, as E. P. Thompson [argues] . . . which appealed instead to the free grace of prophetic inspiration. Where the bourgeois public sphere looked to rational exchange of ideas in the public space as the motor force of progress, the prophetic tradition followed an apocalyptic vision of total social transformation” (98). In some ways, this project was paradoxical, for “[l]ike other radical artists, [Blake] wished to transform or even destroy the classical public sphere, while at the same time seeking to participate more fully in it” (112) by insisting “on the right to a place in the public sphere of a visionary and apocalyptic tradition” (98).

³⁷ Mee observes that “[t]he most violently republican language in the revolution controversy was usually that which drew upon the language of the Book of Revelation and the other biblical prophecies [and] [t]he millenarianism of popular enthusiasm, as in pamphlets like Lee’s *King Killing*, frequently provides the most extreme expressions of regicidal sentiments in the 1790s” (107). For example, in adopting the image of Nebuchadnezzar to represent George III, millenarian republicans used the Bible as a “crucial counter-authority to ‘the psychological barrier which stood in the way of imagining the extinction’ of the king” (Mee 108). In consequence of their distance from the public sphere and their rejection of the rational discourse defining it, works of millenarian republicanism ran the risk of prosecution for treason

wrote privately in 1793 that “I say I shant live five years. And if I live one it will be a / Wonder” (ctd. in Phillips 263)—Blake seems to have gone out of his way to protect himself from prosecution for seditious libel, excising references to “George the third” in *America* and undertaking only “carefully modulated excursions into semi-caricatures of Edmund Burke and George III in *Europe* plates 3(4) and 12(14)” (Worrall 203).³⁸ As a legally dangerous, socially toxic, and politically counterproductive ideology, Blake’s enthusiastic republicanism worked along with his status as an artisan to set him outside of the public sphere and apart from the Johnson circle.

For these reasons, Blake likely sought to use the format of the conventional letterpress book to align his work with Johnson’s middle-class market and thus to protect his poetry from charges of seditious libel, as the case of his quarto pamphlet poem *The French Revolution* suggests. Presumably, in turning from illuminated printing to letterpress during one of his most productive periods (Viscomi xxv), Blake sought to join the Revolution controversy by issuing through Johnson a more widely accessible work

or seditious libel, as shown by Richard Brothers' arrest, trial and conviction in 1795 for imagining the king's death in *A Revealed Knowledge of the Prophecies and Times*, and Richard “Citizen” Lee's conviction for the distribution of his *King Killing* pamphlet. Like *A Revealed Knowledge* and *King Killing*, certain of Blake's works—like *America*—risked prosecution for their prophetic, anti-monarchical visions. Worrall writes that “[p]rophets with printing presses and radical views could, and did, find themselves the subject of surveillance and prosecution. Scriptural texts themselves had, by the end of 1792, begun to figure in prosecutions for seditious utterance, a circumstance which makes the text of *America* plate 8 (E53) particularly vulnerable” (201).

³⁸ Erdman remarks that “Blake appears to have been deeply impressed by the persecution of Priestley and Paine ...” (153), while Ackroyd speculates that “Blake, cursed by his 'nervous fear', decided himself to withdraw [*The French Revolution*] in the neurotic suspicion that he might be prosecuted, or persecuted, by the state authorities” (162). Likewise, Phillips argues that Blake's shift toward illuminated printing was motivated by fears of prosecution: “[i]t may have been just because he felt and wrote as he did that the risk became too great, if he pursued his plans to their logical conclusion and published and distributed his works in a normal way” (265). Such worries were not unjustified, for in 1803 Blake would be the subject of an information filed by the soldier John Scholfield for uttering seditious words.

likely to reach a larger audience than any of his illuminations.³⁹ Written sometime in 1790, the poem's content bears out this presumption.⁴⁰ As a prophetic celebration of the early stages of the Revolution, the poem concludes by envisioning the departure of representatives of the *ancien regime* as the "Senate in peace sat / beneath morning's beams" (306). But in two ways the poem also manifested a potentially dangerous radicalism. First, the prophetic tenor of *The French Revolution* endangered it by aligning it with the works of other enthusiastic political prophets, like Brothers and Lee. As a visionary indictment of Louis XVI and his court, Blake's poem participated in a less respectable strain of radicalism and thus distanced itself from the genteel philosophy of Johnson and his circle. But the poem's radicalism lay also in its strong anti-monarchism and its representations of kings as fatally weakened through illness. Not only does the poem's repeated pronouncement that "kings are sick throughout the earth" (61) work to establish its "principal and overtly republican theme, like Paine and Barlow's"

³⁹ Erdman writes, for example, that "abandoning Illuminated Printing, perhaps from zealous haste or perhaps because he had found a regular publisher, he had 'Book the First' set in type by Joseph Johnson and hoped no doubt soon to have the whole seven volumes on the bookstalls among the prophetic works of Mackintosh, Barlow, Paine, Wollstonecraft, and other writers in freedom's defense" (152). Likewise, Butter argues that "[i]t may be that it was [the] flurry of controversy in late 1790 [arising from the publication of Burke's *Reflections* and Johnson's pamphlet responses] that decided Blake to enter the fray with his *The French Revolution*, and to get it printed for publication by Johnson in 1791" (19).

⁴⁰ According to William Richey, "rather than an otherworldly prophecy ... *The French Revolution* is essentially a political tract in epic form that represents Blake's most public attempt to enter the ongoing English debate over the French Revolution. Writing in 1791, Blake—like Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Paine—seeks to counter the chief conservative voice of the time, Edmund Burke, whose 1790 *Reflections on the Revolution in France* had eroded much of the initial English sympathy for the revolutionary movement. What results is a poetic dialogue in which Blake challenges the underlying assumptions of Burke's counterrevolutionary text ... Since Blake had for years been affiliated with Johnson and his stable of writers, it seems quite likely that Blake was participating in this leftist propaganda effort, and that he designed *The French Revolution* as a poetic complement to the prose manifestos of Wollstonecraft and Paine" (817; 833 n. 4). Yet while Richey suggests that "the format of this poem suggests that Blake was aiming at a more general audience than was his usual practice" (834 n. 4), in fact the quarto publication would have made the work more accessible while still restricting Blake's audience significantly.

(Braithwaite 119), but the deaths of Louis XVI and the other “kings of nations” are imagined in vivid detail and with apocalyptic force:

The noise of trampling, the wind of trumpets, smote the palace walls with a blast.
Pale and cold sat the King in midst of his peers, and his noble heart sunk and his
pulses
Suspended their motion, a darkness crept over his eyelids, and chill cold sweat
Sat round his brows faded in faint death, his peers pale like mountains of the dead,
Covered with dews of night, groaning, shaking forests and floods. The cold newt
And snake, and damp toad, on the kingly foot crawl, or croak on the awful knee,
Shedding their slime, in folds of the robe the crowned adder builds and hisses
From stony brows; shaken the forests of France, sick the kings of nations,
And the bottoms of the world were opened, and the graves of arch-angels
unsealed ... (293-301)

Moreover, rather than abstracting its political drama into cosmic allegory, *The French Revolution* is insistently historical (if sometimes inaccurately so), achieving for the poem its status as “the only one of [Blake’s] visions or prophecies in which the historical particulars are clear and explicit” (Erdman 165). As an enthusiastic denunciation of the evils of kingship and an apocalyptic prediction of the coming demise of the institution of monarchy, *The French Revolution* displayed potentially actionable content that opened the poem to prosecution for seditious libel.

Yet its appearance in quarto and under Johnson’s imprint would have tempered its enthusiastic anti-monarchism by associating it with a respectable publisher and limiting its accessibility to the middle classes, thus weakening any seditious tendencies it could express. Ultimately, however, the poem was never published: it exists in a single quarto proof copy whose title-page declares it to be the first of seven finished “Books,” of which no other evidence exists (*Complete Poetry* 124). Much speculation has been devoted to the question of why Blake’s only quarto poem was withdrawn from the press. Johnson or

Blake might have deemed its anti-monarchism too legally risky, even in a quarto publication. Yet withdrawing the poem for political reasons in early 1791 would have been unnecessarily cautious, given not only that quartos were never prosecuted but that government prosecutions for seditious libel still had yet to begin in earnest (Braithwaite 199; Butter 19). Likewise, Blake may have failed to compose the other books of the poem, thus weakening Johnson's confidence in his ability to produce the material promised on the book's title-page.⁴¹ More plausibly, though, Johnson balked when he became concerned that Blake's enthusiastic poem would both undermine his attempt to represent republicanism as a respectable and rational response to Burkean monarchism and threaten his own reputation as a middle-class publisher. Once printed in quarto proofs, Johnson may have realized not only that "[t]o contemporary audiences ... [the poem] may have appeared an uneasy and unintelligible mix of real life incident and heavily prophetic poetry" (Braithwaite 199), but that its status as visionary prophecy contradicted the polite material trappings of its quarto format. In the end, Johnson likely backed away from *The French Revolution* because he concluded that, even in quarto, the work's enthusiastic content contradicted too blatantly his reputation as a respectable

⁴¹ Noting that "the project was quickly and discretely dropped," for example, Braithwaite writes that "[i]f the timing for this was mid-way through 1791 then the popular clamour unleashed by Louis XVI's escape to Varennes would have proved extremely unsettling to the publication of Book One, with its glowing portrayal of Lafayette and peaceful, deeply optimistic conclusion with 'Paris without a soldier, silent' (II.304-5) completely shattered by the massacre on 17 July on the Champ de Mars" (120). Citing Antal, Erdman writes that "Johnson was advised against publishing by John Bonnycastle, one of Fuseli's intimates ... " (152). Beer agrees, suggesting that "it seems likely that the project was abandoned as a result of the publisher's fears of Government action" (95). Bentley writes of the poem's withdrawal that "perhaps Johnson decided that the growing government hysteria about the untamed forces across the channel meant that it would be injudicious to print a work so sympathetic to the revolutionaries ... " even though he admits that "[w]e do not know why the publication of *The French Revolution* was aborted" and that "perhaps Blake never finished the poem" (Bentley 109). See also Tyson 127.

publisher and his aims as a rational republican.

Barlow and *The Conspiracy of Kings*

While the enthusiasm of Blake's poem made quarto publication untenable, the format was the only logical choice when it came to publishing the work of Joel Barlow. When Barlow arrived in London in 1788, en route to Paris as a representative of the Scioto Company, he was already a recognized poet in England: during the preceding year, an edition of his poem *The Vision of Columbus*, which had passed quickly through two American editions, had been published in London by John Stockdale. In part because of his growing literary reputation, Barlow quickly succeeded in establishing connections with reform-minded intellectuals in London, and by September of 1788 he had probably met Joseph Johnson (Tyson 119). Thus, when Barlow returned to London from France in 1791, he was able to join Johnson's increasingly radicalized circle with ease, becoming particularly close with Thomas Paine, among others (Buel 140).⁴² Paine's influence seems to have encouraged Barlow to apply his literary talent to radical politics, for over the course of the next year Barlow composed two explicitly Paineite political compositions—a prose tract entitled *Advice to the Privileged Orders: In the Several States of Europe, Resulting from the Necessity and Propriety of a General Revolution in the Principle of Government*, and the lengthy poem *The Conspiracy of Kings*—both of which were published by Johnson.

⁴² Barlow became an intimate of Thomas Paine's, acting as one of only a few friends close to Paine while he was writing *Rights of Man* Part 2 during the fall of 1791 (Buel 143). Partly through his connection to Paine, Barlow would become increasingly radicalized over the next few years, traveling to France on mysterious though probably politically motivated business (Tyson 127), joining the SCI in late spring of 1792, becoming a delegate to the National Convention in France later that year, and becoming increasingly involved in French politics.

In *Advice to the Privileged Orders*, Barlow took aim at the basic institutions of the *ancien regime*, attacking primogeniture and entail, the church, the aristocracy, and monarchical military systems, while arguing on behalf of what he called “distributive justice.” But in addition to its ideological agenda, the tract’s explicit and repeated allusions to *Rights of Man* demonstrated clearly that “Barlow was on the side of Paineite radicalism rather than middle class rational dissent” (Braithwaite 117).⁴³ Consequently, “next to *Rights of Man*, Barlow’s *Advice* was the work considered most seditious by the British government” (Woodress 119). The pamphlet’s potentially seditious nature was suggested during the trial of Thomas Hardy in 1784, when the Crown’s prosecutor declared “as he brandished a copy of the *Advice* in court: ‘Barlow’s book you will find is in the plainest and most unequivocal language, as I understand it, an exhortation to all people to get rid of kingly government’” (Woodress 119).⁴⁴ But while *Rights of Man* Part 2 was prosecuted, *Advice to the Privileged Orders* was not. Barlow may have dodged the law because “Paineite exercises in king-bashing” (Harling 124) rather than attacks on “aristocratical tyranny” like Barlow’s were more frequently tried.⁴⁵ But just as likely,

⁴³ The textual similarities between the two books were strengthened by the fact that *Advice* “appeared on February 6, 1792, ten days before Part 2 of *The Rights of Man* [sic]” (Buel 144). Because he was so confident of the parallels between the two works, Barlow “was sure that his book would find no reader ‘who will not have read the Rights of Man’ (Woodress 119). Indeed, though he had planned to publish a second part to *Advice*, when *Rights of Man* Part 2 Barlow concluded that Paine had “covered much of the ground he had intended to travel,” and consequently Barlow “waited until late in the year, then wrote only one more chapter, which was not published in England for three years” (Woodress 122).

⁴⁴ Meanwhile, in Howell’s *State Trials*, Barlow’s name appears consistently alongside Paine’s (Mulford 152). At the same time, the two authors were linked in contemporary radical societies. In the *Journal of the House of Commons*, for example, it was noted that “[a]t a meeting of the Society for Constitutional Information for March 4, 1792, a letter was ‘read from the Norwich Revolution Society, which said that Paine’s Rights of Man and the Advice to the Privileged Orders have been read with attention and circulated with avidity’” (*Journal* 49: 682).

⁴⁵ Perhaps the crucial difference was that Paine had attacked directly and immediately the institution of

Barlow's *Advice* escaped prosecution not because of its content but because of its address to a middle-class and cosmopolitan audience.

The mechanisms by which *Advice* fixed this audience were both textual and material. On the one hand, whereas Paine appealed to the lower orders, Barlow framed his "Advice" as if it were meant for the "Privileged Orders" of "Philosophers and contemplative men" (5).⁴⁶ More importantly, the price of *Advice* strengthened its appeal to this audience. While the sixpence price of Paine's pamphlet made it almost universally

monarchy, whereas Barlow had not. Indeed, whereas when Paine had stated that "[a]ll hereditary government is in its nature tyranny"—a claim cited as the first instance of libel by the Crown during Paine's trial later that year—he had meant hereditary monarchy, Barlow had gone out of his way to distance himself from such assertions, arguing that "[t]he tyrannies of the world, whatever be the appellation of the government under which they are exercised, are all aristocratical tyrannies" (*Advice* 11). In fact, Barlow had sought explicitly to avoid the discussion of monarchy, remarking in the final paragraph of his introduction that "I have not prescribed to myself the task of entering into arguments on the utility of kings" (21). Even so, Barlow wrote elsewhere in the same text that "[f]rom these considerations we may conclude, that royalty is preserved in France for reasons that are fugitive; that a majority of the constituent assembly did not believe in it, as an abstract principle; that a majority of the people will learn to be disgusted with so unnatural and ponderous a deformity in their new edifice, and will soon hew it off" (20).

⁴⁶ Indeed, throughout *Advice* but especially in the "Introduction," Barlow seems to have the terms of the developing libel law at the front of his mind. Barlow claims that his aim is simply "to take a deliberate view of the real nature and extent of [the change of government in France], and find what are the advantages and disadvantages to be expected from it" (2). He addresses those "Philosophers and contemplative men, who may think themselves disinterested spectators of so great a political drama, [and who] will do well to consider how far the catastrophe is to be beneficial or detrimental to the human race; in order to determine whether in conscience they ought to promote or discourage, accelerate or retard it, but the publication of their opinions" (5). Treating the success of the Revolution as a foregone conclusion, Barlow explains that he intends to attempt to persuade rationally those classes, or Privileged Orders, affected by its course to accept its changes (8). Those to be affected, "sincere inquirers after truth" (6), form "a class of men respectable both for their numbers and their sensibility" and, as Barlow claims, it is his "hope to administer some consolation to them in the course of this essay" (7). Such men differ markedly from that "mob" to which Barlow gives an extended footnote halfway through the "Introduction" (8-9). Ultimately, however, Barlow makes clear that while the respectable class of men may or may not be persuaded of the benefits of the political changes sweeping France, this "mob" will determine the actual course of events, in France and elsewhere. As Barlow writes in the concluding paragraph of the "Introduction," the question of "whether a change of government shall take place, and extend through Europe" will depend "on a much more important class of men, the class that cannot write; and in a great measure, on those who cannot read. It is to be decided by men who reason better without books, than we do with all the books in the world" (21-22). Even so, *Advice* goes out of its way to make clear that its audience is composed of those who can write, who can read, and who do reason with books—that is, the respectably educated classes capable of speculative thinking rather than the illiterate and easily inflamed mob.

available, at three shillings *Advice* was addressed to a middle-class readership. Meanwhile, compared to Paine's pamphlet, *Advice* saw relatively low print runs, with the first two editions being limited to one thousand copies, probably of five hundred copies each (Tise 139). Consequently, the material properties of the pamphlet worked to restrict it to those "privileged orders" imagined by Barlow as his audience. But whereas the textual forms of address were the work of Barlow, his publisher Joseph Johnson was in charge of fixing the pamphlet's material determinants of address. In raising the pamphlet's price and printing relatively few copies, Johnson was likely motivated by his fear of prosecution for seditious libel, which was at the forefront of the publisher's mind at the time.⁴⁷

Like *Advice*, Barlow's long poem *The Conspiracy of Kings* also embodied textual and material forms of address that directed it towards a safely middle-class audience and secured it against prosecution. And indeed, such security was necessary, for as Barlow and his friends seem to have agreed, *Conspiracy* was a "little mad poem" whose radicalism was even more overt than that of *Advice*.⁴⁸ On the one hand, where the language of *Advice* was abstractly philosophical and usually civil, *Conspiracy* was violently prophetic and viciously personal, attacking "The Great" as "Drones of the

⁴⁷ Around this time, for example, Johnson was to withdraw from the publication of *Rights of Man* Part 2, and ultimately he was to refuse "to publish Part II of *Advice* owing to a rash of prosecutions of booksellers for issuing 'libellous' works" (Tyson 119-120).

⁴⁸ Writing to William Hayley and James Stanier Clarke of his "little mad poem" (ctd. in Mulford 137), Barlow wrote that "[i]f you can find a secret corner in your house, to hide it from the view of your visitors, it may be no injury to your reputation. but it must not be known that you have any knowledge of such a reprobate as the Author must have been" (ctd. in Mulford 137). Clarke seems to have agreed with Barlow about the poem's dangers, quipping that "I think I shall hear of you in the Tower before long. If so take care to procure good apartments . . ." Though facetious, both comments seem intended to mitigate real fears of prosecution.

Church and harpies of the State” (9-10); monarchs as “crested reptiles” (14); “Courts and Kings” as “prolific monsters” and “vampires” (209-10); and Burke as a “degenerate slave” (106) and “the sordid sovereign of the letter’d world” (148) who sought by his “infuriate quill / To rouse mankind the blood of realms to spill” (129-30).⁴⁹ Yet even more significantly, *The Conspiracy of Kings* was legally risky because of its unrelenting anti-monarchism.⁵⁰ Addressing itself to the emigre princes organized under the Comte D’Artois and taking aim at their conspiratorial attempts to reinstall Louis XVI as King of France, *Conspiracy* imagines the deaths of monarchs in memorably vivid terms:

Show me your kings, the sceptred horde parade,—
 See their pomp vanish! See your visions fade!
 Indignant Man resumes the shaft he gave,
 Disarms the tyrant, and unbinds the slave,
 Displays the unclad skeletons of kings,
 Spectres of power, and serpents without stings. (55-60)

Likewise, *Conspiracy* attacks monarchy for its rampant militarism, envisioning “those prolific monsters, Courts and Kings” (208) as “vampires nurs’d on nature’s spoils” (209) for whom “the starving peasant toils” (210) and who, in bidding “wild slaughter spread the gory plains, / The life-blood gushing from a thousand veins, / Erect their thrones amid

⁴⁹ Indeed, in only a few cases does *Advice* shift away from its declared speculative project and toward rhetorical denunciation, as when Barlow writes of the church, directing his readers' attention, for example, toward “the last fifteen centuries, in which we are able to trace with compassionate indignation the frenzy of our ancestors, and contemplate the wandering demon of carnage, conducted by the cross of the west” (54-5). Likewise, Barlow's treatment of Burke in *Advice* is relatively civil: the latter is accused of a “total want of argument” (15), disparaged as “the last solitary admirer of chivalry” (16), and “the whining of that good gentleman” on jurisprudence dismissed as “about as rational, as it would be to lament that the noble science of Heraldry was in danger of being forgotten; or that men had lost the mystical meaning of *Abracadabra*” (142).

⁵⁰ Barlow's poem was motivated by a deep and potentially seditious hatred for the institution and its representatives. Writing to Thomas Jefferson of the death of Leopold of Austria, Barlow remarked that “though one of my kings died while the poem was in the press, it was not my fault,” continuing that “[i]f this had been the case with all of them, I should have been willing to have suppressed the publication for so good a cause” (ctd. in Mulford 152, n. 1).

the sanguine flood, / And dip their purple in the nation's blood" (215-17). Finally, the poem prophesies the inevitable failure of any attempts at restoration:

Learn hence, ye tyrants, ere ye learn too late,
Of all your craft th'inevitable fate.
The hour is come, the world's unclosing eyes
Discern with rapture where its wisdom lies;
From western heav'ns th'inverted Orient of springs,
The morn of man, the dreadful night of kings. (157-62)

Conspiracy thus concludes that "Truth's blest banners" will "Shake tyrants from their thrones, and cheer the waking world" (264-5). In the legal climate of the time, any of these statements could have been used to justify the prosecution of Barlow and his publisher, Johnson. As a poem "just as politically explicit and unencumbered as his previous prose *Advice*" (Braithwaite 118), *Conspiracy* expressed a political vision that, along with Paine's in *Rights of Man*, was "without doubt the most extreme that Joseph Johnson ever published (taking him immoderately close to what he later, jokingly, described as a 'hanging offence')" (Braithwaite 118).⁵¹

Like *Advice*, however, *The Conspiracy of Kings* was never prosecuted. While it is possible that the poem escaped charges because of its reluctance to include George III or Louis XVI in its catalogue of tyrant kings, *Conspiracy's* textual and material forms of address also protected it from prosecution.⁵² For like *Advice*, *Conspiracy* was a work

⁵¹ Mulford agrees, declaring that "Barlow's view was clearly propagandistic ..." and that "[t]he message and language are radical and revolutionary" (150). Meanwhile, the radicalism of Barlow's poem was so overt that it finally "brought Barlow the official recognition from English radicals that until then had been only informally his" (148); his induction into the SCI, for example, followed shortly after the publication of *Conspiracy*. His work seems also to have quickly earned him the Crown's attention: immediately following the appearance of *Conspiracy*, Barlow left England for France under mysterious circumstances—probably to negotiate a trading deal between France and English traders—but Mulford suggests that Barlow was motivated at least in part by his desire to escape British surveillance (137).

⁵² Barlow picks out certain monarchs in particular as objects of attack: "the mad knave that S—— sceptre

meant not for the mob but for the respectable, contemplative, poetry-buying classes. On the one hand, *Conspiracy*'s text addresses an audience safely distant from the English lower orders. Its title page—which announces that the poem is “ADDRESSED / TO THE INHABITANTS OF EUROPE, / FROM ANOTHER QUARTER OF THE WORLD”—pivots its attention away from England and toward a safely distant and abstractly characterized trans-European readership. More specifically, the poem addresses itself to three audiences—“ye knaves,” the emigre princes; Burke, the “degenerate slave”; and, towards its conclusion, “MAN”—of which only the last could be construed as referring to a readership whose passions might be easily inflamed to seditious action.⁵³ Yet the poem's paratexts carefully constrain the audience addressed as “MAN” to a narrow, educated elite. Not only does the poem's Greek epigraph establish the audience of *Conspiracy* as polite, respectable, and classically educated, but it places a violently anti-monarchical statement in a language indecipherable to most readers and in the mouth of an obscure Greek poet. Announcing that “[t]o lay low, as thou wilt, a people-eating tyrant / Is no sin towards the gods,” the epigraph exemplifies the method by which *Conspiracy* uses forms of address to temper its radical anti-monarchism. Likewise, Barlow's strongest anti-monarchical statements within the poem itself are qualified by Latin footnotes. For example, where Barlow writes that “Indignant MAN resumes the shaft he gave, / Disarms the tyrant, and unbinds the slave, / Displays the unclad skeletons of kings” (57-9), he

stole” [Gustavus III] (75); “She, whose thunder shakes the northern pole” [Catherine II] (76); the “weak brow” of Frederick William II (78); and “the ape of wisdom and the slave of gold” [Leopold of Austria] (81). Yet the poem neglects to attack the most obvious monarchs—Louis XVI and George III.

⁵³ “To thee, O MAN, my heart rebounding springs” Barlow claims, instructing “MAN” to “[b]ehold th'ascending bliss that waits your call, / Heav'n's own bequest, the heritage of all” and to “seize the proffer'd prize” (243-6).

attaches a footnote indicating the origin of the last line in Juvenal's *Satire 8*: "Ossa vides regum vacuis exhausta medullis."⁵⁴ Together, the epigraph and footnote render potentially seditious lines respectable, not only by placing them within the mouths of classical authorities but also by including them in their original and class-marking languages. Finally, the poem's use of heroic couplets reinforces its self-representation as a Juvenalian satire in the politely neo-classical mode.⁵⁵ In adopting such textual devices, Barlow directed his poem toward a middle-class readership.

But the material properties of *The Conspiracy of Kings* also served to restrict its audience to those polite readers thought capable of receiving the text speculatively and contemplatively. As a quarto pamphlet priced at one shilling sixpence, the twenty-page *Conspiracy* was sold for three times the cost of Paine's much longer work and only half the price of Barlow's own *Advice*. *Conspiracy* also likely saw a very small print run, with its first edition including probably no more than 250 copies. For these reasons, even while the poem was published "to a great noise" (ctd. in Mulford 137), material constraints likely limited its readership to a small number of middle-class readers. With this in mind, claims that *Conspiracy* was primarily "propagandistic" should be

⁵⁴ The fact that the line is slightly misquoted is probably not intentional, though it might have worked to tarnish Barlow's authority as an author.

⁵⁵ According to Mulford, the use of couplets makes "[i]t is easy to understand why scholars have assumed that Barlow's poem is just another juvenalian satire after the manner of Pope or Swift" (138), motivated perhaps by Barlow's wish for "the uninitiated audience—the audience not familiar with radical ideology—to be misled into thinking *The Conspiracy of Kings* was simply the invective of a juvenalian satirist" (138). To be sure, Mulford is correct in drawing attention to the association between the couplet and neo-classical conservatism, but Barlow might also have attempted to impose the form of juvenalian satire on the poem to render polite its prophetic utterances, which threatened transform the poem into a more popular form. Indeed, Barlow attempts to distance himself from the form of popular prophecy, warning his audience that "[t]hink not I come to croak with omen'd yell / The dire damnations of your future hell, / To bend a bigot or reform a knave, / By op'ning all the scenes beyond the grave" (23-6).

qualified.⁵⁶ Likewise, suggestions that the low sales of *Conspiracy* together with “the fact that (ostensibly, at least) [it] addressed a privileged not a popular audience” showed that it did “not appear to warrant the threat of prosecution” (Braithwaite 118) must be modified. In fact, the poem’s low sales and privileged readership were determined by its quarto format, which defined its audience as a privileged and educated elite, whose knowledge of the classics and secure financial position marked it as contemplative and therefore incapable of being inflamed to seditious action. *Conspiracy*’s embedded forms of address thus established the poem within the bourgeois public sphere and secured it against prosecution for seditious libel.

Wordsworth and *Descriptive Sketches*

Like Barlow, William Wordsworth also contributed a radically anti-monarchical quarto poem to the pamphlet war of the early 1790s. Written in the wake of a walking tour through France, Switzerland, and northern Italy during which he observed first-hand the early stages of the Revolution, Wordsworth attempted to transform his observations into poetry about a year later, when he began work on *Descriptive Sketches* (*Cornell* 6). Probably written over the summer of 1792, the poem demonstrates the extent to which Wordsworth’s friendships in France and his proximity to revolutionary events had radicalized his politics (*Cornell* 7; 9; Roe 51). Indeed, as he was soon to explain to William Mathews, Wordsworth now placed himself among “that odious class of men

⁵⁶ Even if Mulford is correct in asserting that Barlow was “exploring the extent to which a renaming would propagandize a political message” (151), or Buel is right that *Conspiracy*’s publication indicates that Barlow had decided “it was time to appeal to the feelings of men as well as to their reason and that the best means of reaching the illiterate was through a political poem” (146), the poem’s quarto format in fact restricted its readership significantly and thus inhibited any propagandistic aspirations.

called democrats,” whose opposition to “monarchical and aristocratical governments, however modified,” and “[h]ereditary distinctions and privileged orders” meant that he was “not amongst the admirers of the British constitution” (ctd. in Bromwich 4-5).⁵⁷ Understandably, then, even though it advertised itself as a conventional eighteenth-century landscape poem, “Wordsworth’s main concerns in *Descriptive Sketches* are politics and society, not topography” (*Cornell* x; see also Braithwaite 127-8). Structurally, the poem begins and ends with two “strongly political episodes, moments when his narrator highlights social and political oppression within the landscape he explores” (Birdsall 43).⁵⁸ Likewise, the poem celebrates the power of the conquering French army’s “Fire and Sword” to undermine oppressive regimes and rectify injustices (774-805), while referring approvingly to Paine and disapprovingly to the Pitt Ministry’s attempts to silence him in recounting how “Pain’s wild rebellious burst proclaims her rights aloud” even “[w]hile strives a secret Power to hush the croud” (653). Most significantly, *Descriptive Sketches* is “fiercely anti-monarchist,” even if it tries to operate “at such a

⁵⁷ So extreme was Wordsworth’s radicalism that in the political climate of the early 1790s, his family grew understandably nervous for his safety, as his brother Richard suggested in May of 1794 when he advised William to “be cautious in writing or expressing” his radical positions because “[b]y the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act the ministers have great power” (ctd. in Bailey 41).

⁵⁸ Birdsall and others provide strong readings of *Descriptive Sketches* as primarily political in orientation. By opening the poem with the “violation of the Chartreuse” and concluding with a description of “the oppressive slavery in the shadow of Mont Blanc” (Birdsall 43), Wordsworth’s narrator, who seeks “political freedom and social justice,” only finds “tyranny and oppression in locations of great beauty” (Birdsall 43). According to Birdsall, “[t]he contrasts derive not merely from the fact that *Prelude* 6 recollects the tour differently or that in 1805 Wordsworth was a mature poet. *Descriptive Sketches* is fundamentally political and only incidentally concerns itself with the mind of the narrator or the Swiss landscape” (41). In particular, the “central experience” of crossing the Alps “is not so much as mentioned in *Descriptive Sketches*. Even the descriptive particulars of the scene that give life and force to the passage in *The Prelude* are dissipated throughout *Descriptive Sketches* (lines 122-23, 130, 215, 246-50). Wordsworth could not have forgotten the experience that was so dramatic in both the journey and *The Prelude*, so he must have excluded it from *Descriptive Sketches* deliberately. The reason ... is that this episode does not contribute to the poem’s social and political (as opposed to psychological) emphasis” (41).

level of generality” as to be “applicable to all political situations, or to none” (Gill 65). Concluding with the prediction that “every sceptered child of clay” would soon be “Swept in their anger from th’affrighted shore” and “[w]ith all his creatures sink—to rise no more” (806-9), the “final lines of *Descriptive Sketches* ... place their author firmly in the camp of the antimonarchical reformers who were the target of Pitt’s administration” (Bailey 40).⁵⁹ In celebrating France’s revolutionary army, praising Paine, rebuking governmental censorship, and explicitly attacking monarchy, Wordsworth’s poem expressed a potentially actionable set of political declarations.

Given the poem’s politics, “it seems entirely natural that Wordsworth should have been drawn straight to St Paul’s Churchyard and applied to Joseph Johnson to publish his first poetry” when he returned to London in December of 1792 (Braithwaite 127). Wordsworth had been searching for a London publisher during the preceding months, and while he might have been attracted to Johnson because of his position as Cowper’s publisher or his commercial success (Tyson 172), it is equally likely that Wordsworth sought out Johnson on the basis of his political reputation (*Cornell* 10). Wordsworth apparently knew of Johnson as the publisher of the “master Pamphlets of the day” and may also have been directed to him by radically minded English acquaintances in Paris

⁵⁹ The poem’s radicalism is further suggested by the fact that so many of the ideas foreshadowed in it appear in clearer and more explicit form in the *Letter to Bishop Llandaff*, written only a few months after *Descriptive Sketches*. To Bailey, the poem “is also an indication of the openly republican sentiments [Wordsworth] entertained at the time and that would lead him, probably within a few weeks, to compose the even more radical *Letter* to the Bishop of Llandaff, in which ... he defended the execution of Louis and, asserting his membership of the radical community, pointed out that he was ‘not alone, even in this kingdom’ in hoping that monarchy would never be restored in France” (40). See also, e.g., Chard (“Bookseller” 91) and Roe 72.

during December of 1792 (Braithwaite 127).⁶⁰ Either way, Wordsworth made contact with the publisher “at a time when his political attitudes were particularly compatible with those of Johnson and his circle” (Tyson 171-2). For, like Johnson, Wordsworth’s radicalism, open to prosecution, was still moderate relative to other strands. Rejecting Jacobinism and enthusiastic republicanism, Wordsworth sided with the Girondistes, generally opposing (outside of *Letter*) the execution of Louis XVI, as well as many of the more violent expressions of revolutionary fervor (Roe 80). Probably motivated by such ideological similarities, Wordsworth successfully arranged with Johnson to publish his poem, which was issued as a quarto pamphlet on January 29, 1793.

