Dryasdust Antiquarianism and Soppy Masculinity: The Waverley Novels and the Gender of History

Dominick LaCapra has been arguing for some time now that relationships between contemporary historians and their objects of inquiry are fundamentally transferential and, ideally, “dialogic.” Historians narcissistically project their discipline’s controversies onto the past, and when things go well, the past’s irreducibility to the terms of such controversies voices itself, disrupting those terms to the point that historians understand both the past and their discipline differently. If we provisionally accept LaCapra’s model of the ideal historian—the historian as “mentalité case,” as he once characterized it—then we might argue that for contemporary historians of the discipline of history, one of the most disruptive dialogues ought to occur when studying an influential predecessor who practices and portrays other kinds of transferential history. Particularly provocative would be the dialogue with a predecessor who idealizes transferences with the past that involve the material realm of the body as much as they do the “mental” realm of disciplinary controversy. Such a dialogue would add a more blatantly physical component to scenes that we had grown accustomed to perceiving as just talking, perhaps complicating the view that the hallmark of modern historicism’s development was the rise of a dialogic relationship to the past. Indeed, if this earlier transferential history were implicated in its age’s own disciplinary controversies over history, it would inevitably alter our understanding of the discipline’s history as well.

This essay initiates such revisions through a reading of Sir Walter Scott’s *The Antiquary* (1816), among the most popular of Scott’s immensely popular Waverley Novels during the nineteenth century (so solid was the novel’s canonization by the

**ABSTRACT** This essay attempts to widen the discursive contexts through which scholars understand Romantic historicism and the role of Walter Scott’s Waverley Novels in its development. Placing Scott’s *The Antiquary* (1816) and “Dedicatory Epistle” to *Ivanhoe* (1819) in dialogue with contemporaneous verbal and visual discourse over antiquaries, Edmund Burke, and the Lady Hamilton affair, the essay proposes that Romantic historicism disciplined bodies as it defined and authorized new forms of knowledge. Romantic historicists perceived the ability to relate to and know the past properly as dependent on the manliness of the historical thinker’s sentimental and sexual constitution. Thus, the era’s arguments over the legitimacy of different forms of historical inquiry, as well as over the historical novel’s cultural authority in relation to the field of history, frequently became contests over the manliness and sensibility of their practitioners’ bodies. / Representations 82, Spring 2003 © The Regents of the University of California. ISSN 0734-6018 pages 52–86. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center St., Ste. 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.
early twentieth century that Virginia Woolf assumed that readers of *To the Lighthouse* needed only a small clue to identify it as the novel provoking Mr. Ramsay’s tears, and E. M. Forster made it the butt of his famous distinction between “plot” and “story” in *Aspects of the Novel*). In the novel, Scott interrogates the cultural legitimacy of various modes through which individuals know the past and live with that knowledge, and he does so while modeling individual relationships to history in terms that resonate with LaCapra’s. But he also emphasizes the intimacy of those modes, portraying historical pursuits as sentimental and sexual ones too. Specifically, I mean to show that Scott’s novel about the 1790s asserts the post-Waterloo relevance of that earlier decade’s widespread concerns that historical inquiry can improperly sentimentally and sexually initiate—and, therefore, according to the logic of the period, also improperly gender—British men. Like participants in that earlier decade’s debates over historical inquiry, the novel demarcates the field of history’s legitimacy as one whose borders men literally ought to feel: it not only suggests that the sentimental and sexual constitutions of historically minded men are relevant when judging their competence as historical thinkers but also implies that the legitimacy of historical pursuits depends upon the manliness of the sentimental and sexual education that those pursuits impart.

As itself a kind of history, *The Antiquary* may only raise such concerns in order to commit them to the grave, deflecting them backwards onto 1790s antiquarianism and implying in turn that historical pursuits’ affective propriety and manliness improved after that decade. I shall argue, however, that because such pursuits since the 1790s had come to include Scott’s own novels, historical narratives that attended in part to realms previously associated with antiquarian research, the novel also gave those concerns continued life, particularly for historical novelists trying to grant their fictions cultural authority by way of association with history. This is clear in Scott’s “Dedicatory Epistle” to *Ivanhoe* (1819), his famous meditation on the epistemological and methodological problems facing the historical novelist, which I read as an effort to defend the historical novelist’s authority at the expense of antiquaries by establishing the greater affective propriety and manliness of the novelist’s body.

Scholars have long recognized the Waverley Novels’ importance to the rise of the novel and to the evolution of modern European historicism. Historians as early as Thomas Macaulay, Jules Michelet, James Anthony Froude, and Augustin Thierry cite them as a major influence on their work. If we accept this privileging—and given, as I argue, that *The Antiquary*’s terms for examining history’s legitimacy are typical both of the Waverley Novels and of their age, I see no reason why we should not—then Scott’s novel provides strong evidence that history’s early move toward disciplinization was also a conscious work of disciplining men’s feeling bodies. One goal of this essay, then, is to widen the terms in which contemporary scholars discuss Scott’s historicism. While early-twentieth-century novelists like Woolf and Forster and critics like F. R. Leavis dismissed the Waverley Novels as boyish...
and sentimental, more and more scholars have been arguing that we ought to take that corpus seriously as history, and particularly as evidence that the field of history was being redefined in the early 1800s. But these scholars also restrict that redefinition to a transformation in historical epistemology and concomitant changes in historical method, largely focusing their attention on how Scott’s conception of the “problem” of representing culture derives from Scottish Enlightenment stadialist theories of uneven development; from early-nineteenth-century skepticism of essentialist conceptions of human nature; and from a more nuanced understanding of historical mediation and, by extension, of history’s relationship to fiction. What such accounts neglect, and what this essay attends to, is the importance of the body within this new historicist epistemology as a medium or even organ of knowledge and, in turn, the cultural work performed on bodies in the domains of sentiment, sex, and gender as writers sought to give this historicism legitimacy.

Still more broadly, by reading The Antiquary as itself an authoritative history (of history in the 1790s), this essay also begins to correct for a general neglect of the same in accounts of historicism’s emergence, accounts that inform this scholarship on Scott, not to mention LaCapra’s ideal of the historian. Perusing many of the twentieth century’s more influential histories of history—from R. G. Collingwood’s The Idea of History (1946) and Georg Lukács’s The Historical Novel (1937) to, more recently, Michel Foucault’s The Order of Things (1966), Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities (1983), J. G. A. Pocock’s Virtue, Commerce, and History (1985), and James Chandler’s England in 1819 (1998)—one is apt to conclude that if historicism battled for its legitimacy at all while in its infancy, then this battle was waged solely on epistemological and methodological grounds. Foucault, for example, though he devoted his late career to examining the body’s disciplining in nineteenth-century culture, never examines the work of bodily discipline that took place in the name of history’s initial disciplinization (which he dates between 1775 and 1825) when he treats that topic in The Order of Things. Perhaps more strikingly, Collingwood makes the same omission, despite insisting in The Idea of History that a genuine act of historical thought, or what he calls “scientific history,” involves reenacting the past imaginatively in one’s own person. Surely, to the extent that he acknowledges that this reenactment involves “sensations and feelings” in addition to a “process of knowledge,” that formulation suggests that scientific history can never be separated from the historical situation of its practitioner’s own felt embodiment. It further implies, then, that every scientific history is not only an expression, in part, of a feeling body but also, however consciously, an act of making and unmaking such bodies. Yet Collingwood’s own history of scientific history’s emergence never tells a story about the body, restricting that emergence to the discovery that “human nature” has a history or, as he puts it, that “the historical development of the science of human nature entails an historical development in human nature itself.”
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Scholars familiar with *The Antiquary* may think it an odd place to reinterpret Scott’s historicist project because the novel has long been read as a portrait of the Scotland that Scott knows in 1816 rather than of the Scotland “of the last ten years of the eighteenth century,” as he claims in the novel’s “Advertisement.” Fueling this impression has been a consensus that it lacks formal elements crucial to the other Waverley Novels’ ability to represent history. Critics deny not only that Lovel, its protagonist, is a “mediocre hero”—Lukács’s characterization of Scott’s standard hero, a figure who mediates the conflicting social forces of a historical moment and, for Lukács, who thus stands in for the course of history—but also that its secondary characters fail to typify the kinds of competing social and national causes that their analogues represent in other Scott novels. Obviously such criteria for assessing a novel’s claim to be legitimately historical are unscientific and open to ideological reproach, but they do raise doubts about *The Antiquary*’s status as a historical representation to the extent that they generally have received praise as a way to describe Scott’s particular historical method.

