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"SUCH EDITORIAL LIBERTIES": SCOTT AND THE TEXTUAL AFTERLIVES OF THOMAS THE RHYMER

David Selfe

Among the ballads in the *Penguin Book of Scottish Verse* is the tale of Thomas's lengthy decampment with the Queen of Elfland, "Thomas the Rhymer." As in several other chronologically-arranged anthologies, the *Penguin Book* places "Thomas the Rhymer," also known as "True Thomas," among "Anonymous Ballads" from the later sixteenth century, after the works of Sir Robert Aytoun (1570-1638), and before those of William Drummond of Hawthornden (1585-1649).[1]

When we turn to the relevant page, however, for the ballad itself, it becomes clear that this "Thomas the Rhymer" is not, in fact, sixteenth century, nor is it wholly anonymous: with one important exception discussed below, it is Walter Scott's reworking of "Thomas the Rhymer," first published in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802), two centuries after the dating indicated by the Penguin arrangement.[2] The source that Scott

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[1] Robert Crawford and Mick Imlah, *The Penguin Book of Scottish Verse* (London: Penguin, 2006), 7-8, 223-226. This essay uses the 2006 Penguin, rather than the Allen Lane edition (2000) or the same editors' *New Penguin Book of Scottish Verse* (2000), though any differences there do not seem to affect this text. Other anthologies with similar chronological placement and text include Tom Scott, ed., *The Penguin Book of Scottish Verse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin,1970); W. Macneile Dixon, ed., *The Edinburgh Book of Scottish Verse, 1300-1900* (London: Meiklejohn and Holden, 1910); John W. Oliver and J.C. Smith, eds, *A Scots Anthology from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1949); and David McCordick, ed., *Scottish Literature: an Anthology* (New York: Peter Lang), 1996.

[2] [Walter Scott, ed.], *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 2 vols (Kelso: printed by James Ballantyne, 1802), II: 244-296. Most quotations below are from the 1802 edition, but the date is included in each citation, because for subsequent editions Scott made small, incremental changes, and also reclassified some ballads as modern imitations he had earlier called ancient. On the early publication history, see William, B. Todd and Ann Bowden, *Sir Walter Scott, A Bibliographical History* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 1998), 19-35, and for an edition incorporating Scott's

reworked was Anna Gordon Brown's "Thomas Rhymer and Queen of Elfland."[3] In textual terms, the two versions are easily distinguished in the first stanza, where Brown sets the story merely "oer yond grassy ban" and by "the fernie brae," while Scott locates it in traditional Thomas the Rhymer country, "on Huntlie bank" and "by the Eildon Tree." Brown had written down her 16-stanza version only two years before Scott's collection was published, and it represents an eighteenth-century orally-based version of earlier material. Scott's 20-stanza reworking involved adding new stanzas, many smaller changes in phrasing, and differences in the typographic presentation of "antique" language. Scott's text in its turn would become part of the reworking of the ballad and the tale by later editors. Brown's text has long been in the public record, but, since the *Penguin Book* was published, the stakes for modern editors in choosing which version to print have been raised by new scholarship on the Brown ballad manuscripts.[4]

An editor's choice between textual alternatives, like the editor's motivations in selecting between them, is not neutral. As Jeremy Smith and Christian Kay observe: "editorial practices are the product of contemporary intellectual assumptions, and because these assumptions are subject to change, so are the practices."[5] Through time, many people are involved in the transmission of a text, and there will be an evolving relationship in each transmission between textual form and textual function. This essay aims, then, first to contextualise Scott's transmission of Thomas the Rhymer

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later additions, see T.F. Henderson, ed., *Sir Walter Scott's Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 4 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1902).

[3] Brown's version was first printed in Robert Jamieson's introduction to "True Thomas and the Queen of Elfland," in his *Popular Ballads and Songs, from Tradition, Manuscripts, and Scarce Editions, ... with a few Originals by the Editor*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Constable, 1806), II: 7-10.