Appearing a month after the trial of Paine and only a week after the execution of Louis XVI, *Descriptive Sketches* entered a political context that focused attention on its radicalism. Yet while its sympathy for Paine, the Revolution, and anti-monarchism might have endangered its author and publisher, the poem’s paratextual, textual and material forms of address tempered its politics, aligning it with that of the Johnson circle. Paratextually, the poem sought to emphasize the respectability of its author and his milieu. Its full title—*Descriptive Sketches Taken During a Pedestrian Tour in the Italian, Grison, Swiss, and Savoyard Alps by W. Wordsworth, B.A. of St. John’s, Cambridge*—framed the text as a landscape poem recording the grand tour of an educated Englishman rather than a seditious attack on the British constitution. Likewise, the poem’s Latin epigraphs announced its intended audience as the educated middle-classes. Using lines

⁶⁰ Braithwaite writes, for example, that while in Paris during December, 1792, Wordsworth “may also have hovered around the large expatriate group of residents at White’s Hotel, which included Paine, Barlow and Thomas Christie and virtually formed an off-shoot of Johnson’s circle in the city” (127).

from Lucretius—“Loca pastorum deserta atque otia dia” (*De Rerum Natura* 5.1387)—and Virgil—“Castella in tumulis— / —Et longe saltus lateque vacantes” (*Georgics* 3.475; 477)—Wordsworth’s title page offered evidence of its author’s status as a gentleman speaking to other gentlemen. Finally, the poem’s deeply sentimental “Dedication” to “Rev. Robert Jones,” a “Fellow at Cambridge,” eschewed any mention of politics, declaring instead Wordsworth’s hope that the work would remind Jones of “moments to which you can hardly look back without a pleasure not the less dear from a shade of melancholy” and recalling their time slumming as “two travellers plodding slowly along the road, side by side, each with his little knapsack of necessaries upon his shoulders” rather than “lolling in a post chaise” (i).

Like its paratexts, the poem’s textual devices also addressed it to a carefully circumscribed audience. On the one hand, *Descriptive Sketches* emphasizes its status as a speculative exploration meant for the middle-classes rather than an inflammatory tract intended for the lower orders. Modally, it never speaks with certainty but always hypothetically. Speculating in its opening lines that “Were there, below, a spot of holy ground, / By Pain and her sad family unfound, / Sure, Nature’s GOD that spot to man had giv’n, / Where murmuring rivers join the song of ev’n!” (1-4), the poem repeatedly qualifies its utopian pronouncements. Likewise, its concluding hymn to revolutionary Liberty is rounded off by a melancholy hope that “To night, my friend, within this humble cot / Be the dead load of mortal ills forgot, / Renewing when the rosy summits glow / At morn, our various journey, sad and slow” (810-13). As an early instance of Wordsworth’s poetics of disappointment, the Miltonic allusion severely qualifies the

poet's hopes that the transformative power of Liberty will recreate an earthly Paradise. Formally, too, *Descriptive Sketches* displays its polite pretensions. Just as the couplets of *The Conspiracy of Kings* suggest its status as satire, the couplets of *Descriptive Sketches* are meant to establish its membership in the tradition of polite, eighteenth-century loco-descriptive verse. Meanwhile, the poem's extended periods indicate its intended audience as one comprised of educated men thought to be capable of parsing complicated syntax. Claiming that "Tho' Liberty shall soon, indignant, raise / Red on his hills his beacon's comet blaze; / Bid from on high his lonely cannon sound, / And on ten thousand hearths his shout rebound; / His larum-bell from village-tow'r to tow'r / Swing on the astounded ear it's dull undying roar / Yet, yet rejoice, tho' Pride's perverted ire / Rouze Hell's own aid, and warp thy hills in fire" (774-81), *Descriptive Sketches* couches an aggressively militant image of Liberty and a violent attack on the "perverted ire" of monarchical reaction in an obscure syntax meant to diffuse its radicalism by directing it toward an educated audience.⁶¹

But the poem's format also channeled it to a middle-class audience, for like *The Conspiracy of Kings* and *The French Revolution*, Johnson printed *Descriptive Sketches* in the quarto. Significantly, the fifty-five page pamphlet was sold for the relatively high

⁶¹ Wordsworth as well as his contemporaries recognized this obscurity: as the *Cornell* editors write, "Wordsworth himself later pronounced *Descriptive Sketches* 'juvenile, ... inflated and obscure'" (*EY*, p. 327) [and] [h]is opaque syntax and obscure imagery occasionally make for difficult reading, and Wordsworth sometimes seems overwhelmed by the genre and verse form he has chosen" (x). Likewise, writing years later in the *Biographia* of his discovery of the poem, Coleridge declared that "[s]eldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced ... The language was not only peculiar and strong, but at times knotty and contorted, as by its own impatient strength; while the novelty and struggling crowd of images, acting in conjunction with the difficulties of the style, demanded always a greater closeness of attention, than poetry (at all events, than descriptive poetry) has a right to claim. It not seldom therefore justified the complaint of obscurity" (ctd. in *Cornell* 1).

price of three shillings, meaning that while its content “would certainly have appealed to the less restrained of Wordsworth’s acquaintances and readers” (Bailey 40), it was “clearly destined . . . for the polite middle class poetry market” (Braithwaite 128). At twice the price of Barlow’s shorter poem and six times the price of Paine’s *Rights of Man* Part 2, Wordsworth’s *Descriptive Sketches* was issued as a conspicuously expensive luxury publication. Meanwhile, though “there is no record of the number of copies printed” (Cornell 10) and scant evidence regarding its distribution, it is difficult to imagine that the circulation of the poem was high.⁶² The poem was likely distributed widely by revolutionary sympathizers at Cambridge (Cornell 10), where Coleridge probably encountered it, but Wordsworth himself doubted its general commercial success, asking Mathews a year after its publication “to have the goodness to call on Johnson, my publisher, and ask him if he ever sells any of those poems, and what number he thinks are yet on his hands” (ctd. in Tyson 171). Together, the poem’s high price and low distribution redirected it towards an audience thought capable of reading its radical pronouncements without being inflamed to seditious activity.⁶³ As in the cases of Blake’s *The French Revolution* and Barlow’s *The Conspiracy of Kings*, the material, textual and paratextual forms of address embodied by Wordsworth’s *Descriptive Sketches* quarto

⁶² In all likelihood, the circulation was small, for Johnson apparently neglected to advertise the poem and seems to have had a number of copies in stock as late as 1805 (Tyson 172). It should be noted that the Cornell editors disagree, contending that “*Descriptive Sketches* seems to have had reasonably wide distribution” (10).

⁶³ The success of Johnson and Wordsworth in addressing the poem to such an audience and thereby placing it in legally safe space is indicated by early reviews, which emphasized the poem’s poetry over its politics. Braithwaite writes that “[w]hen it came to reviews . . . none of them commented on the political sentiments expressed in Wordsworth’s poems (not even the noted ‘Jacobin’ Thomas Holcroft who reviewed them in the *Monthly*) but concerned themselves mainly and in some cases quite harshly with the work’s literary merits” (129). In fact, only the *Analytical* mentioned the poem’s politics (Braithwaite 129).

pamphlet secured the poem against possible prosecution.

Coleridge and *Fears in solitude*

As a bibliographic form thought to be incapable of expressing any seditious tendency, the quarto format of Johnson's poetry pamphlets secured them against the charge of seditious libel. Yet though such publishing practices protected him from prosecution for most of the 1790s, Johnson finally ran afoul of the law in 1798. Most likely, Johnson was a casualty of a quickly changing political landscape. By early spring of that year, Britain was in the grips of an invasion crisis: on March 1, John Binn of the LCS, and Arthur O'Connor and James O'Coigley, both of the United Irishmen, had been arrested en route for France after O'Coigley was found with a letter addressed to the French government urging the invasion of Ireland. The Pitt Ministry's crackdown was immediate. Over 70 members of popular reform groups were arrested beginning in March. Habeas Corpus was suspended again in April. O'Coigley was convicted of treason and hanged in May. Local militias recruited volunteers in preparation for a possible invasion throughout the spring.⁶⁴ And, as in years past, the government sought to silence dissent by prosecuting radical writers and their booksellers, among them Johnson. Secure for most of the decade, Johnson was finally charged in February of 1798, when he and two other London booksellers were arrested on *ex officio* informations for the sale of Gilbert Wakefield's octavo pamphlet *A Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop of Landaff's Address to the People of Great Britain*. Deemed a seditious libel for its pro-French statements and its denunciations of social conditions in England, the content of *Reply* was

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (and especially Chapter 7) for an account of the events leading up to the invasion crisis, as well as Coleridge's involvement in them.

probably less important than the fact that it gave the Ministry a pretext for prosecuting Johnson, whose radical connections, publishing activities, and proprietorship of the consistently anti-governmental *Analytical Review* had finally succeeded in rendering him “a deep thorn in the side of the government” (Braithwaite 159).⁶⁵ Either way, on July 17 Johnson was tried by special jury and found guilty of distributing a seditious libel in the form of *Reply* (Braithwaite 163). Thus, while “[f]or the greater part of his career, Johnson seemed accurately to gauge where the legal and political boundaries for booksellers were drawn” (Braithwaite 166), by 1798 the government at least had concluded that Johnson’s radicalism outweighed his respectability.

The Wakefield trials were played out according to the established scripts. In the trial of John Cuthell, one of the booksellers charged, the prosecution argued that while “[f]ree, manly, and rational discussion is open to every man in this country upon all

⁶⁵ The suggestion that Wakefield’s pamphlet was used as a pretext to prosecute Johnson is based on the fact that, by established standards, the pamphlet was not necessarily objectionable. On the one hand, as Braithwaite explains, “[t]here is no doubt that Wakefield’s *Reply* contained much that was offensive to government” (155), especially his claim that “I am fully satisfied, that, if the French could land a considerable army in the country, to the number, suppose, of 60,000 or 70,000 men ... the kingdom would be lost for ever” partly because “the same cause which has facilitated the progress of the republicans on the continent would operate as powerfully for them in this country also namely a degree a poverty and wretchedness in the lower orders of the community which especially in their present state of depravity and ignorance will render the chances even from confusion of any change desirable” (*Reply* 18). Yet “[a]t 1s 6d *Reply* compared favourably to Llandaff’s *Address* which could be had for as little as 'Three-pence' and came out in at least 14 editions during 1798. Moreover, Johnson himself had sold many (possibly up to ten times) more copies of the latter, making accusations of cheap or mischievous mass-circulation patently absurd” (Braithwaite 157). Tyson argues that Johnson was tried and convicted not so much for the publication of *Reply* but rather for his activities on behalf of Unitarianism, his proprietorship of the *Analytical Review*, his connections to Paine, and his association with the SCI (154-5). Johnson had links to those figures soon to be arrested at Margate, having during the preceding year “sold several works which, in their various ways, could be linked to the activities of United English and Irishmen” (158). Meanwhile, the *Anti-Jacobin* had succeeded in publicizing these associations: in “New Morality”—a poem that also attacked Coleridge—Wakefield and by implication Johnson were targeted along with Paine and Johnson’s major author, Joseph Priestley; meanwhile, a Gillray caricature, along with attacking Coleridge, satirized the *Analytical* as forming part of a “Cornucopia of Ignorance.”

subjects; and juries should never be called upon to convict, except they find that the publication has deviated from the path of manly discussion,” Wakefield’s pamphlet had strayed from this aim and “gone into abuse and invective without argument; for such species of publication cannot be met with reasoning, and therefore cannot, in the weak minds of those who believe them, be refuted by reasoning” (*Howell’s State Trials* 654). The defendants contested the suggestion of mischievous tendency. In his statement during the November sentencing hearing, Johnson drew attention to the materiality of his publications as evidence of his innocence, explaining that “where he could take the liberty of doing it, he ha[d] uniformly recommended the Circulation of such publications as had a tendency to promote good morals instead of such as were calculated to mislead and inflame the Common people” (ctd. in Braithwaite 163-4). Similarly, Wakefield argued in his own trial that *Reply*’s visible aim of reaching a middle-class audience undermined the government’s claim that the pamphlet was seditious. On the one hand, Wakefield suggested that the work’s use of classical languages situated it within the bourgeois public sphere, claiming that “[t]he composition also is learned and scholastical or, if you will, pedantic, interlaced with Latin and Greek quotations, refuting instantaneously all imputation of seditious application to the passions of the multitude, and demonstrating an exclusive appeal to the more enlightened classes of society” (*Howell’s State Trials* 720). But Wakefield also argued, like Johnson, that *Reply*’s material characteristics precluded any seditious tendency:

[t]he size of the print and the goodness of the paper ... disprove a contemplation in me of general dispersion among the public, and without this view of general dispersion among the public, and without this view of general dispersion, I am at a loss to conceive, how a charge of sedition can

be maintained. A price also, correspondent to these external appearances, rendered the pamphlet inaccessible to many purchasers of such writings; nor did the title ... hold out any invitation of acceptable materials to the lovers and sowers of sedition ... Ocular inspection and common sense alone confer upon them a validity which no exaggeration can enforce, no sophistry impair. (*Howell's State Trials* 719)

Finally, Wakefield made known Johnson's involvement in such formatting and pricing decisions, explaining that "I employed also one bookseller, the regular vender of all my publications ... Gentlemen! if these allegations in behalf of honest purpose both in him and me be not imperiously decisive, and incapable of confutation, the Attorney-general must demonstrate me a most crafty knave, or I will confess myself an idiot" (*Howell's State Trials* 719). As such remarks make clear, Johnson must have recognized the importance of format, paper, and other material characteristics in proving or disproving the charges of seditious tendency advanced against *Reply*.

But Johnson also recognized that his reputation for respectability could be used to mitigate his case. Indeed, as Johnson went to great lengths to establish in his statement at the sentencing hearing, his acquaintance with "respectable and scientific Writers" meant that his publications had been "generally of a Moral, Philosophical, and Medical Nature, many of which [were] an honour to his Country" (ctd. in Braithwaite 163-4). Yet Johnson also knew that his status as a publisher of respectable works depended in large part on the format of these publications. Hence, while awaiting sentencing, Johnson undertook the publication of a quarto poetry pamphlet meant to remind the government of his reputation in the book trade. Like Johnson, the pamphlet's author, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, also had much to gain from its publication. His role as lecturer and journalist and his acquaintance with John Thelwall had earned him the interest of the Ministry, and along

with Wordsworth he was subject to governmental surveillance at Alfoxden in 1797.

During the following summer, Coleridge was publicly attacked by the Tory press, first by the *Anti-Jacobin*, which in July published a poem ridiculing him as well as other liberal or radical poets as Jacobins and fanatics, and then, in August, by a Gillray caricature that pictured him wearing an ass's ears. Hence, by August 1798 "Coleridge's name was infamous enough for him to have been a target of the Tory satirists" (Magnuson 70).

Thus, like Johnson, Coleridge found himself under attack for seditious radicalism at the height of the invasion crisis of 1798.⁶⁶ Moreover, like Johnson, Coleridge was anxious to improve his reputation in the eyes of the government and the public. The *Fears in solitude* quarto pamphlet, composed by Coleridge and published by Johnson in early September, was issued by the two men with just this aim in mind.⁶⁷

Though Johnson and Coleridge probably shared acquaintances, they first met in person only when Coleridge visited Johnson's shop in late August or early September of 1798, just before he embarked for Germany from Yarmouth (Braithwaite 161; see also

⁶⁶ Coleridge's radicalism during the 1790s was widely recognized. See Roe (723-7) for an overview of his radical career and its public reception.

⁶⁷ Critics tend to agree on this point. Paul Magnuson, for example, argues representatively that Coleridge's "*Fears in Solitude* was designed to answer criticisms of himself and Johnson," a fact "confirmed by the first notices printed in the *Analytical Review* (Dec. 1798), published by Johnson, which [asserts] that "Mr. C. in common with many others of the purest patriotism, has been slandered with the appellation of an enemy of his country" (77). Thus, "[t]he public significance of 'Frost at Midnight' in the fall of 1798 is that it presented a patriotic poet, whose patriotism rested on the love of his country and his domestic affections" (78), even while preserving enough ambiguity to "avoid the stigma of both Jacobin materialism and loyalist idolatry" (91). Magnuson advances this argument in the midst of a more general explanation of how "the meaning of a poem depends on the themes and figures that exist in the public discourse before the poem is written, on the allusive structure of its public language, and on the paratextual frame formed by the volume's other poems" (67-8). I agree with Magnuson, but, as this section shows, bibliographic codes were also an important component of the poem's meaning, and in the case of *Fears in Solitude*, the pamphlet's quarto format was also an essential element of Johnson's and Coleridge's response to Tory criticism.

Chard, “1790s” 97). Writing to his wife in October of 1798, Coleridge claimed that he had gotten on so well with the publisher that “I have desired Johnson to print in Quarto a little poem of mine,” and that “Johnson . . . without any poems sold to him; but purely out of affection conceived for me & as part of anything I might do for him, gave me an order on Remnant [the English bookseller] at Hamburg for 30 pound” (*Collected Letters I*: 417-8). Including three poems—“Fears in Solitude,” “France, an Ode,” and “Frost at Midnight”—that had been composed by Coleridge earlier in the year, the pamphlet was issued sometime in early September and sold for one shilling sixpence.⁶⁸ Yet, as Magnuson points out, the dates of composition dwindle in significance because “the purposes of publication are more important than Coleridge’s original intentions in drafting the individual poems,” for “[i]n late August, when the volume was composed, both author and publisher were under attack from the press and the government” (68). By issuing their response to this attack in the format of the quarto pamphlet, Johnson and Coleridge sought to supplement their public declaration of patriotism with a material symbol of gentility.

Like those of Barlow and Wordsworth, the poems appearing in the *Fears in solitude* pamphlet indicated their position within the bourgeois public sphere both textually and materially. The pamphlet’s eponymous poem exemplifies this process. Its carefully modulated ambivalences are a function of its speaker’s self-representation as a politely dissenting intellectual and its construction of its audience as the politically un-inflammable middle-classes. Coleridge assumes a dangerously enthusiastic voice in

⁶⁸ Of the pamphlet’s three poems, only “France, an Ode” had already appeared in print, having been published on April 16 in the *Morning Post*.

attacking British vices, veering towards anti-monarchism—"We have offended, O my countrymen! / We have offended very grievously, / And have been tyrannous" (42-4)—while lambasting British luxury consumption as the "riotous thirst ... [of] / A selfish, lewd, effeminated race, / Contemptuous of all honourable rule, Yet bartering freedom, and the poor man's life, / For gold, as at a market!" (55; 57-60). But his prophetic prediction that "Therefore evil days, / Are coming on us, O my countrymen" is tempered by his self-representation as a leisured and "humble man" (14), whose "intellectual life" (183), "ennobling thoughts" (184) and patriotic dedication to his "native" and "mother Isle" (179) are the outgrowth of a newfound domesticity rooted in the secure solitude of the British countryside. And Coleridge makes clear that any objection he takes to British policy is the result of sincere concern for the well-being of his country rather than zealous fanaticism or malicious intention, explaining that "I have told, / O Britons! O my Brethren! I have told / Most bitter truth, but without bitterness. / Nor deem my zeal or factious or mistim'd; / For never can true courage dwell with them, / Who, playing tricks with conscience, dare not look / At their own vices" (150-7). Finally, Coleridge repeatedly draws attention to his alignment with the middle-class ideology of Rational Dissent rather than the vulgar radicalism of the lower orders, including the institution of oath-taking in his litany of British vices (69-83) while distancing himself from the "poor drudges of chastising Providence" (165), those "groaning with restless enmity" who "expect / All change from change of constituted power" (178-9), and those who are made by a "mad idolatry ... / enemies / Ev'n of their country" (169; 171-2). Taking pains to separate himself from the lower classes, Coleridge portrays himself as polite, preacherly,

and patriotic.

“Fears in Solitude” represents its audience as similarly middle-class in composition. Though the poem roundly attacks the British government’s treatment of its impoverished domestic and imperial subjects, its forms of address indicate that the economically secure rather than the impoverished constitute its intended audience. Even while “[f]rom east to west / A groan of accusation pierces heaven! / The wretched plead against us, multitudes / Countless and vehement, the sons of God, / Our brethren!” (45-8), “Fears” makes clear that its audience—those referred to by “us” here and elsewhere—are not the wretched and countless multitude but the “selfish, lewd, effeminated” consumers of luxury. Likewise, Coleridge’s attack on the unfeeling abstractions created by mass literacy and the spread of cheap newspapers expresses his only slightly veiled anxiety about an ever-growing reading public made up of men like “the poor wretch, who has learnt his only prayers / From curses, who knows scarcely words enough / To ask a blessing of his heavenly Father, / [and who] Becomes a fluent phraseman” (105-8). Neither the “poor drudges” preaching sedition, nor the newly literate “poor wretch” who reads him, nor even the “poor man” whose life is bartered on the market are included in the intended audience of “Fears.” Instead, Coleridge speaks to those men who, like himself, form a leisured class of readers whose respectable social and economic positions mark their difference from the poverty-stricken men and women capable of being incited to acts of sedition.

But such textual forms of address were supplemented by the pamphlet’s material properties, which directed its poetry toward the same middle class audience addressed by

its texts. The one shilling sixpence price of the pamphlet precluded those “poor wretches” lamented by “Fears” from purchasing it, while its low print run meant that it was available only to a small audience of buyers rather than the “wretched . . . multitudes” to whom political pamphlets like Paine’s *Rights of Man Part 2* appealed. *Fears in solitude*’s genteel status was further indicated by its paratextual material, including Johnson’s announcement in the pamphlet’s final pages of works “Just published.” Announcing three new editions of Cowper’s *Poems*, the listing draws attention to Cowper’s established social position—the poet is described as being “OF THE INNER TEMPLE, ESQ”—and the luxurious trappings of the new editions, which include “An elegant Edition in a small size, in 2 vols. price 6s. in boards” and “An elegant Edition in 2 vols, with 10 plates from Stothard’s designs, engraved by Heath, Parker, Medland, Neagle, Angus, &c. price 14s. in boards” as well as a cheaper edition still sold for the high price of 5 shillings (24). By virtue of its price, low print run, and bibliographic milieu, *Fears in solitude* entered the book market as just the sort of luxury good attacked in its first poem’s catalogue of British vices (56), excluding most of that growing mass of readers feared in its attacks on the “fluent phraseman” (108) from accessing its poems in their complete forms and indicating instead its intended audience as the respectable middle-classes. By issuing the *Fears in solitude* pamphlet in quarto, Johnson and Coleridge meant to remind both the government and the reading public of their respectability and thus salvage their reputations during a politically sensitive year.

Conclusion

In the end, Johnson’s attempt to use the *Fears in solitude* quarto pamphlet to re-

establish his respectability failed: in February of 1799, he was sentenced to six months in prison and given a £50 fine. Johnson's conviction for seditious libel was to prove hugely significant, for not only did it substantially upset his business—his output decreased markedly the next year—but it exerted a lasting impact on his reputation. Referring to the publisher's conflicting identities during the 1790s, Braithwaite writes that “a jury in 1798 was sufficiently packed as to be able to accept [the radical] version of Johnson, finding him guilty of willful not negligent criminal publication ... and thereby helping to establish what remains the received impression of him today—a by-word for ‘radical’ publishing in the 1790s” (162). But though Johnson's conviction may have radicalized his reputation for posterity, in fact for most of the 1790s Johnson was recognized as a respectable publisher with a safely middle-class audience. As this chapter has shown, foremost among those devices by which Johnson assured his respectability was the quarto poetry pamphlet, whose use established the publisher's position within the public sphere and shaped the reception of the poetry it embodied. Issued in the form of the quarto pamphlet, the potentially seditious anti-monarchism embedded in the radical poetry of Blake, Barlow, Wordsworth and Coleridge was tempered insofar as it was directed to an audience thought capable of receiving it judiciously and speculatively rather than intemperately. As a material component of the bourgeois public sphere, the quarto format was a crucial component in the creation of the ‘respectable radicalism’ of Johnson and his acquaintances during the 1790s. As such, the quarto materialized that “luxury of democratic converse” whose practice assured the Johnson circle its reputation for promulgating a safely respectable political ideology and thus secured the publisher and

his authors from harassment by the Pitt ministry for most of the 1790s.

CHAPTER 4

THE “LUXURY OF IMAGINATION”:

ANXIETY, IDEOLOGY, AND APOSTASY IN WORDSWORTH’S *EXCURSION*

QUARTO

When it first appeared in 1814, *The Excursion* was designed with one purpose above all in mind: to assure Wordsworth’s literary survival. Not only was the text of the poem meant as a “literary Work that might live” (*The Excursion* viii), but its material embodiment in the durable form of the quarto book was intended to guarantee its material permanence, thus ensuring its continuing life for a body of future readers more receptive than Wordsworth’s contemporaries to his poetry. Yet what the format imparted in material durability it took away in terms of circulation, for as a high-priced luxury book with a low print run, the quarto was out of reach for most readers. Meanwhile, the book’s publication also signaled a change in Wordsworth’s political reputation, eliciting from many of his contemporaries charges of political apostasy, and marking for them Wordsworth’s self-proclaimed role as ally to the British crown, apologist for the Anglican church, and bard of the monied few. Nevertheless, critical accounts of *The Excursion* have tended to ignore one very important detail: the historical meaning and impact of its original bibliographic format. By examining the early material history of the *Excursion*, this chapter attempts to intervene in our discussions about Wordsworth’s poetry. Focusing attention on Wordsworth’s desire to exploit the reputed durability of the quarto format,

Part 1 argues that Wordsworth's so-called "anxiety of reception" expressed itself not only textually but also bibliographically. Part 2 argues that Wordsworth's choice to publish in quarto indicated a recognition on his part of the irreducible materiality of all attempts to achieve textual transcendence, showing that the contradictions of Wordsworth's Romantic ideology were embodied at the level of the book. Part 3 uncovers the material dimension of Wordsworth's political apostasy, emphasizing the quarto's status as a luxury book reserved for "gentleman, persons of fortune ... [and] persons who can afford to buy, or can easily procure, books of half-a-guinea price, hot-pressed and printed on super fine paper."

Perhaps most interesting of all, *The Excursion*'s status as a quarto also served to materialize the luxury of its aesthetic ideology, and especially its glorification of imagination. That Wordsworth conceived of poetic imagination in terms of luxury is clear from a letter sent to Coleridge on Christmas Day, 1799. Recounting a 1799 journey from Sockburn to Grasmere, Wordsworth devoted a long, lavish description to a group of waterfalls found in a cave encountered *en route*:

I cannot express to you the enchanting effect produced by this Arabian scene of colour as the wind blew aside the great waterfall behind which we stood, and alternately hid and revealed each of these fairy cataracts in irregular success, or displayed them with various gradations of distinctness as the intervening spray was thickened or dispersed ... In the luxury of imagination we could not help feeding upon the pleasure which this cave, in the heat of a July noon, would spread through a frame exquisitely sensible. That huge rock on the right, the bank winding round on the left with all its living foliage, and the breeze stealing up the valley, and bedewing the cavern with the freshest imaginable spray. And then the murmur of the water, the quiet, the seclusion, and a long summer day. (LWDW I: 280)

Directly echoing the language of the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, the letter not only

figures imagination in explicitly luxurious terms but also hints at the material conditions qualifying its enjoyment: the “frame exquisitely sensible” of the leisured poet, with time enough to enjoy the pleasures of a “long summer day” excursion and education enough to express it poetically.¹ But Regency readers also recognized that the bibliographic constraints guiding the transmission of Wordsworth’s celebration of poetic imagination—especially in the form of that doctrine of visionary transcendence celebrated by *The Excursion*—shaped this ideology’s class status. Celebrating the tranching down of *The Excursion*, for example, one poet thanked the publishers for “enabling me / Upon my humble shelf, to see / ‘THE EXCURSION’—in Octavo” (4-6) before figuring Wordsworth’s aesthetic project explicitly in terms of the luxurious wealth of its material form, explaining that “[l]ong have I grieved, that such a mine / Of Poesy’s true lore divine, / Rich veins of thought affording; / Should be half inaccessible / By means of that forbidding spell / Which lurks in quarto boarding” (“Verses to Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown on their Publication of Wordsworth’s *Excursion* in Octavo” 7-10). But

¹ The phrase “luxury of imagination” recurs with great frequency throughout the period: a *European Magazine* review of the *Memoir of Captain Felix M’Donogh*, for example, recounts of a rural retreat near Oxford that “[i]n this delightful seclusion he enjoyed all that luxury of imagination in which a mind, at this period of life naturally romantic, loves to indulge, and which not only the charms of nature, but the associations connected with this elysian retreat, were so peculiarly fitted to excite” (85: 290); an essay on Schlegel’s “A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature” argues that “that which is excited by the luxury of imagination pleases him, in poetry, as the profusion of colours and perfumes would do in nature” (*Literary Panorama* 8.50: 273); the *Monthly Repository*’s “On Poetic Skepticism” asks “what luxury of imagination is there, which a Christian, whose belief is founded on understanding is unfitted to enjoy?” (11.123: 159); the *Athenaeum* writes in a “Bibliographic Notice of Jerome Pompei” that “in point of fire and enthusiasm, rapidity of thought, and luxury of imagination, [Pompei] was placed above [his contemporaries]” (22: 332); an essay “On the Genius and Writings of Moore” printed in the *European Magazine* observes of requited love that “[i]t is then the heart bounds with joy, and revels in all the luxury of imagination” (85: 388); and so on. Likewise, *The Examiner* commends the Duke of Buckingham’s “luxurious imagination” (“The Examiner” 561: 616), and *Universal Magazine* observes of the Duchess of Roxburghe that “[i]n the select circles which she forms, ease, elegance, lively sallies of wit, a luxurious imagination, and all the *agremens* that render female conversation so delightful, are enjoyed in their highest perfection” (4.20: 3). See also Samuel Johnson’s essay on “The Luxury of a Vain Imagination” (*Rambler* 51).

the luxuriousness of *The Excursion*'s quarto format also expressed the contradictions of its ideology, as another contemporary suggested in remarking that “the meek, sentimental, sympathetic and all benevolent Mr. Wordsworth” should have “disdained the pomposity of quartos, and the extortion . . . of two guineas” (“Spoils” 224). Luxurious in its physical embodiment as much as its rhetorical expression, *The Excursion*'s ideology of transcendent imagination was classed by its format, assuring that its glorification of simple necessity was rendered the unique possession of those gentry and aristocratic readers to whom it was at last addressed.

“Fit though few”: Wordsworth’s Anxiety of Reception and the *Excursion* Quarto

In *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism*, Lucy Newlyn argues that “Romanticism can be understood as a species of ‘reaction-formation’” intended to mitigate authorial anxiety about the reception of Romantic texts (xi). To Newlyn, Wordsworth provides an especially clear-cut case of this “anxiety of reception” (ix). Because Wordsworth “saw that the provisionality of literary tradition—its openness to the modifications and revisions of successive generations of reader-writers—made his own work vulnerable to mis-reading” (92), he sought to control the reception of his work through his prose criticism even while the “hermeneutics of collaboration” modeled in his poetry tended to undercut such attempts (133). Yet while Newlyn focuses on his use of texts to address his anxiety of reception, Wordsworth also sought to alleviate fears about the survival of his works through the bibliographic formats in which he embodied them.² Though

² While Newlyn does acknowledge Wordsworth’s interest in the formats he used to publish his work (93), her argument only focuses in passing on such material strategies, concentrating instead on Wordsworth’s “theoretical attempt to direct the public’s expectations” and the ways in which this attempt was undercut by his poetry.

Wordsworth had always experienced anxieties about publishing, only in the wake of the negative reviews of *Poems in Two Volumes* did he have “any cause to feel aggrieved by the reaction of his audience” (Newlyn 93). But rather than responding to the anxieties triggered by these reviews by developing exclusively textual defenses, Wordsworth sought to exert greater control over the reception of the poem meant to establish his reputation, *The Excursion*, by publishing it in quarto. By embodying *The Excursion* in the luxurious and durable quarto format, Wordsworth sought to ensure that the text met with his ideal audience: those “fit though few” readers constituting the “People, philosophically characterised.”

During the period leading up to the publication of *The Excursion* in 1814, Wordsworth’s poetic reputation underwent a series of damaging attacks. Initiated by Frances Jeffrey’s *Thalaba* review of 1802, these attacks came to a head in 1807 following the publication of *Poems in Two Volumes*. On the grounds especially of its puerility and its suspect political commitments, *Poems* received strongly negative reviews, with reviewers suggesting that its problems were serious enough to bring about the ruin of Wordsworth’s career, and that, in the words of one writer, the poet could only hope to “see his error, and not persist in making murderous attacks upon his own literary reputation” (*RR* II.816).³ Certainly, the reviewers’ predictions were to some extent self-fulfilling. Not only did the reviews decimate sales of *Poems*, but they also “nearly destroyed Wordsworth’s reputation” by refashioning his public image in a powerfully

³ Likewise, the *Annual Review* (*RR* I.21), the *Satirist* (*RR* II.846), and Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh* (*RR* II.431) all warned that the collection’s failure had the potential to damage Wordsworth’s literary career and poetic reputation irreparably.

harmful way (Trott 12). As late as 1837, Thomas Noon Talfourd could refer to the period between 1807 and 1814 as one during which Wordsworth's name "was made a byword" and his works routinely "scoffed at" (ctd. in Swartz 482; 488). Though Wordsworth seems to have anticipated to some extent such negative reaction, the reception of the 1807 volume was also personally damaging (*LWDW II*: 145). In particular, Wordsworth began to suffer an "anxiety of reception" in response to the attacks on *Poems*. Ultimately, the experience taught Wordsworth "that the reception of future volumes must be more tightly controlled than ever" (Newlyn 94) if his literary reputation was to be protected.