In light of the evidence of Scott’s “Advertisement,” however, this same point ought to prompt concern that the absence of identifiable historical types in *The Antiquary* simply means that critics have not known what they were looking for—that the novel, in short, tells us an unfamiliar history. David Hewitt recently paved the way for this recognition by pointing out that the novel’s few national-historical references are entirely consistent with one another, dating its action very precisely to the mid-1790s. I intend to show that the location of the novel’s action in the 1790s is in fact historical in a quasi-Lukácsian sense—that it portrays representative types derived from the historical peculiarity of the mid-1790s as understood in 1816—and thus to help it reveal this unfamiliar history. If critics have recently denied that Scott’s third novel is historical, they have been correct to point out that it is deeply concerned with the “historical”—concerned, that is, with the uses and limits of history as a field of study. Indeed, I argue here that the unfamiliar history that the novel reveals is that of the 1790s struggle over what to accredit as history. What renders this history unfamiliar is that contrary to the “mentalist” bias of the histories of history with which we are now familiar, *The Antiquary* dramatizes the earlier struggle as a choice between different kinds of sentimentalized and sexualized men. Scott constructs his narrative around two stereotypes of the feeling historical man that 1790s thinkers routinely deployed—often when attacking Edmund Burke—in an effort to define the limits of proper historical study and the relationship between historical thought and prudent action. By way of juxtaposition with these types, Lovel then functions less as a mediocre hero than as an empty form for stating the case of the “historical” for post-1790s historiography.

Satirical portraits of men obsessed with history, particularly of antiquaries,
abounded in the late eighteenth century. Scott seizes upon perhaps the two most common of these for his main characters in *The Antiquary*: the modern-day Quixote (Scott’s Sir Arthur Wardour), who turns to the past on deeply political and nostalgic grounds in an effort to sustain a chivalric order of things that not only is outmoded but also cannot exist in the form that the Quixote imagines; and the pedantic scholar-collector (Jonathan Oldbuck), whose interest in the past is so thoroughly detached from present concerns as to be misanthropic and even morbid. Both portraits reinforce charges of political irresponsibility with connotations that such men are social misfits, figures whose perverse affective constitutions make them, according to the logic of the age, barely recognizable as men. But in the context of a novel set in a community that fears the expansion of the French Revolution to Britain, such types also have broader resonance, for I shall argue that they were two of the stereotypes that 1790s radicals commonly applied to Burke when discrediting his opposition to France. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Burke had proposed that prudent political action depends upon competent historical understanding (something that he denies to the French and their British supporters) and that such competence both depends upon and reinforces a properly “manly” sentimental constitution. These stereotypes were thus ideal fits, turning Burke against himself by implying that he was both out of touch with recent history and incompetent to his own historicist project on sentimental and gendered grounds. When Scott appropriates the types for his only novel set in the age of Burke, however, the resulting narrative reads as a vexed effort to rescue Burkean historicism from such types while also affirming their validity and, I conclude, their importance for keeping history, as well as the historical novel, disciplined.

For Sir Arthur, a knight of ancient Scottish blood, antiquarian inquiry is a profoundly sentimental enterprise, offering an outlet for Jacobite sympathies that, by the time of the novel’s action, he feels more than he practices. “In all actual service and practical exertion he was a most zealous and devoted subject of George III,” we read, but he opposes the “protestant succession” and “revolution principles” of 1688 in his studies, taking upon himself the role of “chivalrous assertor” of the “good fame of Queen Mary” (38–39). It is in fact this “chivalrous” role that offers the best purchase on the sentimentality of those studies, for while Sir Arthur never seriously expresses a wish to restore an earlier historical moment, he does wish to preserve the chivalric system, a system whose ethical code is also a sentimental code, that secures hereditary “rank and privilege” (40). His antiquarianism enacts this preservation insofar as he experiences his historical pursuits as chivalric ones, and in this respect, he clearly typifies the kind of historically minded subject that 1790s radicals famously charged Burke with being. Burke may update chivalry in *Reflections*, defending something closer to what Michael McKeon terms “conservative ideology” than to the “aristocratic ideology” that McKeon finds in medieval romance—defending, that is, the need to maintain the chivalric system of male
sentimental deference to rank and sex because it has proven its worth as a prudent ethical and political code and not because rank and sex necessarily guarantee honor. But for Burke’s 1790s opponents, his historicism both defended and exhibited this older aristocratic ideology-based system of chivalric sentiment, just as, Scott suggests, Sir Arthur’s antiquarianism does.

Those who sought to discredit Burke’s competence as a historical thinker thus often caricatured him as a Quixote, implying that his chivalry-based historicist apologia for inherited cultural formations blinded him to the evidence of France’s “true” state. Thomas Paine famously expresses this point in *The Rights of Man* (1791) when he locates Burke in “a world of windmills,” arguing that his historical portrait of France resembles the world of “plays” and “tragic paintings” more than that of reality. Scott similarly emphasizes that Sir Arthur’s historical understanding is less sound epistemologically than his friend and neighbor Jonathan Oldbuck’s and that his quixotic, chivalric sentiment-based faith in the probity of legends and received authorities is to blame. “The faith of Sir Arthur, as an antiquary, was boundless,” he notes, whereas Oldbuck was more scrupulous in receiving legends as current and authentic coin. Sir Arthur would have deemed himself guilty of the crime of lese-majesty had he doubted the existence of any single individual of that formidable bead-roll of one hundred and four kings of Scotland, received by Boethius, and rendered classical by Buchanan, in virtue of whom James VI. claimed to rule his ancient kingdom. (38)

Sir Arthur’s sentiment-based epistemological paradigm, that historical testimony’s veracity correlates to the rank of its adherents (a transportation into historical method of the same principle of sentimental deference to “persons” over “principles” that Paine had criticized in Burke), actually occasions a dispute when Oldbuck questions the evidentiary relevance of the fact that one of his friend’s historical authorities is a “gentleman of high family and ancient descent” (50). In fact, Sir Arthur, whose “taste for antiquities” we are told is “neither very deep nor very correct” when compared to Oldbuck’s, grows angry at intrusions of his neighbor’s empiricist historical method—what Sir Arthur calls an “uncivil” method based on a “frivolous accuracy of memory” and “pettifogging intimacy with dates, names, and trifling matters of fact”—into his own romance-derived vision of the past (41).

For Burke’s opponents, depicting him as a Quixote of course implied more than just an epistemological critique of his chivalric sentiment-based historicism. It borrowed his own correlation of historical understanding and political prudence to critique his historicism on moral and political grounds too, equating it with the injustices of the historical formations that he used it to defend. We find this in Paine’s critique when, after detailing the abuses of the ancien régime, he suggests that Burke “pities the plumage but forgets the dying bird.” Political caricaturists made the equation more blatant, representing a quixotic Burke doing everything from riding the hydra of “monarchy” over the backs of “base born plebians” to...
wielding a “Shield of Aristocracy and Despotism” (figs. 1, 2). But the larger point to be made is that such images usually do less to indict Burke’s historicism for being sentimental or chivalric than they do to imply that his sentimental chivalric constitution is malformed, that it misses the proper objects of sentiment. In _Reflections_, Burke had portrayed manliness, and manly sentiment in particular, as crucial to historical understanding and, in turn, to prudent action. Few of the era’s portraits of Burke-as-Quixote—even Paine’s—readily challenge that logic, representing him instead as historically imprudent because he is, quite simply, incompetent to his
The quixotic Burke sallies forth from the office of his publisher while brandishing a pen-shaped lance and displaying a “Shield of Aristocracy and Despotism.” The shield is decorated with various scenes of the monarchy’s injustice and inhumanity.

The properly feeling man would feel for the people whom the quixotic defender of monarchy crushes underfoot or emblazons on his shield. The atrophied nature of Burke’s body in these and similar images (a body that is always out of place amidst the trappings of chivalry) only underscores the inadequacy of his bodily constitution to what Burke had implied are the mutually constitutive tasks of being manly, feeling properly, and prudently analyzing and acting in the present state of history.

The Antiquary similarly critiques Sir Arthur, matching his incompetence as a
historian to his imprudence as a historical actor. Sir Arthur’s fate is intertwined with that of Dousterswivel, a con man and possible spy for the French, who successfully preys upon the knight’s ancestral pride and credulity in romance in order to prompt him to invest his family fortune in ill-adviced business ventures. The result is that Sir Arthur’s chivalric sentiment-based history nearly bankrupts his ancestral estate, shakes up the town’s social hierarchy, reduces Britain’s national wealth, and strengthens the French cause. Scott’s sense of the threats that such possibilities pose—that Sir Arthur will, for example, inadvertently diminish the aristocracy’s power and also increase Britain’s vulnerability to revolutionary conspiracy—of course derives more from Burke’s fears in the 1790s than from the views of his radical opponents. But his equation of chivalric sentiment-based historicism with imprudence hearkens back to the earlier decade’s caricatures depicting Burke as a Quixote.

Indeed, as in those images, Scott punctuates his portrait of Sir Arthur’s incompetence as a historian and imprudence as a historical actor with various question marks about his manliness and sentimentality. In an early scene, for example, Sir Arthur assumes the role of the damsel in distress when he and his daughter are stranded on a cliffside by the tide. They must be rescued by Lovel, whose actions are then applauded as “manly” (74). In another early scene, Sir Arthur opens both his prudence and his sentiments up to suspicion by asking magistrates to round up Edie Ochiltree, an itinerant beggar, as a possible French spy. Not only does Ochiltree later help Lovel save Sir Arthur’s fortune and protect Britain from French invasion, but in his roles as news-bringer, oral historian, and state-sanctioned object of sympathy, he is also the novel’s most obvious emblem of sentiment’s importance to national strength.21 His name actually conjures up the oak tree, Burke’s favorite metaphor for Britain’s solidity: just as the community’s tears sustain Ochiltree, Scott seems to imply, so they water the British oak.22 Sir Arthur’s failure to feel for Ochiltree thus contributes to the reader’s sense of his incompetence as a historian, if not more generally to a sense of the incompatibility of Sir Arthur–like historical study in the 1790s with maintaining Burke’s ideal political, sentimental, and manly order of things.

