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Secrecy, Surveillance and Counterintelligence in the Prose Fiction of Walter Scott and Robert

Louis Stevenson

Author's Name:

Hilary Elizabeth Clydesdale

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## Lay Summary

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From the Greek ‘Anekdotia’, meaning ‘previously unpublished’, Secret History elevates domestic secrets, sexual affairs, and personal anecdotes to the status of public history. It makes the controversial claim that the secret activities and scandalous private affairs of well-known and powerful public figures (especially, monarchs, nobles, and statesmen) are the hidden and unpublicised springs of historical events. It turns domestic spaces (in particular, the bedroom, parlour, kitchen, and closet) into the hidden stage on which public history unfolds.

In this thesis, I argue that there is a significant and previously unrecognised connection between Secret History and the nineteenth-century historical novel. I highlight that Secret History has an

important and unappreciated role in the development of the historical novel in Britain from 1814 to 1894. By first examining and establishing the influence of Secret History on Walter Scott (1771–1832), I trace a significant and clear line of development from Scott to his Scottish successor, Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), whose contribution to the genre of the historical novel is often undervalued. By analysing the historical novels of the Scottish novelists, Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson, I highlight that Secret History provides the ideal framework for tracing and analysing how domestic forms of secrecy, surveillance, and intelligence-gathering are central to their historical novels' plots, narrative structures, and presentation of history. I argue that Scott and Stevenson draw on and adapt Secret History's ability to render the terms 'secret' and 'unpublished' synonymous and I illustrate that this ensures domestic secrets and anecdotes become a defining feature of their novels' narrative and historical structures. I argue that Secret History enjoys a significant and sustained literary role throughout the nineteenth century. My thesis centres on five key questions:

- How does reading the two Scottish novelists, Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson, together illustrate changes to the historical novel in the nineteenth century?
- What does examining Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson together tell us about the role and literary function of Secret History in nineteenth-century Britain?
- How does examining Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson together help recognise the importance of Secret History to studies of nineteenth-century literature?
- What is the relationship between the narrative structures of the historical novel and Secret History?
- What is the relationship between domestic secrets, personal anecdotes, and narratives of public history?

While Scott has long been recognised as a historian, he is yet to be studied as a secret historian. By looking to his often-overlooked *Secret History of the Court of James the First* (1811) and placing it at the centre of my analysis of his historical novels, I use Secret History to explore how and why

Scott uses narrative structure to explore the historical value of gossip, anecdotes, and scandal. In the second half of the thesis, I turn to Robert Louis Stevenson to trace this relationship between Secret History and its gossipy, intimate, and salacious content to the late-nineteenth-century historical novel and I investigate how and why Secret History is asked to play a central role in Stevenson's definition of literature, history, and journalism. Studies of Scott and Stevenson often draw attention to the ways in which their historical novels are dramatically different, a tendency underpinned by the idea that Scott and Stevenson present history in two radically different ways: the tragic and divided Scotland of Stevenson reflects a lack of historical process in his novels that appears at odds with the post-Enlightenment association of history with progress typically associated with Scott. In tracing its use as a vital plot and narrative device by both authors, I offer Secret History as an alternative model of history and the role of the historian to those typically associated with the historical novels of Scott and Stevenson.

I highlight that both authors use Secret History to investigate the relationship between fiction and history, gossip and historical intelligence, anecdotes and historical narrative, private life and public history, secrecy and publication, and domesticity and publicity. I conclude that Scott's and Stevenson's adaptation of Secret History's ability to render the term 'unpublished' synonymous with 'secret' ensures that secrecy becomes a defining feature of their novels' narrative and historical structures.

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Hilary Clydesdale

## Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the relationship between domestic secrets and history in the historical novels of Walter Scott (1771–1832) and Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894). I do so by investigating the connections between the historical novel and Secret History, a controversial genre of historical narrative that publicises the secret activities and scandalous private affairs of powerful public figures, most often monarchs, nobles, and statesmen. By looking to Secret History (*Anekdotia*), I closely trace the nuanced relationship between domestic secrecy, surveillance, and intelligence-gathering and the historical and narrative structures of the historical novel from 1814 to 1894. Drawing on the etymology of *Anekdotia* (Greek: ‘previously unpublished’), I consider how the historical novel builds on secret history’s ability to turn ‘unpublished’ into the synonym of ‘secret’, and I examine how secret history helps Scott and Stevenson navigate and explore the benefits and challenges of presenting the public with a historical narrative that publicises intimate, scandalous and salacious secrets and which offers the fruits of eavesdropping and gossip as an important, even revolutionary, piece of social and political intelligence. By examining the similarities between secret history and the historical novel, it allows us to clearly and closely trace the nuanced relationship between domestic secrets, public history, and the historical and narrative structures of the historical novel. I closely investigate how the historical novels of Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson triangulate and foster a complicated relationship between history, the publication of domestic secrets, and the nineteenth-century historical novel and, in doing so, I trace secret history’s continued influence on the composition of the nineteenth-century historical novel inherited by Stevenson from Scott.

In the first half of my thesis, I argue that Scott turns secret history into a literary, historical, and narrative device that is capable of exploring and complicating the relationship between private life and public history in the historical novel, and I conclude by highlighting

that Scott contributes to a distinctly nineteenth-century evolution of Secret History (*Anekdoty*): both as its author and as its subject. I then turn to Robert Louis Stevenson to trace this relationship between domestic secrets and historical narrative to the late-nineteenth-century historical novel, and I investigate how and why secret history plays a central role in Stevenson's definition of literature, history, and journalism. By highlighting the importance of secret history as an integral plot and narrative device deployed by both authors, I begin to outline a space of reconciliation and similarity between Scott's and Stevenson's presentations of history. I conclude my analysis by drawing attention to the way that Stevenson's view of literary history, and Scott's place within this literary history, brings secret history to bear on the late-nineteenth-century historical novel in complex and nuanced ways.

## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

‘We desire to have the privilege of the valet-de-chambre to follow the politician into his dressing closet, and to see the hero in those private relations where he is a hero no longer’:

### Domestic Secrets as Historical Intelligence in Secret History and the Historical Novel

On 4 December 1811, Walter Scott (1771–1832) wrote to Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe offering him the loan of three secret histories, a controversial genre of history that publicises the secret activities and scandalous private affairs of renowned, powerful, and high-profile public figures, most often monarchs, nobles, and statesmen. Scott offers Sharpe *The Perplex’d Prince* (1682), *The Fugitive Statesmen: In Requit for The Perplex’d Prince* (1683), and *The Life and Heroic Action of James Duke of Monmouth* (1683) which detail the supposed affair between Charles II and Lucy Walters and speculate whether the couple had been legally married in secret.<sup>1</sup> The writers give various degrees of credence to the rumour, later known as the legend of the Black Box, that the couple’s marriage contract had been concealed in a secret box which was forbidden from reaching public eyes. The confirmed existence and legitimacy of a marriage contract between the king and his lover would invalidate the line of British royal succession and change the rightful inheritances of the Duke of Monmouth and the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensferry, affecting the current, as well as the historic, status of these noble houses.<sup>2</sup> It is for this reason that Scott playfully asks Sharpe to enjoy reading the books but

engage not to revive the legend of the “Black Box”, or to prove his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensferry lawful heir to these realms. It would grieve me to the heart to lose the privilege of Lady Dalkeith’s squire and minstrel, and of cuddling her little boys [...] let the House of Hanover keep what they have got.<sup>3</sup>

Underneath Scott's playful and light-hearted tone, he neatly touches on Secret History's intriguing, and potentially dangerous, ability to carry and publicise uncorroborated rumour, scandal, and secret intelligence of enduring political and social relevance. *The Perplex'd Prince* blends history, fiction, and satire in its depiction of Charles II and Walters for the pamphleteer thinly veils his subjects' identities, most likely in a bid to avoid prosecution for seditious libel or *scandalum magnatum*: Conradus (Charles II) is secretly married to Dame Lucilious (Lucy Walters) while the Prince of Purdino (James II) proves himself incompetent and conspiratorial in the Popish Plot (1678–81) to assassinate his brother.<sup>4</sup> As Robert Mayer, Richard Maxwell, Brian Cowan, and Rebecca Bullard have noted, secret histories, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, struggled to overcome the problem that readers were interpreting their uncorroborated and scandalous histories as a form of libellous fiction and lie-telling.<sup>5</sup> As Cowan highlights:

The secret history stands at the intersection of several different modes of fiction and nonfiction writing, and it became prominent at roughly the same time that other well-known genres emerged, especially the fictional novel and new forms of factual narratives that attended to the problem of proof needed to persuade readers they were "true". It appeared at the boundaries between fact and fiction, and between public and private worlds.<sup>6</sup>

In his letter to Sharpe, Scott is underwhelmed with the pamphleteer's 'stupid, bold attempt to throw the history of Charles's amour with Lucy Wa[l]ters [...] into a novel'. However, Scott's criticism of the history does not stem from a belief that secret history and the novel are incompatible; nor does he appear to have an issue deciding which parts of the history he believes are factual; and, he certainly does not express disapproval of the monarch's private life becoming the subject of gossipy exposure and publication. On the contrary, for Scott, the pamphleteer has been too tame for 'Nothing like private history or even delectable scandal

can be gleaned out of it'. Nonetheless promising that the loan will give Sharpe 'some articles of minute information' about Charles II and James II, Scott's critique of the histories reveals that, at the end of the same year he publishes his *Secret History of the Court of James the First* (1811), Scott is not only thinking about secret history as a historical narrative rooted to a specific place (the royal court) but one tethered to a specific process: the publication of 'private history' and 'delectable scandal'.<sup>7</sup> With his criticism of *The Perplex'd Prince* we can also see that Scott is actively considering and examining the compatibility of secret history and prose fiction.

In this thesis, I argue that Scott turns secret history into a literary, historical, and narrative device that is capable of exploring and complicating the relationship between private life and public history in the historical novel. I then turn to Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) to trace this relationship to the late-nineteenth-century historical novel and I investigate how and why secret history is asked to play a central role in Stevenson's definition of literature, history, and journalism. With the Greek for Secret History, *Anekdotia*, meaning 'previously unpublished', I explore how the historical novel builds on and explores secret history's ability to render the term 'unpublished' synonymous with 'secret' and examines the benefits, as well as the challenges, of presenting the public with a historical narrative that publicises intimate, scandalous and salacious secrets and which offers the fruits of eavesdropping and gossip as an important, even revolutionary, piece of social and political intelligence.<sup>8</sup> I highlight that this association of 'unpublished' with 'secret' allows Scott and Stevenson to establish and explore the relationship between forms of libel and censorship in their novels and instances of counterintelligence: defined as an action, measure, or sanction intended to prevent, thwart, or delay the discovery and public disclosure of secrets, especially those of monarchs and statesmen. By investigating the similarities between secret history and the historical novel, it allows us to clearly and closely trace the nuanced relationship between domestic forms of

secrecy, surveillance, and intelligence-gathering and the historical and narrative structures of the historical novel. This presents a new approach to both the study of the origins and development of the nineteenth-century historical novel and to studies of Scott's and Stevenson's presentations of history in their historical novels.

Published in 2017, *The Secret History in Literature*, edited by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell, is a landmark study that begins to forge a space for Secret History in literary studies by recognising its influence on Epic poetry, Restoration drama, Amatory fiction, spy narratives, Satire, fairy tales, and the rise of the Periodical between 1660 and 1820 in Britain, France, and America. Although *The Secret History in Literature* takes great steps towards studying the origin and development of the genre of Secret History and assessing its influence on fiction, the influence of Secret History on the development of the novel beyond the end of the long eighteenth century remains to be explored. With only Miranda Burgess touching upon Scott in her chapter on Secret History in the Romantic period, and Stevenson writing at a time beyond the scope of the study, I offer a way of tracing Secret History through the nineteenth century by highlighting and analysing its influence on the historical and narrative structures of the historical novel from 1814 to 1894. I argue that both Scott and Stevenson actively engage with Secret History, and position it as a narrative framework on which the nineteenth-century historical novel is constructed and developed. It is conventional in studies of Secret History to consider the genre to be in dramatic decline by the turn of the nineteenth century and consigned to a state of political redundancy (which is why *The Secret History in Literature* focuses on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). However, by looking to Scott and Stevenson, I highlight that Secret History enjoys a resurgence of popularity in the nineteenth century in response to Royal scandals and changes in Libel law, and I also demonstrate that Secret History is adapted to suit the needs of the literary market: even as it declines as a means of political engagement, it proliferates as a literary one. In tracing its use

as a vital plot and narrative device by both authors, I offer *Secret History* as an alternative model of history and the role of the historian to those typically associated with the historical novels of Scott and Stevenson.

In her study of *Guy Mannering*, Jane Millgate argues that Scott's decision to write a 'tale of private life' ensures that he is unable to reconcile the historical narrative to the status of 'public history'.<sup>9</sup> Judith Wilt also notes the difficulty of reconciling 'the history of national ideas' to the 'public/private life of an individual in a community' and considers how Scott's bildungsroman narratives allow him to situate the private, social progress of the protagonist within a wider narrative of historical progress.<sup>10</sup> However, I argue that private life is essential to Scott's definition and presentation of public history in his historical novels and I do so by looking to *Secret History* and the complicated historical role it assigns to private life and domestic scandal. Scott has long been recognised as a historian and this has been thoroughly read into his historical novels.<sup>11</sup> However, Scott has yet to be recognised as a Secret Historian and, accordingly, his *Secret History of the Court of James the First* has been largely ignored by scholars and left unanalysed and unexplored. Scott's fascination with Secret History presents a hitherto undervalued and unexplored avenue of research and it presents an unexplored pathway into analyses of his historical novels, their origin, composition, and presentation of history.

While Scott and Stevenson have, respectively, been examined in relation to Gothic forms of secrecy, exploring the relationship between domestic forms of secrecy and history in their fiction and non-fiction historical narratives presents new ground for analysis.<sup>12</sup> In *Legitimate Histories*, Fiona Robertson explores the relationship between secrecy and strategies of denial and deferral in Scott's narratives. Connected to intense feelings of fear, terror, and anxiety, Robertson looks to secrets and secrecy to trace the influence of the Gothic on Scott's historical novels. For Robertson the power of secrecy lies in it being an 'unutterable or

unnarratable source of mystery which must remain safely beyond the bounds of fiction'.<sup>13</sup> I offer a different reading of secrecy and secrets in Scott by drawing attention to the important role that the *disclosure*, rather than the jealous guarding, of secrets has on the narrative and historical structures of his *Secret History* and historical novels. This approach allows us to trace the complicated connections that Scott forges between private life, domestic secrets, public scandals, and public history. In comparison, it is studies of psychology, psychoanalysis, criminality, and sexuality in Stevenson's work which draw attention to the importance of secrets and secrecy in his fiction but, as with Scott, there have been no studies which unite the analysis of domestic secrets to the presentation of history in his historical novels.<sup>14</sup> By drawing on *Secret History*, I consider how Scott and Stevenson use their historical novels to equate the process of publication to a process of secret disclosure, one that blurs the distinctions between domestic and private spaces, historical narrative and gossip, libel and fiction, and between historical fact and salacious political intelligence.

There are a number of studies that draw attention to thematic similarities in Scott's and Stevenson's work, in particular their depictions of the Scottish landscape, representations of Scottish identity and nationhood, their fictional reimaginings of the eighteenth-century Jacobite movement, and the tension between written and oral methods of storytelling in their historical novels.<sup>15</sup> However, there are no detailed comparative studies which trace a path of reconciliation between Scott's and Stevenson's depictions of history and their approaches to historicism. In *The Story-Teller Retrieves the Past*, Mary Lascelles argues that Scott and Stevenson use historical fiction to present a picture of eighteenth-century Scotland that is partly 'drawn from history' and partly from their memory of family history, genealogy, and legend. Contrary to Stevenson's suggestion in *Records of a Family of Engineers* that tracing his family history allows him to pick 'a private way through the brawl that makes Scots history', Lascelles argues that 'history' and 'personal memories' are antithetical. For

Lascelles, drawing on family history and legend allows Scott and Stevenson to transition their historical narratives out of the realm of the real and into that of 'fictitious history'.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, in this thesis, I illustrate how family histories, familiar narratives of the past, and the secrets of private life form an integral part of Scott's and Stevenson's conceptualisation and representation of national history.

As Alison Lumsden highlights, Stevenson's contribution to the history of historical fiction has often been overlooked and undervalued in literary studies and 'on the rare occasions when he is discussed in this way it is often to conclude that his work is operating upon very different principles from Scott's'.<sup>17</sup> Comparisons of Scott and Stevenson often draw attention to the ways in which their historical novels are dramatically different, a tendency underpinned by the common conception that Scott and Stevenson are exponents of two radically different models of history: the tragic and divided Scotland of Stevenson reflects a lack of historical process in his novels that appears at odds with the post-Enlightenment association of history with progress typically associated with Scott. In his examination of social class in Stevenson's work, Robert Irvine distances and disassociates Stevenson from the historical novelist and instead argues for Stevenson's preference and suitability for being explored in relation to the genre of the adventure story which, Irvine argues, 'promises the pleasures' of adhering to the structural pattern 'of narrative expectations aroused, frustrated and fulfilled, rather than the effect of encountering the reality of a specific society in all its historical complexity'.<sup>18</sup> Ian Duncan takes a similar step away from associating Stevenson with the historical novel in his designation of *The Master of Ballantrae* as a 'long Scottish tale'. It is in this essay, which rationalises why 'Modern critical judgements rarely count Stevenson' as a significant contributor to 'the heyday of the English novel', that Duncan explores the possibility that 'however brilliant an author of prose fiction', Stevenson 'did not write novels'. That is to say, he did not write historical novels 'according to the ways in

which the genre came to be defined' according to 'The example [...] set at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott, which accordingly loomed large over Stevenson's conception of his art'.<sup>19</sup> Whilst acknowledging the differences that their different historical contexts inevitably bring to bear on the authors' approaches to fiction writing, my analysis of Stevenson in this thesis accords with Lumsden's argument that 'Scott is Stevensons's most obvious literary precursor and the two writers may not be as different as recent criticism suggests'.<sup>20</sup> Where Lumsden looks to memory and memorialisation to draw attention to nuanced similarities between Stevenson and Scott, I turn to the public disclosure of domestic secrets and the genre of Secret History. Doing so allows us to clearly and closely trace the relationship between domestic forms of secrecy, surveillance, and intelligence-gathering and the historical and narrative structures of the historical novel and fully explore the implications of Scott's claim that all readers of history secretly 'desire to have the privilege of the valet-de-chambre to follow the politician into his dressing closet, and to see the hero in those private relations where he is a hero no longer'.<sup>21</sup>

#### A Brief History of Secret History: From Procopius to Scott

Widely credited as the first Secret Historian, Procopius of Caesarea wrote his *Anekdotia* (Greek: Secret History) in 550 AD. The subject of his history was the Byzantine Emperor Justinian and his wife, the Empress, Theodora. As well as exposing the secrets and conspiracies behind the political actions of the emperor and his court, Procopius also directs his attention to his subjects' private life and salacious personal scandals. In his *Proemium*, Procopius argues that these details had to be made accessible to the public who, without these secrets being divulged, would pass on to future generations an entirely erroneous picture of the period's political history and character. Procopius lays so much historical value in these domestic, private secrets that much of his *Anekdotia* was heavily censored when it was first translated into Latin by the Roman antiquarian, Niccolò Alamanni. Procopius had previously

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written more traditional accounts of the period's politics and wars. However, in his secret history he suggests that he had always intended to write such a scathing and scandalous exposé of the court and marriage of Justinian but had felt that he could not safely do so whilst 'those responsible for what happened were still alive' for it would have been 'impossible either to avoid detection by swarms of spies or if caught to escape death in its most agonizing form'. Procopius inaugurates what was seen in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the fundamental role of the genre of Secret History: to publicly expose statesmen's private relationships and affairs, previously 'passed over in silence' by historians, and herald them as the secret origins of infamous or well-known 'events already described'.<sup>22</sup> Procopius provided the model for future secret historians who sought to publish their 'printed gossip', to use Rebecca Bullard's term, and offer it as a valuable piece of historical intelligence, presenting their work to the public as a safeguard of truth and historical accuracy.<sup>23</sup> It is only after his work is translated into English in 1674, under the title of *Secret History of the Court of the Emperor Justinian*, that the phrase 'secret history' became a prominent feature of seventeenth and eighteenth century works. In 1686, Antoine Varillas published his *Secret History of the House of Medicis* in which he highlights his indebtedness to Procopius whom he credits as his 'guide' and inspiration. However, Varillas also wanted to extend Secret History beyond the methods of his ancient predecessor and begins to consciously think of secret history, not as a piece of libel or printed gossip, but as a genre of history in its own right, one that should be guided by a fixed method and philosophy. In order to define the role of secret histories, he compares the work of the traditional, orthodox historian, whom he defines as any historian who deals with 'Men in Publick', and contrasts their role with the secret historian who only examines them 'in private': the orthodox historian, he says,

thinks he has perform'd his duty, when he draws them such as they were in the Army, or in the tumult of Cities, and the anecdote-ographer endeavours by all means to get

open their Closet-door; th'one sees them in Ceremony, and th'other in Conversation; th'one fixes principally upon their Actions, and th'other wou'd be a Witness of their inward Life, and assist at the most private hours of their Leisure: In a word, the one has barely Command and Authority for its Object, and the other makes his Main of what occurs in Secret and Solitude.<sup>24</sup>

Bearing in mind this definition, it is unsurprising that authors of secret histories have often been the target of severe outrage, with critics labelling such histories as blatantly indecent, libellous, and even unethical. Given these political and emotional responses to their exposés, it was common practice for secret histories to be published anonymously.

By the time Scott is writing, in the early nineteenth century, the genre of Secret History had become a rather old-fashioned means of active political engagement and instead, writers, such as Walter Scott, Isaac D'Israeli (1766–1848), Johann Fichte (1762–1814) and Leopold Von Ranke (1795–1886) are looking to the genre as a means of historical and sociological enquiry in which they explore and debate the theoretical relationship between private, secret affairs and public history.<sup>25</sup> It is precisely with this in mind that D'Israeli writes his tract, 'True Sources of Secret History'. As a staunch supporter of Secret History, D'Israeli begins his tract by calling for his contemporary historians to take the genre more seriously and to acknowledge its value as a 'subterraneous' spring of new, potentially revolutionary, historical information. D'Israeli argues that Secret History was ignored and marginalised in narrative accounts of national histories and asserts that

This is a subject which has been hitherto but imperfectly comprehended even by [...] historians themselves; and has too often incurred the satire, and even the contempt, of those [...] who play about the superficialities of truth, wanting the industry to view it on more than one side.<sup>26</sup>

D'Israeli is defending the Secret History from the charges it had continued to face since Procopius and, like Varillas, he wants to strip the genre's association with libel, gossip, and inauthenticity. Until this time, secret histories often dealt with either contemporary scandals or in recalling those of individuals who were recently deceased and remained the subject of active public and political interest. As I highlight in chapter one, Secret History played an important and active role in the public's response to Royal scandals in 1809 and 1820. However, there is also a surge of academic interest in secret histories in the first two decades of the nineteenth century in which historians, including Scott and Sharpe, look to the secret politics, scandal, and domestic secrets disclosed about long-deceased kings, queens, noblemen, and statesmen. No longer of active political and social interest, they are truly secret *histories*. As a result, a number of editorial projects emerge in which previously unpublished memoirs, tracts, and printed gossip from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are collated, edited, and published.<sup>27</sup> In these works, the editor occupies a position of great authority, moderating, qualifying and interpreting much of the authors' gossipy evidence. It is precisely this type of secret history that Scott publishes in 1811.

In 1809, Scott's work on *Somers Tracts*, a thirteen-volume historical miscellany, gives him access to a variety of historical tracts and it is from this research that Scott comes across the secret histories of four authors, Francis Osborne (1593–1659), Anthony Weldon (1583–1648), Peter Heylin (1599–1662), and Edward Peyton (1587–1652) which, together, span the reign of King James I in England (1603–1625) and Scott also includes tracts on his predecessor, his aunt, Elizabeth I, and his successor, his son, Charles I.<sup>28</sup> The final tract is something of an outlier, however, because it was written under Cromwell, in 1644. Scott discovers this anonymous tract while the first part of his *Secret History* is already at press but he decides that it is 'at once a companion and a contrast' to the four previous authors' tracts. This unanticipated addition is *The Court and Kitchin of Elizabeth, commonly called Joan*

*Cromwel* and is written with obvious hatred towards Cromwell and, especially, towards his wife. The author tries to blame Cromwell's actions on his wife, her cooking, and her inability, according to the author, to effectively manage their household. Scott introduces the tract by acknowledging that the author's depiction of Cromwell's wife is 'to say the least, unnecessarily scurrilous'. Despite the author's unforgiving depiction of Cromwell's wife and his overt threats of physical violence, Scott nevertheless values the hate-filled account for containing 'some curious anecdotes of Oliver's domestic life and housekeeping'.<sup>29</sup> Scott's informal reference to Cromwell by only his Christian name reflects the degree to which *Secret History* seeks to scrutinise the character and private conduct of its rulers. Cromwell's domestic life, his marriage, his eating habits and even his recurrent issue with kidney stones, all become telling sources of historical detail and information.

D'Israeli and Scott were good acquaintances and they engaged in the early-nineteenth century debate about *Secret History* together: Scott publishes his *Secret History of the Court of James the First* in 1811 and this inspires D'Israeli to write his *An Inquiry into the Literary and Political Character of James the First* and publish it five years after Scott, in 1816.<sup>30</sup> One of the main reasons that Scott and D'Israeli identify James I as the ideal candidate for their secret histories is because of the need to vindicate James's character from Antony Weldon whose scathing account of the king had endured since its first publication in 1650 and had given rise to James I's famous reputation for being 'the wisest fool in Christendom'. Throughout the tracts on James I that Scott collects and edits for his *Secret History*, James's Scottishness is used as the subject of ridicule and, as Scott uncovers and reveals, Anthony Weldon had written a scathing letter insulting the king's character and Scottish origin which had mysteriously 'crept to the press' without the author's knowledge.<sup>31</sup> Weldon's account of Scotland and the Scottish people was so severe, critical, and biased that it led to his immediate dismissal from King James's court. Scott invites his readers to consider whether

the fallout from this tactless publication influences Weldon's decision to write his scathing and unforgiving account of James I and his court. Scott is fascinated with this ability of the Secret History to uncover previously hidden details. By giving voice to secret tracts 'previously passed over in silence' it promotes, according to Scott, a more balanced, truthful and accurate picture of Scottish and English history. Scott's *Secret History* allows him to deliberately disrupt and challenge traditional or long-held historical narratives and reputations by looking to secret spaces and the dark, silent voids their omission leaves in narratives of public, national history. It is for this reason, as Bullard highlights, that Secret History is credited for bringing marginalised voices and sources into the stream of public history and awareness.<sup>32</sup> As Scott demonstrates in his introduction to *The Court and Kitchen of Elizabeth*, Secret History's propensity to offer domestic spaces as a powerful and highly influential extension of the Royal or, in Cromwell's case, the Protectoral Court, certainly ensures that women come to serve a pivotal, and even a privileged, role in their narratives, with secret historians identifying women as important facilitators of access to the intimate recesses of monarchs and statesmen's private lives. Secret History's fascination with domestic spaces, in particular the bedroom, parlour, and closet, brings women into the political world via their privileged, exclusive and domestic relationships. Wives, mistresses, lady's maids, and servants become heralded as important secret agents, trading in the confidential political intelligence which their ubiquitous presence in their husbands', lovers', or employers' private and domestic lives inevitably provides. In *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Jonathan Swift had acknowledged this revolutionary role of Secret History in shattering and replacing long-held and sanitised versions of public history. Gulliver confesses that

I was chiefly disgusted with modern History. For having strictly examined all the Persons of greatest Name in the Courts of Princes, for an Hundred Years past, I found how the World had been misled by prostitute Writers, to ascribe the greatest Exploits

in War to Cowards; the wisest Counsel to Fools, [...] Truth to Informers [...] How great a Share in the Motions and Events of Courts, Councils, and Senates might be challenged by Bawds, Whores, Pimps, Parasites, and Buffoons: How low an Opinion I had [...] when I was truly informed of the Springs and Motives of great Enterprizes and Revolutions in the World, and of the contemptible Accidents to which they owed their Success.<sup>33</sup>

Swift is writing during the height of *Secret History*'s popularity when, as Peter Burke highlights, the secret historian's claim that 'great events had petty causes' had become 'regarded as an antidote to "official history"', especially when 'it was obvious that official historians were not telling the whole truth. Authors and publishers alike realized that there was a market for alternative stories, unofficial versions of the past, whether they were presented as histories or romances'.<sup>34</sup> The genre of *Secret History* has long been identified as a contributing factor in the emergence and rise of the novel in Britain in the eighteenth-century with Daniel Defoe's writing of fiction and secret history providing a helpful example of their compatibility and contemporaneity. However, the relationship between the development of the historical novel and the influences of *Secret History* is a neglected field of investigation.

#### Secret History and the Study of the Historical Novel

In *The Historical Novel*, Georg Lukács identifies Scott as the creator of the modern historical novel which, he argues, emerged out of the Europe-wide tumult of the Napoleonic War and the 'concrete possibilities' it created for those fighting 'to comprehend their own existence as something historically conditioned, for them to see in history something which deeply affects their daily lives and immediately concerns them'. For Lukács, Scott stands separate from previous writers of historical fiction, whose depictions of character and manners were 'entirely those of the writer's own day', for he was able to tap into and explore

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this contemporary growth of historical consciousness which allowed individuals to ‘see the specific qualities of their age historically’. As Lukács elaborates, ‘What is lacking in the so-called historical novel before Sir Walter Scott is precisely the specifically historical, that is, derivation of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of their age’.<sup>35</sup> More recently, James Chandler has offered a detailed investigation of the early nineteenth century’s growing awareness of its own role as, and place in, history and its impact on Scott’s presentation of history in his historical novels, in particular casuistry in *The Heart of Midlothian*.<sup>36</sup> Chandler positions Scott and his historical novels at the centre of the Lukácsian dialogue he identifies between the impact of national crises in war and rebellion during the early-nineteenth century and the development of a specifically nineteenth-century historical consciousness. Andrew Lincoln similarly defines Scott’s historical novels as ‘responses to the experience of change’ in the wake of revolution, war, and Waterloo where ‘The exploration of the past could be experienced as bracing historical realism, which offered the shock of historical recognition without self-confrontation’.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps the most well-known of Lukács’s arguments in *The Historical Novel* is his claim that the hero of the historical novel must stand on neutral ground, what he calls the ““middle course”” between ‘the struggle of extremes’, where he can ‘enter into human contact with both camps’ and witness the effect and ‘totality of certain transitional stages of history’ as ‘a more or less mediocre, average English gentleman’. The importance of this observation on the passive role of protagonists in the historical novels of Scott has been well noted and explored in literary studies, and it is Lukács’s theory on the role of historical figures, ‘the great historical personalities’, in the historical novel which I move to investigate more closely. In contrast to the hero’s historical passivity, Lukács argues that when ‘we meet with the most important personalities of English and even of French history’, they are presented ‘in their real historical grandeur’ but ‘Scott never shows the evolution of such a personality’ because

for him the great historical personality is the representative of an important and significant movement embracing large sections of the people. He is great because his personal passion and personal aim coincide with this great historical movement, because he concentrates within himself its positive and negative sides, because he gives to these popular strivings their clearest expression, because he is their standard-bearer in good and in evil.<sup>38</sup>

Lukács is offering the historical figure as the antithesis of the protagonist, or ‘historical hero’, of the historical novel: where the protagonists must surveil, watch, and witness a battle of opposing forces (quite literally for Edward Waverley at the Battle of Prestonpans in *Waverley*), the historical figure must reconcile these opposing forces and reflect ‘this great historical movement’ within their character. This theory underpins Richard Maxwell’s reading of secret histories (by which he means depictions of the royal court and its politics) in Scott’s novels. The royal court, Maxwell argues in *The Historical Novel in Europe*, is an important historical venue for Scott’s protagonists, one that allows his passive heroes to temporarily come into contact with ‘the stage of history’ before retreating into ‘relative obscurity’:

Scott would include moments of direct contact with well-known historical figures, people who ineluctably carried history around with them, embodying it in their persons and their presence, and shaping it by their idiosyncrasies [...] But the emphasis would remain on the (less vivid) fictive hero, whose naïveté and relative obscurity would allow him to exit the stage of history before he got seriously hurt. In sum, a particular history would enclose and dominate a secret one.<sup>39</sup>

Lukács and Maxwell are reading historical figures in the historical novel as a deliberate construction of the novelist to reconcile the great historical crises of the day within a single character. In her Lukácsian analysis of the historical novel, Barbara Foley highlights that ‘the world-historical hero here plays a necessarily subsidiary role’.<sup>40</sup> Whilst this is certainly

accurate, it is important to draw attention to the distinction that Lukács is making: the historical figure may play a secondary and supplementary role in the protagonist's (fictional) historical narrative and plot, but this is far from saying that the historical figure has a secondary or supplementary role in (real) history. It is worthwhile noting this distinction because there is a tendency to dismiss the nuanced literary and historical role that historical figures play in the historical novels of Lukács's conception and definition where their ability to gesture towards the 'great' overshadows the fact that this idea necessarily reconciles the individual, the anecdotal, and the petty to the historical novel's view and presentation of national history. Lukács opens a path for this argument, noting that

What matters therefore in the historical novel is not the re-telling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figure in those events. What matters is that we should re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel, and act just as they did in historical reality.

Turning to Balzac, Lukács argues that Scott and James Fenimore Cooper successfully achieve this 'poetic awakening' of 'human motives' in their historical novels because they 'confined themselves to small encounters. Revealing through them the spirit of the two contending masses'. It is important to recognise, he continues, that

it would be a mistake to think that Tolstoy, for instance, really depicted the Napoleonic wars *in extenso*. What he does is [...] take an episode [...] And Tolstoy's genius as a historical novelist lies in his ability to select and portray these episodes so that the entire mood of the Russian army and through them of the Russian people gains vivid expression.

In many ways, Lukács's value of the 'episode' opens up a space to investigate the role of anecdotes and *anekdota* (Secret History) in this conception of the historical novel, especially as he begins to trace a relationship between historical figures and their 'petty struggles':

Balzac, in his criticism of Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme*, enthusiastically praised Stendhal's genius, because he had undertaken a magnificent picture of court life [...] Balzac points out how in the petty struggles of the court of Parma all the social and spiritual conflicts which took place [...] are clearly manifest [...] its human spiritual reflexes can be revealed in an obvious, straightforward way, whereas the presentation of the big political problems which formed the substance of the intrigues [...] would create a dead and heavy ballast in a novel.

What are the implications of this argument? What happens when we acknowledge, as Lukács does, that the historical figure is 'great because his personal passion and personal aim coincide with this great historical movement' or, as Maxwell claims, that these historical figures are 'shaping it [history] by their idiosyncrasies'? What happens when a narrative examines a 'great historical movement' in relation to the microcosmic individualism of 'personal passion' and 'personal aim'? When secret, often sexual relationships, are revealed as the driving forces behind important political or strategic decisions, what does this do other than invite petty domestic and sexual secrets a place in history's narrative? What secret role does Scott ascribe to monarchs' lovers, such as George Villiers (*The Fortunes of Nigel*), Henrietta Howard (*The Heart of Midlothian*), and Clementina Walkinshaw (*Redgauntlet*), and what influence are they revealed to have had on the monarch's political decisions? Where Lukács seeks to see the episodic encounters between historical figures and historical heroes in the historical novel as a condensed microcosm, representative of larger historical crises and movements, I move to investigate how, why, and the degree to which, the historical novel reconciles private, domestic history to that of public history. I do so by drawing on the novel's predecessor, the genre of Secret History, and I draw attention to the continued and nuanced role that secret history plays in the nineteenth century historical novel inherited by Stevenson from Scott. This is an investigation that the historical novel seems particularly well

designed to conduct since, as Lukács notes, ‘all narrative art has to do with the small and even trivial details of life, it cannot allow the hero to figure personally in the foreground all the time for this would mean reducing him to the general level of the life portrayed’.<sup>41</sup>

### Thesis Outline and Structure

In this thesis, I argue that the historical novels of Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson triangulate and foster a complicated relationship between history, the publication of domestic secrets, and the historical novel and I do so by comparing the narrative and historical structures of the historical novel with those of *Secret History*. For chronological simplicity, I examine Scott first before turning to Stevenson which allows us to trace a clear path for secret history in the historical novel from 1814 to 1894. It also helps to highlight and interweave an important, albeit rather obvious, distinction: Scott never read Stevenson, but Stevenson has read Scott. By turning to Stevenson in the second half of the thesis, my investigation can look in two directions: i) to the important and timely role Stevenson assigns secret history in his historical novels to explore contemporary questions about the relationship between domestic secrets and public history, and ii) backwards to Scott, as Stevenson’s ‘most obvious literary precursor’, to investigate how and why secret history is embedded as an important literary device in the nineteenth-century historical novel. As an author writing at the end of the nineteenth century and consciously reflecting on the place of his writing, and that of his contemporaries, in relation to Scott, I highlight how secret history in the historical novel is adapted to deal with Stevenson’s contemporary concerns, including the rise of investigative journalism, the Victorian ‘fear’ of the recent past, the professionalisation of literary criticism, and Stevensons’s interest in critical biography and literary history.

In Chapter One, I draw attention to the distinction between the genre of *Secret History* and the usage of ‘secret history’ as a literary term. I draw on Michael McKeon’s *Secret History of* Hilary Clydesdale

*Domesticity* to define the relationship between ‘domesticity’ and ‘publicity’ in *Secret History* and I trace this into Scott’s historical novels by analysing the relationship between secret passageways and secret histories in *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822). I demonstrate that looking to *Secret History* to analyse Scott’s historical novels is an appropriate, timely and fruitful investigation. I highlight that Scott’s *Secret History of the Court of James the First* (1811), and its reappearance in the fictional secret histories of the court of King James I in *Private Letters of King James’s Reign* (1821) and *The Fortunes of Nigel*, is contextualised by two of the most effective, notorious, and high-profile British Royal scandals of the nineteenth century: the Mary Anne Clarke affair and the Duke of York’s parliamentary inquiry (1809) and the Queen’s Trial (1820). Contextualising my analysis in early-nineteenth-century scandal and changes to Libel prosecution, I trace the complicated journey of *Secret History* into Scott’s historical novels, and I explore how Scott uses secret history to investigate how, why, and the degree to which, the personal and sexual secrets of statesmen are of legitimate public concern: what is the influence of private life on public history and is the publication of statesmen’s domestic secrets an exercise for the gossip, the historian, or the historical novelist?

In Chapter Two, I scrutinise *Secret History*’s reputation as a form of ‘printed gossip’ and I draw attention to the role of gossip as the carrier of historical detail and secrets in Scott’s *Secret History* and *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818). I analyse the relationship that Scott and D’Israeli propose between the disclosure of domestic secrets, the publication of historical narratives, and the sociology of gossip, and I trace this complicated relationship from Scott’s *Secret History* into his historical novels. I consider how secret history and gossip inform the narrative structure of Scott’s historical novels and, by analysing the novels’ paratextual prefaces, I investigate how secret history and gossip inform the way the novel functions in the Edinburgh publishing-world of the early nineteenth century.

In Chapter Three, I use James Hogg's *Familiar Anecdotes of Walter Scott* (1834), David Jones's *Secret History of White-Hall* (1697) and Scott's *Secret History of the Court of James the First* to trace the anecdote back to its origin in the genre of *Anekdotia*. I draw attention to the complicated literary and historical role that this assigns to the anecdote and, by analysing the mixed narrative structures of *Secret History* and *Redgauntlet* (1824), I consider how Scott, like the secret historian, uses narrative form to reconcile the anecdote to narratives of public history. By looking to Scott's literary fame, especially posthumously, I argue that Scott contributes to a distinctly nineteenth-century evolution of Secret History as both its author and its subject.

In the second half of this thesis, I turn to the late-nineteenth-century Scottish historical novelist, Robert Louis Stevenson, to pick up and trace this connection between the development of the nineteenth-century historical novel and the genre of Secret History from 1814 to 1894. In Chapter Four, I re-contextualise Secret History in relation to Stevenson's contemporary debates about investigate journalism and its interest in publishing domestic secrets as a form of public intelligence. I argue that Stevenson uses secret history and the secret historian in *Prince Otto* (1885) to carefully explore the emerging and controversial figure of the Special Correspondent. I conclude the chapter by bringing the strands of my argument together with a close reading of Stevenson's *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa* (1892) and draw attention to the striking parallels between the government's attempts at silencing, censoring, and preventing the publication of their secrets in Samoa and the similar attempts at counterintelligence that Crabtree faces in the royal court of *Prince Otto*.

With Chapter Five, I use the piecemeal censorship and publication of Samuel Pepys's diary from its first abridged publication in 1825 (which Scott reviewed) to the much larger 1879 edition (which Stevenson reviewed) to map and explore the relationship between Secret

History and the delayed publication of secrets on the narrative and historical structures of the historical novel. Where Scott elevated the anecdote to the status of history via the mediation of literary form and narrative structure, I argue that Stevenson conceives that the anecdote's relation to history is determined by the condition of time and delayed disclosure. I draw these arguments together in a close reading of Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889). I read Mackellar's narrative as a secret history and I argue that Stevenson models Mackellar on Pepys, a connection built on the shared century-long delay between their memoirs' composition and their reading. I use this connection to consider how Stevenson invites secret history to occupy a central role in his concept of history, not as a complete or knowable territory of the past, but as a process of gradual disclosure and revelation. I conclude by arguing that Pepys and Mackellar allow Stevenson to explore the distinction between the recent and the historical past.

In Chapter Six, I highlight that Stevenson's view of literary history, and Scott's place in it, brings Secret History to bear on the late-nineteenth-century historical novel in complex and nuanced ways. I scrutinise Rebecca Bullard's claim that the aim of secret histories is to 're-plot familiar narratives of the past' and I use this to consider how, and why, Stevenson forges a complicated relationship between gossip, anecdote, literary history and literary criticism.<sup>42</sup> By examining the theme of 'familiarity' in Stevenson's collection of essays, *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882) and his unfinished historical novel, *Weir of Hermiston* (1896), I explore how familiarity, domestic secrets, and gossip play an important and controversial role in Stevenson's conception of literary history. I conclude by analysing the role of familiarity in *Weir of Hermiston* and I examine the complex role that Walter Scott plays as a character in the novel, set just before the publication of *Waverley*, which aims to reaffirm its own connection to, and place in, literary history.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Scott misremembers the title of the last tract: he is referring to *An Historical Account of the Heroick Life and Magnanimous Actions of the most illustrious Protestant Prince, James Duke of Monmouth* (London: Thomas Malthus, 1683). Scott refers to the tract in the same way in a footnote to Walter Scott (ed.), *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts*, VIII/XIII (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1812), p.404: although Scott cites p.128 of *The Heroic Life and Actions of James Duke of Monmouth*, the excerpt is from p.128 of *An Historical Account* (1683).

<sup>2</sup> For more on the legend of the Black Box and its impact on Monmouth, Buccleuch and Charles II see, F. A. Inderwich, *Side-Lights of the Stuarts* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1888) pp.368–70; Walter Riddell Carre, *Border Memories; or Sketches of Prominent Men and Women of the Border*, ed. by James Tait (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1876), pp.65–6.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Scott, Letter to Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, 4 December 1811, Edinburgh, in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, 1811–1814*, ed. by H. J. C Grierson (London: Constable & Co., 1932), pp.26–8 (p.27).

<sup>4</sup> *Scandalum Magnatum*: a legal precursor to English Defamation law which protected the English peerage against any defamatory speech threatening their social or political reputation and inciting a scandal of the magnates. For more, see John Lassiter, ‘Defamation of Peers: The Rise and Decline of the Action for *Scandalum Magnatum*, 1497–1773’, *The American Journal of Legal History*, 22.3 (July 1978), 216–36.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Mayer, *History and the Early English Novel: Matters of Fact from Bacon to Defoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.94–112; Richard Maxwell, *The Historical Novel in Europe, 1650–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Rebecca Bullard, ‘Introduction: Reconsidering Secret History’, in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.1–14; Brian Cowan, ‘The History of Secret Histories’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 81.1 (2018), 121–51.

<sup>6</sup> Cowan, p.121.

<sup>7</sup> Scott, Letter to Sharpe, p.27.

<sup>8</sup> ‘anecdota (n.)’, *OED* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Accessed February 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1656866664>.

<sup>9</sup> Jane Millgate, *Walter Scott: The Making of the Novelist* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p.67, p.66.

<sup>10</sup> Judith Wilt, *Secret Leaves: The Novels of Walter Scott* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p.6.

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<sup>11</sup> Key examples include Peter Garside, ‘Scott and the “Philosophical” Historians’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36.3 (1975), 497–512; James Anderson, *Sir Walter Scott and History, with other papers* (Edinburgh: The Edina Press, 1981); David Brown, *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979); G. M. Young, ‘Scott and the Historians’, in *Sir Walter Scott Lectures, 1940–1948*, ed. by W. L. Renwick (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 1950) pp.79–108; Catherine Jones, ‘History and Historiography’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by Fiona Robertson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.59–69; Ian Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), especially pp.215–35; Ian Duncan, ‘Walter Scott and the Historical Novel’, in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English: Volume 2, English and British Fiction 1750–1820*, ed. by Peter Garside and Karen O’Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.312–32; Frank Palmeri, *States of Nature, Stages of Society: Enlightenment Conjectural History and Modern Social Discourse* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2016); Jillian M. Hess, *How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information: Commonplace Books, Scrapbooks, and Albums* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p.138; Matthew Wickman, ‘Redgauntlet: Speculation in History, Speculation in Nature’, *Walter Scott at 250: Looking Forward*, ed. by Caroline McCracken-Flesher and Matthew Wickman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), pp.181–97.

<sup>12</sup> See Dale Townshend, *Gothic Antiquity: History, Romance, and the Architectural Imagination, 1760–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Stephen Arata, ‘Stevenson and *Fin-de-Siècle* Gothic’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) pp.53–69; Fiona Price, ‘The Politics of Fear: Gothic Histories, the English Civil War and Walter Scott’s *Woodstock*’, *The Yearbook of English Studies* 47 (2017), 110–24; Daniel Cook, ‘Walter Scott’s Late Gothic Stories’, *Gothic Studies* 23.1 (2021), 43–59; Penny Fielding and Diedre Lynch, ‘The Book as Fearful Thing’, in *The Unfinished Book*, ed. by Alexandra Gillespie and Diedre Lynch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp.108–20.

<sup>13</sup> Fiona Robertson, *Legitimate Histories: Scott, Gothic, and the Authorities of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.163.

<sup>14</sup> Clare Clarke, *Late Victorian Crime Fiction in the Shadows of Sherlock* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), especially pp.13–43; Anne Stiles, ‘Robert Louis Stevenson’s “Jekyll and Hyde” and the Double Brain’, *Studies in English Literature*, 46.4 (2006), 879–900; Larry Kreitzer, ‘R.L. Stevenson’s “Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” and Romans 7:14–25: Images of the Moral Duality of Human Nature’, *Literature and Theology*, 6.2

(1992), 125–44; Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Antonio Sanna, ‘Silent Homosexuality in Oscar Wilde’s *Teleny* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*’, *Law and Literature*, 24.1 (2012), 21–39; Daniel Hannah, ‘Queer Wanderings: Transatlantic Piracy and Narrative Seduction in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Master of Ballantrae*’, *English Literature in Transition, 1800–1920*, 57.2 (2014), 184–209.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher MacLachlan and Ronald W. Renton (eds), *Gael and Lowlander in Scottish Literature: Cross-currents in Scottish Writing in the Nineteenth Century* (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International, 2015), especially pp.v–viii, pp.56–71, pp.190–202; Ian Brown and Clarisse Godard Desmarest (eds), *Writing Scottishness: Literature and the Shaping of Scottish National Identities* (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International, 2023); Richard Maxwell and Katie Trumpener, ‘The Romance of the Outlands: The *Fin-de-siècle* Adventure Story between History and Geography’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 41.2 (2011), 106–24; Caroline McCracken-Flesher, ‘Thinking Nationally/ Writing Colonially? Scott, Stevenson, and England’, *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 24.3 (1991), 296–318; Maureen Martin, *The Mighty Scot: Nation, Gender, and the Nineteenth-Century Mystique of Scottish Masculinity* (New York: Suny Press, 2009); Anna Faktorovich, *Rebellion as Genre in the Novels of Scott, Dickens and Stevenson* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2013); Christopher MacLachlan, ‘Murder and the Supernatural: Crime in the Fiction of Scott, Hogg, and Stevenson’, *Clues*, 26.2 (2008), 10–22.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, *Records of a Family of Engineers* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1912), p.2. Mary Lascelles, *The Story-Teller Retrieves the Past: Historical Fiction and the Fictitious History in the Art of Scott, Stevenson, Kipling, and Some Others* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp.19–20. More recently, Alison Lumsden has reassessed this relationship between history, memory and imagination in Stevenson and Scott, suggesting that memory and memorialisation are reconcilable to a study of history and historical process in the historical novel: see Alison Lumsden, ‘Stevenson, Scott and Scottish History’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp.70–85.

<sup>17</sup> Lumsden, p.70.

<sup>18</sup> Robert P. Irvine, ‘Romance and Social Class’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp.27–40.

<sup>19</sup> Ian Duncan, ‘Stevenson and Fiction’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp.11–26 (p.22, p.11, p.12). Jenni Calder has also positioned Stevenson in contrast to Scott, see Jenni Calder, ‘Figures in a Landscape: Scott, Stevenson, and

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Routes to the Past', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp.121–32.

<sup>20</sup> Lumsden, p.70.

<sup>21</sup> Walter Scott, 'Memoirs of Samuel Pepys, Esq.', *The Quarterly Review*, 33.66 (March 1826), 281–314 (p.281).

<sup>22</sup> Procopius, *The Secret History*, trans. by G. A. Williamson and Peter Sarris (Penguin Classics: London, 2007), p.1.

<sup>23</sup> Bullard, p.1.

<sup>24</sup> Antoine Varillas, *Anecdota Heterouiaika, Or, The Secret History of the House of Medicis* (London: R. Bentley and S. Magnes, 1686), Author's Preface, a4.

<sup>25</sup> Isaac D'Israeli, 'True Sources of Secret History', in *Curiosities of Literature*, ed. by B. Disraeli, IV/IV (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1881), pp.293–309; Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 'Vorlesungen über die Freimaurerei', 1802–3, in *Ausgewählte Politische Schriften*, ed. by Zwi Batscha and Richard Saage (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp.169–216: For English translation see, Roscoe Pound, *Masonic Addresses and Writing of Roscoe Pound* (New York: Macoy, 1953), and for a reading of Fichte and Secret History see, Daniel Jütte, *The Age of Secrecy: Jews, Christians, and the Economy of Secrets, 1400–1800*, trans. by Jeremiah Riemer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). For more on Ranke's dismissal of Secret History as fiction, see Brian Croke, 'The Search for Harmony in Procopius' Literary Works', in *A Companion to Procopius of Caesarea*, ed. by Mischa Meier and Federico Montinaro (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp.28–58.

<sup>26</sup> D'Israeli, p.309, p.293–94.

<sup>27</sup> Ina Ferris investigates Secret History as a form of antiquarian inquiry in the early-nineteenth century: see Ina Ferris, 'Printing the Past: Walter Scott's Bannatyne Club and the Antiquarian Document', *Romanticism*, 11 (2005), 142–60 (p.151). Ferris later applies this Antiquarian definition of Secret History to the Gothic fiction of James Hogg: see Ina Ferris 'Scholarly Revivals: Gothic Fiction, Secret History, and Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*', in *Recognising the Romantic Novel: New Histories of British Fiction, 1780–1830*, ed. by Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008) pp.267–84.

<sup>28</sup> Scott interchangeably attributes the tract, *Aulicus Coquinariae*, to William Sanderson and Peter Heylin. The authorship of *Aulicus Coquinariae* remains uncertain but is attributed to Heylin.

<sup>29</sup> Walter Scott, *Secret History of the Court of James the First*, II/II (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Co., 1811), p.470, p.469.

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- <sup>30</sup> For more on Scott and D’Israeli’s dialogue on Secret History see, Ina Ferris, ‘The “Character” of James the First and Antiquarian Secret History’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 37.2 (2006), 73–6.
- <sup>31</sup> Scott, *Secret History* II, p.10, p.73.
- <sup>32</sup> Bullard, p.6, p.9.
- <sup>33</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels: An Annotated Text with Critical Essays*, ed. by Robert A. Greenberg (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1961), pp.170–71.
- <sup>34</sup> Peter Burke, ‘History, Myth, and Fiction: Doubts and Debates’, in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 3: 1400–1800*, ed. by José Rabasa, Masayuki Sato, Edoardo Tortarolo, and Daniel Woolf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.261–81 (p.276).
- <sup>35</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p.24, p.20. p.19.
- <sup>36</sup> James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998).
- <sup>37</sup> Andrew Lincoln, *Walter Scott and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p.1, p.2.
- <sup>38</sup> Lukács, p.37, p.36, p.35, p.33, p.38.
- <sup>39</sup> Richard Maxwell, *The Historical Novel in Europe, 1650–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.48.
- <sup>40</sup> Barbara Foley, *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1986), p.148. Foley’s analysis of the historical novel centres on her recognition that although ‘Lukács pays little attention to the question of documentary corroboration, [...] we can expand upon his analysis by noting the ways in which Scott’s testimonial materials are intended to reinforce the propositional claims of his novels’: Foley pays particular attention to Scott’s paratexts and *Waverley* to explore this argument (p.149).
- <sup>41</sup> Lukács, p.42, p.43, p.42, p.46.
- <sup>42</sup> Rebecca Bullard, ‘Introduction: Reconsidering Secret History’, in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.1–14 (p.2).

## Section One

### Walter Scott's Secret Histories: Domestic Secrets, History, and Narrative Structure

#### Chapter One

'I proceeded from one obscure recess to another': The Secret Passages of the Author of Waverley and King James I in *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822)

“Sir, I will hear no more on it. Besides being a most false and impudent figment, as I can testify – it is *Scandaalum Magnaatum*, sir – *Scandaalum Magnaatum*” [...]

“I care not an ounce of rotten cheese”, said John Christie in reply, “what you call it – but it is TRUE; and I am a free Englishman, and have right to speak the truth in my own concerns”.<sup>1</sup>

When John Christie confronts Richie Moniplies in volume three of *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822), he shares the rumour that Nigel, Lord Glenvarloch, is having an affair with Christie's wife, Nelly, and angrily accuses Moniplies of his complicity in this scandalous affair.

Worried that Christie's accusations will be overheard in the street, Moniplies attempts to silence Christie by threatening him with punishment for slander under the ancient, English statute of *Scandalum Magnatum*. Christie rebuffs Moniplies with a logical, albeit politically and legally dangerous, argument: Lord Glenvarloch's private life became a matter of legitimate interest when he began his illicit affair with his wife. According to Christie, Nigel's (falsely rumoured) affair with Nelly gives him and his neighbours a legitimate precedence for openly and publicly propagating the scandal. During the years under investigation in this chapter, between 1809 and 1822, defining the circumstances which transform a private indiscretion into a valuable piece of public intelligence forms the substance of timely and volatile debate in the wake of two of the most effective Royal scandals of the nineteenth century: the Mary Anne Clarke Affair (1809) and the Queen's

Trial (1820). On 25 February 1809, less than three weeks after Prince Frederick, the Duke of York, and his mistress, Mary Anne Clarke, had become the centre of their highly-publicised and scrutinised Parliamentary inquiry into the couple's trading of army commissions, Walter Scott wrote to John Murray to inform the publisher of his intention to compose his only self-titled *Secret History*, *Secret History of the Court of James the First* (1811). When Scott returns to his *Secret History* a decade later to form the substance of two new literary projects, his *Private Letters of King James's Reign* (1821) and *The Fortunes of Nigel*, he does so in the context of renewed public scrutiny into the domestic lives and secret affairs of the monarch: George IV, Maria Fitzherbert (the king's mistress), and the Queen Consort, Caroline of Brunswick, became popular subjects of public debate in the wake of the Queen's Trial for adultery, its impact on the king's delayed coronation, and its garnering of George IV's public reputation as a 'drunken debauchee, bad husband, unfaithful lover, untrustworthy friend, unnatural father, corrupt regent, and worse king'.<sup>2</sup> The journey from Scott's inception of *Secret History* in 1809 to its adaptation to historical fiction in 1821 and 1822 is one driven by a contemporary concern to renegotiate the boundaries between the public and the domestic recesses of its monarch's private affairs and secrets.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that *Secret History*, as a genre renowned for its libellous nature, plays an important role in handling the period's uncertain relationship with domestic secrets and their place in public history. I begin by defining the *Secret History's* relation to domesticity before reading this into *The Fortunes of Nigel*. I offer a close reading of the novel's preface to establish the complicated relationship that Scott forges between the (fictional) Author of *Waverley* and secret histories, and I draw attention to the important connection that the preface sets up between secret passageways and secret history in the novel. I then use George Heriot's liberal use of secret passages in the narrative proper to explore the role of Scott's *Secret History* in *The Fortunes of Nigel* and to draw attention to

the strange impotence that libel enjoys at each turn of the novel's plot. I then turn to Scott's unpublished *Private Letters of King James's Reign*, written in 1821, to consider how this unfinished novel uses Secret History to explicitly comment on the monarch's domestic secrets and self-interested private conduct in a way denied to its successor, *The Fortunes of Nigel*.<sup>3</sup>

As Tara Ghoshal Wallace highlights in her study of Scott's depictions of monarchy in his middle-period novels, 'Scott's Stuart royals manifest childish irresponsibility [...] or a narcissistic obsession with personal needs [...] that puts their subjects at risk'.<sup>4</sup> By looking at Scott's adaptation of his *Secret History* to two literary projects, his unfinished *Private Letters of King James's Reign* and *The Fortunes of Nigel*, I consider how Scott turns secret history into a literary device which allows him to carefully investigate the impact of the monarch's private conduct, 'childish irresponsibility' and 'narcissistic obsession with personal needs' on his political and public responsibilities. I draw attention to the timeliness of Scott's investigation and I consider why he seems to restrain his secret history's ability to deal more overtly in this timeliness, preventing the secret history in *The Fortunes of Nigel* from fully expressing his latent interest in libel, George IV, and the monarch's newly disclosed domestic secrets. As Alison Lumsden highlights, Scott's novels of the 1820s take a closer look at the limits of the historical novel as a means of recapturing and articulating the past and in this 'period of "great preface writing"', novels such as *Ivanhoe*, *The Fortunes of Nigel* and *Pevekil of the Peak* demonstrate an increased self-reflectivity in Scott's work and offer us meditations on fiction and its relationship to history'.<sup>5</sup> While demonstrating how Secret History fits into Scott's use of the preface as a space for increasing his novelistic 'self-reflectivity', I also highlight that the preface of *The Fortunes of Nigel* sets up the strangely discordant place Scott assigns for secret histories and libel in the narrative proper. I suggest that there is another reason for Scott's struggle to articulate and give voice to the past in *The Fortunes of*

*Nigel*: the court of James I threatens to draw dangerously contemporary and libellous parallels to the court of George IV. Although Scott chooses to set his novel in the distant past of the early-seventeenth-century royal court, he takes a dangerous step closer to reflecting and criticising contemporary, politically volatile Royal scandal.

In *The Secret History of Domesticity*, Michael McKeon uses the domestic novel to trace new and emerging distinctions between ‘private’ and ‘public’ realms during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Britain. Where Jürgen Habermas sees eighteenth-century political life and engagement as a series of top-down interactions between the state and the nascent bourgeoisie which allowed political power to trickle down from the state into ‘public’, ‘private’, and ‘intimate private’ bourgeois spheres, McKeon uses the domestic novel to investigate how these three spheres, or realms as McKeon refers to them, were acted upon by a specific cultural movement ‘from domestication to domesticity’.<sup>6</sup> McKeon thinks of this ‘movement’ in literal terms for, he argues, the distinction between public and private realms was clarified out of a cultural movement “‘inward” *through* the realms of the state and civil society, religion, printing and the public sphere, the state and the family, domestic labor, domestic architecture, gender differentiation, subjectivity, intimacy, and sexuality’. McKeon considers how this movement inwards created a ‘public-private dyad’ that subjected domestic life to a formal, systematized cultural re-evaluation which allowed it to enjoy a ‘thematic and teleological significance that formerly had characterized only the public realm’. In this context, McKeon draws attention to *Secret History*, in the heyday of its popularity during the time under his study, as a genre at the forefront of this cultural movement: *Secret History* transforms objects of ‘formal domestication’ (letters to friends, family, and lovers and the bedchambers, cabinets, chests, and drawers in which they are privately written and stored) by charging them with a latent political significance and exposing to them to the public. As McKeon highlights, *Secret History* and literary depictions of domesticity are easily

reconciled for they find themselves represented and encoded by the same symbolic objects and places, couched in an obvious, overt, and immediately recognisable physical space: the *domus*, or home. Tied to its ‘spatial and structural representability’, domesticity, as a concerted cultural and literary movement ‘inwards’, is tethered to literal and metaphorical depictions of place (the home, bedchamber, closet, parlour, and kitchen).<sup>7</sup> Although McKeon is undoubtedly right in recognising and tracing the complex duality between domesticity and Secret History, it is important to stress that, although they share essential features, Secret History is not a product of domesticity: it is the product and contingent of *publicity*, utilising print technology to quickly and efficiently disseminate gossipy and scandalous insights into the private lives and conduct of statesmen, nobility, and monarchs to the public. As I argue in this chapter, Walter Scott uses the nineteenth century literary market to demonstrate that secret histories thrive and capitalise (in Scott’s case, quite literally) on this very marketable and appealing idea: print publication is designed to reveal and disclose information to the public which it was never supposed to know. This ability to publicise secret information via print publication strikes to the core of the genre for its original Greek title, *anekdota*, means that which was ‘previously unpublished’.<sup>8</sup> As Rebecca Bullard puts it, ‘against the secrecy and silence of arbitrary power, secret history pits the publicity and populism of print’.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, while acknowledging its historical origin with Procopius and his *Anekdota* of Emperor Justinian, McKeon defines ‘Secret History’ as both a literary and ‘a contemporary term’, one that ‘signifies the private revelation of high public secrets, a substantive ambition that bears a close relation to the rhetoric of formal domestication, with which it sometimes is combined’.<sup>10</sup> While bearing in mind McKeon’s definition, it is important to emphasise that there is a significant difference between the term ‘secret history’, and its rise and fall in popular English vocabulary, and the genre ‘Secret History’. In Britain, as with Europe as a whole, secret histories sometimes bore the name Secret History, *Anekdota*, or *Historia*

*Arcana* on their title page and sometimes they did not, instead opting to eschew the term in preference for the simple and eye-catching phrase, ‘previously unpublished’. Histories that drew attention to the scandalous private lives of statesmen and monarchs, including, for example, Anthony Weldon’s *Court and Character of King James* (1650) and Anthony Hamilton’s *Memoirs of Count Grammont* (1714), might not include the term ‘secret history’ on their title page but they both belong to the genre, self-styled to handle and expose the private and political secrets of their subjects via publication. Scott, who edited Weldon and Hamilton’s histories for publication, recognised their historical and literary currency in the nineteenth century, using Weldon as the cornerstone of his *Secret History* and noting Hamilton’s ability to present the ‘profligate and abandoned’ character and ‘manners of the court of Charles II’ as even ‘more seductive and dangerous’ than previously realised by historians.<sup>11</sup>

It is clear that secret histories and their authors are more a threat to domesticity than its companion, hijacking the inward movement from public to intimate spaces that McKeon identifies and infiltrating these private, domestic recesses to discover personal secrets in the form of letters, gossip, or eavesdropped snippets of conversations which can then be eagerly carried out of their domestic hiding places and into public view to fascinate, entertain, and influence their readers. Secret History turns domestic spaces into promising repositories of secret, political intelligence and transforms them into physical and metaphorical extensions of the royal court. They draw attention to the scandalous connections between statesmen’s parlours, closets, and bedchambers and the hidden motivations for adopting or denouncing certain political policies and strategies. At the heart of Secret History is the desire to render private, personal secrets publicly accessible, advocating for a public right to gain partial and temporary access to the private spaces, relationships, and domestic manners of important public figures. Printed for public dissemination and consumption, Secret History carefully

and deliberately mediates the flow of information between three different spaces: the royal court, the royal bedchamber, and the print-house. I want to adapt McKeon's definition of Secret History and push it a stage further: secret histories certainly privilege domestic spaces but they do so in order to herald them as the hidden stage on which public affairs unfold, where 'the springs and motives of great enterprises and revolutions [...] and of the contemptible accidents to which they owed success' play out in private and beyond the boundaries of public scrutiny and judgement.<sup>12</sup> While Secret History undoubtedly represents the 'movement inwards' that McKeon defines it by, this is only half the picture. Secret History controversially invites the public gaze into domestic, private, and clandestine quarters and renders the confidential, treasonous, or sexual liaisons which take place within their walls a matter of public interest and inquiry. Secret histories *publicise* domestic secrets, forcibly reinventing domesticity as a publicly accessible and contingent space. With this definition, the Secret History's metaphorical movement inwards, from public to domestic spaces, functions less as a single, sustained movement, as McKeon suggests, and more after the fashion of a physical secret passageway. A connective corridor which is only known and accessible to a select few, the secret passageway facilitates movement in two directions: inwards to domestic spaces (which the secret historian turns into the repository of salacious and scandalous intelligence) and outwards to the reading public (to whom the secret historian reports and shares his findings).