In order to exert such control, Wordsworth evolved a number of strategies. First, he altered the generic shape of his poetry. Though in the *Preface* Wordsworth had disparaged the reading public's thirst for the sort of "extraordinary incident" which made the tales of Scott successful, after *Poems* was panned he deliberately sought to craft in *The White Doe of Rylstone* a story whose narrative elements would appeal to the public.⁴ Second, and more seriously, he experienced a growing aversion toward publishing of any kind. Though Wordsworth had always suffered apprehensions about submitting his work to evaluation by the reading public, the reviews of *Poems* seem to have cut through his defensive posture of nonchalance and exposed deeper anxieties, resulting in his decision to withdraw *The White Doe* from the press and refuse to publish any poetry whatsoever

⁴ Dorothy hints at this motive when she writes of *The White Doe* in March of 1808 that "I can never expect that poem, or any which he may write, to be immediately popular, like the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*; but I think the story will help out those parts which are above the common level of taste and knowledge, and that it will have a better sale than his former works, and perhaps help them off . . ." (*LWDW II*: 203). See also her letters of May 11 and December 3, 1808 (*LWDW II*: 234-6; *LWDW II*: 277-9).

between 1807 and 1814, when *The Excursion* finally appeared.⁵ Third, Wordsworth's traumatic experience at the hands of the reviewers in 1807 seems to have initiated his decades-long crusade for the extension of copyright, which began the following year (*LWDW* II: 266). Though his interest in copyright reform was in part financially motivated, Wordsworth seems above all to have been driven by a need to ensure the survival and guarantee the status of his literary reputation across the decades (Eilenberg 352; 354). In reshaping his texts, refusing to publish, and embarking on a quest for copyright reform, Wordsworth sought to ward off anxieties about the reception of his work by assuming greater control over his readers' reactions to it.

Most significantly, Wordsworth's anxiety of reception drove him both to devote close attention to the constitution of his audiences and to undertake the formulation of a number of defensive "figures of self-vindication" (Swartz 488). These related aims were evident as early as the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*. Observing that nascent industrialization, urbanization, and standardization had produced among readers "a craving for extraordinary incident which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies" ("Preface" xix), Wordsworth suggested that this craving was only satisfied by the popular but ephemeral publications that appeared with greater and greater frequency during the 1790s and whose passing popularity rendered them markedly distinct from the

⁵ Earlier statements of this aversion can be found in letters of March 6, 1798 and Nov. 10, 1806 (*LWDW* I: 210-12; *LWDW* II: 95-7). By 1806, Wordsworth had begun to assume a posture of non-chalance consistently, but the reviews of *Poems* seem to have undermined it and have led him to withdraw *The White Doe*. Though he had planned to publish *The White Doe* shortly after *Poems*, in the wake of the collection's negative reviews Wordsworth vacillated. (The story of this vacillation can be found in letters written by Dorothy between 1808 and 1809 [especially *LWDW* II: 203-6; 224-5; 234-6; 378-81].) In fact, it was not until 1814 that any poetry, let alone *The White Doe*, was issued. By refusing to publish for seven years, Wordsworth likely sought to forestall any further blows to his reputation.

less popular but timeless works of great art produced by the genuine poet.⁶ Though his distinction between the ephemerality of popular writing and the permanence of high art would appear with greater frequency during the subsequent decade, it took the hostile reception of *Poems* to move Wordsworth to transform his scattered remarks into a doctrine of reading audiences.⁷ In the months following the publication of *Poems*, Wordsworth began to formulate an opposition that would be refined over the next seven years. Corresponding to his distinction between the ephemerality of popular “stimulants” and the permanence of unpopular but serious literature, Wordsworth distinguished two audiences—one, a multitudinous, fickle, and ephemeral “Public”; the other, an anticipated audience named the “People.”⁸ This distinction was to find its clearest and first public expression in the “Essay, Supplementary to the Preface” of 1815, where Wordsworth distinguished a “Public,” characterized as “clamorous,” “loud,” “governed by factitious influence,” “unthinking” and existing in the present, from the “People, philosophically characterised,” which, though it existed in the present only as a “few and

⁶ Against the images of “accumulation,” “deluge,” “rapidity,” and “numerousness” associated with such ephemerally popular works, Wordsworth opposed the “inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind” and “the great and permanent objects that act upon it which are equally inherent and indestructible” (“Preface” xix-xx). According to Wordsworth, poetry especially exemplifies such qualities of mind: “The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespear and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse ...” (xix)

⁷ See especially Wordsworth’s 1807 letter to Lady Beaumont (*LWDW* II: 150): opposing the ephemerality of “present reception” and the numerousness of the “multitude of unhappy and misguided” to the durable permanence of the “work of time,” Wordsworth assuages his anxiety of reception by anticipating the latter as the fate of his work. Though his poetry may not exert its influence until “we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves,” Wordsworth assures Lady Beaumont that its future reception will prove its worth.

⁸ Evidence for this development is found primarily in Wordsworth’s letters from the period. See *LWDW* II: 194; II: 145; and II: 264, especially.

scattered hearers,” would in time grow into an approving posterity whose praise would prove the worth of the poetry currently disparaged (“Essay” 374-5).

But in attempting to mitigate his anxiety of reception by distinguishing the hostile “Public” of the present day from a future class of “People” capable of recognizing literary greatness, Wordsworth encountered a further problem. For his poetry could only find its proper reception with a future audience if it survived to reach that audience. But, as Wordsworth well knew, this survival was materially constrained: the timelessness Wordsworth anticipated for his poetry depended on the durability of the forms embodying it. Hence, Wordsworth’s anxiety of reception also led to a pre-occupation—evident throughout his career but especially leading up to the publication of *The Excursion* in 1814—with the materiality of texts. On the one hand, Wordsworth seemed to understand language in generally material terms.⁹ But he also displayed a fixation with the bibliographic materiality of poetic texts. Indeed, many of the canonical moments in Wordsworth’s body of work manifest the poet’s fascination with material textuality, especially with the bearing of material form on the durability of a text. Occasionally, this fascination is expressed in terms of confidence in the durability of books.¹⁰ But more often Wordsworth shows not a conviction in the material durability of a text but rather an anxiety about the inefficacy of material form to guarantee a text’s survival (*Prelude* 5.18-

⁹ See, for example, his remarks in the “Preface” (*LB* xii) and the “Essay” (347).

¹⁰ See the Simpon Pass episode in Book 6 of the 1805 *Prelude*, for example, where the visible expressions of the transcendent unity of mind and nature are figured bibliographically, as “Characters of the great apocalypse, / The types and symbols of eternity, / Of first, and last, and midst, and without end” (6.636-40). The “characters” and “types” of eternity are not simply Biblical but also material, referring to the linguistic characters and types imprinted on paper as Nature imprints them on Wordsworth’s mind. Significantly, the timelessness of natural sublimity is imaged in terms of a permanently durable Book of Nature.

22; 5.45-49; and 5.88-98). Frequently, such passages indicate the power and significance of this anxiety by imaging books in terms of mortality and burial (*Prelude* 5.161-5; 8.725-7; and 9.238-245). The association between the material form of the book and the forms of burial is also apparent in the image with which Wordsworth most commonly figures his literary work—that of the monument, the permanence of whose material form provided him with a model for textual inscription (*Prelude* 6.48-60; 13.432-56; and *1850* 8.608-16).¹¹ Yet, as Wordsworth knew, the monument only served as a bibliographic ideal. In fact, the permanence symbolized by its material durability had to find physical expression in the form of the book, and it was the difficulty of so doing that generated Wordsworth's anxiety about material textuality.

Wordsworth's anxiety about the perishable materiality of his work also helps to explain his familiarity with the practical dimensions of books and publishing—of formats, prices, print runs, patterns of circulation, and bibliographic codes. As Gill observes, Wordsworth demonstrated a “grasp on all aspects of publication,” frequently becoming so deeply involved in the production of his books that he was little less than “a printer's nightmare” (Gill 185).¹² Wordsworth was especially aware of the ways in which book format impacted audiences and reception, recognizing, on the one hand, the massive reach of the cheap, small-format chapbook, and on the other, the power of expensive, larger-format books like the quarto to constrict a reading audience (*LWDW II*:

¹¹ Wordsworth's tendency to figure his poetry in terms of the monument continued throughout his career. In his third Duddon sonnet, for example, Wordsworth asks “How shall I paint thee?—Be this naked stone / My seat, while I give way to such intent; / Pleased could my verse, a speaking monument, / Make to the eyes of men thy features known” (“How shall I paint thee” 1-4). Likewise, in “Fidelity” he suggests of his tale that “A lasting monument of words / This wonder merits well” (52-3).

¹² See Gill (185) for lengthy examples of the ways in which this was true. See also, e.g., *LWDW II*: 275-6.

246-51; St. Clair 201). Moreover, Wordsworth was also well aware of the ways in which the bibliographic codes attached to a book's format framed its texts. To an extent, this awareness was likely shaped by his experience at the hands of his reviewers, though Wordsworth himself tended to employ the bibliographic codes associated with cheap print matter in disparaging popular writers.¹³ Likewise, Wordsworth's awareness of the bibliographic codes attached to certain formats was evident in his attempts to manipulate them during his early career as a publishing poet, as suggested by his choice to publish *Lyrical Ballads*—a collection of poetry defined in part by its commitment to an aesthetic of simplicity—in the octavo format.¹⁴ In particular, Wordsworth recognized what

¹³ In 1802, Jeffrey had attacked the Lake School by suggesting that the literary codes of its poetry mirrored the vulgar bibliographic codes associated with cheap print matter, asserting of the its market that “the ingenious writers who supply the hawkers and ballad-singers, have very nearly monopolized that department, and are probably better qualified to hit the taste of their customers” (*RR* II.418). Likewise, in its review of *Poems*, the *Satirist* had opened its attack by asserting that “[i]nstead of occupying two duodecimo volumes of wire-wove and hotpressed paper, with a beautiful type and a large margin, these poems would have been more appropriately invested with a fine gilt wrapping, adorned with wooden cuts, and printed and bound uniformly in all respects with Mother Bunch's tales and Mother Goose's melodies” (*RR* II.845). Wordsworth employed such codes in disparaging other writers when, for example, in speaking of copyright he writes in 1808 that “[t]he law, as it now stands, merely consults the interest of the useful drudges of Literature, or of flimsy and shallow writers, whose works are upon a level with the taste and knowledge of the age; while men of real power, who go before their age, are deprived of all hope of their families being benefited by their exertions” (*LWDW* II: 266). In describing the “useful drudges of Literature” and other “shallow” writers as “flimsy,” Wordsworth implicitly draws an analogy between the impermanence of the weak writer's reputation and the material ephemerality of the material form used to embody it.

¹⁴ That Wordsworth was intent on so shaping *Lyrical Ballads*, for example, is apparent from his letters regarding the presentation of the book. Writing to his publisher Joseph Cottle regarding the preparation of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, Wordsworth had requested with Coleridge that the text be printed with “18 lines in a page, the lines closely printed, certainly more closely than those of the Joan (Oh by all means closer! W. Wordsworth), equal ink; & large margins. That is beauty—it may even under your immediate care mingle the sublime” (*LWDWI*: 219-20). Wordsworth's interest in typographic codes is evident throughout his career. Yet though Wordsworth and Coleridge attempted to convince Cottle to produce an aesthetically appealing object, they also sought to prevent the *Lyrical Ballads* book from incorporating any of the extravagant codes associated with the luxury quarto. See Alan Boehme, who argues that “the simple typographic style of *Lyrical Ballads* was crafted to exemplify in material form the artful simplicity of Wordsworth's poetry and, consequently, to help justify his verse ‘experiment’,” while the edition's relatively cheaper, relatively more accessible octavo format enacted materially the volume's project of promoting an ideology of egalitarianism (Boehm 47).

constituted bibliographic luxury. Writing to Edward Moxon of *Sonnets* late in his career, for example, he confessed that “you somewhat surprize me in purposing to print one Son. on a page, the whole number being I believe 415. Your plan and consequent price would make it a book of luxury” (*LWDW VI*: 518). But though he was conflicted about such luxurious books—partly from his recognition of the commercial motives encouraging the book industry to embrace the luxury book and partly from his awareness of the potential impact on circulation—Wordsworth apparently had no objection to book luxury *per se*, and even sought to employ the luxurious codes of the quarto book in pursuing his own projects.¹⁵ In particular, he recognized the power of the luxury book—and specifically the quarto—to signify literary value, as indicated by Benjamin Haydon’s reminiscence that “[o]ne day Wordsworth in a large Party, at a moment of silence, leaned forward & said, ‘Davy, do you know the reason I published my White Doe in Quarto’ ‘No,’ said Davy, rather blushing. ‘To express my own opinion of it,’ he replied” (*Diary 2*: 470). Haydon’s memory suggests that Wordsworth was acutely sensitive to the impact of bibliographic codes—and especially the luxury codes attached to the quarto—on the reception of a text during the Romantic period.

Driven by fears about the survival and status of his literary reputation to search for a bibliographic form capable of both creating those “few and scattered hearers” constituting the “People” and monumentalizing his poetry for an “improving posterity” of future readers, Wordsworth turned to book format, and specifically the quarto book, when

¹⁵ On the one hand, Wordsworth complains in 1819, for example, that “booksellers are revelling in luxury upon gains derived from works which are the delight of many nations” (*LWDW III*: 535). On the other, he confessed to Moxon that he had “no objection” to the luxury publication of *Sonnets*, “yet still my wish is, to be read as widely as is consistent with reasonable pecuniary return” (*LWDW VI*: 518).

it finally came time to publish *The Excursion* in 1814. Though he had managed to avoid issuing any new collections of poetry for seven years after the publication of *Poems*, Wordsworth was finally induced by circumstance to publish again in 1814. Though forced in part by financial pressures to publish *The Excursion*, amid “all the other pressures in the years 1812-15 what mattered intensely to him was the redeeming of his reputation” (Gill 300).¹⁶ Indeed, Wordsworth’s decision to publish *The Excursion* in 1814 was closely bound up with his anxiety about his literary reputation, as he assured Thomas Poole that year when he confessed that “[m]y poetical labours have often suffered long interruptions; but I have at last resolved to send to the press a portion of a poem which, if I live to finish it, I hope future times will ‘not willingly let die’. These you know are the words of my great predecessor, and the depth of my feelings upon some subjects seems to justify me in the act of applying them to myself, while speaking to a friend, who I know has always been partial to me” (*LWDW* III: 146). By alluding to Milton, Wordsworth meant not just to suggest his place alongside his “great predecessor” in the English literary canon but also to indicate his desire to produce a timeless rather than an ephemeral work, one capable of surviving long enough to reach posterity. Yet while

¹⁶ Gill writes that “[i]n 1813 Wordsworth was under pressure from three connected demands: that he should save his wife’s health; that he should, somehow, gain more money; that he should establish his reputation by published work, which would decisively refute the *Edinburgh Review*’s most recent goading observations that he ought to be ‘ashamed’ of most of *Poems, in Two Volumes ...*” (295). To a certain extent, these pressures were difficult to separate. Writing to Samuel Rogers on May 5, Wordsworth announced that “I am about print (do not start) eight thousand lines, which is but a small portion of what I shall oppress the world with, if strength and life do not fail me. I shall be content if the publication pays the expenses; for Mr. Scott, and your friend Lord Byron, flourishing at the rate they do, how can an honest poet hope to thrive” (*LWDW* III: 148). As his references to Scott and Byron suggest, Wordsworth sought not only remuneration but also status. Yet where Scott and Byron had achieved their popularity on the basis of what he took to be objectionable narrative practices, Wordsworth sought to produce a work of a more serious nature. Explaining his present activities to Wrangham on April 26, Wordsworth wrote of the work that “It is serious, and has been written with great labour ...” (*LWDW* III: 144).

Wordsworth could count on finding a sympathetic audience in his friend Poole and other members of his literary coterie, he could not so trust Regency or future reading audiences. Driven by his anxiety about his literary reputation, Wordsworth sought to create an ideal readership for *The Excursion* through the material means of the quarto book.

Letters from the period indicate that Wordsworth was closely involved in the production of *The Excursion* quarto.¹⁷ Meanwhile, letters and publishing records strongly suggest that Wordsworth also intended that his new work be published in the luxurious quarto format.¹⁸ By publishing *The Excursion* in quarto, Wordsworth sought to satisfy his

¹⁷ See, for example, *LWDW* III: 144. Apparently, Wordsworth also involved himself in designing the poem's title-page: a letter from Longman Co. to Wordsworth, signed May 20th, informs him that "We shall send you with this a proof of the Title of the Excursion, with a very trifling alteration from the copy you sent us; for your approbation" (Owen 26). The correspondence between Wordsworth and the Longman house—some of which can be found in Owen's "Letters of Longman & Co. to Wordsworth, 1814-36"—indicates the degree to which Wordsworth was involved in all aspects of the printing and publishing of his work.

¹⁸ While I have found no document stating explicitly Wordsworth's intention to publish *The Excursion* in quarto, all available evidence suggests that he did so intend this. On March 16, 1814, Longman writes to Wordsworth to inform him that "[w]e [can *del.*] will with pleasure publish your new poem on the plan we do the works of our friend Southey, we to pay all the expenses & divide the profits equally [with you *del.*] between us" (Owen 25-6). The Southey "plan" likely refers to the poet's arrangements with Longman regarding the publications of *Madoc* (1805) and *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), both of which were issued in quarto. Of those verse quartos issued in the first decade of the century, these two were, at 42 shillings—the cost of the *Excursion* quarto—far and away the most highly priced. But these exorbitant prices—as well as the arrangements regarding expenses and returns agreed to by Southey and Longmans—were conditioned by the quarto publications of the books. Wordsworth evidently hoped to profit off of the Southey plan. St. Clair suggests that "in hopes of matching the money which Scott and Byron were making ... [Wordsworth became,] in effect, a high-priced publisher himself" in arranging for the quarto publication of *The Excursion* (201). As Wordsworth well knew, Scott and Byron were the authors of the two most recent major verse quartos (see, e.g., St. Clair 200): Scott's *Rokeby* had appeared in quarto at the price of 42 shillings in 1813, and Byron's *Childe Harold* quarto had appeared at the price of 30 shillings in 1812. Indeed, Wordsworth refers to this hope in a letter sent in May, 1814, where, speaking of the *Excursion* quarto, he admits modestly but probably disingenuously that "I shall be content if the Publication pays its expenses, for Mr. Scott and your friend Lord B., flourishing at the rate they do, how can an honest Poet hope to thrive?" (*LWDW* III: 148). By arranging for Longman to pay the expenses and divide the profits for the *Excursion*, Wordsworth likely sought to earn higher returns than he previously had, and Longman's ledgers provide evidence that Wordsworth agreed to the Southey plan, showing "the initials 'W.W.' written in against the accounts, implying that Wordsworth personally inspected and approved them on a visit to London" (St. Clair 201). Moreover, for two

need to ensure the survival and status of his work by creating that audience he believed to be most capable of properly receiving it—the “People.” In attempting to form an audience of the “People,” the quarto offered Wordsworth two practical benefits. First, the quarto was a luxury book, whose high price and low print run established its rarity and therefore narrowed its possible readership considerably. As St. Clair observes, “[a]t 42 shillings (2£ 2s) before binding, over 45 shillings (2£ 5s) bound, *The Excursion* in quarto was, for its length, perhaps the most expensive work of literature ever published in England” (201). Indeed, so high was the book’s price that it was prohibitively expensive for most readers, including, probably, Wordsworth himself (St. Clair 202). Likewise, the book was rare, for only 500 copies were produced by Longman. Yet even for such a low print run the price of a copy of Wordsworth’s poem was wildly high, constraining its readership to only those wealthiest of readers capable of spending lavishly on a book more expensive than almost any other of the many verse quartos flooding the Regency-period book market. The poem’s reviewers recognized the quarto’s power to restrict the

reasons it is likely that Wordsworth rather than Longman proposed the Southey plan for the publication of *The Excursion*. First, as late as mid-March, 1814, Longman still seems not to have even seen the poem, as is suggested by a letter asking Wordsworth whether “you will favor us with a sight of the poem” (Owen 26). Without knowledge of its length, the firm wouldn’t have been able to make an accurate formatting decision or suggestion. Second, Longman gave Wordsworth control over his formatting choices. For example, during the months directly preceding the publication of *The Excursion*, Longman writes Wordsworth to let him know that “[w]e shall be happy to print your *Lyrical Ballads and other Poems* as you propose in 2 vols. 8[vo]” (Owen 26). Likewise, less than a year later, Longman writes in a letter signed January 28, 1815 that “[i]f the [statement *del.*] arrangement proposed in [that *del.*] our letter of 5th Aug [1814] be agreeable to you, we will put the work to press immediately [& print 500 copies in quarto *del.*] in any form that shall be agreeable to yourself ...” (Owen 27). Both letters indicate the degree to which Wordsworth maintained control over the formatting of his poetry. This control is also apparent in Haydon’s oft-related story about Wordsworth’s awkward exchange during a lull in conversation at a dinner party about “the reason I published my White Doe in Quarto ...” (*Diary* 2: 470). The evidence thus suggests that Wordsworth rather than Longman proposed the quarto publication of *The Excursion* according to the “Southey plan.” The argument of this section, however, is that Wordsworth was driven to do so not solely by financial considerations but also by anxieties about his literary reputation. See also Mary Poovey’s discussion of the *Excursion* quarto in *Genres of the Credit Economy* (297-8).

readership of the poem, with *The Literary Gazette* noting of the first quarto edition a few years later that “a quarto, of the price of two guineas, is likely only to be known by report to the majority of readers of poetry; and the consequence is, that though this beautiful poem has been published, we believe, more than six years, it has, from its size and cost, been as inaccessible to numbers, whom its contents would have delighted, as if it had continued in manuscript” (206: 837). Likewise, both William and Dorothy were aware of the ways in which the price and low print run of the quarto impeded access to the poem.¹⁹ As reviewers and the Wordsworths both knew, *The Excursion* quarto was a book meant for the few, the fashionable, and the monied.

In publishing *The Excursion* as a luxury quarto book, Wordsworth was driven by a few related aims. First, he likely sought to achieve some “small pecuniary advantage” for his household during a time of considerable financial insecurity by attempting to appeal to an audience of fashionable readers (*LWDW* III: 184; Gill 295).²⁰ Though this appeal violated a long-standing opposition to fashionable luxury, Wordsworth believed that the *Excursion* quarto’s fashionability might prove both financially profitable and socially beneficial.²¹ Likewise, Wordsworth probably sought to use the quarto to appeal to

¹⁹ Writing in the wake of the quarto’s failure, Wordsworth voices concern over the book’s high price, informing Thomas Poole in March of 1815 that “[i]f you can conscientiously recommend this expensive work to any of your wealthier friends, I will thank you, as I wish to have it printed in a cheaper form, for those who cannot afford to buy it in its present shape” (*LWDW* III: 210-11). Meanwhile, Dorothy asserts in a letter dated February 27, 1815 that “I have no anxiety about the fate of either the *Excursion* or the *White Doe* beyond the sale of the first Edition—and that I do earnestly wish for. There are few persons who can afford to buy two guineas Book, merely for admiration of the Book. The edition has no chance of being sold except to the wealthy; and they buy books much more for fashion’s sake than anything else—and alas we are not yet in the fashion” (*LWDW* III: 207).

²⁰ For Wordsworth’s earnings on *The Excursion* quarto and subsequent editions, see Owen.

²¹ For example, only a year later he would criticize “those whose existence passes away in a course of fashionable pleasure” and for whom poetry “is a species of luxurious amusement” (“*Essay*” 342). But in

fashionable audiences in order to mark his present status as an established poet, for *The Excursion* was published in quarto not only “to express his own opinion of it” but to suggest the appropriate opinion for the taste-making class generally.²² But as a luxury book, the quarto’s power to constrain readership also answered to Wordsworth’s desire to create that audience of “few and scattered hearers” constituting the small class of “People” capable of appreciating his poetry. *The Excursion* was to make this aim explicit in its “Prospectus,” where Wordsworth alluded to Milton in explaining his hope to reach a “fit audience . . . though few” (xi). Necessarily, the luxury quarto was a book that limited access to its text to those few capable of purchasing a copy. Even housed in a circulating library, the quarto appeared in so few copies that its readership was restricted through number of copies alone. The quarto thus embodied materially Wordsworth’s aim of creating a narrow class of readers for his reputation-making poem.

Second, the quarto was also a durable book, providing Wordsworth with the

private letters Wordsworth expressed a pre-occupation with the book’s sale among the British social elite, writing with glee on November 26, 1814 that “[y]esterday I had a letter from Sir George Beaumont in which he says the Bishop of London is enchanted with the *Excursion*, and indeed I hear but one opinion on the subject!” (*LWDW* III: 171). Dorothy shared her brother’s conflicted hope of appealing to upper class readers, as suggested by her admission to Catherine Clarkson that “[p]erhaps you may not guess for I have but half explained myself why I am sorry that William did not see the Duke on account of the sale of the *Excursion*. I think the more Friends he has either of Rank or Talents or notoriety the better, that they may talk against the Writers for the more that is said of the work the better” (*LWDW* III: 165).

²² Even after the apparent failure of the quarto volume, Wordsworth continued to anticipate the power of *The Excursion* to establish his reputation. Responding in passing to Jeffrey’s negative review, Wordsworth writes in December of 1814 that “I am delighted to learn that your Edinburgh Aristarch has declared against the *Excursion*, as he will have the mortification of seeing a book enjoy a high reputation to which he has not contributed” (*LWDW* III: 180). Jeffrey himself made reference to the quarto’s reputation for embodying high-quality work in the first line of his review of *The White Doe*, where he announced of the book that “[t]his, we think, has the merit of being the very worst poem we ever saw imprinted in a quarto volume” (*RR* II.454-5). Even if his project initially failed, poetic reputation, as much as financial remuneration, was Wordsworth’s aim in bringing *The Excursion* to press in quarto.

material means necessary to produce a truly monumental work “that might live.” Not only was the *Excursion* quarto intended to limit its present readership to a small class of readers, but it was also meant to survive long into the future, ensuring the existence of its text for those future readers whom Wordsworth believed would be more receptive to his work. Certainly, he conceived of the poem itself along these lines, but the quarto book embodying the text was also designed for physical permanence. Mary Poovey has suggested that “Wordsworth’s insistence that *The Excursion* be priced for elite buyers may have articulated his preference for future readers over the attention of any of his contemporaries, for well-made, high-priced books would survive longer than cheap editions” (*Genres* 298). As a matter of fact, however, it was the quarto’s materiality—the fact that it was “well-made”—as much as its exorbitant price that promised to render its text permanent.²³ As a large and well-crafted book, the *Excursion* quarto was far more durable than small-format books like the octavo or duodecimo. The format’s reputation for durability partly explains its associations with age and antiquarianism during the period, for over and over, the quarto is imaged as a book that *lasts*. Indeed, Wordsworth himself acknowledged the *Excursion* quarto’s value as a durable collector’s item when he advised Alexander Dyce in 1831 that though the poem had been improved in subsequent editions, “I thought the Quarto might have its value with you as a Collector” (*LWDW V*: 373). Hence, in attempting to identify a bibliographic form capable of transferring the qualities of the monument into book form and thereby ensuring the availability of *The Excursion* to the “People” constituting his ideal future audience, Wordsworth was drawn

²³ Indeed, as the “Conclusion” of this chapter shows, Wordsworth came to realize that the two properties were in conflict.

toward this particular and established format.

Thus, after a seven year hiatus during which he suffered a growing anxiety about the survival of his work and the strength of his status as a poet, Wordsworth issued his reputation-making poem in a bibliographic format meant to create the audience of the “People” that he had only previously theorized. By restricting its readership to a small number of present readers through high price and low number, the luxury quarto limited *The Excursion*’s audience to a “fit audience though few.” Likewise, the quarto’s durability promised to monumentalize the text, promising its survival for those future audiences on whose approbation Wordsworth believed his reputation would depend. Embodying *The Excursion* in the material form of the quarto thus allowed Wordsworth to control the reception of his text and mitigate his fears about the survival and status of his work.

“More lowly matter”: Romantic Ideology and the *Excursion* Quarto

By publishing *The Excursion* in quarto, Wordsworth sought to ensure the survival of the text of his poem by issuing it in a bibliographic form known for its durability. Wordsworth’s pre-occupation with identifying a durable bibliographic form for *The Excursion* mirrored the poem’s thematic obsession with permanence: of the lastingness of natural forms against the ephemerality of social formations; of the transcendent powers of the visionary imagination against the limited appeals of reason; and of the eternal security of the spiritual over the fleeting comfort of the bodily. Most fundamentally, *The Excursion* opposes its figures of permanence to the endlessly changing forms of the material world. Summarizing his project in the “Prospectus,” Wordsworth introduces a

set of dialectical oppositions meant to structure *The Recluse* as a whole. Invoking the “prophetic spirit” serving as his muse, Wordsworth asks that it assure

that my Song
 With star-like virtue in its place may shine;
 Shedding benignant influence,—and secure,
 Itself, from all malevolent effect
 Of those mutations that extend their sway
 Throughout the nether sphere!—And if with this
 I mix more lowly matter; with the thing
 Contemplated, describe the Mind and Man
 Contemplating; and who, and what he was,
 The transitory Being that beheld
 This Vision,—when and where, and how he lived;—
 Be not this labour useless.

(88-99)²⁴

Though the passage establishes a series of oppositions—between the unchanging “Song” and the malevolent mutability of “the nether sphere”; between “the thing / Contemplated” and the “lowly matter” with which it is mixed; and between “[t]his Vision” and “[t]he transitory Being that beheld” it—each depends on an implicit dichotomy between the unchanging immateriality of thought and the ephemeral materiality of bodies. In its account of the poem’s “high argument” (71), the “Prospectus” explains that the opposition between immaterial mind and the material world is characterized by dialectical inter-dependency rather than irreconcilability, on the basis of the sublime power of the mind to reconcile oppositions in transcendent, visionary unities (62-71). Yet in repeatedly invoking the opposition between mind and matter, the “Prospectus” always privileges the former over the latter term, characterizing matter by the “malevolent effect / Of those mutations that extend their sway / Through the nether sphere.”

²⁴ The text used throughout this section is that of the uncorrected 1814 quarto edition.

In opposing the unchanging, “star-like virtue” of its “Song” to “those mutations” of the material world, the “Prospectus” expresses what Jerome McGann calls the “romantic ideology”: the “grand illusion” that “poetry, or even consciousness, can set one free of the ruins of history and culture” (*RI* 91). Even so, McGann pays little attention to *The Excursion*. Instead, McGann treats “The Ruined Cottage”—a text that was to become Book 1 of *The Excursion*—as “an exemplary case of what commentators mean when they speak of the ‘displacement’ that occurs in a Romantic poem” (*RI* 84-5). In the wake of McGann’s treatment of the poem in *The Romantic Ideology*, much criticism has sought to identify the textual devices—from imagery, to fragment, to frame—involved in the poem’s ideological displacements.²⁵ Meanwhile, other commentators have tried to demonstrate that the poem exposes rather than practices ideological displacement (Wolfson 14; Swann 84). In almost every case, however, critical discussion about the ideological status of the story of Margaret focuses not on Book 1 of *The Excursion* but rather on one of the manuscript versions of “The Ruined Cottage.”

Yet because it was the *Excursion* quarto, and not “The Ruined Cottage,” that Regency readers bought—or borrowed—and read, attempts to understand historically the early ideological status of Wordsworth’s poem should focus on the text of *The Excursion* rather than MS. D or B. Though discussions about the ideological maneuvers of “The Ruined Cottage” have been richly productive, they apply to a poem that went unpublished and unread by most readers until the middle of the twentieth century.²⁶

²⁵ See, e.g., Liu (*Wordsworth: The Sense of History* 322); Levinson (*The Romantic Fragment Poem* 221-230); and Chandler (*Wordsworth’s Second Nature* 130-5).

²⁶ The textual history of “The Ruined Cottage” is notoriously complicated. See *Cornell RC* ix-xiii for a

Editors and critics might agree that MS. D presents the most aesthetically pristine or psychologically significant version of “The Ruined Cottage,” but such agreement neglects the fact that most nineteenth-century readers were unacquainted with the text.²⁷ Instead, nineteenth-century readers were familiar with a single version of the poem, that text finally published (and revised) as Book 1 of *The Excursion*.²⁸ Likewise, it was *The Excursion* rather than MS. D that was read by Victorian and early twentieth-century readers.²⁹ Because Romantic, Victorian, and early twentieth-century readers tended not to encounter Book 1 alone but rather within the context of *The Excursion* as a whole, the story of Margaret was inseparable from the stories of the Wanderer, the Solitary, and the Pastor during its early reception history. In focusing discussion on MS. D rather than *The Excursion*, most commentators ignore reception history, choosing to locate the

detailed overview; see also Rieder 150. Though a version of the poem was ultimately published and reprinted as Book 1 of *The Excursion*, and an edition of the first two books brought under the title *The Deserted Cottage* by George Routledge in 1859 (Gill *Revisitings* 47-8), not until the twentieth century were any of these manuscripts published. The *Cornell* edition of the poem provides a useful summary of the poem’s twentieth-century publication (*Cornell RC* xii).

²⁷ See *Cornell* i for a summary of such remarks. See also Rieder 149. In focusing on MS. D rather than Book 1, commentators implicitly privilege Wordsworth’s psychological development, or at least his impact on a small coterie audience, over historical reception. For example, Rieder explains the popularity of MS. D on the grounds that it succeeds in “relocating Shelleyan accusations of Wordsworth’s apostasy to the crucial moment of Wordsworth’s career . . . in early 1798” (Rieder 147). But, as Part 3 of this chapter explains, Wordsworth’s “apostasy” was more a public event than a private realization, as the reference to Shelley—a reader whose sole access was to Book 1—indicates.

²⁸ In “Alastor,” for example, Shelley alludes not to MS. D but to Book 1 of *The Excursion* when he concludes the poem’s preface by writing “The good die first, / And those whose hearts are dry as summer dust, / Burn to the socket!” Writing from the other end of the political spectrum, Coleridge remarked on the centrality of Book 1 to Romantic culture when he observed in 1832 that “I have often wished that the first two books of the *Excursion* had been published separately, under the name of ‘The Deserted Cottage.’ They would have formed, what indeed they are, one of the most beautiful poems in the language” (ctd. in *RC* ix).

²⁹ As the editors of the *Cornell* edition of “The Ruined Cottage” observe, “for a century the text [of “The Ruined Cottage”] reprinted was simply the first book of the last approved version (1850) of *The Excursion*, which incorporated revisions made in 1820, 1827, 1832, 1837, and particularly in 1845” (*RC* ix), when Wordsworth revised the poem along Anglican lines.

ideological interest of Book 1 in Wordsworth's psychological development rather than the text's historical transmission and reception by readers. But in treating Wordsworth's psychological development over readers' reception as its object of analysis, the debate about the ideological status of "The Ruined Cottage" privileges biographical interest over cultural history. If the actual ideological impact of the poem during the Romantic period is to be understood, then attention needs to turn from "The Ruined Cottage" MSS and toward the *Excursion* quarto.³⁰

Such attention must focus not only on the historically received text of the poem but also the material form that embodied it and framed its interpretation. Much critical attention has been paid to *The Excursion*'s textual frames and their psychological, ideological, and political significance.³¹ Yet in focusing on its textual frames, commentators tend to neglect the poem's material frame—that of the book. First published as a durable quarto, *The Excursion* was embodied in a material form that drew attention to those very problems of natural ruin and historical change which the text sought to contain, displace, and transcend. Though the material durability of the quarto book was meant to render its text permanent, it also indicated Wordsworth's recognition of the necessary ephemerality of material things, including books and texts, and thus displayed the contradictions running through the poem's ideological project.