The historical understanding of Oldbuck, a landholder descended from early German printers, promises to avoid such problems given that the narrator indicates that it is more “scrupulous” and “correct” than Sir Arthur’s. While Sir Arthur experiences his antiquarian pursuits as a deeply politicized defense and enactment of sentiment-based aristocratic ideology, Oldbuck imports a quasi-scientific empirical method and ideal of impartiality into his own.23 The way he lives can “neither make nor mar [the] king” (47), he boasts, and indeed the relation of his historical study to his Whig politics never becomes entirely clear to the reader. But while that method and ideal may lend his histories a greater semblance of veracity, Scott makes it clear that they guarantee neither those histories’ relevance nor their historian’s
social responsibility. In this respect, I would argue, Oldbuck revives the most prevalent late-eighteenth-century stereotype of the antiquary, a figure that Mary Wollstonecraft, Catherine Macaulay, and Paine also had applied to Burke in the 1790s in an effort to discredit his manliness and prudence.

When distinguishing eighteenth-century antiquarianism from the Scottish Enlightenment’s “philosophical” historical project, contemporary scholars emphasize that the former, by privileging the particular over the general, the rare over the representative, and the empirical over the theoretical, raised questions about the politics and possibility of the latter’s ideal of historical totalization. Nationalist antiquaries, those who turned to oral tradition and the past’s material remains so as to mourn and restore cultures colonized by the English, discounted Scottish Enlightenment stadialist models of historical progress as imperialist themselves. Likewise, protracted debates between scientific antiquaries, gentlemen scholars who made a hobby of classifying and archiving ballads, artifacts, and ruins, tended to underscore not only the difficulty of producing stable knowledge of the past but also the inadequacy of existing philosophical histories to account for the raw materials the past had left behind. As the epigraph on Sir Richard Hoare’s *Ancient Wiltshire* (1810) tellingly boasts, “We speak from facts, not theory.”

But by the turn of the century, such arguments had also given antiquaries a reputation for being unmanly on the grounds that they failed to produce forward-looking knowledge or policy. Many viewed them as men who, as Scott pointedly observed in his journal in 1826, “neglect what is useful for things that are merely curious”: “trifling discussions about *antiquarian old-womanries*,” he later writes, are “like knitting a stocking, diverting the mind without occupying it.” Some still valued antiquaries’ insights for showing where philosophical histories—histories that acknowledge that every reflection of the past is also a selection of the past that gives it a direction—misdirect history by being inaccurate reflections. Indeed, Katie Trumpener has demonstrated antiquaries’ importance for solidifying insurgent movements in Britain’s peripheral Celtic states in the period. But in general, antiquaries had acquired a reputation for neither selecting nor reflecting anything useful and, therefore, for rejecting historical “direction” in favor of the pleasure of historical reflection as an end in itself. The popular image of the antiquary in the period was that of a man whose enjoyment in studying the past irresponsibly detaches him from present historical concerns, calling his manliness into question. It is certainly a mold into which Wollstonecraft and Macaulay inserted Burke in two of the earliest attacks on *Reflections*. Just after accusing Burke of having been “emasculated by hereditary effeminacy,” Wollstonecraft depicts him in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) as a man whose affinity for the ancient British constitution is akin to “raking amongst heterogeneous ruins” and to looking into “an ancient castle, built in barbarous ages, of Gothic materials.” Macaulay follows suit in *Observations on the Reflections of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke* (1790), writing that France’s revolutionaries...
“do not profess to have any of the spirit of antiquarians among them,” seeing “none of those striking beauties in the old laws and rules of the Gothic institutions of Europe, which Mr. Burke does.”

It is also the satirical image of the antiquary that Scott references when portraying Oldbuck. Oldbuck’s taste for antiquarian disputes and consistent pleasure in the arcane perhaps imply a distance from believing in the possibility or the ideal of historical totalization. But even if we reject this point, the novel consistently insists on the detachment of his historical discourse from the “manly” project of directing the nation’s present course. The opening scene of *The Antiquary* emphasizes precisely this detachment. We first encounter Oldbuck worrying about the state of Scottish infrastructure and threatening to sue when the public coach falls off schedule, but when he discusses his antiquarian researches with the coach’s other occupant, we read that, *like a child,*

the pleasure of this discourse had such a dulcifying tendency that, although two causes of delay occurred, each of a more serious duration than that which had drawn down his wrath . . . , our *Antiquary* only bestowed upon the delay the honour of a few episodical poohs and pshaws, which rather seemed to regard the interruption of his disquisition than the delay of his journey. (10)

The episode sets up the subsequent aside that Oldbuck gave up a legal career in his youth and began a lifelong, monklike confinement (he calls himself a kind of “coenobite”; 20) when his employer found that his great application and “pleasure” in tracing the history of legal casuistry could not be turned to “lucrative and practical purposes” (14). At times, this incompatibility between his pleasure in past cases and his ability to participate in present “causes” can be comic. But the novel as a whole implies that it is no laughing matter, emphasizing that Oldbuck’s historical pursuits and pleasures interfere with other men’s understanding of, and thus their ability to act prudently in, the nation’s present historical situation. Early in the novel, for example, he dismisses fears of a French naval invasion, calling such fears a “military frenzy” and jokingly wishing the invasion “were made and over, that [he] might hear no more about it” (44, 120). Yet the novel legitimates that frenzy by its end: the French navy never lands, but only, the plot reveals, because the British army and navy have been preparing for such an event. When it emerges that Lovel, the novel’s “manly” hero (74), has secretly coordinated the army’s part in this effort to secure British shores, Oldbuck’s earlier boast to Lovel that he is covertly excavating a “national concern” (a Roman battlefield that evidence suggests is probably a recent ditch) ironically points up the disconnection of the histories that he makes from the prudence and manliness that the latter shows as he, so to speak, makes history (29).

The metonymic relationship of this disconnection to the work of excavation in the scene also connects Oldbuck to another “unmanning” facet of the romantic-era stereotype of the antiquary. Throughout the period, writings by figures as diverse as Laurence Sterne, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Robert Southey, George Crabbe, and
William Hazlitt portray scholars—including antiquaries—as men who revive the dead to instruct the living. Paine, who contends that Burke’s sentimental deference to precedent maintains rights for the dead that he denies to the living, consistently links Burke to that project so as to suggest that the state he defends is “monstrous”: such a state keeps its dead alive artificially and subjects the living to their authority. But a more common implication in the period’s antiquarian satires is that studying the past’s material remains does not resurrect the dead so much as deaden the historian—that an interest and pleasure in nonvital or revivable material “unmans” a man by detaching him from the living. Certainly this is one of the ironies present, for example, in Thomas Rowlandson’s early nineteenth-century caricature “Death and the Antiquaries” (fig. 3). Death’s presence in this scene, as in every other scene from the Dance of Death series from which this panel is taken, highlights the shared mortality of all ranks and walks of life. But in this case death also shares the interest that the antiquaries take in an exhumed body, mirroring them even in the pose that he assumes as he inspects the body.

This view of antiquaries is present too in Paine’s attempt to discredit Burke and, later, in Scott’s portrait of Oldbuck. “Dryness,” “mouldiness,” and “dustiness” are the era’s most common tropes to evoke antiquarian morbidity, the implication being that dry bones, mold, and dust form not just the material but also the symbolic milieu of the antiquary. In the opening pages of The Rights of Man, Paine repeatedly depicts Burke’s sentimental attachments to historical precedents (what Paine calls
“the manuscript assumed authority of the dead”) as nonvital antiquarian ones—that is, as less-than-human material attachments to “dry, barren” texts, “musty records,” “mouldy parchments,” and of course “the dead” themselves. The same tropes, and perhaps even Paine’s depiction of Burke, inform Scott’s 1816 representation of Oldbuck’s study (a space that Oldbuck’s niece and maid are cleaning when he and Lovel enter it):

“You’ll be poisoned here with the volumes of dust they have raised,” continued the Antiquary, “but I assure you the dust was very ancient, peaceful, quiet dust, about an hour ago.” . . . It was, indeed, some time before Lovel could, through the thick atmosphere, perceive in what sort of den his friend had constructed his retreat. It was a lofty room of middling size, but obscurely lighted by high narrow latticed windows. One end was entirely occupied by book-shelves, greatly too limited in space for the number of volumes placed on them, which were, therefore, drawn up in ranks of two and three files deep, while numberless others littered the floor and the tables, amid a chaos of maps, engravings, scraps of parchment, bundles of papers, pieces of old armour, swords, dirks, helmets, and Highland targets. . . . The floor, as well as the table and chairs was overflowed by the same mare magnum of miscellaneous trumpery, where it would have been as impossible to find any individual article wanted, as to put it to any use when discovered. (21–22)

The room resembles a church architecturally, but atmospherically, the “labyrinth of inconvenient and dark passages” at its entrance, along with its covering of artifacts and dust, more clearly evoke a tomb (20). The general impression is that this particular type of dry and dusty “study” (Scott clearly invites the double reading) is simply cut off from, out of place among, and useless to, the living. Indeed, the reader gets the sense, like Charles Lamb in a contemporaneous comment on Char- ron, that its contents are unavailable to resuscitation—that they are “scholastic dry bones, without sinew or living flesh.” If Sir Arthur evokes the 1790s stereotype of Burke that suggests his sentimental historical pursuits are imprudent, unmanly escapes from history and into romance, we might say that Oldbuck evokes the period’s many portraits of the antiquary, including of Burke-as-antiquary, that suggest that he is imprudent, nonvital, and, thus, unmanly because his pleasures in historical pursuits lead him to live too much in history.