In the 'Introductory Epistle' to *The Fortunes of Nigel*, Scott highlights the appropriateness of this metaphor for he introduces Secret History to his historical novel through depictions of secret passageways and labyrinths. In the preface, Captain Clutterbuck finds himself in the presence of his '*magne parens* [great parent]', the Author of Waverley but, struck by an intense feeling of what he, rather dramatically, describes as 'a holy horror', Clutterbuck is first forced to make his way through the labyrinthine maze of dark corridors and small

‘crypts’ that comprise the back-settlement of a fictional rendering of Constable’s publishing house, in Edinburgh, before he is able to discover and meet the ghost-like Author (5, 4). Filled with dread, Clutterbuck moves from ‘one obscure recess to another’: in some, he discovers hordes of old, dusty and forgotten volumes, and in others he fears that either ‘some ecstatic bard’ or a ‘band of critics’ might be hiding, lurking in a productive darkness where ‘the phantom train [of] their secret work’ can be realised (4). Driven, however, by some ‘irresistible impulse’, Clutterbuck manages to navigate this ‘succession of darksome chambers’ and finally comes across the spectral figure of the Author of Waverley, seated in ‘a vaulted room, dedicated to secrecy and silence’ (4). The Author is found clutching a bundle of blotted and revised proofs of *The Fortunes of Nigel* which he has been studiously revising until Clutterbuck’s dramatic entrance. Clearly in the final stages of its preparation for print and publication, the Author’s history is designed to break through this obscure seal of ‘secrecy and silence’. Amid the old, dusty and obscure recesses of the archival crypts, the Author occupies a space of tension, mediating between the lost, forgotten and abandoned histories contained within the very cleverly described, ‘vaulted rooms’, and these histories’ disclosure to the public. Symbolically abutting the public-facing publishing house, the quasi-mystical and cavernous vaults both literally and metaphorically back up the industry and economy of the publishing house.<sup>13</sup> Scott situates these secret repositories as a vital bolster to the burgeoning productivity and demand of the early-nineteenth century literary market and he forges a vital role for the historical novelist in this. The meeting between Clutterbuck and the Author of Waverley ends with the Author relinquishing his bundle of blot-stained papers to the printers and, in doing so, he offers *The Fortunes of Nigel* as a vehicle for transporting these abandoned, forgotten, and secret histories, including his own *Secret History of the Court of James the First* on which his fictional King James and his court is based, out of obscurity and firmly into the public’s eye.

With the preface to *The Fortunes of Nigel*, Scott completely reimagines the origin of his historical novels. He creates an arcane, metafictional world where the ‘phantom train’ of his literary composition is accommodated by a number of mysterious forces. Although the Author takes pride in reporting to Clutterbuck that *The Fortunes of Nigel* has ‘Not a Cock-lane scratch’ of ‘the mystic, and the magical, and the whole systems of signs, wonders, and omens [...] no dreams, or presages, or obscure allusions to future events’ contained in its plot, the novel’s preface is far from devoid of these arcane forces where they prove foundational to the Author’s work (6). To Clutterbuck’s surprise, the Author of *Waverley* confesses that a play he had recently put to the stage (where it had enjoyed much praise by its critics) was not ‘the off-spring of my mother-wit’ but derived from numerous ‘scraps of old plays’ that he had received ‘from a source inaccessible to collectors’ (11). The Author proceeds to share a curious anecdote with Clutterbuck in which he recalls his stay in ‘the *haunted apartment*’ of a friend’s mansion in Worcestershire twenty years earlier (11). The Author claims that one evening he was visited in his bedroom by the guilt-stricken ghost of a domestic cook, Elizabeth (Betty) Barnes. Scott models Betty on one of the most well-known and infamous figures of British literary anecdote, Elizabeth (Betsy) Baker, who reportedly destroyed fifty-six priceless seventeenth-century manuscripts belonging to the keen antiquarian and Somerset Herald, John Warburton (1682–1759), by using his irreplaceable collection of unprinted works of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Massinger, and their contemporaries to line the bottom of her pies and baking trays before consigning all but three manuscripts for kindling.<sup>14</sup> Warburton’s ignominious loss of these irreplaceable manuscripts to ‘my own careles[s]ness and the Ignora[n]ce of my Ser[vant] in whose hands I had lodgd [sic] them’ quickly became an incredibly popular and well-known literary anecdote.<sup>15</sup> As Walter Wilson Greg highlights,

the story has been told over and over again with every kind of facetious adornment, till no history of literature is complete without it, and our national biography has to take serious account of the eccentric herald and his cook Elizabeth B.<sup>16</sup>

Inserting the Author of *Waverley* into the narrative of this literary secret history, Scott ensures the Author meets Warburton's cook in the domain of secret history (the bedchamber) and the conversation necessarily turns to the matter of its publicity, requiring the Author to fulfil the ultimate goal of all secret histories: publication. When the Author realises that he has been roused from sleep by the ghost of a female servant, he quickly overcomes his shock at her sudden appearance in his room and heralds it as a lucky opportunity, 'a proper spot of work', to hear her story and adapt it to his next literary project, leaving him already reimagining Betty as a tragic protagonist who had 'hanged herself for love of the stage-coach-man' before the end of her hollow-voiced introduction (11). While the Author is proven correct in anticipating that 'the Spirit of Betty Barnes' will provide him with promising material for his next literary composition, it is certainly not in the way he expects: Warburton's cook is not a tragic heroine in the making, but a knowledgeable servant with extremely valuable intelligence to share about her employer and his work. Unbeknownst to the 'dramatic antiquary', he has chosen to stay in Warburton's old bedchamber, the repository of this important literary secret which had continued to plague Betty's spirit and conscience for over a hundred years. In this case, the bedroom is, quite literally, the haunt of secret history and after aggressively brandishing her sauce-ladle to silence the Author, Betty informs him that a few 'greasy and blackened fragments' of Warburton's ill-fated collection have miraculously survived in the bedroom's coal storage, untouched and unread since the time of her death. Given the national renown and significance of the texts, Betty is the source of high-value intelligence and when she shares it with the Author, she does so on the condition that he publicly shares the discovery of Warburton's lost manuscripts and fulfil her

desire ‘to indemnify the world for the errors of my ignorance’ (12). The Author only keeps half his promise, allowing the fragments to reach a public audience but only under a veil of anonymity which does nothing to vindicate Betty’s reputation: the secret history of Betty Barnes and John Warburton is only half resolved, requiring the metafictional preface of the historical novel to contain the Author’s strange revelations and fully fulfil the secret history’s desire for its own disclosure. Despite it being her ‘ill-fated hands that consigned to grease and conflagration the scores of small quartos’, Warburton’s domestic cook has been posthumously transformed into their sole custodian (12). The Author is forced to realise that Warburton’s servant will not be the subject of his literature, but its secret, arcane facilitator. Scott transforms Warburton’s servant and his bedchamber into repositories of a literary secret history, one that humorously details the rippling interactions between domestic life and history. Clutterbuck interrupts the Author’s anecdote in obvious disbelief, but not before this humorous encounter with ‘the holocaust of victims which this unhappy woman had sacrificed to the God of Good Cheer’ cocoons the Author of *Waverley* in the world of secret history in a wonderfully complex manner, blurring the distinction between literary anecdote, *arcana historia*, and the metafictional investigations of the historical novelist into the creative impulses behind his genre (12).

With the preface to *The Fortunes of Nigel*, Scott uses the Author of *Waverley* to investigate and reimagine the relationship between secret histories, their voyeuristic fascination with publicising domestic encounters, and the creation of his historical novel. Beginning with Clutterbuck’s anxious journey through ‘the labyrinth’ and ending with his hasty retreat down its corridors after Mr. C.’s rebuke of the Author ‘for suffering any one to penetrate so far into the *penetralia* of their temple’, Scott ensures the historical novel and its author are shrouded and enveloped by secrets and secrecy (17). Set in this secret, hidden space (*penetralia*), between the printers and the publishing house in Edinburgh, Clutterbuck’s

interview with the Author of *Waverley* provides a framework for engaging with the historical novelist, rather paradoxically, as both a source of secrecy and a source of its dispelling, and for engaging with the historical novel as a vehicle for publicising secret histories. Scott's *Secret History* is a good example for it finds itself once again presented to the public but in a form contained and mediated by the plot and narrative structures of the historical novel. In examining this relationship between secret history and narrative structures of the historical novel, it is helpful to return, as Scott does, to its metaphorical association with secret passages. In the course of their conversation, the Author and Clutterbuck enter into a lengthy debate about 'passages which lead nowhere' in literature and how these passages, while surplus to the plot, provide moments of excitement (13). Despite his enjoyment writing 'passages which lead nowhere', the Author acknowledges that these literary dead-ends are often met with readerly disappointment. As a result, the Author conceives that 'To the public, I stand pretty near in the relation of the postman who leaves a packet at the door of an individual. If it contains pleasing intelligence [...] the letter is accepted' (9). It appears that Scott has returned, albeit in less dramatic fashion than his encounter with Betty Barnes, to associating the historical novelist with sharing and facilitating the free movement and communication of information, creating a public network that finds itself, quite literally, presented at the boundaries between public and domestic spaces and accepted through 'the [front]door of an individual'.

In *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt considers how the narrative structures of Richardson's novels reflect the 'somewhat limited literary perspective prevalent in his day'. By drawing on *Clarissa*, Watt elaborates that this 'limited literary perspective' manifested itself in a narrative style typical of the eighteenth-century novel in which 'the didactic function of art was best served by making characters paradigms of vice and virtue'.<sup>17</sup> While this view is now widely accepted among literary scholars, there is one component of Watt's argument that

merits particular attention and examination here. Although Defoe, Richardson and Fielding acknowledge the Novel as a mechanism for revealing and ‘comprehending the most important Concerns of Private Life’, this ability similarly falls under the ‘limited literary perspective’ that Watt identifies in the authors’ oeuvre, seeing the novelists enter into the sphere of ‘Private Life’ with cautious and restrained steps.<sup>18</sup> As Watt notes, Fielding ‘ostentatiously refused to go too deep into the minds of his characters’ and, in *Tom Jones*, Fielding provides a rationale for this refusal for

it would be an ill office in us to pay a visit to the inmost recesses of his mind, as some scandalous people search into the most secret affairs of their friends, and often pry into their closets and cupboards, only to discover their poverty and meanness to the world.<sup>19</sup>

In *The Fortunes of Nigel*, Scott has no qualms allowing the reader ‘to pay a visit to the inmost recesses’ of Nigel’s mind. In fact, he interrupts the narrative to observe that

I myself chuse [sic] to present to my dearest reader the pictures of my hero’s mind, his reflections and resolutions [...] I have put his thoughts into language; and this I conceive to be the purpose of the soliloquy upon the stage as well as in the closet, being perhaps the only way of communicating to the spectator what is supposed to be passing in the bosom of the scenic personage (246).

Where Fielding places the Author on the threshold of private, secret spaces and uses him to reinforce their boundaries and remind the reader of their distance and inaccessibility, and appealing to a social and moral code of privacy and decency in the process, Scott offers a radically different vision, one that is more accordant with the aims of Secret History than the eighteenth-century literary examples typically referred to in studies of Secret History and the rise of the novel.<sup>20</sup> To Scott, the author functions as a facilitator of hidden or difficult-to-find information whose fundamental role lies in providing the reader with either previously

unknown, or unknowable, information. The Author of Waverley operates in secret in both the metafictional prefaces and in reality. Hidden behind a fictional persona who works ‘in secrecy and silence’, Scott creates an image of himself which is positioned between these two competing versions of accessibility, between the public and private, and the known and secret. In the same letter (1809) to John Murray in which Scott discloses his plan to embark upon his *Secret History*, he also informs Murray of his intention to add the, now-famous, symbol of a portcullis as a ‘decisive mark of appropriation’ to copies of his anonymously published works. Scott requests that the symbol is accompanied by the Latin inscription, *Clausus Tutus Ero* [closed in I am safe], which Scott proudly reveals to be an anagram of his name, ‘*Walterus Scotus* (taking two single U’s for the W)’. Whilst we can only speculate whether Scott’s preparatory work for his *Secret History* provided him with the inspiration for this plan, there is a precedence for the argument: the portcullis symbol and its accompanying motto was designed in 1594 for the Laird of Buccleuch in advance of his participation with King James and his nobles in a ceremonial joust held in Stirling to celebrate the Baptism of King James I’s son, Henry. Scott is certainly aware of this historical origin and mentions it in his letter to Murray, noting that the portcullis and accompanying motto were previously ‘borne by a Champion of my name in a tournament at Stirling’: a reference to the ceremonial joust which took place in Stirling as part of the celebrations for Prince Henry’s Baptism in 1594, and the ‘Champion’ with whom he shares his name is the Lord of Buccleuch.<sup>21</sup> Regardless of Scott’s source of inspiration for the scheme, Scott’s use of the symbol and its secret, anagrammatic motto exposes another way in which Scott uses secrecy and anonymity to at once disguise his authorly identity and express it: his motto, *clausus tutus ero*, reflecting an Author of Waverley who is poised between the domesticity of Abbotsford (jealously guarded by the portcullis) and the publicity of print publication. His insignia is fitting for the secret historian. By 1822, Scott had turned this fascination with secrecy into a commercial

commodity, recognising the value of titillating public interest as ‘The Great Unknown’. It proves fitting to adapt Bullard’s definition of Secret History as ‘a genre designed to disclose secret intelligence, [which] in fact involves acts of both revelation and concealment’ and apply it to Scott’s metafictional presentations of the work of the historical novelist.<sup>22</sup>

As foregrounded in the preface, in the narrative proper the characters of *The Fortunes of Nigel* similarly require a skilled navigator to help guide them through the novel’s plot and its Secret History, facilitating their encounters with the elusive, work-shy King James I. Providing such access requires a skilled political navigator, one who can mirror the Author of *Waverley*’s ability to mediate between domestic and public spaces. As an individual who regularly travels to and from the royal court but does not belong to it and its factional politics, it is George Heriot, an individual who does not feature in *Secret History*, who Scott selects as his *Secret History*’s mouthpiece in the novel. As the king’s goldsmith, Heriot has regular and unalloyed access to the king’s private chambers where only the most exclusive visitors are permitted to see and entertain James in private. Heriot proves an effective conduit, connecting public spaces to the private, intimate recesses of the king’s life. As Heriot reveals to Nigel:

the nature of my employment affords me direct access to the interior of the palace; I am well known to be no meddler in intrigues or party affairs, so that no favourite has, as yet endeavoured to shut against me the door of the royal closet; on the contrary [...] But I cannot be thus connected with the Court, without hearing, even against my will, what wheels are in motion, and how they are checked or forwarded. Of course, when I chuse to seek such intelligence, I know the sources in which it is to be traced (56).

Heriot is a conduit between these two spaces: ‘connected with the Court’, he facilitates Nigel and Moniplies’s access to James during those moments of private leisure that the king so jealously guards. Heriot guides Nigel, both physically and socially, through the politics and

gossip of the royal court. As Nigel's self-professed 'informer' of court secrets, Heriot becomes Nigel's most important ally throughout the novel and it is not coincidental that Nigel's misadventures occur when he dismisses Heriot's advice in favour of one of James's (fictional) favourites, Malcom (57). Until this point, Nigel defers to Heriot to help him navigate London and the royal connections and blindly follows Heriot, trusting "you see your way through this business, so I hardly do" (59).

It is with Heriot that the reader is first introduced to the character of King James I and it is in this meeting in James's private quarters where the material of *Secret History* is most heavily brought to bear on the novel. Scott follows Heriot on his secret, confidential journey to see the king at Whitehall and allows the reader to watch this 'movement inwards' that, as McKeon has shown, is characteristic of *Secret History*. After instructing the copyist to replicate Nigel's supplication to the king 'the Citizen, then gave the young Scrivener an angel, and bidding him, on his life, to be secret in all business entrusted to him, again, mounted his mule, and rode on westward along the Strand' (64). From this shop, a characteristically public space, Heriot's journey becomes increasingly select, exclusive, and secret: he makes his way through the streets along the Strand; he is then permitted through the gates of Whitehall Palace without delay or interruption, before dismounting his horse and making his way deftly through the palace, 'at present a labyrinth not easily to be traversed' (65). He is then briefly attended by two palace attendants as he walks through the palace but, these companions are soon 'left behind [...] in an anti-room' for it is only Heriot who is permitted to enter the king's private closet at this time (65). After going up 'a private staircase, —even that private staircase, the privilege of which at court is accounted a nearer road to power than the *grandes entrées* themselves', Heriot stoops through 'a little door half-covered by the tapestry', and his journey from the public and into the domestic domain of *Secret History* is complete (349, 66). The novel's transition into its own version of the Secret

History of King James is signalled by the gradual falling away of Heriot's company as he makes his way through the labyrinth of corridors in secrecy and silence. Heriot is the first character to give the reader direct access to the king. Unfiltered by the second-hand testimony of Moniplies and Jenkin, James is seen in "my very cabinet, where naught suld enter but at my ain pleasure" (71). It is with Heriot that the reader sees the king dressed in the green, velvet robe described by Osborne in Scott's *Secret History* and it is in James's private closet that the secret reason why the king favours this robe is revealed: as per Weldon's testimony, it is 'dagger-proof' (66).<sup>23</sup> But in his private chamber where 'we are secret, my good auld servant Geordie', James is presented at leisure and is free to openly discuss his expensive taste for Heriot's jewels and gold and openly criticise his courtiers' political manoeuvrings (70). It is in the domain of secret history that the king's domestic quarters are revealed to be an unofficial extension of the royal court, where friendships and affairs direct the king's political strategies and conduct. It is here that the influence of Scott's *Secret History* is most clear: James's physical appearance and his uneven and clumsy gait are taken from Osborne and Weldon's testimonies; James's undaunted love of horse-riding, despite his poor skill, need to ride side-saddle, and his proclivity to hunt with an enormous quantity of Greek wine in his riding bottles, are details drawn from one of Scott's editorial notes on Roger Coke in *Secret History*; and, perhaps one of the most memorable features of the novel, James I's reference to Charles, Prince of Wales, and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, by their familiar nicknames of 'Babie Charles' and 'Steenie', is taken directly from *Secret History*.<sup>24</sup> As Frank Jordan has noted, *Secret History* provides Scott with 'a rich repository of detail on James's appearance, character, manners, habits, behaviour, and actions'; it provides 'accounts of key episodes', insights into the court's 'ongoing disputes and discontents', and it also reveals the 'extravagance of the court' as well as the ongoing, but certainly hushed, debate

questioning the king's sexuality. These shared attributes of *Secret History* and *The Fortunes of Nigel* prove essential to the novel and, as Jordan concludes,

it would not be excessive exaggeration to claim that little would be lost from *Nigel* [...] if the four writers [Osborne, Weldon, Heylin, and Peyton] were Scott's sole source. And not just for their information, either: these memoirs or histories also comprise a rich storehouse of opinion'.<sup>25</sup>

One expression of this 'storehouse of opinion' lies in Scott ensuring 'we may see what a slave King James was to his favourites; this appears by many passages of this story'.<sup>26</sup> Taking after *Secret History*, *The Fortunes of Nigel* presents the king as more preoccupied with satisfying his own childlike whims and those of his favourite courtiers, 'such as council him for their own private ends and interest', than diplomatically conducting his public and political duties.<sup>27</sup> As Scott observes, the king has no interest in 'the politics of Europe; but then, to make amends, he was prodigiously busy, when he could find a fair opportunity, of intermeddling, with the private affairs of his loving subjects' (397). This characteristic is judged very differently by the king's goldsmith in the novel, Heriot, who secretly reproaches James for 'never' indulging 'any kingly or noble sentiment, without its being sullied by some after-thought of interested selfishness' (371). James I was well-known among nobility for developing special relationships with select statesmen who often started their careers outside the royal court and, due to the king's favour, were quickly promoted to high-ranking positions in the court: Steenie, the Duke of Buckingham, grew to be the most powerful and influential courtier out of this select group. These men were known, alternatively, as James's 'minions' or his 'favourites', with the latter term gaining most popularity.<sup>28</sup> As historian David Bergeron highlights, a monarch's 'favourite' is defined as 'one who stands unduly high in the favour of a prince' and, he adds, that for James and his courtiers the term also 'implies a special intimacy' which includes, but is not limited to, sexual attraction.<sup>29</sup> It is said

in *Secret History* that James lost interest in Buckingham after his favourite was married in 1620, and this led Buckingham to forge a strategically co-dependant relationship with Charles instead, much to James's disappointment.<sup>30</sup> By the time of Nigel's adventures in Scott's novel, James's personal relationship with Buckingham has already reached its peak: he had amassed great political power under James and had already begun asserting himself with the heir apparent, as Scott reflects by the inseparableness of Charles and Buckingham in *The Fortunes of Nigel*. As John Burke highlights, Scott models Nigel on a young Buckingham, introducing him to the king's court at the same age as Buckingham when he first met the king and ensuring they share the same physical appearance and characteristics: 'Nigel's best asset, Scott whispers to those who want hear, is not the justice of his cause, but his youthful good looks, just as it was for Robert Ker[r] and George Villiers'.<sup>31</sup> Aware of the permeability between the king's private and public conduct, it is no wonder that (fictional) Buckingham's strategy to prevent Nigel's financial and political success is to trick him into never appearing at court after the triumph of his first visit which sees the king agree to assist Nigel against the explicit wishes of his favourite. In the novel, Scott makes sure to highlight that James's public, stately conduct is always privately motivated and this affects the king to such a degree that he proves incapable of making a political decision without first consulting his personal relationships and allegiances. Nigel's plights throughout the novel reflect the king's inability to rule without these private, personal relationships impeding his public duties, finding himself swayed from one course of action to another depending on who he spends more time with: Heriot, Nigel, or Buckingham. As Weldon reported in *Secret History*, 'Buckingham having the chancellor, treasurer, and all great officers, his very slaves, swells in the height of pride'.<sup>32</sup> It is clear that Scott is situating his fictional Buckingham within this height of his political influence and clout for it is he who has secretly coordinated the Lord Chancellor's mission to seize Glenvarloch's family estate in the novel and has ordered the

chancellor to ensure that each of Nigel's attempts to fight the legal acquisition of the land and property in London is met with sabotage. Heriot confides in Nigel that 'The Conservator Peterson only lends his name to shroud no less a man than the Lord Chancellor of Scotland, who hopes, under the cover of this debt, to gain possession of the estate [...] to gratify a yet more powerful third party' (57). When Nigel reaches the royal court to petition the king, James is conflicted by the justness of Nigel's plea and his desire to satisfy his son and Buckingham. It transpires that, whilst the king had no active role in planning Glenvarloch's financial demise, he confesses to Lord Huntinglen that he had always had an 'inkling' of the secret, hidden sources behind Nigel's sudden financial straits. Feeling the pressure to satisfy his favourite courtier, James initially decides to "let the land gang [...] Baby Charles and Steenie want to kill a buck there this next year—they mun hae the land (114). The ensuing plot revolves around the two factions of Nigel, Heriot, and Lord Huntinglen, and Buckingham, Malcolm, and Charles, competing for the king's personal favour: the only way for either party to get what they want. Nigel's case represents a much larger and more concerning pattern, one that speaks to contemporary concerns about George IV and his brother, Prince Fredrick, Duke of York: the king is willing to make political choices and advance certain careers on the basis of his personal relationships and at the expense of fairness and political policy.

It is clear that James's private relationships materially influence his political decisions and the constitution of his court and this sees Buckingham gain the reputation as 'a Peg-a-Ramsay', seemingly an open reference to his long-standing affair with the king (119). The concept of a royal 'favourite' is therefore a complicated one: it is certainly not a domestic relationship for although we can assume that much of the king's relations with the favourite takes place in private, domestic spaces and behind closed doors, there is an obvious and undeniable political expression of this favouritism. Their relationship is best defined, albeit a

little paradoxically, as a ‘publicly private’ one: it is a physically and emotionally intimate relationship that the king not only openly announces to his court by the ‘unduly high’ political power and rank that he gifts to his lovers, but also by making it a very real and legitimate political concern. In Scott’s novel, it is Malagrowthier who draws attention to this dynamic in James’s royal court for, in response to Nigel’s dubiousness that ‘this was publicly spoken of me’ in the king’s court, Malagrowthier retorts, ““Spoken openly? [...] “ay, by my troth was it—that is to say, it was whispered privately—whilk is as open promulgation as the thing permitted”” (172). In *Secret History*, Osborne uses a particularly helpful analogy to explain the effect of James’s continual intermingling of his private and political conduct had on his political reputation. At ‘his bosome’ Osborne observed, there is always

a place reserved for younger men and of more indeering countenances. And these went under the appellation of his favourites or minions, who, like burning-glasses, were daily interposed between him and the subject, multiplying the heat of oppressions in the generall opinion, though in his own he thought they screened them from reflecting upon the crowne.<sup>33</sup>

James adopts a similar strategy of, to borrow Osborne’s terminology, political interposition in *The Fortunes of Nigel* and Scott, like Osborne, offers *Secret History* as the way around this strategic obstacle. James takes great pains to make sure that he is not easily accessible to his subjects. The select few who are invited into the king’s presence gather in an ‘anti-chamber’ to the king’s quarters where ‘those only, who, from birth, their posts in the state or the household, or by the particular grant of the King, had right to attend the court, as men entitled to pay their respects to their Sovereign’ (106). This ‘right to attend’ the king is certainly an exclusive one, and when James is in public spaces, he ensures his servants, guards, and posse of favourite courtiers are strategically ‘interposed between him and the subject[s]’. In order to bring Nigel’s supplication before the monarch, Moniplies manages to battle his way through

this ‘crowd of lords’ and attendants who buttress the king against the ‘idle persons of low condition [...] dishonouring the royal presence with their base, poor, and beggarly persons’ (49). Although James expresses his shock and disappointment at the number of supplications, pasquinades and libels his subjects are forcing into his hands each time he leaves the royal apartments, the lack of access to the king or, perhaps more importantly, to his jealously guarded royal prerogatives, leaves all but his elite subjects disconnected and distanced from the king. This lack of public access makes the king a very difficult figure to locate. Hidden behind a series of private passages which are guarded by various attendants, secret passwords and lovers, James spends the majority of the novel in his private quarters and royal closet at the Palace of Whitehall. It is remarkable that despite Whitehall’s imposing grandeur, characters routinely struggle to find their way to and from these royal premises. It reflects the disjunction the king’s selfish, interiorised and privately-motivated discharge of his royal duties is creating, one that *requires* a problematic renegotiation of ‘public’ and ‘political’ spaces, especially since James’s interest in meddling with his favourite’s private affairs demands the relocation of the political realm into those of the private and domestic.

Moniplies falls victim to this phenomenon when he tries to return to Nigel’s lodgings after meeting the king in its grounds: “To come hame, I behoved to ken whare hame was; now, I had clean tint the name of the wynd, [...] sae I gave up till God should send the daylight to help me” (44–45). Finding himself increasingly lost and betrayed by those he looks to for direction, Moniplies is forced to spend the night in St Cuthbert’s kirkyard. This is illustrative of the tension Scott forges between domestic, public, and political spaces. This is reflected by Jenkins whose ability to navigate the ‘extraordinary labyrinth of small, damp, and unwholesome streets and alleys’ in London is immediately turned into a metaphorical expression of his mental sharpness, ‘fire, roguery, and intelligence’ and, most importantly, his secret activity ‘in his master’s affairs’ (4). The physical ability to navigate ‘every lane,

blind alley, and sequestered Court of the ward' is equated with the deft ability to secretly know and openly influence his master. This connection is reinforced by Dame Ursula whose 'lucrative trade' in smoothing out the 'very secret and confidential' affairs of her customers is reflected in her physical nimbleness, taking 'her departure with the light and steady pace of one accustomed to accommodate her footsteps to the purpose of dispatch and secrecy' (103). Like Ursula, Jenkin is able to use his intelligence to his financial advantage and manages to draw paying customers into Ramsey's shop-front by supplying his customers with anecdotes about the king, duping a passing clergyman into buying the most expensive spectacles in the shop. The accuracy of his anecdote is certainly doubtful and it is through this distorted lens that the reader first encounters the king in the novel, chiming with Scott's reminder to the reader that the history of James I's court and character has been one determined by the biased and inconsistent 'eye and ear witness' testimony of secret historians who have 'bequeath[ed] [...] it as a problem to future historians' (66).<sup>34</sup> Like Osborne, Weldon, Heylin, and Peyton, Jenkin is profiting from depicting the king in a certain likeness: questionable anecdotes about the king prove a useful, lucrative and tradable commodity.

Scott uses Heriot's first journey visiting the king to represent James I in private but when Heriot returns to escort Nigel to the palace, Scott uses this second journey into the confidential and exclusive recesses of Secret History to represent the political character of James I at court. Having exposed the weight that James's private relationships have on his political conduct during his first visit, Heriot's return to Whitehall is used by Scott to illustrate the extent to which 'the private staircase' to the king's domestic quarters 'is accounted a nearer road to power than the *grandes entrées*' to the official Royal court. As before, Heriot is employed as the conduit, facilitating Nigel's passage to the royal court. This is made immediately evident by Scott who ensures Heriot leads his 'passengers' from the front of the group and 'in anxious attention to save his young friend, from the least,

momentary embarrassment, had taken care to give the necessary password to the waiters, grooms of the chambers, ushers, or by whatever name they were designated; so they went onward without interruption' (106). The courtier, Maxwell, confirms that whoever James admits into his private rooms secretly wields the king's political powers and are permitted 'to sneak into the outer apartments, without either respect or decency' much to the "scandalized" court's distaste "for such a thing durst not be attempted in the Queen's days—there was then the court-yard for [...] mobility" (107). Where the court-yard had previously ensured the Queen must entertain her guests within view of her attendants, James has created a network of private passages, a 'labyrinth' of his design, which allow his private visitors, like Heriot and Buckingham, to gain ingress and egress to his personal closet without being impeded. It is precisely this new form of secret 'mobility' that Heriot exploits throughout the novel, providing access to the previously inaccessible recesses of the king's chambers and court. However, once Heriot introduces Nigel to the court, it is clear that the rules of exclusivity and limitation remain strong and uncompromised: Scott switches to refer to Nigel by his formal title of 'Lord Glenvarloch', which is a rarity in the novel, and Heriot becomes referred to as 'his city friend' (106). As Maxwell gleefully highlights, "Master Heriot's name will pass current for much gold and silver [...] but not for birth and rank. I am compelled by my office to be peremptory. The entrance is impeded" (108). Heriot's journey into the court is suddenly stopped short, for 'my condition permits me to go no farther with you', and it is one of Nigel's father's peers who convinces Maxwell to admit Nigel to the court (108). It is at this moment that Heriot's influence over Nigel and his courtly adventures begins to wane and although Heriot proves instrumental to the successful reinstatement of Nigel's authority over the Glenvarloch estate at the end of novel, where he had previously acted as Nigel's mentor and guide, he now becomes embroiled and influenced by the Court's gossip about Nigel and confesses that 'if I once saw my way clearly through this labyrinth [...] it avails not talking

now' (334). When the characters are met with physical barriers which impede their onward progress, these moments correlate with a metaphorical impediment to the character's access to political intelligence about the king and his court. There are therefore two main issues that Scott's secret history of the king reveals in *The Fortunes of Nigel*: the king is unduly influenced by private concerns when executing his public and political duties, and the road to the domain of secret history, the king's domestic quarters, is an exclusive one. But in many ways Scott has disappointed the Secret History's ability to draw explicit parallels between the political impact of James I's private vices and its timely reflection of those of George IV. By looking more closely at the context of contemporary Royal scandal, we can begin to investigate why Scott has revived his *Secret History* in *The Fortunes of Nigel* only to offer it a predominately literary role instead of allowing it to fulfil its overt political potential. Secret histories in *The Fortunes of Nigel*, from its preface to its denouement, provide insight into the role Scott is conceiving for the historical novelist rather than scrutinising the scandalous connection to the contemporary, timely concern that the private, especially sexual, relationships of the monarch have an undue and unfair influence over political decision-making which Scott's presentation of James's favourites, lovers, and absentee Queen in *The Fortunes of Nigel* perfectly opens up. Given Scott's involvement in the preparations for the king's coronation celebrations in Edinburgh it is perhaps unsurprising that he leaves these parallels unexpressed, but by paying closer attention to the context of Royal scandal and contemporary changes to Libel prosecution, we can explore this strange impotency of secret history further before turning to Scott's *Private Letters* to see how, in an unpublished novel, Scott allows his *Secret History* to fulfil this potential to more explicitly comment on the scandalous connection between the monarch's private life and the public.

Passages which lead nowhere: Libel, Secret History, and Scott

In 1809, Colonel Gwyllym Lloyd Wardle accused Frederick Augustus, the Duke of York, (George III's younger son) of trafficking Army Commissions at the request of his mistress, Mary Anne Clarke. The allegation culminated in a high-profile parliamentary inquiry in which both the Duke and his mistress were forced to publicly testify, during which Clarke reveals a number of embarrassing and intimate details about the Duke's personal and political opinions, including his unsavoury opinions about certain Members of Parliament sitting on the inquiry.<sup>35</sup> Heralded at the time as an unprecedented and historic case, and still regarded as such by historian Anna Clark, the Mary Anne Clarke affair of 1809 revolutionised public access into the royal family's 'most private hours of their Leisure' and what occurred there 'in Secret and Solitude'.<sup>36</sup> By giving his ex-lover the power to trade army commissions on his behalf, the Duke's salacious personal life had a proven influence on his political and military decisions, making it seemingly impossible for writers to comment on his public misconduct without decrying its origin in his private life. Reflecting on the impact of the Duke's scandal on the 1810s and 1820s, Caroline of Brunswick's lawyer, Lord Chancellor, Henry Brougham reported that:

Not only attacks upon the Royal Family were published without any reserve or decorum, but libels upon all other public men were circulated with equal freedom; and unmeasured invectives against all the institutions of the State were [...] ventilated through all the channels of publication without restraint; because, when there was no possibility of prosecuting the libels upon the Royal Family, it became impossible to prosecute other libels, without appearing to admit the innocence of the former class of writings.<sup>37</sup>

Less than a decade after the Duke of York's resignation of his military command, the Prince Regent, George William Frederick, was living with his mistress, Maria Fitzherbert, whilst deploying royal funds to send secret investigators to Europe to gather evidence against his

wife, Queen Caroline, documenting rumours and reports about her reportedly scandalous conduct and sexual affairs abroad. This secret project became known as the Milan Mission and it provided the evidence confidentially presented to Parliament by the king in July 1820. This trial of Queen Caroline for adultery complicated the relationship between the monarch's private life and his public reputation. According to a long-held and ancient English statute, Queen Caroline's infidelity to the king was not an act of private disloyalty: it was an act of treason. The king's marital bed and the couple's respective extra-marital affairs became a point of constitutional significance and open public debate, discussed in pamphlets, newspapers, and pulpits. Where George III's struggles with paranoia and poor mental health placed an unrivalled emphasis on the interior recesses of the monarch's life, behaviour, and psychology, it was the embroilment of his sons in two of the most shocking, decisive, and public scandals of the nineteenth century that revolutionised the way that the private life and domestic manners of the monarch and the royal family became part of everyday, public discourse and condemnation. As Brougham recognised,

The freedom with which the press commented upon these became impossible to check; no prosecution could be instituted against any libellers, however violent; no jury could be expected to convict, how indecent soever might be the license of abuse assumed; and all the pending informations and indictments were at once abandoned as hopeless.<sup>38</sup>

Between 1790 and 1832, the Crown's Court prosecuted over two hundred cases of libel and this number marks a significant increase in the prosecutorial rate for cases of Criminal and Seditious and Obscene Libel in Britain which had previously only stretched to a total of one hundred and ninety cases during the eighty-seven years from 1702 to 1789.<sup>39</sup> William Pitt's 'Terror' on seditious libel in the 1790s had clearly set a precedence for the first three decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup> This increase in the prosecution rate of libel certainly

demonstrates the State's continued interest in using its Defamation laws 'as instruments of control', to borrow Philip Harling's phrase, over the burgeoning publishing industry in this period. However, closer investigation of libel law reveals that this relationship is far more complicated than it initially appears: while the *prosecution* rate for libel enjoys a dramatic rise from 1790 to 1832, the number of *convictions* for the crime during this same period rapidly declines. Looking at the statistics for the years under investigation in this chapter illustrates this remarkable trend. Between 1808 and 1812, only twenty percent of prosecuted libel cases ended in criminal sentencing and even at 'the height of post-war repression', from 1817 to 1822, only thirty-eight percent of those who had been prosecuted for libel were tried, convicted, and incarcerated for the crime.<sup>41</sup> It is clear that there was a strong appetite in the British government to punish and repress the publication of libellous material, but the Crown Prosecution's ability to *win* their cases had waned significantly. As Harling puts it, between 1790 and 1832 the 'enforcement of libel laws was scattershot at best; and defendants ultimately managed to undermine the government's prosecutorial strategy by exploiting the flexibility of language to win acquittal'.<sup>42</sup> It is for this reason that Harling concludes that the growing number of the Crown Prosecution's

humiliating defeats in court [...] led to the decline of libel as a means of controlling political expression. Ultimately, the uncertainty of language doomed the crown lawyers to failure, because they had too much difficulty convincing juries that what they called libels were indeed libellous.<sup>43</sup>

By 1822, it was more than just juries whom the Crown Prosecution struggled to convince that 'what they called libels were indeed libellous' after of a decade of royal scandals that not only revolutionised the extent to which the private life and domestic manners of the monarch and the Royal Family could be reported, publicised and openly criticised in print without facing legal prosecution, but also drew attention to the pre-existent and very real connection

between private life and public duty. Although Scott could have used secret history to overtly draw parallels to his historical context, Scott instead opts to gently touch this subject, allowing his Secret History of James I in *The Fortunes of Nigel* to depict, without fully commenting on, the fact that, like the Duke of York and George IV, James I's private chamber is the true, secret seat of the Royal court. Far from penetrating into the secret recesses of the king's court and private chambers, political pamphlets and satires are, quite literally, discarded by James I before he passes through the palace gates. For his subjects, however, the threat of libel prosecution is never far from the drama. It hides behind each movement of the novel's plot along 'the perilous labyrinth in which folly and inexperience, as well as violent passions, have involved' its titular protagonist (182). Nigel is continually surrounded by the legal instruments of libel prosecution but, remarkably, Scott ensures that they are rarely acknowledged as such. Nigel confesses his fear of being prosecuted by the litigious and severe Star Chamber, but he does not openly acknowledge that this is because of its notoriety as a court dedicated to the severe punishment of seditious and treasonous libel. Ursula Suddlechop, the 'half milliner half procuress, and secret agent in all manner of proceedings' who is responsible for coordinating Nigel's escape from Alsatia, reveals to Margaret that her 'honoured patroness' had been Anne Turner, a historical figure whose complicity in the poisoning of Thomas Overbury led to her public execution, in 1615, after one of the most well-attended public trials of the Jacobean period (102).<sup>44</sup> As Scott notes in the Magnum Opus edition of the novel, Turner's case was overseen by the infamous Edward Coke, the Attorney General responsible for revolutionising England's libel laws during James I's reign and for its attendant surge in libel prosecutions. Scott's *Secret History* reveals that Coke manipulated his involvement in Turner's case for his own political advantage by attempting to make the king more sympathetic to his intolerant and inquisitorial approach to prosecuting and punishing libel after offering a number of ill-concealed hints alluding to

further high-level scandal, treason and plots which he alleged were taking root within James I's most valued inner circle of royal favourites.<sup>45</sup> Scott makes subtle reference to Coke's involvement in the execution in *The Fortunes of Nigel* for Ursula recalls seeing Turner 'standing on the scaffold with the ruff round her pretty neck, all done up with the yellow starch' (102). As Scott knew, it was 'by Lord Coke's orders' that both Turner and her executioner had worn yellow starch ruffs and cuffs at her execution as a sinister 'deterrent to the dedicated followers of the fashion', a French custom which Turner, praised for her beauty and skill as a milliner, had popularised.<sup>46</sup> Hidden behind obscure references, the history of libel and its prosecution proves to be a fascinating feature of *The Fortunes of Nigel*, a feature which is made all the more intriguing because Scott oscillates between acknowledging and disavowing this connection. The series of obscure references to libel marginalises and contains the text's potential to openly draw attention to its interest in libel, a subject of contemporary interest and heated debate in the wake of George III's death and the delayed coronation of his son due to the Queen's Trial. Nigel's evasion of arrest after brandishing his sword in the King's Park provides the best illustration of how libel assumes a paradoxically tangential *and* central position in the novel for he is threatened with a form of corporal punishment which was legally reserved for the punishment of libel under the Marian Statute, the first statute in English law to differentiate between oral defamation (slander) and written defamation (libel) and to dedicate itself to punishing those who 'have devised, made, written, printed, published, and set for the dyvers, heynous, sedicious, and sclanderous [sic] Writinges, Rimes, Ballades, Letters, Papers and Books, intending and practicing therby to move and stir sedicious Discorde, Disention, and Rebellyon'.<sup>47</sup> The Marian Statute, named after Mary I, was devised and implemented by the queen as a more punitive alternative to *scandalum magnatum*. It was not only revolutionary as a statute dedicated to punishing the distribution of defamatory comments in print, it was also the first statute to distinguish

between two types of libel: i) the defamation of the monarch by commenting on their private life and domestic manners, and ii) treasonous libel, advocating physical assault or rebellion against a reigning monarch.<sup>48</sup> Scott is not only aware of this history due to his work on *Secret History*, he is also explicitly bringing it to bear on *The Fortunes of Nigel*.<sup>49</sup> Mungo Malagrowther witnessed the last execution of the Marian statute: recalling the public amputation, Malagrowther tells Nigel that ‘I [...] had the good fortune to behold it performed in the Queen’s time, on a chield that had written a pasquinadoe’ and had been called either ‘Tubbs, or Stubbes’ (339, 340). Malagrowther is referring to John Stubbs who published *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf whereinto England Is Like to Be Swallowed by another French Marriage* (1579) in which Stubbs makes a number of scathing comments about the Queen’s proposed marriage to François, duc d’Alençon, who is repeatedly referred to as the anti-Christ. As Alastair Bellany highlights, Stubbs ‘blended religio-political critique with personal defamation’ and he, his publisher, and his printer were immediately found guilty of libel by Elizabeth I.<sup>50</sup> Although the printer was pardoned, Stubbs and his publisher were sentenced to the public mutilation that Malagrowther witnesses, and Nigel narrowly avoids, in *The Fortunes of Nigel*.<sup>51</sup> The scene Malagrowther witnesses is drawn from William Camden’s *Annals for the Year 1581*, in which it is reported that Stubbs, just as Malagrowther recalls, cried “God save the Queen!” to the crowd immediately following the amputation of his right hand (340).<sup>52</sup> It is remarkable that Scott seems to go out of his way to situate Nigel’s misfortune within the history of libel prosecution, even punishing him under the penalty of the Marian Statute, while consistently and deliberately falling short of seeing this connection move towards an obvious political purpose or expression. Even though Scott peppers the novel with libels, secret histories, and references to historic prosecutions for libellous publications, these are not used to materially influence or advance the plot. Instead, the potential for secret history and libel to have a more prominent and politicised role is left

unfulfilled and the characters remain stubbornly blind to the pieces of libel which freely circulate, leaving them either unnoticed or ignored. When King James goes out in public in *The Fortunes of Nigel*, he continually finds himself plagued by a number of his subjects who thrust miscellaneous papers into his hands. Instead of carefully reading their contents, James I crumples the pages together and divides them across two, large coat pockets, dedicating one for ‘petitions’ and the other for ‘pasquinadoes’ (310). Rather than being posted for public notice in municipal spaces, as is typical of pasquinades, Scott once again forces libel into the novel’s plot and sees these satires and lampoons hand-delivered to their subject. Although the episode passes quickly, the emptying of his overburdened pockets sees King James lament to his son that the invention of the alphabet inevitably sowed the seeds for rebellion against institutional monarchies which ‘I pray God they bearna their armed harvest in your day’ (310). Although the Prince of Wales finds the king’s comments comically hyperbolic, given the reader’s knowledge of Charles I’s reign, its termination in his public execution, and the rise of Cromwell, James I’s words ring as strangely prophetic. However, libel carries a strange impotency in *The Fortunes of Nigel*: frequently referenced but rarely of material interest to either the characters or the plot, libel is both ubiquitous in the novel and ill-defined in its role. Even Secret History, renowned for its libellous nature, serves a literary, rather than political purpose in Scott’s novel. While they both reflect the degree to which the king is self-indulgent, deploying his political powers at the whim of his private feelings and relationships, Scott denies this revelation any rhetorical force or historical consequence in the novel at a time when such observation and criticism would have been particularly apt and timely. Where Scott is less overt in allowing his secret history in *The Fortunes of Nigel* to openly comment on the relationship between libel and the public scrutiny of its monarch, in his *Private Letters of King James’s Reign* Scott fulfils *The Fortune of Nigel*’s potential to more

overtly advertise and foreground his interest in exploring and drawing attention to these connections.

According to John Gibson Lockhart, Scott had dedicated himself to his new literary project, *Private Letters of King James's Reign*, in the autumn of 1821 which, he claimed, provided the inspiration for *The Fortunes of Nigel*.<sup>53</sup> In his *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, Lockhart provides a detailed recollection of Scott's passionate, yet short-lived, work on *Private Letters* and its abandonment in favour of commencing work on *The Fortunes of Nigel*:

Scott amused some leisure hours with writing a series of "Private Letters" supposed to have been discovered in the repositories of a Noble English Family [...] These letters were printed as fast as he penned them, in a handsome quarto form, and he furnished the margin with a running commentary of notes, drawn up in the character of a disappointed chaplain [...] overflowing on all occasions with spleen against Monarchy and Aristocracy.<sup>54</sup>

Scott had advised that any author who sought to imitate his literary style must 'read old books, and consult antiquarian collections, to get their knowledge; I write because I have long since read such works, and possess, thanks to a strong memory, the information which they have to seek for'.<sup>55</sup> But in *Private Letters*, Scott does more than return to these 'antiquarian collections' and secret histories to provide the literary inspiration and historical grounding for his tale: he carefully emulates *Secret History*'s narrative style, seventeenth-century vernacular, and propensity for turning private, domestic spaces into lucrative sources of political and historical intelligence where 'the waiting-gentlewoman' is transformed 'intoe our good angel and trustie spie'.<sup>56</sup> The influence of Scott's *Secret History* on the physical layout as well as the narrative style of his *Private Letters* is striking and, given Scott's initial plan to publish *Private Letters* under the pretence of non-fiction, it is unsurprising that he draws latent parallels to his *Secret History*. Emulating and exaggerating his own editorial

process in *Secret History*, Scott allows the fictional editor of *Private Letters* to occupy, quite literally, the margins of the history, using acerbic footnotes to pass judgement on the letters' contents and their secret revelations. Only identified by his initials, T.H., the editor uses the (fictional) dedication to the secret history to rationalise and explain his plan: dedicating his work to an unnamed man, referred to only as 'my Lord' and 'your Lordship', T.H. reveals that he has loyally served this anonymous Lord for many years and feels that he has been repaid for this faithfulness with his Lordship's betrayal. While the circumstances of this betrayal remain a mystery to the reader, T.H. vehemently believes it warrants financial reparations and is bitterly angry to have received no communication from his Lordship to address the conflict. In order to receive the apology and remuneration he believes deserved, T.H. has searched through the private repositories of an unnamed patron, 'the late Lord ——', in a bid to uncover his Lordship's most scandalous family secrets. After 'the fruit of many days' labour', T.H. discovered a number of private, confidential, and scandalous letters which had lain safe and unpublished in the family's private repository and date 'from the time of Elizabeth, when [...] your Lordship's family first rose into eminence, down to that of George I., when the series was discontinued, perhaps from motives of safety' (58–59). T.H. admits that he has collated and copied this extensive 'manuscript correspondence' and is now publishing the secret history with the hope its scandalous disclosures will threaten both his Lordship's reputation and the prestige associated with the noble household. The blackmailer promises that his collection, now presented to the public for the first time, will entirely discredit the long-standing, erroneous and sanitised versions of the Lord's family history which are credited as the 'fables of flattering genealogists' (58). With this vision, T.H. echoes Procopius, looking to those secrets and scandals previously passed by in silence to, in T.H.'s words, 'enable us to form a real and unbiassed opinion of the manners, habits, and sentiments of English persons of rank, during the seventeenth century' (59). Scott has fashioned T.H.

into a secret historian, allowing him first to examine the confidential recesses of his subjects' personal and domestic lives and then proceed to publicly disclose the secrets he uncovers, publishing them in a collated and edited volume.

While T.H. is confident his Lordship will immediately recognise him as the history's author, his identity remains a mystery to all but this one reader. T.H. has weaponised his literary dedication and employed it as a very public means of delivering a personal and direct threat, reiterating that his extensive search in the private repository yielded a number of secrets of which he has 'made liberal and accurate extracts, with a view of one day giving the Public' (59). The strength of T.H.'s composition of his secret history as a means of blackmail and extortion lies in his repeated assurances that it remains incomplete: he has many more secrets in his possession which he can, and will, publish if his demands remain disappointed. T.H. reiterates that he has chosen *to begin* by publishing this secret history relating to his Lordship's family and their interaction with King James but he has the means, and certainly the motivation, to publish further instalments of private letters from later periods. T.H. alleges that each publication will bear new secrets and will relate to a different generation of his Lordship's family. This is particularly dangerous to the Lord: it is easy to label the misdemeanours of one family member, or even a single generation, as an uncharacteristic blip in the family's history, but each new publication threatens to find such transgressions a systemic characteristic of the family. T.H. threatens to uncover *a repeated pattern* of underhanded secrecy in this family's history, transforming his Lordship's noble inheritance into one of deceitful ill-repute. It is precisely this line of reasoning that led Charles Bradlaugh to advocate for the impeachment of the entire House of Brunswick in 1875 for, he argued, their proclivity for gambling, infidelity, and political corruption is evidently an inherited trait that renders the family, including any future generations, entirely unsuited to their royal positions:

That George II. was utterly indifferent to English improvement, and was mostly away in Hanover. Lord Hervey's "Memoirs" portray him as caring for nothing but soldiers and women, and declare that his highest ambition was to combine the reputation of a great general with that of a successful libertine. That George III. was repeatedly insane, and that in his officially lucid moments his sanity was more dangerous to England than his madness [...]. That George IV. was a dissipated, drunken debauchee, bad husband, unfaithful lover, untrustworthy friend, unnatural father, corrupt regent, and worse king.<sup>57</sup>

Writing fifty years before Bradlaugh, Scott is using his fictional secret history to articulate a similar concern, one that is neatly reflected in the coalescence of husband, lover, friend, and father with regent and king. Here, fatherhood acts as fulcrum, reconciling George IV's corruption of his private relationships to the corruption of his public inheritance: the Crown. In Scott's *Private Letters*, T.H.'s power not only lies in his ability to print these secrets, but also in his promise that they are serial, apparently endemic to the familiar structures of the British monarchy and nobility. T.H. mockingly praises his self-restraint and thinks 'it necessary to preserve silence on these topics, in order to obviate the blame which might otherwise be imputed to me, however unjustly, as having betrayed the family secrets of the patron [...] with whom I once dwelt' (61). But T.H.'s silence is pointedly partial. Scott draws a parallel between the legend of the Black Box (which Scott had discussed with Sharpe in 1811) and T.H.'s evidence of an extra-marital affair which promises to 'lift the veil which covers the proceedings in a certain great divorce case, during the reign of Charles II', and Scott allows T.H. to tantalise his readers by assuring his Lordship that

I have carefully omitted, in the following publication, everything in these letters which could point out the names of the persons by whom they were written, so that it

will rest with your Lordship's prudence whether these particulars are ever known to the Public (60).<sup>58</sup>

This thinly-veiled threat warns his Lordship that this secret history could raise significant questions about his own inheritance and ancestry if his family is implicated in any public scandal, however historic, which casts doubt over any of his ancestors' legitimacy. As he sarcastically notes in the marginalia of Letter V, 'Here we see unveiled the real source of this noble Lord's fraternal solicitude [...] Such are kings and nobles.—We beg a thousand pardons—such they *were*, before they attained their present height of purity and virtue' (78).

By using the anonymous writer of the dedication to enter in to a complex scheme of blackmail and bribery, Scott has established a connection between publication and the disclosure of family secrets and he has used this to reflect on the continued value and currency of such historic intelligence. Scott uses the vengeful editor, T.H., to explore how a Secret History of private life in the eighteenth century could carry any active political and social intelligence into the fictional nineteenth century of its editor. The editor is explicit in his desire to use his knowledge to blackmail his Lordship and continues to reinforce the importance of these domestic secrets as valuable pieces of political intelligence and leverage: 'I have chosen the present mode of compelling your attention to my situation, aware that it will hardly be agreeable to your Lordship that a *Second Edition* of this Dedication should appear, with the name, rank, and titles, of him whom I have now the honour to address' (58). Despite taking after Anthony Weldon in vehemently expressing his hatred for, and personal vendetta against, the subject of his secret history, T.H. retains the common trait of the secret historian in passionately denying either indiscretion or dishonour in their disclosure of individuals' secrets and domestic spaces for public scrutiny and enjoyment, using the dedication to 'vindicate myself from any charge of breach of trust, or abuse of opportunity, while availing [...] to the Public such a stock of additional and interesting information' (59).

Lockhart had claimed that Scott was ‘delighted, perhaps above all other books, in [...] good family histories’ which ‘patient antiquarianism, long brooding and meditating [...] gloriously transmuted into the winged spirit of national poetry’.<sup>59</sup> This is an interesting idea: first, it invites us to examine Scott as an author deeply invested in looking to family histories (predominately those of the nobility and aristocracy) as a valuable form of historical inquiry in which the economic and political relationships among nobles and their monarchs are seen through the lens of domestic life, personal friendships and private, petty feuds. From this vantage point, familial and domestic secrets are not only brought into the legitimate remit of history, they are transformed into Scott’s literary scaffold on which his vision of the ‘national’ can be constructed and reinforced. Drawing liberally on material from his *Secret History*, Scott uses *Private Letters* to invite the personal secrets of the monarch and his nobles into (fictional) public history. In the letters, secret biases, conspiracies, debts, sexual relationships, and schemes of blackmail have a clear impact on the way the nobility operates and governs and by enmeshing private life with the political secrets of the royal court, Scott not only appeals to the interests of the secret historian ‘to get open their Closet-door’ in order to ‘be a Witness of their inward Life, and assist at the most private hours of their Leisure’, he goes beyond Varillas’s definition of Secret History and begins to conceive of secrecy and its disclosure as a *literary*, as well as a historical, process.<sup>60</sup> As Douglas Grant notes ‘Scott would learn from this intense study of family papers much of his craft as an historical novelist’ and Grant defines this ‘craft’ as Scott’s ability to combine two different types of history in his novels: the national and the private.<sup>61</sup> This oscillation and dialogue between these two visions of history forms a vital part of Scott’s *Private Letters* in which T.H. frequently interrupts the narrative to add a spiteful footnote condemning the conduct of King James and his courtiers, using the subject of the poor, grieving ward of the king as a way to elide private and public history since ‘contemptible James’ and ‘crafty Salisbury’

must become the arbiters of her destiny; and from his bed of sickness he [her father] already beholds the rapacious courtier [...] hovering like a vulture [...] Thus does arbitrary power, pursuing us even into those domestic recesses which it might be supposed least able to penetrate, canker the root of private, while it subverts the foundations of public felicity (67).

As the text's editor, T.H. uses the marginalia to express his political and moral judgements of the king's private conduct and draws attention to an important pattern of behaviour, one that legitimatises his use of these historical documents to metaphorically pursue the king and his Lordship's ancestors 'into those domestic recesses which it might be supposed least able to penetrate' and dovetail the unfortunate demise of the, unnamed, young girl into a narrative recounting the king's political misconduct and its root in his selfish, private preoccupations. This elision of domestic secrets into political intelligence is reconciled in the character of the waiting-woman who is turned into a political agent who operates within a complex network of government-endorsed espionage and counterintelligence to 'spie' the treasonous plots of 'fugitive traytores, as workinge some subtile mischeefe under grounde' from her domestic vantage-point and report them to the king and his select courtiers (65). It is clear that there are two forms of secret passages at work in *Private Letters of King James's Reign*: the history itself is composed from secret letters, previously hidden in a private repository, and, metaphorically, the history is based in the 'under grounde' workings and secret passages that connect domestic, private spaces with the royal court and its politics. In *Private Letters*, the reader is led through these secret passages by an editor who has his own obscure and personal agenda, and it is this metaphorical connection between domestic spaces and secret passages that foregrounds Scott's literary use of his *Secret History* in *The Fortunes of Nigel* and *Private Letters*.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Scott, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, ed. by Frank Gordon (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p.288. Hereafter, cited in text.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Bradlaugh, *The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick* (Boston: William F. Gill & Company, 1875), pp.12–13.

<sup>3</sup> Scott discontinues his work on *Private Letters* in 1821 and the unfinished novel is subsequently published by Andrew Lang for *Scribner's Magazine* in 1893 as 'An Unpublished Work of Scott: Private Letters of King James's Reign'. It was republished by Douglas Grant in 1947 as 'Private Letters of the Seventeenth Century, by Sir Walter Scott'.

<sup>4</sup> Tara Ghoshal Wallace, 'Monarchy and the Middle-Period Novels', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by Fiona Robertson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.106–17. Wallace also acknowledges, but does not investigate, the contextual significance of George III's madness and the Queen's Trial on Scott's depictions of Stuart monarchs (p.106).

<sup>5</sup> Alison Lumsden, *Walter Scott and the Limits of Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p.135.

<sup>6</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. by Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp.xxii–xxiii [my emphasis], p.xxiii, p.xxi.

<sup>8</sup> 'anecdota (n.)', *OED* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Accessed February 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1656866664>.

<sup>9</sup> Rebecca Bullard, 'Introduction: Reconsidering Secret History', in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.1–14 (p.4).

<sup>10</sup> McKeon, p.xxii.

<sup>11</sup> Walter Scott (ed), *Memoirs of the Court of Charles II by Count Grammont*, Revised Edition (London: George Bell & Sons, 1891), pp.1–417 (p.14).

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels: An Annotated Text with Critical Essays*, ed. by Robert A. Greenberg (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1961), pp.170–71.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Duncan offers a different reading of Clutterbuck's encounter with the Author but we share the conclusion that Scott is commenting on the industriousness of the Edinburgh printing press and literary market during this episode: Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp.xii–xiii.

<sup>14</sup> For the history of this anecdote see, Irvin Leigh Matus, *Shakespeare, In Fact* (New York: Continuum, 1999); John Freehafer, 'John Warburton's Lost Plays', *Studies in Bibliography*, 23 (1970), 154–64; and, Walter Wilson Greg, 'The Bakings of Betsy', *Collected Papers*, ed. by J. C. Maxwell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp.48–74.

<sup>15</sup> Lansdowne Manuscript (807), printed in Greg, p.53.

<sup>16</sup> Greg, p.48.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), p.213.

<sup>18</sup> Subtitle of *Clarissa*.

<sup>19</sup> Watt, p.273; Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, I/IV (London: A. Millar, 1763), p.161.

<sup>20</sup> For example, McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity*, Robert Mayer, *History and the Early English Novel: Matters of Fact from Bacon to Defoe* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), especially pp.94–112; and Peter Burke, 'History, Myth, and Fiction: Doubts and Debates', *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 3: 1400–1800*, ed. by José Rabasa, Masayuki Sato, Edoardo Tortarolo, and Daniel Woolf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.261–81.

<sup>21</sup> Walter Scott, Letter to John Murray, 25 February 1809, Edinburgh, in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, 1808–1811*, ed. by H. J. C. Grierson (London: Constable & Co., 1932), pp.167–70 (pp.168–69). For more on the historical origins of Scott's motto, see Michael Bath, *Emblems in Scotland: Motifs and Meanings* (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2018), pp.79–114.

<sup>22</sup> Bullard, p.3.

<sup>23</sup> According to Weldon, James made his robe 'steletto prooffe' and 'full stuffed' his breeches in case of an assassination attempt, see Walter Scott, *Secret History of the Court of James the First*, II/II (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Co., 1811), p.1.

<sup>24</sup> On King James's horse-riding practices: compare *Secret History* II, note to pp.3–4 with *Fortunes of Nigel*, p.47, p.307. On James I's physical appearance and his favourite green gown: compare *Fortunes of Nigel*, p.47, p.109, pp.114–15 with *Secret History* I, pp.195–96, and II, pp.1–2, see also the facsimile engraving of King

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James at the beginning of *Secret History II* which is drawn from Osborne's description and Scott's explanation of the engraving, II pp.13–17. On familiar nicknames: compare *Secret History II*, p.452, I p.459 with *Fortunes of Nigel*, pp.67–68. As Scott notes in *Secret History*, 'Steenie, it must be remembered, the Scotch diminutive of Stephen, was a nickname which James had given the duke, on account of his resemblance to the picture of St Steven, the proto-martyr' (II, p.452). On James I's reported homosexuality see *Secret History I* pp.274–75 and note to p.50. For a reading of James's homosexuality in the novel see, John J. Burke Jr. 'The Homoerotic Subtext in Scott's *The Fortunes of Nigel: The Question of Evidence*', *CLIO*, 29.3 (Spring 2000), 295–314.

<sup>25</sup> Frank Jordan, 'Historical Note', in *The Fortunes of Nigel*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp.516–39 (p.522).

<sup>26</sup> Scott, *Secret History I*, p.311.

<sup>27</sup> Scott, *Secret History II*, p.60.

<sup>28</sup> Scott, *Secret History I*, p.274.

<sup>29</sup> David M. Bergeron, *King James & Letters of Homoerotic Desire* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), p.vii.

<sup>30</sup> Scott, *Secret History I*, pp.458–61.

<sup>31</sup> Burke, p.310.

<sup>32</sup> Walter Scott, *Secret History I*, p.442.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Scott, *Secret History I*, p.274.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Scott, *Secret History I*, p.314.

<sup>35</sup> See Elizabeth Taylor (ed.), *Authentic Memoirs of Mrs. Clarke* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1809); Wardle, Gwyllym Lloyd. *Stratford's Authentic Edition of the Investigation of the Charges Brought against His Royal Highness the Duke of York*, XI (London: J. Stratford, 1809); and, W. G Waters, 'Mary Anne Clarke (1776–1852)', in *Lives of Twelve Bad Women* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897), pp.289–312.

<sup>36</sup> Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004), p.148. Antoine Varillas, *Anecdota Heterouiaaka, Or, The Secret History of the House of Medicis* (London: R. Bentley and S. Magnes, 1686), Author's Preface, a4.

<sup>37</sup> Henry Brougham, 'Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth, interspersed with original Letters from the late Queen Caroline, and from various other distinguished Persons. 2 vols. 8vo. Colburn. London: 1838.' *The Edinburgh Review*, 67.135 (April 1838), 1–80 (p.4).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>39</sup> Philip Harling, 'The Law of Libel and the Limits of Repression, 1790–1832', *The Historical Journal*, 44.1 (March 2001), 107–34 (p.108). For the history of Libel see John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide, 1793–1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>40</sup> For more on Pitt's 'Reign of Terror' on Seditious Libel and Treason in the 1790s, see Clive Emsley, 'An Aspect of Pitt's "Terror": Prosecutions for Sedition during the 1790s', *Social History*, 6.2 (May 1981) 155–84; and, Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783–1846* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), especially pp.39–109.

<sup>41</sup> Harling, p.107, p.110.

<sup>42</sup> Harling, p.107. The amendment of Britain's libel law under the Act of 1792 is partly responsible for this scattershot enforcement for it restored the juries' ability to adjudicate on libel cases which had previously been the reserve of the Crown's judges.

<sup>43</sup> Harling, p.111.

<sup>44</sup> Walter Scott, 'Notes to *The Fortunes of Nigel*', in *Introductions and Notes from The Magnum Opus: Ivanhoe to Castle Dangerous*, ed. by J. H. Alexander with P. D. Garside and Claire Lamont (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.173–91 (p.179). In his note about Mistress Turner, Scott directs the reader to his *Secret History* for further information: 'Compare this curious passage in the History of King James for the First Fourteen Years, 1651, with the Aulicus Coquinarius of Dr Heylin' (179). For more on the historical significance of Turner's trial in the Overbury-Somerset case see Alastair Bellany, 'Mistress Turner's Deadly Sins: Sartorial Transgression, Court Scandal, and Politics in Early Stuart England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 58.2 (1995), 179–210.

<sup>45</sup> See Scott, *Secret History* I, pp.427–28.

<sup>46</sup> Scott, 'Notes to *The Fortunes of Nigel*', p.179; Bellany, 'Mistress Turner's Deadly Sins', p.189.

<sup>47</sup> Quotation from Alastair Bellany, 'Libel', in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Volume One: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.141–63 (p.148).

<sup>48</sup> Bellany, 'Libel', pp.145–46. Harold J. Berman, 'The Origins of Historical Jurisprudence: Coke, Seldon, Hale', *The Yale Law Journal*, 103.7 (May 1994), 1651–1738.

<sup>49</sup> Scott draws attention to the fact that Nigel is facing the corporal punishment associated with the Marian Statute, an act 'passed by Philip [1527–1598] and Mary [1516–1558] against the writers and dispersers of seditious publications': Scott, 'Notes to *The Fortunes of Nigel*', p.188.

<sup>50</sup> Bellany, 'Libel', p.147.

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<sup>51</sup> Scott, 'Notes to *The Fortunes of Nigel*', pp.146–47.

<sup>52</sup> Scott cites Camden's *Annals for the Year 1581* in his *Magnus Opus*: Scott, 'Notes to *The Fortunes of Nigel*', pp.188–189.

<sup>53</sup> Douglas Grant suggests Lockhart is right in recalling that *Private Letters* was printed in Autumn 1821 but believes Scott's work on its composition, with Lady Louisa and Morrith, had begun earlier in the year: Douglas Grant, 'Introduction', *Private Letters of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), pp.7–54 (p.37). Mark Weinstein and Alison Lumsden also doubt the accuracy of Lockhart's recollection of the timeline of Scott's work in 1821: see Mark Weinstein and Alison Lumsden (eds), 'Essay on the Text', in *The Pirate* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), pp.393–451 (p.396).