If romantic ideology responds in part to anxieties about material change, then

³⁰ Of course, there is nothing methodologically wrongheaded about the choice to study Wordsworth's psychological development—indeed, Part 1 of this chapter does just this. Yet while the examination of Wordsworth's "anxiety of reception" requires that attention be paid to the poet's private intentions and actions, the examination of the development and transmission of romantic ideology is primarily a matter of historical reception and therefore requires as its object the historically received text.

³¹ See, for example, Manning ("Wordsworth, Margaret, and the Pedlar" 202; 215) and Rieder (148-9).

such anxieties form the narrative core of *The Excursion*. Certainly, the story of Margaret's decline illustrates both the inevitability of material alteration and, through its framing devices, "the proper attitude to [the] human suffering" (Manning 207) caused by this alteration.³² By portraying Margaret's tragedy as part of an eternal cycle of material change, the Wanderer attempts both to displace its causes from the social to the natural and to suggest that the poetic vision of unchanging stability represented by the notorious blade of speargrass, "so calm and still," can provide an imaginative means by which to cope with tragedies such as hers. Thus, the Wanderer's framing narrative illustrates McGann's conception of romantic ideology as representing the power of "poetry, or even consciousness" to set "one free of the ruins of history and culture." But the story of Margaret also prefigures the "one major, confessed narrative intention" of *The Excursion*: "to educate the Solitary out of what is said to be self-consuming melancholy and into a state of active acceptance or peace of mind" (Simpson 200). Though triggered by the deaths of his wife and two children and his disillusionment with the failures of the French Revolution, the Solitary's melancholy also emerges from his inability to come to grips with the ephemerality of the material world and to acknowledge the permanence of immaterial reality. Rather than finding solace in the eternal forms of Nature, the Solitary

³² The Wanderer's first words indicate the centrality of the problem of material alteration to *The Excursion*: "Thus did he speak. 'I see around me here / Things which you cannot see: we die, my Friend, / Nor we alone, but that which each man loved / And prized in his peculiar nook of earth / Dies with him, or is changed; and very soon / Even of the good is no memorial left ...'" (501-6). In the story that follows, material change initiates Margaret's downfall: "[t]wo blighting seasons when the fields were left / With half a harvest" and "[a] worse affliction in the plague of war" lead to a "time of trouble" that brings about the physical and mental deterioration of Robert, the "sad reverse" of the family's fortunes, Robert's desertion of Margaret and his children, and the gradual decline and death of Margaret. The frame provided by the Wanderer's narrative is meant to instruct his listener into the proper attitude toward the story of Margaret and the spectacle of needless suffering generally.

reads them as further confirmation of the transience of all things, and his despondency follows in the wake of his realization that “what good is given to Men, / More solid than the gilded clouds of Heaven, / What joy more lasting than a vernal flower? / None!” (443-6). Unable to cope with material ephemerality and failing to find solace in the permanent forms of nature, the Solitary is left “pleased / To skim along the surfaces of things, / Beguiling harmlessly the listless hours” (138-40) as a recluse among the mountain reaches.

Like Book 1, *The Excursion* as a whole recounts the attempts by the Wanderer and the Pastor to correct the Solitary of his despondency by re-interpreting the mutable materiality of all things as a sign of a deeper and more permanent stillness.³³ By trying to turn his attention from the mutable world toward a divine and immutably transcendent reality, the Wanderer hopes to console the Solitary by showing him that the grief occasioned by the passing of material things can be overcome in visions of immaterial unity (4.146-7; 4.153-9). Likewise, the Pastor attempts to teach the Solitary to cope with

³³ The Wanderer’s argument is summarized in his response to the Solitary’s monologue: “[o]ne adequate support / For the calamities of mortal life / Exists, one only; —an assured belief / That the procession of our fate, howe’er / Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being / Of infinite benevolence and power, / Whose everlasting purposes embrace / All accidents, converting them to Good” (4.10-17). Throughout his speech, the Wanderer divides transcendent immateriality from mortal materiality, distinguishing “those transcendent truths / Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws” from “This universe [which] shall pass away” (4.96-7; 4.100). Throughout *The Excursion*, materiality is characterized by decay, ephemerality, and constant change: the Wanderer bemoans the fact that “man grows old, and dwindles, and decays” (4.760); he attacks “the Ephemeral offspring of the unblushing world” (4.210); and asks that his listeners be “taught with patient interest to watch / The processes of things” (4.1257-8). On the other hand, the Wanderer advises that his listeners turn from ephemeral materiality towards the vision of “eternal things”: “Come Labour, when the worn-out frame requires / Perpetual sabbath; come disease and want; / And sad exclusion through decay of sense; / But leave me unabated trust in Thee— / And let thy favour, to the end of life, / Inspire me with ability to seek / Repose and hope among eternal things ... / But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken, / And subject neither to eclipse or wane, / Duty exists;—immutably survive, / For our support, the measures and the forms, / Which abstract Intelligence supplies; / Whose kingdom is, where Time and Space are not” (4.57-63; 4.71-6).

the shocks and disappointments of the material world, though not by advancing rational appeals but rather by activating the imagination through the display of “solid facts” (5.637) “plain pictures” (5.638-9), and “[a]uthentic epitaphs” (653). Such images and stories are meant to illustrate a set of “high Truths” which “our wise / Forefathers ... to guard against the shocks, / The fluctuation and decay of things, / Embodied and established ... / In solemn institutions” like the Anglican Church (5.1003-6). Like the Wanderer, the Pastor’s aim is to turn the Solitary’s attention away from the transitory things that populate mortal existence and toward the undying truths of immortal life.

Through rational argument and poetic narrative, the Wanderer and the Pastor strive to construct the grounds for the sort of displacement attempted by the Wanderer in Book 1. Even so, the ideological agenda of *The Excursion* is deeply conflicted. Though the Wanderer and the Pastor strive to prove the truth of their arguments and the strength of their visions, doubts about the power of their project haunt their monologues, structure the poem’s narrative, and emerge in its failure to reach closure. On the one hand, the poem’s skepticism about its programme is expressed in the unreliability of its narrative voices, especially that of the Wanderer, whose exaggerated “happiness” at the vision of the speargrass surrounding Margaret’s cottage hints at the insufficiency of his approach to her tragedy. Likewise, the poem’s reluctance to privilege any single voice complicates the status of each character’s perspective.³⁴ Finally, in concluding not with the Solitary’s recovery but rather with the deferral of attempts to achieve it to another day, the poem seems to question deliberately the power of its responses to the Solitary’s despondency

³⁴ See Robert Ryan (*Romantic Reformations* 102) for a discussion of this reluctance.

(9.985-90; 9.795-6).

Yet nowhere is *The Excursion*'s skepticism about its own ideological project more apparent than in its representations of the very material object intended to transmit it: the book. As Wordsworth knew, only through its embodiment in a durable material form could the text of *The Excursion* accomplish its ideological aims. Yet as a physical object, this text was susceptible to those very material changes it was meant to teach readers to transcend. Consequently, throughout much of *The Excursion* the ontological status of material textuality is ambiguous: books are figured sometimes as vehicles of spiritual transcendence, sometimes as symbols of material decay, and sometimes as existing in a space between textual immateriality and documentary materiality. In Book 1's description of the Wanderer's early reading, for example, the book occupies a space between imagistic and textual transcendence and physical degradation. Through the local minister, the Wanderer is given access to Fox's *Book of Martyrs*—recounting “The life and death of Martyrs, who sustained, / With will inflexible, those fearful pangs / Triumphantly displayed in records left / Of Persecution, and the Covenant”—and a collection of chapbook romances:

And there by lucky hap had been preserved
A straggling volume, torn and incomplete,
That left half-told the preternatural tale,
Romance of Giants, chronicle of Fiends
Profuse in garniture of wooden cuts
Strange and uncouth; dire faces, figures dire,
Sharp-knee'd, sharp-elbowed, and lean-ankled too,
With long and ghostly shanks—forms which once seen
Could never be forgotten! (1.188-203)

The passage lingers especially on the opposition between the transient materiality of a

mutable form like the chapbook and the survival of the images and texts it embodies. Though the chapbook is “torn and incomplete,” preserved for posterity only by “lucky hap,” the diabolical images it prints “could never be forgotten” once imprinted on the young Wanderer’s receptive mind. A similar opposition is suggested in the Poet’s description of the Wanderer’s bible. Among “the lonely mountain tops” (1.240) the Wanderer recognizes

... how beautiful, how brightly appeared
 The written Promise! He had early learned
 To reverence the Volume which displays
 The mystery, the life which cannot die:
 But in the mountains did he feel his faith;
 There did he see the writing; all things there
 Breathed immortality, revolving life
 And greatness still revolving ... (1.243-50)

Like the chapbook, the Wanderer’s bible, itself a mutable material form, displays transcendent truths: “the mystery, the life which cannot die.” Only in the mountains, though, is the Wanderer able to witness the “written Promise” of the “immortality, revolving life / And greatness still revolving,” which corresponds to and renders permanent the text embodied in his bible. Subject to decay, the material form of the book is opposed to the undying Book of Nature, whose natural forms eternalize the Bible’s “written Promise” in the unchanging landscape of the English countryside.

Because of their status as mutably material objects, though, books are primarily imaged throughout *The Excursion* in various stages of decay. In Book 1, for example, Margaret’s decline and the ruination of her cottage are marked by the degradation of her books. In his third return to the cottage, the Wanderer explains that though Margaret “seem’d the same / In person and appearance ... her House / Bespake a sleepy hand of

negligence”:

The floor was neither dry nor neat, the hearth
Was comfortless, and her small lot of books,
Which, in the Cottage window, heretofore
Had been piled up against the corner panes
In seemly order, now, with stragglng leaves
Lay scattered here and there, open or shut,
As they had chanced to fall. (1.855-64)

Like the Wanderer’s “stragglng volume” by “lucky hap preserved,” the “stragglng leaves” of Margaret’s books signify the forces of misfortune afflicting her, having scattered across the floor “as they had chanced to fall.” The power of the decaying book to indicate the dissolution of both a psychological state and a physical space recurs in Book 2 when the Poet describes the Solitary’s mountain cottage: “What a wreck / We had around us! Scattered was the floor, / And, in like sort, chair, window-seat, and shelf, / With books, maps, fossils, withered plants and flowers, / And tufts of mountain moss; and here and there / Lay, intermixed with these, mechanic tools, / And scraps of paper,—some I could perceive / Scribbled with verse ...” (2.286-93). As in the description of Margaret’s cottage in Book 1, the disorder of the Solitary’s hovel tropes the apparent disorder of his mind. But along with the other signs of death—“fossils, withered plants and flowers”—the Solitary’s books and “scraps of paper” especially evoke the ruin of his life. Like the “scattered leaves” decorating Margaret’s floor, the scraps strewn about the cottage, some “scribbled with verse,” both indicate the confused state of the Solitary’s despondency and signify the alterations that have triggered it. For both Margaret and the Solitary, the decay of the book signifies both the material mutability that has afflicted them and the absence of any adequate textual guide capable of teaching them to transcend

their affliction.

Though the textual matter littering the Solitary's cottage suggests the disorder of his life, the Solitary's damaged psychological state is most clearly expressed in the image of the book found by the Wanderer and the Poet as they approach his home. Roaming among the baby-houses nearby the Solitary's cottage, the Poet finds "[a] book, that, in the midst of stones and moss / And wreck of party-coloured earthen-ware ... had lent its help to raise / One of those petty structures" (2.456-9):

The Book, which in my hand
Had opened of itself, (for it was swoln
With searching damp, and seemingly had lain
To the injurious elements exposed
From week to week,) I found to be a work
In the French Tongue, a Novel of Voltaire,
His famous Optimist. (2.461-7)

Like the books found in the cottages of Margaret and the Solitary, and the chapbooks read by the Wanderer, the Solitary's copy of *Candide* is found in a state of serious decay, "swoln / With searching damp." On the one hand, the book's condition—swollen, broken, and used by children to erect an imaginary community—figures the utopian optimism of Voltaire and the other Enlightenment philosophes whose works provided the ideological basis for the French Revolution as both juvenile and ephemeral. But the book also metaphorizes the life of Solitary, who at this point in the narrative is thought by the Poet and the Wanderer to be dead; as the Wanderer observes, "'A Book it is ... to the Person suited well ...'" (2.482-3). Referring to the children who have erected the baby-houses, the Wanderer exclaims that the book is "a sad memorial of their hapless friend" (2.480) and a "relique" (2.509) signifying the political failure that haunts him. During his

discussion with the Solitary, who miraculously appears following the book's discovery, the Wanderer returns the book, but not without denying its power to guide the Solitary through his despondency: "'Gentle Friend' ... / ... 'You have known better Lights and Guides than these ... In the ports / Of levity no refuge can be found, / No shelter, for a spirit in distress'." Instead, he urges the Solitary to recognize the "law of duty" whose practice wards off "each vicissitude of loss and gain" and resolves the "vain anxiety" caused by his fear of material change (4.1012-37).

Even while it images the book primarily in terms of its mutable materiality, *The Excursion* also sometimes figures the book as a lasting object capable of preserving transcendent truths. This power is not so much a function of the book's material form as its status as a vehicle for immaterial texts, especially of certain genres.³⁵ In his attempt to correct the Solitary's despondency in Book 4, the Wanderer reminds him that

³⁵ Like *The Prelude*'s Book 5, *The Excursion* represents poetic and mathematical texts as especially associated with the transcendence of materiality. In Book 1, the Wanderer's encounters with Milton direct his attention to the opposition between bibliographic materiality and the permanence of texts. Traveling "... to a neighboring town / He duly went with what small overplus / His earnings might supply, and brought away / The Book which most had tempted his desires / While at the Stall he read. Among the hills / He gazed upon that mighty Orb of Song / The divine Milton" (1.265-70). Though embodied in the material form of the book, Milton is apotheosized in the mountains, where his text merges with the image of the sun to become a "mighty Orb," thereby participating in the unchanging permanence of nature. Likewise, the Wanderer's thoughts are redirected by his step-father toward the divinely transcendent truths written into the natural world through the forms of a set of mathematical "books that explain / The purer elements of truth involved / In lines and numbers, and, by charm severe, / (Especially perceived where nature droops / And feeling is suppressed,) preserve the mind / Busy in solitude and poverty" (1.271-8). In focusing the Wanderer's mind on the "purer elements of truth," the mathematical texts possess a preservative power, buoying him up in moments of "idleness" when he feels "[t]hrough yet he knew not how, a wasting power / In all things ..." (1.286-7). Like the poetic texts of Milton, these mathematical texts sustain the Wanderer through their power to merge with nature: according to the Poet, "with [Nature's] hues, / her forms, and with the spirit of her forms, / He clothed the nakedness of austere truth" (1.288-90) whose abstract demonstrations he finds in his mathematical texts. In measuring the "altitude of some tall crag," the Wanderer contemplates the ways in which "some peak / Familiar with forgotten years ... shews / Inscribed, as with the silence of the thought / Upon its bleak and visionary sides, / The history of many a winter storm,— / Or obscure records of the path of fire" (1.296-301). Like his copy of Milton, the Wanderer's mathematical texts ultimately lead him to contemplate the ways in which natural forms clothe the austere truths of the immortal universe.

books are yours
 Within whose silent chambers treasure lies
 Preserved from age to age; more precious far
 Than that accumulated store of gold
 And orient gems, which for a day of need
 The Sultan hides within ancestral tombs.
 These hoards of truth you can unlock at will. (4.561-9)

Unlike the decaying books belonging to Margaret and the Solitary, or found on the shelf of the Minister, those books imagined by the Wanderer are durable containers for texts figured as oriental jewels. In preserving their “hoards of truth” for posterity, the books are cited by the Wanderer as objects capable of lasting in a manner feared by the Solitary to be impossible. Such books are valuable insofar as they support “Remembrance, [which] like a sovereign Prince, / For you a stately gallery maintain[s] / Of gay or tragic pictures” (4.559-61). Like the memories of his travels and his skill as a musician (4.560-2; 4.570-3), the Solitary’s books preserve treasures incapable of being altered by the passage of time. Significantly, these books are figured as vaults and their store of texts as luxuries. As “orient gems” possessed by a sultan, the Wanderer frames luxury as textual rather than bibliographic, and its objects as immaterial rather than materially mutable. Luxury connotes a kind of timeless immateriality incapable of suffering alteration or decay. Even so, the form of the book seems to occupy an uncertain place between life and death, its chambers capable of preserving its textual luxuries but still “silent” and tomb-like.

Likewise, the Pastor figures books in terms of their preservative power. In the first of his “[a]uthentic epitaphs,” he tells the story of the Unrequited Lover, whose love gradually weakens him until he is killed by a fever. Upon his deathbed, the Lover asks that his beloved accept

Of his possessions, that which most he prized;
 A Book, upon the surface of whose leaves
 Some chosen plants, disposed with nicest care,
 In undecaying beauty were preserved.
 Mute register, to him, of time and place,
 And various fluctuations in the breast;
 To her, a monument of faithful Love
 Conquered, and in tranquility retained! (4.211-18)

As in the descriptions of books in Books 1-3, the material form of the book merges with the forms of nature, as indicated by the ambiguous “leaves” preserved within its covers: as the surface upon which the “chosen plants” are placed, the leaves of the book transform imperceptibly into the leaves of the flowers. Like the natural forms described in Books 1-3, the plants placed in the book are “undecaying,” yet only as a consequence of the book’s preservative power. Just as the silent chambers of the books cited by the Wanderer preserve textual luxuries, the “mute register” of the Lover’s book preserves mutable natural objects against the decay of time. Likewise, the lover’s book itself monumentalizes his love after his death, providing a lasting reminder of his devotion. A similar durability is also emphasized in the story of the Deaf Man, for whom

books

Were ready companions whom he could not tire,—
 Of whose society the blameless Man
 Was never satiate. Their familiar voice,
 Even to old age, with unabated charm
 Beguiled his leisure hours; refreshed his thoughts;
 Beyond its natural elevation raised
 His introverted spirit; and bestowed
 Upon his life an outward dignity
 Which all acknowledged. (7.439-48)

Only by virtue of their durability can the Deaf Man’s books provide the sustaining power which they do. Their charm “unabated” even into his old age, the man’s books serve as

luxuries with which he indulges himself in leisure: “The dark winter night, / The stormy day, had each its own resource; / Song of the muses, sage historic tale, / Science severe, or word of holy Writ / Announcing immortality and joy / To the assembled spirits of the just, / From imperfection and decay secure” (7.456-471). Like the Wanderer, the Deaf Man finds consolation especially in poetic epics and tales and mathematical texts. Yet his bible provides him with the most powerful assertion of his own eventual immortality in the face of “imperfection and decay.” Like many of the other books appearing in *The Excursion*, the Deaf Man’s bible exists as a durable form meant to fend off fears of ephemerality.

Books thus occupy an unstable ontological position in *The Excursion*. As physical objects, they are repeatedly imaged both in terms of their material mutability and their power to provide a durable medium capable of preserving a potentially timeless text for posterity. The book’s unstable ontological position, participating in both the material decay of the object and the immaterial transcendence of the text, helps to explain the recurrent association between books and burial evident throughout not only *The Excursion* but much of Wordsworth’s other work. In Book 5, for example, the Solitary instructs his companions to “stoop, and place the prospect of the soul / In sober contrast with reality / And Man’s substantial being” before asking them to imagine

[i]f this mute earth
Of what it holds could speak, and every grave
Were as a volume, shut, yet capable
Of yielding its contents to eye and ear. (5.246-49)

Like the Solitary’s notion of “Man,” the book possesses both the “substantial being” of its material form and something over-and-above matter—an undying text corresponding to

the “soul” of the “Man.” Poised between life and death, the book is like a “grave / . . . shut, yet capable / Of yielding its contents to eye and ear.” The Solitary’s suggestion that “every grave / Were as a volume” corresponds to the poem’s tendency to image books as burial containers, as when the Wanderer refers to *Candide* as “a sad memorial of their hapless friend” (2.480) and a “relique” (2.509), the Solitary to books as “silent chambers” (4.562), and the Lover to his book as a “monument of faithful Love / Conquered, and in tranquility retained!” (4.211-18). Likewise, throughout *The Excursion* the book’s function is a preservative one: upon the Minister’s shelf is “preserved / A straggling volume” for the Wanderer’s use; the Wanderer’s step-father provides him with books to “preserve the mind / Busy in solitude and poverty”; the Solitary’s books hold treasure “[p]reserved from age to age”; and the Lover’s book contains flowers that “[i]n undecaying beauty were preserved.”

The image of book as tomb corresponds to *The Excursion*’s pre-occupation with monumental inscription. Before meeting the Pastor, the three other characters enter his church to see both that “Admonitory Texts inscribed the walls, / Each, in its ornamental scroll, enclosed” (5.154-5) and that “marble Monuments were here displayed / Upon the walls; and on the floor beneath / Sepulchral stones appeared, with emblems graven / And foot-worn epitaphs, and some with small / And shining effigies of brass inlaid” (5.164-8). Unlike the texts printed in books, the texts appearing in the church are inscribed in stone—in the panels of the wall, the “marble monuments” hanging upon them, and on the “Sepulchral stones” engraved with “foot-worn epitaphs.” A similar image is encountered in the story of the Two Men of Opposed Principles, when the Pastor informs his listeners

of the decision of the two figures to commemorate “the long-lived tree / [which] [w]as disappearing by a swift decay” (6.510-11) and which served as a resting-place while they conversed by erecting “a Dial, which should stand / For public use, and also might survive / As their own private monument” where “undivided, their Remains should lie” (6.513-18). Upon this monument “[w]inds an inscriptive Legend” (6.528) in Latin:

“Time flies; it is his melancholy task,
 “To bring, and bear away, delusive hopes,
 “And re-produce the troubles he destroys.
 “But, while his blindness thus is occupied,
 “Discerning Mortal! do thou serve the will
 Of Time’s eternal Master, and that peace,
 Which the World wants, shall be for Thee confirmed!” (6. 531-7)

But though the text inscribed upon the dial—and indeed the dial itself—express the *tempus fugit* motif, the text’s material form preserves it from exactly that sort of temporal ruin that it laments. The inscription is meant to exist outside of time, recording its effects though never succumbing to them itself. The monumental stones scattered throughout the churchyard register a similar impermeability to the passage of time, preserving their textual inscriptions in unblemished form for posterity. *The Excursion* thus figures the ideal form of textual preservation as the monument rather than the book, for, as the Wanderer concludes in Book IX, while “A few rude Monuments of mountain-stone / Survive; all else is swept away” (9.707-8).

By imaging the book as a burial tomb and privileging the form of the monumental inscription, Wordsworth establishes a close association between material textuality and the forms of burial.³⁶ This association finds its clearest expression in the “Essay on

³⁶ Extensive commentary has been devoted to Wordsworth’s interest in epitaphs, monuments and inscription. (See especially Hartmann, “Wordsworth, Inscriptions, and Romantic Nature Poetry” in

Epitaphs” appended as a note to Book V of the poem in the 1814 quarto. Though the “Essay” attempts to develop an “epitaphic theory of poetry,” it also demonstrates that Wordsworth was pre-occupied with the form of the epitaph for its material qualities, as its opening sentence indicates: “[i]t needs scarcely be said, that an Epitaph presupposes a Monument, upon which it is to be engraven” (431). According to Wordsworth, the monumentality of the epitaph originated in response to “a twofold desire; first, to guard the remains of the deceased from irreverent approach or from savage violation: and secondly, to preserve their memory” (431) and was meant to impart a number of qualities—durability, naturalness, and immortality—to its text (436-444). By transmitting the qualities of the monument to the text itself, the epitaph exemplified Wordsworth’s textual ideal. But as a permanent material object impervious to physical change, the epitaphic monument also provided the ideal material form for textual preservation.

As the “Essay” indicates, Wordsworth’s tendency to image books in terms of burial was motivated not only by his belief in the book’s divided ontological status but by his conviction that the burial monument provided the ideal material form for textual

Beyond Formalism; De Man, “Autobiography as De-facement”; Angus Easson, *The Lapidary Wordsworth: Epitaphs and Inscriptions*; Kneale, *Monumental Writing: Aspects of Rhetoric in Wordsworth’s Poetry*; and Ferguson, *Wordsworth: Language as Counter-Spirit*.) For general context on the Romantic interest in epitaphs, see Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch, “The Epitaph and the Romantic Poets: A Survey.” See Paul Fry’s “The Absent Dead: Wordsworth, Byron and the Epitaph,” for example, on the “epitaphic moment” (413) in literary history; see also D. D. Devlin’s *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Epitaphs* for an account of how the “epitaph is for Wordsworth the epitome of poetry because it is analogous to the ‘spot of time’ and his own poetic mode” (121). Some commentators have focused on Wordsworth’s interest in the materiality of the epitaph (see Cynthia Chase, “Monument and Inscription: Wordsworth’s ‘Lines’,” 67, and David Simonsen, *Wordsworth and the Word-Preserving Arts* 5). Others have sought to show that Wordsworth was interested in the epitaph because of the power of its form to shape audiences. Devlin points out that Wordsworth’s fascination with the epitaph was partly generated from his belief that “the epitaph brings together the different publics a poet might have or wish to have. It is not ‘a proud writing shut up for the studious; it is exposed to all’” (110). See also Scott Hess, “Wordsworth’s Epitaphic Poetics and the Print Market,” for arguments in this vein.

inscription. Though the book was subject to decay, the monument lasted, preserving its text in pristine condition for posterity. The epitaphic monument thus presented Wordsworth with a model whose bibliographic imitation had the potential to resolve his anxiety about literary survival. Indeed, such anxiety manifested itself directly in the text of *The Excursion*, appearing in the conclusion of the “Essay,” for example, when Wordsworth voices his conviction that “[t]he mighty Benefactors of mankind, as they are not only known by the immediate Survivors, but will continue to be known familiarly to latest Posterity, do not stand in need of biographic sketches, in such a place; nor of delineations of character to individualize them”; rather, according to Wordsworth, “this is already done by their Works, in the Memories of Men” (445-6). By “mighty Benefactors” Wordsworth means to refer to poets, as indicated by the quoted lines—taken from Milton’s “On Shakespeare”—with which he concludes the “Essay”:

What needs my Shakespeare for his honoured bones
 The labour of an age in piled stones,
 Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid
 Under a star y-pointing pyramid?
 Dear Son of Memory, great Heir of Fame,
 What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
 Thou in our wonder and astonishment
 Hast built thyself a livelong monument,
 And so sepulchred, in such pomp dost lie,
 That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

Like Milton, who writes that Shakespeare’s “livelong monument” exists not physically but rather “in our wonder and astonishment,” Wordsworth suggests that the grandest monument—that most able to preserve the memory of deceased greatness—is that immaterial state least susceptible to the ravages of time: “Memory.” But Wordsworth’s use of Milton’s lines betrays the persistence of his anxiety about literary survival, and

especially its origin in fears about the power of books to preserve texts. For, significantly, Wordsworth fails to quote Milton's poem in full. Following his assertion that Shakespeare "[h]ast built thyself a livelong monument," and before concluding with the final couplet quoted by Wordsworth, Milton writes that

For whilst, to the shame of slow-endeavouring art,
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath, from the leaves of thy unvalued book,
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took;
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble, with too much conceiving. (9-14)

Wordsworth's excision of these lines suggests the power of his anxiety of influence: just as Shakespeare's influence transforms Milton into a marble sepulchre containing the latter poet's dead fancy, so does Milton's influence threaten to overwhelm Wordsworth's own poetic creativity. Yet the excision also hints at Wordsworth's anxiety of reception, for as Milton observes, there does after all exist a physical monument to Shakespeare's memory: the "unvalued book" from whose leaves readers "Those Delphic lines with deep impression took." Contrary to Wordsworth's assertion, the "mighty Benefactors of mankind" are not monumentalized solely through their "Works, in the Memories of men," for these works only exist in the form of material documents. Just as the dramas of Shakespeare and the poetry of Milton exist only in their documentary forms, so does Wordsworth's own work survive only in its bibliographic embodiments. Yet there always exists a chance that these forms will go "unvalued," and worse, that they will decay and disappear. Thus, rather than providing a resolution to his anxiety of reception by finding in "Memory" a place of security, the lines—and particularly those left out—indicate the lingering presence of Wordsworth's doubt about the power of the book to assure his

literary survival.

Part 1 of this chapter has shown that in order to assuage his anxiety of reception, Wordsworth published *The Excursion* in the most exclusive and durable bibliographic form available to him: the quarto. As a format recognized for its durability, the quarto provided the most trustworthy material embodiment for a text meant to reach the “People” constituting his future readers. The images of books and monumental inscription throughout *The Excursion* certainly provide further evidence that Wordsworth sought to mitigate his fears of bibliographic perishability by publishing his text in the form of the monumental quarto. Indeed, the poem’s paratexts explicitly figure the text as a monument.³⁷ Like the engraved monumental stones scattered throughout the mountain churchyard, which “[s]urvive” when “all else is swept away” (9.707-8), the quarto book most closely approximated *The Excursion*’s ideal form of material textuality—that of the monument. But, as Wordsworth knew, the construction of “a literary Work that might live” was as much material as textual, and the quarto publication of *The Excursion* represented an attempt by Wordsworth to ensure the physical survival of his text in an age defined by rapid and revolutionary changes.³⁸ Yet the attempt to monumentalize *The*

³⁷ The dedicatory sonnet defines the text as a “monument . . . of high respect and gratitude sincere” and suggests that the bibliographic monument of *The Excursion* is meant to preserve the work for posterity when “Life is insecure / And Hope full oft fallacious as a dream.” Likewise, the “Preface” refers to Wordsworth’s desire of “being enabled to construct a literary Work that might live . . .” (38).

³⁸ As the Wanderer reminds his listeners while speaking of Sir Alfred in Book 7, “The courteous Knight, whose bones are here interred, / Lived in an age conspicuous as our own / For strife and ferment in the minds of men; / Whence alteration in the forms of things, / Various and vast. A memorable age!” (7.1008-12). *The Excursion* responds directly to the revolutions of its memorable age, its main narrative being devoted to correcting the Solitary of the despondency he suffers in the wake of the failure of the French revolution, and its later books addressing the problems emerging with Britain’s industrial revolution. Yet the poem is also acutely sensitive to the third revolution characterizing the age: that transforming the book industry and the world of print. This sensitivity is evident partly in the poem’s attention to the greatly increased amount print material flooding the country. Unlike members of

Excursion through the materially durable form of the quarto displayed the contradictions at the core of his ideological project. Even if, through the voices of the Wanderer and the Pastor, *The Excursion* had sought to assure its readers that “poetry, or even consciousness” could set “one free of the ruins of history and culture” by encouraging the imaginative transcendence of material ephemerality, yet the *Excursion* quarto itself signified the dependency of this ideology of transcendence on the very material forms meant to be transcended. In reminding readers that poetry’s transcendent power is conditioned by material forms that live, decay, and die, Wordsworth’s monumental quarto enacted at the level of the book the contradictions of romantic ideology.

But the *Excursion* quarto’s ideological contradictions were not confined to Wordsworth’s desire to assure the material durability of his transcendent poetics. Instead, as Regency readers were quick to notice, the quarto’s status as an exorbitantly priced luxury book also complicated its celebration of rural simplicity and natural necessity. Congratulating Wordsworth’s publishers on their release of a long-awaited octavo edition of *The Excursion* in 1821, the writer of “Verses to Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown on their Publication of Wordsworth’s *Excursion* IN OCTAVO” hinted at the tension between the luxurious form of the quarto and its poetic program, focusing especially on the book’s size and price. To the poem’s “cumb’rous shape” (13), the writer

previous generations, each of the poem’s rural figures not only finds books readily accessible but also owns a fair number of them despite living in relative poverty. But the books described throughout the poem are frequently imaged as existing in states of decay, with emphasis being placed on their ephemerality as material objects rather than their durability. Instead, the only texts which seem to possess any lasting power are those epitaphic lines inscribed on the forms of the churchyard monuments. Whereas throughout *The Excursion* books are repeatedly figured as ephemeral objects, its monuments succeed in rendering their texts permanent. As the most monumental of Romantic-period books formats, the quarto was the book most capable of monumentalizing the text of *The Excursion* and ensuring its survival and that of Wordsworth’s literary reputation.

owed “[a] tangible objection: / For books, which one is only able / To read—by spreading on a table, / Seldom invite inspection” (15-18). Alluding to the quarto’s reputation as a luxury product, meant to be placed on drawing room tables rather than in readers’ hands, the writer configured the *Excursion* quarto as a bibliographic ornament rather than a readable text. The writer of “Verses” objected even more strongly to the book’s price, for while “[t]welve shillings, for a book like this, / E’en for poor bards, is not amiss—/ Two guineas is—the d——l!” (22-4). The consequence of such a prohibitively high cost was ironic, for never was a price more diabolically luxurious than

... when set
 Upon a tome one wants to get;
 Then—then indeed we feel it:—
 Un pauvre diable, tel que moi,
 Is tempted to infringe the law,
 And, from pure taste, to steal it! (25-30)

Barred from legitimately purchasing the book, poor bards and other “pauvres diables” are forced by their poverty to break the law if they are to acquire it, finding themselves in strange union with those very outcasts glorified by the text of the poem. The luxurious quarto’s celebration of the wandering, the broken, and the solitary thus came at the expense of excluding the actually impoverished from the poem’s readership. Even more subtly, the *Excursion* quarto’s status as a luxury also reconfigured the poem’s ideological program, exposing as its ground “a mine / Of Poesy’s true lore divine, / Rich veins of thought affording” (7-9). Casting Wordsworth’s quasi-divine poetry of transcendence as a mine of gold, the writer unearthed the luxury of the *Excursion*’s “[r]ich veins of thought” in the precious rarity of its material form, which rendered it “half inaccessible, / By means of that forbidding spell / Which lurks in quarto boarding” (7-12).