Scott’s novel, set in a French Revolution–fearing Britain, thus reintroduces the terms and two key caricature types deployed in 1790s Britain’s own French Revolution–inspired debates over history. But while it follows contributors to those debates in representing that decade’s interrelated crises of historical understanding, political prudence, and national stability as crises of male feeling, it refuses to follow contributors—Wollstonecraft, for one—who contended that the crises lay in the very fact that British men feel. A few recent commentators on the novel do note its celebration of sentiment, arguing that it asserts the dependence of national cohesion on sentimental interactions across social ranks and on those ranks’ understanding of their traditional obligations to one another. But such an account also falls short of acknowledging that the novel attributes Britain’s 1790s stability as much to military action as to sentimental interaction and—and this is the key point given
the way that the novel references 1790s political discourse—that it points to sentimental men as the key to Britain’s success in both arenas. I would argue, that is, that *The Antiquary* retrospectively endorses one of Burke’s implicit claims in *Reflections*—namely, that Britain’s most manly and prudent historical subjects are those men whose teary eyes and tradition-based sentimental social ties not only strengthen the British oak directly but also enable them to recognize and prompt them to act when its waters need defending.39

For if Sir Arthur typifies the incompatibility of aristocratic ideology-based sentiment with manly and prudent historicism in the 1790s, then the character of Lovel, a sentimental man and capable army officer who rejects that ideology, looks like an attempt on Scott’s part to assert the compatibility—even, the positive correlation—of other types of male sentiment with the same. The start of the novel clearly establishes Lovel as a “man of feeling”: in addition to befriending Ochiltree, he is engaged secretly and, we are told, hopefully to Sir Arthur’s daughter Isabella; finds that his cheeks turn “scarlet” in her presence; spends most of his time alone; and worries much of that time about her well-being and their mutual feeling (43). Yet as the novel proceeds, Scott also suggests that he is both a competent historical thinker and a manly and prudent historical actor. As evidence of the former, Scott attributes to him the novel’s only complex statement of the problem of historical epistemology. When, during a touring party led by Oldbuck and Sir Arthur, a question arises as to why more is known about medieval knights than abbots, only Lovel can supply a good answer:

“The eras by which the vulgar compute time, have always reference to some period of fear and tribulation, and they date by a tempest, an earthquake, or burst of civil commotion. When such are the facts most alive in the memory of the common people, we cannot wonder,” he concluded, “that the ferocious warrior is remembered, and the peaceful abbots are abandoned to forgetfulness and oblivion.” (133)

This post-Scottish Enlightenment recognition, both that any historical representation is necessarily a culturally situated selection and reflection of culture and that the selection itself is a second-order reflection of culture, brings out the inadequacy of Sir Arthur’s and Oldbuck’s various appeals to representations to establish historical “facts.” Moreover, Lovel matches this recognition with a capability—greater than those of the novel’s other characters—to diagnose and act prudently in moments of local and national crisis: His quick thinking and physical prowess enable him to rescue Sir Arthur and Isabella; his assessment of Dousterswivel’s motives allow him to save Sir Arthur financially; and on a larger historical scale, his skill and acumen as an officer insure Britain’s safety from a naval invasion.

One could argue perhaps that the plot establishes Lovel’s historical competence and prudence as if in spite of his sentiments insofar as he must perform these feats before he and Isabella can act on their feelings (his actions earn him Sir Arthur’s respect and, thence, marital blessing). But given that the novel coerces the reader’s sympathy for these sentiments, this denouement does more to assert, as Burke once
had, that proper manly sentimental feeling (both for immediate loved ones and for the community at large) underwrites sound historical understanding, which the prudent historical actor in turn requires. This is not to say that *The Antiquary* repeats Burke’s intellectual work in *Reflections*. Lovel’s virtual absence from the second half of the novel prevents the reader from observing his development as a historical thinker, political agent, and sentimental man, thus making Scott’s correlation of these developments much more mystical and arbitrary than Burke’s. Rather, Lovel represents the validity of that Burkean correlation in the abstract for Scott, even as the figures of Sir Arthur and Oldbuck serve to acknowledge the difficulties, historically, of achieving that correlation. In turn, the reader is left with the sense that, while the novel portrays 1790s Britain’s historical and historicist crises as problems of manliness, and specifically of male feeling, the structure of its plot implies that these crises lessened with the emergence of a new generation of feeling men.

**The Antiquarian Mind’s Desire**

*The Antiquary* does not limit the scope of these problems of feeling, however, to the terms in which I have just presented them. They are problems not strictly of men’s sentiments and cognitive pleasures but of male sexuality too. Arguably, this is implicit in the novel’s subject matter: the “man of feeling,” whether revered or reviled, consistently emerges from 1790s debates over history as both a sentimental and a sexual type. Burke ensured this by erasing the line between male sentimental and heterosexual feeling in his “historical” performance in *Reflections*. He holds that France’s national troubles stem from a paucity of sentimental men—men, for instance, who feel as he does toward Marie Antoinette—but prefaces the point with a passionate rhapsody on her beauty and an erotic tableau of an unsentimental mob driving her “half-naked” from her bedroom. In an age in which caricaturists were wont to represent the “man of feeling” as a lascivious heterosexual type, *Reflections*’ publication led them to insert Burke—particularly, in quixotic guise—into that formula (fig. 4). Others, like Wollstonecraft, interpreted male sentiment as a mark of unmanliness and sexual “equivocality,” and charged Burke on these grounds with historical incompetence and imprudence. Given that Lovel’s portrayal in Scott’s novel suggests the Burkean point that sound historical understanding and manly, prudent historical action in the 1790s depended upon male sentiment and vice versa, the evidence of that decade’s political debates over male sentiment suggests that perhaps we also ought to interpret the novel as establishing their dependence on men’s “proper” sexual feelings too. That suggestion gains plausibility when we recall that the novel not only offers up marriage to Isabella as a reward for Lovel’s manly, prudent historical actions but also invites our suspicion throughout that the motive for those actions is Lovel’s desire for her.

But *The Antiquary* also explicitly correlates manly, prudent history-making with
Figure 4. [Attributed to Frederick George Byron], *Don Dismallo, After an Absence of Sixteen Years, Embracing His Beautiful Vision!* 1790. © The British Museum, London. Burke, who turns away from his sobbing wife and embraces Marie Antoinette, says, “What’s her bacon and eggs to the delicious Dairy of this celestial vision!!!” In a reply ripe with innuendo, the French queen replies, “. . . do thou vanquish with the sacred spear, great Hero . . . ?”
“proper” sexual feeling by establishing Lovel’s historical career as a corrective to Oldbuck’s. Earlier I argued that Oldbuck evokes the 1790s stereotype that antiquaries are unmanly, imprudent historical subjects because their pleasures detach them from the living. But I left out that this “dry” type can also be a male sexual type in the 1790s and in Scott’s 1816 novel—indeed, throughout the period, many perceived antiquarian pursuits and pleasures as perverting men sexually, and even as evidence themselves of perversion. Romantic-era verbal and visual texts routinely represent antiquaries as nonvital men whose pleasures in the past’s material presence compete with, or disqualify them for, “proper” sexual relations with the living. In the standard formulation, an antiquary does not just live among the dead; the past and its remains, even the act of examining and thinking about them, become a kind of replacement bedfellow. As the wife laments in Francis Grose’s satirical “Complaint of a wife at her husband’s rage for Antiquities” (1791), ever since her husband joined the “Society of Antic-queer-ones,” he not only frequents “burial-places” more than “watering places” but also has lost interest in her sexually: appalled by the sum that he spent on an artifact because it was “eunuch” she concludes, in a phrase ripe with double entendre, “Folks must love those kind of cattle better than I do.” Burke’s opponents sometimes linked him to this type too in their efforts to discredit his competence as a history-maker and to imply the unnaturalness of political systems that produce and depend upon such men. But caricatures and the Reflections fracas perhaps did less to solidify perceptions of antiquaries’ perversity than did a roughly contemporaneous set of publicly canvassed events from the private life of Sir William Hamilton, the British Envoy to Naples and a renowned antiquary. Those events, though undoubtedly familiar to many readers, are nonetheless worth rehearsing in detail because their public representation not only affords a sustained glimpse at this sexual stereotype but also resonates with the cultural work that I take The Antiquary to perform through its juxtaposition of Oldbuck and Lovel.