<sup>54</sup> John Gibson Lockhart, *The Life of Sir Walter Scott* (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1842), p.466.

<sup>55</sup> Lockhart, p.369.

<sup>56</sup> Walter Scott, *Private Letters of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by Douglas Grant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), p.77. Hereafter, cited in text.

<sup>57</sup> Bradlaugh, pp.12–3.

<sup>58</sup> It is worth noting another parallel to *The Perplex'd Prince* (1682): its author is 'T.S'.

<sup>59</sup> Lockhart, pp.754–55.

<sup>60</sup> Varillas, a4.

<sup>61</sup> Grant, p.24.

## Chapter Two

‘Secret history is the supplement of history itself, and its great corrector’: Secret History,

### Gossip and the Composition of Scott’s Historical Novels

In his ‘True Sources of Secret History’, Isaac D’Israeli argues that ‘Secret history is the supplement of history itself, and is its great corrector’ for ‘the combination of secret with public history has in itself a perfection, which each taken separately has not’.<sup>1</sup> At first glance this might seem a fascinating, but rather straightforward, claim, one that seeks to vindicate the genre of Secret History from its enduring reputation as nothing more than a scandalous attempt at printing gossip and spiteful libels about statesmen, monarchs, and public figures. However, on closer examination, it becomes clear that D’Israeli is using the term ‘secret history’ with a degree of imprecision, sliding almost seamlessly from talking about the genre of Secret History, what he calls the public’s ‘great corrector’ due to its challengingly unfiltered and gossipy view of history, and moving into something much less definitive and concrete. In juxtaposing ‘secret with public history’, D’Israeli has begun to define the history, not by literary or generic markers, but by its relationship to a literal state of secrecy. Returning the genre to its Greek origin in *Anekdotia*, meaning ‘previously unpublished’, D’Israeli is toying with a much more literal version of a *secret* history, one that is waiting on the verge of public disclosure, and consigned to, what D’Israeli hopes is only a temporary, state of censorship, silence, and secrecy. As noted in chapter one, this version of Secret History that D’Israeli is inviting us to investigate, gains particular momentum during Scott’s literary career. The 1820s inaugurated the century’s fascination with the Diary of Samuel Pepys (1669), infamous for its personal and scandalous details about the courts of Charles II and James II in Restoration-Era England. Published for the first time in a heavily censored form in 1825, Pepys’s diary invites the historical gaze into private, secret recesses where it

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can see its leaders, as Rebecca Bullard puts it, ‘in a metaphorical and literal state of undress’, as well as striking its nineteenth-century readers as a truly *secret* history, one that had remained hidden, silent, and unreadable behind indecipherable codes and cyphers for well over a hundred years.<sup>2</sup> With the deaths of George III in 1820 and George IV in 1830, secret histories of the previous monarchs’ reigns and those of their Hanoverian predecessors were being published in a similar fashion to Pepys’s *Diary*: memoirs, including those of John Hervey, Anne Hamilton, and Charlotte Bury, which had previously been self-censored out of ‘unquestionable feelings of delicacy and duty’ to the monarchs were quickly sent for publication after their deaths.<sup>3</sup> The manuscript of Hervey’s *Memoirs from his first coming to Court to the Death of the Queen* (c.1757) had been diligently stored in the family’s archive with the strict injunction that it was not to be published before the death of George II, but even after the death of Hervey’s son, Augustus, third Earl of Bristol, this injunction was prolonged, extending to a century-long delay between the history’s composition and its first publication.<sup>4</sup> The interest surrounding Hervey, Hamilton, Bury and Pepys, reflects a contemporary fascination with the Memoir’s ability to reveal monarchs to the public, and to history, via their private and often fleeting, encounters with their subjects, and, as with Procopius’s *Anekdotia* of Justinian I, the memoirs’ delayed publication creates a complex interplay between secrecy, publication, and historical narrative. They are perfectly placed to fulfil D’Israeli’s expectation that secret histories should transform their readers

into the contemporaries of the writers, while we are standing on the “vantage-ground” of their posterity; and this[,] what to them appeared ambiguous, to us has become unquestionable; what was secret to them has been confided to us. They mark the beginnings, and we the ends.<sup>5</sup>

D’Israeli is drawing attention to the defining feature of Secret History: it renders the term ‘unpublished’ synonymous with ‘secret’. Defined in this way, secrecy is transformed into

both a sociological and a literary condition: i) it is contingent on its relative position to the public (from whom the secret is hidden), and this relative position ii) is determined by a condition of *publication* (it is unpublished). In this chapter, I scrutinise this relationship that D'Israeli is proposing between publicity, the publication of historical narratives, and the sociology of secrecy, and I do so by tracing the nuanced connection between Secret History, gossip, and the narrative construction of Scott's historical novels.

Alongside libel, one of the most common designations for secret histories is that they represent a form of printed gossip.<sup>6</sup> In this chapter, I closely investigate this association and I consider how Secret History sketches a path of reconciliation between gossip and historical narrative which can be traced into the historical novel. I examine gossip as a sociological phenomenon and note the role of dialogic response in the composition of its narrative structure. I draw these arguments together in a reading of Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818) and establish that gossip informs the text at two narrative levels: gossip as history within the novel, and the novel as gossip. I consider how this informs the study of Secret History as a genre renowned for its gossipy nature and this allows us to not only examine the place of Secret History as part of the history of the novel, but also see how it informs the way the novel functions in the Edinburgh publishing-world of the early nineteenth century. I argue that Scott creates a fictional 'gossip circuit', to borrow Karen Adkins's phrase, between the prefatory characters of his novels before offering a close reading of the relationship between neighbourly forms of gossip and secret history in *The Heart of Midlothian*.<sup>7</sup>

Gossip is a complicated matter: it is something you do (to have a gossip), something you are (to be a gossip), and something that is (a piece of gossip). It is also often accompanied by an association with secrecy, indiscretion, and intimacy. At its core, however, and stripped of its more complex sociological features, gossip can be reduced to four essential components: it is (i) the exchange of information via conversation, either verbal or written, between two or

more people, (ii) about an individual(s) not present, (iii) who is unaware that he or she is being spoken about, and (iv) the conversation is tacitly acknowledged as confidential. Studies in social anthropology and sociolinguistics highlight that there is a traditional association of gossip with malicious talk among women which Karen Adkins, Francesca Giardini and Rafael Wittick note a need to dispel.<sup>8</sup> Their approach reiterates Patricia Meyer Spacks's call for abandoning 'the subject of women as intimately connected with that of gossip' in literature and, more recently, this has been echoed by Ana Rodríguez Navas in her analysis of the role of gossip in the Caribbean literary canon.<sup>9</sup> While the notion that gossip is a phenomenon of social interaction among women has lost favour, the majority of literary studies on gossip retain their focus on the female but, there does appear to be a reason for this concentration of effort. In her comparative study of gossip in the fiction of Jane West and Jane Austen, Erin Goss argues that gossip is

the purview of those— mostly women— who seek a larger world than that to which they have access, and both the letters they write and the stories they carry around only to drop later provide evidence of their efforts to expand the space available to them.<sup>10</sup>

For Goss, Spacks, Navas, and Jan Gordon, gossip is a form of social transgression, a means through which marginalised voices claim a degree of authority and control, and it is in this regard that literary studies most often investigate the relationship between women and gossip.<sup>11</sup> This association of gossip with female subversions of authority is not limited to literary studies: it underpins much of the work on the role of gossip in secret histories. As Rebecca Bullard highlights, secret historians transformed 'marginalised and conventionally unreliable groups and individuals, including women' into political spies and carriers of historical intelligence.<sup>12</sup> The association of gossip with individuals, predominantly women, who occupy marginal social, literary, and historical spaces is certainly pervasive among critics of Secret History who are eager to draw attention to their unreliability and biases. In

his study of Secret History and domesticity, McKeon similarly associates women with gossip and, like Spacks, Gordon, Goss and Navas, he recognises gossip's subversive potential, highlighting that 'the tangled nexus of ideas that cohere in the image of the gossip—purveying tittle-tattle, publishing secrets, reproducing intelligence, midwifery childbirth— [...] adumbrates a vision of female publicity alternative to the standard one of [...] “the hymenial union”'.<sup>13</sup> Moving beyond a gendered discourse, I offer an alternative interpretation of gossip and its role in literary and historical narratives, and I diverge from the norm in literary studies by defining gossip as a form of social regulation, not subversion. The precedence for this argument is found in sociological and anthropological studies of gossip which, building on the work of Max Gluckman, have increasingly recognised that, far from being subversive, gossip is a socially normative experience, reinforcing a shared set of rules and values.<sup>14</sup> As Robin Dunbar highlights, gossip is an exercise in 'social censure' for, as Nicholas DiFonzo and Bordia Prashant demonstrate, gossip fulfils a sociological 'need for belonging' among gossipers, and the individuals about whom the gossip is exchanged are brought under collective scrutiny, judgement, and pressure of conformity.<sup>15</sup> It is a process that reinforces, rather than subverts, social norms and the authority of the group from whom the secret had been deliberately hidden by an individual. Gossiping privileges the perspective of the group over the individual, and it is for this reason that, as Adkins establishes, 'a voice of a group emerges over any single speaker'.<sup>16</sup> Gossip is the work of exchange, reciprocation and collaboration and its aim is to expose the private, intimate, and scandalous details of the individual for public consumption, evaluation and judgement. It is a narrative that clarifies the social expectations of the group by reclaiming private conduct and domestic affairs as the domain of public scrutiny, access and interpretation.

It might seem tautological to draw attention to the fact that gossip is a dialogic narrative: if gossip is a conversation, then is it not *de facto* dialogic? But this is not the case. To trace the

distinction between monologic and dialogic discourse, it is helpful to draw upon a study conducted by Catherine O'Connor and Sarah Michaels which places the question 'When is Dialogue "Dialogic"?' at its centre. Ultimately the distinction lies in the status of the speaker in relation to their audience:

Monologic discourse is usually associated with fixed transmission of unchanging ideas and status inequalities. Dialogic discourse connotes social relationships of equal status, intellectual openness, and possibilities for critique and creative thought.<sup>17</sup>

Monologic discourse requires a distinct, hierarchical division between the speaker and audience while dialogic discourse occurs among peers, preconditioning a sense of equality and reciprocity between speaker and audience: the former occurs between teacher and student, or boss and worker; the latter occurs between neighbours, friends, or co-workers. It is this distinction in the power dynamics between speaker and audience that proves pivotal to the function of dialogic discourse. Where one sees a single, authoritative speaker emerge; the other sees a negotiation of authority between speaker and audience. As a dialogically constructed narrative then, gossip must also occur among participants of an even social footing. This was acknowledged in one of the earliest modern accounts on the sociological nature of gossip, *The Present Age* (1846), in which Søren Kierkegaard argues that gossip brings its participants onto a level-footing.<sup>18</sup> Contemporary studies continue to offer evidence of this with Adkins, Difonzo and Prashant establishing that gossip only occurs among those who feel comfortable and socially intimate with each other. Gossip is dialogic in its narrative composition and this is particularly clear when we consider the distinction, or lack thereof, between verbal and written forms of gossip, for both continue to be guided by the same processes: Adkins observes that whilst 'gossip is a primarily oral phenomenon; written gossip [...] often seeks to recreate the flavour not just of orality but also of intimacy'.<sup>19</sup> Letters, a mainstay of secret histories, are perhaps the most obvious form of written gossip. As a

written conversation between two intimates, typically (although not always) of the same social class, and composed in a series of reciprocal revelations and responses, the epistolary form perfectly illustrates gossip's dialogic nature. The whole narrative, as a sustained reciprocal exchange of information and opinions, requires a continual negotiation between the initial gossip, and their reader's responses. Gossip, whether oral or written, is a response-driven narrative, one that O'Connor and Michaels classifies as a 'sequence of turns'.<sup>20</sup> As a narrative of responses, gossip is, to use Mohammad and Vasquez's sociolinguistic term, co-constructed: a 'collaborative phenomenon, which requires the participation and alignment of at least two participants'.<sup>21</sup>

As Robert Mayer notes, Spacks's 'suggestion that gossip is a form of discourse akin to novelistic discourse needs to be coupled with the qualification that [...] *such material could be the stuff of history*'.<sup>22</sup> Turning to *Secret History* provides this reassurance to literary studies. In his study of the sociology of secrecy, Georg Simmel considers how gossip and secrecy share a complex and, in many ways, an oppositional relationship for 'Secrecy sets barriers between men, but at the same time offers the seductive temptation to break through the barriers by gossip'.<sup>23</sup> Where secrecy requires concealment and distance, gossip is discursive, intimate, and revelatory. Dealing not only in the revelation of secrets but also in their public disclosure and debate, gossip, like *Secret History*, works towards *publicity* rather than secrecy. The Greek for 'secret', *arretos*, means 'unspoken' or 'unspeakable': secrets and gossip are constructed in direct relation to this realm of silence.<sup>24</sup> However, from this mutual foundation they move towards contrasting goals: where secrecy thrives in a state of restriction and silence, gossip is articulate, using its verbosity as a vehicle for publicising secrets. In Scott's *Secret History of the Court of James the First*, Osborne recognises the problematic and controversial role that gossip plays in his secret history in which 'it may be reckoned amongst the most innocent' that 'the tongue [is] supplying the same place in a man,

a sting is found to do in a serpent'. Turning to Biblical aphorism, Osborne believes that this negative association of gossip will prevent his history's 'passport' into future generations and ensure his failure to create a lasting impact on the way the court of James I is understood and commemorated. He considers both the gossip contained in his narrative and the gossip it will generate upon its publication as a fatal 'wounding' of his history's ability to be taken seriously by its readers. Noting that the intelligence it contains regards recent affairs and individuals still alive at the time of its original printing, he laments that his narrative is 'quite divested of the patched coat of antiquity, (it not bearing so much as the facing of any other[']s custome but my owne,)'. Osborne recognises the difficulty of reconciling the immediacy of gossip as a valuable, tradeable form of social currency to the interests of future societies, readers, and historians while noting its potential and immediate attractiveness to the 'prick-eared attentions' of its contemporary readers.<sup>25</sup> What Osborne identifies as a flaw in his history, is heralded by Scott's fictional antiquary, Templeton, as an essential advantage of the historical novel. In the preface to *Ivanhoe*, Templeton argues that contemporary readers need to be met with familiarity (familiar language, expressions, and social experiences) for them to comprehend the history to which they are being introduced. For Templeton, historical narratives written for the public's entertainment and attention should be carefully and deliberately 'divested of the patched coat of antiquity' because

He who first opens Chaucer [...] is so much struck with the obsolete spelling, multiplied consonants, and antiquated appearance of the language, that he is apt to lay the work down in despair, as encrusted too deep with the rust of antiquity.<sup>26</sup>

Unable to take his understanding of the genre of secret history to this extreme without passing into the world of fiction, Osborne remains concerned that the gossip in his narrative will detract from the perceived authenticity of his historical narrative. Despite this concern, Osborne resolves to 'take my selfe obliged, out of that tender respect all naturally carry

towards a faire repute [...] not to suffer it [his secret history] to come into the world speechlesse'. Osborne is directly deploying the gossip contained in his narrative against the 'unspoken' and 'unspeakable' (*arretos*) secrecy of the royal court, imbuing his narrative with a metaphorical orality. In paradoxical fashion, Osborne is articulating the function and interpretative value of his text in his prefatory address 'To the Reader', in the lexicon of aural reception. In order to legitimise the value of his gossip-filled narrative about the private affairs, scandals and secrets of the most powerful and influential political figures of his day, Osborne extends this metaphorical aurality further. He argues that

no sound requires a more docile eare, nor an exacter attention, than that proceeding from the trumpet of fame; the jarrings of which, like other wind instruments, are not discernible at any distance as neerer hand.

Osborne is creating a complicated political and literary situation for his secret history. The whispered, hushed, and confidential secrets of the court are associated with the evanescence of sound, threatened with irrelevancy and, if not speedily translated onto the written page by the secret historian, easily lost forever and irretrievably erased. Osborne offers secret history as the method for capturing this secret intelligence, preserving it for future generations and reconciling it to the demands of historical narrative. Osborne's work is in safeguarding the political intelligence, gossip and secrets which are otherwise 'not discernible at any [historical] distance'. It is precisely this ability to preserve secrets, unknown by most of their contemporaries, and offer them to future generations and historians that is praised by D'Israeli. The secret historian, according to Osborne, recomposes and reconstructs partial, sanitised, and biased historical narratives and he does so for a strong moral cause:

Now, if nothing might be registered of wicked, effeminate, and ill-consulted princes, but things plausible, and tending to the fame of the dead, one of the chiefe reins of terrour and restraint would be quite let loose to those alive; the impartiall grave

affording no more protection to their dust [...] From whence it may be concluded no lesse necessary [...] to dissect and make inspection into the defects of a dead king, or ruins of a tattered state, then [sic] for a physitian to anatomize a body, whose life was, through evill and extravagant courses, forfeited to the law: by both which, honest men may come to be cured, and common-wealths better governed.

Osborne conceives that the private dealings and secrets of kings, statesmen and governments are ‘forfeited’ to the secret historian and are legitimate, educational spaces for the public to be exposed to the realities of their government and its surprising, unofficial, and underhanded dealings. Providing ‘the docile eare’ and ‘exacter attention’ required to discern, investigate and share these secrets publicly, Osborne not only rationalises why the public’s perception of its statesmen, monarchs and their political motivations require such radical revision, he also forges a valuable place for gossip in these revisionary historical narratives. Just as Weldon prefaces his secret history by drawing attention to the clandestine methods by which he acquired his intelligence, as an ‘eye and ear witness’ of history, Osborne similarly reflects the secret history’s complex interest in orality and aurality, seemingly investigating secret history as a narrative fascinated with overhearing and oversharing.<sup>27</sup> Osborne, and even Weldon, promote a certain dynamic between the secret history and its readers: it is one of intimacy, proximity and negotiation of meaning. It shares the interest of gossip in clarifying the expectations of the group (between the secret historian and his readers) and does so by reclaiming private, secret and domestic affairs as the rightful domain of public scrutiny, access and debate. As well as forming much of the history’s content, it appears that the aural, intimate reception of gossip is also indicative of how Osborne expects the narrative to be received and processed by his readers.

In her study of the politics of disclosure in seventeenth-century secret histories, Rebecca Bullard invites us to consider that Osborne’s association of secret history with orality and

gossip extends to the heart of the genre for, as Bullard highlights, ‘Secret history appears to be one of the many voices –belonging to both high and low cultural forms– that, according to Mikhail Bakhtin’s highly influential analysis, make up this “heteroglossic” genre’.<sup>28</sup> The multiplicity of voices in Scott’s histories, both non-fiction and fiction, has been well-documented in literary studies, even if his *Secret History* has been largely ignored.<sup>29</sup> In her analysis of Scott’s paratexts, Fiona Robertson considers how Scott used narrative structure to assess and scrutinise ‘competing narratological and historiographical authorities’.<sup>30</sup> But far from the Bakhtinian ideal, the multiple, competing sources of authorship in *Secret History* are not entirely free from the domination of a single, unified authorial or narratorial voice with Scott’s editorial voice emerging as one of ultimate authority and arbitration, judging the author’s evident political and social biases and reflecting on the accuracy of their views and recollections. Scott’s authoritative and interpretative paratextual interventions in *Secret History* provides a radical reinterpretation of the memoirs it contains. Scott’s introductions to each author’s secret history, and his sustained and extensive footnoting, facilitate a single, authorised reading of the historians’ accounts missing from their original editions. To adapt Mayer’s words, in his editorial paratexts of *Secret History*, Scott metaphorically positions himself on the written page ‘in relation to a host of literary and historiographical forebears and contemporaries, establishing a particular view of [...] the nature and function of historical inquiry’.<sup>31</sup> As Bullard notes, secret histories are textually complex, constructed out of a number of competing voices and sources, but in *Secret History*, Scott manifoldly complicates this textual picture by collating the five secret histories, each written by different authors and at different times, and asking them to ‘throw considerable light upon each other’.<sup>32</sup> In their new narrative arrangement, the historians are stripped of their original authority over their narratives and now come to contribute to the polyphonic narrative, emerging as one voice among many. Ina Ferris establishes that ‘Bakhtin’s whole theory of the dialogic assumes the

centrality of response in the construction of discourse, and his sense of continual “reaccentuation” of texts points to the role of response in shaping literary history’.<sup>33</sup> Each tract is selected by Scott and placed in dialogue with its predecessor as a method of literary mediation and historical negotiation. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than Scott’s introduction to Heylin’s ‘Aulicus Coquinariae’ in which he draws attention to the importance of reading the history as an ‘answer to the Court and Character of James I by Sir Anthony Welldon’.<sup>34</sup> It is for this reason that Scott adds an additional detail to Weldon’s tract: in the right-hand margins he indicates the original page numbering ‘here retained for the facility of the references from Aulicus Coquinariae’.<sup>35</sup> However, Scott’s editorial authority is distinct from this polyphonic plurality of historical voices and responses. The second contribution that Scott makes to the histories’ narrative structure lies in his persistent and consistent footnoting which allows him to introduce excerpts from other historical accounts, remark upon any inaccuracies or incongruities within and between the memoirs and register his occasional scepticism at their claims. Scott’s presence in the text is one of authority, controlling the narrative and influencing how it is read, interpreted, and judged by the reader. Scott’s function lies in arbitration, mediating the voices and perspectives of the past and placing them within a new contextual framework for the reader. It is for this reason that footnoting remains of central importance, ensuring that the reader’s attention is continually drawn to the wider historical narrative to which his *Secret History* contributes and reframes. Scott’s editorial presence hovers over the history and its gossipy claims: his voice emerges clearly and authoritatively. Mediated with authority and regulated in form, Scott believes that his editorial work provides Osborne’s tract, and the four histories it now accompanies, the ‘sufficient passport’ into the nineteenth century which Osborne feared it would never accrue. Scott offers himself as the facilitator of secret history’s ability to become a serious and valuable ‘supplement of history itself, and its great corrector’.

Where Osborne struggles to reconcile gossip to historical narrative, writing of Scott's contribution to the genre of the Memoir in the nineteenth-century, John Galt rationalises that 'With respect to the gossip of the times, [...] it has been the subject of table-talk in every society [...] and what breach of private confidence is there in narrating the "on dits" of the day?'.<sup>36</sup> This debate on the compatibility of gossip and history strikes at the heart of the issue. While Osborne is uncertain whether his gossipy narrative will be considered 'the stuff of history' by future generations, D'Israeli, Scott and Galt seem eager to provide this reassurance in the early nineteenth century. However, this reassurance of gossip's place in history is attended by a number of complex narrative structures which move to accommodate, mediate and frame its claims.

In his essay, D'Israeli considers how Secret History's fascination with publicising the private and domestic secrets of its subjects led to the genre's long-held reputation as a form of printed gossip:

The circumstantiality of its story, the changeable shadows of its characters, the redundancy of its conversations, and the many careless superfluities which egotism or vanity may throw out, seem usually confounded with that small-talk familiarly termed *gossiping*. But the *gossiping* [...] reveals the individual, or by a simple incident unriddles a mysterious event. We may discover the value of these pictures of human nature, with which secret history abounds.<sup>37</sup>

D'Israeli's observation is particularly intriguing because it at first appears that he wants to distinguish Secret History from gossip, for which it is 'usually confounded', but he quickly changes tack and moves to re-evaluate and reframe this relationship. Emancipating gossip from its reputation for indiscretion, unreliability, and insignificance, D'Israeli redefines it as a legitimate and invaluable source of historical intelligence. As part of this radical reinterpretation of gossip and its sociological function, D'Israeli emphasises the importance

of gossiping as a narrative process, one that incrementally ‘reveals’ and ‘unriddles’ secrets as its narrative unfolds. As Osborne reflects, *Secret History* challenges the association of gossip as a primarily verbal form of story-telling with its printed narrative ensuring the secrets it discloses can reach a much larger audience than the immediate and intimate conversation typically associated with the act of gossiping. Under D’Israeli’s construction, gossiping and reading are related processes. As Eve Tavor Bannet highlights in her study of *Secret History* and the history of censorship in Britain, secret histories of the private lives and affairs of monarchs

attracted curiosity about what could be “conveniently told”; by arousing curiosity, it attracted readers. Characterised by Hobbes and Locke as an “Appetite after Knowledge” and “Lust of the Mind”, curiosity was viewed for two centuries both as an appetite that drove the young or ignorant *to learn new things* and as everyone’s *primary motive for reading*.<sup>38</sup>

Scott draws attention to the fact that the historical novel shares this dual pressure of secret history and gossip to entertain its readers with consistent contributions of something previously unknown and unexpected. This, Scott reveals, is a demanding task for fiction: ‘full of merry-making and murdering, kissing and cutting of throats, and passages which lead to nothing, and which are very pretty passages for all that’, literature shares the difficulty of secret history and gossip to reconcile the ‘circumstantiality of its story, the changeable shadows of its characters, the redundance of its conversations, and the many careless superfluities’ with ‘the regular road’ of its narrative and plot.<sup>39</sup> As Scott had noted in *The Tale of Old Mortality* ‘every volume of a narrative turns less and less interesting as the author draws to a conclusion, just like your tea, [...] I think history, growing already vapid, is but dully crutched up by a detail of circumstances which every reader must have anticipated’.<sup>40</sup> This presents us with a very different picture of the historical novel from Lukács who argues

that it is ‘through the plot, at whose centre [the hero] stands, a neutral ground is sought and found upon which extreme opposing social forces can be brought into a human relation with one another’.<sup>41</sup> Scott is proposing that there is something in the historical novel that struggles against ‘the regular road’ or ‘neutral ground’ of its plot and instead seeks ‘passages which lead to nothing’, ‘circumstantiality’, ‘redundance’ and ‘careless superfluities’. This idea is pervasive in Scott where he often uses the novels’ prefaces as a way to humorously explore the novel’s association with the word, idle.<sup>42</sup> In her investigation of ‘the problem of beginning’ in Scott’s historical novels, Ina Ferris draws attention to the fact that Scott’s plots ‘usually take a long time to get going’ and reflect that he ‘is more comfortable in the looseness of a middle than in the definiteness of beginning or ending’. Ferris concludes that this ‘seems somehow central to the form of the historical novel invented by Scott’, and she attributes this to the fact that

The historical novelist intervenes in a field which already exists as an authoritative discourse, no matter how contested portions of that discourse might be. And the pressure of the already-written and the already-known is most acute at the moments of beginning and ending narration. [...] His beginnings [...] work to disconcert expectation and prediction, functioning as agents of differentiation rather than assimilation. In so doing they set up the crucial move of the narrative out of known into relatively unknown and uninterpreted historical spaces, and it is largely through this move that Scott creates the modern historical novel.<sup>43</sup>

In the Advertisement to his *Magnum Opus*, Scott draws attention to ‘the various legends, family traditions, or obscure historical facts, which have formed the ground-work of these Novels’ and the ‘incidents founded on fact’ that have made their way into the novels as their, ‘altogether, or in part, real’, historical foundations.<sup>44</sup> But there is something more complex and nuanced between the development of Scott’s novels and the genre of Secret History that

D'Israeli and Ferris's analyses are inviting us to trace, and this runs far beyond Scott's acknowledgement of his novels' indebtedness to the materials of Secret History. Secret histories plot the same intervention that Ferris describes of the historical novel: secret historians compose their narratives in referential contrast to 'the already-written and the already known', promising to shed new light on an old, often-told story by moving 'the narrative out of known into relatively unknown and uninterpreted historical spaces', in particular the bedchamber, kitchen, closet, and servants' quarters, and engaging in a 'field which already exists as an authoritative discourse', namely that of Traditional history, to borrow Varillas's term. It is for this reason that Robert Mayer defines secret history as a supplemental narrative, one 'intended to correct a mistaken view or to complete an unsatisfactorily partial picture— and therefore generally anecdotal, impressionistic, and suggestive' in form.<sup>45</sup> Mayer expounds that it is secret history's 'unsatisfactorily partial' and anecdotal narrative that led to its traditional dismissal as subjective gossip, scandal-mongering, falsehood, and slanderous fiction.<sup>46</sup> The evolution of secret history and its gossipy narrative into fiction writing was perhaps most strongly suggested and heralded by the French word for secret history, *nouvelle*, meaning 'a piece of gossip'.<sup>47</sup> It is the negative interpretation of secret history's partiality, in both meanings of the word, that D'Israeli aimed to dispel, calling for historians to recognise that 'he who *only* views things in masses will have no distinct notion of any one particular [...] But as secret history appears to deal in minute things, its connection with great results is not usually suspected'.<sup>48</sup>

In D'Israeli and Mayer's respective investigations of secret history, and in Ferris's investigation of Scott's historical novels, all three critics identify a 'looseness' of narrative that accompanies the secret history and the historical novel's move from the known to the unknown, and from the specific to the circumstantial and superfluous. Defined by Karen Adkins as loose, informal talk, it is perhaps this aspect of gossip and gossiping that D'Israeli

is inviting us to consider as a form of historical narrative that unites secret history and the historical novel.<sup>49</sup> For Ferris this looseness is reflected in how Scott's novels 'set into play a multiplicity of perspectives that blocks the closure of a simple, unitary understanding. Any event, they imply, is multiple, existing simultaneously in several contexts and [...] understanding[s]'.<sup>50</sup> What Ferris defines as the loose historical structure of Scott's narratives, D'Israeli and Mayer call 'partiality' in the narratives of secret history, and it is precisely this complicated relationship between 'minute things' and historical narrative that we can more closely trace by turning to *The Heart of Midlothian* where the novel's narrator, the nineteenth-century school teacher, Peter Pattieson, is a gossip who forges an intimate relationship with the implied reader, a relationship predicated on his sustained and confidential disclosure of private and historic secrets about the Porteous Riots, its aftermath in Edinburgh in 1736, and the court of Queen Caroline. Before turning to the narrative proper, it is first helpful to draw attention to the history of Scott's composition of the novel, *The Heart of Midlothian*, through which a reading of the novel as gossip can be framed and contextualised.

#### The Author of Waverley: A Gossip

In *Walter Scott and Fame*, Robert Mayer highlights that Scott was surrounded by a great degree of celebrity which inaugurated a new type of nineteenth-century reader: the fan. Mayer argues that Scott's readers 'addressed him as a writer who, however great, was approachable in ways his forebears had not been and his contemporaries were not'.<sup>51</sup> This nascent intimacy between Scott and his readers is evident in the extensive corpus of letters exchanged between the two, which forms the basis of Mayer's study. This correspondence illustrates the growing, reciprocal relationship between author and reader, and the emergence of Scott's 'fans', to borrow Mayer's term, speaks to a growing sense of dialogic intimacy between the author and his readers. Jürgen Habermas offers a helpful remark about the

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creation of the literary, bourgeois public sphere in Britain which helps trace a point of origin for this rapidly evolving and intimate relationship between author and reader that Scott represents in the early nineteenth century. According to Habermas, the growing bourgeois literary sphere ensured that ‘the relations between author, work, and public changed. They became intimate mutual [...] actors who “talked heart to heart”’.<sup>52</sup> It is notable that Habermas defines this burgeoning relationship in the vocabulary of gossip, an intimate dialogue of response, equality and reciprocation. By the early nineteenth century Scott is writing during what Lucy Newlyn calls, ‘the rise of the reader’, a newly authorised reader of fiction who actively participates, judges, and critically engages with the publishing industry, its authors, and their published materials.<sup>53</sup> If the nineteenth century saw the rise of the professional author, then it also witnessed the growth of a proportionately professionalised reader, who combined the roles of consumer, critic, and fan. In her analysis of the relationship between gossip and forms of intimacy, Karen Adkins highlights that ‘gossip is talk based on trust’.<sup>54</sup> From the Latin *con fides*, meaning ‘with trust’, the participants in gossip act as confidantes, providing each other with exclusive and often scandalous information with the expectation that the information will remain confidential to the group. One such expression of this sociological confidence between Scott and his readers is demonstrable in the composition of Scott’s *The Heart of Midlothian*. In February 1817, Scott received a letter from Helen Goldie, wife to Thomas Goldie of Craigmuir, the Commissary of Dumfries. In her letter, Goldie draws Scott’s attention to the life of Helen Walker, a short biography that later inspires the plot and protagonists of *The Heart of Midlothian*. Goldie recounts her unexpected encounter with Walker on a holiday near the Abbey of Lincluden during which she hears Walker’s remarkable history about her sister’s trial and sentencing for the crime of infanticide; her subsequent petition to the Duke of Argyll for an official pardon, and the eventual award of clemency for her case. Goldie’s letter, detailing, what would become, the particulars of one of

Scott's most successful novels, materially influenced Scott's work and increased the fame from which Goldie's confident address to the Author of *Waverley* had originated. As Simmel highlights, confidence is 'a mediate condition between knowing and not knowing another person'.<sup>55</sup> *The Heart of Midlothian* is the product of a readerly confidence of Simmel's definition: Helen Goldie's letter to Scott is based upon her conviction that she has, to some degree, got to know the anonymous author through his work. Goldie is not only certain that her letter will be welcomed by the Author of *Waverley*, she also believes that she has come to understand his literary taste and his preference for the subjects of his history-writing and perhaps most importantly, she feels able *to contribute* to his work. This is not only striking in itself, but it also remarkable that she is correct: Scott does go on to use Helen Walker's story as the basis for his historical novel. Since Scott and Goldie had never met both individuals were obscured by a degree of anonymity: it was not until 1827 that Scott's identity as the Author of *Waverley* was publicly confirmed and Scott laments in his introduction to the Magnum Opus edition of *The Heart of Midlothian* that 'Mrs Goldie was unfortunately dead before the author had given his name to these volumes'.<sup>56</sup> There was a similar degree of secrecy surrounding Helen Goldie who left her letter without either date or signature. Without either Goldie or Scott providing their name, the correspondence is more strongly marked by the identities of 'author' and 'reader'. Not intended for Scott the lawyer or poet, Goldie sends her letter specifically to the Author of *Waverley*. This phenomenon seems neatly illustrated by Scott who, in the Magnum Opus introduction, writes about himself in the third person.<sup>57</sup> Scott's interaction with his 'unknown correspondent' is rather complex: navigating the uncertainties of anonymity and reconciling them with the nascent confidence and intimacy growing between Scott and his readers. Goldie's letter certainly illustrates the growing dialogism between author, novel, and reader: she has directly responded to Scott's work and Scott responds to Goldie's letter *through the historical novel*. Scott uses *The Tale of Old*

*Mortality* (1816) to fictionally represent this new type of dialogic confidence. Martha Bucksbody, an acquaintance of Peter Pattieson and a prolific reader, is given the authority to conclude the novel:

I requested her to look over my loose sheets the morning before I waited upon her, and enlighten me by the experience which she must have acquired in reading through the whole stock of three circulating libraries in Gandercleugh and the two next market-towns.<sup>58</sup>

Bucksbody is identified by Pattieson as a qualified reader, one who merits consultation on how best to conclude his history. Bucksbody expresses her dissatisfaction with the novel's ending and forces Pattieson to address her concerns and rewrite it. The "heart to heart" discussion between the (fictional) author and (fictional) reader is reproduced in the novel, taking the form of a transcript of the character's conversation. *The Tale of Old Mortality* ends with Pattieson's concession of his authority, inviting Bucksbody to amend and collaborate on the novel's conclusion.

As Ina Ferris highlights, the publication of the Waverley Novels proved an 'authoritative event', changing the way prose fiction was popularly perceived and moving 'the novel out of the subliterate margins of the culture into the literary hierarchy'.<sup>59</sup> In the same way as its predecessor, *Rob Roy* (1818), before the publication of *The Heart of Midlothian* Scott and his publishers worked hard to garner public interest in the novel's historical setting. In anticipation of its publication, Constable strategically generated public interest in the Porteous Riots of 1736 and published an article entitled, 'Remarks on the Tumult at Edinburgh, Commonly Called the Porteous Mob' in their *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany; a New Series of the Scots Magazine*: printed in June, it anticipates the publication of *The Heart of Midlothian* in the following month. A successful attempt at preparing the literary market for the novel, Scott and his publishers have established a marketing and

advertising strategy that, quite literally, capitalises on the publication of the Waverley Novels having proven, as Ferris puts it, an ‘authoritative event’, one subject to the same ‘heart-to-heart’ play of responses between the reader and the author that Habermas had identified in burgeoning form in the previous century but now exploited as a means of successful marketing. This responsiveness of the literary market continues after *The Heart of Midlothian*’s publication in July for Constable publishes Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe’s *Criminal Trials, Illustrative of the Tale Entitled “The Heart of Mid-Lothian”* (1818). This is an interesting title, placing the history in direct dialogue with Scott’s novel. As Ferris notes, it ‘appears authorised by the novel rather than the other way around’.<sup>60</sup> In fact, Sharpe notes in his preface that since ‘The tragical story of Nicol Muschett and his wife being so frequently alluded to in the “Heart of Mid-Lothian,” we have subjoined to these trials some details respecting it’. What is particularly striking is the claim that Sharpe’s history is ‘illustrative’ of *The Heart of Midlothian*, suggesting that they are to be read as supplemental narratives. The subtitle promises the inclusion of ‘some particulars of the life of Captain John Porteous’ which, Sharpe explains in the Preface, is due to ‘the public curiosity being much excited respecting all the circumstance which attended the murder of Captain Porteous, as well as the private history of the individual himself’.<sup>61</sup> The type of history-writing that Scott has inspired is that of secret history, predicated upon the ability to provide the reader with access to ‘private history’ and previously undisclosed information.

In examining Scott’s literary reception as part of a gossip matrix of dialogic responses, it is helpful to draw upon contemporary reviews. Published in two parts between January and February 1817, Thomas McCrie wrote a scathing critical review of the first series of *Tales of My Landlord* for *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*. He complained that Scott had presented the Scottish Covenanters with ‘glaring partiality and injustice;— the more so, as a great proportion of the readers of the work know little more of the history of that time,

beyond [...] Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*' which ensured that the Covenanters were 'reviled as hypocritical and murderous ruffians'.<sup>62</sup> This criticism was echoed by many Evangelical critics who condemned *The Tale of Old Mortality* as a scandalously uneven portrayal of Scottish Covenanter history. In his preface to *The Heart of Midlothian*, the novel's fictional editor, Cleishbotham addresses and dismisses this criticism. Cleishbotham's highly emotional response to the charges against 'him' ensures that the treatment of McCrie's brand of criticism in *The Heart of Midlothian* becomes a humorous dismissal rather than a serious reaction to the claims. This culminates in Cleishbotham's glee at sharing the news with the reader that he is descended from Quakers, and can therefore be considered 'an impartial judge of these discrepancies of opinion' (5). A humorously hyperbolic account of his family history, full of apparently heart-felt apostrophes, the use of Cleishbotham to level this rebuttal secures the novel as an interactive, and *re-active* critical space. This is particularly evidenced by the fact that Scott's great-grandfather, Walter Scott Laird of Raeburn was a Scottish Quaker. Whilst this genealogical detail was missed by the readers of the first edition of the novel, for whom the novel was originally published anonymously, Scott uses his notes to the Magnum Opus edition of the novel to confirm his lineage, stating that 'many a true word is spoken in jest'.<sup>63</sup> Gossipy dialogism therefore informs Scott's composition of his historical novel in a number of interconnected ways.

This pattern becomes increasingly obvious with Scott's playful representation of the Author of *Waverley* in the novel's prefaces. Written with a great amount of dramatic flourish and comedic hyperbole these moments of metafictional interaction reflect, in a rather overt fashion, a self-conscious dialogism between Scott and his novels. In conversation with his characters, Scott negotiates his critical reception and discusses the trappings of his notoriety and readerly expectations. In *Loving Literature* (2015), Deidre Lynch considers how the popular conception of the author-figure has traditionally manifested itself as an emotional

investment, noting that the proliferation of print material led to ‘various projects intended to affirm the humanity that was lodged in the artifacts of the book market and thus to close some of the gaps between the living world and the paper world’.<sup>64</sup> Rupturing the spaces and distinctions between the real and the fictional, the Author of *Waverley* exists imperfectly within the world of his own creation, haunting the characters with his ghostly, spectral presence. The select prefatory characters, chosen by the Author of *Waverley* to contribute to his work as editors, have a tendency to speak across texts, with Dryasdust and Clutterbuck addressing their prefaces to each other in the epistolary style.<sup>65</sup> This creates a dizzying matrix of voices which speak *across* Scott’s oeuvre of historical novels which is reinforced by the fact the prefatory characters are aware of each other. For example, Dryasdust and Clutterbuck discuss their colleague Jedidiah Cleishbotham, whose death allows them to advance to a greater editorial prominence in the narratives. Gossiping and sharing their experiences with the Author of *Waverley* and praising their own literary skill as superior to ‘the other descendants of our common parent’, the prefatory characters create an informal dialogue and sequence of responses which act as a ‘gossip circuit’, defined as a continued and sustained source of conversation within a social group in which new pieces of gossip and information are frequently added, discussed and debated.<sup>66</sup> The inclusion of these recurring narrators and editors ensures Scott’s readers are greeted by familiar names, characters and references. Where Mayer and Robertson explore how the presence of the fictional editors of Scott’s novels create a tense competition between a number of textual voices vying for authority *within* his novels, by looking at Scott’s novels as part of a much larger textual framework, one constructed out of the interconnected conversations occurring between the prefatory characters, we can trace a different picture. Rather than undercutting the authority of a single text, the framing presence of these familiar prefatory characters reinforces the authority of ‘the *Waverley* Novels’ as a whole. In this form, Scott creates a circular and overarching

narrative, comprised of gossipy conversation, which gestures *between* the novels and is largely unencumbered by the polyphonic clash of overlapping voices and authorities *within* each novel. Scott's decision to kill both Cleishbotham and Pattieson guarantees that no single, favoured, or privileged voice emerges out of the novels' prefaces and ensures that this gossip circuit remains intact. This circular, intertextual form of authority in the Waverley Novels is highlighted by contemporary reviewers. After the publication of the first *Tales of My Landlord, collected and arranged by Jedidiah Cleishbotham* in Edinburgh (1816) *The Edinburgh Review* tried to prove 'beyond all question' that the volumes under review were 'a new coinage from the mint which produced *Waverley*, *Guy Mannering*, and *the Antiquary*'. Continuing to publish his novels anonymously, it was important to the public, and undoubtedly to Scott too, that the correct novels were attributed to the Author of Waverley. The reviewer argues that the return of Scott's prefatory characters from his previous novels, combined with their accurate, realistic depiction of their manners and attitudes, proves its authenticity as a Waverley Novel. The reviewer notes that

We are only the more assured that the old acquaintances we continually recognise in these volumes, are really the persons they pretend to be, and no false mimics, that we recollect so perfectly to have seen them before, or at least to have been familiar with some of their near relations.<sup>67</sup>

Although published anonymously, the recurring editors and narrators act as an authorial signature, a point of recognition for Scott's readers and a stamp of authenticity. Far from undermining the text's authority, it bolsters its credibility within the literary market.

In the preface to the first novel in *Tales of the Crusaders* (1825), Scott brings this gossip circuit into direct dialogue with the growing interest in the secrecy surrounding the Great Unknown and the creation of the Waverley Novels.<sup>68</sup> Gathering the familiar prefatory characters of his earlier novels and appointing Monkbarrow as their secretary, the Author

convenes a meeting of the group to allow these ‘various literary characters of eminence’ to debate their right, as self-professed ‘share-holders’ in the Author of Waverley’s industrious literary output and success, to demand larger cuts of the author’s profits and to create ‘a Joint-Stock Company united for the purpose of writing and publishing the class of works called the Waverley Novels’. Albeit humorously depicted in the preface, where the assumed formality of the proceedings clashes with its occurrence in the Waterloo Tavern, Scott’s success in the literary market is revealed to be reliant on a number of financial processes and the ‘plurality of trades’ associated with his prefatory editors. In this preface to *The Betrothed*, Scott uses his metafictional gossip circuit to explore the increasing public fascination with exposing the secret identity of the Author of Waverley. It is for this reason that a journalist has hidden underneath the table around which the recurring characters have gathered in order to overhear and subsequently publish the details of the Author’s private meeting with his prefatory ‘share-holders’. Due to the infiltration of their meeting by this journalist, Scott begins the preface with a fictional disclaimer written by *Edinburgh Newspaper*, reminding its readers that they

must have remarked, that the various editions of the proceedings at this meeting were given in the public papers [...] on the part of the gentlemen of the press to assert their privilege of universal presence wherever a few are met together, and to commit to the public prints whatever may then and there pass of the most private nature.<sup>69</sup>

The interaction between Scott, his fictional-self in the form of the Author of Waverley, and the bringing together of his prefatory characters forges a complex relationship between the novels and gossip, especially given Scott’s ability to generate the public’s interest in determining his real identity as the Great Unknown which remained a continued source of gossip, intrigue and speculation until his identity was officially revealed by Lord

Meadowbank in 1827. Gossip, its circulation and dialogic discourse permeates the composition and the reception of Scott's Waverley Novels.

#### From Neighbourhood Gossip to Secret History

In *The Heart of Midlothian*, however, it is not in the preface, but at the beginning of the narrative proper that Peter Pattieson is introduced as the history's narrator. It is important to note this distinction because it reflects Scott's deliberate positioning of Pattieson as an intradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator in the history he is recounting, crafting Pattieson into a familiar, distinct, and easily recognisable *character* in the novel. With the root of his name deriving from the Scots word, 'paiter', meaning to 'chatter on endlessly', Peter Pattieson is a character where gossipy conversation defines both his essential characteristic and his narrative function.<sup>70</sup> It is Pattieson's ability to 'chatter on endlessly' that allows him to uncover the Deans's family history after a mail coach, carrying two Edinburgh lawyers and their client, overturns. Where Pattieson anticipates the coach will be a harbinger of written news, it is, instead, the carrier of intelligence in the form of gossip. During their conversation in the Wallace Inn, the lawyers discuss the intriguing family history of the Deans and it is immediately heralded by Pattieson as the perfect material for a historical novel. As with *The Fortunes of Nigel*, Scott is using his characters to craft a metafictional origin for the historical novel which owes much to 'circumstantiality', serendipity and, in this case, a literal deviation from 'the regular road'. Described by the novel's fictional editor, Jedidiah Cleishbotham, as 'a place frequented by most at one time or other in their lives', Gandercleugh and the Wallace Inn act as a point of confluence and convergence for travellers across Scotland (4). As the title of the series, *Tales of my Landlord*, suggests, the Wallace Inn is the primary space where histories are both narrated and shared, providing the narrator of the tales, Pattieson, with the inspiration for his historical narratives. In *The Black Dwarf* (1816), the first novel of the series, Cleishbotham highlights that the Inn is frequented by many 'travellers, from distant

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parts, as well as from the remote districts of our kingdom' who 'were wont to mingle in the conversation, and to tell news that had been gathered in foreign lands, or preserved from oblivion in this our own'.<sup>71</sup> It is this site of informal conversation, the exchange of gossip, news and the narration of legend, where histories are circulated and exchanged. In contrast to the publicity of the Inn, novels are introduced to the narrative as secret, private, and guilt-inducing objects which 'you are likely to find [...] lying on his table, snugly intrenched, however, beneath Stair's Institutes, or an open volume of Morrison's Decisions' (15). Lying beneath legal tomes, the reading of novels is a guilty pleasure that the Edinburgh lawyers secretly entertain. In contrast with the 'open' legal volumes, the novel is 'snugly intrenched', deliberately set aside for private use and hidden from public view. This association between secrecy, privacy and novel-reading becomes a recurring feature of *The Heart of Midlothian*, underpinning Pattieson's function as the provider of exclusive access to private conversations, spaces and scandals.<sup>72</sup> This function is inaugurated at the start of the novel with Halkit and Hardie sharing a whispered secret which takes place beyond the 'hearing' of the reader. Beginning as he means to continue, Pattieson uncovers the secret and, by repeating the 'penetrating and insinuating word', 'Interest', which Pattieson manages to overhear, he successfully shares the lawyer's secret with the reader (19). Extending this growing intimacy between the narrator and implied reader, Pattieson reveals to the reader that which he previously kept hidden from his acquaintances: he confesses his guilty enjoyment of a joke levelled at Dunover's expense which, although he was 'anxious to conceal my mirth from the object of it', is disclosed to the reader (12). Scott crafts a careful and familiar relationship between the narrator as a gossip and the reader as confidante which is often expressed in the narrative proper by the assumption that both Pattieson and the reader have come to the same conclusion about a particular episode and is exemplified by short transitional statements in the variety of, 'as the reader has probably already conjectured' and,

‘which the reader will probably think very natural upon the occasion’ (47, 152–153). While these statements are not exclusive to *The Heart of Midlothian*, the privileged position that Scott gives Pattieson in both the discovery and the narration of the Deans’s history in chapter one means that these statements are given the distinct voice of a single character which is denied from other novels, including *Waverley* (1814) and *Guy Mannering* (1815).

In noting the presence of Cleishbotham in the preface, the intimacy between the reader and Pattieson becomes even more pronounced via their contrast. The editor’s hyperbolic language and high rhetoric revolts against Robert Paine’s definition of gossip as a ‘genre of informal communication’.<sup>73</sup> Cleishbotham begins his epistolary address to the reader by philosophising whether ‘ingratitude comprehendeth every other vice’ (3). Certainly not the language of intimacy, Cleishbotham almost exclusively uses his space in the text to legitimise his position within it as the history’s ‘impartial judge’ and authoritative ‘historian’ (5, 4). However unconvincingly these claims of impartiality may strike the reader, Cleishbotham offers them as a reassurance of ‘the veracity and the authenticity of my historical narratives!’ (4). Cleishbotham’s attempts to validate and claim a degree of ownership over the history, tightens the ‘looseness’ of a narrative whose narrator is more interested in the idleness of ‘chatter’ rather than the productivity of historical truth and accuracy. In *The Black Dwarf*, Cleishbotham criticises Pattieson’s method of historical narration, declaring that ‘in arranging these legends for the press, hath more consulted his own fancy than the accuracy of the narration; nay, that he hath sometimes blended two or three together for the mere grace of plot’.<sup>74</sup> Instead, Pattieson subscribes to Templeton’s argument that historical novels ‘neither can, nor do pretend, to the observation of complete accuracy’ because it would thwart the author’s ability for ‘exciting interest of any kind’.<sup>75</sup> The unapologetic looseness of the historical narrative, a factor that affords both it and gossip the reputation for triviality, is necessary to appeal to the reader as consumer. It is for this reason that Pattieson’s narrative

holds itself to its own standards of accuracy, peppered with generalisations and ambiguities. In detailing the estate history of the Deans and Butler's land, Pattieson remarks that Dumbiedikes, Senior, was attended by 'a tall gawky silly-looking boy of fourteen or fifteen' (68–69). The narrator's gaze is imprecise, leaving this ambiguity to convey that he does not particularly value accuracy, and certainly not in place of entertaining, albeit unnecessary, detail. Pattieson's propensity for gossipy rather than precise detail is emphasised by the hovering presence of the editor, Cleishbotham, who interjects to render extra details, or factual incongruities known to the reader because, as he explains in one of his footnotes, 'I love to be precise in matters of importance' (8). Despite highlighting that the novel does not hold itself to the strictness of antiquarian note-taking, this interference is minimally invasive. It is exactly this elasticity that informs, rather than detracts from, Pattieson's rhetorical fluency where accuracy and transparency *within* the narrative is heralded over attention to details which fail to pique his interest as a story teller.

Addressed to its 'courteous reader' the preface adopts an epistolary structure, giving the impression that the reader is the specific recipient of the enclosed history and drawing attention to the emerging reciprocity between authors and readers in the early-nineteenth century. Functioning in a similar fashion to Scott's editorial role in his *Secret History*, Cleishbotham assumes a confident, authoritative tone. This is accentuated by Cleishbotham's assertion that Pattieson's narrative is 'now given unto thee in particular, and unto the public in general' (4). This is an interesting phrase, playing with the new experience that reading inhabits for the readership by 1818: as a private and public process, one that is simultaneously an individual experience and one that is generated en masse. Cleishbotham draws attention to a more transactive, reciprocal relationship between author and reader, thanking his readers for generating his financial success and allowing him to buy a larger house.<sup>76</sup> However, in his concluding *L'Envoy*, Cleishbotham attempts to place restrictions on

the text, encasing the conversational narrative style of Pattieson with a more clinical, restricted, and muted form. Immediately referring to its closed, textual parameters, Cleishbotham observes that *The Heart of Midlothian* ‘hath filled more pages than I opined’ (469). In making this observation, the reader loses some of the intimacy cultivated throughout Pattieson’s narrative. Reminded of the newly commercialised relationship between reader-consumer and text-commodity, the reader is left with a somewhat disappointing picture of the contemporary literary scene, with Cleishbotham’s use of the space to advertise his services as translator ‘at the easy rate of five shillings per quarter’ (469).

In identifying Pattieson’s antithetic position to Cleishbotham, it is possible to explore how this impacts the novel as a historical narrative by looking at the role of Saddletree’s shop: the site of neighbourhood gossip utilised when ‘it’s safest speaking of sic things *inter parietes*’ (220). Dismissing his apprentice to the street to avoid their conversations being overheard, the neighbours gather in a space that sits, literally, between the Saddletree’s domestic quarters and the public street beyond the shopfront. Neither entirely private nor public, the conversations occur in a confidential space: permitting an exchange of intelligence amongst neighbourly confidantes which excludes participation from those outside the circle of intimates. It is here that the tell-tale feature of gossip emerges for a single, distinct voice of the group develops: the gossips quickly begin to speak as a single unit, reminiscent of the chorus in a Greek tragedy: “Kickin the Duke of Argyle!” exclaimed the hearers at once, in all the various combined keys of utter astonishment’ (220). It is here, in the midst of gossipy, neighbourly conversation that historical detail is presented in the narrative, mirroring the way in which history presents itself to Pattieson as a patron of the Wallace Inn in chapter one. John Campbell (1678–1743), the second Duke of Argyll, is introduced to the reader through the perspectives of the local, neighbourhood gossips. Mr Saddletree finds a copy of the Duke’s sympathetic speech towards Scotland after the Edinburgh Porteous Riots in 1736

which is revealed as the cause of the Duke's ostracization from the king's court. The secret history as the centre of the novel, Jeanie's meeting Queen's Caroline and her court, is first introduced to the reader through the neighbourhood gossips. This inaugurates the rather unusual place neighbourhood gossip comes to play in the novel's secret history.

Before she finds herself at the centre of the novel's secret history of the court of George II and Caroline of Ansbach, Jeanie observes that her access to the queen and her court 'had something in it of an awful mystery', one ill-reconciled to 'the annals of a life so simple as her's [sic]'.<sup>77</sup> As with Heriot in *The Fortunes of Nigel*, as an outsider of the court Jeanie is not complicit in the court's scandals and affairs and is, at least theoretically, well placed to convey its secrets to Scott's readers.<sup>78</sup> But there is something unusual in the way that secrecy and gossip operate in Caroline's court. Even as Jeanie remains comically ignorant of her unfortunate and unintended innuendos about the king's private life, Jeanie's presence at the court unriddles the mysterious (to adapt D'Israeli's phrase) for the novel's readers are guided through the meeting by Pattieson, who discloses the reason for the Duke of Argyle's dissent from the royal court and reveals the extent of Caroline's political power which 'Since Margaret of Anjou, no queen-consort had exercised such weight in the political affairs of England' (331). Unlike James I in *The Fortunes of Nigel*, Caroline both recognises and skilfully utilises the fact that a monarch's private life and relationships come under political and gossipy scrutiny, forming a strategic alliance with Lady Henrietta Howard, the mistress of George II, which 'secured her power' over her husband and his royal courtiers, for the king was in secret prudent enough to take and to follow the advice of his more adroit consort [...] She loved the real possession of power, rather than the shew of it, and whatever she did herself [...] she always desired that the king should have the full credit as well as the advantage (333, 332).

Caroline is revealed as the secret puppeteer directing and managing the king and his court in a manner which predates her powerful ascendancy as his Regent. It is precisely Caroline's unrestricted personal access to the king that the Duke of Argyle requires for, although the 'road to the king's closet, as a peer and a privy-counsellor' remains nominally open to the duke, his ongoing, public dispute with the king and government (introduced to the narrative by the neighbourhood gossips) means this 'road to the king's closet' is unofficially and secretly barred (335–336). During the course of her conversation with Caroline and Howard, Jeanie, in her political ignorance, 'had touched in this delicate conversation' upon the open secrets of the royal court which, 'lay[ing] under ground', form the unacknowledged basis of the Queen's political decisions and alliances.<sup>79</sup> While Jeanie enters into her conversation with Caroline unaware that the political vocabulary of a royal court is, to borrow Bannet's phrase, 'encased in cryptics' and double meanings, Caroline, on the other hand, is especially adept at investigating and exposing these hidden motives and meanings. In her analysis of *Secret History in the Romantic period*, Miranda Burgess investigates how the British government 'paraded its own secrets, which concentrated, in turn, on obsessive investigation of the secrecy of others'.<sup>80</sup> Caroline enters into a similar 'parade' of her husband's sexual secrets, deliberately stationing her husband's mistress as 'one of her principal attendants' and giving her a prominent position in Caroline's royal procession at Richmond Park (333). As an open secret, George II's affair inverts the traditional intention of secret history: far from guarding the secrets of her marriage from public knowledge, Caroline assumes that news about Howard's affair with George II and his ongoing dispute with their son, Frederick, Prince of Wales is already common knowledge. It does not occur to Caroline that Jeanie's words are not 'encased' in secret references to the state of her private and domestic life. In accordance with Burgess's theory, Caroline turns this stately 'parade' of her private life and affairs into an 'obsessive investigation of the secrecy of others', at first assuming that the Duke is having

an affair with Jeanie, before turning to the much more dangerous assumption that Jeanie is trying to infiltrate the royal court as a secret supporter of Porteous's unapprehended murderers. In the secret history at the centre of *The Heart of Midlothian*, it is Jeanie, not the Queen or her court, who is viewed with suspicion as a potential harbourer of secret intelligence, especially since the Porteous Riots (1736) 'had been conducted on so secure and well-calculated a plan of safety and secrecy, that there was little or nothing learned to throw light upon the authors or principal actors [...] of this singular conspiracy' (63). In *The Heart of Midlothian*, Scott turns Jeanie and the neighbourhood gossips into the custodians of a different type of secret history, one that ruminates over the potential for 'the annals of a life so simple' to contain valuable, previously secret, intelligence about public history and public figures. Caroline's concern that Jeanie knows the identity of participants in Porteous's murder is certainly born of her paranoia of conspiracy but, unbeknownst to her, her suspicions are correct: Jeanie does know the leader's identity but is 'happy that the question was so framed that she could, with a good conscience, answer it in the negative' (340). Scott uses the historical novel to create a (fictional) secret, private, and sexual spring which runs just below the surface of the well-known history of the Porteous Riots. In Scott's history, Robertson uses the Edinburgh mob's infiltration of Edinburgh's Tolbooth Prison as the ideal method and public cover for his private goal: to secretly facilitate his lover's escape from imprisonment. The urgency behind Robertson's call to public action on the night of Porteous's murder has a secret, private face to which the Edinburgh public, government and monarch in the novel have not been made privy. The historical novel seems to ask *history* to struggle against 'the regular road' of its traditional narrative and instead search for supplemental information in 'circumstantiality [...], the changeable shadows of its characters, the redundance of its conversations, and the many careless superfluities' of private life and in an individual's short-lived encounter with powerful statesmen and politicians.

A. D. Cousins and Dani Napton note that Scott creates a ‘continuum between home and nation’ in *The Heart of Midlothian* where ‘the experiences of an insecure domestic space and of an unstable national identity’ coincide.<sup>81</sup> Anne Frey takes this observation a stage further, arguing that the protagonists of *The Heart of Midlothian* use the ‘local knowledge’, which they accrue through their daily lives and social interactions, and ‘serve the state, carrying British order [...] and participating in the governance of local populations’.<sup>82</sup> However, in her interaction with Caroline, Jeanie deliberately ensures that her transaction with the court is one directional: she is certainly not interested in sharing her ‘local knowledge’ from Edinburgh with the Queen for she understands the strict and unforgiving legal ramifications that sharing Staunton’s true identity carries. In *The Heart of Midlothian*, the secret influence that private life and domestic affairs have on historical events certainly underpins the novel’s presentation of secret history, but its traditional focus has been inverted: it is not the court keeping their subjects resolutely uniformed of the secret springs of political influence; instead, it is their subjects who are doing so to their statesmen. Published in 1818, the novel is poised to reflect on the growing concerns in the Whig government in the wake of increased displays of civil unrest in the years following the passing of the Corn Laws in 1815. England in 1816 and 1817 was peppered with riots and uprisings with the March of Blanketeers and the Pentrich Rising taking place a few months before *The Heart of Midlothian*’s publication. This friction between the state and the public comes to a head in the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 and is immediately followed by the Seditious Meetings Act.<sup>83</sup> Given this context, it is perhaps no surprise that Scott is reframing secret history to handle the growing paranoia and concern in the British government for the power of the public to coordinate as a single, disruptive unit, reflected by the Edinburgh mob in the novel. The shift of *The Heart of Midlothian* away from the traditional emphasis on the royal court is signalled by Scott eschewing the political gossip of the courtiers for the local, neighbourly gossip of the Edinburgh shopkeepers and residents.

It is here that the ‘local knowledge’, which Frey identifies as a central component of the novel’s presentation of history, is shared, cultivated and debated. This prominent role of neighbourly, local gossip in the novel ensures that the loose ‘small-talk’ and serendipity of ‘simple incident’ that frames D’Israeli’s conception of Secret History is similarly central to the historical process of *The Heart of Midlothian*. By turning to ‘the annals of a life so simple’ as Jeanie’s, Scott echoes D’Israeli’s reminder that there are ‘no unimportant personages in history’.<sup>84</sup> In reconstructing his version of secret history to include the court of public opinion, Scott investigates the relationship between gossip as idle talk, and gossip as the carrier of political and historical intelligence.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac D’Israeli, ‘True Sources of Secret History’, in *Curiosities of Literature*, ed. by B. Disraeli, IV/IV (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1881), pp.293–309 (p.294).

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca Bullard, ‘Introduction: Reconsidering Secret History’, in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.1–14 (p.1).

<sup>3</sup> John Wilson Croker (ed), *Memoirs of the Reign of George the Second, from his Accession to the Death of Queen Caroline. By John, Lord Hervey*, I/II (London: John Murray, 1848), p.x. Anne Hamilton, *Secret History of the Court of England from the Accession of George the Third to the Death of George the Fourth* (London: William Henry Stevenson, 1832); and Charlotte Bury, *Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth*, ed by John Galt (London: Henry Colburn, 1839).

<sup>4</sup> The publication of Hervey’s memoir was long-awaited: its existence was confirmed in 1757 by Walpole in his *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors*.

<sup>5</sup> D’Israeli, p.294.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the reception of Secret History as gossip see Bullard, pp.1–14.

<sup>7</sup> Karen Adkins, *Gossip, Epistemology, and Power: Knowledge Underground* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p.7.

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<sup>8</sup> See Adkins, pp.3–4. Also, Francesca Giardini and Rafael Wittek, ‘Introduction: Gossip and Reputation—A Multidisciplinary Research Programme’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Gossip and Reputation*, ed. by Francesca Giardini and Rafael Wittek (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.1–20.

<sup>9</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks, ‘In Praise of Gossip’, *The Hudson Review*, 35.1 (1982), 19–38 (p.33). Since the publication of Patricia Meyer Spacks’s influential monograph, *Gossip* (1985) gossip has received increased attention in literary studies with the majority of analysis focusing on the role of gossip in the nineteenth-century domestic novel, with Jane Austen receiving particular attention. For more, on gossip, women and literature see Erin Goss, ‘Homespun Gossip: Jane West, Jane Austen, and the Task of Literary Criticism’, *Eighteenth Century* 56.2 (2015), 165–77; Christine Roulston, ‘Discourse, Gender, and Gossip: Some Reflections on Bakhtin and *Emma*’, in *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology & British Women Writers*, ed. by Kathy Mezei (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp.40–65; and, Robert L. Mack, ‘The Austen Family Writing: Gossip, Parody, and Corporate Personality’, in *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. by Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp.31–40. On gossip and narrative structure, see Anne Frey, *British State Romanticism: Authorship, Agency, and Bureaucratic Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp.126–27, p.129. Ana Rodríguez Navas, *Idle Talk, Deadly Talk: The Uses of Gossip in Caribbean Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Goss, p.170.

<sup>11</sup> Jan Gordon expanded his analysis of gossip to prominent, nineteenth-century male writers, including Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, and Oscar Wilde. His definition of gossip diverges from Spacks, Navas, Goss in his discussion of Scott’s *Waverley* (1814) in which Gordon defines gossip as ‘an elusive orality [that] is both *there* and *not there*’: Jan Gordon, *Gossip and Subversion in Nineteenth Century British Fiction: Echo’s Economies* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p.36. Gordon’s analysis of gossip in *Waverley* is closer to what Penny Fielding considers the ‘complex and elusive existence’ of an ‘unstable orality’ in nineteenth-century fictional, historical narratives, including those of Walter Scott: see Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture, and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), quotation from p.16.

<sup>12</sup> Bullard, p.6. For more on marginalised voices, and the issue of their unreliability, in Secret History see Robert Mayer, *History and the Early English Novel: Matters of Fact from Bacon to Defoe* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), especially pp.94–112.

<sup>13</sup> Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), p.594.

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<sup>14</sup> Max Gluckman, 'Papers in Honor of Melville J. Herskovits: Gossip and Scandal', *Current Anthropology*, 4.3 (1963), 307–16, especially p.308. It is interesting to note that Gluckman uses Austen's *Emma* to support his argument, reflecting the value of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of gossip between sociology, psychology, anthropology and literary studies.