[4] See Sigrid Rieuwerts, ed., *The Ballad Repertoire of Anna Gordon, Mrs Brown of Falkland* [Scottish Text Society, 4th ser., no. 8] (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2011), 218-19; Ruth Perry, "The Printed Record of an Oral Tradition: Anna Gordon Brown's Ballads," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 38 (2012), 69-91 (78-79); and cf. the survey of Brown MSS in William Montgomerie, A Bibliography of the Scottish Ballad Manuscripts, 1730-1825, Part VI [Part VII]," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 7.1 [4] (1970), 6—75, 238-254 (this MS 241-243). The Brown and Scott versions given as parallel texts by J.A.H. Murray, ed., *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldonne* [Early English Text Society, orig. ser., 61] (London: Trubner, 1875), lii-lv (parallel texts); and sequentially, separated by a third undated MS, by Francis J. Child, ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1882-1898), I, pt. 2 (1884): 323-324 (version A, Brown), 325-326 (version C, Scott).

[5] Jeremy Smith & Christian Kay, "The Pragmatics of Punctuation in Older Scots," in *Communicating Early English Manuscripts*, ed. Päiva Pahta and Andreas H. Jucker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 212-25.

within the sociocultural conditions under which it was received, prefaced by a brief history of the narrative's diachronic passage, and then to offer a comparative analysis of Scott's and Brown's respective versions of Thomas the Rhymer, including differences in editorial choices such as the "apologetic apostrophe" (defined and discussed in the closing section below). This analysis spells out how such textual traces shed light on the changing relationship between textual form and textual function.

The story of "Thomas the Rhymer" is, of course, much older than either Scott or Brown's transmissions, emerging in the medieval metrical romance, "Thomas of Erceldoune" (or on James Murray's EETS half-title and header 𝔗𝔬𝔪𝔞𝔰 𝔒𝔣𝔣 𝔈𝔯𝔰𝔰𝔢𝔩𝔡𝔬𝔲𝔫𝔢), and extant in four manuscripts spanning a hundred years:[6]

> Thornton MS. (Lincoln A., 1. 17): ca. 1419-1450
> MS. Cambridge Ff. 5, 48: mid fifteenth century
> MS. Cotton Vitellius E. X: late fifteenth century
> MS. Lansdowne 762: early sixteenth century.

Whilst there is no evidence directly linking the Brown-Scott ballad with the medieval romance, Scott is content to imply an authenticating link. In 1802, in minute print at the bottom of the page preceding Scott's transmission is the note: "the editor has been since informed by a most eminent antiquary, that there is in existence an MS. copy of this ballad of considerable antiquity, of which he hopes to avail himself on some future occasion."[7]

Overlapping the date of the final manuscript of the romance, Lansdowne MS.762, was the production in the 1530s of *The Prophecies of Rhymer, Bede and Merlin* (found now in Supplement 3889.5, *Manual* V.291, in MS Rawlinson C.813). Crucially, this version of "Thomas of Erceldoune" is no longer a medieval romance but a political prophecy. The Queen of Elfland has become the Virgin Mary, and she reconciles the warring knights, St. Andrew and St. George ("Stynt your strife and your follye").[8] This revision, occurring as it does in the 1530s, seems pertinent in light of the Reformation and efforts at cross-border reconciliation between Protestants.

The first recorded print publication of any of the Thomas the Rhymer versions was by Robert Waldegrave in his *The Whole prophesie of Scotland, England, & some-part of France, and Denmark* (1603). Waldegrave had previously fled political persecution in England and, through a series of felicitous encounters, was awarded the position of King's Printer to James VI of Scotland. Waldegrave's version, in transmitting the 1530s prophecies,

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[6] A fifth, Sloane MS. 2578 (c.1547), contains Thomas's prophecies but not the narrative which characterises the later ballad.

[7] Scott, *Minstrelsy* (1802), II: 250.

[8] Anon, "The Prophecies of Rhymer," in *Political Protest and Prophecy Under Henry VIII*, ed. Sharon L. Jansen (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1991), 69.