In 1786, Emma Hart, the daughter of a blacksmith, became Hamilton’s live-in mistress. He was a widower of nearly sixty; she was twenty and reputedly one of the most beautiful women in Britain. What seemed to capture the public imagination about the relationship most, however, were not its startling differentials in age, education, social class, or physical attractions. It was that soon after it began, Sir William began having Emma perform for his friends a series of “attitudes,” or poses taken from statues and frescoes familiar to antiquaries. By 1794, these astonishing tableaux vivants had spawned series of Frederick Rehberg sketches and Thomas Piroli engravings, as well as numerous public and private reports. Goethe describes Emma’s pantomime, which he witnessed in 1787, in a passage that later appears in his Die italienische Reise (1816): The Chevalier Hamilton, so long connoisseur and student of Art and Nature, has found a counterpart in a lovely girl—English, and some twenty years of age. She is exceedingly beautiful and finely built. She wears a Greek dress becoming her to perfection. She then
merely loosens her hair, takes a pair of shawls, and effects changes of posture, mood, gestures, mien and appearance that make one really feel as if one were in some dream. . . . Her elderly knight holds the torch for her performance, and is absorbed in his mind’s desire. In her he finds the charm of all antiques, the fair profiles on Sicilian coins, the Apollo Belvidere himself.\textsuperscript{15}

In an essay on connoisseurship, Ann Bermingham supposes that these performances made Sir William appear as “merely a passive spectator in the thrill of feminine beauty.”\textsuperscript{46} But it was much the opposite that occasioned observations like Goethe’s. Particularly striking in the passage is that Goethe in effect admits his own sexual pleasure in Emma’s “finely built” female body but denies that pleasure to Sir William, attributing to him instead “a mind’s desire” for the variously gendered “antiques” that she brings to life. And this attribution to him of pleasure not in the body of a living woman but in the body, so to speak, of history is not unique to Goethe. It informs most reports of Sir William, including Horace Walpole’s quip, occasioned by news of his friend’s second marriage in 1791, that “Sir William Hamilton has actually married his gallery of statues.”\textsuperscript{47}

If many already viewed Sir William as perverse before his marriage because they thought that he desired a woman most for her ability to transform herself into an archive, the subsequent events of his marriage did little to quell perceptions that he was unable to take or maintain sexual interest in women or, at least, in living women. In 1798, Emma began an open affair with Admiral Nelson, which lasted until his death at Trafalgar in 1805. She bore him two children, and in the two years prior to Sir William’s death in 1803, Nelson, perhaps the national hero of Britain in his day, lived in the same house with the Hamiltons. This peculiar case, which perfectly encapsulated the tradition of seeing antiquaries as men who desire the past more than they do women, thoroughly solidified perceptions of antiquaries as “unmanly” and “ perverse.” Almost a decade after Sir William’s death, the affair still filled the public imagination sufficiently to serve as the primary allusion for Rowlandson’s \textit{Modern Antiques} (c. 1811), probably the early-nineteenth-century’s most famous caricature of the figure of the antiquary (fig. 5).

Rowlandson’s image represents an artifact-filled cabinet in which an aged antiquary inspects the genitals on a male-figured sarcophagus while, nearby, a young woman and a naval officer employ another sarcophagus for a sexual liaison.\textsuperscript{48} The sexual coupling inside the furniture of the tomb parallels the antiquary’s relationship to that furniture such that the antiquary becomes the scene’s comic butt. The parallel draws out the already present hint of the sexual nature of the antiquary’s pursuits while registering their distance from, even their power to make him oblivious to, “proper”—that is, both heteronormative and vital—sexual impulses, such as those being indulged in his line of vision. That sexual perversion itself emerges as a kind of deathliness too insofar as the image’s oxymoronic title marks the antiquary as less a person than an antique himself. At the same time, viewers receive no clues that they ought to see the antiquary as incompetent at his study or that

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Figure 5. Thomas Rowlandson, *Modern Antiques*, c. 1811. © The British Museum, London.
they ought to disapprove of the liaison in the foreground, even if its “real-life” referent suggests it is adulterous. The effect is to suggest that antiquarian pursuits pervert men sexually or are evidence themselves of perversion; to correlate this perversion with deathliness; and, conversely, to correlate naval heroism with male sexual normalcy, vitality, and fecundity.

By juxtaposing Oldbuck’s antiquarian type with a narrative of Lovel’s fruitful careers as an officer and closet romantic, *The Antiquary* participates in the same tradition of 1790s anti-antiquarian thought that the Hamilton affair helped to consolidate and that Rowlandson’s *Modern Antiques* encapsulates so perfectly. For there can be little doubt that Scott’s portrait of Oldbuck not only conjures up the 1790s type of the antiquary as a man who is detached from the present state of the nation, living more among dry bones than among the living, but also taps into the sexual side of that type. We saw earlier that the novel opens with a coach journey during which “the pleasures of [antiquarian] discourse” distract Oldbuck from his historical situation (10). But before that discourse begins, the narrator has already sexualized Oldbuck’s relationship to the archive by presenting him in flagrante delicto with a rare book, “undoing the parcel in his hand . . . on which he gazed from time to time with the knowing look of an amateur, admiring its height and condition” (9). In this context, “amateur” of course connotes one devoted to or fond of something, and in fact, in a subsequent disquisition on the art of book collecting, Oldbuck himself emplots his antiquarian pursuits in the genre of the rake’s narrative.49 During the speech, he itemizes his conquests, celebrates his ability to coax others out of what they hold most sacred, recalls his nighttime searches for “trophies” on some famously seedy streets in 1790s Edinburgh, and all the while represents himself as an eager and impassioned “amateur”:

See this bundle of ballads, not one of them later than 1700, and some of them an hundred years older. I wheedled an old woman out of these, who loved them better than her psalm-book. . . . These little Elzevirs are memoranda and trophies of many a walk by night and morning through the Cowgate, the Canongate, the Bow, Saint Mary’s Wynd,—wherever, in fine, there were to be found brokers and trokers, those miscellaneous dealers in things rare and curious. . . . [H]ow have I trembled, lest some passing stranger should chop in between me and the prize, and regarded each poor student of divinity that stopped to turn over the books at the stall, as a rival amateur, or a prowling bookseller in disguise!—And then, Mr Lovel, the sly satisfaction with which one pays consideration and pockets the article, affecting cold indifference, while our hand is trembling with pleasure! (24–25)

Oldbuck’s “rapturous voice” and “transport” as this disquisition continues cannot help but assume sexual overtones (25), particularly insofar as they echo the sexualized language and tone that the period’s growing literature on book collecting consistently adopts to describe men’s relationships to their books.50 The best-known of these works, the lighthearted *Bibliomania* (1809), written by Thomas Frognall Dibdin, a friend of Scott’s, provides several good examples of this, but richer still is John Ferriar’s slightly earlier satire “The Bibliomania” (1809).51 Ferriar’s anti-
antiquarian poem attacks the “Tyrant-passion” that turns a man into a “lettered fop,” leading him to cast a “wistful glance” at books, to boast that the object of his “ardent mind” is “in red morocco dressed,” and to regard bookcases as guardians of “tempting charms.” Even if such erotic overtones were to escape Scott’s readers, however, Oldbuck makes them unavoidable by his speech’s end. He concludes with the observation—one that resonates with stereotypes like Rowlandson’s that depict antiquaries whose attachments to the material remains of the past substitute for, or provide alternatives to, heterosexual pleasures—that “the charms on which we doat are not so obvious to the eyes of youth as those of a fair lady” (26).

Such self-posturing against traditional male heterosexual pleasures perhaps invites readers to interpret Oldbuck’s historical pursuits and friendships as forms of homosexual practice, a reading made more compelling by Scott’s own friendships with antiquaries like Richard Payne Knight, who had gained notoriety in 1786 for publishing a study on cults of priapus. Indeed, Sir William Hamilton had collaborated on the study with Knight, a fact of which Rowlandson of course reminds his viewer when he portrays Sir William inspecting the male genitals on a sarcophagus. Nonetheless, as The Antiquary works to render Oldbuck’s “dry” antiquarian career incompatible with a traditional heterosexual one, it also represents his eroticized relationship to the material remnants of the past less as a proxy for hetero- or homosexual relationships than as a sexual persuasion all its own, one that more often than not interferes with sexual interests in the living. In addition to depicting Oldbuck’s study as a tomb, Scott consistently juxtaposes glimpses of Oldbuck’s antiquarian pleasures with references to his “early disappointment in love, in virtue of which he had commenced Misogynist, as he called it” (15). When, for example, the reader first hears of this “disappointment”—a failed attempt to woo a woman named Eveline Neville—the discovery follows the suggestive observation that Oldbuck holds “little intercourse” with society at all and that his “studies and pleasures seemed to them alike incomprehensible” (15). It later turns out that these studies and pleasures themselves contributed to this failure insofar as they provided the rival suitor who ultimately married Eveline with ample opportunities for “indulging his levity at [Oldbuck’s] expence” (270). That story of “disappointment” by itself brings the novel’s portrait of Oldbuck into the proximity of the sexual discourse in which Rowlandson’s drawing participates, and its appearance within the narrative of a military officer’s success in the face of similarly disappointment-laden circumstances only heightens the connection. Lovel plays a kind of morally impeccable Lord Nelson (he is not an adulterer) to Oldbuck’s sexually suspect and unmanly Sir William Hamilton.