<sup>15</sup> Robin I. M. Dunbar, 'Gossip in Evolutionary Perspective', *Review of General Psychology*, 8.2 (2004), 100–10 (p.107); Nicholas DiFonzo and Prashant Bordia, 'Rumor, Gossip and Urban Legends', *Diogenes*, 54.1 (2007), 19–35 (p.25).

<sup>16</sup> Adkins, p.8.

<sup>17</sup> Catherine O'Connor and Sarah Michaels, 'When is Dialogue "Dialogic"?', *Human Development*, 50.5 (2007), 275–85 (p.277).

<sup>18</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and the Present Age, A Literary Review*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987), especially pp.63–4, p.78, p.94.

<sup>19</sup> Adkins, p.9.

<sup>20</sup> O'Connor and Michaels, p.278.

<sup>21</sup> Abeer Mohammad and Camilla Vásquez, "'Rachel's not here": Constructed Dialogue in Gossip', *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 18.3 (2015), 351–71 (p.352).

<sup>22</sup> Mayer, *History and the Early English Novel*, p.66 [my emphasis].

<sup>23</sup> Georg Simmel, 'The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies', *American Journal of Sociology*, 11.4 (1906), 441–98 (p.466).

<sup>24</sup> Sissela Bok, *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p.7.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Scott, *Secret History of the Court of James the First, I/II* (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Co., 1811), p.126. There is also a religious component to Osborne's argument, for more on this see pp.126–27.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe: A Romance*, ed. by Graham Tulloch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p.10.

<sup>27</sup> Scott, *Secret History I*, pp.125–26, p.130, p.127–28, p.313.

<sup>28</sup> Rebecca Bullard, *The Politics of Disclosure, 1674–1725: Secret History Narratives* (Abingdon: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2009), p.23. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

<sup>29</sup> Ina Ferris, 'The Historical Novel and the Problem of Beginning: The Model of Scott', *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 18.1 (Winter, 1988), 73–83 (p.73). For Bakhtinian readings of Scott, see J.H Alexander and David Hewitt (eds), *Scott in Carnival: Selected Papers from the Fourth International Scott Conference, Edinburgh, 1991* (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1993); Robert Mayer, 'Scott's Editing: History, Polyphony, Authority', *Modern Philology*, 112.4 (2015), 661–90; Robert Mayer, 'The Illogical Status of Novelistic Discourse: Scott's Footnotes for the Waverley Novels', *ELH* 66.4 (1999), pp.911–37; Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1991); and, C.M Jackson-Houlston, *Gendering Walter Scott: Sex, violence, and Romantic period writing* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Fiona Robertson, *Legitimate Histories: Scott, Gothic, and the Authorities of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) p.118. For more on paratexts and Scott see, Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Leven (Cambridge University Press, 1997), and Judith Wilt, *Secret Leaves: The Novels of Walter Scott* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

<sup>31</sup> Mayer, 'Scott's Editing', p.662.

<sup>32</sup> Scott, *Secret History I*, p.iii.

<sup>33</sup> Ferris, *Literary Authority*, p.3.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Scott, *Secret History of the Court of James the First, II/II* (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Co., 1811), p.91.

<sup>35</sup> Scott, *Secret History I*, p.313.

<sup>36</sup> John Galt (ed), *Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth, Interspersed with Original Letters from the Late Queen Caroline, the Princess Charlotte, and from various other Distinguished Persons, III/IV* (London: Henry Colburn, 1839), p.vii.

<sup>37</sup> D'Israeli, p.294–95.

<sup>38</sup> Eve Tavor Bannet, 'Secret History and Censorship', in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.160–73 (p.169 [my emphasis]).

<sup>39</sup> Walter Scott, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, ed. by Frank Gordon (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p.13, p.10.

<sup>40</sup> Walter Scott, *The Tale of Old Mortality*, ed. by Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p.350.

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<sup>41</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p.36.

<sup>42</sup> For example, *Ivanhoe*, *The Heart of Midlothian* and *The Fortunes of Nigel*.

<sup>43</sup> Ferris, 'The Historical Novel and the Problem of Beginning', p.73, p.74.

<sup>44</sup> Walter Scott, 'Advertisement', in *Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus: Waverley to a Legend of the Wars of Montrose*, ed. by J. H. Alexander with P. D. Garside and Claire Lamont (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.6–7 (p.7).

<sup>45</sup> Mayer, *History and the Early English Novel*, p.97. In his study of the origins of the novel in the eighteenth century, Robert Mayer offers Secret History a prominent position, arguing that its subjective, anecdotal, and biased accounts of history paved, 'if not fully prepared', the way for the emergence of the novel form (p.112). Mayer argues that *Memoirs of Count Grammont* played a significant role in this convergence of Secret History with the origin of the eighteenth-century novel (pp.94–112). Although Mayer does not draw attention to the literary afterlife of the *Memoirs* beyond the eighteenth century, it is worthwhile noting that Scott edits this Secret History in 1811 and it is Scott's edition of the history which is reprinted throughout the nineteenth century as an accompaniment to the diary of Samuel Pepys.

<sup>46</sup> Brian Cowan makes a similar argument: he notes that secret histories, whether claiming to be non-fiction or fiction, continually blur the distinction between the two which ensures that 'this generic and epistemic uncertainty made these stories appear unsettling, not easily categorizable, and hence best dismissed as unreliable or confidently ignored as unimportant', leading to their marginalisation by most scholarly disciplines: Brian Cowan, 'The History of Secret Histories'. *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 81.1 (2018), 121–51 (p.121).

<sup>47</sup> For example, Sébastien Brémond's Secret History revealed the intimate details of the relationship between Charles II and the Duchess of Cleveland and was called a *nouvelle*: Gabriel [Sébastien] Brémond, *Hattigé, ou Les Amours du Roy de Tamaran, Nouvelle* (Cologne: Simon L'Africain, 1676).

<sup>48</sup> D'Israeli, p.294.

<sup>49</sup> Adkins, p.8.

<sup>50</sup> Ferris, 'The Historical Novel and the Problem of Beginning', p.77.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Mayer, *Walter Scott and Fame: Authors and Readers in the Romantic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.4.

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- <sup>52</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p.50.
- <sup>53</sup> Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.4.
- <sup>54</sup> Adkins, p.78.
- <sup>55</sup> Simmel, p.450.
- <sup>56</sup> Walter Scott, 'Introduction to *The Heart of Midlothian*', in *Introductions and Notes from The Magnum Opus: Waverley to a Legend of the Wars of Montrose*, ed. by J.H Alexander with P.D. Garside and Claire Lamont (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.290–94 (p.292).
- <sup>57</sup> For example, 'the author conceives himself obliged to his unknown correspondent': Scott, 'Introduction to *The Heart of Midlothian*', p.293.
- <sup>58</sup> Walter Scott, *The Tale of Old Mortality*, ed. by Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p.349.
- <sup>59</sup> Ferris, *Literary Authority*, p.1.
- <sup>60</sup> Ina Ferris, 'Scott's Authorship and Book Culture', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scott*, ed. by Fiona Robertson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.9–21 (p.19).
- <sup>61</sup> Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, *Criminal Trials, Illustrative of the Tale Entitled "The Heart of Mid-Lothian"* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co., 1818), p.xxxvi, p.i.
- <sup>62</sup> Thomas McCrie, *Vindication of the Covenanters; in a Review of the "Tales of my Landlord"*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn (Edinburgh: William Whyte and Company, 1845), p.33, p.82.
- <sup>63</sup> Walter Scott, 'Notes to *The Heart of Midlothian*', in *Introductions and Notes from The Magnum Opus: Waverley to a Legend of the Wars of Montrose*, ed. by J.H Alexander with P.D. Garside and Claire Lamont (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.294–326 (p.294).
- <sup>64</sup> Deidre Lynch, *Loving Literature: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p.22.
- <sup>65</sup> For example, *The Fortunes of Nigel* and *Pevevil of the Peak*
- <sup>66</sup> Walter Scott, *Pevevil of the Peak*, ed. by Alison Lumsden, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p.4. Adkins, p.7.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Tales of My Landlord, collected and arranged by Jedidiah Cleishbotham, Schoolmaster and Parish Clerk of the Parish of Gandercleugh. 4vol. 12mo. Edinburgh, 1816’, *The Edinburgh Review* 28.55 (1817), 193–259 (p.193).

<sup>68</sup> *Tales of the Crusaders* comprise two novels, both published in 1825: *The Betrothed* and *The Talisman*.

<sup>69</sup> Walter Scott, *The Betrothed*, ed. by J. B. Ellis, J. H. Alexander and David Hewitt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p.3, p.7, p.3.

<sup>70</sup> Mairi Robinson (ed), ‘Paiter’, *The Concise Scots Dictionary*, (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1996), p.470.

<sup>71</sup> Walter Scott, *The Black Dwarf*, ed. by P.D. Garside (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p.8.

<sup>72</sup> For more on reading culture in the nineteenth century, see Andrew H. Miller, *The Burdens of Perfection: On Ethics and Reading in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2008); William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); William St. Clair, ‘Publishing, Authorship, and Reading’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Fiction in the Romantic Period*, ed. by Richard Maxwell and Katie Trumpener (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.23–46.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Paine, ‘What is Gossip About? An Alternative Hypothesis’, *Man* 2.2 (1967), 278–85 (p.278).

<sup>74</sup> Scott, *The Black Dwarf*, p.8.

<sup>75</sup> Scott, *Ivanhoe*, p.17.

<sup>76</sup> A reference to Abbotsford.

<sup>77</sup> Walter Scott, *The Heart of Midlothian*, ed. by David Hewitt and Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p.330. Hereafter, cited in text. Miranda Burgess has also defined this episode as a Secret History, noting that ‘Jeanie’s visit to London, under the guidance of the Duke of Argyle, her landlord and patron, constitutes a more obvious critique of public or standard history’ and the scene’s ‘aesthetic and ethical force are inherited from secret history’: see Miranda Burgess, ‘Secret History in the Romantic Period’, in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.188–201 (p.196).

<sup>78</sup> For a comparison of *The Fortunes and Nigel* and *The Heart of Midlothian*, see A. D. Cousins and Dani Napton, ‘Monarchy, Home and Nation in Scott’s *The Fortunes of Nigel* and *The Heart of Midlothian*’, *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture*, 64.2 (2017), pp.114–23.

<sup>79</sup> For example, Scott draws attention to the fact that the Duke of Argyle continued to play an essential role in keeping Howard safe from her violent husband. This power of protection, along with his popularity in Scotland,

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provides Caroline with strong motives for keeping Argyll as a private ally for George II: 'it was, therefore, of the highest importance to retain some hold over so important a personage as the Duke of Argyle' (332).

<sup>80</sup> Burgess, pp.188–89.

<sup>81</sup> Cousins and Napton, p.115.

<sup>82</sup> Frey, p.89. Frey situates this argument in relation to Lukács's model of agency in Scott's historical novels.

<sup>83</sup> Much has been written on this subject, for more, see James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Julie Kipp, 'Back to the Future: Walter Scott on the Politics of Radical Reform in Ireland and Scotland', *European Romantic Review*, 16.2 (2005), 231–42; Andrew Lincoln, *Walter Scott and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Gerard Carruthers, 'Responses to Peterloo in Scotland, 1819–1822', in *Commemorating Peterloo: Violence, Resilience and Claim-making during the Romantic Era*, ed. by Michael Demson and Regina Hewitt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp.120–39; Penny Fielding, 'I bide my time: History and the Future Anterior in *The Bride of Lammermoor*', in *Walter Scott at 250: Looking Forward*, ed. by Caroline McCracken-Flesher and Matthew Wickman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), pp.28–45.

<sup>84</sup> D'Israeli, p.294.

### Chapter Three

Familiar Anecdotes of Walter Scott and Darsie Latimer: *Anekdotas*, Scott, and the Mixed Narrative Structure of *Secret History* (1811) and *Redgauntlet* (1824)

In the following miscellaneous narrative [...] the whole that I presume to do is after an intimate acquaintance of thirty years to give a few simple and personal anecdotes which no man can give but myself. It is well known what Sir Walter was in his study, but these are to show what he was in the parlour, in his family and among his acquaintances.<sup>1</sup>

James Hogg (1770–1835) begins his *Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott* (1834) by promising his readers partial, but certainly exclusive, access to private recesses of Walter Scott's personal life which, it is claimed, 'no man can give but myself'. Hogg's *Familiar Anecdotes* was published first in the United States in April 1834 and then, two months later, it was printed for British readers under the different title of *The Domestic Manners and Private Life of Sir Walter Scott*. Jill Rubenstein has conjectured that this delay in British publication is part of an attempt, spearheaded by Scott's son-in-law and official biographer, John Gibson Lockhart, to prevent or, at the very least, delay, its publication.<sup>2</sup> When this proved impossible, Rubenstein suggests that Lockhart used his literary reputation and connections to minimise the public's awareness of the book's publication, limiting its advertisement and the number of reviews it received in literary magazines and journals. As Rubenstein notes, there are startlingly few reviews of Hogg's *Domestic Manners and Private Life* given the continued, posthumous popularity of Scott among the British reading public in 1834, and this muted critical anticipation of, and response to, its publication is exceedingly conspicuous. News of Hogg's personal history of his relationship with Scott was certainly ill-received by

Scott's family, friends and literary critics alike, and, on the occasions when it *was* reviewed in periodicals, it was subject to harsh criticism, garnering Hogg the reputation as

coarse, egotistical, vain, regardless of obligation, careless of truth, and ready to take advantage of any opportunities injudiciously afforded him to break through the decencies and privacies of life, if by doing so he could furbish up materials for an article.

Hogg's depiction of Scott's wife, Charlotte Charpentier, in his anecdotes was the source of particular outrage, sparked in the main by Hogg's insinuation that she was the product of an illegitimate relationship, leading the reviewer of *Fraser's Magazine* to label *Domestic Manners and Private Life* as an indecent and impertinent 'collection of falsehoods' worthy only 'of an eavesdropper at a lady's-maid's table'.<sup>3</sup> In the year before the publication of Hogg's *Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, Lockhart was outraged to receive news of Hogg's literary project and in a letter addressed to Hogg, dated 22 March 1833, he expresses his shock and disappointment at the endeavour. Hogg had composed and sent his *Anecdotes* to be printed without Lockhart's knowledge, input, or, much to Lockhart's dismay, his censorship. In his letter, Lockhart recalls meeting with John McCrone:

I confess I was exceedingly hurt and angry [...] For I well knew that altho' you had always loved and respected Sir W. you could not write so many pages about him without saying things that would give pain to his children [...] You confess that [...] you have no doubt all you wrote will be published [...] I cast my eye hastily over the *M.S.* and the first thing I lighted on was your statement about Lady Scott & *opium!* and then indeed I [...] abused you heartily, & said the next thing would be to get Sir Walter[']s valet and explain the secret history of his toilette [...] They seem to me very unworthy of the subject and of the writer— And they contain [...] gross

mistatements [sic] as to matter of fact– one of them [...] directly impeaches the personal veracity of Sir W. Scott.<sup>4</sup>

Through Hogg and Scott, we can trace an evolution of Secret History. Moving away from the eighteenth-century focus on well-known and influential politicians, statesmen, and monarchs, writers in the nineteenth century turn to a new and emerging figure of public celebrity, the author of fiction, for the subject of secret histories, revealing their ‘Domestic Manners’ and ‘Private Life’ to an eager public.<sup>5</sup> It is conventional in studies of Secret History to consider the genre to be in dramatic decline by the turn of the century and consigned to a state of political redundancy, but by looking to early-nineteenth century literature, and in particular to the emergence of Scott’s historical novels and his literary celebrity, it is clear that Secret History is adapted to suit the needs of the literary market: even as it declines as a means of political engagement, it proliferates as a literary one. Although Hogg’s *Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott* has not been labelled in literary studies as a ‘Secret History’, both its scandalous interest in the private affairs of its subject and its gossipy claim to provide the public with previously unpublished and inaccessible material, make such a designation apt. Hogg’s choice of title draws an explicit connection to the genre, returning the anecdote to its origin in the genre of *Anekdotia* (Greek: Secret History). Combining our modern sense of the anecdote as a short, intriguing biographical story and reconciling it to its origin in the historical form of the *Anekdotia*, Hogg invites us to trace the evolution of Secret History in the nineteenth century and see that the genre, and its fascination with exposing the domestic secrets of its subjects for public enjoyment, scandal, and gossip, remains active in the nineteenth century.

April London has noted that ‘if we understand anecdote as the *epitome* of secret history – the irreducible essence of a mode often regarded as in decline post-1740 – then the evolution of secret history takes interestingly diverse directions that extend its reach well into the

Romantic period'.<sup>6</sup> London examines biographical anecdotes in Sterne and Austen and she argues that this literary use is indebted to, but completely emancipated from, the genre of Secret History. However, I want to highlight that, far from an afterlife, the literary anecdote *continued to retain* an active connection and indebtedness to the form, content and structure of *Anekdotia* after the end of the long eighteenth-century. In this chapter, I consider how Scott is poised to trace Secret History's evolving literary role in the nineteenth century as both its author and its subject. I demonstrate that Scott's literary fame, especially posthumously, places him at the centre of the ongoing negotiations between domestic life and public history. Beginning with Hogg's history and then moving into a close reading of David Jones's *Secret History of White-Hall* (1697) and Scott's *Secret History of the Court of James the First* (1811), I return the anecdote to its origin in the genre of *Anekdotia*. I then explore the complicated historical function this assigns to the anecdote and I trace this into Scott's *Redgauntlet* (1824), its presentation of history, and its epistolary and mixed narrative structure. I examine the complex role Scott forges for the anecdote as a form of historical narrative that bridges private life and public history and I argue this culminates in the Secret History of the Jacobite court-in-exile in the novel.

While news of its initial publication was muted by Scott's literary executors in 1834, the editor of Hogg's anecdotes, reprinted in Edinburgh in 1882, conceived that the history 'had always been exceedingly popular' among readers of Scott and attributes this popularity to Hogg's ability to bring Scott 'bodily before us, with all his peculiarities' and throw 'so much light upon the social and more homely side of the Great Novelist's character'. This sentiment echoes that of the unknown author of Hogg's preface to *Domestic Manners* who praises Hogg's ability to present Scott 'in his strength and in his weakness' and allow his readers to

see him caracoling across the wild heaths of “the south *hielands*”, laughing with glee as he wades “up to the oxters”, in his fishing excursion [...] in his exuberance [...] Then, again, we see him in his hours of depression.<sup>7</sup>

Depicting Scott at home, with his friends, in states of anger, depression, and even on his death bed, Hogg certainly fulfils the datum of the secret historian to present his subject ‘in a metaphorical and literal state of undress’.<sup>8</sup> Adding to Hogg’s growing reputation for secrecy, indiscretion, and underhandedness in his approach to composing and publishing his *Anecdotes*, the inclusion of a preface written by an unknown, likely American, author was viewed in Britain with suspicion: ‘we take it for granted that the means by which the sketch came into the hands of the editor are neither honest nor honourable, else there could be no need of making any mystery about what in an ordinary case would be a matter of infinitely small consequence’.<sup>9</sup> Hogg begins and ends his *Anecdotes* by deferring to Lockhart’s authority as Scott’s official biographer, positioning himself after the fashion of the secret historian, as ‘A Witness to inward Life’ who ‘endeavours by all means to get open their Closet-door [...] and make his Main of what occurs in Secret and Solitude’.<sup>10</sup>

Although Lockhart had expressed his objections to Hogg’s secret history of Scott in clear and decisive terms, there was one intention of the author’s that particularly infuriated Scott’s future biographer, leading him to threaten legal action against his publishers: Hogg wanted to include excerpts of Scott’s private letters and correspondence in his *Anecdotes*. As the executor of Scott’s literary estate, Lockhart reminds McCrone and Cochrane that it is impossible ‘private letters of Sir W. Scott could be legally published without the sanction of his executors’ and, in the course of his conversations with McCrone, Cochrane and Hogg, he makes it clear that no such permissions will be extended to either Hogg or his publishers. Lockhart claims that the publication of Scott’s personal letters is an obvious breach of privacy and social decency, exposing elements of Scott’s life, character and relationships to a

public who has no right or claim to such personal access to the author, his family, and his confidantes. However, it is also clear that Lockhart is stubbornly defending the material of his own ongoing literary project, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* (1837–8), by denying such exclusives from reaching the public by any other hand than his own and, perhaps more importantly, preventing the publication of material which might contradict his own depiction of Scott and his character in his upcoming, seven-volume biography of his father-in-law. It is with this conflict of interest in mind, that McCrone accuses Lockhart of trying to sabotage and censor Hogg for his own financial benefit, keenly monopolising the public's interest in receiving new disclosures about Scott 'in his study, [...] in his family, and among his acquaintances': McCrone pointedly asks Lockhart, 'have we no right to print anecdotes such as Mr. Hogg's?' to which he receives the unequivocal reply that, 'I have no right to prevent Hogg or any man from publishing what he pleases on the subject— Always excepting *letters*'.<sup>11</sup> This fraught exchange illustrates the mounting importance critics and readers alike were beginning to place on the value of Scott's private letters and correspondence after his death in 1832. Rather ironically, the poor reception of Hogg's *Anecdotes* sparks an even greater demand for more intimate details about Scott's life and career for, despite *Frazer's Magazine's* obvious distaste for Hogg's work, it whets the reviewer's appetite for more revelations about Scott, leaving him eager to find

men who can furnish admirable accounts, and supply us with personal particulars of Scott, who in the course of a few years will be removed from the scene. We wish that they would contribute their quantum of information to the general stock of knowledge concerning the man, of every particular about whom posterity will be curious [...] But there is the correspondence! What an inexhaustible mine of information and entertainment will not that present!.<sup>12</sup>

The reviewer's craving for new information about Scott's 'personal particulars' is intensified by his overwhelming concern for its perishability, asking Scott's acquaintances to securely bank their anecdotes in the public's 'general stock' of knowledge where their future 'posterity' can be safeguarded and guaranteed. Scott's personal letters present a different conundrum: they strike the reviewer as a tantalisingly physical and durable resource, an 'inexhaustible mine of information and entertainment', which, to his disappointment, is being left unexploited and unmined. It is interesting that this metaphor of mining also implicitly acknowledges that the discovery and extraction of telling details, secrets, and intelligence from Scott's private correspondence requires labour: the letters must be carefully processed by their reader, mined so that their 'minute details', to borrow Lockhart's phrase, can be extracted, sorted and differentiated.<sup>13</sup> This idea permeates David Douglas's two-volume collection of *Familiar Letters of Sir Walter Scott* (1894) which was selected 'for publication from the correspondence preserved at Abbotsford' between Scott, his family and 'some of his dearest friends'.<sup>14</sup> *The Atlantic Monthly* heralded Douglas's publication as the long-awaited fulfilment of public interest in Scott's domestic manners, completing 'for the present at least, our knowledge of Scott's private life'.<sup>15</sup> To complete such a task, Douglas had 'mined' the wealth of Scott's familiar correspondence from Abbotsford, both literally and metaphorically transforming Scott's domestic and private spaces into ones of public value, access, and utility. Scott's home had turned into a hybrid space, alternatively a domestic, family home, jealously guarded by the now-famous Abbotsford portcullis and its illustrative motto, *clausus tutus ero* [closed in I am safe] and, at the same time, it was seen as an unmined, dryasdust, repository of secret histories waiting for historians and editors, like Douglas, to prove Scott's motto incorrect.

It is with the controversy and fascination surrounding the publication of Scott's private, familiar letters that we can begin to more closely trace the anecdote's relationship to history

and its association with epistolary form. In his 1848 edition of *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, Lockhart begins by acknowledging the historical value of Scott's personal letters for 'the interest of Sir Walter's history lies, I think, even peculiarly in its minute details – especially the details set down by himself in his Letters and Diaries'.<sup>16</sup> In advocating for the publication of Scott's private letters, *Frazer's Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, and Lockhart have all turned to the same argument: Scott's private life contained 'particular' and 'minute' *historical* details which, documented in his personal letters and journal, are worthy of public notice. However, all three authors neglect to elaborate on exactly how or why such personal, anecdotal detail should be considered historical, especially when Hogg's attempt was labelled as an injudicious and impertinent attempt to publicise 'the decencies and privacies of life'. In 1870, James Hope Scott offers a similarly opaque rationale for publishing a new edition of Lockhart's biography of Scott, adding previously omitted materials as a means of dispelling the 'veil of mystery' he conceives to still surround 'Scott's personal history' in the late-nineteenth century for, he argues, 'the omission of *details* becomes, after a certain point, a serious injury to the truth of the whole'.<sup>17</sup> What is particularly interesting about this pervading perception of Scott's private correspondence as historical material, is that it is offered, not only as a piece of intelligence about Scott's personal history, but also as a piece of valuable public history for 'Scott's acquaintance with great people was so extensive, that he could hardly write the most familiar letter without unconsciously writing history at the same time'.<sup>18</sup> But what does it mean for a private letter to not only act as a container of private details but also of historical ones? And what is the difference between the letter as a carrier of minute details and personal particulars, and the letter as illustrative of a wider, public history and therefore part of a wider historical narrative? It is Lockhart who turns to narrative form and structure to draw attention to the complexities of this relationship, claiming, in 1834, that the sensitive, confidential nature of Scott's private letters could only

be mollified in the immediate aftermath of their author's death by their amelioration into 'a book of smaller bulk' which 'embracing only what may be called more strictly narrative, might be acceptable'.<sup>19</sup> There appears to be a distinction of form, between the epistle and 'what may be called more strictly narrative', which sees the anecdote's place in history mediated and determined by *literary* condition.

In 1826, Scott had identified a growing interest among the reading public to gather information about the private lives of authors and 'to turn willingly to those volumes which promise to lay bare the motives of the writer's actions, and the secret opinions of his heart'.<sup>20</sup> It is in reference to the public's mounting, and rather intrusive, fascination with his personal life and history that Scott begins his unfinished autobiography, correctly anticipating that his life would become a source of public interest and scrutiny after his death and foreseeing, whilst desperately trying to avoid, his private conduct and relations becoming the subject of unofficial, gossipy histories in the fashion of Hogg's *Anecdotes*. Scott notes:

The present age has discovered a desire, or rather a rage, for literary anecdote and private history, that may be well permitted to alarm one who has engaged in a certain degree the attention of the public [...] I may be therefore permitted [...] to take the precaution of recording a few leading circumstances (they do not merit the name of events) of a very quiet and uniform life— that, should my literary reputation survive my temporal existence, *the public may know from good authority all that they are entitled to know* of an individual who has contributed to their amusement.<sup>21</sup>

Scott's phrase, 'literary anecdote', helps us to recognise the anecdote as a literary form, one that is contingent on a type of narrative structure that sees it intimately connected to, yet distinct from, its partner, public history. Joel Fineman has recognised and studied this strange and complex connection that the anecdote fosters between literature and history. Describing it

as a ‘peculiar and eventful narrative force’, Fineman concludes that the anecdote is best defined as a

literary form that uniquely *lets history happen* by virtue of the way it introduces an opening into the teleological, and therefore timeless, narration of beginning, middle, and end. The anecdote produces the effect of the real, the occurrence of contingency, by establishing an event as an event within and yet without the framing context of historical successivity, i.e., it does so only in so far as its narration both comprises and refracts the narration it reports.<sup>22</sup>

According to Fineman, the anecdote never reaches the status of history: it always lies outside and on the periphery of history’s teleology. For Fineman, debating whether the anecdote is a legitimate and accurate source of information is a moot point for he conceives that the content of the anecdote is irrelevant to its historical function: it produces the *effect* of the real, even if its contents are dubious; it creates a *sense* of contingency, even if the event it narrates is seemingly inconsequential and unimportant. The content of the anecdote is mined from personal, private, and often circumstantial, events and experiences but, by dint of its narration and disclosure to others, the anecdote’s implicit purpose is to present its readers with a *telling instance or example*, one that allows the circumstantiality of the anecdote to gesture beyond itself, pointing towards a wider, more universalised and diffused historical purpose.

If the *raison d’être* of the anecdote lies beyond itself, beyond its linguistic content and circumstantial detail, and beyond its self-contained narrative structure which sees it, almost paradoxically, ‘both compris[e] and refrac[t] the narration it reports’, then how can we see, let alone measure, its impact on, and relationship with, public history? Even as Scott acknowledges the importance of decisive moments and experiences in his life at the beginning of his autobiography, he simultaneously denies these ‘leading circumstances’ a clear or stable historical identity: ‘they do not merit the name of events’. We can begin to

tease apart this complex relationship between the anecdote's literary form and its associated historical function by turning to Samuel Johnson who defined the anecdote in his *Dictionary of the English Tongue* (1755) as: 'something yet unpublished, secret history [...] It is now used, after the French, for a biographical incident, a minute passage of private life'.<sup>23</sup> This eighteenth-century definition of the anecdote is extremely helpful: written at the time when the genre of Secret History was at its most popular in Britain, it acknowledges the anecdote's origin in Secret History whilst also noting its growing distance and disassociation from the genre. The emergence of a second, increasingly popular, definition of the anecdote as 'a biographical incident' (derived from its Latin etymology rather than its Greek), is more closely aligned with our modern conception of the anecdote as 'a short account of an amusing, interesting, or telling incident or experience; sometimes with implications of superficiality or unreliability'.<sup>24</sup> By turning to Secret History and the historical novel, we can begin to determine whether Scott conceives a role for the anecdote that manages to reconcile it to history or, like Fineman, whether the anecdote is left to gesture towards a greater historical significance which it can never itself carry. In order to trace the anecdote's complicated relationship between literary form and historical narrative, as foregrounded by Hogg and Lockhart, it is helpful to draw on Fineman's definition of the anecdote as a *historeme*: 'the smallest minimal unit of the historiographical fact'.<sup>25</sup> This is an important literary and historical condition for its status as a *historeme* allows us to immediately recognise that the anecdote is subject to a self-contained structure, sequenced into its own self-contained pattern of beginning, middle, and end. Through Lockhart's distinction between the epistolary form and a larger, cohesive, teleological historical narrative, it is possible to foreground the examination of the anecdote's relationship to history through literary form, one that is echoed by Hogg's association of his anecdotes with a 'miscellaneous narrative'. A latent narrative structure is hinted at by Johnson in his definition of the anecdote as 'a minute

passage of private life' for, as well as emphasising its foundation in private, personal experience, Johnson's definition invites us to consider how the anecdote is attributable to a specific, and easily identifiable, narrative structure. As a literal 'minute passage of private life' the letter is the narrative structure most representative of the anecdote. Its self-contained form and condensed, short narrative ensure that the epistle is a *historeme*: physically and literarily the 'smallest minimal unit of the historiographical fact'. By recognising the epistle as a *historeme*, we can more closely trace the relationship between the anecdote and the historical and narrative structures of *Anekdotia* (Secret History) and the historical novel.

### Epistolary Narrative, Anecdotes, and Secret History

In his *Secret History of White-Hall* (1697), David Jones argues that the most effective way to expose a corrupt government and its spies is to publish its statesmen's confidential letters and private correspondence. It is for this reason that Jones considers the ability to publish private, confidential letters as the *sine qua non* of the secret historian's resources for, he writes,

there is a very engaging part naturally couched under such a method of bringing State-Arcana's to light, by way of Letters, which, in the very Notion of them carry something of Secrecy; though after all, the Reader cannot but observe an Air of History to run a manner through the whole Composition: but whether arising from the Mode of those Minutes from whence our Author drew his Intelligence, or from his own natural Genius, or partly from both, is, I confess, a Question I never asked.<sup>26</sup>

In his *Secret History*, Jones makes a number of fascinating claims about the relationship between letters, secrecy, and historical narrative. He begins by arguing that 'something of Secrecy' is fundamental to the form and function of letters. Although vague, this is perhaps the most straightforward of Jones's assertions: letters contain and 'carry' their author's secrets as they travel from the hands of one confidante to the other, and their call to discretion

is signalled by their enclosure in sealed envelopes addressed to a single recipient and reserved for the eyes of this intended reader only. The aim of the secret historian, according to Jones, is to give in to the impulses of the women of letters, Mrs Mailsetter and her group of local gossips, in *The Antiquary* (1816), who eagerly waylay, delay, and even break the seals of letters to uncover the intelligence they contain and trade it for gossip and scandal.<sup>27</sup> But the distinction between the intrusiveness of Mrs Mailsetter's group of gossips and that of the Secret Historian lies in Jones's second and, for the purposes of my argument, his most important, assertion: the intervention and collation of statesmen's correspondence into a single collection of letters promises its readers, not just a series of disclosures but a connected narrative, one that 'contains an Air of History' which runs '*through the whole* composition'. Each letter is repositioned and remediated by its framing context. Mediated by their mutual and relative positions, each letter in the collection defies its anecdotal singularity, subsumed into a textual whole which conforms to a single, united narrative, each letter contributing its detail to elucidate its author's chosen subject: in Jones's case, uncovering political spies and exposing their nefarious plots at White Hall. Jones equivocates his interest and responsibility in determining where this historical 'Air' originates: the secret letters themselves, or their rearrangement at the hands of the secret historian. The distinction between the letters (as the evidence 'from whence our Author drew his Intelligence') and the secret history as a whole (the product of the historian's 'natural Genius' in arranging, evaluating and explaining the letters' 'Intelligence') becomes a point of unexpected and unresolved uncertainty. This uncertainty is a recurring theme for secret historians who, despite their ability to rationalise why their exposés are of public value and interest, are frequently confronted by the difficulty of defining and pinpointing the exact relationship and convergence point between personal life and public history.

Osborne begins his 'Traditional Memoirs', edited by Scott in his *Secret History of the Court of James the First*, by dedicating his secret history to his son, Lucilius. Osborne uses this dedicatory epistle as a means of advocating for the historical importance of the form, considering the publication of private letters as the best way to find and expose 'the intelligence, negotiations, conferences, and transactions of all those that have resided in embassy with our princes' from which a historian

might no question be able to compose a more exact chronicle than this nation ever saw [...] for elegancy, it would, like honey, drop out the same leaves he gathered his information from; epistles being the quintessence of the writer[']s judgement, as they are undoubtedly the elixir of his rheotrick [sic].<sup>28</sup>

Not only does Osborne echo Jones's argument that confidential, private letters contain valuable historical insight, he is also making a number of complex observations about how these *historemes*, each the product of their writer's partisan experiences and 'judgement', can be translated by the secret historian into a 'more exact chronicle than this nation ever saw'. As part of this dramatic translation of the letter from the singular, minute and secret, to the general, assimilated and public narrative that Secret History promises, Osborne conceives the History as a product of collaboration and integration, allowing the secrets and judgements of the letter-writer to infuse the historian's narrative as they 'drop out' of the letters' leaves, 'like honey'. In the same way as Jones, Osborne begins to complicate and problematise the relationship between the secret historian and the anecdotal secrets he recounts and narrates. The authority of the Secret Historian over the texts, tracts, and letters they reproduce is a point of contention that continues into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1775, James MacPherson traces this connection and places it at the heart of his Secret History of King James II entitled, *Original Papers; Containing the Secret History of Great Britain, from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hannover*. Macpherson's *Secret History* is

comprised extensively, and almost exclusively, of letters which, ‘contained in the following collection’, will ‘convince the public, that he [Macpherson] has very much to say, that is both striking and new’. This is a fascinating claim and it exposes two important features of the Secret History. Macpherson highlights that the letters are of vital historical importance for they afford the ability

to redeem history from the misrepresentations of the designing, the errors of the ignorant, and the weakness of the prejudiced; to give characters their genuine colour; to shew mankind, without either fear or favour, as they were.

But, despite the letters’ professed importance, Macpherson positions himself as both the author of the secret history and the facilitator of its disclosure, crediting himself, and not the authors of the letters, as having ‘very much to say, that is both striking and new’ to the public. In order to further distinguish and define his role as a secret historian, Macpherson highlights that the intelligence the letters bear are not only previously unpublished, but previously indiscernible, buried and obscured by a dizzying wealth of confusing, competing, and miscellaneous information. According to Macpherson, the true historical significance of the letters was almost irretrievably obscured before he embarked upon its excavation for, when the letters were first ‘placed in the Editor’s hands’ they were but ‘*as materials of a history of this country*’. Macpherson promises that his ‘Secret History of Great Britain’ had previously been entirely ‘contained’ and confined by their disorganised arrangement in a ‘jumbled [...] mass of confusion’. The letters’ translation into a cohesive historical narrative required ‘a great deal of time and industry, and, it may be said, a very considerable knowledge of the period to which they relate’.<sup>29</sup> Macpherson draws attention to the difference between the letters as the material of history, and the secret historian as the facilitator of the history’s secret discovery, narration, and public disclosure.

The importance of *Secret History*'s mixed narrative structure is immediately signalled by the plurality inherent to the genre's name: *Anekdotia* is the plural nominative of the Greek word, ἀνέκδοτο. Rebecca Bullard has noted that this sense of plurality strikes to the core of the genre for

secret historians uncover “wheels within wheels” and new discoveries supplement one another. *Anecdota* are also plural, however, because, like so many other characteristically eighteenth-century genres, secret history is a mixed form, created by and through competing influences and impulses.<sup>30</sup>

Although Robert Mayer does not include Scott's *Secret History* in his study of Scott's early editorial projects, Mayer's contention that, as an editor, Scott was fascinated with producing texts 'in which a host of contributors – poets, the editor, the other voices introduced by the latter – coexist within the text' is nicely illustrated by Scott's *Secret History* which, as I noted in Chapter Two, certainly reflects 'a remarkable polyphony in Scott's editions, a coincidence, even a clash, of writers from different epochs'.<sup>31</sup> This became a central, and acknowledged, feature of his *Secret History* which begins with an 'Advertisement' that recognises the text's heterogeneous authority and draws attention to the attendant difficulties in offering a clear definition of the *Secret History*'s narrative form, style, and its relationship with other methods of history writing. It begins by stating that,

The scarce Works, which are here republished in a uniform shape, bear reference to an interesting period of history, and throw considerable light upon each other. They may be considered as holding a middle character between History and Memoirs, neither presenting the systematized form and dignified elevation of the one, nor the connected narrative and detail of the other species of composition; but they contain many curious facts [...] which the reader might in vain ransack either the work of the professed historian, or the memoirs of individuals.<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, Scott is trying to move his *Secret History* away from what Mayer identifies as the polyphonic ‘clash’ in his earlier editorial projects, appealing instead to the idea of uniformity and integration. The difficulty in moving towards a ‘uniform shape’ is immediately signalled by Scott’s claim that the tracts ‘bear reference’ to the period’s history for he is at once acknowledging the historical value of the authors’ *anekdota* and signalling their value as *contributions* to history rather than *as* history. Scott makes a similar point in the prefatory ‘advertisement’ to Robert Cary’s *Memoirs* which he edits for publication in 1808. Scott begins by stating that the memoirs ‘throw peculiar light upon the personal character of the Queen [Elizabeth I]’ and he uses this observation to explore the relationship between personal and public history. For Scott,

Memoirs are the materials, and often the touchstone, of history; and even where they descend to incidents beneath her notice, they aid the studies of the antiquary and the moral philosopher. While [...] the reserved temper of our nation has generally deterred our soldiers and statesmen from recording their own story, an attempt to preserve, explain, or render more generally accessible the works which we possess of this nature, seems to have some claim upon public favour.<sup>33</sup>

Scott is exploring the points of convergence between the everyday experiences and records of soldiers and statesmen’s *stories* and a national history which often conceives these as irrelevant ‘incidents beneath her notice’. Like Macpherson, Scott concludes that these anecdotes ‘are the materials’ and the ‘aid’ of history, but, echoing the words of his autobiography, he continues to deny them a stable historical identity: alternatively referred to as an ‘incident’, a ‘story’, and an ‘aid’, not even to the historian, but, rather puzzlingly, to ‘the antiquary’. Here, Scott is subtly reflecting the tension between these anecdotes and their potential unsuitability as historical material by latently associating these ‘stories’ with the status of story-telling, rather than serious historical narration. At this point, Scott appears to

be bolstering Fineman's reading of the anecdote's unstable relationship with historical reality, accuracy, and contingency.

In the second volume of his *Secret History*, Scott introduces Edward Peyton's 'Divine Catastrophe' and refutes Anthony Wood's argument that the tract is "a most despicable and libellous book, full of lies, mistakes, and nonsense" for, Scott argues, it cannot 'be denied that these Memoirs, amid a quantity of false argument and sophisticated history, contain many minute particulars worthy of preservation respecting the politics and incidents in the court of the first two princes of Stuart'.<sup>34</sup> Whilst this neatly demonstrates Scott was a proponent of viewing *Secret History* as a legitimate means of historical inquiry, it certainly does not explain how the reader is able to differentiate between Peyton's 'lies, mistakes, and nonsense', which Scott does not deny, and those 'minute particulars worthy of preservation'. It is my contention that Scott conceives that the key to his history lies in its mixed narrative structure which ensures, as Scott puts it, the history holds 'a middle character between History and Memoirs, neither presenting the systematized form and dignified elevation of the one, nor the connected narrative and detail of the other species of composition'. In his *Secret History*, Scott publishes the work of five authors together, each a proponent of a radically different, often contradictory, view of each other. He compiles them into a single text, and edits them to form a single narrative, illustrative of a specific moment, and person, in history: the court and character of King James I.<sup>35</sup> Scott promises that reading these tracts in combination with one another offers the reader with access to new, previously indiscernible, historical insights. It solicits a specific type of reading process: by placing the tracts in dialogue with each other, the reader is invited to read *across* the four accounts. This is a phenomenon of the genre that leads to, what Bullard calls, *Secret History's* solicitation of "transverse" reading practices. These texts ask us to read *across* boundaries: between texts, literary traditions, cultures, and geographical territories'.<sup>36</sup> It is exactly this type of

‘transverse’ narrative arrangement that allows the anecdote to gesture beyond itself, reconciled to a wider ‘context of historical successivity’ to which it contributes. Although Scott does not privilege the epistolary form in same way as Macpherson, whose *Secret History* is entirely structured by chapters comprised exclusively of previously unpublished letters, Scott’s decision to collate multiple tracts, written by different authors with varying political persuasions and accuracy of judgements, and publish them *together* for the first time creates a similarly transverse narrative. In his introductions to each of the tracts, Scott reiterates his intention that his *Secret History* should be read and understood transversely, reminding the reader that the following tracts have been deliberately selected in order to ‘throw considerable light *on each other*’. In his *Secret History*, Scott promises to expose the reader to new, previously unknown historical detail but, rather remarkably, he invites the reader to recognise that this new intelligence is not, or at least not entirely, a result of their previous inaccessibility, but of their anecdotal singularity. Scott promises that his new narrative arrangement is fundamental to James I’s historical re-evaluation: nothing new is written, but something new is read or, as Jones highlights, ‘the Reader cannot but observe an *Air of History to run a manner through the whole Composition*’.

#### Anecdote, Illustration, and Historical Narrative

Scott’s interest in exploring the practicalities and limitations of composing ‘integrated’ and ‘unified’ historical narratives proves to be a topic of continued interest throughout his literary career, and it is towards this interest that the prefaces of his historical novels often turn, with *Cleishbotham*, *Dryasdust*, *Oldbuck* and their contemporaries explaining the providence of the following history and commenting on the wealth of heterogeneous material, sources, and authorities from which the narrative has been ameliorated. Mayer has highlighted that Scott often returns to the word ‘illustrate’ in order to describe or advocate the value of the editor and their textual interventions in correcting and clarifying, particularly

through the liberal use of examples, competing historical accounts. Mayer contends that Scott's interest in 'illustration' is a defining feature of Scott's editorial process in his early historical and literary projects, culminating in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802) and, what Andrew Lang called, its "vivifying" design.<sup>37</sup> But it is not just the editorial footnote that deals in this form of textual 'illustration', the desire 'to make clear or evident by means of examples' is the pivotal function of the anecdote, designed to provide its reader with, to use Scott's description, a 'characteristic story', a single, detailed example which speaks to the character of the whole.<sup>38</sup> We see this in his *Secret History*. At the conclusion of the second volume, Scott reveals that the final tract has been added to the collection owing to its unexpected discovery 'while the preceding Tracts were at press'. Scott learns that this 'very rare pamphlet' was written 'in requital of Sir Anthony Welldon's "Court and Character of King James"' and therefore deserves a space in his *Secret History* because 'the anecdotes it contains may form at once a companion and a contrast to those retailed of the Court of the House of Stuart'. Scott seeks to scrutinise Cromwell's character by reconciling the 'scantlings [...] of information' contained in *The Court and Kitchin of Elizabeth* about his domestic manners and ill-health. As Scott writes in his introduction to the tract:

That Cromwell attained supreme power by fraud and hypocrisy cannot be denied; but if, while possessed of the unlimited command of the public revenue, his own household set an example of sobriety and moderation, it was most unjust to impute to him, or his wife, a real virtue as matter of scandalous ridicule.<sup>39</sup>

Cromwell's domestic life and finances become a telling source of historical detail, illustrating and informing Scott's opinion of Cromwell as a political leader: his ability to control and limit his household spending, and do so in accordance with his wife, is transformed into a *telling instance or example* of his political character. In advocating for the tract's relevancy to Cromwell's political and historical character, Scott's echoes, what Varillas calls, 'the

privilege of Anékdota’: ‘to relate with a serious Air, the smallest trifles’ and reconcile them to ‘the greatest Matters’.<sup>40</sup>

Scott uses the historical novel to further investigate the anecdote’s ability to ‘illustrate’ history through the minute, the trifling, and the particular. Following *Waverley* (1814) and *Guy Mannering* (1815), Scott uses the ‘Advertisement’ to his third novel, *The Antiquary*, to highlight that it ‘completes the series of fictitious narratives’ which, together, are ‘intended to illustrate the manners of Scotland’. This depiction of eighteenth-century manners is periodised, not by the rise and fall of monarchs and rebels, but by the rise and fall of domestic relationships and personal experiences for, as Scott asserts, the novels aim ‘to illustrate’ the social and cultural contexts of the lives of ‘our fathers’ and ‘our youth’. Scott allows the novels to function anecdotally, offering their fictional narratives to the reader as a series of telling narratives which *illustrate* something beyond themselves. Recalling Fineman’s ambivalence towards the accuracy of the anecdote’s content over its historical function, it appears that Scott is invoking a similar function for his historical novels, asking them to gesture beyond their fictionality and historical inaccuracies and point towards a wider historical purpose and significance. Although the historical novel details and recounts (fictional) personal adventures and exceptional encounters, Scott argues that his narratives are able to defy this specificity, and this defiance goes a great way in defining the role and function of the historical novel, according to Scott in his introduction to *The Antiquary*. But such a method of historical illustration is attended by a number of complex narrative structures: Scott confesses that in *Waverley*, *Guy Mannering*, and *The Antiquary* ‘I have been more solicitous to describe manners minutely, than to arrange in any case an artificial and combined narration’.<sup>41</sup> In appealing to the historical function of the anecdote, Scott has again emphasised the association of the anecdote with a mixed rather than ‘combined’ or ‘artificial’ historical narrative structure. Scott returns to this idea in *The Tale of Old Mortality* and draws

attention to the effect of literary form on the historical function of the anecdote. Scott crafts a very different relationship between the anecdote and narrative structure in *The Tale of Old Mortality* in which

My readers will of course understand, that, in embodying into one *compressed* narrative many of the anecdotes which I had the advantage of deriving from Old Mortality, I have been far from adopting either his style, his opinions, or even his facts, so far as they appear to have been distorted by party prejudice. I have endeavoured to correct or verify them from the most authentic sources of tradition, afforded by the representatives of either party.<sup>42</sup>

This association between narrative structure and the anecdote strikes to the heart of the anecdote's literary and historical function, as reflected in the secret histories of Scott, Hogg, MacPherson and Jones. It resonates with Lockhart's complex argument that publishing Scott's private letters in 1837 would be an act of tactless indiscretion but the assimilation of their contents into 'a book of smaller bulk, embracing only what may be called more strictly narrative' is considered entirely 'acceptable'.

In his journal, Scott remarks on Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe's love of Secret History, noting that

he is a very complete genealogist and has made many detections in Douglas [*Peerage of Scotland*, 1813] and other books on pedigree which our nobles would do well to suppress if they had an opportunity. Strange that a man should be curious after Scandal of centuries old. Not but Charles loves it fresh [...] and he tells the anecdote with such gusto that there is no helping sympathizing with him'.<sup>43</sup>

In consciously drawing attention to the indebtedness of the anecdote to 'Scandal of centuries old', Scott takes a further step towards untangling the complicated strands connecting secret history to the anecdote. He highlights an important quality of the anecdote: it is designed to

be entertaining, told ‘with such gusto that there is no helping sympathizing’. It is this final aspect of the literary anecdote that Scott also carefully and deliberately brings to bear on his historical novels. In *Peveiril of the Peak* (1822), Scott uses Julian Peveiril’s romantic interest in Alice Bridgenorth to reconcile the character’s private and personal life to a greater, more diffused social and historical significance. Scott writes:

there are few men who do not look back in secret to some period of their youth, at which a sincere and early affection was repulsed, or betrayed, or became abortive from opposing circumstances. It is these little passages of secret history, which leave a tinge of romance in every bosom, scarce permitting us [...] to listen with total indifference to a tale of true love.<sup>44</sup>

Peveiril’s early experience of romance is used by Scott to indicate and exemplify something beyond its own circumstantiality and biographical specificity, presenting Peveiril’s private and emotionally intimate relationships as a valuable source of sociological ‘secret history’, which leaves ‘a tinge of romance in every bosom’. As well as inviting the anecdote to a position of narrative prominence in his novel, Scott is also acknowledging the value of the anecdote to the writer of fiction, conceiving it as a literary device which detains the reader’s attention and excites emotions ‘even in the most busy or advanced period of life’.

Two years after the publication of *Peveiril of the Peak*, Scott’s interest in reconciling the intimate, personal, and private experiences of the individual to a wider social and historiographic purpose sees him deviate from the typical narrative and historical structure of his historical novels in *Redgauntlet*. Published in 1824, Scott’s decision to compose *Redgauntlet* in a style indebted to the eighteenth-century epistolary novel is both outdated and unusual of Scott’s approach to the narrative composition of his historical novels. In this section, I return to the anecdote as a literal ‘minute passage of private life’ and I examine the role of the epistle in disclosing personal, domestic secrets simultaneously with (fictional)

historical detail in the novel which allows the secret plans of Hugh Redgauntlet's Jacobite uprising to be contained, and incrementally exposed, in the same corpus of letters which disclose Darsie's romantic infatuations with the mysterious woman, Green Mantle. I consider the impact of the novel's mixed narrative structure and I investigate why the anecdote is subject to such revision and magnification in the novel, proving itself as an insufficient means of historical narration. By looking to *Anekdoty*, I explore why the narrative structure (the epistle) and the historical content (circumstantial, personal secrets) of the anecdote prove insufficient for Scott's needs in *Redgauntlet*, requiring the return to third-person narrative to weave Darsie Latimer and Alan Fairford's correspondence into the novel's (semi-fictional) secret history of Charles Edward Stuart's return to Scotland in 1765. I draw attention to the influence of William King's *Political and Literary Anecdotes of His own Time* on the novel's composition, which Scott acknowledges in his Magnum Opus introduction to the novel.<sup>45</sup> I consider the role of King's *Literary Anecdotes* on *Redgauntlet*, especially in relation to the sudden intrusion of the infamous Black Colin Campbell into the makeshift royal court which convenes at Fairladies House, dispelling the already-defunct spirit of rebellion in a hushed, anticlimactic conclusion to the novel. This allows us to more closely trace the relationship between the anecdote, Secret History, and the narrative structure of the historical novel.

#### Minute Passages of Private Life: Anecdote, Secret History and *Redgauntlet*

Patricia Sosnoski has drawn attention to the nuanced ways the epistolary structure of *Redgauntlet* is used by Scott to represent and investigate the difficulties of knowing and understanding the past.<sup>46</sup> As Scott, Jones and Macpherson highlight in their respective secret histories, the epistle is both a promising and problematic source of historical intelligence, and the letters at the centre of Scott's novel, *Redgauntlet*, certainly reflect this dynamic: they are misunderstood and intercepted at every turn. In his biography of Jonathan Swift, Scott labels

‘letters and anecdotes’ as ‘fugitive pieces’ of historical narrative for, although they are ‘calculated to throw light [...] on history’, they are easily discarded, physically and metaphorically ‘flung’ out of the historian’s reach.<sup>47</sup> At each turn of *Redgauntlet*’s plot, letters are a similarly ‘fugitive’ source of unexpected chaos, ending up in unintended places, coming to light at inopportune moments, and being read by unanticipated recipients: Alan Fairford abruptly abandons his legal case for the litigious Peter Peebles when, among the miscellaneous and disorganised legal documents, he finds a letter addressed to his father which confirms that his friend, Darsie Latimer, has gone missing near the Scottish Borders; Nanty Ewart intercepts Craig-in-Peril’s letter and warns Fairford that his life is in danger; Charles Edward Stuart ‘coolly and deliberately’ breaks the seal of the same letter Ewart tampers with in order to discover its dangerous message; and, despite Stuart’s willingness to read letters addressed to someone else, he is extremely displeased when Fairford reads the prince’s letter over his shoulder and figures out that ‘there are a few cyphers added’ to its contents.<sup>48</sup> Letters are heralded as the harbinger of intelligence in *Redgauntlet*, but they struggle to alternatively contain or divulge their secrets in the manner, time, or place that their authors had originally anticipated or intended at the time of their composition. In order to reclaim some control over the epistle’s arbitrary and untimely ability to disclose the secrets it contains, letter writers in *Redgauntlet* frequently turn to cyphers and codes as a means of securing their intelligence. This is not limited to the letters between the Jacobite spies in the novel and when Darsie Latimer fears that his letters are no longer being delivered to Fairford, and are instead being intercepted by his captors or simply discarded, he begins to use allusion and code as a means of targeting his disclosures to his one intended recipient: ‘Alan Fairford will understand me when I say, I am convinced I saw G. M. during this interval’ (161). From the moment Latimer becomes aware that his letters might be read by a third party and ‘may perhaps fall into very different hands’ from those of his confidante, he becomes increasingly

aware that he needs to provide the reader of his letters with a connected narrative, one that explains the plight of his situation and clearly demands assistance. We see this by the abrupt changes Scott makes to Latimer's writing between volume one (comprised of Latimer's informal letters to his friend, Fairford) and volume two (comprised of Latimer's unsent letters to Fairford, collected into a 'journal'). For example, Latimer no longer refers to characters by their nicknames in volume two and instead opts for their Christian names, making their identities much easier to track down should his letters be intercepted by an individual willing to help release Latimer from his confinement: Benjie becomes Benjamin, Sam becomes Samuel Owen, and Joshua and Rachel Geddes become Mr. and Mrs Geddes. The narrative style of volume two is characterised by Latimer's awareness that his packet of letters, although addressed to Alan, will most likely become the entertainment of a stranger and this alters the way he presents his experiences. This attempt to whip the 'fugitive' letter in a uniform shape is perhaps most obviously reflected in the decision to label it a 'Journal' which clearly invites a new, transverse reading of the letters as a single narrative, but this is also signalled by the subtle changes Scott makes between the miscellaneous form of volume one and the more integrated form of volume two. Latimer is more concerned with rounding-out his narrative, making sure that his previous tendency to reference locations and placenames with imprecision becomes much more specific and accurate: 'a boy named Benjamin, the son of one widow Coltherd, who lives near the Shepherd's Bush' (146).

Fairford and Latimer's private correspondence becomes the unassuming carrier of both private and historical detail in the novel, and this is because there are two, interrelated secret histories at the centre of *Redgauntlet* and the friends' private letters and correspondence play a vital role in both of their disclosures and resolutions. Darsie Latimer is a young man in search of information about a family history from which he has been forcibly estranged since his early childhood. It is this personal history, 'long a mysterious one', that the narrative

pushes to ‘the verge of some strange development’ at the same time as Charles Edward Stuart’s secret return to England leads to a poorly-planned, and hugely unsuccessful, Jacobite uprising (164). Needing the heir to the Redgauntlet fortune (his unsuspecting nephew, Darsie Latimer) to pledge his allegiance and resources to the prince, the attainted Jacobite, Hugh Redgauntlet, spearheads an ill-conceived plan to restore Charles Edward Stuart to the British throne and places the kidnapping of his nephew at the centre of this plot. As a result, the *Atlantic Monthly*’s claim that Scott could ‘hardly write the most familiar letter without unconsciously writing history at the same time’ seems particularly apt for Latimer and Fairford: their letters are heralded by their fictional editor, Dryasdust, as ‘the thread of the story’ which reveals the secret history of Charles Edward Stuart’s court-in-exile at Fairladies House (125). As with Peyton’s tract in his *Secret History*, Scott makes it clear that the letters in *Redgauntlet* ‘contain many minute particulars worthy of preservation respecting the politics and incidents’ of this secret uprising.<sup>49</sup> But Scott still encounters the same issues when trying to integrate the anecdotal into his historical account, and this is an issue Scott consciously asks his historical novel to consider and explore. Latimer playfully asks whether Alan has ‘skipped’ any of his letters’ contents because he recognises that

The rage of narration, my dear Alan [...] has not forsaken me, even in my confinement, and the extensive though unimportant details into which I have been hurried, renders it necessary that I commence another sheet (27, 152).

This tendency of Fairford and Latimer’s letters towards ‘unimportant details’ was heavily criticised by Scott’s contemporary reviewers: *The Edinburgh Magazine* disapproves of the epistolary form ‘with all its provoking but necessary minuteness of explanation’ and the *Westminster Review* laments that the ‘letters are unavoidably full of iteration and of tiresome detail’.<sup>50</sup> The reviewers’ acknowledgement that the epistle is a literary form necessarily and ‘unavoidably’ iterative, minute, and detailed draws attention to the difficult clash that these

anecdotes encounter between their ‘minuteness’ and Scott’s attempt to reconcile them to a connected narrative. In the same way, the *Literary Magnet* labels Latimer’s ‘little adventures’ as ‘very uninteresting and protracted’ and the *London Magazine* highlighted that ‘one and a half’ of the three volumes ‘are dedicated to matters having nothing whatever to do with the main story’ for the novel ‘is made up altogether of unconnected stories, one which, chiefly from its superior length, we must conjecture to form the principal subject. The mass also seems only about half licked into form’.<sup>51</sup> Scott is aware that the literary anecdote is an insufficient form of historical narration. At the end of the second volume, the narrator interrupts the narrative in order to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that ‘the continuation of this history assumes, with the next division, a form somewhat different from direct narrative and epistolary correspondence, though partaking of the character of both’ (143). It is remarkable how this recalls, with striking similarity, Scott’s claim that his *Secret History* partakes the character of both History and Memoirs but ‘neither present[s] the systematized form and dignified elevation of the one, nor the connected narrative and detail of the other’. Although this change in narrative form is certainly, as James Kerr notes, ‘a gesture apparently designed to help the reader comprehend the larger view of things’, the transition struck Scott’s reviewer from *The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* as particularly puzzling for

the epistolary form is abandoned, and we are introduced, in the second volume, to what bears to be “narrative”, but which, after all, proves to be a piece of patch-work but ‘till we opened the second volume, we never for a moment doubted, that [...] we had been perusing a *narrative* so far at least, and that the story was to be told—as Richardson had so admirably though diffusely told his.<sup>52</sup>

This is an interesting criticism, particularly because it is a problem of the novel’s structure that the narrator draws attention to and, in many ways, deliberately creates. At the beginning

of volume two the narrator draws a clear distinction between the epistolary form of the previous volume and the connected narrative of the following, declaring that the ‘epistolary correspondence [...] in the preceding volume’ lacks the ability to ‘instruct the reader for his full comprehension of the story’ and therefore requires ‘portions of narrative, as may serve to carry on the thread of the story’. From volume one to volume three of *Redgauntlet*, Scott traces the journey of the literary anecdote into a compressed, unified historical narrative.

The most well-known product of Scott’s willingness to flood *Redgauntlet* with seemingly ‘unconnected stories’ is the inclusion of ‘Wandering Willie’s Tale’ in the novel. Although the character of Wandering Willie plays a continued role in the narrative, his fanciful anecdote about the Redgauntlet curse is largely immaterial to the novel’s plot and it is for this reason that ‘Wandering Willie’s Tale’ is published as a stand-alone short story and, even in scholarship, analysis of the Tale is often distinguished from analysis of the novel.<sup>53</sup>

‘Wandering Willie’s Tale’ illustrates Scott’s interest in using the historical novel to explore the relationship between literary anecdote and historical narrative. The Tale disassociates and divorces the Redgauntlets of the narrative proper (Hugh, Lillias, and Darsie) from their ancestry, using supernatural machinery as a surrogate for historical structure and guides the narrative through a series of tragic events attributed, not to historical process, but to the machinations of a mystical curse. Scott takes the literary anecdote’s ability to ‘both compris[e] and refrac[t] the narration it reports’ to a narrative extreme, allowing the Tale to *illustrate* and *gesture towards* British Covenanter history without being taken seriously by its listeners as an accurate source of historical information. Sir Robert Redgauntlet’s bloody (fictional) role in British history, persecuting Covenanters under the personal direction of Charles II and his dramatic fall from power and political prominence after the Glorious Revolution, is resituated into an unearthly, ethereal and demonic afterlife, one devoid of a teleological structure which sees the ‘ghastly revellers’ of Covenanter persecution and their

‘wicked serving-men and troopers, that had done their work and cruel bidding on earth’ convene in Willie’s version of a timeless, damned eternity. Willie finishes his literary anecdote by asking it to gesture beyond itself, deliberately concluding ‘his long narrative’ with a ‘moral’ for his audience to internalise. It is this miscellaneous quality of *Redgauntlet*’s narrative and historical structure that *Macmillan’s Magazine* praised in a late-nineteenth century review (1886) of Scott’s novel. The writer argues that *Redgauntlet* reminds its readers that

it is often useful to turn from the contemplation of the great figures of the past to others of less power and fame, but still capable [...] of teaching us something, *if only we know how to get at it, and how to use it.* [...] There is certainly some entertainment to be got from these occasional rambles through the by-paths and bridle-roads of history, and some refreshment too.<sup>54</sup>

In *Redgauntlet*, Scott uses secret history to reconcile the seemingly unconnected and irrelevant ‘by-paths and bridle-roads’ of Latimer’s history to a greater historical significance. In his Magnum Opus introduction to *Redgauntlet* (1 April 1832), Scott reveals that William King’s *Political and Literary Anecdotes* provided a great source of inspiration for the novel’s plot, and it has a clear impact on Scott’s depiction of both Charles Edward Stuart and his supporters in the makeshift royal court at Fairladies House in the final volume of *Redgauntlet* for ‘it was while reflecting on these things that the novel of *Redgauntlet* was undertaken’.<sup>55</sup> In 1818, John Murray publishes William King’s *Political and Literary Anecdotes of his Own Time*, a previously unpublished memoir which claims there was a significant attempt to reinstate the Stuart line of succession in 1750 which saw Charles Edward Stuart secretly return to England in the hope of sparking a widespread uprising and rebellion in his favour. King claims that Stuart secretly returned to Britain in 1750 in the hope of inspiring further rebellion and was met, as in Scott’s novel, with his supporters’ intrusion into his private life,

demanding that Stuart end his extra-marital affair with Clementina Walkinshaw (1720–1802) whom they suspect of espionage. The editor of King's *Anecdotes* introduces the secret memoir by recounting its unusual journey from manuscript to print: an unnamed friend of the (anonymous) editor 'met with the following work in the possession of two ladies, relatives of the writer, Dr. King' while in France. Although King's *Anecdotes* had never been made public, the editor believes 'there can be little doubt of its having been intended for publication'. There are three main features of King's narrative and depiction of Charles Edward Stuart that make their way into Scott's novel: Alan's surprise at meeting Charles Edward Stuart's mistress, Clementina Walkinshaw, at Fairladies House is modelled on a similarly unexpected and shocking encounter between Walkinshaw and William King in the dressing-room of Lady Primrose's mansion; Scott's fictional Charles Edward Stuart suffers from the same 'impatience of his friends [...] in exile' that King recalls, an impatience which Scott's Hugh Redgauntlet form a similar 'scheme which was impracticable' and 'no preparation had been made, nor was any thing ready to carry it into execution'. As King recalls in his *Anecdotes*, the primary reason why Stuart's supporters are hesitating to carry their plan 'into execution' is because, as Scott puts it, "A female planet predominates" (294). This dominating political figure, the prince's mistress, was the daughter of Scottish nobility who had begun her affair of eight years with Charles Edward Stuart at some point before she began to live with him in 1752 and their daughter, Charlotte, was born in 1753. King reveals that the relationship between Stuart and Walkinshaw became a source of deep-seated worry and suspicion among Stuart's supporters because it emerged that her sister was working in the Hanoverian king's household. This, combined with the fact that 'this girl, who soon acquired such a dominion over him, that she was acquainted with all his schemes, and trusted with his most secret correspondence' led 'all those persons of distinction' in England who remained supporters of Edward Stuart to believe 'that this wench had been placed in his

family by the English ministers'. Although she remains anonymous, Clementina is introduced to Alan when she unexpectedly interrupts his meeting with the disguised prince, 'Father Buonaventura', and appears 'as if by sudden apparition' by entering the room through a small, secret door which is hidden behind a strategically placed tapestry. Unaware of his situation, Alan finds himself at the centre of the novel's secret history and encounters the prince, not only in his makeshift royal court, but also catches him in a secret affair which 'the mere fact of her being known to be in this country, would occasion many evils' (287). In the same way as *The Fortunes of Nigel*, key political players and influences are introduced to the history via the secret passages which connect statesmen's domestic quarters to public spaces. In *Redgauntlet*, the Prince's angry response to his follower's request to break off his affair with Walkinshaw on their suspicion of her being a Hanoverian spy is met, almost verbatim, by the words of William King's memoir in which it is claimed that the Prince could have seen 'her removed from him without any concern; but he would not receive directions in respect to his private conduct from any man alive'.<sup>56</sup> In Scott's fictional rendering of this encounter, Charles Edward Stuart reprimands his Jacobites for 'forcing themselves into my domestic privacies' with an unchecked freedom to 'regard my private affections, and my domestic arrangements' as matters of public concern, leading him to stubbornly conclude that "I tell you, sir, I could part with that individual to-morrow, without an instant's regret [...] but that I will never betray my rights as a sovereign and a man' (355–356, 357). Scott values King's first-hand, and uncorroborated, account which attributes the Prince's failure in his final bid to raise a Jacobite rebellion to his private conduct and extra-marital affair. As in King's *Anecdotes*, it is Stuart's prideful unwillingness to submit to the desires of his followers in *Redgauntlet* which renders the uprising defunct, even before General Campbell intrudes and interrupts their argumentative meeting. Scott privileges King's account of the affair because 'from this anecdote, the general truth of which is indubitable, the principal

fault of Charles Edward's temper is sufficiently obvious [...] Inspired, however, by the spirit of hereditary obstinacy, Charles preferred a useless resistance to a dignified submission' (355).