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made changes to reflect the new political realities of 1603. In the 1530s, the conclusion reads:

> Traytours shall towres taste
> And doutles be don to dye,
> All London shall tremble in haste
> A dede king when they see.[9]

The 1603 transmission includes a more up to date prophecy:

> However it shall happen for to fal
> The Lyon shal be Lord of all.
> The Frenche wife shal beare the Sonne,
> Shal weild al Bretane to the sea
> And from the Bruce's blood shall come
> As neere as the ninthe degree,[10]

If we identify this "French wife" as Mary, Queen of Scots, that would make the beneficiary of this particular prophecy, ruling "all Britain," James VI and I, Waldegrave's employer and protector. Scott seems to have known the Waldegrave prophecies in some form, because he adapted them for Part II of "Thomas the Rhymer":

> Or who shall rule the Isle Britain?
> From the North to the South Sea,
> The French wife shall bear the son,
> Shall rule all Britain to the sea.[11]

Thereafter, the only other print edition so far recorded before Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy* is *The Prophesie of Sir Thomas of Astledowne* (1652). Enclosed in a copy of *Sundry Strange Prophecies of Merlin, Mede, and Others*, printed for Matthew Walbancke, the *Prophesie* is primarily a transmission of the version found in the Lincoln Thornton manuscript. An interesting feature is the lexical transition from Northern Middle English to an Early Modern English influenced by prestigious lexical and orthographic variants emerging from London and the South-East. For instance, if we observe the opening lines of the Lincoln Thornton MS.:

"Lystyns, lordyngs, bothe grete & smale, │ And takis gude tente what j will saye"

Comparable lines in the 1652 transmission read:

"Listen lordings great and small │ And take good tent what I shal say"

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[9] Sharon L. Jansen ad Kathleen Jordan, ed., *The Welles Anthology: MS Rawlinson C.813: A Critical Edition* (Binghampton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1991), 250.

[10] *The Whole prophesie of Scotland, England, & some-part of France, and Denmark* (n.p.: Robert Waldegrave, 1603), unpaginated [f. 9v].

[11] Scott, *Minstrelsy* (1802), II: 282.

Whilst the transmitter has retained the Northern/Scots lexical term *tent*, they have anglicised the spelling of *gude* to *good*—a prophetic trace concerning Scots' fortunes. This spelling variation reflected an emerging trend of anglicisation in which Scots sounds were commonly represented with English orthography, a process hastened by the Scottish court's departure south fifty years previously. It is also worth observing the ongoing differentiation between the vowel <i> and the consonant <j>: we might notice the evolution from "what j will saye" to "what I shall say." Jennifer Bann and John Corbett cite this as a Scots innovation, began by none other than a certain Robert Waldegrave c.1590 and found in printed texts such as Skene's Acts (1597).[12]

Like the editors of the Penguin anthology, Scott idealised the role of the ballads in the nation's literary history as a primitive manifestation of Scots poetry. "It cannot be uninteresting," he would later write, "to have a glimpse of the National Muse in her cradle."[13] When Scott received Anna Gordon Brown's version of "Thomas the Rhymer" at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was as a written-down ballad, the emergence of which brought forth a host of new sociocultural parameters for a narrative that was, as we have seen, already situated within a complex sociohistorical matrix. Oral culture had been deeply shaken by the advent of the modern agrarian system and widespread industrialisation. Suzanne Gilbert, quoting Tom Devine's remark that between 1760 and 1830 "the face of the Scottish countryside was radically altered and the way of life of the people fundamentally changed," adds that, as communities were fractured and displaced by enclosure and the urban exodus, traditional cultural practices survived only in those rare spaces untouched or ignored by homogenising mechanisation.[14] James Hogg would later write of the impact of such social upheaval on balladry:

> On looking back, the first great falling off is in SONG … only kept
> up by a few migratory tailors.… Where are those melting strains
> now? Gone, and forever![15]

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[12] Jennifer Bann & John Corbett, *Spelling Scots: The Orthography of Literary Scots, 1700-2000,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 26.

[13] Walter Scott, "Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad" (1830), in T. F. Henderson, ed., *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 4 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1902), IV: 7.