Yet Scott also remakes a sexual critique like Rowlandson’s as a history of male sexuality insofar as he uses these “proper” and “improper” male sexual types not in a synchronic image but in a diachronic historical narrative. The Antiquary provides little evidence of the kinds of historical changes that other Waverley Novels narrate, but I have already remarked that a sense of historical movement emerges
within it in the form of a generational shift from affectively malformed antiquaries like Sir Arthur and Oldbuck to responsible history-making, sentimental men like Lovel. I am arguing here that Scott’s novel suggests that this shift was one in male sexual norms too insofar as it maps these opposing sexual types onto different sides of the same generational divide—onto Oldbuck and Lovel, respectively. Given that Oldbuck refers to Lovel throughout as his “phoenix,” the implication seems to be that the latter’s marriage at the novel’s end arises as if out of the dust of Oldbuck’s sexual career, thus committing the old antiquary’s “dry” sexual type to the grave. The metaphorical quality of Lovel and Isabella’s marriage as generational rebirth is in fact made all the more blatant as it occurs just after Lovel discovers, as does everyone else, that he is the long-lost son of Eveline Neville, the woman who occasioned Oldbuck’s early “disappointment”: at the very moment that Lovel’s sexual career appears most like a counterfactual version of Oldbuck’s, Scott transforms him into the son that Oldbuck quite literally never had.

*The Antiquary* thus asks to be taken seriously as a historical portrait of the situation of history itself in and just after the 1790s, representing what we might call the “case” of history’s disciplinary authority and legitimacy in that era in terms similar to those in which the era’s own thinkers understood it. Recent histories of history would have us believe that during this period, the problem of defining the limits of legitimate historical inquiry primarily constituted an exercise in developing new epistemological forms. But when read as an authoritative history itself, *The Antiquary* draws into relief the extent to which the period’s writers understood that problem to extend beyond epistemology. The problem was not just whether individuals could know the past, but whether the study of history could be made socially relevant and responsible. This latter concern had everything to do with what kind of sentimental and sexual education—in turn, what kind of man—people believed that study produced. There was even a sense that the epistemological problem of history derived from this problem of manliness, that only a properly sentimentally and sexually constituted man could ever truly know the past.

In addition, the novel begins to help us recognize that the period’s stereotypes of antiquaries played an important role in defining and reflecting these concerns. As a history, *The Antiquary* reads largely as an effort to rescue the post-1790s historical thinker from the criticisms that such caricatures imply. Through the figure of Lovel, who avoids and compensates for the flaws of characters based on those caricatures, the novel endorses the Burkean position that competent historical thought should correlate with properly manly sentimentality and sexuality, and these, with prudent historical action. It may use such caricatures to highlight that correlation’s difficulty, thus asserting their relevance to defining what count as proper ways to access and relate to the past. But it also tries to commit that difficulty to the past, locating the relevant targets of such caricatures not only in an earlier historical moment but also, by way of juxtaposition with Lovel, in a residual position in relation to that moment. Lovel emerges from the novel as an empty form of a new historical man,
a sparsely drawn figure whose outlines hold little more than the promise that between the 1790s and 1816 historical inquiry and practice successfully left their antiquarian forefathers’ problems in the dust.

Reopening the Case of History in 1816

Of course there would have been much to make Scott’s readers skeptical about such a promise. In the decade preceding the novel’s publication, there is plenty of evidence that attests to the continued vitality of 1790s stereotypes of antiquaries and, moreover, of that period’s concerns over the manliness, sentimentality, sexuality, and political prudence of historical inquiry and education. Rowlandson’s 1811 Modern Antiques is one of several surviving prints from this decade that rework the theme of the antiquary who neglects his wife; review essays of the 1810s on history and historical novels regularly discuss the importance of feeling to historical understanding and of vitality to historical representations; and the period’s political journalism and pamphleteering remain wedded to many of the same vocabularies and ideologies that structured the Reflections controversy.

But the more important point in the context of the present essay is that there are also ways in which The Antiquary itself modifies the reader’s conviction in the evenness of the generational shift in history-making that it narrates. To this point I have been discussing the novel as a history. In this section, however, I would like to suggest that Scott’s investment in writing this history, particularly in promising that since the 1790s the Oldbucks and Sir Arthurs of the world had been safely marginalized in relation to the field of legitimate historical thought, derives from the fact that he is writing a novel. In other words, I mean to show that his concern with the 1790s, and with 1790s caricatures of antiquaries in particular, bespeaks his own concern over the authority and legitimacy of historical novels both as literature and as a form of history-writing, an anxiety that in fact underwrites many of Scott’s efforts in the Waverley Novels to articulate his cultural project.

The key to this reading lies in the fact that, as so many readers of The Antiquary have remarked, Lovel’s character never escapes being overshadowed by Sir Arthur’s and Oldbuck’s. This effect has been interpreted by some critics as a sign of the novel’s “incoherence” and even “failure” as a plot. But there is also a coherence and success to that effect: it does less to undermine confidence in the existence of a generational shift in history-making than it does to call into question the historical novel’s own position in relation to that shift. Indeed, as The Antiquary turns Sir Arthur and Oldbuck into residual figures within the landscape of post-1790s historical thought, the novelist comes to resemble the two aged antiquaries much more than he does Lovel. The ending, for example, arguably revives the same imprudent, incompetent mode of historical epistemology that it elsewhere attributes...
to Sir Arthur. In the last chapter, Lovel learns more than just his parentage: he finds out that he is heir to the title and estate of the Earl of Glenallan. If this use of the revealed parentage trope so familiar to readers of romance already reduces the plot’s historical specificity, it also grafts the old knight’s unhistoricist worldview onto the course of 1790s history. Far from upsetting Sir Arthur’s correlation of true nobility with aristocratic nobility, along with the sentimental and ethical codes derived from it, Lovel’s emergence as the right type for 1790s Britain revitalizes that correlation, effectively rendering his rightness as a type unspecific to any one time or place.

More strikingly, the ending also collapses the distance between the novelist and Oldbuck. Throughout the novel, Oldbuck tries to persuade Lovel to write a fictionalized account of an ancient Caledonian battle in Scotland, and, at the novel’s end, he still “regularly inquires whether [Lovel] has commenced the Caledoniad, and shakes his head at the answers he receives” (365). But the closing sentence further indicates that he has “completed his [historical] notes” that will be appended to the project and that these are “at the service of any one who chuses to make them public” (365). In other words, the novel closes with Oldbuck writing, and Lovel abstaining from writing, Scottish historical fictions that resemble the Waverley Novels in form: Scott’s own “Notes to the Antiquary” commence only a page after this sentence in most early editions. At the very least, Oldbuck’s resemblance to Scott struck his contemporaries. Washington Irving, for example, wrote that “many of the antiquarian humours of [Oldbuck] were taken from [Scott’s] own richly compounded character.”

Scott even invited the comparison himself as his career unfolded. In his journals, he began referring to women as “ladykind” or “woman kind” (phrases he once had placed in Oldbuck’s mouth), and he also entitled his catalogue of his antiquarian holdings Reliquiae Trottcosianae, or the Gabions of the late Jonathan Oldbuck Esq.

Much of Scott’s self-posturing as Oldbuck is tongue-in-cheek of course and, like Irving’s own Geoffrey Crayon, even conventional for its day. Nonetheless, it does suggest how difficult he found it to separate his own relationship to the past and its remains from the attachments to the same that he critiques in The Antiquary. Since Macaulay’s famous 1828 Edinburgh Review essay on “History,” it has been a commonplace in Scott criticism to argue that the Waverley Novels encouraged professional historical inquiry’s extension into fields previously examined only by antiquaries. The flip side of that account must be that novels like The Antiquary reveal the extent to which Scott understood his struggle for cultural legitimacy and authority outside of the field of traditional history-writing in terms of late-eighteenth-century antiquarianism’s vexed struggle for the same. In turn, based on my argument to this point, we can expect that a key focal point for the former struggle was the manliness both of the Author of the Waverley Novels’ sentimental and sexual constitution, and of the sentimental and sexual education that those novels offer.
Support for this argument can be found throughout the Waverley Novels. The legitimacy of applying it to the series as a whole gains particular credence, however, if we examine it through the “Dedication Epistle” to Ivanhoe, a text that critics often cite as Scott’s most significant meditation on historiography. The “Dedication Epistle,” part of the prefatory matter to Ivanhoe, consists of a letter from Ivanhoe’s fictitious author asking permission to dedicate the novel (which is based on a manuscript owned by The Antiquary’s Sir Arthur Wardour) to the Rev. Dr Jonas Dryasdust, a fictional antiquary whose name first cropped up in The Antiquary as one of Oldbuck’s colleagues (282). The text primarily defends the claim, one that Dryasdust purportedly disputes, that it is possible to write novels about English history that are as effective and interesting as Scott’s novels about Scottish history. Yet, despite its specific focus on historical novels and not on history-writing per se, scholars have discussed the text almost unanimously as Scott’s most detailed statement of the epistemological problem of knowing the past and the related methodological problem of making the past known through representations. Lukács and Chandler even identify it as one of modern European historicism’s foundational texts, the latter privileging it as “the literary instantiation of Romantic historicism’s complex conceptual framework.”