There is also another clue in King's *Anecdotes* which unriddles the peculiar and uneventful appearance of Colin Campbell in *Redgauntlet*. At first glance, Campbell's muted, and rather placid, presence at the novel's denouement seems to resonate with Latimer's observation that the conspirators are 'rash enough to throw away their services and lives in a desperate cause': in other words, Campbell does not consider Redgauntlet's flailing attempt to gather support for reinstating the Stuart line of succession as a legitimate threat to the government (188). But Campbell's ambivalence is also accounted for by Scott's interest in William King and Archibald Cameron which Scott recounts in his Magnum Opus introduction to *Redgauntlet*. Archibald Cameron was attainted after the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 but returned to the Highlands in 1750 or 1751 and is shortly thereafter apprehended and sentenced to death. To the general public, it appeared that the government had levelled an unreasonably harsh sentence on an individual who had peacefully 'come to the Highlands solely upon his private affairs'. However, the government did not publicly disclose that Cameron had been at the centre of a Jacobite conspiracy funded by unknown financiers in France and orchestrated with one of the exiled prince's royal favourites, McPherson of Cluny, the chief of Clan Vourich and Scott reveals that the government had 'thought it proper to leave Dr. Cameron's new schemes in concealment, lest, by divulging them, they had indicated the channel of communication which, it is now well known, they possessed to all the plots of Charles Edward'.<sup>57</sup> Through this lens of secret history, we can see that Campbell adopts the same approach, leaving the Jacobite's 'new schemes in concealment' by offering Redgauntlet a peaceful retreat to France and his supporters a smooth reconciliation with the Hanoverian government. Once Campbell delivers his ultimatum to Stuart, Redgauntlet, and Hilary Clydesdale

their failing supporters, Campbell plays a strikingly passive role in the following action, turning ‘away to the window, as if to avoid hearing what they said’ and continuing to ignore the treasonous oaths which ‘General Campbell was too generous to criticize at the time, or to remember afterwards’ (373, 377). This strategic generosity and forgetfulness ensure that the episode remains a secret to the public, thereby safeguarding the government’s knowledge of the active smuggling routes the Jacobites are continuing to exploit along the British coastline and across the English Channel (illustrated by Nanty Ewart’s journey with the Prince in the *Jumping Jenny*). Inspired by the case of Archibald Cameron, in *Redgauntlet* the Hanoverian government adopts a policy of concealment, allowing the intelligence gathered from its informant, Cristal Nixon, about the Jacobites’ ‘channel of communication’ to serve a wider purpose, thinking it proper to leave Redgauntlet’s ‘new schemes in concealment’. Campbell’s political sagacity and strategy ensures that Redgauntlet’s failed Jacobite uprising becomes a truly secret history, mirroring that of Archibald Cameron.

The success of Campbell’s strategy, to prevent the secret history of Charles Edward Stuart’s return to Britain becoming public knowledge, is acknowledged at the novel’s conclusion. In the final epistle of the novel, Dryasdust confesses to the Author of Waverley that he has run out of miscellaneous sources of information to conclude the narrative: ‘I am truly sorry’, Dryasdust admits, ‘that my anxious researches have neither, in the form of letters, nor of diaries, or other memoranda, been able to discover more than I have hitherto transmitted’ (378). Without access to these private, secret and miscellaneous *anekdota*, Dryasdust must return to unrestricted and publicly accessible sources of information: a marriage contract and an old newspaper report. The report, from the fictitious ‘Whitehall Gazette’, recounts a meeting between Darsie Latimer (now known as Arthur Redgauntlet) and the Hanoverian king. The reporter is concerned by Campbell’s introduction of a rumoured Jacobite, Arthur Redgauntlet, to the king’s court and interprets the meeting as

proof of a secret conspiracy, spearheaded by Campbell, to fill the king's court with Stuart sympathisers and ensure 'we are going, *remis atque velis* [with oars and sails], into the interests of the Pretender, since a Scot had presented a Jacobite at Court' (378). Here, the impact of General Campbell's strategic generosity and leniency on Hugh Redgauntlet is subtly acknowledged by Scott. Unaware of Campbell and Darsie's secret history, the newspaper perpetuates a false narrative, one that, no doubt, has a marked impact on the public's view of the king and his court and which, in the same way as the government's silence on Archibald Cameron's case, would create 'a dark blot' on the king's reputation 'in popular estimation'.<sup>58</sup>

Bearing in mind the importance of King's *Political and Literary Anecdotes* on *Redgauntlet*, it is puzzling that Scott should, on one hand, place such credence in King's revelations about Stuart's secret return to Britain in 1750 and the detrimental impact of his affair with Walkinshaw on his popularity which, however circumstantial, Scott believes 'the general truth of which is indubitable', and then transpose the action of the novel from 1750 to 1765. It is clear from the manuscripts of both *Redgauntlet* (1824) and the novel's Magnum Opus introduction that this change of date and historical context for *Redgauntlet* is a deliberate decision, one that, despite some initial confusion on Scott's part, was chosen before the composition of *Redgauntlet* began.<sup>59</sup> After the fashion of Joel Fineman, it seems that Scott has drawn on the privilege of the literary anecdote to gesture towards an 'indubitable' and 'general' truth without being beholden to it.<sup>60</sup> Scott begins work on *Redgauntlet* with two clear intentions: the history was to draw on William King's *Anecdotes* of Charles Edward Stuart but the events it describes were to be transposed by fifteen years in order to capture the Prince at the approach of middle age where the impact of 'family discord', 'disappointed ambition', his 'humiliating habits of intoxication' and his loss of the 'friendship even of those faithful followers who had devoted themselves to his misfortunes'

could be included in the history.<sup>61</sup> By placing his fictitious Jacobite uprising in 1765 Scott is also able to reconcile King's secret history of Charles Edward Stuart with other sources of anecdote and rumour about Charles Edward Stuart who is said to have returned to Britain for George III's coronation in 1761. In doing so, Scott creates a complex interplay between the anecdote as a 'minute passage of private life', and the anecdote as the container of secret histories. As the *Westminster Review* highlights in its review of *Redgauntlet*, Scott makes use 'of this anecdote' which 'our readers may have heard' about the coronation of the King in which 'the champion's gage disappeared and another was found substituted in its place' (191). By relocating the action to 1765, the history takes place within living memory and these anecdotes and experiences are invited into the narrative in the same way as William King's. The anecdote, 'long and generally current', that the gauntlet was laid at George III's coronation in 1761 becomes a central feature of the narrative and is a feature that makes deliberate use of Scott's altered time period from the early 1750s to the early 1760s for the action of the novel. In his *Magnum Opus* notes to the novel, Scott highlights that the scene in which Lilius replaces the newly coronated King's gauntlet with her glove 'may be considered as a violent infraction of probability' but 'a report to such an effect was long and generally current, though now having wholly lost its lingering credit'.<sup>62</sup>

*Redgauntlet* is well documented for being autobiographical. A 'fictionalised self-study', Scott's playfulness with the historical setting of his novel accommodates this autobiographical interest, permitting the inclusion of personal anecdotes and experiences in the novel, including Scott's experience on the Kittle nine-steps in Edinburgh as a school boy and his own experience with the real-world prototype for Peter Peebles.<sup>63</sup> In the 1820s, there is a proliferation of work claiming to provide the secret 'anecdotes' from which Scott's historical novels were born, providing the public with reading guides, summaries of plots and also with the secret sources of inspiration from which the author was inspired to write his

novels. Published in 1833, *The Waverley Anecdotes* begins with a typical acknowledgement of the anecdote's insufficiency: 'these incidents, though of no great value in themselves, in conjunction with some general observations drawn from authentic historical sources, may not prove uninteresting to those who are curious to trace the history of national manners and popular superstitions [through the novels and romances of Walter Scott]'. The aim of *The Waverley Anecdotes* is to reconcile the 'incidents, characters, and scenery, described in the Novels and Romances of Sir Walter Scott' to their historical roots and, in doing so, the author claims to have discovered a fundamental connection between the anecdote and Scott's approach to composing his fictional historical narratives. The anonymous author argues that in writing *The Waverley Anecdotes* he has managed to both demonstrate and emulate Scott's novelistic historical process. By taking an interest in reconciling these incidental anecdotes to 'more general observations' about Scottish history, he highlights that his historical materials have been directed into the same [...] channels as those of our great prototype [...]

Principally, but "a gatherer", in collating and arranging the following subjects [...] the object aimed at, founded on historical data, could not we conceive, have been better represented than under the head of Anecdotes.<sup>64</sup>

This interest in reverse engineering the narratives of Scott's novels to reveal their 'minute' historical foundations is further illustrated by Robert Chambers's similarly titled work, *Illustrations of the Author of Waverley being Notices and Anecdotes of Real Characters, Scenes, and Incidents Supposed to be described in his Works* which had appeared almost ten years earlier. Chambers's *Illustrations* deliberately traded in the sense of mystery and secrecy which continued to surround the identity of 'the Great Unknown' at the time of the publication of both its first and second edition, in 1822 and 1825 respectively, offering itself, on one hand, as a sober and sophisticated history which promises to extract the 'useful and entertaining knowledge' contained in Scott's historical novels and reconcile the 'domestic

manners of the Scots' to a much-needed 'historical notice' while offering this information to the public as if it were a piece of secret intelligence. The frontispiece to Chamber's *Illustrations* includes a half-obscured portrait of an unidentifiable man whose face is entirely covered by a half-pulled curtain and stands above the Latin inscription, attributed to Tacitus, *eo magis prae fulgit, quod non videtur* [that which is unseen, shines the brighter].

Scott's investigation of the relationship between the anecdote and public history continues to endure in the years after the publication of *Redgauntlet* and manifests itself in surprising ways, finding Scott the promoter of anecdotes, and *Anekdotas*, both as their author and their subject. This is perhaps best exemplified by the controversy surrounding Scott's history of Napoleon Bonaparte. While his *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte* (1827) was credited in Britain for presenting a dispassionate and unpartisan account of Napoleon Bonaparte, this was far from the biography's reception in France.<sup>65</sup> Scott's work was labelled by Napoleon's younger brother, Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland (r.1806–1810), as 'false', 'exaggerated', 'calumnious' and 'cruel' and this outrage at Scott's *Life of Napoleon* led the younger Bonaparte to publish his own counter-history in 1829, titled *Response A Sir Walter Scott, sur Son Histoire de Napoléon*. Whilst the Advertisement to Scott's *Life of Napoleon* strongly denies any attempt at the creation of a Secret History, stating that Scott 'has neither grubbed for anecdotes in the libels and private scandal of the time, nor has he solicited information from individuals who could not be impartial witnesses in the facts to which they gave evidence'. This denial of the ill-gotten, 'grubby' anecdote is, however, immediately qualified, contrasting 'the various public documents' from which the history is derived to that of the 'private information which he has received' which, together, 'have much enlarged his stock of materials, and increased the whole work to more than twice the size originally intended'.<sup>66</sup> Louis Bonaparte further articulates his outrage at Scott who, he claims,

tired of the vain renown of the novelist, wished to raise himself to that of the legitimate historian; but, [...] after having turned into romance some parts of the history of his own country, he has now converted into history the romances and libels, fabricated during the last thirty years, against France and against Napoleon.<sup>67</sup>

This is an interesting criticism of Scott and it is one that, in many ways, he invites, having used the preface of *The Betrothed* to advertise the publication of his *Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, by the Author of Waverley*.<sup>68</sup> Advertised in the fictional preface of *The Betrothed*, Scott's clever approach to self-advertising his history of Napoleon perfectly illustrates the complex, nuanced, and enduring relationship Scott forges between secret histories, anecdotes, and the composition of his historical narratives, both fiction and non-fiction alike.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> James Hogg, 'Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott', in *Anecdotes of Scott*, ed. by Jill Rubenstein with Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp.31–75 (p.37).

<sup>2</sup> Jill Rubenstein, 'Introduction', in *Anecdotes of Scott*, ed. by Jill Rubenstein with Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp.xi–xxix, (pp.xxv–xxviii).

<sup>3</sup> 'Domestic Manners of Sir Walter Scott. By James Hogg', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, LVI.X (August 1834), 125–56 (p.125, p.139, p.142).

<sup>4</sup> John Gibson Lockhart, Letter to James Hogg, 22 March 1833, in *Anecdotes of Scott*, ed. by Jill Rubenstein with Douglas S. Mack, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp.xl–xlii.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and Mary Shelley are similarly the subject of gossipy publications, particularly about their private lives, domestic scandals, and sexual promiscuity. John Galt claims that 'An editor ought to be acquainted with the private history of public men, and the more invidious his information is, the greater will be his advantage': John Galt, *The Autobiography of John Galt*, II/II (London: Cochrane and M'Crone: 1833), p.200. This is an idea earlier propagated in John Galt, *The Life of Lord Byron* (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1832).

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- <sup>6</sup> April London, ‘Secret History and Anecdote’, in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.174–87 (pp.174–75).
- <sup>7</sup> James Hogg, *Domestic Manners and Private Life of Sir Walter Scott*, 1834 edition (Edinburgh: William Brown, 1882), p.iii, p.vi.
- <sup>8</sup> Rebecca Bullard, ‘Introduction: Reconsidering Secret History’, in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.1–14 (p.1).
- <sup>9</sup> ‘Domestic Manners of Sir Walter Scott’, p.125.
- <sup>10</sup> Antoine Varillas, *Anecdota Heterouiaika, Or, The Secret History of the House of Medicis* (London: R. Bentley and S. Magnes, 1686), Author’s Preface, a4.
- <sup>11</sup> Lockhart, Letter to James Hogg, p.xl, p.xli.
- <sup>12</sup> *Fraser’s Magazine*, p.156.
- <sup>13</sup> John Gibson Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by James R. Hope Scott (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1870) p.ix.
- <sup>14</sup> David Douglas, *Familiar Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, I/II (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1894), p.v.
- <sup>15</sup> ‘Scott’s Familiar Letters’, *The Atlantic Monthly*, 73 (March 1894), 405–9 (p.405).
- <sup>16</sup> Lockhart, p.ix.
- <sup>17</sup> James Hope Scott (ed), *Life of Sir Walter Scott* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1870) pp.v–vi [my emphasis].
- <sup>18</sup> *The Atlantic Monthly*, p.405.
- <sup>19</sup> Lockhart, p.ix.
- <sup>20</sup> Walter Scott, ‘Memoirs of Samuel Pepys, Esq.’, *The Quarterly Review*, 33.66 (March 1826), 281–314 (p.281).
- <sup>21</sup> Walter Scott, ‘M memoir of Sir Walter Scott’s Early Years, Written by Himself’, in *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by James R. Hope Scott (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1871), pp.1–43, (p.1 [my emphasis]).
- <sup>22</sup> Joel Fineman, ‘The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction’, in *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veesser (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp.49–77 (p.57, p.61).
- <sup>23</sup> Henry Todd and Alexander Chalmers (eds), ‘A’necdote’, in *Johnson’s English Dictionary* (Philadelphia: Griffith & Simon, 1844), p.89.
- <sup>24</sup> ‘Anecdote, N.’, *OED* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Accessed February 2024  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8041486720>

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<sup>25</sup> Fineman, p.57.

<sup>26</sup> David Jones, *The Secret History of White-Hall, from the Restoration of Charles II. down to the Abdication of the late K. James*, Second Edition, I/II (London: Printed for D. Brown, A. Bell, et. al.: 1717), p.vi.

<sup>27</sup> Scott plays with the idea of ‘men and women of letters’ in this scene of the novel: Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, ed. by David Hewitt, (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 1995), pp.109–11.

<sup>28</sup> Walter Scott, *Secret History of the Court of James the First*, I/II (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Co., 1811), pp.vii–viii.

<sup>29</sup> James Macpherson (ed), *Original Papers; Containing the Secret History of Great Britain, from the Restoration, to the Accession of the House of Hannover*, I/II (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1775), p.5, p.3, p.6 [my emphasis], p.5, pp.5–6.

<sup>30</sup> Bullard, p.5.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Mayer, ‘Scott’s Editing: History, Polyphony, Authority’, *Modern Philology*, 112.4 (2015), 661–90 (p.664).

<sup>32</sup> Walter Scott, *Secret History I*, p.iii.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Scott (ed), *Memoirs of Sir Robert Cary; and Fragmenta Regalia* (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Co., 1808), p.vi.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Scott, *Secret History of the Court of James the First*, II/II (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Co., 1811), pp.307–8.

<sup>35</sup> This is also an interesting title since Scott includes tracts on Elizabeth I and Charles II. The title implies that these tracts are supplementary, providing historical context for the reign under Scott’s scrutiny in his *Secret History: James I’s*.

<sup>36</sup> Bullard, p.7.

<sup>37</sup> Mayer, p.668.

<sup>38</sup> Mayer, p.667. Walter Scott, *Memoirs of Jonathan Swift, D.D., Dean of St Patrick’s, Dublin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.28.

<sup>39</sup> Scott, *Secret History II*, p.469, p.470.

<sup>40</sup> Antoine Varillas, *Anecdota Heterouiaaka, Or, The Secret History of the House of Medicis* (London: R. Bentley and S. Magnes, 1686), Author’s Preface, a4.

<sup>41</sup> Scott, *The Antiquary*, p.3.

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- <sup>42</sup> Walter Scott, *The Tale of Old Mortality*, ed. by Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p.13.
- <sup>43</sup> Walter Scott, *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by W. E. K. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp.2–3.
- <sup>44</sup> Walter Scott, *Pevekil of the Peak*, ed. by Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p.118.
- <sup>45</sup> William King (1685–1763). His *Political and Literary Anecdotes* is published in 1818 by John Murray in London.
- <sup>46</sup> Patricia Sosnoski, ‘Reading “Redgauntlet”’, *Scottish Literary Journal*, 7.1 (1980), 145–54.
- <sup>47</sup> Scott, *Memoirs of Jonathan Swift*, p.vi. This echoes Varillas’s argument that secret historians make use of intelligence ‘neglected and flung aside by the Historian’: Varillas, Author’s Preface, a4.
- <sup>48</sup> Walter Scott, *Redgauntlet*, ed. by G. A. M. Wood with David Hewitt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p.279, p.280, 285. Hereafter, cited in text.
- <sup>49</sup> Walter Scott, *Secret History* II, p.308.
- <sup>50</sup> ‘Redgauntlet, a Tale of the Eighteenth Century. By the Author of “Waverley”’, *The Edinburgh Magazine, and Literary Miscellany*, 14 (June 1824), 641–647 (p.642). ‘Redgauntlet; a Tale of the Eighteenth Century. By the Author of “Waverley”. Edinburgh, 1824.’, *Westminster Review*, 2.3 (July 1824), 179–94, (p.181).
- <sup>51</sup> ‘Redgauntlet, by the Author of Waverley’, *Literary Magnet of the Belles Lettres, Science, and the Fine Arts*, 1.1 (January 1824), 436–37 (p.436); ‘Redgauntlet’, *London Magazine*, 10 (July 1824), 69–78 (p.71, p.77).
- <sup>52</sup> James Kerr, ‘Fiction against History: Scott’s *Redgauntlet* and the Power of Romance’, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 29.3 (1987), 237–60 (p.238). ‘Redgauntlet, a Tale of the Eighteenth Century’, p.642.
- <sup>53</sup> Daniel Cook, *Walter Scott and Short Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), especially pp.36–60; Daniel Cook, ‘Scott’s Wandering Tales’, *European Romantic Review*, 34.1 (2023), 47–65; Ralph Stewart, ‘The devil takes a hand: Daniel Webster, Wandering Willie, and Lord Balmerino’, *Scottish Studies Review*, 8.1 (2007), 9–16. Coleman Oscar Parsons, ‘Demonological Background of “Donner-Hugels Narrative” and “Wandering Willie’s Tale”’, *Studies in Philology*, 30.4 (1933), 604–17.
- <sup>54</sup> ‘The Laird of Redgauntlet’, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, 54.320 (June 1886), 116–24 (p.116 [my emphasis]).
- <sup>55</sup> Walter Scott, ‘Introduction to *Redgauntlet*’, in *Introductions and Notes from The Magnum Opus: Ivanhoe to Castle Dangerous*, ed. by J. H. Alexander, P. D. Garside and Claire Lamont (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.350–70 (p.338).

<sup>56</sup> William King, *Political and Literary Anecdotes of his own Times* (London: John Murray, 1818), p.iv p.iii, p.353, p.205, p.208. King's identity as the memoir's author was initially uncertain: the editor of Murray's edition claims to have compared handwriting samples from the memoir's manuscript to account books from St. Mary Hall in Oxford, where King had been Principal, which confirmed King's identity as the author (iii).

<sup>57</sup> Scott, 'Introduction to *Redgauntlet*', p.352, p.353.

<sup>58</sup> Scott, 'Introduction to *Redgauntlet*', p.352.

<sup>59</sup> On Scott's confusion with the date, see J. H. Alexander, P. D. Garside and Claire Lamont (eds), 'Redgauntlet: Editorial Note', in *Introductions and Notes from The Magnum Opus: Ivanhoe to Castle Dangerous* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.343–45 (p.344).

<sup>60</sup> As James Kerr highlights, in *Redgauntlet* Scott 'shifts the emphasis of his writing, to a greater degree than ever, toward the process of making historical narrative and away from the depiction of actual events': Kerr, p.238.

<sup>61</sup> Scott, 'Introduction to *Redgauntlet*, p.357.

<sup>62</sup> Walter Scott, 'Notes to *Redgauntlet*', in *Introductions and Notes from The Magnum Opus: Ivanhoe to Castle Dangerous*, ed. by J. H. Alexander, P. D. Garside and Claire Lamont (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.358–70 (p.369).

<sup>63</sup> G. A. M. Wood and David Hewitt (eds), 'Historical Note', in *Redgauntlet* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp.440–43 (p.442). Scott, 'Notes to *Redgauntlet*', p.359, pp.364–65. For more on *Redgauntlet*'s autobiographical underpinning see Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, especially p.47, p.50, p.351; Arthur Melville Clark, *Sir Walter Scott: the Formative Years* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1969), especially pp.32–40, p.148; and Margaret Fetzer, 'The Paradox of Scot(t)land: Authorship, Anonymity and Autobiography in Scott's *Redgauntlet*' *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 59.3 (2011), 227–46.

<sup>64</sup> Anon., *The Waverley Anecdotes: Illustrative of incidents, characters, and scenery, described in the Novels and Romances of Sir Walter Scott, Bart* (London: J. Cochrane and J. McCrone, 1833), p.xii.

<sup>65</sup> On the positive reception of Scott's *History of Napoleon in Britain* see William Henry Ireland, 'Preface', in *A Reply to Sir Walter Scott's History of Napoléon, by Louis Bonaparte* (London: Hurst, Chance, and Co., 1829), pp.v–viii.

<sup>66</sup> Walter Scott, *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French: With a Preliminary View of the French Revolution*, 1827 Edition, I/VI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.iii.

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<sup>67</sup> Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, *A Reply to Sir Walter Scott's History of Napoléon*, by Louis Bonaparte, trans. by William Henry Ireland (London: Hurst, Chance, and Co., 1829), pp.2–3.

<sup>68</sup> Walter Scott, *The Betrothed*, ed. by J. B. Ellis with J. H. Alexander and David Hewitt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) p.3.

## Section Two

### Robert Louis Stevenson's Secret Histories: Domestic Secrets, History, and Narrative Structure

#### Chapter Four

#### 'What have we to do with books?': Publishing Secrets in Stevenson's *Prince Otto* (1885) and *A Footnote to History* (1892)

“And now,” said Prince Otto, opening the roll, “what is all this? It looks like the manuscript of a book.”

“It is,” said Gotthold, “the manuscript of a book of travels”.<sup>1</sup>

This dialogue not only introduces Secret History to the plot and narrative structure of Stevenson's *Prince Otto* (1885), it also introduces it to the difficulty of recognising and identifying its genre. What the characters initially identify as a book of travels is actually a carefully written exposé, a secret history 'On the Court of Grünewald' containing the scandalous details of the government's private affairs and domestic secrets. Referred to by a number of names, including a 'book of travels', 'memoir', 'bits of scandal' and 'libel', Sir John Crabtree's secret history on the court of Grünewald is never explicitly labelled as such.<sup>2</sup> This misattribution of genre similarly plagues Stevenson's *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa* (1892). Sitting unsettlingly between a form of journalism, literature, and narrative history, the gossipy content of his history left Stevenson, and many of his contemporaries, unsure to which of these categories his *Footnote to History* belonged, instead positioning it, as Roslyn Jolly notes, 'somewhere between modern history and investigative journalism'.<sup>3</sup> In *Prince Otto* Stevenson allows the narrator, a fictional editor of the history, to apologise for the harshness and invasiveness of Crabtree's secret history whilst simultaneously heralding it as the main source of reliable intelligence and truth in the

narrative, in one instance noting that in his portrait of Princess Seraphina ‘Sir John’s description was unkindly true, true in terms and yet a libel, a misogynistic masterpiece’ (60). The secret history is elevated by Stevenson to a vital plot device, directly leading to the resolution of Otto and Seraphina’s marriage after both characters have instructive, yet tense, encounters with the secret history and the English, secret historian, John Crabtree. Crabtree is imprisoned for libel and faces the wrath of the powerful subject of his secret history, Prince Otto, and he finds his work seized and censored. It is surprising to note the striking similarities between the experiences of Crabtree and those of Stevenson in the immediate aftermath of his *A Footnote to History* which was published seven years after his historical romance, *Prince Otto*. Facing formal charges of slander and libel, Stevenson is threatened with financial penalty, imprisonment, and deportation for the publication of his history of Samoa.

In this chapter, I trace the highly complex and relevant ways that secret history informs Stevenson’s approach to history and literary narrative between 1885 and 1892. I do so by varying the methodological structure I have adopted for the study of Scott. Published in 1811, Scott’s *Secret History of the Court of James the First* predates his first historical novel by three years. Where we must look at Scott’s historical novels *through* his pre-existent work and interest in the genre of Secret History, Stevenson requires the opposite approach. In this chapter, I analyse Stevenson’s *A Footnote to History* (1892) by looking to his historical romance, *Prince Otto* (1885). I demonstrate that Stevenson’s approach to his *A Footnote to History* marks a development in a line of historicist thought that begins with his work on *Prince Otto*, one that sees Stevenson explore the relationship between literature and history as mediums for publicising personal secrets. I consider how Stevenson uses the author of Prince Otto’s secret history, Crabtree, to plot, negotiate and explore these challenges, in a way that

looks towards Stevenson's own approach to writing and publishing historical secrets and disclosing private conversations in *A Footnote to History*.

Starting with an introduction to Stevenson's connection to Secret History, I then move the chapter into a close reading of *Prince Otto*, paying particular attention to the role of Crabtree's *Memoirs* in negotiating a burgeoning interest in investigative journalism that sees Stevenson redefine the relationship of the author to matters of domestic secrecy and their publication. In the final section of this chapter, I offer an in-depth reading of Stevenson's *A Footnote to History* as a secret history, looking to its narrative and structure to trace Stevenson's evolving ideas of authorship, publication, and domestic secrecy, as foregrounded almost a decade earlier in his novel, *Prince Otto*. This reconciliation of *A Footnote to History* to a single genre marks a step towards its greater integration into the study of Stevenson. By recognising that, lying between literature, history, and investigative journalism, *A Footnote to History* finds itself squarely situated in the realm of secret history, it allows the historical narrative to be analysed, not as an outlier to Stevenson's work but as a product of his earlier prose fiction. I note that Stevenson uses Secret History in order to take the subject of history (in both *Footnote* and *Prince Otto* this takes the subject of dynastic change and deposition) and reconcile it to the investigative impulse of the journalist. By recognising and tracing *A Footnote to History*'s origin in Stevenson's earlier novel, *Prince Otto*, I also offer an alternative to the common approach in scholarship of dividing the life and work of Stevenson into two distinct episodes: his early life and career in Edinburgh and Britain until 1887, and his life as an author in exile after 1887, travelling extensively in the Western Pacific before settling in Samoa.<sup>4</sup> By paying close attention to the three stages of inception, composition, and reception, I consider how *A Footnote to History* reflects Stevenson's evolving approach to authorship, one that is characterised by an interest in redefining the boundaries of public rights to information that originated in *Prince Otto*.

Stevenson had written *Prince Otto* with the hope of producing his best, and most acclaimed work to date, but in this aim he proved bitterly disappointed. *Prince Otto* was met with disappointment and lacklustre reviews, shattering Stevenson's ambitions for the novel to be considered his greatest literary achievement to date. In 1886 he complained in a letter to Gosse 'that is the hard part of literature. You aim high, and you take longer over your work, and it will not be so successful as if you had aimed low and rushed it'.<sup>5</sup> It is perhaps Stevenson's desire to produce a monument of literary achievement, a magnum opus, that leaves the reader of *Prince Otto* all too aware of the novel's *literariness*: 'Mr Stevenson's new book is so plainly an essay in pure literature', Henley writes in an anonymous review for the *Athenaeum*, that

to the average reader it may be something of a disappointment. It has none of the qualities of an ordinary novel [...] Mr. Stevenson has worked from beginning to end on a convention which is hardly to be paralleled in modern literature.<sup>6</sup>

This sentiment is echoed in current scholarship with David Robb concluding that the novel 'looks as if it has been concocted not from a sense of life, but from a sense of literature'.<sup>7</sup> This critical disappointment, combined with the acclaim of his more successful works, particularly *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), *Kidnapped* (1886), and *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), has led to *Prince Otto* remaining marginalised in the study of Stevenson, receiving little scholarly attention. Traditionally, *Prince Otto*'s overt constructedness has been seen as a fault of the narrative, one attributed to Stevenson's shortcomings as an author, 'an "out-of-character" mistake', but I offer a radically different reading of the novel, highlighting the remarkable subtleties and complexities of the narrative's structure and composition.<sup>8</sup> Just as *Prince Otto* is 'best understood as an experiment in genre', to borrow Robert Irvine's phrase, so too is Stevenson's *A Footnote to History*.<sup>9</sup> Published in 1892, *A Footnote to History* is an undervalued milestone in Stevenson's literary career, reconciling

numerous concerns and ideas that had been troubling Stevenson and his writing for a number of years. Despite this, the importance of *A Footnote to History* has remained largely unstudied in current scholarship.<sup>10</sup> Overshadowed by his more popular literary works, and proving difficult to classify its genre, the marginality of the footnote makes the title of Stevenson's history metaphorically apt for its place in literary study.

In writing his history of Samoa's ongoing civil conflict, Stevenson is ambitious to provide a detailed account of 'an affair, which might be deemed worthy of a note of a few lines in any general history' and expand it to occupy the 'size of a volume'.<sup>11</sup> In a letter to Edward Burlingame, dated December 1891, Stevenson appeals to literary tradition in order to define the narrative style of this expanded, historical 'footnote'. He invokes classical models of history-telling and myth to describe the type of narrative he has composed, and draws attention to the unusual and unconventional nature of the history he has chosen to recount. Recognising some of the unusual and entertaining features that this lends his historical narrative, Stevenson writes that

Here is for the first time a tale of Greeks— Homeric Greeks— mingled with moderns, and all true; Odysseus alongside of Rajah Brooke, *proportion gardée*, and all true.

Here is for the first time since the Greeks (that I remember) the history of a handful of men, where all know each other in the eyes and live close in a few acres, narrated at length and with the seriousness of history. Talk of the modern novel; here is a modern history. And if I had the misfortune to found a school, the legitimate historian might lie down and die, for he could never overtake his material.<sup>12</sup>

In tracing the ongoing political and dynastic controversies in Samoa, Stevenson finds himself narrating an episode of history intimately and indistinguishably connected to the private, domestic affairs of a few individuals, many of whom have personal, or familial connections. Despite appealing to Homeric Greeks to provide a model for the character of his history,

Stevenson twice reiterates that the novelty of the narrative does not detract from the fact that it is ‘all true’. Finding the material of his history in the gossipy testimony and political disputes of families and neighbours, Stevenson attempts to reconcile his *Footnote* to literary and historical traditions, although it continues to fit imperfectly into either model. It is clear that what Stevenson is declaring the substance of a new ‘modern history’ in fact bears the traditional hallmarks of Secret History. As Roslyn Jolly notes, Stevenson calls upon the Greeks not only to appeal to the tropes of ‘the manners and values of the Samoan actors of the tale, but also in the small scale of the action, where historical forces were played out through personal relationships’.<sup>13</sup> It is a result of this emotional and geographic closeness on the Samoan island of Upolu that ensures Stevenson traces history ‘through personal relationships’, allowing both anecdote and gossip (*malanga*) to feature heavily in Stevenson’s history of Apia and its surrounding regions, both as its subject and the vehicle of its content for, as Stevenson notes, ‘gossip is the common resource of all’.<sup>14</sup>

Stevenson’s interest in publicising the domestic secret between 1885 to 1892 is particularly timely, contextualised by a wider interest in the social and political limits of what should be published for the general public: the *Newspaper Libel and Registration Act* was passed in 1881, seeking to put checks and limits on the potential abuses of power in the publication of current affairs; within seven years this was repealed, subsumed into the new *Law of Libel Amendment Act* (1888). This new law considers the publication of news and information as a public service, and therefore states that the type of report that *should not* be made public is one that contains ‘blasphemous or indecent matter [...] or to protect the publication of any matter not of public concern and the publication of which is not for public benefit’.<sup>15</sup> With the *Slander of Women Act* passing two years later, in 1891, it is clear that Stevenson is writing in a period of widespread interest and activity in defining the socio-political responsibilities of those in the business of publication and disclosing personal

information. Given the various, contentious and subjective interpretations of what constitutes ‘of public concern’ and ‘for public benefit’ it is no wonder that secret history becomes such an active feature in Stevenson’s work: finding its way into *Prince Otto* as both a plot and narrative device in Crabtree’s censored *Memoirs on the Various Courts of Europe* and then forming the interest, debate, and substance of Stevenson’s non-fiction history, *A Footnote to History*. It is exactly this interest that leads Stevenson to bear the negative consequences of being seen to inhabit the role of the secret historian.

Stevenson begins his *A Footnote to History* by stating that, ‘the story I have to tell is still going on as I write; the characters are alive and active; it is a piece of contemporary history in the most exact sense’.<sup>16</sup> Despite this matter-of-fact observation, there is nothing ‘exact’ in the way Stevenson comes to think about this ‘contemporary history’. Even the phrase itself is a contradiction in terms, and its insufficiency is revealed by Stevenson in a letter to Henry James, dated December 1892. Within a few sentences on the subject of his *Footnote to History*, Stevenson has likened it to history, journalism, anthropology, and literature:

By my judgement [...] the fierce white light of history will beat no longer on yours sincerely and his fellows here [...] You don’t know what news is, nor what politics, nor what the life of man, till you see it on so small a scale and with your own liberty on the board for stake. I would not have missed it for much. And anxious friends beg me to stay at home and study human nature in Brompton drawing-rooms! [...] I am an Epick Writer with a k to it, but without the necessary genius.<sup>17</sup>

In this chapter, I offer a way of negotiating and analysing the heterogeneity of Stevenson’s *A Footnote to History* through Secret History. By looking to the traits of the secret historian, John Crabtree, in *Prince Otto*, I argue that Stevenson uses the secret historian to hybridise historical enquiry and domestic secrecy into the realm of investigative journalism, reframing the secret history and its narrative structure to accommodate its timely (fictional) political

relevance in *Prince Otto*. The secret historian, Crabtree, is labelled a travel writer by those whom he encounters, a distinction that Stevenson himself comes to bear. I trace how Stevenson draws on the idea of the travelling secret historian, first characterised by Crabtree and then performed by Stevenson in Samoa, to think about the relationship between secret disclosure and publication, particularly in relation to the emerging figure of the Special Correspondent. Stevenson places the author, like Scott, as the gatekeeper and negotiator of the truth on behalf of the reader, and he similarly draws upon the narrative style and structures of secret history, in both *Prince Otto* and *A Footnote to History*, to conceive a public role for the writer, as an individual who both authorises and promotes political progress and reconciliation. It is with this goal in mind, that the secret becomes manifest as the material of publication in his fiction and non-fiction historical narratives.

“Our Own Correspondent”: The Secret Historian as Investigative Journalist in *Prince Otto*

*Prince Otto* begins by playing with the structures and expectations of narrative disclosure, establishing it as a central, yet problematic, feature of the novel. Grünewald’s fictitious revolution unfolds at an undisclosed time for, the narrator reasons, ‘the precise year of grace in which this tale begins’ is less important to the reader than ‘the season of the year’ (8). Despite this deliberate opacity on the part of the narrator, it is evident that Stevenson has the German Revolution of 1848 in mind for his historical romance. It is important to recognise that, as Robert Irvine points out, *Prince Otto* ‘makes no attempt to remain faithful to a particular series of events or even to one historical epoch’.<sup>18</sup> But, after Christopher Harvie, I am privileging *Prince Otto*’s deliberate historical parallel to Germany in 1848 for the current study.<sup>19</sup> The principality of Grünewald is a fictional reminder of a Germany before the formal unification of its, previously independent, states in 1871: it is a lone-holdout against a wave of anti-authoritarian, Republican zeal that has already seized its neighbouring states, and now threatens Grünewald’s political system with imminent revolution. The novel ends in success

for the German revolutionaries, an outcome inevitable to the nineteenth-century, European history from which the narrative of *Prince Otto* is both derived and guided. Despite the narrator's deliberate ambiguity on when 'this tale begins', the themes, concerns, and development of the history leaves little by way of uncertainty for, as the narrator highlights, 'the reader well informed in modern history will not require details as to the fate of the Republic' (160). It is clear that Stevenson is situating the historical romance in a nineteenth-century Germany that is positioned towards the end of the surge of revolutions occurring between 1848 and 1849, and has seen the elimination of monarchies in many of its independent states. The titular character of Stevenson's novel, Prince Otto Johann Friedrich, shares his name both with the Prussian king, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who played a vital role in quelling the first impulses of German revolutions in 1848–49, and with the man who would become Germany's first Chancellor two decades later, Otto Von Bismarck.<sup>20</sup> By reconciling these two, oppositional and historic figures in the name of Grünewald's prince, Otto functions in a Janus-like fashion. He reminds the reader of a Germany comprised of independent states and governed in pockets of autocratic and feudalistic power, and, on the other hand, Otto's political and economic idleness anticipates the imminent redundancy of such political structure. Otto offers a number of self-depreciating and liberal theories on the uselessness of the monarch whose role is described as both unnatural and artificial (12, 27). These ideas are certainly anachronistic for the mid-century, German prince, but they perfectly demonstrate how Otto is being used by Stevenson, and this complex historical and theoretical role of the character is reflected by Crabtree who, in his chapter on Grünewald, writes that

I have seen this poor phantom of a prince riding out alone or with a few huntsmen, disregarded by all, and I have been grieved for the bearer of so futile and melancholy existence. The last Merovingians may have looked not otherwise (46).

Prince Otto, like the last of the Frankish Merovingian dynasty, is a powerless figurehead and this is true not only of his political position in the novel, surrounded by successful conspiracies to siphon and reclaim his judicial, economic, and martial powers, it is also reflective of his place within a narrative that draws attention to the prince's imminent, historical redundancy. Destined to end in revolution, the historical narrative of *Prince Otto* hinges on the resolution of its romance plot and it is here that the historical relationship between the public and the political, and the private and domestic becomes especially intertwined in the narrative structures of Stevenson's historical romance, brought into focus by Crabtree's secret exposé on the court of Grünewald.

The complex function of Crabtree's chapter in Otto's historical narrative is signalled by the seized manuscript bearing striking resemblances to the last publication of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, a German newspaper edited by Karl Marx, with the assistance of Engels, and active during the German Revolution, printing from June 1848 to May 1849. Published in the contested territory of Cologne, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* appeared daily during the period of the German Revolution and it was often referred to, after its subtitle, as the *Organ der Demokratie* (Organ of Democracy) for actively promoting and campaigning for sustained anti-authoritarian revolutions in Germany. The *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* was the subject of multiple attempts at censorship, and in May 1849 it was finally forced into dissolution. In the rush to publish a final issue of the newspaper, the last publication of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* appeared in red ink, leading it to be popularly referred to as 'the red issue'. One of the most visually distinct, and historically remarkable, characteristics of Crabtree's manuscript, seized and censored after the fashion of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, is that it is 'elaborately written in red ink' (44). Whilst red has long been associated with revolution, Crabtree's chapter bears more in common with Marx's newspaper than colour alone.<sup>21</sup> In its

red issue, ‘Suppression of *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*’, Marx prints an official letter that he had received on 16 May 1849 which details the rationale for the newspaper’s suppression:

The tendency of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* to provoke in its readers contempt for the present government, and incite them to violent revolutions and the setting up of a social republic has become stronger in its latest pieces” (!). “The right of hospitality” (!) “which he so disgracefully abused, is therefore to be withdrawn from its Editor-in-Chief, Dr. *Karl Marx*, and since he has not obtained permission to prolong his stay in these states he is ordered to leave them within 24 hours. If he should not comply with this demand, he is to be conveyed across the border.<sup>22</sup>

In his publication, Crabtree describes Otto, or ‘Prince Featherhead’ as he is also referred, as ‘a plexus of weaknesses; the singing chambermaid of the stage, tricked out in man’s apparel, and mounted on a circus horse’ (46). In a similarly condescending and contemptuous tone, he characterises Princess Seraphina as a ‘girl [...] sick with vanity, superficially clever, and fundamentally a fool’ and, although with a begrudging respect, describes Prime Minister Gondremark as a ‘heavy, bilious, selfish, inornate’ man, who ‘sits upon this court and country like an incubus’ (46, 48). Crabtree certainly attempts, with great success, to use his publication to ‘provoke in its readers contempt for the present government’ and even actively endorses ‘violent revolutions and the setting up of a social republic’, writing that ‘my sympathies were early acquired’ to the ‘organised conspiracy against the state’, its ‘Liberal camp’, ‘republican Constitution’ and plan ‘of insurrection’ (47). Stevenson is giving his secret historian a strong, opinionated, and active role in both reporting, to borrow Stevenson’s phrase, ‘contemporary history’ and shaping (fictional) contemporary public opinion. Crabtree finds himself, like the editor of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, censored by the government and forced ‘across the border’, leaving Grünewald with an official passport from Otto in order to find refuge in Vienna after his short spell in prison. It is remarkable that the similarities do

not end here, with Prince Otto's reprimand of Crabtree mirroring that levelled at Marx's publication of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* for 'the right of hospitality which was disgracefully abused'. Confronting his 'guest', Otto highlights that

"You have eaten my bread," replied Otto, "you have taken my hand, you have been received under my roof. When did I fail you in courtesy? What have you asked that was not granted as to an honoured guest? And here, sir," tapping fiercely on the manuscript, "here is your return." (51).

Through Crabtree and his chapter on Grünewald in his *Memoirs on the Various Courts of Europe*, Stevenson articulates and negotiates the complexities of journalistic exposure, censorship, and the moral, political and social obligations of the published author.<sup>23</sup>

Crabtree's chapter is pivotal to the novel's processes of narrative disclosure, exposing the private, domestic secrets of the Prince and Princess in the dual names of entertainment and political instruction. It is a process of exposing the secret that requires the boundaries between private and public to be renegotiated. Crabtree offers his own view on this issue, claiming his right, as 'one who goes sniffing' for any hint of a scandal that is waiting to be publicised, is founded on a fundamental public right to such access (54). He argues that Otto is both a political and public figure as 'a reigning sovereign', and it is for this reason

that I have a right to criticise your action and your wife. You are in everything a public creature; you belong to the public, body and bone. You have with you the law, the muskets of the army, and the eyes of spies. We, on our side, have but one weapon— truth (53).

Rationalising his secret history of the court of Grünewald, Crabtree reflects upon the role of exposure, not as a moral obligation to discover and inform, but as a social and political 'weapon'. This is particularly obvious at the pair's tense, initial confrontation: Crabtree first contributes to the conversation by threatening the prince with further public derision for 'the

sketch is most imperfect. I shall now have much to add' (51). Crabtree flaunts his self-professed right to expose his private encounters with, and personal opinions of, Otto with the assured threat that 'I shall be able to relate [...] the singular interview with which you honour me at present. For the rest, I have already communicated' (51).

Crabtree is drawing attention to an important, and potentially troubling, distinction between the reporter as public servant, making important information known to the public, and the reporter as a deliberate scandal-monger, publishing personal information with the intention of damaging the reputation of another. This active and potentially volatile approach to gathering political intelligence ensures that the secret history, true to its generic stereotype, becomes closely aligned with the bouts of spirited gossip that occur throughout Prince Otto's history. Countess von Rosen is both the subject of rumour and gossip, and their proud communicator, a dual reputation in the court of Grünewald in which she appears to delight. The countess displays astute political skill and manages to exert significant influence over the two political antagonists, Otto and Gondremark, by acting as the trusted advisor of one, and the mistress and confidante of the other. During one of their private and intimate conversations, Countess von Rosen offers Otto an insightful, but deliberately cruel, observation:

“[Politics] is a trade I rather like. It is, after all, first cousin to gossip, which no one can deny to be amusing. For instance, if I were to tell you that the Princess and the Baron rode out together daily to inspect the cannon, it is either a piece of politics or scandal, as I turn my phrase. I am the alchemist that makes the transmutation. They have been everywhere together since you left,” she continued, brightening as she saw Otto darken; “that is a poor snippet of malicious gossip—and they were everywhere cheered—and with that addition all becomes political intelligence (58).

With gossip thinly veiled as political intelligence, the private details of Otto and Seraphina's domestic relationship become rationalised as the rightful material of public information and intrigue. As I have traced in chapters one and two, the lack of clear distinctions between gossip and secret history has led to the form being strongly associated with the charge of libel. Where gossip remains the intimate, secret intelligence of a few participants, the publication of the same information not only ruptures this small-scale, confidential form of the secret's communication, but by appearing in print it also lends the intelligence a degree of authenticity and legitimacy that proves difficult to overcome. It is this association that Otto tries to bring to Crabtree's attention, arguing that

I opened your roll; and what did I find—what did I find about my wife; Lies!” he broke out. “They are lies! They are not, so help me God! four words of truth in your intolerable libel! [...] you rake together all this vulgar scandal, and propose to print it in a public book! Such is your chivalry! (53).

The content of gossip and rumour, Otto suggests, is transformed into the material of libel when it is written ‘to print it in a public book’, in other words, when the secret is publicised. It is at this point that it becomes particularly clear that Crabtree is operating less after the fashion of a historian, and more as a journalist. His writing process also speaks to Crabtree's true intentions as a reporter. Described by Gotthold as a ‘methodical dog’, it is revealed that ‘each chapter [is] written and finished on the spot’ before Crabtree then travels to another foreign court and discovers its hidden scandal to include in his *Memoirs* (44). The foundational role of journalistic investigation and report to the narrative of *Prince Otto* is immediately foregrounded by Grünwald's introduction in the history, narrated through the perspective and experience of the foreign reporter. It is not the sordid detail and investigative zeal of Crabtree that the history initially privileges. Instead, it is the romantic ‘recollections of the Grünwald tourist’, that first familiarises the reader with the fictional, foreign states of

Grünewald and Gerolstein, providing picturesque descriptions of the principalities' natural beauty, idyllic landscape, and romantic architecture (7). Stevenson immediately sets up the narrative to negotiate and explore the role of the reporter as a potential custodian of historical detail and perspective. Before privileging the controversial type of investigative reportage that Crabtree embodies, Stevenson uses the introduction to house a number of journalistic perspectives from which the history is refined, drawing on the emerging figure of the tourist abroad to set up a historical perspective and narrative structure that privileges the views of the visitor and the outsider.<sup>24</sup> But as the first chapter ends the narrative turns towards alternative sources of intelligence, ones that look beyond the superficial and visible and promise to uncover the scandal of private affairs. As the history of Prince Otto and Grünewald continues to unfold in the course of the novel, it is not produced from the reflections of the tourist privileged in its introductory pages; instead, the history is constructed out of gossip, rumour, and the investigative labour of the secret historian.

In calling upon the form and genre of Secret History to think about the historical role of journalistic enquiry and the publication of private information via print, Stevenson is drawing on a foundational, historic connection between the two narrative forms of the secret history and the periodical. In her analysis of the early-eighteenth century periodical press in Britain, Nicola Parsons finds an origin for London's serial publications and periodicals, such as *The London Spy* (1698–1700) and the *Tatler* (1709–1711), in the genre of Secret History. Arguing that the emergence of the eighteenth-century public sphere was due to the combined influence of secret history and the rise of the periodical, Parsons outlines how 'the secret history's distinctive blend of fiction, politics, and gossip migrated from stand-alone publication to London periodicals'.<sup>25</sup> By considering how the content of secret history is transposed from its bound, multi-volume structure into the narrative form of the serial periodical, Parsons draws attention to the foundational, yet complex, relationship between the

public disclosure of secrets and its materialisation in print. The latter decades of the nineteenth century saw a move away from a more passive approach to the publication of news, in favour of active investigation and enquiry.<sup>26</sup> Now seeking out sources of news and information for print publication, work in newspapers became more specialised as distinctions between local and foreign news started to crystalise, and distinctions between the various types of popular journalism, such as travel-writing, editorials, literary reviews, advertising, and news reports, similarly materialised. It is in this context that we see investigative journalism, underpinned by a desire to expose information to the public via print, emerge as a central feature of British press and print culture. Published in the same year as *Prince Otto*, William T. Stead's 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon: A Secret Commission' is an infamous example, appearing to great furore in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.<sup>27</sup> Stead sensationalises an emerging type of journalism, one that, as Brian Lewis demonstrates, was more concerned with 'creating news items rather than simply reporting upon them'.<sup>28</sup> With the self-designation of 'an investigator; not an informer', Stead highlights that 'my purpose was not to secure the punishment of criminals, but to lay bare'.<sup>29</sup>

The parallels between *Secret History* and this new form of active, investigative journalism are particularly clear, both publicising secrets via print publication and in the fashion of gossip, promoting scandal, public fury, and charges of libel. Sir John Crabtree is poised to negotiate all the experiences, burdens, and benefits of being an investigative journalist, and Stevenson achieves this by drawing on the secret history as an archetypal narrative structure that reconciles travel writing, gossip, scandal and charges of libellous indecency within its historical form. In this too, we can see how the secret historian, who finds, documents, and publicises, the secrets of another, is a precursory investigative writer to this type of nineteenth-century journalist. In her recent studies, Catherine Waters shows how this investigative impulse, actively seeking sources of exclusive news, gave rise to the 'roving

reporter' in the British press which culminated in the creation of the Special Correspondent.<sup>30</sup> Alternatively referred to as 'our own correspondent' in contemporary newspapers, the Special Correspondent was sent to foreign territories with the task of reporting home to the British public on the state of a particular affair or conflict abroad.<sup>31</sup> Their unique ability to access these unfamiliar places, uncover the details of foreign events, and publish their findings in newspapers, ensured that Special Correspondents emerged as one of the most popular and widely read journalists during the second half of the nineteenth century, with one writer remarking of the Specials that, 'we accept the information he sends us as though it were a matter of course, and in stirring times we look for it hungrily and devour it eagerly'.<sup>32</sup> One of the most famous journalists of his day, William H. Russell is often credited as the first Special Correspondent, reporting judiciously and copiously for the *Times* during the Crimean War, 1853–1856. As E. M. Palmegiano highlights, Russell's correspondence heralded a new age of journalism, one where the anonymous, editorial 'we' was replaced by the anecdotal experiences of the named individual whose 'exploits quickly sparked contention about the scope of reporting in a free society. According to their enemies, they were spies, analogous to the interviewers of "new journalism" in disclosures of secrets'.<sup>33</sup> This type of mobile, foreign reporter, popularised by William Russell in the 1850s, was not stationed in a particular place, instead moving, or 'roving', from place to place as rumour and necessity demanded. In 1868, the *Leisure Hour* offered a helpful definition of the Special, highlighting that

The qualifications of Our Own Correspondent have risen amazingly during the life of the existing generation [...] If he is not of too refined a *morale*, so as to be over-scrupulous in the adoption of means for obtaining information, it may be none the worse for him in the estimation of the news-devouring public. We are not speaking now of the regular correspondent, who, residing constantly in some foreign capital, gleans from the officials of the Government such information as they choose to impart

[...] but of him who is the special messenger of the London press, and is ready to start to any quarter of the globe at a moment's notice. [...] He may be dispatched incognito to some secret congress or quiet meeting [...] where certain questions of diplomacy are to be discussed in a manner under the rose, but the results of the London editor has determined, if possible, to make public. [...] He does not declare himself: perhaps he is a student acquiring the language, or he is an idle traveller making but a temporary sojourn; but in either character, or any character, he manages to make friends, or to improve his introductions into friendships, and in course of time seeks out the heart of the mystery it was his business to fathom. Or he is despatched to some district on the eve of insurrection, or already in the throes of revolution.<sup>34</sup>

Mirroring these intentions and characteristics of the Special Correspondent, Stevenson's Crabtree travels to Grünewald, a German state 'on the eve of insurrection' and 'already in the throes of revolution', and adopts the guise of an 'idle traveller'. This disguise proves a vital tool for political intelligence-gathering in *Prince Otto* with the titular character adopting the same, undercover strategies as 'our own correspondent', Sir John Crabtree. Confessedly inspired by his first meeting with Crabtree, Otto claims to be a lost "English traveller" in order to spy on his subjects and discover their political opinions and intentions.<sup>35</sup> At every turn in *Prince Otto*, the label of 'English traveller' is proven, after the fashion of the *Leisure Hour's* correspondent, to be synonymous with 'political spy'. It is under this appearance that Crabtree ingratiates himself into Otto's society and uses these moments of pretended friendship to gain personal access to Grünewald's key political players, primarily Prince Otto, Princess Seraphina, and the Prime Minister, Gondremark. These moments of unguarded conversation provide the substance of Crabtree's chapter, materially influencing both the content and contemptuous tone of the exposé. Recounting his first meeting with Otto, Crabtree reports that 'at last, however, on the third occasion when I visited the palace, I found

this sovereign in the exercise of his inglorious function, with the wife on one hand, and the lover on the other' (45). By employing the strategies of the Special Correspondent to access the restricted, political space of Grünewald's court, Crabtree troubles the boundaries between the public and private, defining Otto primarily in the context of his domestic role as a husband and only mentions the Princess to draw attention to her rumoured affair with Gondremark. It is clear that Crabtree is less interested in recounting any political intelligence he has gleaned from the encounter than in disclosing sexual secrets and revealing the private, scandalous details of the prince's troubled marriage. We know that Crabtree publishes his secret history for a British readership because of its bibliographic reference in the history's 'postscript': 'Sir John (2 volumes: London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown)' (160). Written for the benefit of his readers back in his native England, Crabtree acts as 'the special messenger of the London press', reporting on the foreign affairs and scandal of 'the various courts of Europe' contained in his memoir.

The secrets divined from his clandestine investigations are not only made accessible to the public via the publication of Crabtree's secret history, they are also *preserved* by the process of publication. After Otto releases Crabtree from prison, the pair have an emotional reconciliation which ends with Crabtree ripping up his 'racy chapter' on the scandalous secrets of Grünewald's political leaders (54). Although Crabtree ends the encounter with the declaration that 'the chapter is no more', the secrets it contains defy this act of destruction (55). Just as Jeanie in *The Heart of Midlothian* tears her letter from Staunton and distributes its pieces at various intervals of her journey, Crabtree's chapter, like Staunton's letter, overcomes its physical decomposition to be reproduced in print. Where this mysterious reconstruction remains an unexplained feature of Scott's narrative, Stevenson uses the fictional editor of *Prince Otto* to both recognise and rationalise the chapter's continued textual existence:

One point, however, calls for explanation; the chapter on Grünewald was torn by the hand of the author in the palace gardens; how comes it, then, to figure at full length among my more modest pages, the Lion of the caravan? That eminent literatus was a man of method; ‘Juvenal by double entry,’ he was once profanely called; and when he tore the sheets in question, [...] he was possessed of two blotted scrolls and a fair copy in double. But the chapter, as the reader knows, was honestly omitted from the famous ‘Memoirs on the various Courts of Europe’. It has been mine to give it to the public (160).

Written with an eye to publication, Crabtree’s fastidious preparations of the manuscript for print safeguards the secret history, ensuring that the secrets he has uncovered complete their journey to the public eye and readership. Book and print culture are both its means of publication, as the process of making the secret public, and its material, textual preservation. For Crabtree, it is the processes of publication convention that both preserves and safeguards his secret history’s continued existence: publication doubly secures the secret on its journey to the public in *Prince Otto*. The role of publication in preserving Crabtree’s chapter speaks to the interest of the novel on the issue of censorship, a problem that Crabtree and the editors of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* are forced to face. Interestingly, when Otto first encounter’s Crabtree’s manuscript, he vehemently disapproves of its author’s imprisonment:

The papers of an author seized at this date of the world’s history, in a state so petty and so ignorant as Grünewald, here is indeed an ignominious folly [...] to descend to be a spy! For what else can it be called? To seize the papers of this gentleman, the private papers of a stranger, the toil of a life, perhaps—to open them, and to read them. And what have we to do with books? (44).

Otto considers the seizure and censorship of Crabtree’s manuscript to be a violation of privacy, an indiscretion that he thinks all the more unnecessary because he believes,

erroneously, that Grünewald's government is too unsophisticated to require such measures. This is an interesting distinction, for Otto quickly moves away from the argument that censorship is incongruent with 'this date of the world's history' and clarifies that, in fact, censorship is not a historical consideration, but a political one. It is precisely this distinction that ensures Otto's attitude towards the manuscript changes dramatically when he becomes aware that he, and his court, are its subject. Once again, the secret history becomes the subject of an intense and clear renegotiation of the private, the concealed, and the publicly accessible.

Omitted, as promised, from Crabtree's published *Memoirs*, the chapter has now been made public, published independently of its author and the larger work from which it had been originally excluded. As a result, the previously unpublished chapter of Crabtree's *Memoirs* on the court of Grünewald, is proudly declared by the editor-narrator as an *anekdota* for 'it has been mine to give it to the public' for the first time (160). The suppressed and self-censored exposé has itself become the subject of exposure. In his history, *English Journalism, and the Men who have Made It* (1882), Charles Pebody proudly declares that

Secrets are things of the past. Scandals which were formerly hardly whispered in private conversations are now published without the slightest attempt at concealment. Everything is known that used to be hidden, and everything that is known is proclaimed on the house-tops.<sup>36</sup>

The complex narrative structure of *Prince Otto* testifies to the accuracy of Pebody's claim, not only containing, and reproducing Crabtree's secret history, but clarifying it, adding to its detail, and exposing the reader to moments of private conversation and scandal that occurred beyond the gaze of the secret historian. The reader is privy to the tense confrontation between Otto and Seraphina in their private quarters over her apparent infidelity, and their romantic reconciliation in the woods at the novel's conclusion; Seraphina's almost-fatal stabbing of

Gondremark in her bed chamber; Gondremark and Countess von Rosen's flirtatious conspirations in Gondremark's mansion; Otto's passionate kiss with Countess von Rosen at the fountain; Otto's gossip, under an alias, with Killian, Gottesheim and Ottilia at their farm; and, Gotthold's confessions of alcoholism and secretly being in love with Otto's wife, to name but a few key examples. Crabtree's *Memoirs* are certainly central to *Prince Otto*, but they form only a part of a much bigger narrative of exposure, one that carefully assimilates the secret history into the fabric of its text and transforms both the secret history and its author into the subject of exposé themselves. As intelligence 'hardly whispered in private conversations', the scandal, gossip and domestic secrets that Crabtree has failed to observe and document in his chapter on the court of Grünewald 'are now published without the slightest attempt at concealment' by the fictional editor-narrator of *Prince Otto*: 'everything is known that used to be hidden', even that which was hidden from the experienced investigator, Sir John Crabtree. Whilst the narrative does much to privilege his chapter on Grünewald as a factual and accurate account of the court's political scandal and domestic secrets, it also offers a number of critiques of Crabtree, particularly his 'misogynistic' and closedminded characterisation of Seraphina:

Her forehead was perhaps too high, but it became her; her figure somewhat stooped, but every detail was formed and finished like a gem [...] if she was not beautiful, she was vivid, changeful, coloured, and pretty with a thousand various prettinesses; and her eyes, if they indeed rolled too consciously, yet rolled to purpose. They were her most attractive feature, yet they continually bore eloquent false witness to her thoughts (60).

Even as it recalibrates the bias of Crabtree's perspective, the narrative clarifies its own position as a form of secret history, promising the reader a more balanced, truthful and accurate portrait of the characters and offering exclusive access to a new historical

perspective.<sup>37</sup> Bolstered by the narrative's internal structures, the narrator's account of Seraphina is validated later in the novel, with Crabtree complaining in surprise that "upon my word [...] I did not think the girl could be so pretty" (137). Crabtree's private moments of reflection and self-examination become the subject of exposure and revelation through the narrative structures of the novel.

Secret intelligence is validated through its place within a complex matrix of narrative layers, ensuring each source of disclosure becomes subject to scrutiny and exposure: the locals' gossip in chapter two introduces Otto and the reader to Seraphina's unfaithfulness and Gondremark's Machiavellian political schemes; the content of the gossip is then immediately validated by Crabtree's chapter of the *anekdota* which offers a more nuanced and politically insightful account of the scandal; the secret history is then validated and scrutinised by the novel's narrator; and, finally, the narrator's account is validated by the 'Bibliographic Postscript' which lists the plethora of other (fictional) sources from which the history is comprised and to which the interested reader can refer for further information. The narrative structure of *Prince Otto* is therefore as problematic as it is complex, excelling far beyond a single narrative of exposure. Stevenson may be engaging with the emerging interests of the Special Correspondent and the invasiveness of investigative journalism, but he does so by calling upon the form of the multi-volume secret history and the narrative features of the novel to both articulate, clarify and resolve the problems of the biased and libellous reports of sensationalist journalism. The historical narrative, both the secret history and the novel itself, have a distinct narrative process and structure from the output of the journalist.

In 'The Morality of the Profession of Letters' (1881) Stevenson offers the writer of literature an especially lofty social and political position for, he argues, 'the sum of the contemporary knowledge or ignorance of good and evil is, in large measure, the handiwork of those who write'. His moralisation on the value of the writer tends towards hyperbole, raising

the profession to preeminent moral, cultural, social, and political status throughout the essay. Stevenson's unflattering portrayal of journalism serves a strategic purpose, further elevating the 'profession of letters' by such a radical contrast to journalists who 'exercise an incalculable influence for ill' for 'they touch upon all subjects, and on all with the same ungenerous hand'. But there is an overlooked nuance to Stevenson's argument that merits attention: Stevenson's criticism of the journalist is, at its core, a criticism of narrative structure:

The mere body of this ugly matter overwhelms the rare utterances of good men; the sneering, the selfish, and the cowardly are scattered in broad sheets on every table, while the antidote, in small volumes, lies unread upon the shelf.<sup>38</sup>

If we temporarily lay aside the dramatic, moralising tone of the argument, it is possible to see a deeper, and more analytically significant, nuance emerge. Dismissing the miscellaneous and fragmentary nature of the newspaper, Stevenson turns towards the reassuringly self-contained and rigid structure of the bound book. Stevenson presents the bound, multi-volume historical narrative as the most accurate and unbiased container of secrets and public intelligence.

In *Prince Otto*, Stevenson highlights that secret history and investigative journalism are underpinned by the same purpose (to expose the domestic, personal secret to the public via print publication), and they are formed by appealing to the same questionable source, gossip. Their authors similarly find themselves in a precarious social position, championed as truth-seekers by some and challenged as libellous scandal-mongers by others. The two are so similar that it is possible to consider whether, at its core, investigative journalism is a type of secret history, a sub-genre that similarly revels in presenting leaders 'in a metaphorical and literal state of undress' not only for the entertainment of its readers, but also as a challenge to the material of traditional, public narratives.<sup>39</sup> This is the opinion of *The Saturday Review* which, in the same year as *Prince Otto*, printed an article criticising the role of "Our Own

Correspondent”, who ‘must make his letters piquant by describing a general in his night-cap with a heavy cold, and the Commander-in-chief in a trench with a cloak up to his eyes’.<sup>40</sup> But there is one key distinction between Secret History and investigative journalism that ensures this is not the case. The secret historian and the investigative journalist may share the same processes and seek for intelligence in the same places, but the product of their respective investigations is materially and generically distinct: one writes a book, and the other writes an article. It is fascinating that Stevenson is deliberately appealing to the structures of the novel to help him negotiate issues of contemporary journalism, and it is worth noting that, unusual of Stevenson, *Prince Otto* emulates the traditional three-volume structure, one most closely associated with Scott and more typical of the traditional style of the secret history.<sup>41</sup> In doing so, Stevenson begins to forge a central role for the literary writer as an alternative source of secret intelligence, one similarly dedicated to disclosing new, secret information to the public, and privileges the structures of the multi-volume, historical narrative in the process.