[14] Suzanne Gilbert, "Tradition and Scottish Romanticism," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Traditional Literatures*, ed. Sarah Dunnigan and Suzanne Gilbert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 105-13 (107), citing Tom Devine, *The Scottish Nation* (London: Penguin, 2000), 134.

[15] James Hogg, "On the Changes in the Habits, Amusements, and Conditions of the Scottish Peasantry," *Quarterly Review of Agriculture and Prize Essays and Transactions of the Highland Society*, no 14 (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1831), quoted

The resulting, pervasive sense that once-prevalent customs and beliefs in Scotland were at risk of irreparable injury or extinction was a crucial factor in the antiquarian impetus to recover and restore. As Gilbert observes, "Influential collectors and editors sought, with culturally-nationalistic urgency, despite radically difference political agendas, to preserve Scottish culture."[16] For Gilbert, Scott, like other antiquarians such as Joseph Ritson and Thomas Percy, understood the ballads as being distillable from oral culture, as "historical elements that could be reconstructed into narratives of an idealised past."[17]

Such idealisation, however, on occasion expressed itself as frustration with the historical communication of texts, leading Scott to lament that the ballad

> transmitted through a number of reciters, like a book reprinted in a multitude of editions, incurs the risk of impertinent interpolations from the conceit of one rehearser, unintelligible blunders from the stupidity of another, and omissions equally to be regretted, from the want of memory in a third.[18]

Earlier, in the preface to his *Minstrelsy*, he explained his editorial approach to these difficulties as a quest for authenticity:

> No liberties have been taken, either with the recited or written copies of these ballads, farther than that, where they disagreed, which is by no means unusual, the editor, in justice to the author, has uniformly preserved what seemed to him the best, or most poetical, reading of the passage… With these freedoms, which were essentially necessary to remove obvious corruptions, and fit the ballads for the press, the editor presents them to the public, under the complete assurance, that they carry with them the most indisputable marks of their authenticity.[19]

Scott's treatment of "Thomas the Rhymer" makes clear just what this entailed. Scott turned a sixteen-stanza ballad not just into one of 20 stanzas, but into a three-part sequence of 79 stanzas, which, with a substantial introduction and notes, would cover over fifty pages of the 1802 edition. In acknowledging his source, he also explained what he had done with it:

> It [the ballad in part I] is given from a copy, obtained from a lady, residing not far from Ercildoun, corrected and enlarged by one in Mrs Brown's MSS. The former copy, however, as might be expected,

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in R.A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 41.

[16] Gilbert, 105.

[17] *ibid.*, 109.

[18] Scott, "Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry," *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borde*r, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1807), I: 18-19.

[19] Scott, *Minstrelsy* (1802), I: cii-ciii.

is far more minute as to local description. To this old tale the editor has ventured to add a second part, consisting of a kind of Cento, from the printed prophecies vulgarly ascribed to the Rhymer; and a third part, entirely modern, founded upon, the tradition of his having returned with the hart and hind, to the land of Faërie. To make his peace with the more severe antiquaries, the editor has prefixed to the second part some remarks on Learmont's prophecies.[20]

Where Part I was originally headed "Ancient—Never Before Published," Part II is introduced as "Altered from Ancient Prophecies," and Part III as "Modern" " By the Editor."[21]

This teasing attitude to authenticity and "the more severe antiquaries" is underlined in 1803, when Scott appended a note to Part I printing the mysterious manuscript "of considerable antiquity" that he had promised in the footnote in 1802.[22] Describing it now as "an old, and unfortunately an imperfect MS ... received while these sheets were in the press," he prefaced the text itself with this headnote:

> It will afford great amusement to those, who would study the nature of traditional poetry, and the changes effected by oral tradition, to compare this ancient romance with the foregoing ballad. The same incidents are narrated, even the expression is often the same, yet the poems are as different in appearance, as if the older tale had been regularly and systematically modernized by a poet of the present day.[23]

Seventy years later, Murray comments tartly that "the 'as if' in the last sentence might safely be left out."[24] This surely misses the play of ironies in Scott's observation, directed not only against himself but also against the antiquarian and later philological preference for older texts, however fragmentary.