By 1821, objections to the *Excursion* quarto's luxury had become almost conventional. Indeed, as early as March of 1815, reviewers were focusing their vitriol on Wordsworth's quarto, as is apparent in a short essay appearing in *The Scourge* that month under the title "Spoils of Literature." Castigating the manner in which "the Scotts, the Wordsworths, and the Southneys, come forth in all the pomposity of ponderous quartoes, beautiful to the eye, and expensive to the pocket" (221), the author of "Spoils" lamented that "[t]he really deserving portion of the literary community is left to pine in necessity and despair while the manufacturers of quartoes absorb the attention of the public, and the money of the bookseller" (222). Worse, the practice amounted to a species of fraud, with publishers relying on a poet's established reputation to sell a new quarto, thus convincing "[t]he admirer of poetical talent, and the critical friends whose expectations have been excited by the promised displayed in his first effusion [to] pay the additional price for conveyance by the mail, sacrifice their dinners or their places at the theatre, to the anticipated luxury of enjoying a *second Lay*" (223). Publishers and booksellers—those "mercenary dealers in tales of sympathy, and scenes of chivalrous generosity" (222)—were in part responsible for this state of affairs, but so were poets like

Wordsworth:

But what shall we say of the meek, sentimental, sympathetic and all-benevolent Mr. Wordsworth. It might, on superficial reflection, have been imagined that so solitary, so philanthropic, and so abstinent a being would have disdained the temptation of base lucre, and in his regard to the general instruction and amusement of mankind, in his love of simplicity and abhorrence of ostentation, he would have been contented with a legible type, on humble margin, and a moderate price. A man like him should have disdained the pomposity of quartoes, and the extortion (we beg pardon for using the word) of two guineas. Yet, strange to say, this immaculate and virtuous enthusiast has ventured upon a mercantile speculation that would

scarcely have become the character of his own pedlar, and has published 'The *Excursion*, a Portion of the Recluse,' a poem, price £2. 2s. 0. (224)

With its large type, ostentatious margins, and magnificent price, the *Excursion* quarto's profile as a pompously over-priced luxury good subverted the purported egalitarianism of its text, resulting in a "mercantile speculation" at visible odds with the text's glorification of impoverished figures like the Wanderer, Margaret, and the Solitary. But the luxuriousness of the *Excursion* quarto also adversely affected Wordsworth's poetic reputation as a man "meek, sentimental, sympathetic and all-benevolent" and driven by "his love of simplicity and abhorrence of ostentation." Cognizant of both Wordsworth's apparent motivations in choosing to publish his epic in quarto, as well as the social meaning of this choice, the essayist concluded by suggesting that "[a] shilling pamphlet would contain all the tolerable passages of his book, and would have exalted the reputation of their author, without injustice to his friends" (224). As contemporary readers therefore understood, the luxury of the *Excursion*'s quarto format succeeded in classing the poem's aesthetic ideology, directing the poem away from those impoverished figures celebrated by its text and toward those men and women of material substance capable of purchasing the book and assuring Wordsworth's lasting reputation.

Paying "Homage to the Aristocracy of Nature": Apostasy and the *Excursion* Quarto

The status of Wordsworth's ideological project figures frequently in discussions about his political "apostasy."³⁹ Commentators have devoted much critical attention to

³⁹ The debate about Wordsworth's aesthetic displacement of politics is in many ways the outgrowth of an older interest in his political "apostasy." Though, as this section discusses, Wordsworth's contemporaries introduced the charge of apostasy early after the publication of *The Excursion*, it received influential modern treatment by E. P. Thompson in his lecture "Disenchantment or Default: A Lay Sermon." Noting a difference between apostasy and disenchantment, Thompson argues that

Wordsworth's "counterrevolutionary turn" and the corresponding decline in the quality of his work, with both developments contributing to the perception of the "later' Wordsworth," a man defined by Paul Fry as a "Tory place-holder, tireless canvasser against Reform and Catholic emancipation, author of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, sonnets in defense of capital punishment, the Wanderer's celebration of British imperialism ... and all the rest of it" (Fry 3). Much effort has been spent trying to fix a date to Wordsworth's political turn, with critics showing special interest in Wordsworth's personal biography in tracing his change from radical to reactionary.⁴⁰ But Wordsworth's "apostasy" was more a public event than a personal choice. For only after the publication of *The Excursion* in 1814 did the charge of apostasy begin to form the core of an increasingly influential consensus about the development of Wordsworth's career as one beginning in radicalism and ending in ultra-Toryism. This section addresses discussions about Wordsworth's political apostasy in two ways. First, by focusing attention on the relationship between his publications and the charge of apostasy, it shows that whatever the timeline of Wordsworth's *personal* disillusionment with the French Revolution or the

Wordsworth's "creative impulse came out of the heart of this conflict" (Thompson 37). According to Thompson, "[t]here is a tension between a boundless aspiration—for liberty, reason, egalite, perfectibility—and a peculiarly harsh and unregenerate reality. So long as that tensions persists, the creative impulse can be felt. But once the tension slackens, the creative impulse fails also ... when aspiration is actively denied, we are at the edge of apostasy, and apostasy is a moral failure, and an imaginative failure" (Thompson 37). His lecture engages carefully and insightfully with the history of Wordsworth's political development, but Thompson is primarily interested in explaining the birth, evolution and death of Wordsworth's "creative impulse" rather than the origin of Wordsworth's public image as an establishment poet and political "apostate." Since Thompson's lecture, critical interest in Wordsworth's apostasy has tended to focus on its place in Wordsworth's biographical development.

⁴⁰ Fry observes that though dating his alleged apostasy has been difficult, "[c]onventional views on the date of Wordsworth's apostasy range from 1797 or 1798 to 1806, with the majority finding the most decisive transitional signs between 1802 and 1804, the progress of French affairs being the normally cited catalyst, together with simple weariness at playing what Coleridge called ... 'the squeaking baby-trumpet of sedition'" (3).

Napoleonic wars, his *public* image as Tory humanist and radical apostate was a Regency construction. Second, this section uncovers the degree to which the transformation of Wordsworth's public identity was bound up with changes in the formatting of his books. By publishing his "mature" poetic work in the form of the quarto, Wordsworth announced a new political affiliation and reframed his aesthetic project in terms of his desire, as he would later put it in a note to Book 1, to pay "homage to the aristocracy of nature."⁴¹

Wordsworth's political reputation was fixed not so much by his early publications as by Frances Jeffrey and the *Edinburgh Review*.⁴² Though Wordsworth had maintained radical affiliations and expressed radical ideas privately during the first half of the 1790s, he had achieved no public existence as a political figure during the decade.⁴³ When in

⁴¹ Some commentators do show an interest in the public nature of Wordsworth's apostasy. Writing of Wordsworth's "religious apostasy," Robert Ryan observes that "it was much more political than metaphysical in character; much more a public gesture than an internal conversion" (96). Yet in identifying Wordsworth's public indications of ideological reversal, Ryan still concentrates on local and small-scale gestures (96).

⁴² Attacking Wordsworth by association in his *Thalaba* review, Jeffrey took aim at the "sect of poets" to which both he and Southey belonged and "[whose] peculiar doctrines" indicated that they were "dissenters from the established systems in poetry and criticism" (*Romantics Reviewed* II.415). Though his attack was partly religious in shape, Jeffrey also meant to figure Wordsworth and the Lake School as Jacobinical extremists. Members of the Lake School, which represented "the most formidable conspiracy that has lately been formed against sound judgment in matters poetical" (*RR* II.416), were accused by Jeffrey of adhering to "[t]he antisocial principles, and distempered sensibility of Rousseau—his discontent with the present constitution of society—his paradoxical morality, and his perpetual hankering after some unattainable state of voluptuous virtue and perfection" (*RR* II.416). Wordsworth came under particular attack for the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, which Jeffrey labelled a "manifesto" (*RR* II.416) and disparaged for its "systematic" attempt to justify vulgar breaches of poetic decorum and, by implication, political order (*RR* II.417).

⁴³ The government knew through its spies that he was one of the "Sett of violent Democrats" inhabiting Alfodden house in July of 1797, but Wordsworth was not yet publicly viewed as a radical, as, for example, Coleridge and Southey both were (Thompson 42). The government's interest in Wordsworth was probably based primarily on his association with Thelwall, whom Thompson names as "the most notorious public Jacobin in England" in 1797, a man who provided "the most important link figure between the Jacobin intellectuals and the plebeian Corresponding Societies" and who served as the implicit target in one clause of the Two Acts (43).

1798, for example, the *Anti-Jacobin* published a cartoon denouncing a list of seditious literary characters—“ye five ... wandering Bards that move / In sweet accord of harmony and love, / C—dge, and S—th—y, Ll—d and L—be and Co”—Wordsworth was left out (Gill 118). Wordsworth’s scant public record of political involvement during the 1790s was a consequence of his refusal or failure to publish any of his most radical writings: as Gill observes, documentary traces of Wordsworth’s early radicalism—“*A Letter to Bishop Llandaff, Salisbury Plain* and *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, [a] Juvenal imitation, [the] prospectus for the *Philanthropist* and the frank avowal of his political position sent to [William] Matthews”—remained hidden from the public during the 1790s (320-1). Yet even though Wordsworth “had published nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to disavow ... his closest friends had” (Gill 321), as he was to be reminded later in his life. At least during the earlier stages of his poetic career, any publicly recognized political guilt on Wordsworth’s part was a guilt by association—with Coleridge, Southey, and other members of his literary circle. In his review of *Thalaba* in 1802, Jeffrey reminded the British reading public of this fact, attacking the Lake School in language designed to move the radical political affiliations of its members to the forefront of the reading public’s imagination. But though Jeffrey set out the contours of his attack in the *Thalaba* review, his strongest assault on Wordsworth’s reputation was advanced in his review of *Poems* in 1807. By charging that Wordsworth’s work represented an “open violation of the established laws of poetry” and suggesting that its sole benefit lay in its power to “operate as a wholesome warning to those who might otherwise have been seduced by his example, and be the means of restoring to that antient and venerable code its due honour

and authority” (RR II.438), Jeffrey strove to figure Wordsworth as a Lake School radical. In this way, Wordsworth’s political reputation during the first decade of the century owed more to Jeffrey’s influential reviews than his own statements.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that Jeffrey’s political attack charged Wordsworth’s anxiety of reception as much as his accusations of puerility, for Wordsworth’s public actions between 1807 and 1814 became ever more political. It is difficult to map a stable ideological trajectory running through his publications during this period, but Wordsworth displayed a growing tendency to address pressing political matters in print. Wordsworth’s sonnets on the invasion crisis, published first in the newspaper and then in *Poems*, had dealt explicitly with political developments, though without expressing any easily recognizable political agenda apart from opposition to invasion. But the *Convention of Cintra* pamphlet marked a decisive turn in his willingness to adopt a public position on political events. Even though the pamphlet’s fulminations against both the French and the British government failed to establish a clear ideological position, *Cintra* seems to have “relaxed the poet’s defences against apostasy,” for “[o]ver the next few years he identifies increasingly with land, with titles, with blood . . . with tradition, and even with old corruption” (Gravil 233-4; see also Gill 277). More than any publication before *The Excursion*, however, Wordsworth’s decision to accept a salaried position as Distributor of Stamps in 1813 was received as an overtly political act. Indeed, according to Gill, “no act of Wordsworth’s did his reputation more lasting harm” (296), and commentators from Byron (*Don Juan*, “Dedication,” Stanza 6) to Browning (“The Lost Leader,” 1-2) would refer repeatedly to his decision to accept the

position at the Excise in documenting the origins of his political turn (Gill 296).

But it was *The Excursion* that served as the first clear, published indication of Wordsworth's newly adopted role as defender of the political and religious establishment. Indeed, the book was received by many as an attempt on Wordsworth's part to remake his political identity as spokesman for the twin pillars of legitimacy, the British state and the Anglican Church.⁴⁴ Most visibly, its initial text—the dedicatory sonnet—worked to establish Wordsworth's political reorientation toward the British aristocracy:

OFT, through thy fair domains, illustrious Peer!
 In youth I roamed, on youthful pleasures bent;
 And mused in rocky cell or sylvan tent,
 Beside swift-flowing Lowther's current clear.
 —Now by thy care befriended, I appear
 Before thee, LONSDALE, and this Work present,
 A token (may it prove a monument!)
 Of high respect and gratitude sincere.
 Gladly would I have waited till my task

⁴⁴ Debate continues about the extent and nature of Wordsworth's support for state and church. Thompson defines Wordsworth's apostasy in primarily political terms, arguing that it was characterized by "paternalism, Anglican doctrine, fear of change" (67). Philip Connell objects that Wordsworth's political views were more difficult to categorize. Remarking that "[t]he ideological identity of Wordsworth's later poetry ... has tended to be either displaced into a 'proto-Victorian moment', or assimilated to a broad tradition of Tory humanism' and Burkean veneration for prescriptive custom" (125), Connell writes that in fact "[t]he shifting terms of the Lake poets' historical influence and critical reception, together with their abiding reputation as the first, prophetic critics of high capitalist society, have left Wordsworth and Coleridge somewhat isolated from the orthodox 'Toryism' that is commonly supposed to represent their nearest point of reference within contemporary political discourse once they had abandoned the radicalism of their youth" (124-5). Similar debate revolves around Wordsworth's religious "apostasy." According to Robert Ryan, "Wordsworth's religious alienation seems to have begun somewhat later than his political radicalization, and to have been for him a rather more traumatic process" (83), involving a transition from "nature-mysticism to Anglican orthodoxy" (94). As Ryan notes, "[i]n an odd reversal, criticism has used 'apostasy' to denote Wordsworth's return to the religion in which he was brought up, a return that repudiated an apostasy that more truly deserved the name—the one that took place in 1793 when Wordsworth abandoned his affiliation with the national Church and the Christian faith in which he had been baptized" (83). Even at the time, though, commentators were unclear about the nature of that faith to which Wordsworth announced a return in *The Excursion*. As Gravil observes, "Jeffrey thought *The Excursion* offered a kind of mystical Methodism, Lamb contentedly observed its liberal Quakerism; Montgomery objected severely on its natural religion" (211). Meanwhile, John Taylor Coleridge and the *British Critic* found the poem to be in support of Anglican orthodoxy. What is clear is that Wordsworth moved steadily toward orthodoxy over the ensuing decades (see, for example, Gill, "The Ruined Cottage Revisited," *Revisitings*).

Had reached its close; but Life is insecure,
 And Hope full oft fallacious as a dream:
 Therefore, for what is here produced I ask
 Thy favour; trusting that thou wilt not deem
 The Offering, though imperfect, premature.

Addressed to his patron, “THE RIGHT HONOURABLE / WILLIAM, EARL OF LONSDALE, K.G. / &c. &c.,” Wordsworth’s sonnet served to define the *Excursion* quarto as an “Offering” in a feudal exchange between patron-lord and poet-vassal. Lord Lonsdale—or Sir William Lowther, son of Sir James Lowther, for whom Wordsworth’s father had worked as land agent and on whose land Wordsworth had “in youth . . . roamed”—had worked to find Wordsworth his job as Distributor of Stamps, thereby assuring him £90 a year (*Cornell* 373). In one sense, Wordsworth’s act of genuflection represented an attempt to escape a literary marketplace whose vicissitudes threatened the survival of his reputation: by claiming his audience as Lowther as much as the English reading public, Wordsworth figured the acceptance of his “Work” as having already been achieved in its very dedication. Rather than writing in the hopes of appealing to a fickle public whose taste had been corrupted by the deluge of ephemerally popular poetic texts, Wordsworth’s sonnet represents the work invested in the quarto poem as a gift whose acceptance and survival is virtually guaranteed. But the sonnet also makes explicit Wordsworth’s celebration of the social and economic arrangements upon which Tory legitimacy depends. Significantly, Nature is no longer a transcendent and liberating space existing outside the boundaries of political institutions and social conventions but a legally circumscribed “domain” possessed by a lord whose name merges with and directs its swift-flowing rivers. By both figuring the entire text of *The Excursion* as a feudal

offering to an English Lord and representing Nature as a feudal possession, Wordsworth transforms his system into a declaration of public support for British conservatism. Moreover, in concluding the sonnet by stating his hope that the poem will not appear “premature,” Wordsworth suggests his desire to shed not only the “puerile” reputation established by Jeffrey but also the political childishness of his youthful Jacobinism. As he would suggest in a later note to Book I, this new Wordsworth was intent “to pay homage to the aristocracy of nature; under a conviction that vigorous human-heartedness is the constituent principle of true taste” (*Excursion* 1836, 345). As a response to Jeffrey’s reviews and an expression of his new political alignment, *The Excursion* announces the emergence of the politically “mature” Wordsworth—a proponent of legitimacy, a defender of conservatism, and a committed supporter of Tory power.

Likewise, *The Excursion* expresses a newfound support for the Anglican Church. On the one hand, the poem’s entire latter half celebrates the figure of the Pastor and his potential power to convert the Solitary to the cause of legitimacy through his pronouncement of “authentic epitaphs.” But the poem also repeatedly figures the physical form of the church itself as a source of stability and a bulwark against the changes threatening British society. Led by the Pastor through the countryside, the poem’s figures spy “the old Church-tower, / In majesty presiding o’er the Vale / And all her Dwellings; seemingly preserved / From the intrusion of a restless world / By rocks impassable and mountains huge” (9.574-579). In fact, the body of the church itself is the poem’s greatest monument: “Not framed to nice proportions was the Pile, / But large and massy; for duration built” (5.148-9). As discussed in Part 2, the church serves as a symbol for

durability partly because of its power to preserve those “[a]dmonitory Texts inscribed the walls, / Each in its ornamental scroll, enclosed,—” (5.154-5) and those “... foot-worn epitaphs” that “on the floor beneath / Sepulchral stones appeared, with emblems graven” (5.165-7). Like the monumental stones in the churchyard, the church itself is one of the few material objects represented in the book as being unsusceptible to the changes wrought by the passage of time. As such, *The Excursion* works to privilege the Anglican doctrine literally embodied by its material form.

But Wordsworth’s commitment to Church and State is made most clear in the longest passage spoken by the poem’s narrator, the Poet. Conspicuous as an extended invocation, the opening monologue to Book 6 establishes the Poet’s—and by implication Wordsworth’s—very Muse as British political and religious orthodoxy:

Hail to the Crown by Freedom shaped—to gird
 An English Sovereign’s brow! And to the Throne
 Whereon he sits! ...
 —Hail to the State of England! And conjoin
 With this a salutation as devout,
 Made to the spiritual Fabric of her Church;
 Founded in truth, by blood of Martyrdom
 Cemented; by the hands of wisdom reared
 In beauty of Holiness, with order’d pomp,
 Decent, and unreproved ... (6.1-3; 6-12)

Surpassing the declaration of public support for the English aristocracy inscribed in the “Dedication,” the invocation lavishes praise on the monarchy itself as the final guarantor of English liberty. But even more than the British state, the Anglican Church is praised for serving in “order’d pomp” as the source of stability and route to potential transcendence provided exclusively by Nature in the writings of the now “premature”

Wordsworth.⁴⁵ Wordsworth's celebration of Church and State is motivated by his belief that these two institutions represent the best bulwark against the social change sweeping the country: as he writes, "Thus never shall the indignities of Time / Approach their reverend graces, unopposed; / Nor shall the Elements be free to hurt / Their fair proportion ... / ... they shall continue to bestow— / Upon the thronged abodes of busy Men / (Depraved, and ever prone to fill their minds / Exclusively with transitory things) / An air and mien of dignified pursuit" (6.31-33; 37-41). Unlike ephemeral Jacobin institutions and transient revolutionary ideas, the English Church and State offer the one stable foundation for society and thus provide an ideal Muse for Wordsworth's epic attempt to find permanence amid change.

Not only did *The Excursion* text publicize Wordsworth's commitments to church and state, but its bibliographic format also signaled his new political allegiances. As we have seen that both Wordsworth and his contemporaries knew, the quarto was a book of the gentry and aristocracy. Unlike the relatively affordable octavo and duodecimo formats, the quarto was generally accessible only to an elite class of readers. And at 42 shillings a copy, Wordsworth's *Excursion* quarto flaunted its status as book meant to be purchased by the very aristocrats and gentry whose power was celebrated by the poem. No matter the degree to which *The Excursion* elevated the lives of its humble characters, the book was completely out-of-reach to those very members of the lower orders it

⁴⁵ The invocation to Book 6 works to establish the pre-eminence of the Church over Nature, recording the poet's prayer that "ye swelling hills, and spacious plains! / Besprent from shore to shore with steeple-towers, / And spires whose 'silent finger points to Heaven;' ... / —may ne'er / That true succession fail of English Hearts ..." (6.17-19; 23-4). Like Lonsdale's domains and the river Lowther, the "swelling hills, and spacious plains" are presided over by the forces of English conservatism, no longer offering a liberating space of transcendence from cultural forms but thoroughly structured by these very forms.

glorified through its dialogue. But aside from its power to limit access, the quarto format was the material sign announcing Wordsworth's political about-face. In the poem's "Preface," Wordsworth had articulated a new model for understanding the arrangement of his works. Referring to *The Prelude* and *The Recluse*, Wordsworth explains that

the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the Anti-chapel has to the body of a gothic Church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little Cells, Oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those Edifices.
(ix)

Not only did *The Excursion* celebrate the Anglican Church, but Wordsworth figured the work itself and by implication its material embodiment as a materialization of that very church. Just as the quarto publication of *The Excursion* established the text as a monument to Wordsworth's new reputation as poet of England's landed classes, so did this text figure the quarto as a symbol of Wordsworth's new alignment with the Anglican Church. The quarto thus publicly announced the arrival of the "later Wordsworth"—a mature, establishment poet, whose political sympathies were solidly with the gentry, aristocracy, and monarchy, and whose commitment to religious orthodoxy was becoming increasingly clear.

Not all of the book's first readers understood or were willing to accept the political significance of the poem and its formatting choice. Indeed, rather than announcing the arrival of the 'mature' Wordsworth, the poem was read by many members of the reviewing class as providing further evidence of the poet's politically suspect

religious commitments.⁴⁶ But many other readers from across the ideological spectrum recognized the political significance of the *Excursion* quarto. On the conservative end, the Bishop of London was reportedly “‘in raptures’ with the poem,” and the *British Critic*, ideological arm of the Church of England, “was apparently satisfied with the poem’s orthodoxy” (Ryan 101), commending the work’s sanctifying principles, “which seem to us to shine like a glory round every page of true poetry . . . that whatsoever material or temporary exists before our sense, is capable of being associated, in our minds, with something spiritual and eternal; that such associations tend to ennoble and purify the heart” (III.451). Likewise, many of Wordsworth’s most perceptive liberal and radical readers—and former political and poetic allies—were also keenly aware of the shift in politics marked by the publication of the quarto. William Blake seems to have understood the book’s declaration in this way, as the marginalia in his edition of Wordsworth’s poem suggest. In response to Wordsworth’s claim in the “Prospectus” that “All strength, all terror, single or in bands / That ever was put forth in personal Form / Jehovah—with his thunder & the choir / Of shouting Angels & the empyreal thrones—I

⁴⁶ Jeffrey expressed this position most strongly (*RR* II.4; 21; 29-3). But *The Quarterly Review* came closer to identifying Wordsworth’s newly ‘mature’ religious position, writing that “in him, faith, in friendly alliance and conjunction with the religion of his country, appears to have grown up, fostered by meditation and lonely communions with Nature” (*RR* II.828). Even so, the reviewer argued that “an internal principle of lofty consciousness . . . stamps upon his opinions and sentiments (we were almost going to say) the character of an expanded and generous Quakerism” (*RR* II.828), elsewhere described as “a kind of Natural Methodism” (*RR* II.828). Likewise, John Merivale observed in the *Monthly Review* that the “general scope of argument,” at least in the fourth book, is to “combat ‘want of faith in the great truths of religion’” (*RR* II.5). However, Merivale asserts that “Mr. Wordsworth . . . might have borrowed more suitable weapons from the armouries of Hooker and Barrow; and, without deciding whether such effusions be such as to stamp on the opinions and sentiments which they unfold more of ‘the character of an expanded and generous quakerism,’ or ‘of a kind of natural methodism,’ we shall venture to suggest that neither mysticism nor enthusiasm is the best conductor of misguided mortals back to the precincts of a calm and rational religion” (*RR* II.132-3). Even with its invocation to the Church and State of England, *The Excursion* failed to convince many reviewers of Wordsworth’s newly establishmentarian position.

pass them unalarmed” (31-5), Blake writes that

Solomon when he Married Pharaohs daughter & became a Convert to the Heathen Mythology Talked exactly in this way of Jehovah as a Very inferior object of Man’s Contemplations he also passed him by unalarmed & was permitted. Jehovah dropped a tear & followed him by his Spirit into the Abstract void it is called the Divine Mercy Satan dwells in it but Mercy does not dwell in him he knows not to Forgive. (*Blake Archive*)

Blake’s response indicates his opposition to Wordsworth’s “Heathen Mythology” of natural piety, which he elsewhere suggests threatens to drown out the spiritual aspect of men. Yet the annotation is also nakedly political: like Solomon, Wordsworth is also guilty of a conversion brought about by a new alliance with the powers of the establishment. Blake’s particular sensitivity to Wordsworth’s new alliance with the fashionable members of the gentry and aristocracy capable of purchasing his book is evident in his response to Wordsworth’s effusive praise for the manner in which “the individual Mind / ... to the external World / Is fitted.” Writing in the margin to the passage, Blake exclaims that “[y]ou shall not bring me down to believe such fitting & fitted I know better & Please your Lordship,” thereby hinting at the manner in which the poet’s idealism fits his new position as Tory ideologue.

Like Blake, the Shelleys understood the political significance of *The Excursion*. In a diary entry dated September of 1814, Mary Shelley writes that “Shelley ... brings home Wordsworth’s ‘Excursion,’ of which we read a part, much disappointed. He is a slave” (*CPPBS* 356). Meanwhile, Percy Shelley’s disappointment was voiced in his sonnet “To Wordsworth”:

Poet of Nature, thou has wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love’s first glow,

Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
 These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
 Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
 Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
 On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:
 Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
 Above the blind and battling multitude:
 In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
 Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
 Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
 Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

Shelley's elegy laments not only Wordsworth's desertion of "truth and liberty" but also the "honoured poverty" which lent authenticity to his radical political-aesthetic project. While Shelley's comment alludes on the one hand to Wordsworth's acceptance of a government position as Distributor of Stamps, it can also be applied to the quarto format of *The Excursion*, whose wildly high price meant that, in a literal sense, Wordsworth's voice did no longer weave songs "in honoured poverty." As Yvonne Carothers points out, a similar attack takes place in "Alastor" (the poem giving its name to the volume in which "To Wordsworth" appeared), indicating that "after the publication of *The Excursion*, Shelley must have recognized with a jolt that compromised integrity was crippling those luminaries who had sustained him in his youth" (Carothers 22). Finally, *The Excursion* provided a target in "Peter Bell the Third," where Shelley attacks Wordsworth's "legitimate" poem, satirizes the desire for literary "permanence" voiced in its "Preface," and figures Wordsworth as an "Apostate" whose career "was at first sublime, pathetic, impressive, profound; then dull; then prosy and dull; and now dull—o so dull! it is an ultra-legitimate dulness" ("Preface" 340).

Such attacks were carried on by Byron, who castigated Wordsworth explicitly for

the apostasy announced by the *Excursion* quarto. As late as 1819, Byron treated *The Excursion* as exemplary of Lake School apostasy, assaulting its members for prostituting their oratorical skills to Castlereagh and the forces of legitimacy in the “Dedication” to *Don Juan*:

And Wordsworth in a rather long Excursion
 (I think the quarto holds five hundred pages)
 Has given a sample from the vasty version
 Of his new system to perplex the sages.
 ‘Tis poetry, at least by his own assertion,
 And may appear so when the Dog Star rages,
 And he who understands it would be able
 To add a story to the tower of Babel. (25-32)

Byron’s Wordsworth is one whose political apostasy justifies the scorn poured on him throughout *Don Juan*. Yet Wordsworth’s apostasy is marked not only by his acceptance of “his place in the Excise” (46) or the “vasty version / Of his new system,” but also by the quarto shape of Wordsworth’s poetry, to which Byron alludes repeatedly. The *Excursion* quarto is a particular target in Canto 3. Confessing that “All are not moralists,” Byron reminds his readers of a time when “Southey ... prated to the world of ‘Pantisocracy;’ / Wordsworth unexcised, unhired ... / Seasoned his pedlar poems with democracy” and Coleridge sought to join Southey in Pantisocracy by marrying Sara Fricker, a “Milliner of Bath,” “long before his flighty pen / Let to the Morning Post its aristocracy” (3.833-40). Unlike Jeffrey, Byron reads Wordsworth’s newest “Pedlar poem,” *The Excursion*, as fundamentally undemocratic in its vision, unlike those poems, “Seasoned ... with Democracy,” composed in Wordsworth’s youth. As in the “Dedication,” Byron associates Wordsworth’s poetic turn with his decision to become a “hired” poet but also with the *Excursion* quarto. Referring in the next stanza to the “loyal treason, renegado rigour” of

the Lake School, Byron concludes by reminding readers that

Wordsworth's last quarto, by the way, is bigger
 Than any since the birthday of typography ...
 A drowsy frowzy poem, call'd the 'Excursion'
 Writ in a manner which is my aversion. (3.845-9)

In particular, the *Excursion* quarto represents political reaction through its inaccessibility, which corresponds to the inaccessibility of its “system.” As Byron observes of the book, “[h]e there builds up a formidable dyke / Between his own and others’ intellect” (3.849-50), but also reminds readers of the consequences of this move, for “Wordsworth’s poem, and his followers ... / Are things which in this century don’t strike / The public mind,— so few are the elect” (3.851; 3.853-4). By parodying Wordsworth’s hope for an audience “fit though few,” Byron undercuts Wordsworth’s attempt to use his poem and its format to create that elite audience capable of truly appreciating his poetry.

In mounting his attack on Wordsworth, Byron focused not only on *The Excursion* but also the anxieties that drove Wordsworth to issue the poem in quarto. Though the format was not a necessary sign of Tory reaction—*Don Juan* Cantos 1 and 2 itself was printed initially on quarto pages—Byron recognized that the quarto format of *The Excursion* represented an attempt on Wordsworth’s part to respond to anxieties about the reception of his poetry by using its bibliographic codes to refigure the poem’s political and cultural status. Like Shelley, Byron was aware of the Lakers’ anxieties about the reception of their poetry, but only Byron saw the extent to which these anxieties themselves served to motivate their apostasy. Addressing Wordsworth, Byron admits his wish that “your fate may yield ye, when she chooses, / The fame you envy and the skill you need” (“Dedication” 59-60) but declares that “complaint of present days / Is not the

certain path for future praise” (“Dedication” 63-4). Targeting in particular Wordsworth’s desire for a lasting reputation, Byron challenges his attempt to use books like the *Excursion* quarto to achieve this aim, claiming that “[h]e that reserves his laurels for posterity ... / Has generally no great crop to spare it, he / being only injured by his own assertion” (“Dedication” 65; 67-8). Instead, Byron hints that Wordsworth and his fellow poets have forsaken their poetic and political principles for a chance to achieve contemporary popularity as establishment poets, for as the “Dedication” concludes, “Apostasy’s so fashionable too, / To keep one’s creed’s a task grown quite / Herculean” (“Dedication” 134-5). To Byron, then, Wordsworth’s anxiety of reception as much as any other reason motivated the apostasy materially signified by the *Excursion* quarto.

Conclusion: The *Excursion* Quarto, Life and Death

Regardless of their varying sensitivity to its significance as a mark of Wordsworth’s apostasy, Romantic readers understood that the formatting choice of *The Excursion* was meant to fix Wordsworth’s position in the literary establishment and assure the survival of his work for future generations. Early reviewers of the book were especially attentive both to Wordsworth’s aim of producing a “Work that might live” and to its format.⁴⁷ Yet in the event, *The Excursion* failed to sell: only 291 of the 500 copies of the poem printed by Longman had been sold by June, 1815, and sales continued to dwindle over the new few years, with the final 36 copies being remaindered finally in 1834 (St. Clair 661). As contemporaries seemed to recognize, the problem was that the

⁴⁷ See reviews in *Variety* (RR II.892); the *Eclectic* (RR II.39); the *British Review* (RR I.56); and *The Examiner* (RR II.529). Reviewers were also attentive to the poem’s format: see, for example, Jeffrey’s review in the *Edinburgh* (RR II.439; 446).

poem had been issued as a luxury book with a prohibitively high price, meaning that the poem was “as a ‘sealed book’ to no inconsiderable number of readers,” as the *British Review* put it (RR I.227). When the poem was reprinted as an octavo edition in 1820, the *Literary Gazette* would remember the effect of the quarto:

We do not usually conceive ourselves called upon to notice second editions of works; especially such as evince no variation from their predecessors, except in size and price. We must however claim the privilege of deviating from our accustomed mode in the case of Wordsworth’s *Excursion*. Indeed a quarto, of the price of two guineas, is likely only to be known by report to the majority of readers of poetry; and the consequence is, that though this beautiful poem has been published, we believe, more than six years, it has, from its size and cost, been as inaccessible to numbers, whom its contents would have delighted, as if it had continued in manuscript. (*Literary Gazette and Journal of Belle Lettres* 206: 837)

William and Dorothy also recognized that the quarto publication had been a mistake. Realizing that instead of establishing his literary position, the high price of the luxurious quarto had unexpectedly retarded sales, William and Dorothy attempted to identify markets, from the aristocracy to Quakers, whose members would be willing and able to purchase such an expensive book. Yet such attempts ultimately failed, and the Wordsworths’ anxiety over the reception of the poem—and by implication the future of William’s poetic reputation—only increased. Failing to convince wealthy buyers to purchase the book, they hoped for the edition to sell at least enough copies to justify the publication of a second, octavo edition by Longman.⁴⁸

Thus, Wordsworth’s use of the quarto to publish *The Excursion* failed to achieve

⁴⁸ William and Dorothy voice their regret about quarto publication in *LWDW* III: 207; III: 222; III: 202; III: 181; and III: 184; they discuss potential markets in *LWDW* III: 210-11; III: 213; III: 165; III: 181; and III: 183-4; they express anxiety about the reception of the poem in *LWDW* III: 207; III: 213; and III: 230; and they discuss an octavo edition in *LWDW* III: 213; III: 236.

its aim of establishing his reputation for the simple reason that the book's status as an expensive luxury heavily impeded its sales. By restricting the circulation of the work, *The Excursion's* luxury status undermined the book's potential to serve as a durable vehicle for Wordsworth's career-making text and thus forced him to rethink his strategy in defining and maintaining his literary reputation. For this reason, after its initial appearance in 1814, *The Excursion* was never again published in quarto. Indeed, though the poem was widely reprinted, passing through seven individual editions between 1820 and 1850 and appearing as the final volume in each issue of Wordsworth's *Poetical Works*, it tended to appear in smaller and smaller formats. Though these formatting choices were of course partly determined by financial considerations, Wordsworth certainly recognized that only by reprinting his work in smaller formats available at lower prices would circulation increase, an increasingly receptive audience be reached, and his reputation most likely be assured.⁴⁹ Realizing that literary durability was a matter not of status but rather of wide distribution, Wordsworth was led to eschew the luxury quarto for smaller format books more capable of assuring the survival of his poetry and his reputation. And to a degree, he and his publishers succeeded in correcting their mistake. For to Victorian audiences, "*The Excursion* was *the* long Wordsworth poem" (Trott 13; see also *Wordsworth's Revisitings* 2). The popularity of *The Excursion* among the Victorian audience is usually attributed to that audience's ideological constitution and "the characteristic narrowness of Victorian orthodoxy" (Galperin 30). Yet the

⁴⁹ Recognizing this, Wordsworth writes in a letter dated 1840 that "I frequently receive testimonies from Individuals who live by the labour of their hands, that what I have written has not been a dead letter to them; and for this reason chiefly, I shall propose to my Publisher to print the *Excursion* in double column, so that it may circulate as cheaply as can be afforded" (*LWDW* VII: 153).

proliferation of smaller, cheaper copies of Wordsworth's poem—excluding the quarto edition, twenty-five authorized issues of the poem or selections from it were published during the period—does just as much to explain its popularity with Victorian readers. In the end, the *Excursion* episode was to teach Wordsworth that mass distribution across the reading “Public” rather than limitation to the “fit though few” constituting the “People” was the real condition of literary durability.