It is ironic that, in a novel invested in its own narrative structure, *Prince Otto* is first published in serialisation before appearing in bound-book form. Based on his immediate need for money, the decision to serialise *Prince Otto* was difficult for Stevenson because ‘it was not meant to be so read’.<sup>42</sup> Although drawing on the historical connection between the secret history and journalism as sister narratives, publicly exposing the domestic individual to public scrutiny and scandal, Stevenson is returning the narrative of historical secrets to its original bound-book, multi-volume narrative structure. Eschewing the article form, Crabtree explores the connection between the disclosure of secrets and narrative structure, forging a complex relationship between journalism, contemporary history, and literary narrative that continues to trouble Stevenson in *A Footnote to History*.

Literature, Journalism, or Secret History? Stevenson’s *A Footnote to History*

On 17 May 1892, Stevenson writes to Sidney Colvin and celebrates the completion of *A Footnote to History* with rather violent and conflicting emotions:

O! about the Consulate, I thought we had decided to do nothing till the pestilent book came out, and we saw if it did not damn me forever. 'Tis now done, bless God! And I am a free man. O, the German taboo is quite over; no soul attempts to support the C.J or the President; they are past hope [...] It was a fine feeling to have finished the *History*; there ought to be a future state to reward me for that grind! It's not literature, you know; only journalism, and pedantic journalism. I had but the one desire, to get the thing as right as might be, and avoid false concords – even that! And it was more than there was time for. However there it is: done. And if Samoa turns up again, my book has to be counted with, being the only narrative extant.<sup>43</sup>

Professedly 'the only narrative extant' on Samoa's civil conflict, Stevenson is already clarifying *A Footnote to History*'s position as an *anekdota*, claiming that his account, and the information it contains, is the first and only publication of such a nature. In his letter to Colvin, Stevenson brings together the four themes of this chapter, defining his *Footnote* in the terms of 'history', 'journalism', 'book' and 'narrative'. Looking at *Footnote* as a secret history, allows us to begin to trace a path of reconciliation between the three genres, of history, journalism, and literature, against which Stevenson is deliberately positioning his publication. It is certainly a complex relationship to trace for Stevenson is simultaneously appealing to their structures to help him define his narrative, whilst also distancing and disavowing their appropriateness. Although it is offered in a rather self-deprecating manner, Stevenson's claim that 'it's not literature, you know; only journalism' seems to hark back to his 1881 essay on the 'Profession of Letters'. Despite appealing to journalism and its investigative process, Stevenson once again dismisses the traditional narrative output of the profession, the newspaper article, and instead reconciles news, or 'contemporary history' as

Stevenson calls it, to an extended, book-length narrative that takes great pains to ‘avoid false concords’.

Stevenson immediately sets up *A Footnote to History* to navigate and explore the relationship between the journalist and the writer of literature, and to consider their potential role as custodians of history and historical detail. This foundation is laid at the history’s frontispiece which, an excerpt from the second book of Horace’s *Odes*, reads:

*Arma nondum inxpetiatis uncta cruoribus*

*Periculosae plenum opus aleae,*

*Tractus et incedis per ignes*

*Suppositos cineri doloso*

[With swords still stained by sad internecine blood:

Such subjects subject to necessary risks you treat,

Tiptoeing round the fires that

Smoulder beneath a façade of ashes].<sup>44</sup>

It is clear that Stevenson is inviting comparisons between this excerpt and his historical narrative because he repeatedly does so himself throughout the history. The most significant example is from the crux of his history where, explaining why Mataafa’s hopes of regaining political power and support will continue to be ill-fated, Stevenson reports that ‘the arms of Mataafa were *Nondum inxpetiatis uncta cruoribus*, Still soiled with the unexpiated blood, of German soldiers’.<sup>45</sup> The excerpt is a clever choice: the quotation is from Horace’s ode to Pollio, warning him about the dangers that await the historian of a civil war that remains politically volatile, smouldering ‘beneath a façade of ashes’. But the quotation also lends Stevenson an autobiographical lens because Pollio is a writer of literature who has temporarily abandoned his Greek Tragedy in order to ‘put our political affairs in order’ by offering the public a historical account of the civil war instead.<sup>46</sup> As Mario Citroni highlights

‘the ode’s subject is not simply about civil war, but Pollio’s history of it’.<sup>47</sup> Stevenson uses the ode to align himself with Pollio, as a literary writer who feels compelled to put contemporary ‘political affairs in order’ by offering the public an *anekdota*, a new historical perspective and narrative of the civil war in Samoa. It is a hardworking quotation, bringing together *Footnote*’s historical subject (civil war) with Stevenson’s credentials as a fiction author-turned-journalist, and also touches on Stevenson’s fear that his narrative will damage his reputation by subjecting himself to these ‘necessary risks’.

In the field of Geopolitics, Peter Perry uses Stevenson’s *Footnote* to highlight the complex interconnectedness of geographic landscape and political conflict, noting the influence in Samoa of ‘the particular respect of closeness to those involved’, a closeness of both geographic and emotional proximity, that informs the distribution and development of local and imperial power during the period of Stevenson’s history.<sup>48</sup> It is precisely this physical and social proximity that ensures the distinction between the material of history and the content of private conversation becomes particularly challenging for Stevenson to differentiate: ‘the quarters are so close and the scale is so small’, he reports, that ‘every one tells everything he knows [...] And the news flies, and the tongues wag, and fists are shaken’ (26). Stevenson uses the preface of *A Footnote to History* to rationalise the gossipy, rumour-filled content of his history, and he does so in order to legitimatise its privileged position in the history itself, leading Stevenson to later joke that ‘should Apia ever choose a coat of arms, I have a motto ready: “Enter Rumour painted full of tongues”’ (25). But Stevenson deliberately draws attention to the amount of diligent research he has undertaken in order to assimilate disparate sources of information, often of questionable provenance, into a single, reliable narrative account for ‘truth, in the midst of conflicting rumours and in the dearth of printed material, was often hard to ascertain, and since most of those engaged were of my personal acquaintance, it was often more than delicate to express’ (v). In the Preface to *A*

*Footnote to History*, Stevenson explicitly expresses his concern that ‘my plain speaking shall cost me any of the friends that I still count’, and this worry stems, in particular, from Stevenson’s liberal use of personal anecdote to provide historical detail to his Samoan narrative. It is exactly this conflation of the boundaries between the private and the public that leads to Stevenson becoming the subject of controversy. After the publication of *A Footnote to History*, Stevenson encounters numerous accusations of slander and libel, the *sine qua non* of the secret historian. These accusations range in severity, escalating from making Stevenson the subject of unflattering newspaper articles and reviews, to the more problematic issue of his embroilment in formal legal proceedings. In a letter to Charles Baxter, dated 7 October 1892, Stevenson writes,

it seems I am in for a libel action. An accursed ruffian, a missionary by the vile name of Arthur Claxton, of whom I narrated semi-anonymously a pleasing anecdote in the *Footnote to History*, has taken the thing amiss. I am fighting it just now by merely procrastinatory measures, having retained both the lawyers. As we are both British subjects it can go first before the Consul here as Deputy Commissioner, thence to Fiji to the High Commission Court, and thence, alas, to the Privy council’.<sup>49</sup>

Recalling the origin of the anecdote in that of the *Anekdotia* (Greek: Secret History) that I trace in chapter three, it is clear that Stevenson is both engaging with the material of secret history, recounting his own ‘minute passage[s] of private life’ as well as publicising those of his companions, and he is also undoubtedly experiencing the public and political wrath that has accompanied the publication of secret histories since the time of Procopius. Stevenson recalls conversations that took place among guests at his own house in Samoa; recounts information that he has accidentally overheard; and, reveals the details of both successful and failed political conspiracies. In these instances, Stevenson comes to echo Stead’s distinction as ‘an investigator; not an informer’ for in recalling these anecdotes Stevenson redacts the

names of those involved, using anonymity to shield them from otherwise inevitable social, judicial, and political repercussions. Although, as Stevenson and the libel actions later reflect, this flimsy form of ‘semi’ anonymity was easily seen through by those acquainted with Stevenson, his friends, and those with even a passing acquaintance to the key political players alluded to in his anecdotes. Stevenson is using the individual, the local, and the anecdotal to trace historical detail, allowing the individual to act as a carrier of historical information and secrets, claiming that ‘I have not sought to correct it by extraneous testimony. It is not so much the facts that are historical, as the man’s attitude’ (86).

In his letter to Baxter, Stevenson foresees encountering a number of courts and councils, increasing in power and seriousness with each escalation of the libel case, but he fails to predict that within seven months he will be at the centre of British parliamentary and colonial debates. Stevenson becomes a heated subject for the Colonial Office, attracting the negative attention of the Colonial Governor and British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, Sir John Thurston. Thurston threatens Stevenson with financial penalty and imprisonment for the crime of sedition, labelling him as a nuisance who was mawkishly obsessed with ‘secret and personal objects’.<sup>50</sup> In the midst of being threatened with fines, imprisonment and deportation, Stevenson decides to write to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Ripon, and the Foreign Secretary, Lord Rosebery, and tries with great success to call for a revision of the Seditious (Samoa) Regulation for the Western Pacific, 1892. With the distinct possibility of serving the three-month jail sentence carried by the Seditious Regulation and waiting to be enforced by Thurston, Stevenson puts pressure on the British government and Colonial Office to dismiss his formal charge of Seditious by reporting his situation to the *Times* with the promise that ‘if any further scandal happen[s] I shall take the freedom to report it to your paper’.<sup>51</sup> Like Crabtree’s threat that he ‘shall be able to relate’ his encounters with Otto, Stevenson similarly uses his freedom to publish as his first recourse to defence, reporting his

situation to the British public and exploiting his position as a well-known and popular author to garner active interest and support (51). Stevenson's public appeal was certainly well received leading to 'widespread unfavourable comment against the Regulation in the world press'.<sup>52</sup> As a well-known and popular writer, Stevenson found that his fame afforded his case a great deal of diplomacy and leniency in its handling by the British authorities who recognised his 'established popularity and high distinction'; greatly condensed the regulation on sedition to a degree that exonerated Stevenson from its purview; and, denied Thurston any further power to level a similar charge against Stevenson in the future.<sup>53</sup> It is clear that reporting and recounting their experiences is as an active resource for all three authors, Stevenson, Crabtree, and Marx. Even after his official warning, Marx rushes to publicise the news of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung's* forced dissolution: a final act of political defiance and secret disclosure in the face of censorship. It is certainly striking that the 1892–93 definition of Sedition in Samoa which Stevenson is striving to change encompasses 'all practices' that create 'discontent, or dissatisfaction, public disturbance, civil war, hatred or contempt towards the King or Government of Samoa'.<sup>54</sup> These ideas stem from the same historic fears for revolution that led to the censorship of Marx, and his fictional contemporary, Sir John Crabtree.

It is clear that *Prince Otto* and *A Footnote to History* are troubled by similar historical concerns, with both Grünewald and Samoa experiencing political crises that revolve around their precariously positioned monarchs (Otto and Laupepa, respectively) and a political infrastructure that proves too unstable to support the teetering office of the monarch. Both territories are plagued by rumours of war, rebellion, and the potential deposition of an active monarch. Conspiracies against those in power proliferate, and public houses become the seat of political intelligence in the form of heated, public gossip.<sup>55</sup> The Samoan crisis finds the throne contested by a number of eager, potential claimants but, unlike *Prince Otto*, the

dynastic crisis at the centre of *Footnote* plays out in the context of Western imperialism which creates a complex and highly contentious matrix of interferences from Germany, the United States, and Britain.<sup>56</sup> The secret, self-serving interests of the foreign powers in Samoa continued to reinforce the fissures of an already weakened monarchic structure. By 1885, Germany had largely secured control of Samoa, having built fortifications and promoted their favourites to positions of political prominence. After 1892, the end of Stevenson's history, there is a short period of peace, before the throne is once again contested until the office of the King in Samoa is dissolved in 1899 and, in the same year, the Tripartite Convention is agreed which sees Western and Eastern Samoa partitioned into German-controlled and American-controlled territories respectively. In many ways, *Prince Otto* and *A Footnote to History* occupy different ends of the same historical timeline: the first highlighting the historical origins of Bismarck's Germany and the other considering its impact on the political state and crisis in Samoa. It is under Bismarck that Germany undergoes a rapid policy of expansionism, something that is hinted at in *Prince Otto* with Crabtree's assertion in his secret history that Grünewald is one example of a much larger political trend of revolution and integration. Although not imperial by any means, the conspiracies of the state, particularly those of Gondremark, revolve around the strategic use of the army towards the goal of expansion and domination which Crabtree sardonically refers to 'as the future empire of Grünewald' (51). As Harvie highlights 'something of the brutality of the Bismarckian Reich is visible' in Grünewald through Crabtree's report, and it is interesting to note, as Harvie does in passing, that 'towards the end of his life Stevenson was to cope with this German *Realpolitik* in Samoa'.<sup>57</sup> This is an undervalued connection between Stevenson's Samoan history and his earlier novel, a connection which first sees these historical political issues, positioned in relation to the emerging role of contemporary journalism, being negotiated and explored by Stevenson through the imaginative and theoretical lens of fiction

before, only a few years later, he engages with these again as part of his own experience and comes to serve a public function similar to that of Pollio and Sir John Crabtree.

According to Stevenson, *A Footnote to History* is an act of public intervention intended to foster a knowledge of, and interest in, ‘the Samoan question’, as he calls it, in the British public, one that that would spark a timely interest and sympathy for the, soon to be twice exiled, Mataafa.<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately for Stevenson, 1892 saw his hopes dashed in the face of further civil conflict, and the defeat and exile of Mataafa for whom Stevenson had hoped the restoration of his previous position. But Stevenson writes his Samoan history aware of, and hopefully anticipating, its historical timeliness, potentially poised to influence the immediate course of Samoan politics and noting that ‘speed was essential, or it might come too late to be of any service to a distracted country’ (v). What is particularly interesting is that the ‘distracted country’ to which Stevenson refers is Britain, not Samoa. First published in May 1892 by Cassell, *A Footnote to History* is in British circulation for seven months before it reaches the island of Samoa: it is, first and foremost, written with a British readership in mind, to the extent that Stevenson changes the spelling of Samoan words to a phonetic alternative. Reporting and exposing the inner-workings, complexities and secret dealing of Samoa’s key political players back to Britain, Stevenson is writing after the fashion of ‘the special messenger of the London press’, the Special Correspondent, exclusively reporting the details of foreign, contemporary politics to his British readers. Stevenson conceives his *Footnote* to be a narrative of amendment, correcting the erroneous and widespread misconceptions held in Britain of the native Samoan leaders and the rather simplistic views of the impact of the Western imperial powers in the perpetuation of conflict and crisis. In a letter to Reverend Whitmee, dated the month before *Footnote*’s publication, Stevenson argues that the British public do not really comprehend the nuances of the Samoan crisis, nor does it have access to sufficiently unbiased information from which to draw a proper conclusion:

At home it is not, it cannot be, understood: Mataafa is thought a rebel; the Germans profit by the thought [...] the two men [Mataafa and Laupepa] are perpetually offered as alternatives—they are no such thing—they are complementary; authority, supposing them to survive, will be impossible without both.<sup>59</sup>

Stevenson identifies the need for a new, more accurate narrative of Samoa's history to be made publicly accessible 'at home', and his *Footnote to History* promises to afford one. By offering to correct false narratives and offer a fresh perspective on Samoa's historical issues, Stevenson is continuing to parallel the work of *Secret History*, promising an exclusive, previously unpublished account that runs contrary to previous, established or entrenched narratives.

Sharing Crabtree's designation as an 'English traveller', Stevenson is also writing his narrative of political secrets for publication back in Britain in the fashion of a foreign reporter: he remains an outsider, distanced from the effects of the crisis whilst trying to make sense of a situation to which he has, until recently, been entirely unacquainted and share his conclusions with his British readership. As Roslyn Jolly highlights, 'although a generalized notion of public service was in play from the start [...] Samoa was not yet his home, and he had at that time no personal stake in the outcome of the political struggle'.<sup>60</sup> In the same way as the narrative of *Prince Otto* is structured and filtered through the privileged gaze of the foreign reporter as the author of historical detail, Stevenson highlights that

This history is much from the outside; it is the digested report of eye-witnesses; it can be rarely corrected from state papers; and as to what consuls felt and thought, or what instructions they acted under, I must still be silent or proceed by guess. It is my guess that (49).

Clearly deciding that he must 'proceed by guess', Stevenson offers his interpretation of current affairs and, in doing so, privileges his personal opinions of key political players: just

as Crabtree makes his dislike of the ‘foolish’ Princess Seraphina clear, Stevenson makes the similar observation that ‘for Becker I have not been able to conceal my distaste, for he seems to me both false and foolish’ (190). This subjectivity is also the type of detail that made the work of the Special Correspondent so popular. Often referred to as the ‘graphic’ detail of the Special Correspondent, this information was drawn from the personal experiences of the journalist, ranging from picturesque details of their travels to moments of private conversation and contemplation. As Catherine Waters highlights, ‘combining swiftness of despatch with the picturesque presentation of scene or event, special correspondence had from the beginning sought to transport readers imaginatively to the location described’.<sup>61</sup> It is for this reason that special correspondence has an acknowledged parallel to literature, requiring, as the *Leisure Hour* puts it, ‘sufficient graphic effect to render the perusal of his dispatches interesting and agreeable’.<sup>62</sup> Stevenson’s definition of his narrative as a ‘digested report’ of first and second-hand information certainly aligns his history with this type of journalistic and investigative narrative process that Crabtree and the correspondent embodies. The fact that ‘state papers’ cannot corroborate Stevenson’s anecdotal evidence is both a strength and a weakness of his history for, although the information has no way of being proven (nor disproven) it speaks to the timeliness of Stevenson’s report. Stevenson is positioning his work as a source of exclusive information for the British public, providing on-the-ground intelligence that, until then, had only been the preserve of those residing in Samoa. Stevenson is promising exclusive access to unofficial, scandalous, and gossipy sources of information whilst revealing, what he calls, the ‘secret interview[s]’ of the political leaders (61). With Stevenson disclosing that Laupepa, joined by two of his companions, secretly returned to Apia to have a meeting in the American consulate on 10 September 1887, he is fulfilling the *Leisure Hour*’s expectation for special correspondence to publicise the

concealed details of ‘some secret congress or quiet meeting [...] where certain questions of diplomacy are to be discussed in a manner under the rose’ (77).

Like Crabtree and Otto, Stevenson’s personal acquaintance with the ill-fated king of his historical encounter (Mataafa) develops into something of a warm and familiar relationship between the chronicler and his subject. Stevenson meets and becomes the acquaintance of both Mataafa and Laupepa, publishes Laupepa’s letters, and discloses his personal encounters and conversations with them in his history after the fashion of Crabtree’s chapter on Otto and Gondremark, and in one particularly remarkable instance, he reveals the details of a conversation that he overhears between the two rivals. Disclosing these private conversations, both in the form of letters and eavesdropped conversation, was a risky decision, particularly because his evident sympathy for the exiled Mataafa placed him on precarious political footing with his opponents. Stevenson’s less sympathetic view of the British involvement in perpetuating the political crisis in Samoa ensures that he is criticised in the press for his critical interpretation of Britain’s role in the Samoan crisis, with one remarking that ‘Mr. Stevenson takes a rather too unfavourable view of the conduct of the various representatives of his own country in this story’.<sup>63</sup> In addition, his sympathetic portrayal of the exiled Mataafa was troubling to the Germans who, after sustaining casualties at the conflict of Fangalii, had orchestrated the king’s banishment and promoted their favourite, Tamasese, to the Samoan throne who, Stevenson reveals, is a puppet king, controlled by the silent mastermind of German-backed, Brandeis.<sup>64</sup> Stevenson gained the reputation as a nuisance to the German imperial officers in Samoa, and when he writes to his acquaintances about his time spent in German company he conveys a mutual anxiousness between the two. With the seven-month delay between *A Footnote to History*’s publication in Britain, and its first reception in Samoa (December 1892), Stevenson’s history becomes the subject of great debate and rumour in Samoa during this time with unfavourable reports from the United

States and Germany reaching his neighbours' ears. The activity and volatility of this anticipation for his *Footnote* in Samoa, reveals an unexpected parallel to Crabtree. As well as his undoubtedly grander hopes, Stevenson also saw a smaller, but no less significant, impact of the publication on the lives of his neighbours and for Mataafa for whom he hoped to offer political reconciliation and power: 'you are to understand', he writes to Colvin, 'if I take all this bother, it is not only from a sense of duty, or a love of meddling – damn the phrase, take your choice – but from a great affection for Mataafa'.<sup>65</sup> Whilst Otto's efforts to mitigate revolution prove entirely ineffective, Crabtree's exposé still leads to the reconciliation of his marriage. Although he is ultimately a passive reporter of Grünewald's historic revolution, Crabtree's secret history is consequential to the protagonists' personal lives.

Trying to navigate his social and political responsibilities, Stevenson recalls a tense moment when he is asked to read some of his, as yet unseen, history of Samoa after a dinner party in front of many German acquaintances. In a letter to Sidney Colvin, dated 28 October 1892, Stevenson dramatically recalls deciding to read his account of the Samoan hurricane which, although devastating to the island, contains some of the least conflict-inducing observations from his history: 'for once', Stevenson says, 'in my sickening yarn, they are handsome facts: creditable to all concerned' and 'so tempted one to be literary'.<sup>66</sup> Deliberately drawing on the moment of his history that is decidedly more literary than journalistic, Stevenson manages to avoid causing further controversy with his *Footnote*. But here we once again see Stevenson actively appealing to the literariness of his history, something that he strongly disavowed in his previous letter to Colvin (May 1892). In the same year as *A Footnote to History*, Stevenson published *The Wrecker*, a novel written in collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne. Proud to 'have succeeded in packing into one a dedication, an explanation, and termination', Stevenson's epilogue to *The Wrecker* is wonderfully complex.<sup>67</sup> Dedicated to one of Stevenson's long-term friends, Will Hicok Low,

the epilogue stretches across multiple textual boundaries, troubling distinctions between fact and fiction as it invites the fictional characters to step into Stevenson's society, communicating with his friend and taking over the novel's concluding frame, a narrative device traditionally used to bring both resolution and containment. Rebelling against such closure, the fictional world of *The Wrecker* instead troubles distinctions between the fictional and the real, reaching across the territory of fiction and into that of Stevenson's contemporary world after the fashion of Scott's *Clutterbuck*, *Cleishbotham*, and *Dryasdust*. Stevenson uses this moment of metafictional distortion, where the narrative proves incapable of its own containment and restriction, to allow the character to offer the following observation:

The truth is, since I have been mixed up with Havens and Dodd in the design to publish the latter's narrative, I seem to feel no want for Carthew's society. Of course, I am wholly modern in sentiment, and think nothing more noble than to publish people's private affairs at so much a line. They like it, and if they don't, they ought to. But a still small voice keeps telling me they will not like it always, and perhaps not always stand it.<sup>68</sup>

In a fascinating matrix of exposure and *mise en abyme*, it is clear from reading Stevenson's private letter to Edward Burlingame, dated 2 January 1892, (and published posthumously by Sidney Colvin) that there is a period of overlap between Stevenson's composition of *The Wrecker* and *A Footnote to History*. The letter itself brings the two narratives together, beginning with a discussion of the latter work before moving to Stevenson's grand expectations for the length of his Samoan history, and arguing for the necessity of at least one map of Samoa being placed at the history's frontispiece. We can therefore see Stevenson's interest in a print culture that is claiming the private as its own, rightful territory, as a thread of investigation that weaves its way through Stevenson's fiction and non-fiction work. The fictional concern outlined in *The Wrecker*, debating whether such a personal and potentially

indiscrete publication of other's private actions and conversations will, or should, receive either a positive or negative reception, is one that Stevenson repeatedly echoes in his letters to friends and publishers on the subject of *Footnote* throughout its writing, and even in the months that immediately follow publication. Apparently ailed by a similar 'still small voice [that] keeps telling me they will not like it always, and perhaps not always stand it', Stevenson's concern for his reputation upon publishing *Footnote* echoes the anxieties of the secret historian, anticipating a harsh censorship or backlash similar to that of his own Sir John Crabtree in *Prince Otto*.<sup>69</sup> The Epilogue to *The Wrecker* not only perfectly exemplifies the extent to which the distinction between private and public information is of interest to Stevenson, but also how he conceives it to reflect a wider cultural sensibility, one that is a 'wholly modern' phenomenon and intimately connected to a culture obsessed with publication. Bearing in mind the timing of each work's composition and publication, it is likely that Stevenson is making this observation with his next work in mind, already researching, writing, and imminently publishing, 'people's private affairs' as part of his gossipy (*malanga*) and libellous *A Footnote to History*.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, *Prince Otto; A Romance*, ed. by Robert Irvine (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p.43.

<sup>2</sup> Stevenson, *Prince Otto*, p.43, p.44, p.55, p.138. Hereafter, cited in text.

<sup>3</sup> Roslyn Jolly, 'Stevenson and the Pacific', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp.118–33 (p.122). See also, Caroline McCracken-Flesher, 'Travel Writing', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp.86–101: McCracken-Flesher highlights that 'Stevenson situated the book [*Footnote*] between "journalism" and "history"' (p.100).

<sup>4</sup> See Roslyn Jolly, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire, and the Author's Profession* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p.vii..

<sup>5</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Edmund Gosse, January 2 1886, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Sidney Colvin, II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), pp.13–6 (p.14).

<sup>6</sup> William Ernest Henley, 'Unsigned review of *Prince Otto*', *Athenaeum*, November 1885, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.185–86 (p.185).

<sup>7</sup> David Robb, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (Devon: Northcote House Publishers, 2015), p.42.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Harvie, 'The Politics of Stevenson', in *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland*, ed. by Jenni Calder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), pp.107–25 (p.116).

<sup>9</sup> Robert Irvine, 'Introduction', in *Prince Otto; A Romance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp.xxiii–liv (p.xxiii).

<sup>10</sup> However, notably Roslyn Jolly has begun to assimilate *A Footnote to History* into a wider understanding of Stevenson's work, although this is primarily restricted to what Jolly calls Stevenson's second phase of writing after leaving Britain in 1887, between 1891 and 1892: Roslyn Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific* (Abington: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa* (London: Cassell & Company, 1892), p.v.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Edward L. Burlingame, December 1891, Vailima, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Sidney Colvin, Tusitala Edition, IV/V (London: William Heinemann, 1924), pp.125–26 (p.126).

<sup>13</sup> Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific*, p.75.

<sup>14</sup> Stevenson, *Footnote*, p.26.

<sup>15</sup> Section 4 of the *Law of Libel Amendment Act 1888*, England.

<sup>16</sup> Stevenson, *Footnote*, p.1.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Henry James, 5 December 1892, Vailima, in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Ernest Mehew, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 519–21 (p.520).

<sup>18</sup> Irvine, 'Introduction', p.xlvii. Irvine highlights that the historical setting of *Prince Otto* is especially complex, appealing to the 1848 German revolutions but also, anachronistically, to the Holy Roman Empire; pre and post Napoleon in Europe; and, to the Second *Reich* and the declaration of the second German Empire in 1871: see Irvine, pp.xlvi–xlix.

<sup>19</sup> 'the year of the action [...] is 1848': Harvie, p.117.

<sup>20</sup> Although Otto's name draws latent and deliberate attention to the historical figure of Bismarck, it is actually Gondremark who parallels Bismarck and his Realpolitik strategies.

<sup>21</sup> For example, during the French Revolution (1789–1799) red was adopted as the colour of revolution; it was used similarly during the Russian revolution (1917–1923), and red has a well-documented association with Marxism and Communism.

<sup>22</sup> Karl Marx, 'Suppression of *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*', *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 301, 19 May 1849, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Articles from the Neue Rheinische Zeitung, 1848–49*, trans. by S. Ryazanskaya, ed. by Bernard Isaacs (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), pp.254–57 (p.254).

<sup>23</sup> There is a discrepancy in *Prince Otto* regarding the title of Crabtree's secret history, appearing first as 'Memoirs of a Visit to the Various Courts of Europe' (p.44) and then as 'Memoirs on the various Courts of Europe' (p.160).

<sup>24</sup> On the emergence of travel journalism in the second half of the nineteenth century, and its advertisement for British tourism abroad, see Jill Steward, "'How and Where to Go': The Role of Travel Journalism in Britain and the Evolution of Foreign Tourism, 1840–1914', *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, ed. by John K. Walton (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005), pp.39–54. Steward briefly touches on the Special Correspondent as an example of 'nineteenth century travel literature', and highlights that foreign travel underpins the special correspondent's career and narrative style, see pp.41–2 (p.41). See also the preface to *Letters from Ireland, 1886. By the Special Correspondent of the Times* (London: W.H Allen & Co, 1887), in which the special correspondent writes that 'I trust the occasional references I have made to the great attractions which that country [Ireland] offers to the tourist, may induce some to spend their holiday there this year', p.iii.

<sup>25</sup> Nicola Parsons, 'Secret History and the Periodical', in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.147–59 (p.147).

<sup>26</sup> See for example, Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); and, for a more recent study, Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> *Prince Otto* is serialised between April and October 1885 before appearing in bound-book form in November 1885. In serial form, *Prince Otto*'s publication, and initial reading, overlaps with that of Stead's exposé in July 1885.

<sup>28</sup> Brian Lewis, 'Review of *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon: The Report of the Secret Commission; Maiden Tribute: A Life of W. T. Stead*, by W. T. Stead, A.E. Simpson, and G. Eckley', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 20.1 (2011), 198–205 (p.202).

<sup>29</sup> William Stead, 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon', *The Review of Reviews*, 46.271 (July 1912), 99–104 (p.99).

<sup>30</sup> Catherine Waters, *Special Correspondence and the Newspaper Press in Victorian Print Culture, 1850–1886* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p.3. The 'roving reporter' appears in an earlier publication, see Catherine Waters, "'Doing the Graphic": Victorian Special Correspondence', in *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.165–81 (p.165).

<sup>31</sup> The Victorians referred to the Special Correspondent imprecisely, also calling them 'Our Special Commissioner', 'An Occasional Correspondent' and 'War Correspondent'. On the various interpretations of the special correspondent during the Victorian period, and on war as the material of special correspondence, see Waters, "'Doing the Graphic'", p.165, p.167.

<sup>32</sup> "Our Own Correspondent", *Leisure Hour; an Illustrated Magazine for Home Reading*, 17 (London: W. Stevens, 1 January 1868), 53–5 (p.53).

<sup>33</sup> E. M. Palmegiano, *Perceptions of the Press in Nineteenth-Century British Periodicals: A Bibliography* (London: Anthem Press, 2012), p.4.

<sup>34</sup> "'Our Own Correspondent'", p.53.

<sup>35</sup> 'The double recollection of an English traveller, who he had received the week before at court, and an old English rogue called Transome, who he had known in youth, came pertinently to the Prince's help. "Transome," he answered, "is my name. I am an English traveller"', Stevenson, *Prince Otto*, p.23.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Pebody, *English Journalism, and the Men who have Made It* (Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co.: London, Paris, and New York, 1882), p.186.

<sup>37</sup> See also the fictional editor's postscript which highlights that the present history is collated from the memoirs of two characters in *Prince Otto*, Greisengesang and Roederer, 'but', the editor adds, 'with due allowance for this bias, the book is able and complete': Stevenson, *Prince Otto*, p.160.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Morality of the Profession of Letters', in *Essays in the Art of Writing* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 1905), pp.28–41 (p.34, p.32, p.32).

<sup>39</sup> Rebecca Bullard, 'Introduction: Reconsidering Secret History', in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.1–14 (p.1).

<sup>40</sup> "'Our Own Correspondent.'", *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 1.3 (London: November 17, 1885), 44–6 (45).

<sup>41</sup> More expensive to print and buy, the three-volume form rapidly lost popularity in the second half of the Nineteenth Century, often purchased by circulating libraries, like those of Mudie and Smith, rather than book sellers by the 1880s. See Troy Bassett, 'The Production of Three-Volume Novels in Britain, 1863–1897', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 102.1 (2008), pp.61–75. For Stevenson's writing in this context, see Penny Fielding, 'Introduction', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp.1–10, especially p.1.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Will H. Low, 22 October 1885, Skerryvore, in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Ernest Mehew (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), pp.288–90 (p.289).

<sup>43</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Sidney Colvin, 17 May 1892, in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Ernest Mehew (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), pp.488–89 (p.488).

<sup>44</sup> Stevenson, Frontispiece to *Footnote*, p.iii. For translation see 'Horace, Odes: Book II' in *Horace, The Odes: New Translations by Contemporary Poets*, trans. by J.D. McClatchy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp.107–57 (p.109).

<sup>45</sup> Stevenson, *Footnote*, p.271. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>46</sup> Horace, p.109.

<sup>47</sup> Mario Citroni, 'Occasion and Levels of Address in Horatian Lyrics', in *Horace: Odes and Epodes*, ed. by Michele Lowrie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.72–105 (p.80).

<sup>48</sup> Peter Perry, 'Robert Louis Stevenson: A Footnote to Political Geography', *New Zealand Geographer*, 45.1 (April 1989), 41–2 (p.41).

<sup>49</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Charles Baxter, 7 October 1892, Vailima, in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Ernest Mehew (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), p.513–15 (p.513).

<sup>50</sup> Quotation from John Thurston's telegram to the Colonial Office. Although I am yet to locate the original telegram, Mehew refers to it in a footnote: Ernest Mehew (ed), *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), p.527. It appears to have been sent at the beginning of April 1893.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Sedition in Samoa', *The Times*, 33916 (London, 4 April 1893) 10 (p.10)

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<sup>52</sup> Mehew, p.527.

<sup>53</sup> This information comes from telegrams sent by Ripon to Thurston on 14 and 15 April 1893: Mehew, p.527.

<sup>54</sup> The Sedition (Samoa) Regulation, 1892: authorised 29 December 1892 by the Secretary to the High Commissioner, Wilfred Collet, and effective from 1 January 1893.

<sup>55</sup> For example, the prince's marriage in *Prince Otto* is the subject of public gossip with Seraphina's name becoming 'a taproom by-word' (p.15); in *Footnote* Stevenson emphasises the role of 'the barrooms' in fostering a deep mistrust of Brandeis and his policies, see in particular p.103 and p.107.

<sup>56</sup> Germany secretly backed one king (Tamasese); the United States, albeit weakly, supported the other (Laupepa); Britain remained strangely uninvested in any single political endeavour but, in *A Footnote to History*, Stevenson champions the exiled king, Mataafa.

<sup>57</sup> Harvie, p.117.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Rev. S. J. Whitmee, 24 April 1892, Vailima, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Sidney Colvin, IV/IV (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), pp.39–42 (p.41).

<sup>59</sup> Stevenson to Whitmee, pp.40–41.

<sup>60</sup> Jolly, *Stevenson in the Pacific*, p.68.

<sup>61</sup> Waters, *Special Correspondence*, p.24.

<sup>62</sup> "'Our Own Correspondent'", *Leisure Hour*, p.53.

<sup>63</sup> 'Mr. Stevenson's Foot-Note to History', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 74 (27 August 1892), 251–53 (p.252).

<sup>64</sup> For example, see Stevenson, *Footnote*, p.87, pp.102–3.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Sidney Colvin, 1 May 1892, Vailima, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Sidney Colvin, IV/IV (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 44–62 (p.53).

<sup>66</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Sidney Colvin, 9 March 1892, Vailima, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Sidney Colvin, IV/IV (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969) pp.29–38 (p.37).

Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Edward L. Burlingame, Vailima, 2 January 1892, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Sidney Colvin, IV/IV (London: William Heinemann, 1924), pp.143–44 (p.143).

<sup>68</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, *The Wrecker* (London: Cassell & Company, 1892), pp.423–24.

<sup>69</sup> This appears to be a popular phrase of Stevenson's, appearing in his letter to Henry James. Recounting how his *Footnote* has put him in 'devilishly hot water' and, Stevenson writes about his 'still small voice [of self-approval]': see R.L Stevenson letter to Henry James, p.519.

## Chapter Five

### Smugglers along the solemn highway of History: The Delayed Publication and Disclosure of Secrets in Samuel Pepys's Diary (1669) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889)

History plays an unusual role in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889). It is a force of intrusion and disruption that shapes the Durie family's domestic lives, sexual relationships, finances, and private affairs and, through a series of chaotic interruptions of the *status quo* at the Durrisdeer estate, in Ayrshire, history is an obstacle that the protagonists never fully overcome. Family ties and relationships become irreversibly strained when news of the Jacobite uprising reaches the Durrisdeer estate in 1746 and leads James to join the ill-fated Jacobite forces, leaving his younger brother, Henry, to claim allegiance to the Hanoverian government and inherit the Durrisdeer estate in the wake of the Jacobites' defeat; certain of her lover's death at Culloden, James's fiancé marries his brother and a new, albeit grief-stricken, *status quo* settles upon the family's domestic life; but, after losing his station in the India Uprising of 1757, James's dramatic and unexpected return to his family at Durrisdeer has a catastrophic impact on Henry's relationships with his wife, daughter and father, concluding with the death of both brothers in the American wilderness at the novel's close. *The Master of Ballantrae* is a historical novel, but it is a strange example of the genre where historical characters and events interrupt the narrative and push the Durie's private, family history to a tragic and ignominious conclusion. The novel certainly upholds Avrom Fleishman's argument that 'What makes a historical novel historical is the active presence of a concept of history as a shaping force', but what makes *The Master of Ballantrae* unusual is that this 'shaping force' is not one of progress but of disintegration, decay, and deterioration.<sup>1</sup>

By 1889, Stevenson is moving away from presenting history in fiction as the stadial force of ‘evolutionary and guardedly optimistic’ progress which Scott presents in his historical novels and he is instead positioning it as a force of chaotic and negative disruption. Stevenson achieves this by taking the relationship between private life and public history to something of an extreme, focusing primarily on the tumultuous and scandalous affairs of the Durie family and allowing history, represented by the historical figures of General Clive, Charles Edward Stuart, Alan Breck Stewart, and William Johnson, to appear at ill-timed and highly disruptive intervals in the family’s personal history. As Fleishman notes, ‘The historical novel is pre-eminently suited to telling how individual lives were shaped at specific moments, and how this shaping reveals the character of those historical periods’ but Stevenson approaches this relationship between ‘individual lives’ and history in an alternative manner to Scott: instead of inviting readers of *The Master of Ballantrae* to consider history in its national form, he renders aside the veil of secrecy and obscurity which surrounds the members of a single (fictional) household as they try to navigate and regain control of their lives after the massive and divisive impact of the Jacobite rebellion.<sup>2</sup> Stevenson takes the historical novel’s interest in reconciling the individual, the anecdotal, and the circumstantial to the status of history and places it at the very core of *The Master of Ballantrae*. Stevenson’s version of a secret history of the Jacobite court-in-exile completely inverts those of Scott’s in *Waverley* (1814) and *Redgauntlet* by ensuring that neither prior knowledge of Charles Edward Stuart nor of the Jacobite rebellion will assist the reader in piecing together the strands of the mysteries, intrigues, and espionage at the heart of his historical novel. It is not a secret history of historical figures; instead, the novel is allowing Stevenson to trace the relationship between time and historical disclosure after the fashion of D’Israeli who, as I noted in chapter two, began to explore and define the genre of Secret History in relation to literal states of secrecy and concealment. In *The Master of Ballantrae*, the Durie family never

fully recovers from the impact of the Jacobites' historical call-to-arms and it permeates all aspects of the ensuing tragedy which sees the disruptive afterlife of the Jacobite rebellion die, not on the battlefield of Culloden, but in the American wilderness during an entirely different war, twenty years later. Stevenson presents a version of history which defies the completeness and finality of Scott: *Waverley* invites the fictional nineteenth-century reader to look back on the Jacobite movement 'sixty years since', presenting it as a finished, completed historical moment that can be reflected on with the fullness of hindsight and historical intelligence. On the other hand, Stevenson's history is one that notices and reflects upon its own incompleteness. It is in this regard that Secret History comes to play a central role in the novel and, in investigating this relationship in this chapter, I argue that looking to one of the most famous examples of Secret History to emerge into popular discourse and readership in the nineteenth century, the Diary of Samuel Pepys, helps to trace and explore the complex relationship that Stevenson is inviting between secrecy, delayed publication, and the narrative structures of the historical novel.

In this chapter, I argue that the preface of *The Master of Ballantrae* does much to reaffirm the connection between Secret History (the genre) and secret histories (as a literary device) in the nineteenth-century historical novel. By looking to his essay on Pepys and the publication of his diary (1881), I trace Stevenson's contemporary fascination with Samuel Pepys, 'this odd hero of the secret diary', into the narrative and historical structure of *The Master of Ballantrae*.<sup>3</sup> I consider how Stevenson uses *The Master of Ballantrae* to navigate and explore a number of issues that Pepys and his scandalous diary (written between 1659–1669) raise about the potential ambivalence of the secret, private experiences of the individual to those of a national history: 'how the mightiest crisis of an empire fails to upset the natural balance of a working-day, how tables are spread and houses erected in spite of wars and rumours of wars'.<sup>4</sup> I argue that Stevenson establishes a fundamental relationship between Pepys's diary

and Mackellar's secret history, one founded upon their shared, century-long delay in both their reading and their publication. I consider how the values of Secret History inform the narrative and historical structure of *The Master of Ballantrae*, and I consider why Stevenson subjects Mackellar's manuscript to the same century-long state of 'limbo', as Robert Latham calls it, that Pepys's diary endured in the intervening years between its placement in the Pepysian Library, Cambridge, in 1703, and its eventual reading in the early nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

In *Writing and Orality*, Penny Fielding considers how the reading of Mackellar's manuscript in the fictional nineteenth century of the novel creates a complex interplay between the evanescence of oral story-telling and the longevity of history-writing, and Nathalie Jaëck has explored how the preface of *The Master of the Ballantrae* reflects Stevenson's interest in postponement, using the preface 'as a holding area, as an in-between antechamber whose main function is to insist on the fact that the text is imminent, that, being suspended for a century, it is on the brink of starting—and at the same time delaying it even more'.<sup>6</sup> In this chapter, I highlight a convergence between these two lines of enquiry, noting how Stevenson's interest in postponing and reserving the (fictional) reading of Mackellar's manuscript for a far distant, nineteenth-century readership reflects his, and his contemporaries', anxiety about the recent past which Stevenson conceives of as 'a limbo to us', nothing but a 'confused hotch-potch of unconnected events and a "chaos without form, and void"'.<sup>7</sup> I note that in preserving Mackellar's manuscript for the late nineteenth-century reader, the preface manoeuvres the history out of the realm of the recent and into that of the recognisably distant past. I then consider how Stevenson invites the secret to occupy a central role in his concept of history, not as a complete or knowable territory of the past, but as a process of gradual disclosure and revelation. I conclude by uniting my analysis of the recent past in Stevenson with the literary and historical functions he conceives for the diarist as a

‘chronicler of the times’.<sup>8</sup> I consider how delay and secrecy are used by Stevenson to explore how relatively innocuous domestic, private, and family histories can be ‘smuggled’ along ‘the solemn highway of history’ where they come to enjoy a much larger historical significance as a result of their safeguarded and delayed publication which allows them to enter into another period of history as a rare, exclusive, and sole-surviving historical account.<sup>9</sup> I note that Pepys and Mackellar’s respective secret histories *become* historically significant and do so from the perspectives of both nineteenth-century historians and antiquarians.

#### A History of Pepys’s Diary: From Scott to Stevenson

In 1885, the reviewer of *The Atlantic Monthly* tried to both articulate and assuage his ‘guilty consciousness’ that the publication of Pepys’s diary had allowed the nineteenth-century reading public to enjoy ‘eaves-dropping’ on Pepys’s most private, scandalous and salacious secret activities *and* those of the licentious and corrupt Restoration court which, ‘blabbing more than the tiring women of the whole century’, Pepys manages to preserve and disclose alongside his own personal secrets.<sup>10</sup> From the time of his birth in 1650 until his death in 1694, Stevenson lived in a Victorian Britain eagerly discussing and debating Pepys and his controversial, historical secrets about Restoration-period London and its monarchs, Charles II and James II. Due to the personal, gossipy, and scandalous nature of his diary entries, Pepys wrote the vast majority of his journal in cryptic shorthand, following the tachygraphic code created by Thomas Shelton in 1626, to guard against his diary’s unauthorised reading and the disclosure of its sensitive contents. When it came to writing about his secret sexual affairs, Pepys took the added precaution of adding a polyglot to the cipher, amalgamating numerous languages in order to further obscure its meaning.<sup>11</sup> As a result, it is not until Reverend John Smith deciphers Pepys’s code in 1821 that the diary is able to be read and subsequently prepared for publication, allowing the diary to disclose its secrets for the first time in a hundred and eighteen years upon its first, albeit highly censored,

publication in 1825. Not only read but also published for the first time in the nineteenth century, Pepys's personal secrets and those regarding the unruly, salacious Restoration court of Charles II and James II are exclusively divulged to the nineteenth-century public over a century after they had been committed to paper by Pepys in his journal. In 1669, Pepys feared that he was going blind and decided to abandon the writing of his secret journal. Although he makes no further entries in the diary after this time, Pepys continues to ensure that his diary is secretly preserved throughout his life. It appears that Pepys not only desired to preserve the diary for his own private enjoyment during the remainder of his lifetime, but also made provisions for its discovery and reading after his death in 1703. Given the fastidiousness with which Pepys guarded his secret diary, it is hard to imagine that his decision to catalogue its existence and then place it in the library that he was bequeathing to Magdalene College in his estate, was anything other than the fruits of his very deliberate and calculated plan for its eventual, posthumous discovery. As Latham highlights

it is often affirmed that the diary was secret, meant only for Pepys's own eyes. That was probably true for his lifetime. But some things suggest that he may have intended it to be read by future scholars of historical taste [...] The diary *ab initio* was a history of the times.<sup>12</sup>

It is over a hundred years before Pepys's plan for the posthumous reading of his diary is fulfilled, remaining in a state of obscurity and secrecy until Reverend John Smith decodes the manuscript's cipher in 1821. Due to the complexities of its code and the need to censor much of his deviant, primarily sexual, behaviour from nineteenth-century readers, the publication history of Pepys's diary is both complex and fragmented. Pepys's diary, or 'journal' as it was traditionally referred to in the first half the nineteenth century, is published in a piecemeal fashion between 1825 and 1899 and each new edition of the diary includes more of Pepys's previously unpublished and scandalous secrets than its predecessor had offered to the public.

The diary is first published in a significantly abridged form in 1825 and, in this initial publication of Pepys's diary by Lord Braybrooke, only half of the diary's original contents are included within its two volumes. Braybrooke continued to edit and publish new editions of the diary throughout his career and it is his third edition of the diary (1848–49) which, as Latham notes, 'established the diary's popularity with the Victorian reading public' since it coincided with the publication of Macaulay's *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second*.<sup>13</sup> But it is not until the latter years of Robert Louis Stevenson's lifetime that the Diary is published in its most complete form in the nineteenth century: first by Mynors Bright who publishes the diary in an expanded form between 1875 and 1879, and then by Henry B. Wheatley who offers the nineteenth-century reading public the most complete version of the diary, published between 1893 and 1899.<sup>14</sup> Wheatley's edition of the Diary remains the most authoritative publication of the diary for the majority of the twentieth century and remarkably, it was not until Robert Latham and William Matthews published their new, ten-volume edition between 1970 and 1983 that Samuel Pepys's diary first appeared before the public in its entirety.

It is clear that the 'immediate and phenomenal success' of Pepys's diary continued to endure throughout the nineteenth century, lauded indiscriminately by the public readership, writers of literature, antiquarians and historians.<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that much of this public furore surrounding Pepys was inaugurated in Scott's lifetime and the initial public discovery, disclosure and publication of Pepys's secret diary is witnessed by Scott who is quickly enlisted by Lockhart to write a review of the diary for *The Quarterly Review* and, after some apparent reluctance, it is written and published within months of the diary's first publication. Scott proves to be important to the way Pepys is read in the latter half of the century for the publication history of Pepys's diary is intimately connected to the synchronous republication of a number of Secret Histories, in particular the scandalous

*Memoirs of the Court of Charles the Second* written by Count Gramont and edited by Walter Scott in 1811.<sup>16</sup> Scott's edition of Grammont's secret history of Charles II (which he considers a companion to Pepys's diary) is republished at the same time as the 1848–49 edition of Pepys's diary and it is republished again in 1891, appearing between the conclusion of Mynors Bright and before the start of Wheatley's editions of Pepys's diary. 'The entire work as revised by Sir Walter Scott, with all the notes; and, [...] illustrative anecdotes', Scott's tract is included in a special volume of *Bohn's Standard Library* on *Count Grammont's Memoirs, and other Papers relating to Charles II*. Republished in 1854, Scott's *Grammont's Memoirs* is reprinted alongside *The Personal History of Charles* which, the Advertisement claims, ensure it is 'the most complete picture of the merry monarch in dishabille, yet given to the public'. The tract certainly fulfils this expectation set up by the editor, beginning with an anecdote from a source only referred to as a contemporary "Secret History" which describes Charles II's 'strange and unaccountable fondness for a wooden billet, without which in his arms he would never go abroad' during his childhood.<sup>17</sup> The Victorian fascination with Pepys allows the genre of Secret History to be reintroduced into contemporary historical discourse, circulating once again in the publishing market. Given the interest in Charles II and his royal court that the reading of Pepys prompts in Victorian Britain, Pepys's diary and Scott's edition of Count Grammont's memoir do much to reintroduce Secret History into the literary market. It is fascinating to note that Scott becomes a central figure in this Victorian revival of interest in Secret History. In his history, *Samuel Pepys and the World he Lived In* (1880), Wheatley uses, without crediting his original source, Scott's comparison of Pepys to the barber of King Midas 'who relieved his mind of a burthensome secret by communicating to a bundle of reeds the fact that the worthy prince whom he served had the ears of an ass'.<sup>18</sup>

Fifty years after Scott, the diary is still the subject of contemporary attention and interest, and the final stages of its disclosure and publication to an ever-eager nineteenth-century public readership are witnessed by Robert Louis Stevenson. After the fashion of Scott, Stevenson also writes a lengthy review of the diary which is published in 1881 in *Cornhill Magazine* to mark the completion of Mynors Bright's twelve-volume publication run of his newly edited *Diary and Correspondence of Samuel Pepys*. Less than a year later, in February 1882, Stevenson's review of Pepys is republished as a chapter in his *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*. Stevenson's work on Pepys was well-received, with George Saintsbury crediting the chapter as 'almost perfect' in his review of *Familiar Studies* in *Pall Mall Gazette* (March 1882) and noting that Stevenson 'is so discriminating, so acute, so entirely adequate that [...] the Clerk of the Acts of the Navy is there, and there for the first time'.<sup>19</sup> Stevenson begins his essay on Pepys by decrying the diary's long-standing association with 'the time-honoured phrase, "unfit for publication"' and suggests that 'when we purchase six huge and distressingly expensive volumes, we are entitled to be treated rather more like scholars and rather less like children'. At the centre of Stevenson's displeasure is his belief that the diary's censorship and the removal of its sordid, scandalous and sexual details proves an affront to their historical value and significance: 'it is either a historical document or not', Stevenson rationalises, and it should have appeared in full as soon as it had been understood be of public consequence and historical significance. In 1826, Walter Scott had made a similar assessment about, what Stevenson calls, the editor's 'liberties with the author and the public'.<sup>20</sup> Scott labels the censorship of the manuscript and its secret confessions as the 'castration of Pepys' which,

even when decency or delicacy may appear [...] to demand omissions, it comes to be, [...] a matter of very serious consideration in how far such demands can be complied

with, without actual injustice to the characters handled by the author, the self-supplied key to whose own character and dispositions is thus mutilated and impaired.<sup>21</sup>

It is certainly clear that Pepys presents a rather exceptional historical figure for the nineteenth century. His diary is published in abridged and highly censored forms across the span of seventy years, revealing his character and historical secrets in a tantalisingly uneven fashion. Exposed in increments, Pepys is the subject of a sustained, yet incomplete, process of delayed discovery and revelation. To commemorate the publication of the final, twelfth volume of Mynors Bright's edition (1875-79) of Pepys's diary, *The Atlantic Monthly* writes 'A Word for Pepys' and remarks on the continued decision, originating with Braybrooke, to abridge the diary for the public, noting that 'we have all of the original manuscript that will see the light until there is some change in the editor's standard of decency'.<sup>22</sup> This change in standard occurs much faster than the reviewer appears to have envisioned, with another version of the diary, this time closer to a faithful transcription of the manuscript and certainly much longer than any previous edition of the diary, beginning its publication series eight years later, in 1893. Decoding, transcribing and printing new, longer and more comprehensive editions of the diary was a labour-intensive process, but the renewed promise of each edition to provide public access to new, secret information sustained a continued interest and fascination with the Diary and, as Latham highlights, this 'succession of new editions, re-issues and selections published in the Victorian age [...] made the diary one of the best-known books, and Pepys one of the best-known figures, of English history'.<sup>23</sup>

As Rebecca Bullard highlights, the genre of Secret History has long been recognised for its 'partisan and literary characteristics', but Pepys appears to further solidify and entrench the genre's association with literature, in particular fiction, for his Victorian readers.<sup>24</sup> The 1885 reviewer of Pepys in *Atlantic Monthly* nicely exemplifies this point trying, albeit imperfectly, to locate Pepys in literary tradition and genre, noting that even 'if one cannot

apply to the diary the classical definition of a good book [...] it is a classic, nevertheless'.<sup>25</sup> The reviewer continues to read Pepys in his literary context, placing his diary in dialogue with Restoration drama and theatrical performance. Marking something of a halfway point between Scott and Stevenson, the historical novelist, Margaret Oliphant (1828–1897), writes a review of Braybrooke's third edition of Pepys's Diary (1848–49). In her article for *Blackwood's Magazine* (1854), Oliphant makes a number of observations about the role of Pepys's diary which are equally apt for positioning Pepys in relation to the values of Secret History and within the literary history of the nineteenth-century historical novel. At the beginning of her article, Oliphant conceives of Pepys as a crafty intruder 'who smuggles along the solemn highway of history by the Lord of Wotton's side'.<sup>26</sup> A contemporary of Pepys who, in his own journal, recounts a number of unsensational details about the Restoration court, John Evelyn, Lord of Wotton, acts as a foil for the type of scandalous, salacious and slanderous detail contained in Pepys's account. Having 'smuggled' himself and his secret knowledge into the nineteenth century, Pepys's diary trades in the currency of Secret History: gossip and scandal. Despite the criminal associations adherent to Oliphant's description of Pepys as an intrusive and illegitimate figure for history, she identifies the gossipy content of his diary as its *raison d'être* as a valuable historical document and narrative. Unlike Evelyn's 'gentleman-like chronicle', Pepys discloses 'unparalleled revelations [...] from which to glean the history, both public and domestic, of this lively and animated time' for 'no bit of individual story throws more light upon the time than does his'.<sup>27</sup> During the course of his diary, Pepys witnesses a number of significant historical events: the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the licentiousness of the royal court throughout the following decade; the outbreak of the Bubonic Plague in 1665; and, the Great Fire of London in 1666. Although Pepys reveals invaluable information about these historical events, they are never at the centre of his history: he provides glimpses of key events and

these are only accessible through the lens of his routine, everyday experiences and encounters, or through a veil of personal scandal and secrecy.<sup>28</sup> Oliphant vindicates his style, stating that ‘when the broad and general story fails, it is rare that a bit of sun-bright daguerreotype—a homely clear succession of everydays threaded upon some individual life—is unsuccessful in catching the eye and rousing the interest’. Oliphant’s rather novelistic view of Pepys’s historical narrative is perhaps unsurprising, given her approach to handling the Scottish Jacobite movement in her historical novel *Katie Stewart* (1852) which haunts the everyday, domestic lives at Kellie Castle rather than directly impacts them. During their trip to Edinburgh, the female protagonists are only able to catch a glimpse of Charles Edward Stuart from their balcony as he makes his stately procession: the reader glimpses the Royal exile and his loyal Jacobites through the ‘homely clear succession of everydays threaded upon some individual life’ located in the upper-class drawing rooms of *Katie Stewart*. In Pepys’s diary, history is similarly removed from its dignified elevation in the royal court, council chamber or parliament and relocated to Pepys ‘in the privacy of his own closet at home’ where he secretly and indiscriminately chronicles the conversations and events which he has either been a participant in, or witness of: Pepys comments on the Duke of York’s favourite sauce at dinnertime alongside numerous anecdotes about Lady Castlemaine, the mistress of Charles II; he reveals the drunken violence at the Royal Court, and its turning of a blind eye to numerous assassinations, murders, and kidnappings, alongside his personal anecdotes about family, illness, and laundry.<sup>29</sup>

In the same way as his contemporaries, Stevenson is similarly fascinated with considering the historical implications of Pepys’s delayed disclosure of his own closely-guarded secrets, alongside those of well-known historical figures, because the delayed discovery and publication of his secret diary ensured that the Samuel Pepys commemorated in histories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is the result of a well-planned illusion, one that

upholds and perpetuates a false picture of his, and his period's, historical character and reality. Stevenson notes that Pepys is an

unparalleled figure in the annals of mankind [...] because he was a man known to his contemporaries in a halo of almost historical pomp, and to his remote descendants with an indecent familiarity, like a tap-room comrade; [...] being in many ways a very ordinary person, he has yet placed himself before the public eye with such a fulness and such an intimacy of detail as might be envied by a genius like Montaigne.<sup>30</sup>

Pepys's private scandals and domestic secrets are not only revealed posthumously, they are revealed after the century-long endurance of his 'halo of almost historical pomp'. To Stevenson, one of the most remarkable features of Pepys's, now infamous, reputation is the fact that it was never realised, disclosed, or recorded by his contemporaries, but one that secretly and unexpectedly exposed itself to another time, society, and historical situation. This had been remarked upon by Oliphant who noted that Pepys presented himself to the nineteenth century 'with a sudden leap out of chaos and the unknown, and reveals himself, no growth of years, no proper little boy, and much educated young man, but an achieved and complete personage, a *fait accompli* to our admiring eyes'.<sup>31</sup> It is exactly this 'sudden leap' out of the unknown recesses of, respectively, the Pepysian library and the chaotically disorganised basement of M'Briar's publishing house that Stevenson ensures Pepys's diary and Mackellar's manuscript share, launching their respective authors into a position of historical authority and prominence in the nineteenth century. It is towards this Pepysian phenomenon that Stevenson turns in his historical novel, *The Master of Ballantrae*. In preserving his manuscript in an unread state until 1889, Mackellar similarly 'smuggles' himself, the Master, and Henry 'along the solemn highway of history' and into the nineteenth century, reserving themselves a space in (a fictional) Scottish history seemingly disproportionate to the part they played in the national history of their time.

Samuel Pepys and Ephraim Mackellar: Smugglers along the Solemn Highway of History

In a Preface described by Stevenson as ‘a little too like Scott’, *The Master of Ballantrae* begins with its own discovery.<sup>32</sup> Having lain hidden and forgotten among a ‘prodigious accumulation of old law-papers and old tin boxes’ hoarded by two generations of M’Briar Publishing’s owners, the manuscript of Ephraim Mackellar’s secret history of Henry Durie and his brother, an ex-Jacobite turned Hanoverian spy, is unsealed and read by the novel’s two fictional editors.<sup>33</sup> Presenting the reader with a fictional version of both himself and his long-time friend and publisher, Charles Baxter, Stevenson’s preface not only establishes Mackellar’s history as a previously unpublished and mysterious *anekdota*, but also reaffirms the genre’s connection to the form and function of the nineteenth-century historical novel.<sup>34</sup> Together, the two men read the manuscript which ‘no eye’ has looked upon ‘for near a hundred years’ and, after completing the task, Baxter’s fictional persona, Mr Thomson, declares to his companion: ‘Here [...] is a novel ready to your hand’ (6, 8). There is no doubt between the two men that they have come across, and now possess, an authentic historical document, and yet the pair immediately turn to the form of the novel to fulfil the history’s potential for publication. This is both puzzling and intriguing, and although Stevenson remarks on their similarities, this episode between the fictional editor and publisher of *The Master of Ballantrae* also marks a departure from Scott. In Scott’s metafictional prefaces, the historical novel is appealed to as a means to a particular, desirable end: making otherwise dusty, forgotten histories, hidden in the obscurity of archives, crypts and private collections, accessible to a public readership. The fictional Author of Waverley comes to embody this role, claiming to emerge ‘like the Magician in the Persian Tales from his twelvemonth’s residence in the mountain’ bearing new material for a ‘successful novel’ after having ‘buried myself in libraries’ and archives and judiciously combed through historical manuscripts.<sup>35</sup> Although the fictional editors of Scott’s prefaces often criticise their Author’s lack of

attention to historical accuracy and his frequent decisions to privilege details of ‘idle’ entertainment, they come to agree that the form of the historical novel provides the solution to ‘a formidable difficulty’: namely, how to synthesise and interpret miscellaneous and heterogeneous historical sources into a single, comprehensible narrative.<sup>36</sup> According to Scott’s prefatory characters, the historical novel offers a unique type of public service, combining access to secret historical information, about scandals and the ‘*vie privée* of our forefathers’, with the entertainment of novel reading.<sup>37</sup> In his first correspondence with the Author of *Waverley*, Captain Clutterbuck remarks that he does not ‘pretend to much taste in fictitious composition [...] What I respect in you, is the lights you have occasionally thrown on national antiquities’.<sup>38</sup> Clutterbuck enlists the help of the Author of *Waverley* because he can see no other way of making the history of Saint Mary’s monastery available to the public, with previous attempts having left the manuscript incomplete, incomprehensible and, professedly, unendurably tedious to read by the time it reaches the hands of the Author of *Waverley*. Interestingly, however, *The Master of Ballantrae* is not confronted with any of these reconstructive difficulties: where the historical manuscript at the heart of *The Monastery* definitely *requires* the narrative structures of the (fictional) Author of *Waverley*’s historical novel to help salvage its contents and restore its historical value, Mackellar’s manuscript does not. On 20 September 1789, Mackellar is fastidious in preparing his secret manuscript, using multiple seals to secure his secret history inside its durable envelope, thereby ensuring that the history ‘of a purely narrative nature’ is preserved intact, complete, and unread by the time it reaches Stevenson’s fictional editor a hundred years later (7). With their interests piqued by Mackellar’s injunction for the manuscript to remain sealed ‘until a hundred years complete’, the men are captivated by their discovery and read the manuscript in one enthralled sitting, staying up long after the hour they had planned to go to bed. It is clear that Mackellar’s manuscript does not suffer from the same defects as Clutterbuck’s,

proving to be neither incomplete nor tediously unreadable. Despite this evident enjoyment and interest, as soon as the pair have finished reading Mackellar's narrative, Thomson wants it to be rewritten: "Here [...] is a novel ready to your hand: all you have to do is to work up the scenery, develop the characters, and improve the style' (8). Through Stevenson's metafictional preface, we can see a shift in the way the nineteenth-century historical novel is being presented to its readers, one that strangely removes, denies, and distances the historical novelist from his own creation. Unlike the Author of *Waverley*, who is presented as the ultimate, almost mystical, custodian of history's secrets and his creation, the historical novel, provides him an exclusive vehicle for homogenising, integrating, and unifying these miscellaneous anecdotes into a complete historical narrative, Stevenson appears in his historical novel as an individual who is just as baffled and excited by Mackellar's secret history as his implied readers. The historical novelist of Stevenson's conception does not have unrivalled access to exclusive, previously unpublished histories that he can use to supplement Mackellar's *anekdota* and reconcile it to a wider, national history. In fact, the contributions and changes that the editor foresees are entirely of a literary nature, asking the novelist to improve the scenery, characters, and style of the narrative rather than its historical content or structure. With the long list of stylistic, literary deficiencies that Thomson identifies in Mackellar's writing, he is certainly reading the history after the fashion of a literary critic and not as an antiquarian. Stevenson allows his fictional self to make the rather tongue-in-cheek reply that, "My dear fellow, [...] they are just the three things that I would rather die than set my hand to. It shall be published as it stands" (8). By leaving Mackellar's history to be published 'as it stands', Stevenson denies his fictional self the status of historical novelist and consigns him to an editorial role more comparable to Scott's Cleishbotham and Clutterbuck than the Author of *Waverley*, leaving Stevenson's fictional self to add the occasional footnote to Mackellar's history signed 'R.L.S'.

Reading *The Master of Ballantrae* through the preface transforms the way the novel is understood, establishing and entrenching a number of complex narrative and historical structures which underpin the novel and determine the function, status, and historical value of Mackellar's secret manuscript. The preface frames and recontextualises Mackellar's narrative, firmly positioning it as a historical document and clarifying its position as a secret history. Never intended to be read by its contemporary society, it is consciously withheld for disclosure to the Scottish public of a distant future. At the time of its fictional, initial reading in 1889, the private, domestic secrets that the manuscript exposes are truly historic with the deaths of those involved having preceded the disclosure by over a hundred years. Stevenson uses the preface to insist that Mackellar's manuscript is both a previously unpublished and previously unread *anekdota* and, by delaying the act of its reading, Stevenson controls and suspends the manuscript's ability to expose, reserving and preserving the secret until it is offered as, rather paradoxically, an entirely new, and an entirely historic, disclosure. Unknown and undisclosed to any other public readership, Stevenson uses the prefatory introduction to Mackellar's narrative to concentrate, condense, and control the way that history appears to unfold and reveal itself within, and to, the nineteenth century. Stevenson ensures that Mackellar's approach to the job of the secret historian sharply contrasts with the interests of John Crabtree in *Prince Otto* and to Stevenson himself in *A Footnote to History* where the immediate, timely publication of their respective exposés prove vital to their journalistic success, public impact, and social reputation. By way of contrast, *The Master of Ballantrae* sees Stevenson foreground delayed and deferred disclosure, offering it as an alternative process through which the relationship between history, domestic secrecy, and its publication can be viewed and explored. Time and delay are now explicitly called upon to transform Mackellar's memoir into the carrier and discloser of outdated secrets and detail with the drastic time difference between its composition and its reading proving fundamental

to this textual transformation of what could have been another example of a contemporary exposé, into that of a secret history.