When Scott was writing, such editorial interventionism, if scorned by the "severe antiquarians," was often encouraged by reviewers and welcomed by readers. Discussing the *Minstrelsy*, the *Annual Review* delighted that "each ballad has received an additional value either from the insertion of new stanzas added from other written copies or recitations, or from curious notes and illustrative dissertations."[25] A year later, reviewing Scott's third volume, the *British Critic* concurred, noting that it was reasonable that the

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[20] Scott, *Minstrelsy* (1802), II: 250.
[21] Scott, *Minstrelsy* (1802), II: 251, 278, 286.
[22] Murray (lxi) identifies Scott's source as a transcript from the Cotton MS, which gives a fragmentary text of Fytte I in the medieval romance.
[23] Scott, *Minstrelsy* (1803), II: 274-275.
[24] Murray, *Thomas of Erceldoune* (1875), liii.
[25] [Unsigned], "Scot's Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," *Annual Review and History of Literature for 1802*, 1 (London: Longman and Rees, 1803), 635-643 (639).

ballad-editor "should supply, from his own resources, whatever is defective in his originals," to recover "a regular narrative."[26] Scott's earliest biographer, George Allan, was similarly effusive:

> it is Scott himself whom we have mainly to thank for the perfect state in which we find them [the ballads]—for freeing them from those mutations, corruptions, and spurious interpolations, the natural consequences of oral transmission.[27]

Indeed, Charles Zug has argued that

> In taking such editorial liberties, all of them flatly inexcusable to the modern ballad scholar, Scott was adhering to the taste of his time; in fact, his readers demanded that his ballads be finished and fully intelligible.[28]

Many editors preparing a historical text for a general or student readership might still hold the opinion that accessibility necessitates interpolation and emendation.

The role of the editor, where texts of historical significance are concerned, has traditionally been presented as that of recovery and restoration, comparing extant varieties in order to distil the authorial from the scribal, the original from the additional, so that the "process of transmission" might be disentangled or wound back in an effort to "restore the words of the ancients as closely as possible to their original form."[29] The perceived threat to authorial integrity by variance in transmission, regardless of medium, is itself a long and pervasive tradition. Chaucer, concerned that linguistic variation would introduce error, admitted "prey I God that non miswrite of tonge… Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge."[30] Scott himself asserted, that oral transmission was "a process similar to that by which a coin, passing from hand to hand, loses in circulation all the finer marks of the impress."[31]

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[26] [Unsigned], "*Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*," *British Critic and Quarterly Theological Review*, 23 (January, 1804), 36-43 (37).

[27] George Allan, *The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Baronet, with Critical Notices of His Writings* (Edinburgh: Thomas Ireland, 1834), 210.

[28] Charles Zug, "The Ballad Editor as Antiquary," *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 13.1 (1976), 57-73; cf. also Zug, "Sir Walter Scott and Ballad Forgery," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 8.1 (1969): 52-64.

[29] Leighton Durham Reynolds and Nigel Guy Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (London: Clarendon Press, 1974), 212.

[30] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 584.

[31] Scott, "Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry," in *Minstrelsy* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1807), I: 22.

With such context in mind, and Scott's explicit association between variance and corruption, we might now turn to Scott's treatment and reworking of Brown's "Thomas Rymer and Queen of Elfland." Scott may have prefixed his version with the assertion "Ancient—Never Before Published," and paid prefatory tribute to Brown as an "ingenious lady, to whose taste and memory the world is indebted for the preservation of the tales which they contain," but he stops short of ascribing any special authority to her.[32] Like the editors of the Penguin anthology, Scott occludes the historical facts of the Brown transmission, committed to text in 1800. His aim was to print an ancient narrative plucked from obscurity, the ideal text intuited behind the text as transmitted. His text, choosing "what seemed to him the best, or most poetical, reading," would give the ballad restored to its *original* state.[33]

In recent transcriptions from the manuscript that Anna Gordon Brown herself wrote out, the opening lines look like this, with no stanza breaks and almost no punctuation:

> True Thomas lay oer yond grassy bank
> And he beheld a Ladie gay
> A Ladie that was brisk and bold
> Come riding oer the fernie brae
> Her skirt was of the grass green silk
> Her mantle of the velvet fine
> At ilka tett of her horses mane
> Hung fifty silver bells & nine
> True Thomas he took aff his hat
> And bow'd him low down till his knee
> All hail thou mighty queen of heaven
> For your peer on earth I n'er did see[34]

As Malcolm Parkes shows in his book *Pause and Effect*, conventional modern punctuation would not emerge until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[35] Indeed, while a feature we now take for granted in written or printed texts, in the transitional period, written texts often exhibited similar structuring markers to those used in oral literature. William Sherman

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[32] Scott, *Minstrelsy* (1802), I: cvii.

[33] *ibid.,* I: cii.

[34] Anna Gordon Brown, "Thomas Rymer & Queen of Elfland," in her autograph manuscript in the National Library of Scotland (NLS ACC 10611 (2)); transcribed independently by Sigrid Rieuwerts in *Ballad Repertoire* (2011), 218-19, and by Ruth Perry, in *SSL*, 2012, 78-79 (as cited in n. 4 above).

[35] Malcolm Parkes, *Pause and Effect: A History of Punctuation in the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1, argues that the primary function punctuation is guide readers in resolving a text's "structural uncertainties" and to "signal nuances of semantic significance" that a reader might miss or find difficult.

suggests in the Early Modern English period there existed a "fundamentally different understanding of the nature and function of sentences… one poised between written and spoken speech capable of a length and complexity that we are no longer trained to tolerate."[36] In the absence of punctuation, authors and scribes deployed other signalling strategies to guide readers, for instance using closed-class words such as *and, that, so*, *than*, *to* and *of* to function as discourse markers, giving a visual representation of the text's grammatical structure.[37] Gordon echoes this medieval technique in her version, showing how grammatical structure could be perceived within an oral culture without using punctuation.[38]

Contrast Brown's opening with the same lines in Scott's version, as printed for his second edition, in 1803:

> True Thomas lay on Huntlie bank:
>   A ferlie he spied wi' his e'e;
> And there he saw a ladye bright,
>   Come riding down by the Eildon Tree.
>
> Her shirt was o' the grass-green silk;
>   Her mantle o' the velvet fyne;
> At ilka tett of her horse's mane,
>   Hang fifty siller bells and nine.
>
> True Thomas, he pull'd aff his cap,
>   And louted low down to his knee,
> "All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven!
>   For thy peer on earth I never did see."[39]

Some differences are immediately obvious. Scott has relocated Gordon's ballad to the Borders, broken it into stanzas (a felicity for reading rather than orality), revised the verse rhythms to match other ballads, imposed a strict regime of contemporary punctuation, including quotation marks round speech, and made a number of critical lexical revisions.

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[36] William Sherman, "Punctuation as Configuration; or, How Many Sentences Are There in Sonnet 1?," in *Shakespearean Configurations: Early Modern Literary Studies*, special issue 21, ed. Mayer, Sherman, Sillars, and Vasileiou (Sheffield Hallam University, 2013): https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-21/04-Sherman_Punctuation%20as%20Configuration.htm (accessed: 24/8/17).

[37] For the effect of using closed-class words to begin lines in an unpunctuated medieval manuscript, see, e.g., the opening of Chaucer's *General Prologue* in *The Petworth MS. of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall: http://name.umdl.umich.edu/ASH2689.0001.001. (accessed: 21/12/17).

[38] Andrew Jucker & Irma Taavitsainen, *English Historical Pragmatics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 55.

[39] Scott, *Minstrelsy*, 2nd ed., 3 vols (Edinburgh: Printed by James Ballantyne, 1803), II: 269. In 1802, line 2 had *ee,* with no apostrophe; line 3, *lady*, with no terminal e, and line 5, *grass green* with no hyphen.