CHAPTER 5

THE “LUXURY OF THE EAST”:

REGENCY ORIENTALISM AND THE QUARTO BOOK

On June 13, 1819, Thomas Moore recounted a recent meeting with the Lord and Lady Holland: “I paid to Holland House one morning. Lord H. had just finished ‘Lalla Rookh’. My lady said she had two objections to reading it: in the first place, it was Eastern; in the second place, it was in quarto” (*Memoirs* 270). Passing through an almost unprecedented two quarto editions in the first year of its publication alone, *Lalla Rookh* epitomized the popularity of Romantic-period orientalism, as well as the appeal of the luxurious quarto format. Yet its reception also exemplified the anxious frisson generated by oriental quarto books during the Regency period—the dangerous luxury of their contents as well as the decadent lavishness of their form—as Lady Holland’s remark makes clear. Her comment reiterates a complaint, common among Romantic readers, that the quarto was intended as a classed bibliographic ornament rather than as a readable text, a book to be seen rather than read, and therefore, as Robert Southey put it, was condemned to serve only as “furniture in noblemens libraries” (*CLRS*: 1056). But in ruing the book’s “Eastern” associations, Lady Holland also hints at a degree of anxiety about the Oriental origins of Moore’s expensive piece of bibliographic furniture, whose poetry was also recognized by reviewers across the critical establishment as threatening the moral purity of English readers with its evocations of Persian luxury. By speaking of

Holland voices what many Regency readers realized: namely, that “the luxury commodity of orientalism” (Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East* 22) was not only a discursive construction but a material good whose shape was fixed by that format conventionally used to publish it, the “luxurious quarto” (“Mr. Moore’s *Lalla Rookh*” *Monthly Review* 83: 299). Indeed, the travel books and verse romances most deeply involved in the transmission of Romantic-period orientalism were very frequently published in the expensive costume of the extravagant quarto. But the oriental verse quarto’s material luxury had important consequences. For if, as Nigel Leask and others have argued, British Romantic writers sought through their writings to manage anxieties about the destructive effects of oriental literature, they agonized just as much about the orientalizing effects of the luxury commodity used to circulate it, the quarto book (Leask 2). The luxurious format of Romantic-period travel literature generated tremendous consumer desire even while drawing serious readerly objection, and in so doing reinforced the ambivalent appeal of its descriptions of the “luxury of the East.” Likewise, the reception of Regency-period oriental verse quartos like Robert Southey’s *The Curse of Kehama* and Thomas Moore’s *Lalla Rookh* displayed the material contours of Romantic-period orientalism, demonstrating that the anxieties of empire unsettling Romantic writers were materialized in the form of the luxurious quarto book.

“Red morocco fetters”: Orientalism and the Romantic-period Travel Quarto

If orientalism “saturated most forms of writing in the Romantic period” (Makdisi, “Romantic cultural imperialism” 615), then Romantic writing was equally saturated by the discourse on luxury. For the dominant orientalist traits by which Eastern cultures were

distinguished from Western—“excess from simplicity, idleness from vigour ... the artificial from the natural, the useless from the useful, the unmanly from the manly” (Makdisi 610)—were exactly those constituting the image of luxury. Fashioned as an imaginary space of dazzling wealth and extravagant consumption, lustful sultans and overflowing seraglios, spiritual torpor and bodily enervation—of “sherbet and sodomy,” in Byron’s words—the Orient localized the luxury that fascinated and frightened Romantic writers and readers.¹ But even if the “Orient was important for [Romantic writers] because it could be mobilized as an imaginary site in which to project various political and ideological modes of being—despotism, idleness, femininity and luxury, as well as a certain kind of religious enthusiasm ...” (Makdisi 605), the East’s increasing proximity generated anxieties about Britain’s susceptibility to its influence, and especially the dangers of its luxury. Even while British readers could distance themselves from luxury by projecting it deep into the East, Britain’s ever-expanding imperialism increasingly brought luxury home. But the commercial spoils of its Eastern empire were widely perceived as threatening the social and moral order of the British state. By 1810, many British readers would have agreed with the author of “National Luxury the Cause of National Degeneracy” when, in bemoaning “the expenses of the nobles and richer commons, the landlords of the realm, in the purchase of foreign delicacies and the imitation of foreign fashions ... which perpetually advance in value as the demand for

¹ Eastern luxury enticed travelers like Byron, who were drawn by “all the advantages of climate and abundance of luxury” of the Eastern mediterranean (Dallas 90). It flooded Britain in the form of those imported commodities—sweet and bitter almonds, elephant teeth, pomegranate peels, citrons, goat leather (Jackson 200-13)—that filled the shops of London. Most of all, oriental luxury proved a preoccupation of Romantic poetry, tantalizing readers with images of “jellies soother than the creamy curd, / And lucent syrups, in argosy transferr’d / From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one, / From silken Samarcand to cedar’d Lebanon” (“The Eve of St. Agnes” 266-270).

them continues and increases,” he asserted “that the prevalence of luxury has operated more to the decline and fall of great nations” (*The Tradesman* 5.28: 334). Thus, Britain’s anxious projections of luxury into the Orient were compromised by the evident luxury of Regency society itself.

Nowhere was the orientalist depiction of luxury as ubiquitous as in Romantic-period travel writing, which served as a principle mechanism in the discursive production of the Orient. On the one hand, travelers’ accounts of oriental opulence offered lavish descriptions of eastern luxuries, usually fixating on a few practices or goods, like the Turkish bath, tobacco, and tea and coffee consumption, in the case of the Near East.² But frequently traveller’s accounts of particular luxury goods gave way to more general evocations of “Eastern luxury” as an almost atmospheric presence in Oriental cultures. On occasion, writers celebrated the “innocent wholesome luxury” of the East—as Richard Chandler did when he reminisced of Smyrna and Athens that “I have sometimes been regaled, while in the inner room [of the Turkish bath], with ripe fruits and sherbet, and with incense burning to scent the air” (*Travels in Asia Minor* 52)—or reveled in its splendors, as did Edward Scott Waring in recalling a Persian supper during which

² This list is almost conventional in the period’s travel writing. John Cam Hobhouse writes in *A Journey Through Albania: And other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia* (1813) of tobacco as “the universal luxury of all the inhabitants of the Levant” (15). Lord Holland fixates especially on the “luxury of the Turkish pipe” (*Travels* 487), the “luxury of the warm baths” (154), and coffee as “a luxury which [the Turk] cannot forego” (363), claiming that “the pipe, the baths, and the drinking of coffee are his principal luxuries as well as occupations” (267). The haram in particular embodied Levantine luxury to British travellers, as Lord Holland suggested in writing of the Haram of Ioannina that “[t]he apartments are said to be furnished in a style of gorgeous luxury,” and that “[t]he number of females in the Haram is reported to exceed three hundred, but among these are included the various attendants, dancing girls, &c. who minister to the luxuries of the place” (190).

“[e]very thing was ordered in the highest style of Eastern luxury” (*A Tour to Sheeraz* 8).³ But more often accounts of Eastern luxury condemned its excesses as morally corrosive. Observing that the “wives and daughters [of the Princes of the Fanal] are fostered in every luxury, and all the soft pomp of the Asiatics,” for example, John Cam Hobhouse complained that “[a] love of pomp is a distinguishing characteristics of the Greeks, and as the policy of the Turks has allowed them alone ... they fail not to display this unenviable distinction” (*A Journey Through Albania* 517). Eastern luxury was especially troubling for its power to corrupt innocent British subjects, as Lord Valentia hinted when he advised, somewhat oddly, that sending young colonial administrators to India “at the tender age of fifteen, or even fourteen” might “enable them to return in the prime of life, with constitutions unimpaired and habits uncontaminated by the luxuries of Asia” (*Voyages and Travels to India* 213). The seductions and dangers of Eastern luxury were deepened by the aura of mystery surrounding the sources of its seemingly inexhaustible plenitude. Writing of Oriental opulence in his *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, James Bruce claimed that

[t]he farther back we go into the history of Eastern nations, the more reason we have to be surprised at the accounts of their immense riches and magnificence. One who reads the history of Egypt is like a traveller walking through its ancient, ruined, and deserted towns, where all are palaces and temples, without any trace of private or ordinary habitation. So in the earliest, though now mutilated, accounts which we have of them, all is power, splendour, and riches, attended by the luxury which was the necessary consequence, without any clue or thread left us by which we can

³ Similarly celebratory descriptions of luxury abound in accounts of Arabian, Persian and Indian travels. See, for example, Eyles Irwin’s *A Series of Adventures in the Course of a Voyage up the Red Sea*, which describes a night-time concert for a hakeem, “who sate smoking and drinking coffee with his women the greatest part of the night,” and suggests that “[t]hose only who have partaken of this enchanting scene, under a sky still unclouded, can form an idea of its luxury; where the very dews are genial, and the night-breeze carries a temperate coolness on its wing” (297-8).

remount, or be conducted, to the source or fountain whence this variety of wealth had flowed. (1-2)

Though in fact Bruce only succeeds in indicating the antiquity of orientalist explanations of Eastern luxury, accounts like his helped solidify for British readers a particular image of the Orient as a quasi-mystical source of boundless luxury.

Yet Romantic-period travel literature's condemnation of Eastern luxury was complicated by the luxuriousness of the bibliographic form in which it was conventionally embodied—namely, the quarto book.⁴ Undoubtedly, the practice of publishing travels in quarto drew on different motivations, but within the context of the Romantic-period book market, the travel quarto was received as a luxury good.⁵ The format's usual inclusion of “maps, plates, and ‘all appliances and means to boot’”

⁴ Commenting on this pattern in Canto V of *Don Juan*, Byron remarked that “every fool describes in these bright days / His wondrous journey to some foreign court, / And spawns his quarto, and demands your praise ...” (5.52). Listings of both new publications and library holdings throughout the period support Byron's observation. An 1819 *Quarterly Review*, for example, shows that of the twenty-one travel books recently issued under the category “Voyages and Travels,” ten were published in quarto (“New books”). At the same time, auction catalogues for those private libraries sold during the Romantic-period show extensive holdings of recently published travel quartos. So established was the practice of publishing travels in quarto that it was often abused, as when a reviewer complained of Carr's *The Stranger in Ireland* that “[w]e cannot here but exclaim, not so much against authors as against booksellers, who, for their own advantage, have introduced a practice of publishing all travels, light or heavy, in this quarto size. The profit of the bookseller is thus doubled, at the expence both of the public and the author” (*Belle Assemblée* 1:35).

⁵ The popularity of the genre, which increased the confidence of booksellers and publishers in the presence of market demand, probably worked to stimulate the sky-rocketing prices associated with the quarto format: as assistant librarian at the British Museum C. G. Worde suggested in 1795, “one of the most distinguishing features in the literary history of our age and century, is the passion of the public for voyages and travels. Of the books that have lately been published, there are none, novels alone excepted, that, in point of number, bear any proportion to them” (ctd. in Rogers 781; see also Charles Battan, *Pleasurable Instruction* 1). But the conventional bibliographic components of the typical Romantic-period travel book also strongly encouraged publication in quarto (*QR* 1.11: 258), as did its typical length, as suggested by a *British Review* article on Hobhouse's *Journey*, in which the reviewer confesses that “[i]f to travel through Albania and Greece to the Turkish capital be an undertaking of enterprize and difficulty, let it be acknowledged too, in justice to Reviewers, that to travel through a quarto of no less than 1150 pages is a task, which if it does not exercise our patience, at least attests our perseverance” (5.9: 38).

(*Quarterly Review* 1.11: 258) strengthened conventional expectations that the quarto would come with extravagant additions unavailable in other formats, and certainly never as grandly available. The massive size and typical length of the travel quarto also marked the book as an oriental luxury. Not only were such books characterized by the wide margins and high quality paper usually present in quartos, but they were so recognized for the unnecessarily large type enabled by their spacious pages that Thomas Gray was able to satirize its use when he wrote to Thomas Warton during his Grand Tour that he planned to publish “by subscription, in THIS LARGE LETTER The Travels of T. G. Gent:” (ctd. by Rogers 784). Expectations about the sumptuousness of the typical travel quarto meant that such books were almost exclusively issued by the most successful publishing houses of the period, with John Murray becoming especially associated with the genre. Their authorship by English lords and gentry, whose titles were displayed prominently in listings, meant that Regency-period travel quartos were vested with the authority of the most powerful names in the Kingdom. Finally, the travel quarto’s material luxury was exemplified by its already exorbitant but now steadily rising price, at £2 and often more.⁶ Consequently, some reviewers were led to complain about the

⁶ Regardless of its publisher’s motivations, the conventional quarto format of the Romantic-period travel narrative meant that such books entered the market with exceedingly high prices (see, e.g., “New books”). Such prices were nothing new: since John Hawkesworth had earned £6,000 for his three-volume quarto *An account of the voyages* (1773), travels in quarto had maintained a reputation for wildly high prices and huge returns. Even so, during a period in which a typical gentleman’s weekly income was no more than £5, these prices placed such quartos out of the reach of even the wealthiest members of the book buying public, let alone the hands of the middling classes or lower orders. Hence, even if one near contemporary could aver, in a 1790 review of Hassell’s *Tour of the Isle of Wight*, that “Excursions are universally the fashion [and] that this passion is carried to a great extent, and pervades all ranks, may be inferred from the multitude of Guides, Tours, Journeys, Excursions, &c. which are continually published” (“A Tour of the Isle of Wight,” *Monthly Review* III: 309), only an extremely restricted minority of the reading public could purchase, own, and display these books. Nor did the usual practice of tranching down alleviate the problem, for “travel writings were not being purchased by the less well off, since only three travel titles are known to have been published as chapbooks—

unnecessary luxury of the format. In its review of James Grey Jackson's *An Account of the Empire of Marocco*, for example, the *Edinburgh Review* complained that "we must remark, that [Jackson's] book, though written without any affectation of authorship, is certainly too bulky, and too much ornamented, in proportion to the quantity of its materials. It is eked out with some useless chapters (already hinted at), with broad margins, and wide spaces, and with exceeding bad daubs of aquatinta, until that which should have been a small octavo, has assumed the imposing shape of a quarto with plates" (14.28: 306). At every level—from product to publisher, and author to audience—the Regency-period travel quarto was perceived by readers as a luxury good.

But the ornamental luxury embedded in the format used to publish the period's travel literature also drove readers to figure the quarto in anxiously oriental terms. In general, Romantic writers and readers saw bibliographic ornament and its seductions as distinctly Eastern. Excessively ornamental libraries, for example, were consistently figured as the depositories of oriental luxuries, as when Washington Irving recounts in "The Literary Antiquary" that his Parson's

brain was haunted with love-sick dreams about gorgeous old works in silk linings, triple gold bands, and tinted leather; locked up in wire cases, and secured from the vulgar hands of the mere reader,' and, to continue the happy expressions of an ingenious writer, 'dazzling one's eyes like eastern beauties peering through their jealousies'. (147)⁷

Robinson Crusoe, *Buccaneers in America* and a version of Anson's *Voyage*—and only the first of these enjoyed much popularity in that format" (Rogers 787).

⁷ See also "The Mutability of Literature," in which Irving's voluble quarto asks "what a plague do they mean by keeping several thousand volumes of us shut up here, and watched by a set of old vergers like so many beauties in a harem, merely to be looked at now and then by the dean. Books were written to give pleasure and to be enjoyed ..." (211).

Like the beauties of an Eastern haram, decked out in all the opulence of the Orient, the luxury of the Parson's books endangers his moral purity, haunting his dreams and threatening to seduce him away from his duties as an Englishman. In extreme cases, the love for bibliographic ornament threatened to transform the British purchaser or collector into an exotic monster. Reviewing Richard Heber's "Bibliomania: or Book Madness," *The Satirist* attacked "those enthusiasts who throng to every great BOOK-AUCTION, month after month ... to hoard [books] up at home, with vast expense and parade, not for study but for show," explaining that

[t]ruly, the weak possessors of such splendid accumulations can hardly be said to enjoy the beauties of their seraglio; they may rather be contemptuously likened to the mutes and mutilated monsters of the East, who guard in wretched seclusion the choicest treasures of nature, with joyless, hopeless jealousy... Mr. HEBER's "Bibliomania, or Book-Madness," appears perfectly venial, therefore, in our eyes, when we reflect either on the mischievous operation of the passion in men of sordid dispositions, or, on the horrible waste of time and money, which its indiscriminate indulgence occasions. (5: 5-6)

Such anxieties focused with special force on the extravagant quarto. Because the quarto was the period's preeminent ornamental book, the format was often imaged in derisively oriental language, as when in "Ode XVI: Wit on the Wing" (1813) Horace Smith relates the story of a young "quarto-building wight" who "[f]or wit ... / Invokes the Gods; the jilt in spite / Eludes the man of letters. / Wit thro' the wire-wove margin glides, / And all the gilded pomp derides / Of red morocco fetters" (7-12). Imaging the "gilded pomp" of the quarto binding's red morocco leather in terms reminiscent of the fettered bibliographic harams envisioned by Irving and Heber's reviewer, Smith envisions quarto luxury in a distinctly Eastern light. In fact, as Smith suggests, the Eastern origins of many of the

luxurious materials embedded in the quarto—from its Morocco and Russia leather bindings, to its silk headbands and its marbled pages—incorporated oriental luxury into the book’s very form.⁸ Thus, on the basis of its material ornamentation as well as its textual contents, the Regency-period travel quarto was perceived by many readers as a troublingly oriental luxury.

Embodying the appeals of oriental luxury even while eliciting worries about its potentially corrupting influence, the Regency quarto materialized the exotic frisson

⁸ Typically, quartos—as well as books of any format, excepting those, like bibles and law books, with an established market (Pickwoad 271)—were sold to booksellers and to individual purchasers either unbound or in cheaply produced publisher’s boards that were meant to be immediately replaced (St. Clair 192). But because “[i]t was low tone for a gentleman to have unbound books on his shelves” (St. Clair 192), newly purchased books were almost always immediately sent to the binder. Named originally for their countries of provenance—Morocco, Russia, Turkey—the leather often used to bind high-end books like the quarto was frequently imported directly from Eastern markets and embodied the luxury of the quarto travel book’s textual contents at a material level. For example, the fashionable morocco goat leather conventionally used to bind expensive books like the quarto was imported directly from Morocco (Jackson 200-13) or—especially during the eighteenth century—Turkey, while the comparably expensive Russia leather was understood as an exotic luxury, as William Coxe suggested when in *Travels in Poland, Russia, Sweden* (1802) he listed it among other luxury imports of “Crim Tartary” (341). Such “Russia”—probably made from reindeer skins—“became very fashionable towards the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth” and was “usually found on large format books” like the quarto (Pickwoad 278). But goatskin was easily “the most expensive of the conventional binding leathers.” Fashioned into the so-called “Turkey leather” imported from Turkey during the early eighteenth-century, Turkish goatskins provided “an immensely durable skin with a rich grain, mostly used in various shades of red, but also in dark blue and black and less frequently green and yellow (citron)” (Pickwoad 278). Meanwhile, the slightly inferior “Morocco” leather was used from the beginning of the eighteenth century in high-quality bindings. The luxury of such imported binding materials showed itself in their price. According to *The Bookbinders’ Price-Book Calculated for the Different Modes of Binding, as Agreed Upon at a General Meeting of the Trade* (1813), purchasers interested in binding a 400-500 page book in demy quarto could opt for, among others, bindings in “Morocco, elegant bands and loose backs” for £1 5s.; in “Morocco, elegant [with] gilt edged rolled border” for £1 4s. 3d.; or in “Russia or Roan, gilt backs, marb[led] edg[es] bands, loose backs & grained” for 15s. (*Price-book* 14-18). Assuming that prices remained relatively consistent throughout the Regency period, London purchasers interested in binding the two quarto volumes of Chandler’s *Travels in Greece* were forced to expend a relatively huge sum—up to almost half the price of the book for the finest Morocco bindings—on the socially required necessity of having it bound. But in addition to the leathers used to bind high-end books like the quarto, the marbled pages and silk headbands included in luxury bindings also displayed orientalist associations. Of probably Persian origin, marbled paper was historically associated with Turkish bookmaking (Loring 1). Of course, by the Romantic period, marbled paper was being produced in England, but it may have retained its Oriental associations for many readers. Finally, the silk head-bands added to finely bound books exhibited Eastern connotations. Such materials were especially associated with quartos, and frequently used to bind travel quartos, as auction catalogues from the period show.

evident throughout the period's oriental literature but especially pervasive in its travel writing. In this sense, the quarto book emblemized the anxieties of Romantic orientalism. On the one hand, quarto travel literature constructed the Orient as a place of boundless and foreign luxury. On the other, the distinctly oriental ornamentation of the quarto book destabilized such orientalist projections: through its lavishly ornamented form, the quarto offered an unsettling reminder to Regency readers that Britain, bloated on colonial wealth, was as enslaved to luxury as the Orient was imagined to be. If, by the Regency period, the foreign wealth gathered through Britain's expanding imperialism had brought the nation—and its luxury book market—to the peak of decadence, then Britain's ever-growing luxury also threatened dire consequences for the empire. As the most extravagant book of the Regency era, the quarto embodied British anxieties about the potential of oriental luxury to doom the nation.

“A kind of lapidary appearance”: Southey and the *Curse of Kehama* Quarto

Like the period's travel quarto, the Regency verse romance participated in the production of Romantic orientalism. Joining the deluge of travel quartos was a wave of oriental romances—from Robert Southey's *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) to Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (1817)—that figured the East as the source of dangerously excessive wealth. And in fact, such romances were themselves extravagantly priced luxury goods. Ranging from 30 shillings (for *Childe Harold*) to 42 shillings (for *Lalla Rookh*), the Regency verse quarto's luxury was in part a consequence of the power of its high price to generate market appeal, as Southey suggested in remarking of his *Madoc* quarto that “I am sure the book will sell the better for being made expensive” (*CLRS*:

891). But the oriental verse quarto's luxuriousness lay also in its status as an aesthetic rather than a practical object, a book whose construction rendered it "such as the great half-read" (*CLRS*: 904) and "condemned [it] to be furniture in noblemens libraries" (*CLRS*: 1056). The extravagance of such oriental quartos thus served to embody the luxury of their poetic contents even while eliciting anxieties about the potential for luxury—and especially Eastern luxury—to contaminate British readers and book buyers. More than any other poet of the period, Robert Southey registered such an ambivalence about the luxury quarto, as the case of his *Curse of Kehama* quarto shows. While Southey admired the ornamental beauty of the quarto, he also worried about its power to corrupt readers by turning their attention from the edifying text of the poem to the ostentatious ornaments of the book. Likewise, *Kehama*'s reviewers read both the poem and its bibliographic format as expressive of a troublingly appealing Eastern luxury.

Throughout his career, Southey imagined luxury as distinctly oriental in shape, and as especially embodied in Eastern ornament.⁹ The "Orientaliana; or Eastern and Mahomeddan Collections" section of the *Commonplace Book (Second Series)* indicates the strength of this preoccupation.¹⁰ A passage from Quintan Crauford on "Oriental

⁹ From his earliest writings, Southey had engaged in the luxury debates of the Romantic period, though his position shifted in predictable ways between his early career as a radical poet of the 1790s and his ascendancy to the office of laureate during the Regency. While in 1793 Southey had expressed to Grosvenor Charles Bedford his desire to find "some corner of the world where wealth is useless" and "where all should be convenient without luxury all satisfied without profusion" (*CLRS*: 42), by 1805 he would hope that the sale of the luxurious *Madoc* quarto would generate socially beneficial wealth (*CLRS*: 1075).

¹⁰ In addition to those sections focusing strictly on ornament, numerous sections linger on the material luxuries of the East: pistachios (469-71); sherbet (468); the "ointment of Siam" (468); regional wools (472); "Rose Water, and the Women of Yezd" (473); "Soap and Olive Oil of Antioch" (476); "Ornamental Embankments at Benares" (477); wine jars (479); various sorts of Eastern stones (479); the "Splendid Interior of Turkish Houses" (484); tobacco (493); musk (503); raisins (514); and so on.

Dress” notes, for example, how “[i]n the ears, which are always exposed, all the Hindoos wear large gold rings, ornamented according to their taste or means, with diamonds, rubies, or other precious stones” (511). Elsewhere, Southey devotes a lengthy passage to a “diamond of the first water, shaped like a prism, weighing an hundred and seventeen carats, and estimated at twenty-five thousand pounds” and to “the Fucht-Taoos, or peacock-throne, in which the expanded tail of the peacock, in its natural size, was imitated in jewellery, composed of the most costly diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, topazes, and amethysts, producing a wonderful effect” (418). A further entry on the “Trade of Precious Stones at Cambay” relates how “[c]ornelians, agates, and the beautifully variegated stones improperly called mocha stones, form a valuable part of the trade at Cambay” (428). However, Southey’s fascination with Eastern ornament is never simply celebratory, for he consistently reads its excessiveness as a symptom of oriental savagery, entitling as “Barbaric Splendour,” for example, an account of the treasures displayed at the Palace of the Ambassador of the Urbeks and Tartars which recalls of the King that “[i]l y en avoit deux tous couverts de diamans, deux autres de rubis, deux autres d’emeraudes, deux autres de turquoises, et un autre tout brode de belles perles” (489). Even if oriental luxury is displayed most visibly in the jewels and gems of Eastern kings, such ornamental splendors remain barbarous in the wild extravagance of their sheer profusion.

Southey’s conflicted fascination with the luxury of Eastern ornament also saturated his published poetry, especially his oriental romances *Thalaba the Destroyer* and *The Curse of Kehama*. *Thalaba*’s preoccupation with Eastern ornament extends from

its abundant evocations of oriental wealth to the description of its own style, which Southey defines in the “Preface” as “the *Arabesque* ornament of an Arabian tale” (vii).¹¹ As in the “Orientaliana,” such remarks “testify to Southey’s jeweller-like fascination for a refined and sumptuous Eastern life-style” (Saglia 178) even while displaying deeper anxieties about the appeals of Eastern luxury. For Southey’s praise of *Thalaba*’s “*Arabesque* ornament” is complicated by his claim elsewhere that “Poetical Ornaments ... are not enough. If the groundwork be bad, they are like the rich colours of a dauber’s picture, like the jewels that bedizen a clumsy church-idol” (*Commonplace Book* IV, p. 258). Not merely stylistic, Southey’s anxieties about the dangers of Eastern ornament also extended to material objects like the oriental book, as one of *Thalaba*’s early notes makes clear:

A waste of ornament and labour characterises all the works of the Orientalists. I have seen illuminated Persian manuscripts that must each have been the toil of many years, every page painted, not with representations of life and manners, but usually like the curves and lines of a Turkey carpet, conveying no idea whatever, as absurd to the eye as nonsense-verses to the ear. The little of their literature that has reached us is equally worthless. (*Thalaba* note 3)

Exemplified by the bibliographic excesses of the illuminated Persian manuscript, the luxury of the East shows itself in the “waste of ornament” whose perversion of labor and

¹¹ Passages recounting the luxury of eastern ornament are found throughout *Thalaba*, and especially in its “Notes”: citing a number of travel books, Southey explains, for example, that “[t]he magnificent Mosque at Tauris is faced with varnished bricks of various colours, like most fine buildings in Persia” (from Tavernier’s *Voyages en Turquie*); “that [g]ilding is also common upon Oriental buildings” (from Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations and Voyages*); that “they consume ... great store of leafe-gold for that they overlay all the tops of the houses with gold, and some of them are covered with gold from the top to the foote” (from Hakluyt); and that “[t]he Turks and Persians seem wonderfully fond of gilding; we read of their gilt stirrups, gilt bridles, gilt maces, gilt scymitars, &c. &c” (footnote 124). See also, for example, Southey’s remarks on the palace Shedad, which he claims he has “ornamented ... less profusely than the oriental writers who describe it” (note 18).

decadence of taste materializes the “nonsense-verses” of an “equally worthless” literature.

Like *Thalaba*, *The Curse of Kehama* reflected Southey’s conflicts about Eastern luxury and especially ornamentation. From the beginning, Southey hoped to chisel *Kehama* into a work resembling a luxuriously oriental gem, explaining of the poem that “[t]here must be quicker, wilder movements; there must be a gorgeousness of ornament also, —eastern gem-work, and sometimes rhyme must be rattled upon rhyme, till the reader is half dizzy with the thundering echo” (*CLRS*: 1459). In this he certainly succeeded, for *Kehama* is everywhere studded with scenes of oriental splendor. But the poem also manifests Southey’s recurrent anxiety about ornamental luxury, especially in the association it draws between luxury and death. The “funeral pomp” (I.11) of the poem’s opening immediately establishes this association by displaying Arvalan’s wives, who are about to be burned on his funeral pyre in the ceremony of sati, bedecked in the wealth of the East.¹² Likewise, *Kehama* concludes by depicting the terrifying morbidity of ornamental luxury. Having entered Yamenpur—“Infernal City, Yamen’s seat / Of empire, in the midst of Padalon” (XXIII.167-8), a place literally built of precious stones—in the attempt to wrest control over the Heavens from the Gods, Kehama is

¹² Southey writes “O sight of grief! the wives of Arvalan, / Young Azla, young Nealliny, are seen! / Their widow-ropes of white, / With gold and jewels bright / Each like an Eastern queen” (83-87). Upon taking her seat upon the pyre, Azla “calmly the whole terrific pomp survey’d ... They strip her ornaments away, / Bracelet and anklet, ring, and chain, and zone; / Around her neck they leave / The marriage knot alone” (147; 152-155). The morbidity of Eastern luxury is again apparent in “The Sacrifice,” during which “on his golden throne / Reclin’d, Kehama lies / Watching with steady eyes / The perfum’d light that, burning bright, / Metes out the passing hours. / On either hand his eunuchs stand, / Freshening with fans of peacock-plumes the air, / Which, redolent of all rich gums and flowers, / Seems, overcharged with sweets, to stagnate there ... ” (VIII.97-104). Interrupted from sacrificing a horse to the gods by the untouchable Ladurlad, Kehama in his fury butchers ten thousand of his troops, and the scene ends with “the steam of slaughter from that place of blood [spreading] o’er the tainted sky” (IX.1-2).

confronted by three statues surrounding the “Golden Throne,” the first of which embodies Luxury, informing Kehama that “I of the Children of Mankind was first, / Me miserable! who, adding store to store, / Heapt up superfluous, and now accurst, / For ever I the frantic crime deplore” (XXIV.93-96).¹³ Upon drinking from the “Amreeta-cup,” from whose contents he hopes to gain immortality, Kehama is stricken with “[a] stream of poison” that transforms him into a fourth statue and subjects him to that “Infinite everlasting agony” already suffered by Luxury (XXIV.227).¹⁴ If, in general, *Kehama*’s ironic reversals thematize the anxieties of empire—just as the imperialist Kehama’s quest for absolute power results in his radical disempowerment, so does Britain’s increasingly global reach threaten to undermine its colonial might—then the poem’s refusal to imagine luxury outside of scenes of slaughter, agony, and death accomplishes a similar aim, expressing both the mortal dangers of luxury’s appeal and Southey’s own anxieties about

¹³ Yamenpur is imaged explicitly in terms of ornamental luxury: “[t]here on a rock of adamant it stood, / Resplendent far and wide, / Itself of solid diamond edified / ... The Diamond City blazing on its height” (XXIII.170-2; 183).