From the beginning of his secret narrative, Mackellar makes it clear that his history of the private relationship between the Durie brothers has been consciously written with the goal of its publication in mind, believing it ‘not fit that so much evidence should perish; the truth is a debt I owe my lord’s memory’ (9). Mackellar’s history of the Lord Durrisdeer, Henry Durie, and his brother, James, spans the course of almost twenty years and begins with the promise that its contents will be gladly received by the public, whose interest in the scandalous infamy of the brothers is said to be both piqued and unsatisfied at the time of his writing in 1789. Previously reliant on popular report, rumour and gossip, Mackellar claims that ‘the full truth of this odd matter is what the world has long been looking for, and public curiosity is sure to welcome’ (9). Whilst this may seem a grand claim, it is clear from the novel’s preface that the Durrisdeers have retained something of their notoriety more than a hundred years after the deaths of the Durie brothers in the American wilderness. The editor immediately recognises the name of the Durrisdeers and recalls having read about the siblings in Robert Law’s *Memorials* for ‘one of them was out in the ’45; one had some strange passages with the devil’ (6). But the information in the pages of history books proves insufficient, failing to provide any further information on these mysterious ‘passages with the devil’ or to explain the strange circumstances of the ‘unexplained tragedy’ from which ‘deformed traditions’ among the local community near St Brides have originated, marring the reputation of Henry’s children, the successors to his estate, until their deaths in 1820 and 1827 (6, 7). It is revealed that the fictional editor knows more about the reputation of the Duries from local legend than from documentary sources, having heard about the strange, melancholy state of the Durrisdeer estate through a number of his uncle’s childhood recollections. Not only is the information surrounding the Durie’s family history scarce, but it is also plagued by

inconsistencies and errors: even Mr Thomson misattributes the deaths of Henry and his brother, James, to the year 1783 when, as Mackellar highlights in his memoir, the fatal events of the novel's denouement occur in 1764. Confusion surrounding the precise details of the Durie's family history and, in particular, the uncertainty and rumours surrounding the events in the North American wilderness immediately aligns Mackellar's history with the interests of the *anekdota*, offering to correct and clarify the pre-existent and entrenched version of events by exposing the brother's domestic and private lives to the view and scandal of the public.

Secret History becomes ideally suited to deal with the strains of Mackellar's narrative, allowing him the means to expose the intimate, personal and scandalous details of Henry and James's private lives to the public and at the same time, to borrow Adrian Poole's phrase, manage to 'impose an order on the heterogeneous materials in his hands' through its narrative structures.<sup>39</sup> Whilst Mackellar's manuscript clearly functions as a secret history in the fictional nineteenth-century of the novel's opening frame, Secret History, as a genre, has an important and tangible position at the novel's second narrative level. As I highlight in my analysis of Scott's *Secret History* in chapter three, in its traditional form Secret History offers the reader access to a series of miscellaneous texts (including, for example, letters, unpublished documents, and reprints of extracts from obscure memoirs) which, when read together and in a certain order, offer an alternative historical perspective from that entrenched in popular memory. The reader, under the Secret Historian's guidance, is able to divine a number of historical secrets from reading, or re-reading, these documents together and in their newly arranged order. Allison Stedman summarises this phenomenon in her work on Secret History in Pre-Revolutionary France and the writing of Jean de Préchac (1647–1720) who 'strung together sequences of seemingly unrelated anecdotes, which the reader must read linearly and diachronically to perceive the true meaning of the whole'.<sup>40</sup> Predating his final

historical narrative by two decades, it is to this traditional version of Secret History that Mackellar initially turns, constructing ‘a kind of documentary disclosure’ about James Durie which ‘to publish would be to wreck the Master’s honour and to set a price upon his life’ (112, 109). After rifling through James’s personal belongings in his bedroom, Mackellar comes across a number of secret correspondences between James and the English Secretary of State which prove his status as a spy for the British government, betraying his Jacobite compatriots in a series of intelligence reports to the government in England. Mackellar gleefully indexes these documents and creates a dossier of these secret correspondences to which he adds ‘some necessary observations’ of his own (113). The contents are split by Mackellar into four categories, the last including the most damning of evidence against the Master. Mackellar not only orders the papers, he reconstructs and interprets their narrative, drawing attention to the way one paper clarifies the position of another, cross-referencing their contents and strongly recommending the ideal order of their reading: ‘*Nota*: to be read in connection with B. and C.’ (113). Aware of his indiscretions in searching through James’s belongings, reading his private letters and then cataloguing their contents with the intent to threaten their publication, Mackellar begins to worry that his ‘immixture in affairs so private’ might lead to his dismissal by Mrs Henry, Alison Graeme, to whom Mackellar gives his ‘sword of paper’ to read (114, 115). Having anxiously anticipated her reaction, Mackellar is both unprepared and stunned to find that Alison has burned the evidence of James’s espionage in the fireplace for, she explains, as an instrument of blackmail Mackellar’s ‘sword’ can only yield a pyrrhic victory, promising to destroy the family’s reputation alongside that of the Master’s should the truth ever reach the public: ‘he knows we would rather die than make these letters public; and do you suppose he would not trade upon the knowledge?’ (115). The Secret History of the Master’s dealings with the Hanoverian government threatens to be too effective as a vehicle for exposing private secrets to public

scandal, and fails to offer Mackellar the protection for which he desperately longs. Mackellar therefore makes a significant miscalculation in the composition of his exposé: the power of blackmail lies in the threat, rather than reality, of publication; Secret Histories, including Mackellar's, are consciously crafted to make the secret easier to see, read and share. This misalignment of Secret History with suppression and censorship, types of counterintelligence which the genre was specifically designed to overcome, makes Mackellar's position untenable and sees his sword reduced to nothing more than inarticulate 'black ashes of paper' (114).<sup>41</sup> Mackellar is forced to reconcile his desire to document and share the truth about the Master of Ballantrae and his brother with the inevitable ill-repute and scandal which will necessarily follow such disclosure. It is not until two decades after the destruction of his first attempt at writing a secret history that a solution occurs to Mackellar: he does not need to avoid its publication, only delay it. By suppressing his memoirs for a hundred years, Mackellar is able to offer a post-humous vindication of 'my lord's memory', bypassing his contemporary public (for whom the secrets of the Durie's history will remain undisclosed) and securing it for a different public, one a century into the future (9). By choosing to store his history in the basement of an Edinburgh publishing house and placing his directive in the hands of its owner, John M'Briar, it is evident that Mackellar wants his second attempt at 'documentary disclosure' to be published, unlike its predecessor. But during the hundred-year delay, the manuscript is neither completely private nor in any great sense, public: it is, quite literally, a secret history.

Stevenson is fascinated by the pains Pepys took to preserve his diary, even after he stopped adding journal entries to it during the last years of his life. In the same way as Mackellar deals with his first attempt at writing a secret exposé of the Master's espionage, Pepys is forced to destroy dangerous evidence of his secrets:

Pepys, in an agony lest the world should come to see it, brutally seizes and destroys the tell-tale document; and then – you disbelieve your eyes – down goes the whole story with unsparing truth and the cruellest detail. It seems he has no design but to appear respectable, and here he keeps a private book to prove he was not.

It is at this point that we can see how Stevenson's contemporary interest in Pepys and his historical secrets has informed his composition of the historical novel. Whilst Mackellar and Pepys seem equally and irrationally invested in alternatively suppressing and preserving their private secrets, burning documentary proof and then reproducing it in their memoirs, the pair prove themselves dedicated to investing their secret histories in 'a far-distant publicity'.

Despite the diary posing an obvious liability to its author were it ever to be discovered by his contemporaries 'through all this period, that Diary which contained the secret memoirs of his life, with all its inconsistencies and escapades, had been religiously preserved; nor, when he came to die, does he appear to have provided for its destruction'. Ahead of his time, Stevenson theorises that, although the diary had to remain both 'religiously preserved' and religiously hidden throughout his life, Pepys remained fixated on the hope 'of a far-distant publicity' when his memoirs could be disclosed, widely read, and published as soon as 'the gun-cotton and the giant powder, he was hoarding in his drawer' had lost its political and social relevancy and he could be 'resuscitated in some later day'.<sup>42</sup> Until Stevenson, the pervading view of Pepys was that his public exposure was entirely accidental, orchestrated by an unpredictable 'flank movement of posterity'.<sup>43</sup> Pepys's hopeful anticipation that his diary will be preserved and disclosed to a far distant readership is described by Stevenson as 'a sort of pleasure by ricochet'.<sup>44</sup>

In Scott's *Rob Roy* (1818), the protagonist, Frank Osbaldistone, gives readers a sense of this 'pleasure by ricochet' and introduces his memoirs with a dedicatory address to his friend who, he reveals, has requested a full, detailed account of his adventure in Scotland which

took place thirty years before. After writing his memoir, and hoping that the confessions and secrets it contains will be met with ‘kind construction and forgiveness’, Frank asks his friend to

Throw, then, these sheets into some secret drawer of your escritoire till we are [...] parted in this world [...] You will, I am well aware, cherish more than it deserves the memory of your departed friend.<sup>45</sup>

Interestingly, Osbaldistone, Mackellar and Pepys have appealed to the same process of delayed disclosure and reading, hopefully anticipating that their death will transform the way that their private secrets are received, understood, and valued. For Frank, his memoirs will stand in place of the lively, vocal narrations of his adventures that he would often share with his companion, and he hopes that this posthumous reading will transform the story into a *memento mori* of ‘your departed friend’. But for Mackellar and Pepys the reading of their memoirs is an arcane process, one that reveals their most guarded and private secrets *for the first time*, and this exclusive disclosure only occurs after their deaths. The transferred epithet, ‘secret drawer’, is suggestive of the profound complexities that the authors’ process of delayed, post-humous reading creates. Preserved in its pristine and unread state, the hidden text is shrouded in secrecy: temporarily silenced, stilled, and suppressed as an object of concealment rather than its means of exposure. In the intervening years between composition and discovery, the secret histories exist in a state of paradox: they are at once disclosed and secret, exposed and private, revealed and hidden. Like Osbaldistone’s ‘secret drawer’, the terms ‘secret history’ and ‘secret historian’ function as transferred epithets in *The Master of Ballantrae* and Pepys’s *Diary*, revealing the relative position of the memoirs and their authors to secrecy and disclosure: by the time of their reading, the authors are dead, silent and stilled whilst their private histories, now recovered from their imposed state of silence and secrecy, are eloquently disclosing the secrets that they had once been forced to jealously contain. In

*The Master of Ballantrae* and his writing on Samuel Pepys, Stevenson reevaluates the idea of the historical secret. Rather than looking to the inaccessible and private spaces of key historical figures, like Prince Otto or Mataafa, and presenting his readers with the domestic secrets and politics underpinning the historically significant events of revolution and civil war, Stevenson is now presenting the historical secret as a condition of time, and not one of political circumstance. Mackellar's secrets *become* historical, not because of what they reveal about the Jacobite civil war, or to the civil and territorial unrest in America, but because of their endurance, both hidden and undisclosed, across time. When Mackellar's secret manuscript reveals itself to the late-nineteenth century reader, the secret is truly a historical disclosure, an *anekdota* completely remote and removed from the social and political contexts of its creation and composition.

Throughout Mackellar's life with Henry, his desire to control, limit and determine when the Durie's secrets are revealed is constantly disappointed, filling the narrative with a series of ill-timed disclosures: Burke's letter warning Mackellar of the Master's recent financial ruin and growing hatred of his brother arrives 'a week too late' to heed Burke's advice and 'make a bridge of gold to a flying enemy'; Mackellar only reveals James's private 'persecution' of Henry to their father after it has already culminated in the brothers' secret, bloody duel; and, news of James's affair with a married woman in France is exposed after the unexpected interception of a private letter between the lovers, and it is for this secret that the Master is imprisoned, stripped of his pension and desperately requires his brother's money, as forewarned by Burke (70, 101). The plot's advancement towards its tragic denouement is repeatedly punctuated by episodes of delayed disclosure, denying Mackellar and Henry the chance of mitigation and leaving Mackellar to reflect on how frequently 'I was not in time to avert what was impending: the arrow had been drawn; it must now fly' (70). The trigger for Henry's drastic and murderous scheme against his brother, concocted in New York and

executed in the American wilderness, proves a fascinating, and in many ways, an exceptional variation of this pattern. A newly published political pamphlet prophesies the restoration of the Master to his original title, attained in the Jacobite uprising, and the subsequent loss of Henry's son's title, estate, and inheritance. Written by its English author for its immediate, timely publication, the pamphlet reaches Henry's hands and he reads its contents with a seriousness and fearfulness that leads him to employ the secret assassin, Mountain, in the conspiracy to kill his brother. After encountering a number of historical events and a smattering of their associated historical figures, from Charles Edward Stuart and Lord President Culloden, to Robert Clive and William Johnson, the history's origin in a time of national crisis and civil war is brought to its tragic conclusion by the publication of a seemingly harmless and innocuous piece of political gossip and scandalmongering. In rather radical and unexpected fashion, Stevenson brings about the conclusion of his Jacobite historical novel by allowing,

some poor devil in Grub Street, scribbling for his dinner, and not caring what he scribbled, to cast a spell across four thousand miles of the salt sea, and send forth both these brothers into savage and wintry deserts, there to die (181).

Henry closely guards his secret pamphlet, refusing to tell Mackellar or his wife about its existence. It is not until after Henry is dead that Mackellar makes the discovery and, looking through Henry's personal effects immediately after his sudden death, Mackellar retrieves the pamphlet from its hiding place in the breast pocket of Henry's jacket. When Mackellar reads its report, he is shocked that Henry could have possibly 'cared two straws for a tale so manifestly false' and placed so much belief in the 'idle, lying words of a Whig pamphleteer' (184). Discovered after his death, the pamphlet discloses the secret that Henry had been trying so hard to keep during the last few weeks of his life. This post-humous revelation of Henry's final secret is indicative of the novel's fascination with reading as not only a process

of disclosure, but one of delayed disclosure, allowing the secret to reveal itself *in absentia* of its author, its subject, and the historical conditions from which it originally sprung.

In her review of Pepys, Oliphant considers how he reflects that ‘public personages’ are ‘but human men— living their own immediate days one by one, without much thought of your opinion of them, and being no more influenced than they could help by the convulsions of their time’.<sup>46</sup> It is striking to note that the Master echoes both Oliphant’s argument and her description of historical process. Stevenson ensures that the Jacobite uprising clearly imposes itself on the Duries and their everyday domestic lives, for ‘to these four came the news of Prince Charlie’s landing’ (11). The strange inversion of the sentence emphasises how the national movement intrudes and imposes itself on the family, and this sense of history as a force of disruption and imposition is effectively summarised by the Master, who complains to Mackellar on board the *Nonsuch* that

my life has been a series of unmerited cast-backs. That fool, Prince Charlie, mismanaged a most promising affair: there fell my first fortune. In Paris I had my foot once more high up on the ladder: that time it was an accident; a letter came to the wrong hand, and I was bare again. A third time I found my opportunity; I built up a place for myself in India with an infinite patience; and then Clive came, my rajah was swallowed up, and I escaped out of the convulsion (180).

According to James, there are two intimately connected forces of disruption and change that direct the trajectory of his life: history and chance, and both disclose themselves at ill-suited, episodic intervals. Represented by the ‘fool’ Prince Charlie and the disruptive General Clive, history intrudes and disturbs the family’s isolation, and domestic security: the Jacobite movement triggers the family feud but each subsequent ‘convulsion’ that knocks James from his high situation brings with it a proportionately disruptive return of the Master to his brother in Scotland. History is characterised as a series of ill-timed disclosures in *The Master*

of *Ballantrae*, forcing itself on the Duries and Mackellar's nineteenth-century readers at disruptive and unexpected moments. In the Master, we also see something of Pepys with his share in the exploits of Charles Edward Stuart, the pirate Teach (a type for the infamous Blackbeard), Robert Clive, and William Johnson. Whilst James shares a fictional historical role with these figures and their associated movements, it is not for his involvement in any of these events that James is resuscitated for the nineteenth century readers of the novel's preface: it is to publicise his true nature, unknown and unrecognised by his contemporaries but revealed 'to his remote descendants with an indecent familiarity' in the nineteenth century.

Both Pepys's diary and *The Master of Ballantrae* have an unusual relationship with the traditional focus of Secret History: the royal court. As in his chapter on Pepys, Stevenson invites secret history into the private lives of the 'ordinary person [...] shedding a unique light upon the lives of the mass of mankind'.<sup>47</sup> Historical figures fade into the background of these historical narratives and, in *The Master of Ballantrae*, they consistently emerge into the history at ill-suited and inopportune moments. The Battle of Culloden has serious repercussions for the Durie family, bringing rumour of the Master's death and triggering the estate's shadow succession to his younger brother. But, in a similar fashion to Pepys's relationship with the national history of his time, Culloden, Charles Edward Stuart, the East India Company and the Battle of Plassey can only be viewed through a 'clear succession of everydays threaded upon some individual life'. Looking at history as a series of intrusions into the private, settled, and contented realm of private life is something which had fascinated Stevenson in his study of Pepys whose diary reflects the diligence required to keep his salacious, scandalous private life separate from his public encounters and how historic events (the death of a monarch, the Great Fire of London, the plague) present themselves as chaotic, intrusive, and inconvenient impediments to the progress of private, domestic life. Pepys's

documentary disclosure presents his readers with an alternative perspective for the secret historian, no longer investigating the private spaces and secret relationships of the king, but peering into those of a politically unremarkable individual. In fact, as an acquaintance of the king, Pepys inverts the traditional aim of the secret historian: instead of trying to discern and expose the secrets of the king, Pepys is preoccupied with ensuring that *his own* domestic secrets remain hidden from, first Charles II, and then James II.

Mackellar is a similar secret historian to Pepys. Henry's murderous conspiracy against his brother takes place during one of William Johnson's diplomatic missions, allowing Mackellar and Henry to hijack this historical event for their own private, secret and murderous conspirations. Mackellar guiltily plays his role in the conspiracy and is left to 'entertain' and distract Johnson during the journey, whilst he ashamedly nurses his 'private knowledge of the errand we were come upon' (193). This fosters an unusual relationship between the tragic events of the denouement and their historical situation. Although the history is in some measure removed from either a British or American historical context due the tragedy's setting in an unknown location of the American wilderness, Johnson's continued presence throughout the dramatic digging up of the Master from his grave and his brother's sudden death ensures that the moment is not entirely devoid of historical context, but poised unusually in it. This is nicely articulated by Johnson who observes that "I appear to intrude again upon your secrets, [...] believe me, inadvertently" (211). William Johnson's self-conscious and apologetic intrusion upon Henry and Mackellar's secrets in the novel's concluding chapters is a particularly thought-provoking and defining moment of the narrative, especially given its ironic twinge: Mackellar and Henry infiltrate Johnson's diplomatic mission in order to facilitate their real, hidden and murderous plan. Despite taking place in an undisclosed location in the American wilderness, Johnson's presence on the journey ensures that the brothers cannot avoid or outrun their historical context. Shadowing

Henry and Mackellar on their final journey to find the Master's grave, Johnson is a passive, although highly curious, observer of James's short-lived resuscitation and his brother's sudden death. After the dramatic 'disclosure of the dead man's eyes', Johnson has a rather abrupt and unceremonious exit from the narrative: 'Sir William, leaving a small party under my command, proceeded on his embassy with the first light' (218). The sudden appearance of Johnson in the history and his rapid retreat from it, is reflective of the way national history continues to impose itself upon the Duries at abrupt and unsustained intervals. Despite Mackellar's best effort at concealment, the historical figure, William Johnson, continues to worry the secret plot, posing a constant threat to the public discovery of Henry and Mackellar's conspiracy against the Master. A continued threat to the safety of their secret, the most prominent historical character in Stevenson's novel, Johnson, is viewed by Mackellar as a nuisance to his plans, threatening to uncover the family's secrets at a moment when Mackellar desperately requires that they remain hidden. Mackellar remains entirely preoccupied with concealing the truth from Johnson throughout the course of their journey: 'I touched my head and shook it; quite rejoiced to prepare a little testimony against possible disclosures' (193). Far from offering the reader any insight or private information about the historical figure, Sir William Johnson, Mackellar is entirely invested in disguising the real intention of their secret mission and in doing so, Stevenson clarifies the strangely intrusive role history plays in the novel as a 'shaping force' that imposes itself in waves upon the Durie family and its own domestic civil war occurring between the brothers, Henry and James.

Oliphant had praised Pepys's diary as 'the clearest picture ever displayed to the world of a mind and conscience in perfect undress, with not a thought concealed'.<sup>48</sup> Marking an evolution in the traditional interest of Secret History, to reveal its rulers in a 'literal and metaphorical state of undress', Pepys also presents himself, and his contemporaries, in a state of emotional and psychological *dishabille*.<sup>49</sup> In 1885, a reviewer of Pepys remarks how even

‘the most cynical [...] must feel less certain of the sight men would see were the curtain lifted from the bosom of the passerby’.<sup>50</sup> In *The Master of Ballantrae*, Stevenson asks Mackellar to perform this function, rendering the emotional and psychological curtains aside of Henry and James Durie. Mackellar has a particular fascination with the Master of Ballantrae, ‘as birds are said to look on snakes’, whose ability to seduce those around him into following his every whim, command, and desire presents Henry and Mackellar with a particularly fiendish and capable enemy (160). In public, or with certain individuals whom he wishes to influence, the Master assumes a civilised front which he cleaves aside to reveal the cruel reality of his character and disposition to his brother and Mackellar. Mackellar reflects on how ‘never in this world was a more diabolic contrivance so perfidious, so simple, so impossible to combat’ for the Master acts with such well-assumed and convincing airs of grace, humility and benevolence that it is proves impossible for Mackellar to convince his contemporaries of the Master’s true nature (78). Were it not for Mackellar’s secret history, in which he is able to clearly present the Master’s ‘mind and conscience in perfect undress’, his historical reputation as ‘a master of the arts and graces, admired in Europe, Asia, America, in war and peace, in the tents of hunters and the citadels of kings’ would never have been supplanted by the other, much darker and sinister, side of his character (219). With his ability to present how each ‘private thought leaks out’ of his acquaintances, Mackellar acts a new type of secret historian, one who, after the style of Pepys, is able to ‘take us behind the scenes of character and achievement’ and ‘carry on the apostolic succession of experience’ (68).<sup>51</sup> In his reading of *The Master of Ballantrae*, Robert Kiely suggests that ‘as the novel progresses the national and historical overtones assume less and less importance while the psychology of evil becomes the central focus of the narrative’.<sup>52</sup> While the final section of the novel, heralded by the strange encounter between the Master and Mackellar on the *Nonsuch*, certainly draws the reader’s attention to the Master’s psychopathy, as an individual who can identify, without

sympathising with, the complex psychological weaknesses of his foes, it is a mistake to think that this narrative transition also heralds the end of the novel's 'historical overtones'. On the contrary, the final encounters between the Master, Henry, and Mackellar, and the novel's tragic irresolution at its close marks Stevenson's final step in tracing the seemingly inconsequential and anecdotal experiences of his characters into a historical narrative to rival that of Pepys. Stevenson ensures that Mackellar, the Master, Henry, and Alison enjoy the same 'launch' into the nineteenth century that Pepys enjoys:

Of all the wandering loves of Fortune [...] How many laureled heads of Davenants and Bases did she pass by to fix this paper crown [...] All [...] are shut up to be food for worms; their names fresh only in these pages and the foot-note that explains the obscure reference [...] But Fortune is wise, out of her caprice has given us a good gift to make our advantage of, – the sincere history of one Englishman's life, selected, it would seem, almost at random from the intelligent men of his time, but one who remained at bottom the mere human creature'.<sup>53</sup>

By making Mackellar a second Pepys, Stevenson is inviting a seismic shift in historical perspective, one that traces national history through the lens of the individual, and their intimate, domestic experiences. In *The Master of Ballantrae* Scottish history is viewed through the eyes and experiences of one Scottish man's life 'selected, it would seem, almost at random from the intelligent men of his time, but one who remained at bottom the mere human creature', dedicating both his service and his history to the memory of his employer and friend, Henry Durie.

#### Time, Distance and Delay: Unriddling History's Secrets

Although the narrative of *The Master of Ballantrae* is not written in the style of a journal, diaries and journalistic practice nevertheless underpin the history. In a mediated form, the *Memoirs of Cavalier Burke* are excerpted into the narrative, edited, rearranged and, in places

even invalidated, by Mackellar; and, Mackellar reveals that he is using his journals from the period as the foundation of his historical detail. The limitations of the diarist's perspective, one based entirely in the immediacies of daily sensation and experience, are overcome by Mackellar's remediation of the diary's contents decades after its episodic composition. Although he had no view to publishing his diary in its original form, it is nonetheless a vehicle for documenting and disclosing the history. This effect is nicely defined by a reviewer of the novel in the *Pall Mall Gazette* who highlights that Mackellar's 'narrative is apt to assume the appearance of a niggling mosaic of fragmentary reminiscences'.<sup>54</sup> What the critic identifies as a series of 'fragmentary reminiscences', Stevenson familiarly calls 'Mackellarese'.<sup>55</sup> In *Victorian Narratives of the Recent Past* (2017), Helen Kingstone argues that 'the Victorian relationship with history is characterized by a horror of too many details' and it is for this reason that narratives of the recent past become the 'subject of particular attention' and anxiety for their contemporary writers.<sup>56</sup> This contemporary anxiety over the recent past that Kingstone identifies in Victorian literature is noticeably central to Stevenson. In *The Master of Ballantrae*, Stevenson takes great pains to ensure that Mackellar's narrative is never read when it is a recent history, using the hundred-year delay to transport the secret history into the 'far distant publicity' of the late-nineteenth century. Whilst Mackellar's history is written when the events it narrates are still within living memory, by the time it is read in the (fictional) 1889 of the preface this is no longer the case. With the brothers' deaths in America having taken place twenty years before Mackellar writes his history, and the Jacobite uprising having occurred forty years before its composition, the novel consciously edges itself further away from the recent past and into one that narrates, and outlives, a number of lifetimes and generations, with the deaths of Lord Durrisdere, Henry, James, Alison, Mackellar, Alexander and Katherine all occurring long before the secret history is ever read. In 1789, competing versions of the history proliferate, with local legend enshrining

one version of the Durie's whilst written accounts published 'abroad' offer another. As Fielding notes, 'the novel's ability to play out the dramas of history foils Mackellar's privileging of the logocentric historical document' especially when oral histories seem 'to be one step ahead of him'.<sup>57</sup> But Mackellar's decision to postpone the disclosure of his manuscript for a century means that his secret history does not have to deal with these complexities and tensions in contemporary time, waiting to disclose his version of the history until these competing voices have faded out of public knowledge and living memory. Stevenson shares and explores the contemporary 'horror of too many details' in a journal entry, written during a short visit to the Scottish town of Dunoon in 1871, in which he distinguishes between the recent past, described as a 'limbo to us', and 'the past that has been many years in that tense'.<sup>58</sup> He writes,

The doings and actions of last year are as uninteresting and vague to me as the blank gulf of the future, the *tabula rasa* that may never be anything else. I remember a confused hotch-potch of unconnected events, a "chaos without form, and void"; but nothing salient or striking rises from the dead level of "flat, stale and unprofitable" generality. When we are looking at a landscape we think ourselves pleased; but it is only when it comes back upon us by the fire o' nights that we can disentangle the main charm from the thick of particulars. *It is just so with what is lately past. It is too much loaded with detail to be distinct;* and the canvas is too large for the eye to encompass.<sup>59</sup>

In *On Historical Distance*, Mark Phillips notes that theories on the relationship between recent and distant history often lend themselves 'to the economy of metaphor' and it is clear that Stevenson is following this tendency, creating an aesthetic discourse between physical distance and historical perspective.<sup>60</sup> However, Stevenson is not only lodging his ideas of the distant past in metaphors of physical landscape and visibility, he is also foregrounding the

role of memory within this aesthetic framework, and this greatly complicates his theory. Stevenson is not equating historical perspective with the act of looking at a landscape; he is equating it to *recalling and remembering* the sight when it is *no longer visible*. This form of perspective is not a condition of the eye but a phenomenon of hindsight. ‘When it comes back upon us’, the metaphorical landscape is subject to multiple episodes of recollection and reflection ‘by the fire o’ nights’. What Stevenson is describing is another form of historical disclosure *in absentia*: it is only possible, Stevenson suggests, to calculate the value and measure the consequences of an event in its absence, distanced by a number of intervening years between the moment of its occurrence and those of its recollection. In his ‘Note to *The Master of Ballantrae*’, Stevenson describes how he would often labour for hours, turning the characters around in his mind to figure out their proper relation to one another and thereby knit together the strands of his history to form a cohesive and well-ordered narrative. In many ways, it is precisely this type of creative narrative process that Stevenson is appealing to in his ‘Retrospect’, trying to calculate the scale and proportion of each memory in relation to the next and ‘as one term of the proportion changed, the other changed likewise’.<sup>61</sup>

Although Stevenson privileges the metaphor of sight and perspective in distinguishing between historical event and historical disclosure, the primary issue that he is identifying with the recent past is one of narrative construction: it offers nothing but ‘a confused hotch-potch of *unconnected events*’. As Mackellar highlights, the past is a space seemingly devoid of context and progression for ‘at the time we seemed to have accomplished nothing’ (89). Physically and temporally distanced from the Master, in 1789, Mackellar is finally able to gain the perspective and awareness that he sorely lacked in the moment of his voyage with the Master, allowing him to recognise that ‘looking back with greater knowledge, I can now understand what so much puzzled me at the moment’ (159). Eric Hobsbawm has remarked that, ‘retrospectiveness’ is the ‘secret weapon of the historian’, and Stevenson appears to go a

stage further, offering it as vital means of historical disclosure.<sup>62</sup> In a journal entry from 1871, Stevenson labels this narrative process as one born of a careful and steady ‘process of incubation’:

I cannot describe a thing that is before me at the moment, or that has been before me only a very little while before; I must allow my recollections to get thoroughly strained free from all chaff till nothing be except the pure gold; allow my memory to choose out what is truly memorable by a process of natural selection; and I piously believe that in this way I ensure the Survival of the Fittest.<sup>63</sup>

In the twenty years between the deaths of the Durie brothers and the composition of his secret history, Mackellar’s narrative of recollection has gone through a similar ‘process of incubation’, one that reveals which of the Durie’s secrets Mackellar considered to be the most significant. Given that Mackellar ‘never had much toleration for the female sex’ and ‘ever shunned their company’, it is unsurprising that, despite his clear recollection of almost all other subjects, the one figure whom Mackellar forgets the details of her fate is the Master’s mistress, Jessie Broun: ‘the woman was set up in a public of her own, somewhere on Solway side (but I forget where)’ (68, 69).

Stevenson turns to this imagery of visibility and “chaos without form, and void” during the key moments of Mackellar’s narrative which prove to be of vital consequence to the history’s plot, directly leading to the tragic ending of the history: the brothers’ duel in the secluded woodlands on the estate, and the Master’s dangerous journey across the Atlantic on the *Nonsuch* with Mackellar. The significance of these events, and their immediate consequences, to the Durie’s family history is only recognised by Mackellar in 1789, having experienced only a ‘dark foreboding of the truth’ in the moment of the event’s occurrence (72). Before returning to ‘the fatal place’ of the brother’s duel, Mackellar first attempts to make his way back to the house of Durrisdeer and, despite his familiarity with the route, he

struggles to recognise his way home for ‘the blackness fell about me groping dark; it was like a crown surrounding me’ (104). Mackellar’s obscured vision makes its way into a similarly obscure syntactical structure: what, or who, is groping dark? Is it ‘the blackness’ or Mackellar? Either personification or another instance of hypallage depending on its reading, Mackellar’s language becomes strangely inarticulate, refusing to overcome the uncertainty of his position. Finding himself literally surrounded by a ‘chaos without form, and void’, the darkness not only interferes with Mackellar’s field of vision but also with his narrative gaze. ‘Sitting like a crown’, the darkness is the subject of a somewhat unusual and apparently ill-fitting simile: the crown certainly draws attention to Mackellar’s impaired vision but otherwise seems to draw an unexpectedly loose parallel. It does, however, mark a significant, albeit obscure, return of the narrative back to its historical origin in the Stuart’s contest for the British throne and, given the simultaneous contest between the brothers over the Master’s attained inheritance that the Jacobite movement also triggers for the Duries, the dark crown that engulfs Mackellar becomes contextually and historically significant, positioning the bloody duel as a direct, inevitable and *delayed* consequence of its historical origin. But this dim and obscure hint towards its own nativity is tenuous and unassured, unable to see beyond the significance of the duel to discern the full scale of its consequences or foresee the Durie’s future beyond this moment of literal and metaphorical darkness. There are three key moments in *The Master of the Ballantrae* which immediately precede and trigger the history’s tragic end: the brother’s duel; the Master’s journey across the Atlantic on the *Nonsuch* to exact revenge on his brother; and, Henry’s possession of the libellous Whig pamphlet. It is notable that each of these three key events revolve around shadow and darkness, reiterating Mackellar’s imperfect vision in the ‘groping dark’: Nature ‘cries to be alone; and we grope in the dark’ before Henry and Mackellar’s journey into the American wilderness, and the count ‘followed it, groping forward in the dark’ in story recalled on the *Nonsuch* (182, 161).

Darkness becomes a force of both physical and historical uncertainty and obscurity in the novel, playing with Stevenson's fascination with the notion that historical perspective can be couched in metaphors of sight, distance and delayed disclosure.

In an article published in *Blackwood's* (1866), the anonymous contributor to the Edinburgh magazine considers the relationship between portraits and historical perspective in a way that is remarkably close to the rhetoric of Secret History for 'it is well indeed that we should have occasion for the revision of historic verdicts in open court, the culprit at the bar, and his compeers in the box'. Rationalising his argument, the author reflects that 'It is surprising how the lapse of a few centuries clears the mental vision—how the mists which blinded the eyes of contemporaries, in the lapse of years are dispelled' leaving nothing but 'the truth in the balance of historic judgement'.<sup>64</sup> Just like the transformative 'secret drawer' from *Rob Roy*, the 'memorable year' of Culloden, the 'fatal place' of the duel, and Mackellar's secret history, history exists in a state of paradoxical division for Stevenson, one that sees the historical event distinct from the eventual arrival and disclosure of its historical meaning and impact. History is a force of delayed disclosure in *The Master of Ballantrae* and in the Diary of Samuel Pepys. Stevenson conceives that history is conditioned by secrecy: patiently waiting in the 'limbo' of the recent past, history is written by its contemporaries but is only fully disclosed and understood by a future generation for whom it has smuggled itself 'along the solemn highway of history'.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Avrom Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), p.15.

<sup>2</sup> Fleishman, p.51, p.10.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Samuel Pepys', in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1882 Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.290–327 (p.309).

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- <sup>4</sup> Margaret Oliphant, 'Evelyn and Pepys', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 76.465 (July 1854) 35–52 (p.51)
- <sup>5</sup> Robert Latham and William Matthews (eds), *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: A New and Complete Transcription*, I/X (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p.xi.
- <sup>6</sup> Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture, and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Nathalie Jaëck, 'The Greenhouse vs. the Glasshouse: Stevenson's Stories as Textual Matrices', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp.48–59 (p.54).
- <sup>7</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Notes and Essays Chiefly of the Road: A Retrospect (A Fragment: written at Dunoon, 1870)', in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson Edinburgh Edition: Miscellanies Volume IV* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1896), pp.89–101 (p.90–1).
- <sup>8</sup> Robert Latham defines the diarist by their 'urge to be chronicler of the times [which] is probably the commonest reason for writing diaries', see Latham and Matthews, p.cvii. For the role of diaries as a historical and literary narrative device, see Rebecca Steinitz, *Time, Space, and Gender in the Nineteenth-Century British Diary* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
- <sup>9</sup> Oliphant, 'Evelyn and Pepys', p.35.
- <sup>10</sup> 'A Word for Pepys', *The Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, and Politics*, LV (The Riverside Press, Cambridge: 1885), 273–74 (p.273).
- <sup>11</sup> For more details regarding the manuscript's cipher, see Robert Latham (ed), *The Illustrated Pepys: Extracts from the Diary* (London: Book Club Associates, 1979), p.8.
- <sup>12</sup> Latham and Matthews, p.cvii. For more on the measures Pepys took to preserve his diary and how this suggests his intention for it to be found, deciphered, and read posthumously, see Kate Loveman, 'Women and the History of Samuel Pepys's Diary', *The Historical Journal*, 65.5 (2022) 1221–43.
- <sup>13</sup> Latham (ed), *Illustrated Pepys*, p.14.
- <sup>14</sup> For a detailed history of Pepys's diary and its publication see Latham, *The Illustrated Pepys*, pp.7–17.
- <sup>15</sup> Latham (ed), *The Illustrated Pepys*, p.14.
- <sup>16</sup> Due to the original misspelling of 'Gramont' as 'Grammont', republications retain Scott's decision to adopt the misspelling 'for uniformity's sake': *Memoirs of the Court of Charles II by Count Grammont, Edited by Sir Walter Scott. Also, the King's account of his escape from Worcester as Dictated to Pepys, and Boscobel Tracts*. Bohn's Standard Library: Revised Edition (London: George Bell & Sons, 1891), note to p.3.
- <sup>17</sup> *Memoirs of the Court of Charles II*, p.v, pp.419–20.

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- <sup>18</sup> Walter Scott, 'Memoirs of Samuel Pepys, Esq.', *The Quarterly Review*, 33.66 (March 1826), 281–314 (p.283).
- <sup>19</sup> George Saintsbury, 'An Unsigned Review, *Pall Mall Gazette* 35.5, 18 March 1882', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.94–7 (p.97).
- <sup>20</sup> Stevenson, 'Samuel Pepys', pp.290–91.
- <sup>21</sup> Scott, 'Memoirs of Samuel Pepys', p.288.
- <sup>22</sup> *The Atlantic Monthly*, p.273.
- <sup>23</sup> Robert Latham, *Volume X: Companion to The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p.xi.
- <sup>24</sup> Rebecca Bullard, 'Introduction: Reconsidering Secret History', in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.1–14 (p.9).
- <sup>25</sup> *The Atlantic Monthly*, pp.273–4.
- <sup>26</sup> Oliphant, p.35. Lord Wotton, John Evelyn, was a contemporary of Pepys and is frequently mentioned by Pepys, leading Oliphant to remark that 'the boldness of Samuel's secret chronicle even discloses more courageously than he himself does the opinions of Evelyn': Oliphant, p.46.
- <sup>27</sup> Oliphant, pp.37–8.
- <sup>28</sup> For example, Pepys recalls going back to bed after he hears news of the outbreak of the Great Fire (1666) and later digging a hole in the garden to save his wine, papers, and parmesan cheese from the blaze: Samuel Pepys, *The Illustrated Pepys: Extracts from the Diary*, ed. by Robert Latham (London: Book Club Associates, 1979), p.120, p.123.
- <sup>29</sup> Oliphant, p.37, p.46.
- <sup>30</sup> Stevenson, 'Samuel Pepys', p.291.
- <sup>31</sup> Oliphant, p.41.
- <sup>32</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Charles Baxter, May 1894, Vailima, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Sidney Colvin, IV/IV (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), pp.303–5 (p.305). To his regret, Stevenson decided to omit the preface from the novel's first publication and, in 1894, requested its inclusion in the upcoming Edinburgh Edition of the novel, published in 1898.
- <sup>33</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Master of Ballantrae: A Winter's Tale*, ed. by Adrian Poole (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p.6. Hereafter cited in text.

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<sup>34</sup> In the same to letter to Charles Baxter in which he calls for inclusion of the Preface in the Edinburgh Edition of *The Master of Ballantrae*, Stevenson recalls that it described ‘my arrival in Edinburgh on a visit to yourself and your placing in my hands the papers of the story’: Letter from Stevenson to Baxter, p.305.

<sup>35</sup> Walter Scott, *The Monastery*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p.28, pp.27–28.

<sup>36</sup> Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, ed. by Graham Tulloch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p.8.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Scott, *The Monastery*, p.3.

<sup>39</sup> Poole (ed), *The Master of Ballantrae*, p.xxvi.

<sup>40</sup> Allison Stedman, ‘Secret History in Pre-Revolutionary France’, in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.205–15 (p.208).

<sup>41</sup> For more on the connection between Secret History, its form and function, in relation to censorship see Eve Tavor Bannet, ‘Secret History and Censorship’, in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.160–73; and Stedman, especially p.208 and pp.210–13.

<sup>42</sup> Stevenson, ‘Samuel Pepys’, p.327, p.302.

<sup>43</sup> *The Atlantic Monthly*, p272. For more examples of Pepys’s diary being read as an accidental disclosure, see ‘George Cruikshank’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 94.574 (August 1863), 217–24 (p.217); Oliphant, ‘Evelyn and Pepys’, pp.35–52, and Scott, ‘Memoirs of Samuel Pepys, Esq.’, pp.281–314.

<sup>44</sup> Stevenson, ‘Samuel Pepys’, p.296, p.299.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*, ed. by David Hewitt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp.5–6.

<sup>46</sup> Oliphant, p.51.

<sup>47</sup> Stevenson, ‘Samuel Pepys’, pp.291–92.

<sup>48</sup> Oliphant, p.47.

<sup>49</sup> Bullard, p.1.

<sup>50</sup> *The Atlantic Monthly*, p.274.

<sup>51</sup> W. Sichel. ‘Men Who Have Kept a Dairy’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 165 (January 1899), 70–88 (p.88)

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- <sup>52</sup> Robert Kiely, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1964), p.215.
- <sup>53</sup> *The Atlantic Monthly* p.274.
- <sup>54</sup> ‘An Unsigned Review of *The Master of Ballantrae*’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 September 1889, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Paul Maixner (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.341–43 (p.343).
- <sup>55</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to E. L. Burlingame, April 1889, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Paul Maixner (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.340–41 (p.340).
- <sup>56</sup> Helen Kingstone, *Victorian Narratives of the Recent Past: Memory, History, Fiction* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p.15.
- <sup>57</sup> Fielding, p.159, p.164.
- <sup>58</sup> Stevenson, ‘A Retrospect (A Fragment: written at Dunoon, 1870)’, p.91, p.90.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.90 [my emphasis].
- <sup>60</sup> Mark Phillips, *On Historical Distance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p.11.
- <sup>61</sup> Stevenson, ‘A Retrospect (A Fragment: written at Dunoon, 1870)’, pp.99.
- <sup>62</sup> Translated by Mark Phillips in *On Historical Distance*, p.2, originally from Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Un historien et son temps présent’, in *Ecrire l’histoire du temps présent: En hommage à François Bédarida* (Paris: CNRS, 1992), pp.95–102.
- <sup>63</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘Notes and Essays Chiefly of the Road: Cockermouth and Keswick (A Fragment: 1871)’, in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson Edinburgh Edition: Miscellanies, Volume IV* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1896), pp.101–14 (p.102).
- <sup>64</sup> ‘Historic Portraits’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 100.613 (November 1866), 571–84 (p.571).

## Chapter Six

‘The great master dramatist had secretly another intention for the piece’: Familiarity, Critical Biography, and Literary History in Stevenson’s *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882) and *Weir of Hermiston* (1896)

In 1890, J.M Barrie published a short satirical drama in the *Contemporary Review*, called ‘Brought Back from Elysium’, in which the ghosts of Walter Scott, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Charles Dickens, and William Thackeray are temporarily brought back from the dead by a group of anxious late-nineteenth-century literary critics who want to interview the authors about their approaches to writing fiction. The five critics are only referred to as a Realist, a Romanticist, an Elsmerian, a Stylist, and an American, and the only argument on which the group agrees is that their predecessors ‘will be surprised to hear that fiction has become an art’.<sup>1</sup> However, defining the nature, scope, and value of fiction as art is not only proving tricky for the critics, it is also proving exceptionally divisive. As the interview unfolds with the deceased authors, it becomes increasingly clear that the theorists’ attempts to formalise the study of the novel have not only left them bereft of a relationship with each other but also, more importantly, to their predecessors for each group member finds themselves unable to include either Scott, Fielding, Smollett, Dickens, or Thackeray into their theoretical framework. This is primarily due to the critics’ adherence to the contemporary idea, previously promoted by Matthew Arnold, that writers of fiction in the first quarter of the century ‘did not know enough’.<sup>2</sup> Poking fun at this notion, Barrie enlists his fictional Scott to address the theorists: ‘I can see’, Scott begins,

from what you tell me that I was only a child. I thought little about how novels should be written. I only tried to write them, and as for style, I am afraid I merely used the words that came most readily. (*Stylist groans*). Had such an interest in my characters

*(American groans)*, such a love for them *(Realist groans)*, that they were like living beings to me. Action seemed to come naturally to them, and all I had to do was to run after them with my pen.

Set in ‘the Library of a Piccadilly club for high thinking and bad dinners’, Barrie’s satire presents these efforts to develop a critical literary theory as highly unproductive, unnecessarily picky, and entirely irrelevant to the way literature is read, consumed, and valued by the reading public. It is revealed that the Stylist has spent so much time developing rules on style and regulations of form that he has made himself creatively impotent: he confesses to Scott that he ‘dare not write’ a novel but ‘once wrote a little paper on your probable reasons for using the word “wand” in circumstances that would perhaps have justified the use of “reed”. I have not published it’. Unlike the examples of unpublished material I have examined in previous chapters, far from instilling a sense of mystery and secrecy, the Stylist’s claim that ‘I have not published it’ points to the lack of public interest its dissemination would generate among readers and further expresses Barrie’s ridicule of the amount of time and scrutiny the Stylist has dedicated to, what Barrie presents as, a comically redundant investigation: the ‘little paper’ is not revelatory, and will certainly not make a difference to how Scott is read and understood by the critic’s contemporaries. The Stylist’s efforts to formalise and regulate its form has brought the novel, in the world of Barrie’s drama, to the verge of creative extinction. Barrie’s trivial reduction of these schools of literary criticism to a group of self-conscious, narrow-minded, and rather confused literary critics ends with Thackeray’s suggestion that ‘if you thought and wrote less about your styles and methods and the aim of fiction [...] you might get on better with your work’.<sup>3</sup>

While Barrie is certainly using his satirical drama to criticise contemporary attempts at formalising literary criticism, there is a deeper concern that runs throughout the text which merits closer examination and which will form the central focus of this chapter: the critics’

failure to accommodate their predecessors into current definitions of literary procedure and merit reflects a vast disconnect between the contemporary understanding of literary history and the perceived identity and place of contemporary writers *within* this literary history. On one hand, the characters acknowledge that their predecessors ‘are the seed from which the tree [of literature] has grown’ but, at the same time, they are desperate to reiterate their differences: ‘since your days a great change has come over fiction [...] and it struck us that you might care to know how we moderns regard you’.<sup>4</sup> As their interaction with the ghosts continues to unfold, the group loses much of this initial confidence: their theories cannot be reconciled with the work of Scott, Fielding, Smollett, Dickens, or Thackeray, and the group is disappointed to learn that *their* literary contributions are not well regarded by their predecessors who will not allow them, or their work, to pass into the venerated Elysium. Scott confesses that he has not heard of the critics, and the short drama ends with this literary insignificance weighing heavily on the anxious group as the ghosts depart and ‘*the novelists are left looking at each other self-consciously*’.<sup>5</sup> Bearing in mind that the critics confess to never having composed a novel, Barrie’s ironic designation of his characters as ‘novelists’ sarcastically reimagines the term to refer to one who criticises and analyses, rather than writes, novels. At the heart of Barrie’s unflattering and exaggerated portrayal of his contemporaries lies a single source of anxiety: the writers are unsure of their place both *in* and *as* literary history.

Stevenson is particularly sensitive to this concern and he, like many of his contemporaries, turns to Scott and his novels to navigate, explore, and respond to the lost sense of inheritance and connection to the literary past that Barrie represents. In this chapter, I explore this crisis in the way literary history is being understood in the final decades of the nineteenth century through Stevenson and the concept of ‘familiarity’. I highlight that Stevenson’s depictions of familiarity (familiar people, places, books, and histories) underpins his engagement with, and

understanding of, biography, and I do so by paying close attention to an often-overlooked collection of essays, *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882), a volume of nine previously published essays which Stevenson had written between 1874 and 1881 for *Macmillan's Magazine*, *New Quarterly Magazine*, and *Cornhill Magazine*.<sup>6</sup> Together, the essays each form a chapter in a compendium of short biographies on Victor Hugo, John Knox, Charles of Orleans, François Villon, Walt Whitman, Robert Burns, Henry David Thoreau, Yoshida Torajiro, and Samuel Pepys. I use *Familiar Studies* to consider how Stevenson's definition of biography, particularly literary and critical biography, is indebted to the values of Secret History and I explore how intimacy, domestic secrets, and gossip come to play an important, albeit controversial, role in Stevenson's conception of critical biography as a form of national history writing. In the final section of this chapter, I draw this argument to a close by tracing the value and role of familiarity in Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston* (1896). I read *Weir of Hermiston* as a secret history of the historical novel, and I conclude by drawing attention to the complicated role that Walter Scott plays as a character in the novel, set just before the publication of *Waverley*, which aims to reaffirm its own connection to, and place in, literary history. I highlight that this relationship is far from straight-forward for Scott's presence in the novel brings with it a creative impotency, similar to that of Barrie's Stylist, and characters frequently find themselves struck by sudden creative impulses which are met with the disappointment that they 'should find nothing to write' because 'the spirit was dead, or had been re-incarnated already in Mr. Sheriff Scott'.<sup>7</sup>

According to Stephen Prickett, Stevenson is writing during a period of 'growing critical-historical awareness' which underpinned the development and construction of a 'specifically literary history' during the mid-to-late nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> This critical-historical awareness is exemplified by Julius and Augustus Hare who recognised that 'Goethe in 1800 does not write just as Shakespeare wrote in 1600: but neither would Shakespeare in 1800 have written

just as he wrote in 1600. For the frame and aspect of society are different: the world which would act on him, and on which he would have to act, is another world'.<sup>9</sup> This growth in critical-historical awareness influences the way Scott is read. In 1898, George Gissing published a biography of Charles Dickens in which he argues that Dickens stands at a midway point between 'the leisurely old fiction' of Scott and the pressures of writing in serial form for literary journals and newspapers. Gissing argues that if Scott had been writing during Dickens's lifetime, under the pressures of journalism and serialisation, his historical novels would not have taken the same form, style or length. He positions Dickens between Scott and his present age and offers Dickens as the last author who wrote in an age that 'is no longer our own':

Dickens converted into a formal novel the bit of writing which he had begun as sketch or gossip. Nowadays it would be all but impossible for a writer of fiction, [...] a very slight degree of literary conscientiousness, as we understand it, would impose the duty; nay, fear of the public would exact it. But such a thing never occurred to Dickens [...] in the same way we find Walter Scott [...] The whole thing was done for his amusement. The public [...] was something more than amused. And our grave Art of Fiction, a bitter task-mistress, had nothing to do with the matter.<sup>10</sup>

Walter Scott comes to represent an outdated and simplistic approach to novel writing, and it is towards Scott that many writers and critics turn to at the end of century to express and articulate the difference between their contemporary novels and those published before 1832. Many of Stevenson's contemporaries discouraged such stylistic simplicity, as Barrie's *Stylist* in 'Brought Back from Elysium' notes, Scott's ability to write 'two novels in four months' and be praised for his popularity is now 'remembered against you'.<sup>11</sup> However, in *Familiar Studies*, Stevenson argues that Scott's approach to writing fiction is superior to those who, like Henry David Thoreau, laboriously and meticulously plan each piece of writing before

composing it. Such an approach, Stevenson argues, strips the process of creative freedom and authentic expression. Stevenson concludes that ‘easy writers are those who, like Walter Scott, choose to remain contented with a less[er] degree of perfection’.<sup>12</sup> This association of Scott with ‘ease’ and ‘contentment’ speaks to Stevenson’s literary context, in which critics were increasingly locating Scott in a golden, simple, and primitive stage of literary history which occurred before fiction had ‘become an art’.<sup>13</sup> In his chapter on Victor Hugo, Stevenson acknowledges that Scott was writing in ‘an age profoundly different’ from his successors (Hugo and Stevenson) and this had a material impact on the way the authors constructed their novels and protagonists (9). The biggest inheritance from Scott, Stevenson argues, is ‘that Hugo has made upon Scott [...] an advance in self-consciousness. Both men follow the same road; but where the one went blindly and carelessly, the other advances with all deliberation and forethought. There never was an artist more unconscious than Scott’ (10–11). In the same year as Stevenson published his *Familiar Studies*, William Collier offered Scott a similar place in his *A History of English Literature: In a Series of Biographical Sketches* in which he traces the development of a literary history defined and punctuated by the lives and deaths of select authors. His history is split into nine eras: the final era, that of his contemporary society, begins after the death of Walter Scott. As an author who is frequently measured, by himself and his contemporaries, in relation to his predecessor, Stevenson is well placed to explore this late-nineteenth-century fascination with splitting literary history into before and after the awakening of a literary consciousness, and positioning Scott as the point of division between these two literary eras.<sup>14</sup> However, Stevenson is perhaps most unusual for approaching his connection to Scott in overtly personal ways. As well as acknowledging Scott’s role in the development of British literary history, and making frequent references to Scott in his critical essays, Stevenson also uses his grandfather’s friendship with Scott as a means of supplementing Scott’s national literary reputation and significance with an

unreservedly personal connection. In *Memories and Portraits* (1887), Stevenson develops this sense of personal legacy and inheritance:

Our conscious years are but a moment in the history of the elements that build us [...]  
I was with my engineer-grandfather (the son-in-law of the lamp and oil man) when he sailed north about Scotland on the famous cruise that gave us the *Pirate* and the *Lord of the Isles*.<sup>15</sup>

Stevenson's description of history as a collective, familiar experience, one that he has been to some degree privy and involved, allows him to look back on historical events and place himself side-by-side their authors. It is particularly interesting that Stevenson reiterates his familial connection to 'my engineer-grandfather' whilst it is Scott's literary achievements, not his person, to which Stevenson draws closer attention, emphasising his familial connection to an important moment of *literary* creation and history. By emphasising his sense of personal connection to Scott and the inception of *The Pirate* (1822) and *The Lord of the Isles* (1815), Stevenson vicariously positions himself within this historical moment of literary composition. In 1881, Stevenson acknowledged the indebtedness of 'The Merry Men' (1882) to 'Scott's Pirate': 'how should there not?'.<sup>16</sup> Stevenson creates a complicated sense of personal and literary familiarity between himself and the life and works of his predecessor, Walter Scott. This is echoed in a letter Stevenson sent to Edward Burlingame in 1892 in which Stevenson reminds Burlingame that he had recently sent him two essays: 'My Grandfather and Scott' and 'Me and my Grandfather'.<sup>17</sup> Stevenson's use of the possessive, 'my', signals his relative position to each individual and their histories: this is true both in a literal sense, given Stevenson is writing about his deceased relative, Robert Stevenson, and also on a subjective level for he is consciously framing Scott's Northern Lighthouse tour in relation to his own life, literary output, and family history.

This attempt to unite (auto)biography and literary history is not limited to Stevenson's writing on Scott and his grandfather. In *Familiar Studies*, Scott enters into Stevenson's short biography of Burns less as a literary authority and more as an anecdotal observer, recalling his awestruck meeting with Burns at the age of fifteen in Edinburgh with Robertson, Dugald Stewart and Blair in the winter of 1786–7. Burns's meeting in Edinburgh is read by Stevenson through a series of personal adventures 'of which, for I think sufficient reasons, he desired to bury the details' (59). Quick, however, to retrieve these 'buried' details and offer them up for his readers, Stevenson suggests that Burns's trip to Edinburgh was motivated by two secret personal matters: the birth of his illegitimate twins with Jean Armour, and 'the death of Highland Mary [Mary Campbell]' with whom he had been deeply enamoured (59). In Stevenson's narrative, Burns's well-known meeting with Edinburgh's literati is re-read and unriddled in relation to the turmoil of his private life. Stevenson resituates and recalibrates his literary history of Burns to the poet's *familiar* circumstances: those relating to 'a member of a person's household or family'.<sup>18</sup> Stevenson subtly praises himself for being able to unriddle the relationship between the timing of Mary's death and Burns's decision to redouble his literary efforts and embark on his journey to Edinburgh when 'Except in a few poems and a few dry indications purposely misleading as to date, Burns himself made no reference to this passage of his life' (59). Stevenson argues that it was 'after he received this intelligence' about his lover's death that he finally decided to 'set out for Edinburgh' in the hopes of pursuing greater literary fame and connections. For Scott's quotations, Stevenson has chosen those that correspond to the impression Burns made on Scott in terms of his physical appearance and demeanour (which Scott considers to be extraordinary: 'I never saw such another'); he is not asked to comment on Burns's poetic skill (60). Stevenson is inviting us to reconsider the relationship between domestic secrets, private life, and literary history and he comes to champion the idea that scandal and secrets have an important, often overlooked,

role in literary history and then offers these secrets as essential pieces of intelligence for the literary critic. As Rebecca Bullard highlights, the *sine qua non* of secret histories is to ‘re-plot familiar narratives of the past’.<sup>19</sup> In his *Familiar Studies*, Stevenson is entirely preoccupied with re-plotting the familiar: he collects his previously published essays (hence, they are ‘familiar studies’ to some) which, collectively, aim to apply a ‘pair of critical spectacles’ to the personal lives of popular or well-known literary figures (hence ‘familiar men’); he investigates and reveals their domestic (or ‘familiar’) secrets and circumstances and offers these as essential pieces of historical intelligence which affect the way their works should be read and understood (‘familiar books’ are re-examined in the wake of these secret disclosures) (193). It is this aim of Stevenson’s that led Henley to label *Familiar Studies* as a ‘critical biography’, a designation underpinned by Stevenson’s belief that sharing the personal details of an author’s life, complete with their scandalous, often sexual, secrets, is not only a ‘more entertaining’, but also a ‘more edifying’ approach to literary analysis than the ‘dry precept’ contained in ‘books of theory’ (152).<sup>20</sup> In using his critical biographies to ‘re-plot familiar narratives of the past’, Stevenson is recalibrating the relationship between domestic secrets, biography, and literary criticism: he promises to reveal that ‘the great master dramatist had secretly another intention for the piece’ and doing so will unlock a portion of their literature’s meaning and historical significance (58).

In *Familiar Studies*, as well as reading Knox in the context of the Scottish Reformation; Burns in the context of Scottish Jacobitism and the American Revolution; and Thoreau in the context of American anti-slavery movements and civil disobedience, Stevenson argues that their literary contributions are as much a product of their private and personal circumstances, experiences, grievances, and political views. Knox’s awkwardness and embarrassment in the company of women is read into his theology; Burns’s sexual affairs and tense relationship with women is read into his poetry; and, Thoreau’s Transcendentalism is seen as a befitting

literary theory for, Stevenson alleges, such a priggish, mean, and unaccommodating man. This is because when ‘the hero is seen at home, playing the flute; the different tendencies of his work come, one after another, into notice’ (x). Stevenson’s insistence that the author’s personal history, social circumstance and personality brings ‘the different tendencies of his work’ into view, places the private, anecdotal and secret at the very core of his literary criticism and analysis. It plays into the kind of gossipy amusement that Scott saw as the driving force behind readers’ desire to learn and uncover details about an author’s personal life and private relationships. As Scott had observed:

The same spirit, though very differently modified and directed, which renders a female gossip eager to know what is doing among her neighbours over the way, induces the reader for information, as well as him who makes his studies his amusement, to turn willingly to those volumes which promise to lay bare the motives of the writer’s actions, and the secret opinions of his heart.<sup>21</sup>

By offering biography as a means and mechanism of literary disclosure and revelation, Stevenson places the discovery and publication of authors’ personal histories at the heart of reading and understanding literature. The title of *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* signals Stevenson’s attempt to reconcile biography, the study ‘of men’, with literary criticism, the study ‘of books’, appealing to a latent sense of connection between what a text means and the circumstances in which it was written. This is nicely illustrated by George Saintsbury who, even as he praises the chapter on Thoreau as one of the best in *Familiar Studies*, alongside those on Pepys and Burns which he believes collectively ‘do far more than redeem the book’, he notes that ‘the Thoreau essay is the least interesting of the three, simply because Thoreau was infinitely the least interesting man of the three’.<sup>22</sup> It appears that Stevenson’s inability to draw out any salacious personal secrets, revelations, or scandals in his chapter on Thoreau

makes for critical disappointment. The chapter, Saintsbury suggests, fails to fulfil its ‘promise to lay bare the motives of the writer’s actions, and the secret opinions of his heart’.

Although Stevenson criticises the authors’ previous biographers, especially Thomas Carlyle and John Campbell Shairp, for passing moral judgements on their subjects, it is clear that in *Familiar Studies* Stevenson is far from a dispassionate observer, offering a number of personal and judgemental observations about the subjects of his chapters: Thoreau is described as a big-nosed, self-indulgent, skulker; Villon as an unhappy, sinister man, and violent liar; and Torajiro as a heroic and noble patriot. As Henley remarked, ‘each of his essays is the expression of a fitting and peculiar mood of morality and intellect [...] If his criticism were less accurate and methodical than it is, the accent and the terms in which it is conveyed would sometimes get mistaken for an outcome of mere aesthetic emotion’.<sup>23</sup> Liz Farr attributes this to an ‘approach to life writing that is less a matter of disinterested surveillance (or fossil-gazing, or a testament to the moral superiority of English manhood) than the [...] records of random, subjectively selected encounters with men and their books across a range of cultures and historical periods’.<sup>24</sup> However, Stevenson’s treatment of his authors also bears a strong resemblance to that of the gossip and, remarkably, it to this image that Saintsbury turns during his unflattering review of Stevenson’s rhetorical style in *Familiar Studies*. Drawing attention to his distaste for Stevenson’s ‘extremely personal attitude’, Saintsbury writes that

Mr. Stevenson’s essays positively bristle with “you see”, “you remember”, “I say”, “I fancy”, and the rest of it. “Do, my good Sir, leave my buttons alone; and don’t whisper in com[p]any” is the inevitable cry of the natural man.<sup>25</sup>

By likening Stevenson’s, perhaps all too ‘*Familiar*’, style in his essays to a gossipy breach of social convention and etiquette, Saintsbury is drawing attention to a number of features that make the volume of essays such a fascinating and complicated example of, to use Henley’s

description, critical biography. Saintsbury's comparison of Stevenson's essays to gossip is particularly apt: it acknowledges the material of Stevenson's biographical essays, based in intimate, private, little-known, and scandalous information; it also points to Stevenson's intention to present the reader with new versions of previously 'familiar' authors by applying 'a pair of critical spectacles' to the men's reputations; and, it does much to characterise Stevenson's writing style, mimicking that of an intimate, private, and often judgemental, conversation among confidantes. This style becomes conventional for Stevenson after 1882, and is even hinted at by his propensity to label his essays as 'A Gossip' on the subject. As Glenda Norquay highlights in her analysis of 'A Gossip on Romance', Stevenson's 'technique is exactly that of a gossip— indulging in a casual exchange of ideas and memories, which are then resituated within a wider debate'.<sup>26</sup> This technique is not limited to his overtly labelled 'gossips' but is, instead, characteristic of Stevenson's tendency towards the anecdotal, rooting his ideas on literary theory to his own experiences: reading *Macbeth* from the perspective of his childhood self, nostalgically recalling how his mother would read to him on a particularly stormy evening, and reminiscing about a trip to Neidpath Castle which advanced his appreciation, and subsequent critical studies, of literature.<sup>27</sup> Henley recognised Stevenson's gossipy personality emerge in his writing and, championing Stevenson's personable tone and style in his review of *Familiar Studies*, he notes that

Mr. Stevenson is not less himself – is not less humorous, perspicuous, original, engaging – when he is critical of character and literature than when he takes to discoursing to bachelors and maids, or playing at travel on Flemish rivers, or trudging whimsical and adventurous, behind a she-ass in the Cévennes.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, Saintsbury's reproach of Stevenson's informal and conversational style is a clear criticism of Stevenson's lack of academic rigour, implying that his rhetorical style is unbecoming of a serious attempt at literary criticism. Just as the gossip fails to respect social

convention, so too is Stevenson falling short of the literary conventions of which Saintsbury was a keen proponent. It is for this reason that *Familiar Studies* encounters a number of negative and unflattering reviews, with the *British Quarterly Review* going so far as to label the volume ‘a good illustration of literary *nonchalance*’ and resolutely concluding that the essays prove that ‘in a word, Mr. Stevenson is *not* a critic; he is a satirist and humourist of a special type, so rich in reserve that he does not always know when he is joking’.<sup>29</sup> By refusing to accept Stevenson’s efforts as a serious attempt at criticism, the reviews of his *Familiar Studies* reveal the growing pressure from, to use Christopher Kent’s term, ‘higher journalism’ and university professors and students who, since the continued expansion of ancient universities to include the study of Rhetoric and English Literature from the 1850s, were increasingly coming to dominate the columns, reviews, and essays engaging in criticism in literary journals, as well as through the academic publication of their monographs.<sup>30</sup> Although Henley refers to Stevenson as a ‘critic’ in his review of *Familiar Studies*, he draws attention to this ongoing debate on the relationship between criticism, art and higher journalism.<sup>31</sup> He notes that, in *Familiar Studies*

what is purely intellectual is rendered doubly potent and persuasive by the human sentiment with which it is associated. It is possible that this fact will ultimately militate against the success of Mr. Stevenson’s “Studies” as criticism; for criticism – a science disguised as Art – is held to be incapable of passion. [...] However [...] it clothes them with uncommon interest and attraction’.<sup>32</sup>

In the ‘Preface by way of Criticism’ to *Familiar Studies*, Stevenson cleverly acknowledges these contemporary debates with his equivocal use of the word ‘criticism’. Describing his essays as the product of a ‘literary vagrant’, he likens the development of his analytical skills over the previous eight years to ‘a kind of roving judicial commission through the ages; and, having once escaped the perils of the Freemans and the Furnivalls, sets himself up to right the

wrongs of universal history and criticism' (viii–ix). In his reference to Edward Augustus Freeman (1823–92), a key figure in the development of History as an academic discipline in Britain, and Fredrick James Furnivall (1825–1910), a literary scholar at the centre of the Victorian revival in the study of Medieval English literature and editor of the *New English Dictionary*, Stevenson immediately positions himself, and his volume of essays, in direct opposition to this type of scholarly output and discipline. By denouncing his place among 'the Freemans and the Furnivalls' of academic criticism, Stevenson forges for himself the ambitious task of righting 'the wrongs of universal history and criticism'. As one of his reviewers pointed out, with more than a hint of irritation, Stevenson 'conceives it as his duty to regard everything from some new and startling point of view; to take up one side of every question simply because the other is more generally accepted'.<sup>33</sup> Despite the reviewer's obvious disapproval of this approach, his observation goes some way to understanding Stevenson's intention for the volume to supplement the works of 'too polite biographers' who 'gloss' over the scandal in their subjects' lives and to help remove the 'blindfold' from 'our fastidious public' (xv, xvii).