Scott's idealised restoration is most obvious, after his heavy punctuation, in his lexical changes, re-Scotticising anglicised variants and supplanting modern terms with archaicised, poetic variants. It is not just a matter of archaising the spelling: *Ladie* becomes *ladye* and *fine* becomes *fyne*, an Early Middle English spelling variant, which harks back to the medieval lack of discrimination between the vowel /i/ and the consonant /y/. Scott also introduced stock ballad phrases, replacing *he beheld* with *he spied with his e'e*, and introducing new Scots words (*ferlie*). In line 8, for instance, *hung* becomes *hang*, and *silver* is (re)Scotticised to *siller*, an alteration that seems equal parts lexical and metrical restoration: *siller*, arguably, functions better within the metrical stresses of iambic tetrameter, the *-er* morpheme being better suited as an unstressed beat than *-ver* morpheme.[40] In line 10, *took aff his hat* becomes *pull'd ...* and *bow'd him low* becomes *louted low*.

Less obvious perhaps is Scott's shift away from the oral structuring devices in Brown's ballad. In the verses Scott added to Brown's transmission, he does not deploy closed-class words as discourse markers since his profusion of modern punctuation has rendered that practice, in text, unnecessary:

> "Harp and carp, Thomas," she said;
> "Harp and carp along wi' me;
> And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
> Sure of your body I will be.
>
> "Betide me weal, betide me woe,
> That weird* shall never daunton me."
> Syne he has kissed her rosey lips,
> All underneath the Eildon tree." [41]

Scott probably chose the phrase "Harp and carp" (Older Scots, sing, or recite) from the wider ballad repertoire, to evoke ancientness and authenticity, rather than because of its use in the Thomas of Ercildoune romances; it does not occur in the Cotton MS fragment as he reprinted it in 1803.[42] Scott's asterisked footnote, glossing "weird" as destiny, seems part of the same strategy, making Scott's new text seem antique, in need of annotation.

As suggested in this paper's introduction, perhaps Scott's most contentious emendation of Brown's text, at least to modern critics, was his comprehensive deployment of the "apologetic apostrophe": for exmple, *wi'*

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[40] In the MS, Brown first wrote *siller*, which is then corrected to *silver*: see illustration in Rieuwerts, *Ballad Repertoire* (2011), Fig. 3, facing p. 17.

[41] Scott, *Minstrelsy* (1802), II: 252.

[42] Scott may have known the phrase from Jamieson's then-unpublished work: see e.g. Fytte II, line 5, in Jamieson, *Popular Ballads* (1806), II: 27.

to signal *with*; *a'* to signal *all*; *pull'd* to signal *pulled*.[43] Good instances are Scott's second line ("A ferlie he spied wi' his e'e") or the difference between Brown's

> But ye maun gowi me now Thomas
> True Thomas ye maun go wi me

and the equivalent line in Scott:

> "Now ye maun go wi' me," she said;
>   "True Thomas, ye maun go wi' me;

In the 1720s, Allan Ramsay, amongst others, had deployed the apologetic apostrophe to signal the distinctiveness of Scots speech, but by the time Scott wrote the *Minstrelsy*, Scots was no longer competing with English—it had been overwhelmed. In the later 18th century, rather than reconciling two language systems, the apologetic apostrophe was perhaps a strategic choice in an increasingly monoglot publishing industry, paradoxically making antiquarian or imitation-antiquarian works look more antique, more distant from standard English, while at the same time making them more accessible to a primarily English-speaking readership, and so perhaps broadening marketability.

"Every aspect of the physical manifestation of text," Jeremy Smith has argued, "is a vector of meaning," and "as texts move through time" the function and meaning of these physical manifestations "evolves."[44] Alongside Scott's more obvious interventions in the text, even aspects sometimes treated as minor or incidental can represent valuable data about the sociocultural conditions under in which texts were received and modified. This approach to historical texts, pragmaphilology, examining texts in a changing linguistic context, can usefully be applied both to Scott's repunctuation and to the modern anthologists' selection and treatment of the texts they anthologize.[45]

The effect of Scott's reworked ballad, and changing responses to it, can be illuminated by looking again at how the ballad is presented in the *Penguin Book of Scottish Verse*. Though no specific source-text is referernced, the Penguin text for "Thomas Rhymer" almost certainly derives, directly or through an intermediary, from Francis James Childs's long-standard *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, where Child printed Scott along with the

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[43] Cf. my "'A ferlie he spied wi' his e'e': examining the Apologetic Apostrophe," *The Epicurean Cure* (2017): https://www.epicureancure.com/302/a-ferlie-he-spied-wi-his-ee-a-brief-examination-of-the-apologetic-apostrophe/.