These influential discussions, while insightful, nonetheless manifest the blindspot that I attribute more generally to recent histories of history. Specifically, they pass over the fact that Scott formulates these epistemological and methodological problems as plights of feeling in the “Dedication Epistle,” squarely placing the blame for them on men’s bodies and their material circumstances. For Scott, the acuteness of the artistic and historiographic challenge facing the novelist of English history lies in this physical realm:

If you describe to him [the English novel-reader] a set of wild manners, and a state of primitive society existing in the Highlands of Scotland, he is much disposed to acquiesce in the truth of what is asserted. . . . If he be of the ordinary class of readers, he has either never seen those remote districts at all, or he has wandered through those desolate regions in the course of a summer tour, eating bad dinners, sleeping on truckle beds, stalking from desolation to desolation, and fully prepared to believe the strangest things that could be told him of a people, wild and extravagant enough to be attached to scenery so extraordinary. But the same worthy person, when placed in his own snug parlour, and surrounded by all the comforts of an Englishman’s fireside, is not half so much disposed to believe that his own ancestors led a very different life from himself; that the shattered tower, which now forms a vista from his window, once held a baron who would have hung him up at his own door without any form of trial.

Under this formulation, cognizance of historical difference depends on transportation, in all the Romantic-era ambiguity of that term. It requires an imaginative movement that is simultaneously an altered physical state and is thus particularly aided by sleeping in beds and inhabiting scenes that feel as if they belong to other places or times. The problem that the author of a novel about English history faces is that modern-day England is too “snug” a fit: Englishmen cannot remain in En-
English beds and transport themselves within England. In turn, for Scott, knowing the past becomes a problem of a man producing what Chandler would call a “historical casuistry” of his own body. A man attains historical consciousness, following the logic at work in the passage, only when he recognizes the case of his own embodiment—the historicity, in particular, of the relation of his feelings to the historical conditions defining his capacity to feel—and this requires assessing the relationship of that case to cases of embodiment in other times and places.

This conception of historical novel-reading and writing as a kind of physical education for men (one for which Scott also implies that certain male bodies have difficulty matriculating) sets the terms for what I take to be the “Dedication Epistle’s” overarching task—namely, that of distancing the Waverley Novels’ artistic project from antiquarianism while also defending that project’s legitimacy according to the criteria for evaluating historical thought that The Antiquary had endorsed three years earlier. Revisiting questions about the historical novelist that the ending of that novel had raised, Scott approaches this task by trying to establish the sentimental and sexual normalcy of the historical novelist’s body and of the bodily works that his historical narratives perform. Toward that end, he further develops the comparison between novelists who write about Scotland’s history and those who write about England’s. Representing the historical archive as a set of fields strewn with corpses awaiting revival, he opposes the two on the basis of the kinds of fields and bodies on which each works. The former chooses a “recent field of battle,” he writes, and is then “compelled to select” for revival “a body whose limbs had recently quivered with existence, and whose throat had but just uttered the last note of agony.” In such a scene of compulsions, quivering bodies, and notes of agony, historical novel-writing becomes a sentimental and even a seduced act—part response to a cry for help, part deathbed ministration and lamentation, and part attraction between bodies.

In contrast, Scott portrays the author of novels about English history as a man who “select[s] his subject amidst the dust of antiquity, where nothing [is] to be found but dry, sapless, mouldering, and disjointed bones.” If the scene’s morbid dryness already implies that such writers and their narratives lack fecundity, its obvious invocation of the stereotype of the “dry” antiquary raises the possibility of their perversity too. Indeed, Scott seems to confirm the distance of this scene of historical novel-writing from one of proper sentimental and sexual action and education when he comments explicitly on the abject nature of “dryness”: he promises his readers not to tax them with “the repulsive dryness of mere antiquity.” It matters little, of course, that he goes on to suggest that this portrait of the English historical novelist need not be accurate. That suggestion alters only his judgment about the cultural legitimacy of such novels, leaving intact his correlation of legitimate relationships to the past with proper manly sentimentality and sexuality. Nor is the applicability of that correlation necessarily limited because it is applied only to historical novelists. His portrait of the author of historical novels about England,
as well as the wry comments that he makes throughout the “Dedicatory Epistle” about Dryasdust’s “grave” historical researches, imply that he thinks that the correlation also holds for establishing the claims of antiquarianism—and perhaps in light of the evidence of *The Antiquary*, those of any kind of historiography—to cultural authority and legitimacy within the field of history.

This last point is particularly revealing for understanding the Waverley Novels’ role in relation to the discipline of history as the nineteenth century unfolded. Through a progressivist generational narrative set in the same nation (Scotland), *The Antiquary* had elevated an emergent manly historicist thinker over late-eighteenth-century antiquaries, the amateurism of the antiquarian fathers being supplanted, as it were, by the more manly feeling historicism of the son. The “Dedicatory Epistle,” like *The Antiquary*, works to establish a similar hierarchy—this time between the antiquary and the historical novelist—but it produces that hierarchy less through a narrative of generational succession than through one of uneven development. Scott, after all, maps the types of the dryasdustic English antiquary and the Scottish historical novelist onto different national spaces at the same moment in calendrical time. Although he also tries to deny the strict applicability of this model of uneven development along national lines, he nonetheless reasserts the applicability of the model to the space of the field of history by opposing historical novelists to dryasdustic antiquaries and then highlighting (through a passage that acknowledges the embattled nature of the historical novelist’s claim to that field) the fact that both figures occupy that field at the same time. This model of uneven development of the field of history-writing of course need not negate the progressivist successional history of historicism and manliness that *The Antiquary* tries to develop—one of these figures may be more residual than emergent. But when contemplated alongside Scott’s aforementioned portrayals of himself as Oldbuck as his career progressed, that model would seem, if not to enfold the successional model in Scott’s own novel-writing body, then to mark that body as itself an unevenly developed space of competing feeling masculinities and modes of feeling history. This representation of an unevenly developed field of historical engagement enabled by, and productive of, the uneven development of masculinity in fact became the model that Victorian historians would later adopt when trying to stake claims to authority over their discipline for their own particular modes of history-writing.69

Is Everyone a Sentimentality Case?

This essay thus uses the Waverley Novels to reveal some of the layers of tissue that, to adapt the title of Collingwood’s classic study, flesh out “the idea of history” as it develops in Romantic-era Britain. In so doing, it shows that some unexpected—or, at least, recently unremarked—cultural work was being performed in the name of history’s disciplinization in the Romantic era. The project
of understanding the proper limits of historical enquiry often played out in the period’s writings and caricatures as an effort to define masculinity’s relationship to sentimentality and sexuality: masculinity served, in short, as a vessel for the period’s thinkers to negotiate the relationship between, on the one hand, historical understanding and, on the other, sentimental and sexual feeling. Admittedly, that unexpected work has not gone entirely unremarked: a few feminist scholars have begun to respond to the neglect of sex and gender by historians of history and have done so in ways relevant to my concerns here. Bonnie Smith, for example, contends in *The Gender of History* (1998) that the professionalization of history in the 1800s involved gendering and, consequently, rejecting amateur histories as feminine. Ina Ferris also makes the case in *The Achievement of Literary Authority* (1991) that the Waverley Novels lent the novel cultural legitimacy by borrowing some of the masculinity of historical discourse for a traditionally feminine genre that many critics believed overstimulated its readers’ feelings. But while I have sought, in part, to begin doing for our understanding of the role of the Waverley series in early-nineteenth-century historical discourse something analogous to the work that Ferris does for our understanding of its role in the novel’s rise to “literary authority” in the same period, I have also been complicating her argument, not to mention Smith’s. History’s link to masculinity—and, in turn, its legitimacy—was itself far from secure in the 1790–1820 period, and I have tried to show here that its struggle for legitimacy and masculinity actually involved demonstrating its connection to certain types of sentimental and sexual feeling. *The Antiquary*, as a history, helps reveal that 1790s thinkers tried to gain authority for the discipline of history by defending its masculinity, and that they did so by distinguishing it from other modes of history-making—antiquarianism, particularly—that were not perceived as dangerously feminine so much as sentimentally and sexually unmanly. Viewed through texts like *Ivanhoe’s* “Dedicatory Epistle,” the novel further reveals that Scott similarly understood the problem of establishing the historical novel’s authority alongside, but also outside, the field of history-writing in the early nineteenth century. At the same time that he distances his post-Waterloo artistic project from antiquarianism, he also transfers its quest for cultural legitimacy into the terms of antiquarianism’s struggles over the same in the 1790s.