¹⁴ Such passages are numerous. Just as Eastern ornament seems bound to the demonic forces pervading the poem, those who reject it are marked by their angelic purity. In “The Retreat,” Kailyal is described in such terms: “For never Nymph of mountain, / Or Grove, or Lake, or Fountain, / With a diviner presence fill’d the shade. / No idle ornaments deface / Her natural grace, / Musk-spot, nor sandal streak, nor scarlet stain, / Ear-drop nor chain, nor arm nor ankle ring, / Nor trinketry on front, or neck, or breast, / Marring the perfect form: she seem’d a thing / Of Heaven’s prime uncorrupted work, a child / Of early Nature undefil’d” (XIII.194-204). The “Notes” also present readers with lengthy descriptions of the ornamental luxury of the East. Referring to a line in Section XIII—“Nor arm, nor ankle ring”—for example, Southey cites Buchanan’s statement that “Glass rings are universally worn by the women of the Decan, as an ornament on the wrists ... In doing this a girl seldom escapes without drawing blood, and rubbing part of the skin from the hand” (349). Likewise, citing Bruton, Southey writes of the “Chariot of the God” that carries the idol Juggernaut in Section XIV that “[t]he chariot is most richly adorned with most rich and costly ornaments ... and, when it is going along the city, there are many that will offer themselves as sacrifices to this idol” (351). Of the same passage, Southey cites *Indian Antiquities* to explain how women are “consecrated ... to the [sexual] service of the presiding divinity of the pagoda,” Juggernaut: “[t]hey were instructed to mould their elegant and airy forms into the most enticing attitudes and the most lascivious gestures, while the rapid and graceful motion of their feet, adorned with golden bells, and glittering with jewels, kept unison with the exquisite melody of their voices” (352).

the baleful luxury of Eastern ornament.

But the anxieties of Southey's "jeweller-like fascination" with the East also focused on the luxurious form of the quarto format used to publish *Kehama*. In general, Southey understood books and print matter as luxury items, regretting, for example, what "a luxury have our wise rulers resolved to make literature!" (CLRS: 917). This preoccupation with literary luxury even shaped Southey's conception of literary forms themselves, though in uneven ways.¹⁵ But most of all, Southey's thoughts on luxury and literature fixated on the quarto, which he recognized as the period's major luxury format, embodying both the appeal and revulsion he already associated with the ornaments of Eastern luxury. Southey was plainly attracted to the beauty of the book. As early as 1795, he would write to his brother Thomas of his *Joan of Arc* quarto that the book would "want no luxury of type & paper" for "the types are new on purpose—& the paper which I have seen is most excellent" (CLRS: 126).¹⁶ Yet he was also deeply ambivalent about its luxury. This ambivalence was a consequence of practical considerations, for he recognized that the book's luxury status could both generate and inhibit sales, but

¹⁵ Writing to William Taylor in May of 1799, for example, Southey explained of "Dom Daniel" that "it should not be in blank verse, because there is danger of too much mannerism, after two long poems, & because stanzas are more adapted to luxury or magnificence of description" (CLRS: 414). Yet a year later, Southey would scorn the "luxury of language" of certain poems published in the *Annual Anthology*, writing to William Taylor that "Selene is too long. I wonder at your praise of the Song of Pleasure. the latter Stanzas of the Sons of Genius from Thus the pale moon—to scorn the lunar ray—appear to me worth a myriad of such poems. it has luxury of language—but nought else. I have burnt piles of such poetry" (CLRS: 491).

¹⁶ Correspondingly, Southey understood octavos like the second edition of *Madoc* as ugly books in comparison to the quarto. Writing to his brother in 1811, Southey explained that "Longman tells me he has 109 copies of *Kehama* left, which he hopes will soon go, – & therefore as it is desirable one edition should be ready by the time the other is sold, he wishes the second may go forthwith to press. Moreover he has only 50 of the small *Madoc*, – so this also goes to press tomorrow. I am exceedingly glad of this, for the current edition is so clumsily divided, & so ill printed that I never could look at it without displeasure" (CLRS: 1919).

Southey also expressed apprehensions about the threat posed by the luxurious quarto to the British social order and the mores undergirding it.¹⁷ In June of 1805, for example, he complained in reference to the *Madoc* quarto that

books are now so dear that they are becoming rather articles of fashionable furniture than any thing else. They who buy them do not read them, & they who read them do not buy them. I have seen a Wiltshire clothier who gives his bookseller no other instructions than the dimensions of his shelves—& have just heard of a Liverpool merchant who is fitting up a library, & has told his bibliopole to send him Shakespere & Milton & Pope, & if any of those fellows should publish any thing new to let him have it immediately. (CLRS: 1075)

Southey's worry indicates both an understanding of the luxury book's traditional power to enact social distinction and a fear of the social disorder threatened by the increasing availability of such bibliographic luxuries to wider audiences. Historically, the quarto was a book meant for the British gentry and nobility: "[i]f *Madoc* obtain any celebrity," he

¹⁷ Though he would remark of *Madoc* that "I am sure the book will sell the better for being made expensive" (CLRS: 891), he simultaneously worried that its quarto format might also prove detrimental to sales. He indicates his belief in the commercial power of the quarto in recounting a visit to Matthew Lewis: "he was at breakfast, & actually had his gentleman to sugar his coffee for him! as his ballad volume is to be a superb quarto I did not hesitate at giving him mine because a superb quarto never can hurt the sale of my pocket modesty" (CLRS: 403). Likewise, Southey writes to John May in February of 1800 of the unfinished "History of Portugal" that "[l]ess than two quarto volumes could not comprize the work. I should suppose not less than three for the great Indian Episode would require one to itself. the pecuniary profit of such a work might be estimated at not much less than a thousand pounds. Gibbons six quartos acquired him eight thousand" (CLRS: 488). But at the same time, Southey also worried that the quarto format might retard sales: "[i]t is a beautiful book," he wrote of *Madoc*, "but I repent having printed it in quarto. By its high price one half the edition is condemned to be furniture in expensive libraries—& the other to ... collect cobwebs in the publishers warehouses. I foresee that I shall get no solid pudding by it ... However after sixteen years it is something pleasant—as well as something melancholy—to see it as I now do, for the first time in the shape of a book ... It is easy to quit the pursuit of fortune for fame—but had I been obliged to work for the necessary comforts ... instead of the superfluities of life—I must have sunk as others have before me" (CLRS: 1060). So unlikely could quarto sales sometimes seem that Southey occasionally imagined purchases in terms of charity. Writing to Charles Danvers, he explained that "[t]here will be a second edition certainly—perhaps ala mode Cottle—as a hearty shove to a heavy quarto—so I shall have all the plague of correcting—but give you no hint of this to those well disposed persons who charitably design to buy the first, & in fact the corrections will not be important. How many persons who would give me five guineas if they knew I wanted it—will not buy my book" (CLRS: 1048). Southey put his anxieties in clearest terms in a letter to John Rickman: "My quarto it is to be feared will not sell, because it is a quarto" (CLRS: 1064).

explained in the same letter, “its size & cost will recommend it among these gentry—*libros consumere nati*,—born to buy quartos & help the revenue,” while elsewhere he writes of another quarto production that “[i]t does me good to see what a noble pile my boards make” (*CLRS*: 956). At the same time, *Madoc*’s price continued to put it well out of reach of “the people.”¹⁸ But amidst the changing economic landscape of Regency-period Britain, luxuries like the long verse quarto had become more accessible to rising middle class readers, thereby threatening to erode the consumption patterns grounding the British social order. Driven by social ambition, such purchasers were also more inclined to show an unhealthy preoccupation with bibliographic display. As Southey makes clear, the value of the quarto book for such consumers lay in its status as “fashionable” and especially “noble” furniture rather than in its text. As a bibliographic ornament, the quarto book threatened to contaminate the moral purity of both the British reader and British literature by transforming the British literary canon into nothing more than luxurious decor. In these ways, Southey’s anxieties about the power of luxury to destabilize British hierarchy were embodied in the superfluously ornamental quarto book.

Southey understood the quarto as a luxurious ornament meant to decorate the libraries of the British upper and rising middle-classes, but he also saw the book’s conventional contents in terms of ornament. Chief among the quarto’s ornaments were

¹⁸ Southey recognized that the quarto was emphatically not a book for ordinary readers, exclaiming in the wake of *Madoc*’s poor sales that “I ought to have relied enough upon myself to have known that it no more needed a quarto page to ... get it notice—than I need a cocked hat to get into company. Next time I will try a five shilling plan & print for the people” (*CLRS*: 1056); elsewhere, he confidently declared that “my book will not be lost in the crowd” (*CLRS*: 985). Southey similarly classes the book in alluding to “a fine quarto History of the Culdees, from which I expected a good deal, —having a more than ordinary interest in all matters of ... monastic history. Never was there a worse book. It is literally nothing more than an overgrown presbyterian pamphlett” (*CLRS*: 1888).

the prints it often included, which Southey envisioned as devices capable of driving up the price of the book. As he explained of *Madoc*:

I...applied to Longman, and have agreed that he shall publish [*Madoc*] in quarto, with engravings, and share the profits with me. The vignettes are wanted to elucidate an outlandish costume and give broad hints to dull imaginations, and are therefore not mere ornaments. My reasons for preferring this agreement to a prompt payment were, that they might advance the whole capital in giving the book these eye-catching utilities, which are always hearty shoves to a heavy quarto; and that I might receive large interest, instead of paying large discount; for, in fact, that is the clear mode of stating it. (*CLRS*: 901)

Denying their conventional function as “mere ornaments,” Southey is clear that *his* vignettes are useful insofar as they “elucidate an outlandish costume” while assuring a “large interest” by encouraging quarto publication and creating reader demand for *Madoc*. Elsewhere, Southey is even more explicit about the luxuriousness of such ornamental vignettes, justifying their inclusion in *Madoc* by explaining his aim as in part to make “the book sell, which prints do by making it expensive, for the rich think whatever is dear must be good” (*CLRS*: 904).¹⁹ But like prints, the presence of lengthy notes also amplified the quarto’s status as a luxury book, as Southey hinted at strongly to Grosvenor Charles Bedford, when he wrote of *Madoc* that “[t]he book will want some such hearty shove ... as being a heavy quarto,— ... my profits are wholly dependent upon the sale, & are very likely to be nothing. Two guineas is a great price. I hoped it would not have exceeded 25—or 30 shillings—but it grew under correction & the notes

¹⁹ Southey extends his comments to the size of the prints in the same letter, suggesting that “[f]or the size let it be a fit vignette or tail piece for a common quarto, such as the great half-read which tho an uncommon poem, is of the common size, & I should think the subject will look better in wood than in copper, wood giving a greater blackness. Longman will spare no expence in employing the best artists.” See also Southey’s remark to his brother in 1804 that “My plan for *Madoc* stands thus at present, that Longman shall risque all expences & share the eventual profit, printing it in quarto & with engravings—for I am sure the book will sell the better for being made expensive” (*CLRS*: 891).

take up much room tho not a fourth of what I had collected are inserted” (*CLRS*: 1058).

By lengthening the text to be published and thus encouraging quarto publication, both vignettes and notes were essential components of the quarto book’s luxury status. Yet, as Southey made clear, the value of each lay in its presence as a superfluous ornament serving to materialize quarto luxury.

When *Kehama* first appeared in 1810, it embodied such ornamental Eastern luxury for Southey. Printed in quarto partly at the advice of Walter Scott and issued in the standard, low print run of 500 copies, Southey’s book entered the market at the extremely high price of 31.5 shillings unbound (St. Clair 200).²⁰ As Southey was clear about from the beginning, *Kehama*’s status as a luxury quarto was meant in part to solidify his position as one of the period’s major authors, as he plainly informed his brother in remarking that *Kehama* “is to be printed in quarto for the sake of my dignity” (*CLRS*: 1731). Southey perceived this dignity as arising from the book’s power to assure his lasting poetic reputation: even while he recognized that the poem’s status as a luxurious rarity would impede circulation—“I wrote it in full expectation that there were not above a dozen persons who would thoroughly enjoy it at present,” he confessed in March of 1811 (*CLRS*: 1881)—he continued to believe that the book’s size and scarcity would help actualize his long-term success by establishing for him a lasting reputation.²¹ But Southey

²⁰ Southey explained to Walter Savage Landor that “I have made my usual bargain with the bookseller,—that is to say no bargain at all,—they print & I share the profits. Scott recommended strongly the quarto form, & quarto accordingly it is, my own opinion being that . . . in whatever form it appeared a sale to clear the expences was certain, & any thing beyond that exceedingly improbable” (*CLRS*: 1765).

²¹ As he explained in 1805 to Herbert Hill, “[w]ith regard to *Kehama* I was perfectly aware that I was planting acorns while my contemporaries were setting Turkey Beans. The oak will grow, & tho I may never sit under its shade my children will. Of the *Lady of the Lake* 25,000 copies have been printed, of *Kehama* 500.—& if they sell in seven years I shall be surprized. It is of no consequence . . . So as I feel

also recognized the power of the *Kehama* quarto's bibliographic ornaments to impart to the book a luxury that was uniquely oriental. In explaining to Walter Savage Landor, the poem's dedicatee, that the "Notes" offered "a specimen of the ore, that the skill of the refiner may be understood" (*CLRS*: 1808), Southey not only depicted himself as a jeweler and the notes as the raw material of his craft, but the poem as a refined example of his "Eastern gem-work," its luxury shining forth in the rich, Indian ornament of the poetic lines themselves. But, as Southey recognized, the book's notes were also distinctly orientalist in their content: writing of his decision to appoint his brother's wife Sarah "my amanuensis extraordinary, to make notes for *Kehama*," he explained that "[s]he will soon

no want of [any] profit from those works which are for futurity, I am compleatly indifferent concerning their immediate success. The only effect the total non-sale of *Kehama* could have would be to make me take measures against the iniquitous laws of literary property ... " (*CLRS*: 1865). In particular, he hoped *Kehama*'s ultimate success would be served by its uniquely Romantic offer of aesthetic transcendence, urging a reviewer with whom he was in contact that "[t]he best thing that could be done ... would be to interpolate it with one paragraph, written ... to show the value of works of high imagination, in taking us out of ourselves, & ... busying the mind about something which is not connected with the ordinary passions & pursuits of life" (*CLRS*: 1848). Likewise, he related of an acquaintance's experience reading *Kehama* that "she 'felt it elevate her conceptions, & occasion an excitement of mind which made her feel superior to herself" (*CLRS*: 1836). But like Wordsworth, Southey also understood the quarto book as the material mechanism assuring his Romantic apotheosis in a posthumous fame. Writing in 1804, for example, Southey recalls how "you know not, said Horne Took how proud a man feels when he is to be hung upon a charge of high treason.—you know not how consequential a man feels when he is about to send a quarto volume into the ... world. Here it seems a great event. there needs however nothing more to humble him than to walk into a London booksellers shop, or to take up a catalogue ... " (*CLRS*: 985). Indeed, so confident was Southey in the power of the quarto to assure his fame that he could assert in 1805 of *Madoc* that "[m]y own heavy quarto stands I believe better with the world than it does with me" (*CLRS*: 1097). As Southey made clear, even if the quarto's price inhibited sales and prevented him from realizing a fortune, its status as an aestheticized luxury book would consolidate his reputation, as he suggested to Charles Danvers when he explained that "[a]s for *Madoc* it will pay me in the end by its consequences—but upon its profits I reckon nothing" (*CLRS*: 1048). Just as Southey understood that his own capacity for a Romantic rejection of short-term commercial success in favor of the long-term reputation that his poetry might garner was premised on his position as a man who had merely to work for the "superfluities of life" rather than the necessities, so does he indicate the extent to which Romantic ideology was conditioned by its bibliographic embodiments: for if Romanticism transformed immediate market failure into the poetic triumph of lasting fame, then the quarto book was the condition of this transformation. In exclaiming that *Kehama* was meant for "futurity" rather than "immediate success," Southey indicated his faith in the power of the quarto book to earn him such lasting fame.

become right learned in the wisdom of the East, & tho I do not flatter myself so far as to suppose that she will ever be mistress of the whole thousand & eight names of Seeva, yet she is in a fair way of ... knowing great part of his history” (*CLRS*: 1786). Indeed, so extreme was the orientalism of *Kehama*’s notes that Southey worried that they would overwhelm the poem unless something were inserted in the reviews to “rescue me from the imputation of having written a poem of 5000 lines for the purpose of teaching Hindoo mythology” (*CLRS*: 1848). From the ornament of the quarto book itself to the ornamentation of its contents, *Kehama* was seen by Southey as materializing a uniquely oriental luxury.

Like Southey, *Kehama*’s reviewers also perceived the book as embodying the extravagance of Eastern ornament, both stylistically and materially. To a certain extent, reviewers were only following long-established critical consensus in lambasting Southey for the “Eastern extravagance and luxuriousness of his style, which they saw as an importation of Oriental culture, both material and discursive, into the Western literary tradition” (Saglia 183). As early as *Thalaba*, reviewers had tended to agree with Frances Jeffrey that even while his “imitation, or admiration of Oriental imagery ... has, for the most part, the recommendation of novelty; and there is always a certain pleasure in contemplating the costume of a distant nation, and the luxuriant landscape of an Asiatic climate,” ultimately such materials “are all instances of disproportioned and injudicious ornaments” (78).²² But *Kehama* struck reviewers as particularly objectionable for the

²² *Thalaba* was the first work to suggest to reviewers that Southey had “gone native” in search of content. But Southey’s ornamental style also produced in reviewers an unsettling anxiety about the status of oriental images and the poet’s relationship to them. Writing in the *Monthly Magazine*, for example, one reviewer observed in *Thalaba* how “figures, motley, strange, causing palpitation, dance before the eye,

distinctly Oriental extravagance of its gem-like ornamentation. Certainly, some reviewers commended the poem for its stylistic luxury: the *Poetical Register*, for example, was generally positive about *Kehama*'s extravagance, remarking that "[e]xtravagant as the story is, it is told with inimitable spirit, and its consistency is preserved to the last. Nothing can be more perfectly oriental than its scenery and allusions" ("The Curse of Kehama" 547). But most reviewers disagreed. The *Monthly* complained that Southey "excites admiration and pity naturally: —but his courses of terror are always extravagant, and often disgusting" ("The Curse of Kehama" 62) before condemning the poem for its "gross extravagancies" (124) and "extravagant fictions" (127). The *Satirist* objected to the poem's "extravagant superstitions" ("The Curse of Kehama" 250), suggesting that "[t]he descriptions are too laboured and too gaudy" (254). And writing in the *Edinburgh*, Jeffrey figured the poem's stylistic extravagancies in terms of flashily ornamental opulence, exclaiming that

[e]very thing, in his pictures, is gaudy and glittering, and fantastically exaggerated and contrasted. His landscapes are full of coloured light, and gems, and metallic splendour; and sparkle with such portentous finery, as to remind us of the old-fashioned grottos and shell-work of the last generation, or the gilded caverns and full-lighted transparencies of the opera house. His excessive love of the marvellous and gigantic, is a symptom not less decisive ... ("The Curse of Kehama" 433)

A "gilded book of fairy tales" (434), *Kehama* was "the most extravagant and most elaborate of all Mr Southey's performances—and likely to succeed very nearly as

and thwart the anxious grasp" ("Half-Yearly Retrospect" 582). If the "contemporary perception of Southey as a poet who had been 'engulfed' by the Orient is closely linked to his style of representation" (Leask, "Absorption" 183), then this style was as much ornamental as panoramic. See also Diego Saglia: "His is a jeweller's East ... and its sumptuousness contributes to an explanation of how if his writing supports a controlled appropriation of the East, it also falls prey to the seduction of the 'other' culture, becoming so deeply involved in it as to take on the features of Oriental literature" (183).

Thalaba has succeeded,” only on the basis of “the irregularity of its measures; the wildness of its fictions, the splendour of its Oriental scenery, its eternal enchantments, and the fewness of its human characters” (438).²³ More than any other fault, Southey’s poem was damaged by its ornamental extravagance.

But reviewers also worried about the insidious orientalism of the poem’s excessive ornamentation. That Southey’s style was self-consciously Eastern was clear. The *Literary Panorama* contended that Southey had in fact set out to ape the oriental style of Indian poetry: “‘HITHERTO,’ said Mr Southey to himself when meditating a subject which issued in the poem before us, ‘hitherto the Hindoo poets have borne away the palm of extravagance, amazement, and monstrosity ... why should I not out sing those Hindoo mythologists in their own strains ...?’” (“The Curse of Kehama” 1044). Walter Scott agreed, arguing in the *Quarterly* that *Kehama*’s extravagant style was an outgrowth of its oriental material and observing “a glow, an exuberancy even in his descriptions, indicating a richness of fancy adequate to supply the waste not of use only, but of extravagance...” (“The Curse of Kehama” 55).²⁴ Yet as Scott made clear, the

²³ Jeffrey goes on to attack the poem, in relation to *Thalaba*, as expressing a “more ostentatious and elaborate description and ... still greater extravagance of fiction” and citing the offensiveness of “the irregularity and extravagance” of Southey’s prior oriental epic. Jeffrey repeatedly returns to the poem’s “extravagance,” damning “this exhibition of his extravagances” (439); attacking the massacre scene as “the most revolting and contemptible extravagance in the whole poem” (445); and scorning the poem as “utterly extravagant” and composed of “extravagant fictions” (451). Such extravagance is apparent in Southey’s luxuriously bejewelled language, as when “Mr Southey lands his voyagers at the Swerga, which is described with still more extravagant luxuriance, both of language and of fancy. A huge tree of midland height, drops diamond water from very leaf ...” (443).

²⁴ According to Scott, “[t]he story is founded upon the Hindoo mythology, the most gigantic, cumbrous, and extravagant system of idolatry to which temples were ever erected” (44). Such extravagance was also apparent in the poem’s narrative, as when “[a] band of Yoguees or profligate priests seize ... a bride for Jaga-naut, in whose name they prosecute their infamous pleasures. Kailyal is led in a procession, which is described with magnificent luxuriance” (51). Like Jeffrey, Scott remarks on the poem’s “extravagance” repeatedly, writing, for example, that Southey divests “of extravagance what he

poem's extravagant "ornaments" as well as its "land-scape, the animals, the similes, the language, the sentiments are oriental" (59). But Southey's oriental ornamentation also troubled reviewers, who worried with Scott that "[w]e have scarcely been able to find a passage, in which we are reminded that the bard is an European" (59) and that while "[t]he genius and moral feeling of the author are, indeed, visibly superior to the colours with which he works; yet this superiority cannot be perceived from the Englishman breaking forth in any particular passage" (59). The *Critical* voiced similar concerns over the power of Southey's oriental extravagance to overwhelm his Englishness. Though acknowledging the appeal of *Kehama's* luxury, which like "the most highly coloured of Ruben's pictures" possesses a "brilliancy . . . such as to extinguish every other painting in the room in which they are placed" ("The Curse of Kehama" 244), the reviewer remarks on the "lustre" (247) of the poem that "[t]here is indeed some ground of comparison between him and his own Seeva; for he stands forward in the poem before us like a column of fire; and myriads of years must elapse before his partners in the Godhead can reach either the surprizing height of his extravagance, or the terrible profundity of his bathos" (252). As such remarks suggest, the Eastern ornamentation of *Kehama's* poetic style generated observable anxieties among its readers.

Such anxieties extended also to *Kehama's* material form, whose bibliographic ornaments embodied for many reviewers the oriental luxury characterizing the poem itself. Reviewers tended to read *Kehama's* "Notes," for example, as a luxurious superfluity meant partly to justify quarto publication. In remarking that "Mr. S., however,

found . . . of sublimity" (56), while acknowledging that the poetry is so beautiful as to excuse "extravagance itself" (58).

has thought it ‘needful’ to instruct and amuse the reader with much postliminous knowledge in the shape of notes, containing long extracts from those learned Orientalists” (57), the *Monthly Review* hinted at just how superfluous such purportedly “needful” notes actually were. Even more explicitly, the *Satirist* complained that “[w]ith respect to the notes which accompany this poem, they are principally copied from books which are by no means scarce, thus putting all the purchasers of the book to an unnecessary expence; for those who are skilled in Hindu mythology are already in possession of the works from which the quotations are taken, whilst to others these notes are needless” (255). The quarto’s pages also materially enacted *Kehama*’s ornamental luxury. Noting that “every succeeding page is so printed as to wear the appearance of an Epitaph; so completely, indeed, as to suggest to an ignorant reader, the preposterous notion that the measured *irregularity* of the lines was intended to produce such an effect,” the *Monthly Review* quipped “that the poem, in a word, was written for the eye, and in a manner ingeniously emblematical of its speedy and certain destiny: every page, according to a design equally novel and striking, apparently exhibiting its own funereal inscription” (58). Scott was even clearer in the *Quarterly*. Remarking of the appearance of *Kehama*’s pages—which featured centered rather than left-justified lines—he explained that

before we quit the poem, we are bound to notice the novel and beautiful manner in which it is printed. In general a page of poetry is displeasing to fastidious eyes, from the irregular terminations of the lines; this deformity is not only obviated, but a remarkable elegance in the typographic art is introduced in its stead. The centre of every verse is so placed, as to preserve an equal breadth of margin on each side, and to give the page a kind of lapidary appearance, which is singularly striking and agreeable, even before the cause of it is discovered. We hope that every ‘wire wove, hot pressed’ poem composed upon this model, will be printed with the same attention to picturesque beauty, as the *Curse of Kehama*, which has led the way to the

only improvement of which the art of printing, in its present advanced state, is, perhaps, susceptible. (61)

In centering *Kehama*'s lines and thereby giving "the page a kind of lapidary appearance," the quarto pages of Southey's extravagantly ornamented oriental epic embodied the gem-like quality of its poetic style. Even while Scott celebrates rather than condemns *Kehama*'s centered pages, he is clear that they embody the same bejeweled luxury whose excesses threatened to tarnish the native Englishness of the poem itself, the "Eastern gem-work" of whose style and content constituted in large part its dangerous allure. As Scott's remark indicates, the anxieties of empire elicited by *Kehama*'s ornamental luxury and perceived both by Southey and his reviewers were as much material as they were stylistic.

"This luxurious quarto": Moore's *Lalla Rookh* and Oriental Luxury

First appearing in 1817, Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* announced its status as a luxury book in its very title. Named for its heroine, *Lalla Rookh*—or "Tulip-cheeked," as an early note explained (1)—marked the zenith of a Regency-period quarto book mania akin to the Dutch tulip craze of the seventeenth century. The book soon achieved trans-European success, with Moore recording in his diary of having heard that the Grand Duchess of Russia "always carries about with her two copies of 'Lalla Rookh' most splendidly bound and studded with precious stones" (*Diary* 297). Entering the British book market at a cost of 42 shillings and passing through an exceedingly rare two quarto editions, the *Lalla Rookh* quarto's massive size was meant in part to justify its magnificent price, which would have cost a typical member of the English gentry almost half of his weekly income. But the book's format was recognized by Regency readers as

materializing the luxurious extravagance of its textual contents. Consequently, while some readers celebrated the material beauty of Moore's lavish quarto poem, most expressed deep anxieties about the propensity of Moore's "luxurious quarto" ("Mr. Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, an Oriental Romance" 299) to defile British taste and morality. Troubled by the excessive ornament, dangerous narcotic power and sexual licentiousness of *Lalla Rookh*'s luxurious verse, Regency-period reviewers also interpreted the poem's bibliographic format as an expression of the Eastern luxury of Moore's "Oriental School" and thus registered the material dimension of the Romantic anxiety of empire.

Luxury was never far from the reviewers' minds because it lay conspicuously at the center of *Lalla Rookh*'s conflicted politics. For even while the poem condemned luxury as an outgrowth of political tyranny and a symptom of mental enslavement, it grounded its commercial appeal in the literary luxuries of its text. On the one hand, *Lalla Rookh* attacks luxury consistently and explicitly, throughout each of its embedded stories and its frame narrative but especially in the first story, "The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan," whose narrative is grounded on the opposition between the virtues of necessity and the vices of luxury. From its first passages, the "Veiled Prophet" Mokanna is vested with all the tropes of oriental luxury. His public processions are parades of Eastern wealth; he's imaged as being privately ensconced in all the pomp of his power; and even his hate is figured in terms of luxury.²⁵ But Mokanna's enslavement to Eastern

²⁵ Mokanna's procession is imaged explicitly in the language of luxury, for example: "Ne'er did the march of MAHADI display / Such pomp before; —not ev'n when on his way / To MECCA's Temple, when both land and sea / Were spoil'd to feed the Pilgrim's luxury" (1388-91); likewise, the Veiled Prophet is imaged privately as a Pasha-like figure, ensconced in the luxuries of his power: "Upon his couch the Veiled MOKANNA lay, / While lamps around—not such as lend their ray, / Glimmering and cold to those who nightly pray, / In holy KOOM, or MECCA's dim arcades,— / But brilliant, soft, such lights as lovely maids / Look loveliest in, shed their luxurious glow / Upon his mystic Veil's white glittering

luxury is displayed most clearly in the space of his haram, where “[b]etween the porphyry pillars, that uphold / The rich moresque-work of the roof of gold, / Aloft the ... curtain’d galleries rise, / Where, through the silken net-work, glancing eyes, / From time to time, the sudden gleams that glow, / Through autumn clouds, shine o’er the pomp below” (37-42). Conversely, and against Mokanna, Azim embodies the tropes associated with virtuous necessity, having been exposed to the values of Western simplicity, temperance, and restraint during his imprisonment in Greece, where “[e]re manhood darken’d o’er his downy cheek, / O’erwhelmed in fight and captive to the Greek, / He lingered ... till peace dissolved his chains” (68-70) and where no man “could, ev’n in bondage, tread the plains ... / nor feel his spirit rise / Kindling within him [nor] walk where Liberty had been” (71-3). The story’s central conflict, between Mokanna’s Eastern luxury and Azim’s Western simplicity, is staged in the space of the Prophet’s haram, where Mokanna elects “to try the art / Of powerful beauty on that warrior’s heart...” (616-17) by exposing him to the boundless luxuries of the East:

... through vast illuminated halls,
 Silent and bright, where nothing but the falls
 Of fragrant waters, gushing with cool sound
 From many a jasper fount is heard around,
 Young AZIM roams bewildered ...
 Here the way leads, o’er tessellated floors
 Or mats of CAIRO, through long corridors,
 Where, rang’d in cassolets and silver urns,

flow. / Beside him, ‘stead of beads and books of prayer, / Which the world fondly thought he mused on there, / Stood vases, filled with KISHMEE’s golden wine, / And the red weepings of the SHIRAZ vine; / Of which his curtain’d lips full many a draught / Took zealously” (490-502). Basking in the “luxurious glow” of the hundreds of lamps surrounding him, Mokanna’s dissolute appetites are imaged in the exotic wines from which he drinks. Indeed, so concrete is Mokanna’s status as a viciously luxurious oriental despot that his very hate—the driving force of the poem—is cast as a luxury when he explains his hope that “Soon shall I plant this foot upon the neck / Of your foul race, and without fear or check, / Luxuriating in hate, avenge my shame, / My deep-felt, long-nurst loathing of man’s name!” (517-20).

Sweet wood of aloe or of sandal burns;
 And spicy rods, such as illumine at night
 The bowers of TIBET ...” (841-52)

Wandering “through scenes past all imagining, — / More like the luxuries of that impious King ... Than the pure dwelling of a Prophet” (890-1; 894), Azim—“[h]is simple garb and war-boots’ clanking sound / But ill according with the pomp and grace / And silent lull of that voluptuous place!” (888-90)—struggles to uphold his Grecian doctrine of simplicity and restraint: “It was not thus,” he reflects to himself, “in bowers of wanton ease, / Thy Freedom nurs’d her sacred energies; / Oh! Not beneath th’ enfeebling, withering glow / Of such dull luxury did those myrtles grow, / ... but in the bracing air / Of toil—of temperance—of that high, rare, / Ethereal virtue, which alone can breathe / Life, health, and lustre into Freedom’s wreath” (899-902; 904-7). Though recognizing that the Veiled Prophet “thinks me weak—this glare of luxury / Is but to tempt” (921-2), Azim ultimately gives in to the Haram’s temptations: overwhelmed by soft music, whose each note “adds new, downy links / To the soft chain in which his spirit sinks” (966-7), and surrounded by dancing women around whose necks “[h]ung carcanets of orient gems, that glanc’d / More brilliant than the sea-glass glittering o’er / The hills of crystal on the Caspian shore” (1072-4), Azim succumbs to “the place, that bright unholy place, / Where vice lay hid beneath each winning grace / And charm of luxury, as the viper weaves / Its wily covering of sweet balsam-leaves ... ” (1257-60). Ultimately, he is rescued only by the appearance of Zelica, who jolts him out of his luxury-induced stupor and convinces him to abjure Mokanna’s war and join forces with the legitimate Caliph, to whom he dedicates himself until perishing in the poem’s melodramatic finale.

Yet even while demonizing luxury as a disturbingly oriental outgrowth of colonial tyranny—whether Eastern, or, by implication, Gallic or British—the book also marketed itself to readers as a luxury good, textually, paratextually, and materially. The poem’s footnotes and nearly one hundred pages of endnotes gathered together hundreds of passages and allusions exemplifying Eastern luxury from the period’s major travel quartos.²⁶ Meanwhile, *Lalla Rookh*’s four submerged stories were each heavy with lengthy evocations of Eastern luxury that were clearly meant to appeal to an “orientalizing” reading public. Most significantly, the poem’s frame narrative foregrounded such celebratory depictions of Eastern luxury even while imagining its own appeal to its audiences in terms of luxury.²⁷ Representing Moore’s readers, *Lalla Rookh* is seduced by the explicitly sentimental luxury of the oriental stories sung by Feramorz (a fair version of Moore), while the pompous critic Fadladeen—whose presence as

²⁶ In particular, the *Lalla Rookh* notes offered readers a wealth of discrete images of Oriental luxury objects: according to “*Turner’s Tibet*,” for example, “Cloves are a principal ingredient in the composition of the perfumed rods, which men of rank keep constantly burning in their presence” (53); a note from the *Journey of the Russian Ambassador to Persia* explains how “[t]o the north of us, (on the coast of the Caspian, near Badku) was a mountain, which sparkled like diamonds, arising from sea-glass and crystals, with which it abounds” (65); a note from Jackson’s *Account* alludes to “[t]he gold jewels of Jinnie, which are called by the Arabs El Herrez, from the supposed charm they contain” (246); and so on.