[44] Jeremy Smith, "The Afterlives of Nicholas Love," *Studia Neophilologica*, 89, supplement 1 (July 31, 2017): 59-74 (59).

[45] Cf. Andreas Jacobs and Andreas H. Jucker, "The historical perspective in pragmatics," in *Pragmatics and Beyond New Series*, 7 (1995), 3-36.

Jamieson-Brown version in part 2 (1884).[46] In his earlier collection, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1864), Child had printed "Thomas of Ersseldoune," from David Laing's edition, paired with "Thomas the Rymer. Traditional Version," from Scott's *Minstrelsy*, using the Scott text, and also retaining Scott's punctuation, including the apologetic apostrophes.[47] However, in the later more famous, and more scholarly, series, Child removed (most of) the apologetic apostrophes. The exception is in Scott's second line, where Child (like the Penguin editors) has "wi'" not "wi," though "ee," not e'e."[48] The result is a hybrid text, Scott in its wording, still with Scott's stanza breaks and most of his grammatical punctuation, but much closer in appearance to older ballad style, to Victorian philological editing, and, though Child could not have anticipated this, to the punctuation of most modern Scots poetry. Child does not explain this change in his introductory commentary; he had changed publisher, but it is still likely that by the 1880s he himself viewed the apologetic apostrophe as unscholarly.

Viewing the Penguin anthology from this pragmaphilological perspective, we might consider two points of context. Firstly, the editors, in their introduction, refer to the Border ballads as "songs," and to Scott as their "chief collector," quoting James Hogg's mother when she chastised Scott for putting them in print: "they were made for singing an no for reading."[49] Secondly, the pragmatic effect of the apologetic apostrophe had changed. since it first emerged in the early eighteenth century as a practice to navigate increasingly-intertwining language systems. Over time, Scots language revivalists and historical linguists came to view it as pejorative, seeing it as having "the unfortunate effect of suggesting that Broad Scots was not a separate language system, but rather a divergent and inferior form of English."[50] Scott's reworking of Brown is a historical artefact of Scott's time, at the intersection between romantic antiquarianism and the needs or expectations of a widening readership. In preferring the hybrid text, the Penguin editors roll back the ballad's antiquarian associations. Even in choosing Scott's version over Brown, by positioning it as a work of the late sixteenth century, and removing an element such as the apologetic

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[46] Francis J. Child, ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1882-1898), I, pt. 2, no. 37 (1884): 325-326; cf. Crawford and Imlah, *Penguin Book* (2006), 223-226.

[47] Francis J. Child, *English and Scottish Ballads* (Boston: Little Brown, 1864), I: 109-113.

[48] Retaining the single instance perhaps has a compensatory function, making the Scots appear more lexically "authentic," whilst alerting the reader to be mindful of English cognates.

[49] Crawford and Imlah, *Penguin Book*, 19.

[50] John Corbett, J. Derrick McClure, *et al.*, "A Brief History of Scots," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scots* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 13.

apostrophe widely considered to be no longer appropriate in Scots, the ballad is restored to a kind of national legendarium, reflective of those pre-industrial rural communities where oral culture flourished during the sixteenth century.

"The editorial process," Smith has commented, "is unavoidably a transformative process."[51] The past is not received passively. Left behind in diachronically-transmitted texts are analysable traces of such editorial transformation. Scott's transmission of Anna Gordon Brown's text, and in turn the Penguin editor's transmission of Scott's, are representative of a dynamic dialogue with the past. Examining these traces can provide meaningful evidence both for the sociocultural conditions under which texts are created and received, and for the intrinsic, evolving relationship between textual form and textual function.

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[51] Smith and Kay, "The Pragmatics of Punctuation in Older Scots," 222.