In the context of discussing early reviews of *Waverley* (1814), Ferris notes that “the image of a new and abundant spring is typical of the idiom through which Scott’s first readers articulated their experience of *Waverley* as an unexpected incursion of energy into a stale form: water in a dry season.” She is correct, I think, to cite this as evidence that early reviewers sought to give the novels an air of healthiness and manliness and thus to distinguish them from their “promiscuous” female-penned and read counterparts. But that metaphor of “water in a dry season” and its associated trope of resuscitation and rejuvenation—also a trope of impregnation given the link between “dryness” and impotency in the period’s slang—are even more typical of the way that Scott and many of his early readers conceived of the
Waverley series as an incursion of positive energy into the sometimes imprudent, perverse, unmanly, and morbid realm of historical study. In other words, what Ferris sees at stake in the Waverley Novels’ negotiation of the divide between the genres of fiction and history—namely, sex and gender—was also already at stake in the period’s attempts to define history itself as a field of study, and particularly to defend it from the types of charges that were being applied to antiquarianism. If the Waverley Novels, as Ferris herself notes, essentially brought the Scottish Enlightenment’s project of historical generalization into contact with historical particulars that had traditionally been the antiquary’s province, they also brought this crisis of sex and gender to a head in the process. I have been arguing for The Antiquary as a privileged point of entry into that crisis insofar as it reads as an effort both to represent and to negotiate the purportedly “dry season” of 1790s antiquarianism. It remains to be seen whether my own critical intervention in doing so might have the power to make today’s historians of history examine how their ability to think and argue as mentalité cases might be indebted to their forerunners’ struggles to become sentimentalía cases.

Notes


6. Ibid., 287.

7. Ibid., 84.


14. Among the best recent scholarship on the subject are Claudia Johnson’s *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago, 1995), 2–12, 23–46; and Tim Fulford’s *Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics, and Poetics in the Writings of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincey, and Hazlitt* (New York, 1999), chaps. 1–2. On the connection of prudence and manliness in Burkean political thought, see...

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15. That is to say, he represents neither that type of pre-Victorian historian that Sir Herbert Butterfield identifies as a “Tory historian,” nor the counter-imperialist “nationalist antiquary” that Katie Trumpener has shown to be a potent political figure in Britain’s Celtic fringe in the late eighteenth century; Sir Herbert Butterfield, *The Englishman and His History* (Cambridge, 1944), chap. 2; and Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism* (Princeton, 1998).


18. Ibid., 23. Ibid., 24.

19. Ibid., 24.

20. Paine opposes Burkean sentimentality and chivalry on the grounds that they are “artificial” (i.e., unnatural) and not because he does not believe in natural sentiments and, even, a natural chivalry: this is the general thrust of his comment that Burke “is now a case in point with his own opinion that ‘the age of chivalry is gone!’”; Paine, *The Rights of Man*, 144. In fact, throughout the opening pages of *The Rights of Man*, Paine consistently celebrates various supporters of the revolution on the grounds that they are true men of feeling: see, for example, his comments on the secretary of the Archbishop of Thoulouse, Richard Price, and the Marquis de la Fayette; Paine, *The Rights of Man*, 5, 10, 17.

21. Ochiltree may have had a historical original in Andrew Gemmells, an acquaintance of Scott’s; W. S. Crockett, *The Scott Originals* (London, 1912), chap. 8; but as a symbol, he also has a clear original in William Wordsworth’s “Old Cumberland Beggar” (1798).


29. Upon retiring from the Society of Antiquaries in 1784, Edward King, for example, upbraided many antiquaries for studying “without aiming at any one useful end”; quoted in Joan Evans, *A History of the Society of Antiquaries* (Oxford, 1956), 184. Some idea of the general currency of this opinion in the late eighteenth century can be obtained from Zimmerman, “Fragments of History,” 283–85.


32. On this point it is worth noting that most of the antiquarian authorities whom Oldbuck cites in the novel, as well as the actual antiquaries upon whom Scott supposedly based Oldbuck—e.g., William Stukeley, Sir Robert Sibbald, Alexander Gordon, Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, etc.—are members of the tradition of scientific antiquarianism just described; Piggott, *Ruins in a Landscape*, 128, 134–145, 166.


35. Ibid., 13, 20, 17, 12–13. For the continued currency of the trope of antiquaries’ “deadness” at the time that Scott was writing *The Antiquary*, see William Hazlitt’s “On the Conversation of Authors” (1820), in *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. Duncan Wu (London, 1998), 8: 38–39; and John Ferriar’s satirical poem “The Bibliomaniac” (1809), which represents the book collector (a figure generally conflated with the antiquary) as a man for whom “books, neglected and forgot, / Excite his wish in many a dusty lot: / . . . He hovers eager o’er oblivion’s shade”; John Ferriar, “The Bibliomaniac; being an epistle to Richard Heber, Esq.,” (London, 1809).


42. The formulation emerges in medieval discourse over book-love; F. Somner Merryweather, *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages* (London, 1933), 1–16, but it continues to appear throughout the romantic period in texts such as Hazlitt’s “On the Conduct of Life,” 429, 438.


49. The Edinburgh Edition of *The Antiquary* offers this definition of “amateur” (523). Scott refers to Oldbuck and his colleagues as “amateurs” on four separate occasions in the novel’s first twenty-five pages (9, 23, 23, 24).

50. By emphasizing this aspect of Romantic-era discourse on bibliomania, I take issue with Philip Connell’s recent essay on the subject; Philip Connell, “Bibliomania: Book Collecting, Cultural Politics, and the Rise of Literary Heritage in Romantic Britain,” *Representations* 71 (Summer 2000): 24–47. Connell argues that book collectors’ emphasis on treating books as cultural treasures resulted in movements to build better and more complete libraries, in turn solidifying the idea of a national literary heritage and heightening a sense of national participation and belonging among readers and collectors of literature. No doubt this account of the political significance of this newfound interest in the materiality of books is accurate to some extent. Yet, it also passes over the fact that, more often than not, the age’s writings on the subject express concern that the opposite is true—that book-obsession does not facilitate the circulation of books so much as impede it and that the book-obsessed man himself is less a part of national life than apart from it.

51. T.F. Dibdin, *Bibliomania; or Book-Madness; A Bibliographical Romance* (London, 1811). Writing of an ancient library, Leigh Hunt notes that “Dr. Dibdin should have existed in those days. . . . But we doubt whether he could have borne the bliss. (Vide his ecstasies, passim, on the charms of vellums, tall copies, and blind tooling)”; Leigh Hunt, “Book-binding and ‘Heliodorus,’” in *Men, Women, and Books* (London, 1847), 2:78.

52. Ferriar, “The Bibliomania.” A particularly dreadful 1790s example of the erotically and ecstatically overcharged verse that Ferriar satirizes can be found in Isaac D’Israeli’s *Curiosities of Literature* (1791–1834), quoted in *The Book-Lovers’ Anthology*, 226:

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GOLDEN volumes! Richest treasures!
Objects of delicious pleasures!
You my eyes rejoicing please,
You my hands in rapture seize!
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53. A bawdy joke in Daniel Terry’s 1820 stage version of *The Antiquary* provides an indication of the extent to which readers did see something sexual in Oldbuck’s dusty
study. At one point, Jenny Rintherout, Oldbuck’s maid, tells her master’s hairdresser that Oldbuck, or Monkbarns, is one who “battles away at the auld iniquities.” The hairdresser replies, “Antiquities you mean; . . . — and Jenny, my lass, I’d advise ye no to let Monkbarns catch ye dusting his iniquities, as ye ca’ them, a second time”; Daniel Terry, The Antiquary; A National Drama founded on the celebrated novel of the same name, by the Author of “Waverley,” &c. &c. as performed at the Theatre-Royal, Edinburgh (London, 1820), 1.1.


55. Glimpses of these themes’ prevalence can be attained from James Hillhouse’s survey of early review essays on the Waverley Novels and the historical novel in general; James T. Hillhouse, The Waverley Novels and Their Critics (Minneapolis, 1936).


59. See, for example, the journal entries for Monday, 19 December 1825, and Tuesday, 24 March 1829, as well as the introductory matter to Peveril of the Peak (1822); Scott, Journal, 43, 539; and Scott, Waverley Novels (New York, 1902), 12: 22.

60. The classic twentieth-century interpretation of the Waverley Novels in these terms is Piggott, Ruins in a Landscape, chap. 7.


64. On the “case” as the simple epistemological form for historical understanding in the period, see Chandler, England in 1819, chap. 4.

65. Ibid., 7. 66. Ibid.


69. In a forthcoming essay, I develop this point through readings of Victorian review essays on the historical novel and the study of history.


72. Ibid., 14, see also 242.

73. Recall the “Dedication” to *Don Juan* when Byron punningly likens poet laureate Robert “Bob” Southey’s poetry to a “dry bob,” or coitus without ejaculation; George Gordon, Lord Byron, “Dedication” (1818), *Don Juan*, line 24.


75. Ferris, *Achievement of Literary Authority*, chap. 7. It should be noted, however, that Ferris describes the Waverly Novels more as efforts to “novelize” and expand traditional political history than as attempts to “antiquarianize” the novel.