²⁷ As early as the description of *Lalla Rookh*’s departure from Delhi, the poem languishes in such extended treatments: “Seldom had the Eastern world seen a cavalcade so superb. From the gardens in the suburbs to the Imperial palace, it was one unbroken line of splendour. The gallant appearance of the Ragas and Mogul lord, distinguished by those insignia of the Emperor’s favour, the feathers of the egret of Cashmere in their turbans, and the small silver-rimmed kettle drums at the bows of their saddles; — the costly armour of their cavaliers, who vied, on this occasion, with the guards of the great Keder Khan, in the brightness of their silver battle axes and the massiness of their maces of gold; — the glittering of the gilt pine-apples on the tops of the palakeens; — the embroidered trappings of the elephants, bearing on their backs small turrets, in the shape of little antique temples ... the rose-coloured veils of the Princess’s own sumptuous litter ... —all was brilliant, tasteful, and magnificent” (3-4). Such passages continue throughout the poem. Lehere, for example, is represented in terms of its luxuries: “On one side of them was a grove full of small Hindoo temples, and planted with the most graceful trees of the East; where the tamarind, the cassia, and the silken plantains of Ceylon were mingled in rich contrast with the high fan-like foliage of the Palmyra, —that favourite tree of the luxurious bird that lights up the chambers of its nest with fire-flie” (170).

representative of Britain's conservative critical establishment allows Moore to respond preemptively to criticism—rejects their delicately oriental superfluities, huffing sarcastically of “Paradise and the Peri” that ““this ... is poetry! This flimsy manufacture of the brain, which, in comparison with the lofty and durable monuments of genius, is as the gold filigree-work of Zamara beside the eternal architecture of Egypt!” (161), while attacking “The Light of the Haram” for its unnecessary ornament:²⁸

Having recapitulated the epithets, “frivolous”—“inharmonious”—“nonsensical,” he proceeded to say that, viewing it in the most favourable light, it resembled one of those Maldivian boats, to which the Princess had alluded in the relation of her dream,—a slight, gilded thing, sent adrift without rudder or ballast, and with nothing but vapid sweets and faded flowers on board. The profusion, indeed, of flowers and birds, which this poet had ready on all occasions,—not to mention dews, gems, &c.—was a most oppressive kind of opulence to his bearers; and had the unlucky effect of giving to his style all the glitter of the flower-garden without its method, and all the flutter of the aviary without its song. (336)

Likewise, he accuses the poet of being ““one of those bards, whose fancy owes all its illumination to the grape, like that painted porcelain, so curious and so rare, whose images are only visible when liquor is pored into it”” (336-7). Not only does Fadladeen object to Feramorz's luxuriously ornamental imagery, but he also attacks the excesses of the poet's meter, asking ““[w]hat critic that can count ... and has his full complement of fingers to count withal, would tolerate for an instant such syllabic superfluities?”” (124). By voicing such objections through the hypocritically pompous Fadladeen, *Lalla Rookh's* frame narrative subverts potential objections to its luxuries not by rejecting but by embracing them, thus robbing reviewers of the primary target of their abuse.

²⁸ Feramorz's stories are explicitly imaged as sentimental luxuries, as suggested when “[t]he Princess, whose heart was sad enough already, could have wished that Feramorz had chosen a less melancholy story; as it is only to the happy that tears are a luxury” (197).

Yet *Lalla Rookh* also presented itself materially as a luxury good through its initial publication as an exorbitantly priced and commercially oriented quarto book. Indeed, as Moore would contend publicly in the “Preface” attached to later editions of the poem, *Lalla Rookh* was envisioned by both the poet and his publishing house, Longmans, as a luxurious quarto production from its very first conception.²⁹ As Moore explained in the “Preface,” he had initially “conceived the design of writing a Poem upon some Oriental subject, and of those quarto dimensions which Scott’s successful publications in that form had then rendered the regular poetical standard” (*PW* v-vi). While early negotiations with the house of Longman had fallen through, soon Moore’s agent, Mr. Perry, “offered himself as my representative in the treaty” and, in consequence, “there has seldom, I think, occurred any transaction in which Trade and Poesy have shone out so advantageously in each other’s eyes” (*PW* vii). In Moore’s reconstruction,

[t]he short discussion that then took place, between the two parties, may be comprised in a very few sentences. ‘I am of the opinion,’ said Mr. Perry, — enforcing his view of the case by arguments which it is not for me to cite,— ‘that Mr. Moore ought to receive for his Poem the largest price that has been given, in our day, for such a work.’ ‘That was,’ answered the Messrs. Longman, ‘three thousand guineas.’ ‘Exactly so,’ replied Mr. Perry, ‘and no less a sum ought he to receive.’ It was then objected, and very reasonably, on the part of the firm, that they had never seen a single line of the Poem ... But, no; —the romantic view which my friend, Perry, took of the matter, was, that this price should be given as a tribute to reputation already acquired, without any condition for a previous perusal of the new work. This high tone, I must confess, not a little startled and alarmed me; but, to the honour and glory of Romance—as well on the publishers’ side as the poet’s—this very generous view of the transaction was, without any

²⁹ In an 1814 letter to his mother, Moore writes of the negotiations between Longmans and himself over the publication of the poem that “[m]y other piece of good luck was concluding *definitively* a bargain with the Longmans, whereby, upon my delivering into their hands a poem of the length of *Rokeby*, I am to receive from them *three thousand pounds!*” (*Memoirs* 169). Not aesthetic content but rather length was the essential condition of *Lalla Rookh*’s publication—and, particularly, the length of Scott’s hugely popular and extravagantly expensive quarto poem *Rokeby*.

difficulty, acceded to, and the firm agreed, before we separated, that I was to receive three thousand guineas for my Poem. (*PW* vii-viii)

Labeling the *Lalla Rookh* negotiations as the single most advantageous “transaction in which Trade and Poesy” were engaged, Moore expresses his initial desire to figure *Lalla Rookh* as a commercial bonanza. Certainly, the “three thousand guineas” purportedly offered by the Longmans without question or consultation is meant to index *Lalla Rookh*’s magnificent value as a luxury book. In fact, as Moore presents it, the entire transaction is surrounded in an aura of romance generated not only from Mr. Perry’s conviction of the value of Moore’s literary reputation, which precludes him from haggling over prices, but also from the Longmans’ unshakeable faith in the saleability of the oriental romance itself. “[T]he honour and Glory of Romance” is materialized in the colossally high price of the oriental verse quarto, thereby virtually establishing the genre itself as a classed luxury brand. Moore’s configuration of *Lalla Rookh* as a luxurious quarto romance is strengthened a few pages later when he announces that its intended publication in 1816 was stymied by the economic conditions paralyzing post-Waterloo England and precluding the great majority of readers from purchasing the book.³⁰ Finally, Moore’s reference to “Trade and Poesy” also initiates a chain of allusions that unfold through the rest of the “Preface” and that work to figure Moore as a merchant and his book as an oriental luxury good imported by him directly from the East. In his account of

³⁰ Moore writes that “[a]t length, in the year 1816, I found my work sufficiently advanced to be placed in the hands of the publishers. But the state of distress to which England was reduced, in that dismal year, by the exhausting effects of the series of wars she had just then concluded, and the general embarrassment of all classes both agricultural and commercial, rendered it a juncture the least favourable that could well be conceived for the first launch into print of so light and costly a venture as *Lalla Rookh*” (*PW* ix). Though agreeing with Moore “that the times are most inauspicious for ‘poetry and thousands’” (*PW* x) and recognizing that the book’s price and format precluded most readers from its purchase, the Longmans ultimately pressed the publication, releasing the book a year later, in 1817.

the “laborious” reading undertaken in preparation for the volume, Moore explains that his aim was

[t]o form a storehouse, as it were, of illustration purely Oriental, and so familiarise myself with its various treasures, that, as quick, as Fancy required the aid of fact, in her spiritings, the memory was ready . . . —such was, for a long while, the sole object of my studies; and whatever time and trouble this preparatory process may have cost me, the effects resulting from it, as far as the humble merit of truthfulness is concerned, have been such as to repay me more than sufficiently for my pains. (*PW* xvii).

Not only are the materials that enter Moore’s “store-house” in preparation for display in his quarto represented as purely oriental treasures, but the labor invested in their collection is represented as a sound economic investment whose profits well exceed the cost of labor.

Moore’s conception of the *Lalla Rookh* quarto as an oriental luxury was shared by its reviewers. But where Moore celebrated the luxury of its material form, reviewers castigated the book for its oriental excesses, which were understood especially in terms of extravagant ornamentation, stupefying narcosis, and sexual enervation. For some reviewers, the aesthetic power of Moore’s poem was compromised by its wealth of luxurious ornament. In a largely favorable 1817 review in the *Edinburgh* commending *Lalla Rookh* as “the finest orientalism we have had yet” (1), Frances Jeffrey took explicit issue with the luxuries of its ornamental style. Even while Moore’s book demonstrated that “[t]he beauteous forms, the dazzling splendors, the breathing odors of the East, seem at last to have found a kindred poet in that Green Isle of the West, whose Genius has long been suspected to be derived from a warmer clime, and now wantons and luxuriates in these voluptuous regions, as if it felt that it had at length regained its native element” (1),

still the poem's ornamental orientalism remained troublingly barbaric. Observing "that you cannot open this book without finding a cluster of beauties in every page" (2), Jeffrey regretted that "these barbaric ornaments ... are showered lavishly over all the work; and form, perhaps too much, the staple of the poetry—and the riches of that which is chiefly distinguished for its richness" (1-2). Tainted by too close a commerce with Eastern luxury, Moore's work compared unfavorably with the vigorous simplicity of Western art, which was ennobled by its "penury of ornament ... [its] neglect of beauties of detail!—[its] masses of plain surface—[its] rigid economical limitation to the useful and the necessary!" and found embodiment in the "[t]he cottage of a peasant [which] is scarcely more simple in its structure, and has not fewer parts that are superfluous" (3). Figuring the flaws of Moore's poem in the language of luxury, Jeffrey concluded that

[a]ll that we mean to say [of Moore] is, that there is too much ornament ... There are some things, too, that seem so plainly intended for ornaments and seasonings only, that they are only agreeable, when sprinkled in moderation over a plainer medium. No one would like to make an entire meal on sauce piquant; or to appear in a coat crusted thick over with diamonds; or to pass a day in a steam of rich perfumes. It is the same with the glittering ornaments of poetry—with splendid metaphors and ingenious allusions, and all the figures of speech and of thought that constitute its outward pomp and glory. Now, Mr. Moore, it appears to us, is decidedly too lavish of his gems and sweets; —he labors under a plethora of wit and imagination—impairs his credit by the palpable exuberance of his possessions, and would be richer with half his wealth. His works are not only of rich materials and graceful design, but they are everywhere glistening with small beauties and transitory inspirations. (3-4)

Not only were the "gems and sweets" that vitiated *Lalla Rookh* stylistic, but they were also narrative, as Jeffrey suggested in observing that the "four separate and distinct poems—[were] held together 'like orient pearls at random strung'" (8). Though such flaws were not uniformly objectionable—Jeffrey does concede that "there is a charm,

almost irresistible, in the volume of sweet sounds and beautiful images, which are heaped together with luxurious profusion in the general texture of the style” (12)— still the conclusion holds that *Lalla Rookh*’s “great fault certainly is its excessive finery, [which] it should also be observed, is not the vulgar ostentation which so often disguises poverty or meanness—but the extravagance of excessive wealth” (23). Its major aesthetic fault, the poem’s “extravagance of excessive wealth,” threatened to corrupt *Lalla Rookh* as a work of purely British literature.

But Jeffrey’s anxieties were shared by other reviewers, who either worried, like Jeffrey, that Moore’s ornamental style compromised his poem, or, more seriously, that it jeopardized the moral well-being of English readers and book buyers. *Blackwood’s* figured the luxuries of Moore’s poem in terms of Eastern wealth, writing for example of the “Light of the Haram” section that “[i]t is a graceful and levant trifle, that ought to be perused in a drawing room, richly furnished with all the ornaments and luxuries of fashionable life” (510). The review also followed Jeffrey in attacking Moore’s poem for “[t]hat proneness to excessive ornament, which seldom allows Mr Moore to be perfectly simple and natural—that blending of fanciful and transient feeling ... in short, all the peculiarities of his genius adapt him for the composition of an Oriental Tale, in which we are prepared to meet with, and to enjoy, a certain lawless luxuriance of imagery” (280). The *British Critic* went further. Citing Moore’s reputation as a purveyor of luxurious poetry, the *Critic* contended that *Lalla Rookh*’s danger lay not only in the ornamentality of Moore’s verse—like Catullus, Moore’s “productions are like gems highly polished”—but also its potential artificiality, for while “[b]eauties indeed there are, and those of no

common water ... they are liked a diamond or two, which have insinuated themselves into a necklace of paste: there are few, however, of the readers of Mr. Moore, with eyes sharp enough to discover the difference between the genuine and fictitious jewel” (616).³¹ As such, *Lalla Rookh* threatened to deceive its readers, offering them spurious treasures in place of authentic beauty.

Unlike the *Edinburgh, British Critic* and *Blackwood's*, which were each disturbed by the ornamental luxury of Moore's poem, the *British Lady's Magazine* warned of the narcotic power of Moore's verse to unsettle British minds. Distinguishing “Western Literature” from “Orient knowledge” and “Eastern composition,” the *Magazine* railed against the “hot-brained rhapsodies, and poetic simples, that now, like gaudy poppies, obscure the sweet flowers of the garden, with their flashy coverings, conceal or drive from the shelves the classical compositions of our Addison's', our Priors', our Popes', our Lockes', our Miltons' and our Shakespeares” (181). Like the “gaudy poppies” used to produce the opium flooding Britain from the East, *Lalla Rookh* was an oriental import with destructive effects. Not only was the poem itself a “hot-brained rhapsody,” but it threatened to addle the brains of its readers, who had long been nourished on the literary fare of the English canon. Indeed, according to the *Magazine*, *Lalla Rookh* enacted the dangerously addictive properties of oriental luxury:

It is a great calamity for Literature, and an obstacle to the advancement of human refinement, for men of talent and experience, in this *seculum*

³¹ According to the *British Critic*, Moore's previous efforts had already established his reputation as a purveyor of threateningly luxurious poetry. Conceding that “[h]is amatory poems are the works of no ordinary genius,” the reviewer warned that “[t]he very poison which they instill becomes the more dangerous from the softened imagery and the chastened language under which it is concealed. The poems of Little, as they are called, are perhaps the most formidable enemies to public morals which have issued at any time from the British press” (604).

luxuriosum, when the mass of rational beings trust to their sense for all their gratifications, should consume so large a portion of that most valuable of earthly treasure, *Time*, in torturing their fancies either to shape unreal things; or pervert their taste and genius with productions, that like the ephemera of the flood, flutter but an hour, and then sink into eternal oblivion. (181)

Figuring Moore and his readers as opium addicts, who consume tragically excessive amounts of time and labor in “torturing their fancies ... to shape unreal things” destined like the dreams of the opium user to “sink into eternal oblivion,” the *Magazine* lamented the power of oriental verse to destroy the best minds of the Regency in the luxurious haze of poetic narcosis.

However, the danger of *Lalla Rookh*'s luxury was perceived by reviewers as predominately sexual. According to the *British Review*, the entire landscape of *Lalla Rookh* was charged with erotic energy, with the poem unfolding where “the very wind is full of wantonness, and the aspen-trees tremble all over with love; where the spirit of fragrance holds his revels among the night-flowers; where the shores answer in song to the kiss of each wave; and harams, like living parterres, lie basking in blushes and odors” (31). Like the “Satanic School” Southey was soon to attack, the unrestrained sexuality of Moore's “Oriental School,” whose main aim was to teach the “art of love,” represented a grave danger to British youth, who

by constant study in this new Oriental school, acquire as much enervation of mind and fibre as can be maintained with so little direct assistance from the sun. What cannot be effected by direct excitement in a climate so physically unfavorable, may be in some measure supplied by sympathy; and if we can forget the faces and forms of those who migrate hither from various parts of southern Asia, and the impressions made on our minds by the close alliance of dirt and debauchery through all the squalid population of the Mahometan world, we may be made, in a poetical journey with Lord Byron or Mr. Moore, to feel, or to fancy we feel, all that suns and flowers,

and singing and sighing, dark eyes with their 'holy revealings,' and fair forms, with their scanty concealings, are fitted to produce. (31)

Targeting the lush eroticism of Moore's verse—its tendency to “enervate the mind and moral fibre,” its capacity to provide a substitute for the “dirt and debauchery” of Eastern peoples—the *British Review* figured its anxieties of empire as primarily sexual in shape and its colonial fears as foremost concerning the vulnerability of British sexual restraint to the erotic excesses of the East. Because “the circumstances of the times have brought us into such familiarity with the Eastern continent, as to generate a sort of travelled taste for its habits and indulgences,” a “new commerce of mind” has resulted in passion receiving “vast accessions of stimulating ideas” and a situation in which “fancy has lent its faith to all the exaggerations of hyperbole in the description of Oriental voluptuousness.” Embodied by books like *Lalla Rookh*, such “vast accessions” of “Oriental voluptuousness” promised to cripple British potency through their sheer profusion. Like Azim in the Haram, the *Review* politicized the conflict between British prudence and oriental eroticism:

The great mistake of which these poets take advantage is this: where so much is made of corporeal flights, and the various gratifications of sense; where we hear of nothing but of groves and baths and fountains and fruits and flowers, and sexual blandishments, we are too apt to figure to ourselves a paradise of sweets; whereas the real truth is, that wherever these objects constitute the only or principle bliss or ambition or business of a people, there dirt and every disgusting impurity is sure to prevail, and there man tramples upon man in a series of cruel oppression down to the drooping wretchedness of the squalid populace, who have neither the reason nor the rights of men. These miserable Turks or Greeks and Persians and Albanians make a figure only in the sickly pages of our epicurean poets; there is scarcely an individual among them whom an English gentleman of cleanly habits could endure by his side; and yet, because they live in the free indulgence of animal pleasures, evoking life and human faculties to luxuries enjoyed in common with the brutes, it is to these specimens of

humanity that of late years the thoughts of our countrymen are turned by our poets of nature, as involving all that is lovely and caressing in woman, and all that is great and deserving in man. (32)

The damage done by the dissemination of such images of Eastern luxury was potentially irrevocable, for “[t]he laziness, luxury, lust, and cruelty, which have overspread the Mahometan world have been found so captivating in Lord Byron’s poetry; so many ideas transplanted from the harems of the East have of late begun to grow and ripen in the bosoms of our youths and maidens, so luxuriantly have these exotics expanded, and so vivid are their colors even in this northern climate, that the indigenous products of a mere English fancy have in great measure lost their odor and their flavor” (32). Thus, like Byron’s poetry, Moore’s *Lalla Rookh* threatened to corrupt its readers by overwhelming them with evocations of a luxuriously unrestrained Eastern sexuality.

Not simply ornamental, narcotic, or sexual, the excesses of Moore’s *Lalla Rookh* were also recognized by Regency reviewers as material, embodying themselves in the extravagant form of Moore’s luxurious quarto book. To most reviewers, *Lalla Rookh*’s quarto format was a conspicuous aspect of the poem, as is evident in the insistence that it be read in relation to the period’s other verse romance quartos.³² Likewise, *Lalla Rookh*’s

³² The *Monthly Review* recognized the power of *Lalla Rookh*’s quarto status to fix its poetic milieu and commercial competition: “We have often been disposed to feel surprise that, in the selection of their poetical subjects, so many of our modern bards have strayed into the most distant regions of the eastern or the western hemisphere, and yet that no poet of reputation had found charm enough to detain him in the enchanted hills and woods of Persia. We have made an excursion of a very early date with Prince Madoc into South America; we have wept with Gertrude of Wyoming over the scenes of desolation in the northern half of the New World; and we have been ‘cursed’ by Kehama of the mountains of the Ganges:—but, with the exception of some elegant and lighter efforts, rendered indeed of comparative consequence by such names as those of Professor Carlyle and Sir William Jones, the ‘bowers of Rochnabad and the streams of Mosellay’ have remained unsung; and the riches, the beauty, and the dazzling splendor of Persian courts, or camps, or temples, have been lost on the knowledge and the imagination of English genius” (173). Though each of the works listed was in some sense a verse romance, far more significant was the fact that each was issued in the exorbitantly priced quarto format: Southey’s *Madoc* and *Kehama* quartos were sold at 42 and 31.5 shillings, respectively, while

reviewers recognized that the book's textual contents encouraged quarto publication.

Suggesting an association between the lengthy notes included in the book and its large-format size, the *British Review* claimed that

The British Muse, in her migration to the scenes of Oriental luxury, has naturally enough, therefore, carried our poet in her train . . . Here he has taken his stand, and opening his treasures of information, has collected all names of musical or portentous sound, all legends with new ammunition; and here the bard has begun his mysterious lay of all pervading passion, till the very groves have seemed to feel the impulse, and to ring with rapture . . . We are so cloyed before we come to the end of Mr. Moore's quarto volume, with these stimulating sweets, as to be ready almost to wish ourselves in a garden of leeks and onions to relieve our senses. (32-3)

But the luxury of *Lalla Rookh* was also a matter of its magnificent price. Remarking on the power of this price to fix the book as a luxurious rarity, *Blackwood's* based its commentary on the observation that “[a]s, however, a two-guinea quarto must have a comparatively slow circulation, it is probable that many of our readers have not yet seen

Campbell's *Gertrude in Wyoming* entered the market at 25 shillings. Likewise, Jeffrey understood *Lalla Rookh* especially in terms of its status as a quarto entering the market in competition with other verse quartos, alluding in his review to Campbell's *Gertrude* and Southey's *Roderick* (17) but also remarking that “Mr Moore, in the volume before us, reminds us oftener of Mr Southey and Lord Byron, than of any other of his contemporaries. The resemblance is sometimes to the Roderick of the first mentioned author, but most frequently to his Kehama. This may be partly owing to the nature of the subject; but, in many passages, the coincidence seems to be more radical—and to indicate a considerable conformity, in taste and habits of conception . . . In other respects, the descriptive passages in Kehama bear a remarkable affinity to many in the work before us—in the brightness of the coloring, and the amplitude and beauty of the details. It is in his descriptions of love, and of female loveliness, that there is the strongest resemblance to Lord Byron—at least to the largest poems of that Nobel author” (33). The *Critical Review* was also sensitive to the poem's status as a quarto book. Focusing its comments on “the widely-printed quarto on our table” (562), the reviewer complained that “[v]ery few poets, especially in modern times, have gained so easy a reputation as Mr. Thomas Moore: Mr. Robert Southey has been under the necessity of producing annual epics, besides a vast quantity of occasional pieces, in order to gain a fame not so extensive; and all Mr. Walter Scott's romances in verse have been able to accomplish very little for him. Lord Byron, indeed, with his frequent affectations of wildness and presences to sentiment, united to a considerable portion of natural energy, has of late very much absorbed public attention—almost to the exclusion of Mr. Southey and Mr. Scott, who have scarcely ventured into competition with their noble rival; but Mr. Moore has still maintained his rank and station; he has still sent forth his three songs a-year” (560) Like the *Monthly* and the *Edinburgh*, the *Critical Review* understood *Lalla Rookh's* significance to rest especially in its status as a quarto book.

this delightful romance” (503). Likewise, according to the *British Lady’s Magazine*, the *Lalla Rookh* quarto threatened to materialize the addictive qualities of its verse: “[w]e conclude this article with our most fervent wishes, another Othman, but of a more discriminating taste than the one that so cruelly destroyed the Alexandrian library, would descend with bloodless track from the huge Caucasus, and sweep from the booksellers’ shops of Europe to the bakers’ ovens those fustian tales” (181). Like the *British Review*, the *British Lady’s Magazine* conceived of the threat of Moore’s book as bibliographic in nature and hoped for a violently bibliographic purge: “another Othman” to clear from the shops of the booksellers of Europe and from the shelves of England those oriental luxury books that had displaced the more staid “classical compositions.” But the addictive gaudiness of the Eastern text was matched at the material level by the “flashy coverings” of the oriental quartos. Indeed, as the *Magazine* made clear in the very next clause, the real problem was the power of the flashily ornamental cover to distract attention from the contents of the book.³³ The *Monthly* was most explicit in claiming that *Lalla Rookh*’s quarto format materialized its oriental luxury. For not only did the poem offer readers numerous depictions of the luxuries of the East, but *Lalla Rookh* also presented itself as a “highly wrought volume” whose luxuriousness embodied a serious moral threat, as the review’s concluding sentences established:

[t]o what purpose all this sweetness and delicacy of thought and language, all this labour and profusion or Oriental learning? What head is set right in one erroneous notion, what heart is softened in one obdurate feeling, by this luxurious quarto? Alas! with the exception which we have made, not one. O! that the author ‘Would stoop to truth, and moralize his song;’ would

³³ Already noted above, the reviewer worries about the “hot-brained rhapsodies, and poetic simples, that now, like gaudy poppies, obscure the sweet flowers of the garden, with their flashy coverings, [and] conceal or drive from the shelves the classical compositions” (181).

disdain the dull dislike of the times for all dignified and instructive writing;
 would chain their unwilling attention to a thoughtful and ennobling strain;
 and (as we before intimated) would redeem our country from the disgrace
 of yet wanting a legitimate epic poem! (299)

Bewailing “this luxurious quarto” as the embodiment of poetic and bibliographic luxury, the reviewer located the failure of British literature to produce a truly “legitimate epic poem” in the enslavement of British authors and readers to Eastern luxury. As such, the reviewer suggested, the luxurious quarto materialized the seductions of oriental luxury, thus serving as the bibliographic embodiment of the Regency period’s anxiety of empire.

Conclusion

In the frame narrative encasing “The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan,” Moore relates of *Lalla Rookh*’s procession that

[o]n their arrival, next night, at the place of encampment, they were surprised and delighted to find the groves all round illuminated; some artists of Yamtcheou having been sent on previously for the purpose. On each side of the green alley, which led to the Royal Pavilion, artificial sceneries of bamboo-work were erected, representing arches, minarets, and towers, from which hung thousands of silken lanterns, painted by the most delicate pencils of Canton.—Nothing could be more beautiful than the leaves of the mango-tree and acacias, shining in the light of the bamboo scenery, which shed a lustre round as soft as that of the nights of Peristan.
 (48)

Moore’s description of the “Royal Pavilion” was historically relevant, for throughout the years of the Regency, George IV poured British wealth into the construction of his own extravagantly oriental Royal Pavilion at Brighton. Yet while some commentators were enthralled by its “strange Chinese shapes and columns ... like Concetti in Poetry” (Lady Bessborough, ctd. in *Lord Granville Leveson Gower ... Private Correspondence*), most were disgusted at that “certain pile” where “Folly, with her eyes, besets / Its turrets,

tow'rs, and minarets ... / ... Formed to please the eyes of Kings, / And make them happy, night and day" ("The Gewgaw; or, Brighton Toy, A Caricature Poem," 1822, ctd. in *From Enlightenment to Romanticism*). As an anonymous Whig exclaimed in 1816, the Regent's Royal Pavilion embodied "that squanderous and lavish profusion which in a certain quarter resembled more the pomp and magnificence of a Persian satrap, seated in the splendour of Oriental state, than the sober dignity of a British Prince, seated in the bosom of his subjects" (*Life and Administration of Robert Banks* 268). The architecture of the Pavilion thus exemplified fears about the corrosive effects of the "squanderous and lavish profusion" of colonial riches on the heart of the British empire. In this sense, the Royal Pavilion provides a powerful analogy for the Regency oriental verse quarto, representing architecturally to Regency readers what the quarto materialized bibliographically. Books of extravagant price and lavish ornament, and known for the orientalism of their literary contents and material trappings, Regency travel and verse quartos channeled Romantic fears about the destructive influence of Eastern luxury on British morals. Threatening to enslave British consumers to the luxury of literary ornament while transforming British literature into little more than fashionable furniture, the "luxurious quarto" of Regency travel literature and oriental verse embodied for the British reading nation of the late-Romantic period its own anxieties of empire.

CONCLUSION

So concludes this dissertation, which has argued that the quarto book shaped the reception of those poetic texts it embodied by classing them as luxuries meant for elite readerships, and that this process brought about important changes in Romantic-period literary culture. The argument is in many ways a simple one, but the significance of its conclusion has been overlooked. By showing that the cultural capital associated with a set of quintessentially Romantic discourses was as much a consequence of bibliographic format as textual content or literary style, I have aimed to identify the quarto book as an essential component of the material basis structuring the cultural politics of the period. If literary discourses reflected (and reflected upon) the tensions fracturing late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain, then the contours of these discourses were shaped by that quarto format in which they circulated and the corresponding audiences to which they were transmitted. Even so, future work could broaden the scope of my argument, especially in a few areas.

First, more work should be devoted to understanding the relationship between the quarto and luxury. I have argued that the quarto helped transform those texts it embodied into literary luxuries, but it remains to be determined whether the quarto also re-shaped luxury as a discursive category. Chapter 1 shows that the quarto was recognized as the period's predominant luxury book, but did the quarto alter Romantic conceptions of luxury? Romantic luxury was itself a complicated discursive formation, and in particular

I would like to explore the degree to which the quarto participated in or hastened the division of luxury into a benign and economically beneficial “new luxury” and a pernicious and morally corrupting “old luxury.” Throughout the dissertation, I have suggested that quarto luxury was conceived of in terms both “new” and “old”: even a single writer like Southey could recognize the quarto’s power to “raise the revenue” while expressing worries about its power to corrupt British readers and threaten the social order. Future work could explore not only the quarto’s power to signify or embody luxury but its power to bring about such divisions in the concept of luxury. Likewise, my argument that quarto luxury shaped formations like sentimentalism, orientalism, and liberalism would derive reinforcement from cases in which the quarto’s luxury codes were misapplied. In its current state, my project attempts only to show that quarto luxury shaped those discourses associated with the quarto book. But the quarto’s status as a luxury book and the relevance of this status to the reception of quarto poetry could be more persuasively demonstrated by finding cases in which writers misapplied quarto codes to books considered by consensus to be octavos or duodecimos, and then based readings of the texts embodied by these books on the applicability of these quarto codes. Such cases would more clearly establish the power of the quarto to denote luxury and alter a text’s reception.

Second—and relatedly—future work could address a broader range of Romantic texts. In general, this dissertation uses a small set of texts as exemplary cases and thus occasionally gives up the opportunity to illustrate the ways in which its argument produces new readings or relates to now-canonical Romantic-era literature. This is in part

a consequence of my interest in tracking the early reception of Romantic literature and my conviction that understanding the bibliographic determinants of this reception can reshape our present accounts of the cultural politics embedded in this literature. As the preceding chapters show, such an understanding does reshape our understanding of certain Romantic poems—*The Excursion*, *Lalla Rookh*, *The Curse of Kehama*, *Fears in Solitude*, and *The Deserted Village*, for example. But does a deeper understanding of quarto luxury change our readings of “Kubla Khan,” “Tintern Abbey,” or “Hyperion”? Maybe not. In this sense, the scope of my project is limited by the relative infrequency of the format it sets out to examine. Further attention should still be given to quarto texts—the long poems of Scott, Rogers and Campbell, for example, but also work in other genres, like travel and history—but this dissertation has also uncovered Romantic luxury (and not only quarto luxury) as fertile ground for future scholarship. Though “Kubla Khan,” “Tintern Abbey,” and “Hyperion” might not participate in *quarto* luxury *per se*, each poem does engage importantly with luxury. Future projects could trace the myriad ways Romantic poetry attempts to control and market the luxury that so attracted and disturbed the readers and writers of the age.

Third, future work could more closely examine the relationship between luxury and class. Much could be gained from a fuller treatment of luxury’s class valences in Romantic-period Britain, and from a more explicit engagement with the concept of class itself. In general, my argument assumes an historically warranted but relatively simple notion of Romantic class by suggesting a rough distinction between “the lower orders,” “the people,” “the swinish multitude,” and “the vulgar” on the one hand, and “the

reflecting part of society,” “persons of rank,” “men of property,” and “the polite” on the other. Even if this division is generally applicable, given the dissertation’s argument, Romantic-period Britain was a far more complex social space than these categories can fully cover, and future work could explore these complexities and their relationship to quarto luxury. More specifically, though, further attention should be given to the apparent similarities between the logic of luxury—a class-inflected formation the power of which to generate distinction both attracted and repulsed readers and writers—and the logic of class. Indeed, what was luxury if not the master signifier of the British upper classes? My project has shown that Romantic-period luxury differed from class insofar as luxury was a broader category—if it was strongly classed, it was also gendered, raced, and geographically fixed (as urban rather than rural, for example)—but similarities between the logics of luxury and class suggest the possibility that grappling with luxury is in the end also a way of grappling with the most spectacular form of class.

Other areas of future study also beckon, and much work remains to be done on quarto luxury—and luxury in general—in the Romantic period. Even so, this dissertation has shown not only that the luxurious quarto book changed those poems and discourses with which it was associated by transforming them into the exclusive cultural capital of Romantic Britain’s polite classes, but that the period’s writers and readers recognized and tried to exploit this power. As a format reserved for “gentleman, persons of fortune ... [and] persons who can afford to buy, or can easily procure, books of half-a-guinea price, hot-pressed and printed on super fine paper,” the quarto gave Wordsworth a material means to alleviate his anxiety of reception, even while commentators recognized that “the

meek, sentimental, sympathetic and all benevolent Mr. Wordsworth” should have “disdained the pomposity of quartos, and the extortion . . . of two guineas.” Southey’s decision to publish *Kehama* “in quarto for the sake of my dignity” also triggered his fears that the format’s luxury was perverting reader tastes by transforming books into “articles of fashionable furniture.” Thomas Moore succeeded in manipulating the format’s market cachet in publishing *Lalla Rookh* in “those quarto dimensions which Scott’s successful publications in that form had then rendered the regular poetical standard,” but not without stoking the anxieties of readers, who were troubled by his “luxurious quarto.” Joseph Johnson proclaimed his innocence in bibliographic terms, proclaiming that “where he could take the liberty of doing it, he ha[d] uniformly recommended the Circulation of such publications as had a tendency to promote good morals instead of such as were calculated to mislead and inflame the Common people,” while Gilbert Wakefield reminded his listeners that “[t]he size of the print and the goodness of the [*Reply*’s] paper . . . disprove a contemplation in me of general dispersion among the public, and without this view . . . I am at a loss to conceive, how a charge of sedition can be maintained.”

Throughout the period, the luxurious quarto’s power to impact the reception of the texts it embodied was used by these writers and recognized by their readers. This dissertation has sought broaden our understanding of this power, and, more generally, of the bibliographic determinants channeling the transmission of those ideologies, which, like sentimentalism, liberalism, Wordsworthian Romanticism, and orientalism, structure human consciousness and generate social distinction. In an era of ever-easier access to literary texts, the book’s historic power not only to extend but also to limit, restrict, and class the circulation of

literature is increasingly invisible. This study of the quarto has sought to document and examine the power of one bibliographic form by excavating the instances of its operation in the Romantic era and establishing its status as one of the basic material mechanisms shaping the early formation of Romantic ideology.

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