Despite the volume's reputation for being a last-minute and hurried literary project which, as one reviewer put it, was a 'sham' for presenting the public with unedited versions of previously published essays, the chapters of *Familiar Studies* were the subject of long-term planning and thought.<sup>34</sup> This is particularly important to note because Stevenson's decision to publish the essays as a collection appears to have been part of his original plan during their initial composition, and it is clear that Stevenson was rather desperate to see his essays published in this way for, as he reveals in a letter to Henley in 1881, *Familiar Studies* was printed entirely at his father's expense.<sup>35</sup> As early as November 1875, Stevenson, who was struggling to write his essay on Burns and confine it to ten columns at the time, was envisioning a future place for the essay among his, as yet incomplete, essays on Villon and

Charles of Orleans. However, he expressed his uncertainty over whether his biographical essays could rightfully be considered a form of literary criticism. In a letter to Sidney Colvin, Stevenson writes that

when I have done ‘Burns’, I shall finish ‘Charles of Orleans’ (who is in a good way, about the fifth month, I should think, and promises to be a fine healthy child, better than any of his elder brothers for a while); and then perhaps a ‘Villon’ [...] But so soon as Charles of O. is polished off, and immortalized forever, he and his pipings, in a solid imperishable shrine of R.L.S., my true aim and end will be this little book, booky, booklet, bookin, bookicky– yes, that’s it– bookicky [...] The future is thick with inky fingers.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time as Stevenson is writing and planning his biographical essays on Burns, Orleans, and Villon (each of which is included in the ‘solid imperishable shrine of R.L.S’, *Familiar Studies*), he is making plans for a much larger, extended biographical project on Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns.<sup>37</sup> But when it comes to defining his work in literary biography as a form of literary criticism, Stevenson encounters a sudden crisis of confidence. The project, he claims, will be titled ‘*Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns: an Essay*’, but he quickly disapproves of this choice, adding ‘or *A Critical Essay*? But then I’m going to give lives of the three gentlemen, only the gist of the book is the criticism’. This insecurity and confusion, as well as the rather anxious and desperate tone that the letter comes to adopt, reaches its peak with the stream of nonsense words to which Stevenson turns and is compounded by his decision to measure the length of the ‘bookicky’ by ‘100 *Cornhill* pages’ which he estimates is the equivalent of ‘200 pages of decent form; and then thickish paper’.<sup>38</sup> It is clear that there is something rather complicated going on in his letter, with Stevenson’s attempt to reconcile biography with literary criticism meeting multiple points of resistance. *Cornhill* becomes the measure of his literary output, dictating the form, scale and size of the

contribution and it is clear that Stevenson is struggling to locate his literary ambitions within the practical limits of periodical publication. As he begrudgingly notes in his preface to *Familiar Studies*, all ‘writers of short studies’ must develop the skill of ‘having to condense in a few pages the events of a whole lifetime’ and ‘to make that condensation logical and striking’ because that is ‘the only justification of his writing at all’ (ix). But the main complication that Stevenson encounters stems from one source of uncertainty that he struggles to precisely articulate or overcome: what place do biographical histories of authors have in literary criticism? In other words, what is the relationship between authors’ personal lives and circumstances and the literature they produce, and is publicising the former key to fully understanding the minute, analytical detail of the latter? What is the connection between literary biography and literary criticism? In his initial attempt to express and respond to this question, Stevenson implies that there is a fundamental relationship between an author’s personal life and the literature they produce for, although he renounces the project’s basis in critical theory and analysis, he nonetheless conceives that the ‘gist of the book is criticism’. This is a complex idea. It suggests that the study of an author’s life provides invaluable ground for the literary critic to work, establishing a gateway through which a text’s meaning can be accessed, understood and analysed. It is not until he publishes the essays together, in *Familiar Studies*, that Stevenson is able to more coherently trace and advocate for viewing authors’ private lives and personal experiences as the material of legitimate literary criticism and enquiry. In his ‘Preface by way of Criticism’, Stevenson clarifies why his nine biographies were intended to be read together as one collection: they were written with the aim ‘to right the wrongs of universal history and criticism’. With it ‘far from my intention to tell over again a story that has been so often told’, Stevenson claims that his essays offer his readers access to pieces of information about the authors’ lives and private conduct which were deliberately omitted by their previous biographers (40). His collection of biographical

essays seeks to present his readers with new information about the authors' private lives and, especially in the case of Burns, Knox, and Thoreau, their relationships with women. As a result of this intention, he argues that his short biographies should be viewed as 'merely supplemental' to the works of other biographers, especially Thomas Carlyle and John Campbell Shairp who wrote detailed biographies of Robert Burns (xiii). The role Stevenson conceives for his essays is to correct that which was 'truly misleading both as to the character and the genius' in previous literary biographies about the nine subjects of his essays and whilst Stevenson notes that 'This seems ungracious' in the case of Burns 'Mr. Shairp has himself to blame' for such a criticism (xiii). Stevenson continues to elaborate on the important place he is forging for his biographies and their exclusive, previously unpublished secrets of literary history. In his chapter on Burns, Stevenson highlights that, despite an ongoing 'pressure of new information' about the poet's life, 'the apologetical ceremony of biographers' had ensured that Burns continued to be a figure of, what Stevenson conceives as, outrageous censorship (41). Criticising Shairp's moralising attitude towards Burns's behaviour and character in his biography of the poet (published in 1879), Stevenson argues that 'if you are so sensibly pained by the misconduct of your subject, and so paternally delighted with his virtues, you will always be an excellent gentleman, but a somewhat questionable biographer' (40). By identifying the need to fill this gap in Burns's personal history, Stevenson conceives the need for biographers to not only research, but also to publicise, the sordid and disreputable facets of their subject's history: 'Mr. Carlyle made an inimitable bust of the poet's head of gold; may I not be forgiven if my business should have more to do with the feet, which were of clay?' (41). Stevenson acknowledges that his studious attention to his subject's personal failings and insufficiencies was not standard practice since 'too polite biographers' prefer to overlook and censor Burns's drinking and debauchery, omitting as much detail about his scandalous private affairs as possible and

Stevenson claims it was for this reason that he felt it his duty to bring these secrets to the reader's attention and contribute them to Burns's public history: 'I was obliged to dwell very plainly on the irregularity and the too frequent vanity and meanness of his relations to women. Hence, in the eyes of many, my study was a step towards the demonstration of Burns's radical badness' (xv–xvi). Regardless of the perceived morality of Burns's actions, Stevenson argues that 'Yet such is the fact' and as such the material of scandal must be included in the poet's biographical history (xvi).

This interest in reading literature through the poet's life and personal anecdotes is built upon the more conservative work of Burns's previous biographer, Carlyle, who not only believed that discovering more about Burns's life gave readers an unprecedented ability to re-read, rediscover, and understand his poems, but also that this kind of biographical exposure was necessary for any individual who reached such levels of publicity and popularity. Carlyle advocated for a similar type of forfeiture to public scrutiny to that of Osborne's defence of *Secret History's* interest in prying into the private life and scandals of statesmen and politicians:

If an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character recorded for public remembrance, we have always been of [the] opinion that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the inward springs and relations of his character.<sup>39</sup>

It is this interest in exploring the relationship between an author's personal life and their literary output that Stevenson develops and takes to something of an extreme in *Familiar Studies*. Stevenson, following Carlyle's example, places individual, private, and personal anecdotes at the centre of literary interpretation, analysing the dithyrambic structure of Burns's 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled' in relation to the anecdote that Burns came up with the poem whilst riding his horse during a particularly rowdy storm and reading 'Here's a

Health to Them That's Awa' as a combined product of Burns's growing Jacobite sympathies and his woe at the fractious state of his marriage.<sup>40</sup> It is proposed in *Familiar Studies* that private, domestic detail is not only vital to comprehending and evaluating each text, novel, or poem (literary criticism) but also to reconciling literature to both domestic and public history. Stevenson allows the secret, personal, and anecdotal to gesture towards a greater historical and literary significance. Adding a significant degree of complexity to this idea, Stevenson also uses the preface to note that the essays were written 'with enjoyment on a subject while the story is hot in [his] mind from recent reading' and considers the impact of this method on his precision and accuracy in the recounting of facts:

I have a small idea of the degree of accuracy possible to man, and I feel sure these studies teem with error. One and all were written with genuine interest in the subject; many, however, have been conceived and finished with imperfect knowledge (ix).

Recalling Karen Adkins's definition of gossip as a type of loose, idle talk which 'simply means that participants aren't holding themselves to public standards of evidence or proof', it appears that Saintsbury's equation of the essays to a kind of gossip resonates with Stevenson's methodology.<sup>41</sup> His unwillingness to edit his essays was the source of significant rebuke from reviewers, but, according to Stevenson, each of his essays are

woven like a carpet, from which it is impossible to detach a strand. What is perverted has its place there for ever, as a part of the technical means by which what is right has been presented. It is only possible to write another study, and then, with a new "point of view", would follow new perversions and perhaps a fresh caricature. Hence, it will be, at least, honest to offer a few grains of salt to be taken with the text (xii).

Stevenson's reluctance to edit or rewrite his essays is viewed by his contemporaries as an ingenious way of avoiding hard, serious work and criticism, but it also reveals a significant detail about Stevenson's approach to literary criticism and history: he conceives the critic to

be as much a subject of their work as the authors they scrutinise.<sup>42</sup> Just as he reads *Macbeth* through his childhood memories, Stevenson also writes his critical biographies ‘with enjoyment [...] while the story is hot in [his] head from recent reading, coloured with recent prejudice’ for, he concludes, ‘these were all men whom, for one reason or another, I loved; or when I did not love the men, my love was the greater to their books. I had read them and lived with them; for months they were continually in my thoughts’ (ix, xxvii–xxviii). This intimacy between Stevenson as a critic and the authors whose history he is relating, runs to the heart of *Familiar Studies* which, contrary to first impressions, is not a randomly collected series of essays by a self-professed ‘literary vagrant’, but a carefully curated, and secret, biography of its author. Each of the essays in *Familiar Studies* are written about figures whose nationalities represent a country for which Stevenson had a strong, personal attachment and cultural interest. It is clear that Stevenson’s use of the word ‘familiar’ is both well-chosen and hardworking: it speaks to the kind of colloquial language and style, reflective of Hazlitt’s arguments in ‘On Familiar Style’, and it extends onto to a much more personal plane for Stevenson, eliding his experiences of reading and responding to certain texts with the nostalgic recollection of the personal circumstances which contextualised and led up to these moments of criticism and reading. According to *Familiar Studies*, Stevenson is not only ‘a literary vagrant’ due to his self-professed contrariness and status as an ‘amateur’ among many an ‘expert’ on literary history, the idea of ‘vagrancy’ reflects the volume’s wandering, autobiographical journey through key places, stages, and cultures in Stevenson’s life (xxvi). Presenting Stevenson with a kind of ‘surrogate literary family’, to use Farr’s phrase, the theme of familiarity runs ‘like a carpet, from which it is impossible to detach a strand’ throughout *Familiar Studies*. Farr suggests that Stevenson’s essay selection is a self-portrait of its author, one in which his British, American, French, and Japanese subjects were chosen out of his personal love of travel in France, his recent marriage to his

American wife, Fanny, and his enthusiasm as a collector of Japanese prints.<sup>43</sup> This anticipates Stevenson's *Memories and Portraits* which, Stevenson notes, unintentionally developed a strong autobiographical focus. Comprised of previously published essays and three 'in print for the first time', Stevenson notes that 'This volume of papers, unconnected as they are, it will be better to read through from the beginning, rather than dip into at random. A certain thread of meaning binds them [...] This has come by accident; I had no design at first to be autobiographical'.<sup>44</sup> Whilst the structure, form, and composition of *Familiar Studies* implies this connection, it is also directly acknowledged by Stevenson in his chapter on Burns, where he notes that the 'capital defect' of Shairp's biography of Burns, is 'that there is imperfect sympathy between the author and the subject, between the critic and the personality under criticism' which leads to 'an inorganic, if not an incoherent, presentation of both the poems and the man' (39). In her reading of Stevenson's 'A Humble Remonstrance', Glenda Norquay argues that his essay 'anticipates the thinking of later theorists: in its bold challenge to fixed categories of genre and argument for the recognition of strong structural similarities between fiction, biography, and even history'.<sup>45</sup> Three years before his 'A Humble Remonstrance', Stevenson had used *Familiar Studies* to complicate and explore this relationship. Playing with degrees and types of 'familiarity', Stevenson considers the interplay between, to use the opening words of *Weir of Hermiston*, 'public and domestic history', literary composition, and the impact of the personal, subjective, and anecdotal experiences of the author and the reader on interpreting literature.<sup>46</sup>

In 1894, Stevenson continues his exploration of the relationship between familiarity and literary history and turns his attention to the history of the historical novel and its indelible connection to Walter Scott. In the last months of his life, Stevenson was at work on two historical novels, *Weir of Hermiston* and *St Ives*. Although both novels were left unfinished at the time of his death in 1894, their publication history and critical reception are vastly

different. As the project at the forefront of Stevenson's attention at the time of his death, Sidney Colvin decided that *Weir of Hermiston* should be published before its more complete predecessor. As a result, the unfinished *Weir of Hermiston* became the centre of a literary campaign, spear-headed by Colvin, as Stevenson's literary executor, and Stevenson's wife, Fanny van de Grift, to cement Stevenson's literary reputation and legacy. Advertised as 'The Last Romance of Robert Louis Stevenson', Stevenson's family and friends quickly 'endorsed what was to become the dominant narrative around *Weir of Hermiston* in which the loss of its author became part of its branding'.<sup>47</sup> The manuscript of *Weir of Hermiston* was read and prepared for publication with incredible speed and haste after Stevenson's death: the original manuscript, a typescript, and advanced sheets circulated among his closest literary friends within a few weeks. James, Barrie, Henley, and Burlingame were immediately and passionately involved in debates about preparing the novel for publication, each united in their aim of securing Stevenson an enduring, posthumous literary reputation. Colvin believed that the speedy publication of *Weir* would dignify Stevenson's literary position and advance his plans to publish an *Edinburgh Edition* of Stevenson's complete oeuvre to, as Norquay highlights, 'consolidate his status as equal to Sir Walter Scott's'.<sup>48</sup> Advertised as Stevenson's 'Last Romance', it is clear that Colvin published *Weir of Hermiston* with the intention and desire for the novel to be read and judged in relation to Stevenson's death. Unsurprisingly, Colvin begins his editorial note to the novel by drawing attention to this connection, weaving the words of the novel into the real-life, and tragic, circumstances of its author: 'With the words last printed, "a wilful convulsion of brute nature", the romance of *Weir of Hermiston* breaks off. They were dictated, I believe, on the very morning of the writer's sudden seizure and death'.<sup>49</sup> Belle Strong played a key role in the elevation of Stevenson's work on *Weir of Hermiston* to an almost mythological status, giving the novel a central place in her first-hand account of Stevenson's final hours before his sudden death in the evening of 3 December

1894. As his amanuensis, Strong's insistence that Stevenson had been writing the novel on the morning of his death secures *Weir of Hermiston* an anecdotal and biographic significance, tethering the unfinished novel to the narrative of his death. A novel intricately tied to a moment of great biographical significance, the publication of *Weir of Hermiston* is used by Stevenson's literary executors as a means of positioning Stevenson's death as a moment, not only of personal tragedy and loss, but also one of literary significance and public import for it was often effusively stated that the novel 'certainly promised to be the best of his novels'.<sup>50</sup> As Joseph Jacobs observed in his review of the novel, *Weir of Hermiston* stands out as 'a masterly torso', a work of individual, creative inspiration that no other author was seen to be capable of completing ensuring that the unfinished novel only 'intensifies our regret at the early loss of its author.'<sup>51</sup> Unlike *St Ives*, which was completed by Arthur Quiller-Couch, *Weir of Hermiston's* incompleteness became a fitting eulogy for its author: as Edward Purcell scornfully remarked, *Weir* had come to serve a eulogistic purpose and significance:

It is the last, and it is a fragment. The last-born [...] regarded with most favour by friends and family— with compunction we read into it all the concentrated merits of its predecessors which perchance we have undervalued. And a fragment, too: what scope that affords for panegyric of an unwritten masterpiece!<sup>52</sup>

In the final section of this chapter, I trace the complex relationship between biography and literary history in Stevenson's unfinished historical novel, *Weir of Hermiston*. Stevenson's death ensures that *Weir* gained a biographical significance, but Stevenson also rendered the fictional parish town of Hermiston out of a number of real and imagined places from his family history and holidays as a child. I consider how Stevenson's inclusion of Walter Scott as a fictional character in *Weir of Hermiston* is certainly an overt way of reading Scott into his fictional creation, allowing him to walk and interact in a fictional world where his own characters, such as Old Mortality, exist alongside those of Stevenson's, and I use these overt,

complicated, and flawed attempts at reconciliation to consider how, and why, the idea of ‘familiarity’, biography and literary history run through Stevenson’s non-fiction and fiction work.

A Secret History of the Historical Novel: Walter Scott and Familiarity in *Weir of Hermiston*

As Colvin highlighted in his editorial note to *Weir of Hermiston*, the fictional parish town of Hermiston is not representative of a single Scottish location; instead, it stands as an amalgam of places of sentimental value to Stevenson, ‘distilled from a number of different haunts and associations’ which, according to Stevenson’s mother, included his uncle’s farmhouse, called Overshields, in the parish of Stow.<sup>53</sup> Stevenson had intimated to Colvin that he was setting his novel at the Lammermuirs, the famous setting of Scott’s novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), located in the Scottish borders. But Stevenson also laced this literary parallel to Scott with familiar places from his travels in Scotland and drew on his nostalgic recollections of his childhood holidays. As Colvin notes, the fictional (and renamed) Lammermuirs of *Weir of Hermiston* are adapted to include the kirk and manse of Glencorse in the Pentlands of Edinburgh which stood within three miles of Stevenson’s father’s house at Swanston, ‘while passages in chapters v. and viii. point explicitly to [...] Upper Tweeddale’, and the scenery draws extensively on his ‘holiday rides and excursions’ to Peebles, Teviotdale, Ettrick and the Tweed.<sup>54</sup> Stevenson blends the familiar into the very fabric of the novel, playfully oscillating between the addition of highly personal details, ones that remain hidden from the common reader and are only discernible to family and friends (such as his fictional depiction of his uncle’s farmhouse in the novel), and the inclusion of popular references and allusions to Walter Scott and *Old Mortality*, James Hogg and *Major Weir*, Robert Burns, Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes, and Lord Braxfield, the historical prototype for the titular Weir of Hermiston, Adam Weir. Not only does Stevenson construct the setting out of a mosaic of personal experiences, he also peoples the novel with familiar

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characters from his youth. Instead of opting to include a publicly recognisable historical character, of whom there are a small, but significant, number in the novel, Stevenson fills his fictional version of Glencorse Kirk in the parish of Hermiston with the minister Mr. Torrance, whose real-life counterpart and namesake, ‘old Mr. Torrance’ a ‘relic of times forgotten’, had been minister at Glencorse when Stevenson had visited the kirk years before.<sup>55</sup> Stevenson’s interest in creating a narrative where personal, national, and literary histories are able to overlap and interact is established in the novel’s opening frame which introduces the reader to the fictional moorland parish of Hermiston where ‘the chisel of Old Mortality has clinked’ and ‘public and domestic history have [...] marked with a bloody finger this hollow among the hills [...] without comprehension or regret’ (5). Hermiston is a strangely familiar place: it stretches across multiple historical and fictional boundaries, and based in elements of autobiography, Hermiston is a fictional space where Stevenson’s personal history is able to co-exist with both Scott himself (who is a visitor to Hermiston estate in the novel) and, strangely, also co-exist with Scott’s historical character, Old Mortality. The preface creates a complicated fictional space where three types of history are reconciled to each other: (auto)biographical, literary, and fictional.

As Gillian Hughes has noted, *Weir of Hermiston* ‘undoubtedly owes something to *Redgauntlet*’ due to the novels’ focus on the relationship between the father, an esteemed Edinburgh lawyer, and his son, who is doubtful of his interest and ability in the field of Law, and with Stevenson’s inclusion of the meta-narrative, ‘The Four Black Brothers’ he rivals that of Scott’s ‘Wandering Willie’s Tale’.<sup>56</sup> What is particularly interesting about this relationship between *Redgauntlet* and *Weir of Hermiston*, is how complicated these associations between the historical novels become when read through the writers’ dual interest in using the novel to combine national history with elements of the author’s personal history and experiences. *Redgauntlet* is credited as Scott’s most autobiographical novel,

depicting the struggles of a young lawyer as he navigates the beginning of his career and a tense relationship with his father. The novel allows Scott to place his fictional self, as the work-laden, stifled, dutiful son and trainee lawyer, into the middle of espionage, adventure, and romance. In similar fashion, the tense relationship between the father and son of *Weir of Hermiston*, owes much to Stevenson's youth and early-adulthood, reflecting not only his abandonment of the study of Law at University, but also the deep fissures that Stevenson created in his relationship with his father by openly denouncing his faith. As Colvin highlights in his editorial note to *Weir of Hermiston*:

The difficulties often attending the relation of father and son in actual life had pressed heavily on Stevenson's mind and conscience from the days of his youth, when in obeying the law of his own nature he had been constrained to disappoint, distress, and for a time to be much misunderstood by, a father whom he justly loved and admired with all his heart.<sup>57</sup>

Referring to key places from Stevenson's childhood as well as to members of his family, such as his father and his beloved childhood nurse, 'Cummy', who is believed to be the prototype for the elder Kirstie Elliot, the novel's autobiographical underpinnings ensure that the relationship between *Weir of Hermiston* and *Redgauntlet* and, by association, between Stevenson and Scott is rather complicated. As well as writing a novel that deals with deeply personal experiences and times from his past, Stevenson offers his literary predecessor, Scott, a central position in *Weir of Hermiston*: at second narrative level, set in the early-1800s of Scotland, 'Sheriff Scott' appears as a character in the novel, consulting with Adam Weir about the upkeep of his garden in his Hermiston estate, and Scott the poet, is indebted to Stevenson's fictional character, Dandie Elliot, for providing him with material for Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. This creates a complicated relationship between the novel and its literary historical context, always reaching beyond the fictional world of the novel to

acknowledge its own place both *as* fiction and within a literary history *of* fiction. It also gives Stevenson another subtle conduit into literary history, by using a clan-name from his family history, Elliot, and allowing them to move in two different directions: into a history of nineteenth-century fiction and into a national history of Scotland and its clan culture.

Belle Strong recalled that Stevenson valued including autobiographical detail in his fiction and, working with Stevenson as his amanuensis for *Weir of Hermiston*, she recalled that the pair would work on the novel ‘till nearly twelve, and then he walked up and down the room talking to me of his work, of future chapters, of bits of his past life that bore on what he had been writing’.<sup>58</sup> One of the ‘bits of past life’ that emerges most explicitly in the novel is Stevenson’s experience as a member of the Speculative Society in Edinburgh. Stevenson joined the exclusive club in 1869 and in the following year, and for the first time, Stevenson was invited to open the society’s debate on the same proposition that the wayward son of *Weir of Hermiston*, Archie Weir, introduces: ‘Is the abolition of Capital Punishment desirable’.<sup>59</sup> In this scene, Stevenson privileges his memories and early experiences of the club over historical accuracy, setting Archie’s meeting of ‘the Spec.’ in the society’s rooms at Edinburgh University’s Old College when it would have met in the old Hall, housed in an entirely different building which was subsequently demolished in 1817. But Stevenson’s use of the Speculative in the novel is designed to reiterate the continuity between the literary past and present, not to dwell on its troubling differences. It is the Speculative’s long, continuous literary history that Stevenson draws attention to in the novel, appealing to a comforting sense of continuity and familiarity between Scottish authors from 1813 to 1894:

He sat in the same room; only the portraits were not there—those now represented were then but beginning their career; the same lustre of many tapers shed its light over the meeting; the same chair perhaps supported him that so many of us have sat in since (20).

Stevenson creates a legacy for the Speculative society, one that draws a clear and indisputable line from his literary predecessors to his contemporary moment and is defined by a comforting sense of sameness and familiarity. The version of the Speculative presented in *Weir of Hermiston* may not be historically accurate, but it is certainly one that is familiar to Stevenson and his contemporaries. Stevenson's willingness to adapt historical setting and circumstance in his novels was particularly contentious for Watts-Dunton who, in his review of *Catriona* (1893), criticises Stevenson's lack of attention to historical reality and considers it to be legacy of Scott. He argues that

In Scott's time the demands of the historic conscience were not recognized [...] In our time history has become not only more scientific, but also more conscientious than it was in his. Now, unless there is full documentary evidence of Argyll's having been guilty of such infamy as he is charged with, is a writer of great imaginative power, armed evidently with an unusual knowledge of the time, justified in using a well-known historical character for the development of a story? There is no doubt, however, that Mr. Stevenson has [...] upon him, if upon any one of Scott's successors, has the mantle of the Wizard fallen.

By emphasising the distinction between writing a historical novel in 'Scott's time' and in the 'more scientific' and critical 'now' (1893), Watts-Dunton begins to question whether a historical character should be used by the modern historical novelist to further fictional plots when such imagined circumstances were not experienced by their real, historical counterparts. Such a wilful deviation from historical reality into that of fictional circumstance is considered problematic, running contrary to the contemporary expectation of an author's 'historic conscience'. At the same time as Stevenson's literary skills are acknowledged and appreciated by his critic's assessment that Stevenson has taken up 'the mantle of the Wizard fallen', his literary contribution is also threatened with a sense of redundancy and

outdatedness that this comparison to Scott, believed to be less discerning, critical, scientific and conscientious than his literary successors, deliberately bears. It is interesting to note that Watts-Dunton's criticism of Stevenson comes to both articulate and deal with the same sense of historical anxiety that the characters of Barrie's 'Brought Back from Elysium' share: he begins to consider whether Stevenson's lack of historical conscience might re-establish a much-needed sense of familiarity and connection between the end and the beginning of the nineteenth century. By resuscitating the outdated, literary forms of Walter Scott, Stevenson is, according to Watts-Dunton, injecting a much-needed sense of ease, enjoyment and familiarity into his readers' experience of literature because:

we live in times so transitional [...] that literature in a general way simply *must* 'hurt'. Hence art – when, like that of Scott, it is able and willing to add to the enjoyments of life [it] becomes more precious to the soul of man than any of those profundities and attempted solutions of enigmas which Carlyle found [...] to be altogether wanting in the 'Waverley Novels'.<sup>60</sup>

There is certainly a playfulness in Stevenson's treatment of historical characters in his novels, one that allows Stevenson to deviate from the historical conscience of his story in favour, of what Gerald Manley Hopkins calls, Stevenson's interest in the 'fictitious history' of Romance.<sup>61</sup> As well as his complete fictionalisation and refashioning of 'the hanging judge', Braxfield, for his own literary purposes in *Weir*, Stevenson is similarly creative with the character of Alan Breck Stewart, a key character in *Kidnapped* (1886) and its sequel, *Catriona* (1893), who makes an abrupt, and short-lived, appearance in *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889). Stewart's appearance in *The Master of Ballantrae* is particularly fascinating because the episode, complete with the Master's assurance that Stewart's pride and hatred of humiliation will prevent him from revealing the secret that Burke and James survived the battle of Culloden, is completely in-keeping with the prideful, hot-tempered

Stewart of *Kidnapped*. As a recurring character, familiar to Stevenson's readers, Stewart is able to straddle two positions in *The Master of Ballantrae*: he is, in a straightforward sense, a historical figure, an infamous Jacobite and accused 'Appin Murderer', who features in Stevenson's novel; but he also plays the role of a literary cameo, allowing Stevenson to reuse one of his previous characters, familiar to both the author and to his readers. Read together, *Kidnapped*, *Catriona*, and *The Master of Ballantrae*, complicate the idea of the historical character in fiction, creating a fictional history and narrative where the characters of all three novels co-exist in the same fictional version of eighteenth-century Scotland. As a recurring character, Alan Breck Stewart fuses the narrative time of *Kidnapped* into that of *The Master of Ballantrae* in a similar way that the characters of Scott's prefaces create a complicated matrix of interconnected histories and narratives, or as I call it in chapter two, a 'gossip circuit'. With its inclusion of *Kidnapped*'s Stewart, *The Master of Ballantrae*'s inward-facing and private version of history becomes much more expansive in its purview when reconciled to the same narrative and historical time as David Balfour and Alan Breck Stewart. Stevenson begins to play with the distinctions between historical *figure* and historical *character* and this interest, founded in his work in the 1880s, becomes the focus of his final novel, *Weir of Hermiston* where the distinction between a historical figure (Robert Braxfield) and historical character (Adam Weir) is fundamental to the novel's plot and historical setting.

One of the most puzzling features of the historical novel, *Weir of Hermiston*, is Stevenson's treatment of Robert McQueen, Lord Braxfield (1722–1799). Stevenson fostered a particular interest in Braxfield for almost twenty years after seeing his portrait, painted by Henry Raeburn, displayed in Edinburgh during the mid-1870s. In a letter composed a few days before his death, Stevenson thanked Lang for sending him a copy of Braxfield's portrait which was 'engraved from the same Raeburn portrait that I saw in '76 or '77' and Stevenson proudly shared his plan with Andrew Lang to hang the portrait in his study at Vailima 'as a

perpetual encouragement to do better with his Lordship' and to 'stick him into a novel'.<sup>62</sup> As early as 1892, Stevenson had confirmed to his friends, Colvin and Barrie, that 'Braxfield himself is my *grand premier*' for *Weir of Hermiston* or, as Stevenson often referred to the novel, *The Lord Justice-Clerk*.<sup>63</sup> Like Braxfield, Hermiston holds the highest office in the Scottish Judiciary, is renowned for his legal abilities and also for his mean and austere personality which is represented by his awful 'hanging face', and he has become part of the landed gentry through marriage, rather than inheritance. But, despite Stevenson's obvious determination to 'stick him into a novel', it is remarkable that Braxfield does not appear in *Weir* under his real name. Instead, it is rendered into that of the fictional, Adam Weir, Lord of Hermiston. From the time of its conception, it appears that Stevenson always had the intention of renaming the character for, in 1892, he tells Barrie that in 'my Braxfield story [...] his name is Hermiston' and in a letter to Colvin of the same year he recognised that 'it ought to be called – although that is impossible – *Braxfield*'.<sup>64</sup> This is a fascinating notion, first in recognising that his historical novel 'ought to be called' after its main historical character and second for conceiving this to be 'impossible'. One of the main reasons why Braxfield is destined to be a historical prototype, rather than historical character, in *Weir of Hermiston* is due to Stevenson's decision to set the novel in 1812–13 which means that the action of the plot occurs over a decade after Braxfield's death.<sup>65</sup> But, if Stevenson was determined to write a historical novel with Braxfield as its protagonist, why would he deliberately and stubbornly decide to set the novel after his death? Stevenson's choice of dates similarly puzzled Colvin, who wrote that

nor have I any clue to the reasons which led Stevenson to choose this particular date, in the year preceding Waterloo, for a story which, in regard to some of its features at least, might seem more naturally placed some twenty-five or thirty years before.<sup>66</sup>

Stevenson's decision to privilege historical setting, over that of a historical character who had been the subject of much thought and extensive research, strongly indicates that Stevenson believed that the years 1812–13 were integral to the concerns of the novel, more so than setting his fictional Braxfield in his correct historical context. Stevenson's recognition that, in the rooms of Archie's Speculative debate, 'the portraits were not there – those now represented were then but beginning their career' begins to indicate an answer to the question that had troubled Colvin: Stevenson sets his historical novel between 1812 and 1813 because these years are significant to literary history, preceding Scott's publication of *Waverley* (1814) by a matter of months. Set at the dawn of the historical novel, Stevenson writes Walter Scott into the novel, appearing as 'Sheriff Scott' and Scott 'the poet' whilst Scott as 'the historical novelist' has an anachronistic role in the text, created by the nineteenth-century narrator's frequent references and allusions to Scott's novels and characters, including Old Mortality, from *The Tale of Old Mortality*, Dandie Dinmont from *Guy Mannering*, and Flora McIvor from *Waverley*. Interestingly, although Colvin did not explicitly connect Stevenson's setting of the novel in 1812–13 with a deliberate interest in exploring the history of the historical novel, Colvin does, remarkably, endorse and, in many ways, instigate and lay the foundations for such an argument. In his note to the novel, Colvin chose to explain the historical setting of the novel, not in relation to the Napoleonic Wars, but measured against the stages of Scott's life. In his editorial note to *Weir*, he noticed that Adam Weir's personality was better suited to 'eighteenth-century manners' and, in the novel, they present themselves as 'somewhat of an anachronism'. By way of illustration, Colvin begins by drawing attention to the importance of the Napoleonic Wars on social history, but quickly changes tack and instead draws on Scott to illustrate and measure this change:

During the generation contemporary with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars– or to put it another way, the generation that elapsed between the days when

Scott roamed the country as a High School and University student and those when he settled in the fullness of fame and prosperity at Abbotsford.<sup>67</sup>

In *Familiar Studies* Stevenson argued ‘there never was [an] artist much more unconscious than Scott’; in *Weir of Hermiston*, he argues the same, ensuring Scott wanders through the narrative unconscious of his place in literary history. Scott’s lack of literary-historical awareness becomes a central feature of the novel, as he walks unconsciously among, and within, his own literary characters and genre. Scott’s creative energy, helping Adam Weir design the garden at Hermiston, leaves the estate with the ‘air of a toy-shop’, and it is to this location that Archie is sent, after the subtitle of *Waverley*, ‘sixty years since’ its erection (41). Free from the ‘bitter task-mistress’ of the Art of Fiction, the Scott of *Weir of Hermiston* enjoys employing his creativity and creating an atmosphere ‘of a toy-shop’, unbridled with the historical self-awareness of the nineteenth-century narrator who counts his place among his literary predecessors by reimagining the Speculative’s portraits of his literary forebears and by making frequent, anachronistic, references to nineteenth-century authors, such as Conan Doyle, throughout the narrative. The strange tension that *Weir* bears between the historical context of the narrative’s time in 1813, and the nineteenth-century narrator’s desperate attempts to force himself, his subjects, and his literary forebears into a single, familiar and united literary history reaches a point of absurdity with the narrator’s assessment that Archie ‘stirred the maidens of the country with the charm of Byronism before Byron’ (42). Although the narrator is attempting to enforce a sense of historical and critical control by appealing, not to a literary school, but to a key *individual* to the study of literary history, it does more to signal the artificiality of such terms, such as ‘Byronism’, than bolster them for, immediately, the idea of ‘Byronism’ is embarrassed of meaning: if Byronism can exist without, and before, Byron, then the narrator’s attempt at periodisation is rendered redundant. This is particularly peculiar because Byron *was* writing at the time the novel is set, in 1813,

which means that Stevenson is creating a strange and complex fictional space where historical reality and fidelity (defined as a faithfulness to historical fact, time, and literary history) are folded in on themselves. By distinguishing between Byron, his seductive personality (Byronism), and his literature (to which Stevenson does not directly refer), Stevenson has created a curious disconnect between the narrative time of the novel and the early-nineteenth century literary history to which Stevenson seems so eager to relate and anchor his historical novel.

This ‘charm of Byronism’, and all its pretended anachronism, proves effective in attracting a number of female characters, but it is the younger Kirstie, known as Christina, who wins the young Archie’s affections. In order to determine the full scale of his romantic interest in Christina, Archie tests Christina’s ability to understand and critically engage with poetry: ‘he was sounding her [...] to learn if she were only an animal the colour of flowers, or had a soul in her to keep her sweet’ (72). Christina passes Archie’s test when she is able to correctly articulate his morbid feeling of historical insignificance and evanescence for ‘everything appears so brief, and fragile, and exquisite, that I am afraid to touch life. We are here for so short a time; and all the old people before us [...] where are they now?’ (72). Christina is able to address Archie’s moment of existential crisis through poetry, reciting a ballad-song composed by her brother, Dandie, who has ‘been trying to say what you have been thinking’ in verse (72). In his moment of uncertainty Archie recomposes himself, finding security in a piece of literature which addresses and relates to both his thoughts and his historical situation. But Archie’s hatred for his father is characterised by Adam’s ability to disquiet Archie’s faith and challenge the opinions and values he holds most dear: he provides no such moments of poetic reconciliation. Instead, Archie is forced to view his father as a ‘stumbling-block [...] and with every year of his age the difficulty grew more instant’ (12). As Penny Fielding highlights, Lord Hermiston’s name, Adam, draws on its biblical

association to build the character's imposing personality and herald his authoritative use of language, expertly employing it as a tool for judgement and control.<sup>68</sup> In addition, however, this Biblical parallel also reinforces the novel's interest in examining the trappings, as well as the potential value, of recognising one's origins and inheritances: just as Stevenson and his contemporaries are struggling to reconcile themselves and their critical, literary theories to their literary forefathers, particularly Scott, so too is Archie struggling to reconcile himself, both emotionally and ideologically, to the views of his father and this tension reaches its peak with Archie's decision to publicly renounce, and humiliate, his father's endorsement of capital punishment, a position necessary to his judicial standing as the Lord Justice-Clerk in Edinburgh. The distance and division between the two characters is founded upon a theoretical and philosophical debate on the morality of capital punishment. Adam clearly endorses capital punishment and does so by gleefully sentencing Duncan Jopp with the death penalty and living up to his nickname as 'the hanging judge'. On the other hand, Archie tends towards subjective and often arbitrary opinion-based language, turning to a verbose and academic examination of moral theory and philosophy which is tested through the application of mental acuity and rhetorical fluency in the form of verbal debate rather than through practical application or action. This approach repeatedly finds his theoretical moral and philosophical positions threatened with illogicality and redundancy when they prove irreconcilable to their practical application in action. After his public denouncement of his father's sentencing of Jopp, Archie asks his father to let him fight in Wellington's army: for a man who has just publicly decried Capital Punishment, Archie's desire to become a soldier is met by his father's ridicule for such inconsistency. Much of Archie's cultivation, and deployment, of 'curiosity and logic' against his father, is inherited from his mother's dramatic moralising and dogmatic indoctrination in the early years of his childhood (12). One of the challenges Archie faces throughout the novel is in trying to apply his mother's illogical

and emotion-driven dogma to action: it invariably exposes its weakness and inapplicability for ‘whereas in her it was a native sentiment, in him it was only an implanted dogma’ (11). Archie’s adherence to this ‘implanted dogma’ finds him increasingly distanced from the beliefs of his father and it is to one of his father’s acquaintances, Lord Glenalmond, that Archie turns. Attracted to his air and appearance ‘as of an artist’, Archie befriends Glenalmond, who also proves to be a helpful confidante to Archie before he is sent to Hermiston (18). The pair find their relationship built upon their mutual interest in ‘a taste for letters’ which ensures that Glenalmond’s ‘thoughts and language, spoke to Archie’s heart in its own tongue’ (19). Archie’s interest in art and poetry is met with scorn by his father who ‘had a word of contempt for the whole crowd of poets, painters, fiddlers, and their admirers, the bastard race of amateurs, which was continually on his lips, ‘Signor Feedle-erie!’”, he would say: “Oh, for Goad’s sake, no more of the Signor!”” (19). It appears that at the centre of Archie’s disillusioned relationship with his father is their different interpretation of the role of literature and art in society and, perhaps appealing to Barrie’s literary trope, Archie and Glenalmond find themselves having philosophical, Socratic-styled conversations that leave them, ultimately, self-conscious of their shortcomings and unsure of the validity of their ‘very plausible academic opinion’, leaving Archie wondering that if ‘All that’s for nothing [...] who am I?’ (36, 35).

Despite Archie’s attempts to distance himself from his father, he finds it is impossible to disinherit himself from both a physical resemblance to his father and to his stylistic similarities, finding that his manners and means of addressing his peers has more of his father’s approach in it than his own, and ‘he little thought, as he did so, how he resembled his father; but his friends remarked upon it chuckling’ (25). In similar fashion, although Stevenson attempts to emancipate the style and format of his historical novel from Scott’s, he

nevertheless finds himself beholden and judged in relation to his forefather. On 13 June 1896, *The Saturday Review* lamented that *Weir* is

another brilliant testimony to the ultimate mastery of Scott, with gleams here and there of humour, of subtlety, of a whimsical stoicism curiously delightful, of all that Stevenson might have been had not the Scott tradition laid hold of him.<sup>69</sup>

Stevenson had criticised Thoreau and Whitman for their inability to ‘clothe’ their literary theories ‘in the garment of art’. In *Weir of Hermiston*, Stevenson ‘clothes’ his familiarity with Scott and his literary work in a complex historical novel which is anxious and self-conscious of its indebtedness to Scott. *Weir of Hermiston* is Stevenson’s attempt at returning the historical novel to its origin in Scott: it is set on the eve of Scott’s publication of *Waverley* (1814); the name Stevenson chooses for his protagonists, Weir, alludes to the infamous Major Weir, a character at the heart of one of Stevenson’s favourite historical novels, James Hogg’s *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and as well as Dandie’s fictional relationship with Scott and his poetry, the character shares a subtler connection to Scott with the Dandie Dinmont Terrier a breed of dog named after Scott’s popular character of the same name from *Guy Mannering* (1815). Stevenson invites Scott to blindly and unconsciously move in his historical novel that has been consciously and deliberately crafted around him and his literary works. As an acquaintance of Adam, Scott is invited to help design the grounds of Hermiston Estate: ‘My lord had been led by the influence of Mr. Sheriff Scott into a considerable design of planting; many acres were accordingly set out with fir; and the little feathery besoms gave a false scale and lent a strange air’ (40–41). Scott’s ‘design of planting’ ensures that when Archie is sent to Hermiston as a punishment for his rebellious behaviour, he comes to walk on two types of inherited ground, one a legacy of familial inheritance and the other is Stevenson’s conscious placement of his historical character in a literary ‘design’ inherited from Scott. Here Stevenson is metaphorically echoing Barrie’s designation of Scott as ‘the

seed from which the tree has grown'. Watts-Dunton had criticised Stevenson's 'self-conscious' style of novel writing, but in *Weir of Hermiston* this critical-historical awareness is central to the novel's *raison d'être* as a means of re-establishing and exploring his historical novel's place in literary history. But, just as *Familiar Studies* had exposed ten years earlier and, more recently, Barrie's 'Brought Back from Elysium', Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston* struggles to reconcile contemporary literary ambitions to the tradition, style, form and genre of its early-nineteenth century counterpart. This is demonstrated by the novel's inability to turn the legend of 'The Four Black Brothers' into a ballad for

Some century earlier, the last of the minstrels might have fashioned the last of the ballads out of that Homeric fight and chase; but the spirit was dead, or had been re-incarnated already in Mr. Sheriff Scott; and the degenerate moorsmen must be content to tell the tale in prose, and to make, of the Four Black Brothers, a unit after the fashion of the Twelve Apostles and the Three Musketeers (49).<sup>70</sup>

With the genres of the Epic and the Ballad tied to their historical literary circumstance, the narrator of the Four Black Brothers' tale is bereft of any literary tool, other than that of prose narration, to construct his legend. This kind of critical-historical awareness becomes as counterproductive as that of Barrie's fictional novelists in 'Brought Back from Elysium', with this knowledge creating a type of creative and literary impotence, one that leaves 'these ballad heroes' seeking a new literary genre to carry their story: the historical novel. But once again, the history of the historical novel that Stevenson constructs in *Weir of Hermiston* is wilfully contrary and anachronistic. At first, Stevenson appears to maintain historical fidelity to the novel's setting in 1813 by referring to Scott as a poet, rather than a historical novelist, a designation reserved for after 1814. However, by moving to Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*, published in 1844, it is clear that *Weir of Hermiston* continually seeks affirmation of its own place in the history of the historical novel. Scott is credited with

reincarnating and monopolising ballad history and narrative poetry to the creative detriment of his nineteenth-century counterparts, and Stevenson places the Scott of *Weir of Hermiston* on the verge of repeating this literary monopolisation in the face of his immense success as a historical novelist whose shadow, a ‘bitter task-mistress’, comes to loom large over his nineteenth-century successors. In *Weir of Hermiston*, Stevenson, like Archie Weir, struggles to fully comprehend and reconcile himself to his (literary) inheritance and this results in a novel which continually oscillates between reaffirming and disavowing Scott as the father to which Stevenson’s late nineteenth-century historical novel is indebted.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> J.M Barrie, ‘Brought Back from Elysium’, *The Contemporary Review, 1866–1900*, 57 (1890), 846–54, (p. 848).

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Arnold, ‘The Function of Criticism at the Present Time’, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism*, ed. by Vincent Leitch (New York: Norton, 2010), pp.695–714, (p.698).

<sup>3</sup> Barrie, p.849, p.846, p.851, p.854, p.849.

<sup>4</sup> Barrie, p.848.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Victor Hugo’s Romances’, *Cornhill Magazine* (August 1874); ‘John Knox and his Relations with Women’, *Macmillan’s Magazine* (September 1875); ‘Charles of Orleans’, *Cornhill* (December 1876); ‘François Villon, Student, Poet, Housebreaker’, *Cornhill* (August 1877); ‘The Gospel According to Walt Whitman’, *New Quarterly Magazine* (October 1878); ‘Some Aspects of Robert Burns’, *Cornhill* (October 1879); ‘Henry David Thoreau’, *Cornhill* (June 1880); ‘Yoshida Torajiro’, *Cornhill* (March 1880); ‘Samuel Pepys’, *Cornhill* (July 1881).

<sup>7</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, *Weir of Hermiston*, ed. by Gillian Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), p.58, p.49. Fielding offers a different reading of this creative impotency in *Weir*, arguing that it reflects the tension between written and oral forms of story-telling: see Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture, and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.179–97.

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Prickett, 'England: Romantic Legacies', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. by M. A. R. Habib (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.154–71 (p.161).

<sup>9</sup> Julius Charles Hare and Augustus William Hare, *Guesses at Truth by Two Brothers*, II/II (London: S. and R. Bentley, 1827) pp.136–37.

<sup>10</sup> George Gissing, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1898), pp.42–3.

<sup>11</sup> Barrie, p.849.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1882 Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.149. Hereafter cited in text.

<sup>13</sup> Barrie, p.848.

<sup>14</sup> For example, 'Perhaps, indeed, at his best he is comparable with only one novelist, and that one the greatest of all—Walter Scott': T. Watts-Dunton, 'Unsigned Review', *Athenaeum*, 3438, 16 September 1893, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) pp.428–33 (p.432). For more examples of Stevenson's comparison to Scott in reviews see 'An Unsigned Review', *St James Gazette*, 19 July 1886 13.7, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.233–34; and, R.H. Hutton, 'Unsigned Review', *Spectator*, 24 July 1886, 44.5, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.235–36.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, *Memories and Portraits*, Author's Edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), pp.116–17.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to W. E. Henley, 3 July 1881, Pitlochry, in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Ernest Mehew (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp.186–87 (p.186).

<sup>17</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Edward Burlingame, 10 October 1892, Vailima, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Sidney Colvin, Tusitala Edition, iv (London: William Heinemann, 1924), pp.250–51 (p.251).

<sup>18</sup> 'Familiar', *OED* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Accessed September 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9930740605>.

<sup>19</sup> Rebecca Bullard, 'Introduction: Reconsidering Secret History', in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. by Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.1–14 (p.2).

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- <sup>20</sup> William Ernest Henley, 'Review', *Academy*, 21.224, 1 April 1882, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.97–100 (p.99).
- <sup>21</sup> Walter Scott, 'Memoirs of Samuel Pepys, Esq.', *The Quarterly Review*, 33.66 (March 1826), 281–314 (p.281).
- <sup>22</sup> George Saintsbury, 'An Unsigned Review', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 35.5, 18 March 1882, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.94–7 (p.96).
- <sup>23</sup> Henley, p.99.
- <sup>24</sup> Liz Farr, 'Stevenson and the (Un)Familiar: The Aesthetics of Late-Nineteenth-Century Biography', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp.36–47 (p.40).
- <sup>25</sup> Saintsbury, p.95.
- <sup>26</sup> Glenda Norquay, *R. L. Stevenson on Fiction: An Anthology of Literary and Critical Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.10.
- <sup>27</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Popular Authors', in *R. L. Stevenson on Fiction: An Anthology of Literary and Critical Essays*, ed. by Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp.161–73 (168).
- <sup>28</sup> Henley, p.97.
- <sup>29</sup> 'An Unsigned Review', *British Quarterly Review*, July 1882, lxxv, 212–13, in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Ernest Mehw, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), pp.100–2 (p.101).
- <sup>30</sup> Christopher Kent, 'Higher Journalism and the Mid-Victorian Clerisy', *Victorian Studies*, 13.2 (1969), 181–98. For more on the growth of professional and academic criticism see, Joanne Shattock, 'Contexts and Conditions of Criticism, 1830–1914', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. by M. A. R. Habib, Vol.6: The Nineteenth Century, c.1830–1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.21–45; and, Chris Baldick, *Criticism and Literary Theory, 1890 to the Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).
- <sup>31</sup> As Shattock notes 'literary critics –and the term was used self-consciously in preference to "reviewers"– now saw themselves as professionals, and the production of literary criticism as a professional rather than amateur occupation': Shattock, p.32. Grant Allen drew attention to this distinction in 1882: 'does not the mere word "reviewer" call up a wonderfully different mental concept from the word "critic": Grant Allen, 'The Decay of Criticism', *Fortnightly Review* 31.183 (March 1882), 339–51 (p.347).
- <sup>32</sup> Henley, p.99.
- <sup>33</sup> 'An Unsigned Notice', *Westminster Review*, July 1882, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.102–4 (p.102).

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to W.E. Henley, 29 July 1881, in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Ernest Mehew, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), pp.188–89 (p.189). The letter reveals Stevenson was struggling with ill health and debt: his father’s financial assistance was therefore necessary and his lack of willingness to edit the volume was perhaps induced by poor health.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Sidney Colvin, November 1875, Edinburgh, in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Ernest Mehew, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), pp.113–15 (pp.113–14).

<sup>37</sup> Stevenson’s reference of the ‘shrine of R.L.S’ reflects his own attachment to his authorly persona. Glenda Norquay and J.C. Furnas and have examined this attachment, see Glenda Norquay, *Stevenson, Literary Networks and Transatlantic Publishing in the 1890s: The Author Incorporated* (London: Anthem Press, 2020), especially p.6, and J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward: The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: William Sloane Publishers, 1951).

<sup>38</sup> Stevenson, Letter to Colvin, p.114.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Essay on Burns*, ed. by George R. Noyes (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896), p.6.

<sup>40</sup> Carlyle, p.34. Stevenson, *Familiar Studies*, pp.76–7.

<sup>41</sup> Karen Adkins, *Gossip, Epistemology, and Power: Knowledge Underground* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p.8.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, *British Quarterly*, p.101.

<sup>43</sup> Farr, p.41, pp.40–1.

<sup>44</sup> Stevenson, *Memories and Portraits*, pp.vii–viii.

<sup>45</sup> Norquay, *Stevenson on Fiction*, p.9.

<sup>46</sup> Stevenson, *Weir of Hermiston*. p.5. Hereafter, cited in text.

<sup>47</sup> Norquay, *Literary Networks*, p.68.

<sup>48</sup> Norquay, *Literary Networks* p.6.

<sup>49</sup> Sidney Colvin, ‘A Note on “Weir of Hermiston”’, originally published in *Cosmopolis*, May 1896, in *Weir of Hermiston*, ed. by Gillian Hughes, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), pp.101–10 (p.101).

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Jacobs, ‘Unsigned Review of “Weir of Hermiston”’, *Athenaeum*, 3578.673, May 1896, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.465–68 (p.465).

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<sup>51</sup> Jacobs, p.468.

<sup>52</sup> Edward Purcell, 'A review of "Weir of Hermiston"', *Academy*, June 1896, xlix, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 472–75 (p.472).

<sup>53</sup> Colvin, p.109.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Colvin, p.106.

<sup>56</sup> Gillian Hughes, 'Authority and the Narrative Voice in Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston*', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 42.4 (2016), 234–47 (p.241).

<sup>57</sup> Colvin, p.105.

<sup>58</sup> Quotation from Gillian Hughes (ed), 'Introduction', *Weir of Hermiston* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), pp.xxvii–1 (p.xxxvi).

<sup>59</sup> In *Weir of Hermiston*, Archie proposes 'an amendment to the next subject in the casebook: "Whether capital punishment be consistent with God's will or man's policy?"' (p.26).

<sup>60</sup> Watts-Dunton, p.432.

<sup>61</sup> Gerald Manley Hopkins, Letter to R. W. Dixon, 15 August 1883, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) pp.122–23 (p.123).

<sup>62</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Andrew Lang, 1 December 1894, Vailima, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Sidney Colvin IV/IV (London: Methuen and Co.: 1911), p.322.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to J. M. Barrie, 1 November 1892, Vailima, in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Ernest Mehew (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), pp.515–17 (pp.515–16).

<sup>64</sup> Stevenson, Letter to Barrie, p.517; Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Sidney Colvin, 28 October 1892, in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson: Correspondence* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1897), pp.217–19 (p.218).

<sup>65</sup> In his manuscript, Stevenson miscalculates Archie's age at Hermiston: it is likely these inaccuracies would have been edited out in subsequent drafts of the novel. According to the first chapter, Archie's stay at Hermiston occurs in 1812, but this is changed to 1813 later in the manuscript. Colvin edited these discrepancies out of the first edition, sticking with 1813.

<sup>66</sup> Colvin, p.109.

<sup>67</sup> Colvin, p.108, pp.108–9.

<sup>68</sup> Fielding, p.184.

<sup>69</sup> 'The Lost Stevenson', *The Saturday Review*, 81 (13 June 1896), 603–4 (p.603).

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<sup>70</sup> Ian Duncan also highlights that *Weir of Hermiston* presents ‘Stevenson’s most intensive engagement with Scott, and with the Scottish tradition of modern fiction’: Ian Duncan, ‘Stevenson and Fiction’, *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 11–26 (p.20).

## Conclusion

In 1883, Robert Louis Stevenson claimed that ‘The historical novel is forgotten’ and a ‘mere whim of veering fashion [...] has made us turn our back upon the larger, more various, and more romantic art of yore’. Although he concedes that the popularity of the historical novel had dramatically declined after Walter Scott, Stevenson nevertheless credits Scott’s novels as the beginning of a ‘great change’ in the history of nineteenth-century literature, one which ‘was inaugurated by the romantic Scott; and at length, by the semi-romantic Balzac and his more or less wholly unromantic followers, bound like a duty on the novelist’.<sup>1</sup> Scott’s contribution to the development of literature in the nineteenth century becomes somewhat removed and distinguished from the form of the historical novel since, as Brian Hamnett highlights, it ‘had fallen out of favour with writers and critics’ by the 1860s.<sup>2</sup> More recently, Harry Shaw endorsed a similar approach to tracing the history of the historical novel in the nineteenth century by drawing attention to its tangential influences on the development of other literary genres. This is because, Shaw argues, the historical novel’s dependence on ‘the main traditions of the novel’ ensures that the genre ‘does not have a significant history apart from the history of the novel as a whole’ for

the classical historical novel begins with Scott; but the important line of fictional development runs not from Scott to the historical novelists who followed him, but instead from Scott to such masters of European fiction as Balzac, Dickens, and even [...] Flaubert. The authors who produce the best historical novels after Scott tend [...] to be masters of other kinds of writing, [...] Georg Lukács is [...] accurate in describing the history of the novel as a great stream from which tributaries branch off only to rejoin [...] in due course. Scott’s works form such a tributary: he branches off from the eighteenth-century novel, discovers in artistic terms the rich significance of

history, and then reunites with the main stream of nineteenth-century fiction through his influence on Balzac.<sup>3</sup>

But what this view of the historical novel fails to fully appreciate is the genre's continued ability to carefully deal with, and reflect, new and emerging nineteenth-century social, cultural, and literary concerns. After all, despite the claim that the 'historical novel is now forgotten', Stevenson clearly identifies something in the genre which was particularly, perhaps even exclusively, capable of handling and exploring specific contemporary concerns, especially since the historical novel dominates the final decade of his life in the shape of *Kidnapped* (1883), *Prince Otto* (1885), *The Black Arrow* (1888), *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), *Catriona* (1893), *Weir of Hermiston* (published posthumously in 1896) and *St Ives* (published posthumously in 1897), and even preoccupying his private thoughts in the final hours of his life, if Strong's and Colvin's recollections are to be believed. It has been well established in literary studies that Scott had used the historical novel as a timely means for navigating and exploring contemporary issues, particularly those arising from the Napoleonic War. However, there is a tendency, inaugurated by his contemporaries, to undervalue or dismiss the complex, nuanced, and valuable role that Stevenson also forged for the nineteenth-century historical novel, using it as a means of carefully, deliberately and intricately exploring a number of contemporary concerns, including the rise of investigative journalism, the Victorian 'fear' of the recent past, the professionalisation of literary criticism, and Stevenson's interest in critical biography and literary history.<sup>4</sup> The historical novel is not an inherited form that is ill-suited to the needs of the late-nineteenth century, as Hamnett suggests, or one needing to defer its interest in 'the rich significance of history' to other literary forms.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, Stevenson uses the historical novel, and its association with Walter Scott, to carefully investigate new and emerging questions regarding the boundaries between literature, history and journalism, as well as returning to the conundrum which had

preoccupied Scott's engagement with the historical novel: what is the relationship between the anecdotal and circumstantial experiences of domestic, private life and public narratives of national history? By examining Scott's and Stevenson's historical novels, we can see that Secret History played an important role in this development of the nineteenth-century historical novel in Britain from 1814 to 1894 and we can trace a significant and clear 'line of fictional development' from Scott to his Scottish successor, Robert Louis Stevenson, whose contribution to the genre is often undervalued. Both authors use Secret History to investigate the relationship between fiction and history, gossip and historical intelligence, anecdotes and historical narrative, private life and public history, secrecy and publication, and domesticity and publicity.

In drawing attention to how the genre of Secret History played an important literary role in Britain from the publication of Scott's *Secret History of the Court of James the First* in 1811 to Stevenson's death in 1894, we can see that Secret History is far from redundant by the nineteenth century. During Scott's literary career, Secret History gains significance and popularity in the wake of the wave of Royal scandals from 1809 to 1820 and this is reinforced with these scandals' return to public attention when the deaths of George III (1820) and George IV (1830) herald the publication of new, exclusive, and 'previously unpublished' exposés about the Royal family's scandalous private conduct. The piecemeal publication of Samuel Pepys's *Diary* from 1825 is attended by a renewed fascination with secret histories and their ability to resuscitate the scandals of past ages and expose them, for the first time, to nineteenth-century Britain: Scott's *Count Grammont's Memoirs*, a companion to Pepys's diary, ensured Scott gained an important place in Pepys's publication history. The significance of Secret History to the nineteenth-century literary market is compounded by Scott who, as I have shown through my analysis of his *Secret History of the Court of James the First*, not only contributed to the genre with his own edited secret

histories but also by offering Secret History a prominent place in the origin, creation, and composition of his historical novels. As I highlight in chapters two and three, Scott's historical novels also created an appetite for secret histories about the historical events and characters which they feature, including, for example, Sharpe's *Criminal Trials, Illustrative of the Tale Entitled "The Heart of Mid-Lothian"* (1818) and the anonymously published *The Waverley Anecdotes* (1833).

Scott's fascination with Secret History and the complicated and controversial position it assigns to the domestic secret in history is shared by Stevenson who similarly draws on and adapts Secret History to support the historical and narrative structures of his historical novels. Scott and Stevenson show that secrets are constantly under the threat of public exposure by secret historians and historical novelists alike, and this is often most explicitly acknowledged in the novelists' playful, metafictional prefaces where the historical novel is asked to confront and explore its own origins and designs, and this involves repeated appeals to secrecy, arcana, and mystery. As well as using real and fictional secret histories to depict the royal courts of their historical novels, Scott and Stevenson use secret history to subtly explore the relationship between private life and public history. After the fashion of secret historians, the historical novelists use domestic secrets to investigate the hidden, unknown, and often scandalous 'Springs and Motives of great Enterprizes and Revolutions in the World, and of the contemptible Accidents to which they owed their Success' and it is through depicting and exploring these secret springs of history that Scott and Stevenson reconcile private life to public history.<sup>6</sup> Secret History inaugurates a definition of gossip as valuable historical intelligence and we have seen how Scott and Stevenson explored the difficulties of this definition: Scott questions Osborne's concern that gossip will never be taken seriously as a piece of valid or legitimate historical information and places it at the centre of the narrative structures of *The Heart of Midlothian*, allowing local gossips (including the narrator,

Pattieson) to act as the custodians of the novel's secret history of the Porteous Riots. On the other hand, Stevenson faces the charge of seditious libel for writing his own gossip-filled account of the Samoan civil war and, when read through *Prince Otto*, we can see how *A Footnote to History* marks an evolution of Stevenson's investigation into the relationship between literature, history, and journalism and the publication of domestic secrets. The origin of the anecdote in *Secret History (Anekdotia)* allows Scott and Stevenson to explore if, and how, the anecdote can attain the status of public history. Where Scott concludes that the anecdote can be reconciled to history via the mediation of literary form and the transverse narrative structures of *Secret History*, Stevenson concludes that the anecdote's relationship to history is determined by the condition of time and delayed disclosure. Under this conception, the secret history, like those of Pepys and Mackellar, becomes increasingly bound to a literal state of secrecy. Where this association of 'unpublished' with 'secret' is used by Scott and D'Israeli to investigate the sociological foundation of secret histories in gossip, Stevenson takes this association to something of an extreme, allowing secrecy and delay to become a defining feature of his ability to distinguish history from the recent past.

In 1839, John Galt made an intriguing observation about Walter Scott and his relationship with *Secret History*, crediting him with a central role in its survival and evolution in the nineteenth century for, he argues, Scott and Lockhart had offered 'the gossip of the times', the 'table-talk in every society' and the private "'on dits" of the day' to the public as the 'shreds and patches' of history.<sup>7</sup> Scott's literary celebrity, combined with his reputation as 'the Great Unknown', created a lasting appetite for new information about his private life and domestic character which does much to rile the 'current rage for literary anecdote and private history' which Scott saw as endemic by 1826.<sup>8</sup> Scott greatly contributed to the elevation of private life and personal anecdote to the status of history as both its author and its subject. By the 1880s, Stevenson takes this 'rage for literary anecdote and private history' to an extreme,

allowing it to underpin his endorsement of critical biography which, as his *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* demonstrates, allows Stevenson to elevate the domestic secret to a valuable piece of historical *and* literary intelligence which has the capacity to unriddle the secret meanings and hidden nuances of an author's work.

I have established that looking to Secret History and its controversial elevation of gossip, anecdote, and domestic secrets to the status of public history provides a new and fruitful literary framework against which the narrative and historical structures of the nineteenth-century historical novel can be measured and investigated. This investigation has also provided new insights into Scott's and Stevenson's historical contexts, especially by drawing attention to the influences of contemporary Royal scandals and changes in libel law and prosecution on the authors' fiction and non-fiction histories. Overcoming both real and metafictional attempts to block, censor, prosecute, and formally reprimand the authors for offering idle gossip, domestic secrets, and private anecdotes as the material of history, Scott's and Stevenson's adaptations of Secret History's ability to render the term 'secret' synonymous with 'unpublished' ensures that secrecy becomes a defining feature of their novels' narrative and historical structures.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Note on Realism', in *R. L. Stevenson on Fiction: An Anthology of Literary and Critical Essays*, ed. by Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp.65–71 (p.67, p.66).

<sup>2</sup> Brian Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Representations of Reality and in History and Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.181.

<sup>3</sup> Harry E. Shaw, *The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and His Successors* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983) p.23.

<sup>4</sup> For Stevenson's posthumous literary reputation, see Alex Thomson, 'Stevenson's Afterlives', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp.147–59.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Hamnett argues that Stevenson, Eliot and Flaubert reflect that ‘the serious historical novel had become redundant’ and attempts ‘to revive it failed’ (Hamnett, p.xx).

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels: An Annotated Text with Critical Essays*, ed. by Robert A. Greenberg (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1961), pp.170–71.

<sup>7</sup> John Galt (ed.), *Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth, Interspersed with Original Letters from the Late Queen Caroline, the Princess Charlotte, and from various other Distinguished Persons, III/IV* (London: Henry Colburn, 1839), p.vii.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Scott, ‘Memoir of Sir Walter Scott’s Early Years, Written by Himself’, in *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by James R. Hope Scott (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1871), pp.1–43 (p.1).

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