

Procuring Books and Consuming Texts: The Reading Experience of a Sheffield Apprentice, 1798

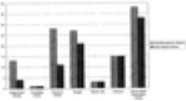
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This essay examines the evidence of reading recorded in the diary of a single young Englishman, the fifteen-year-old Sheffield apprentice, Joseph Hunter (1783-1861). The investigation of personal records, such as diaries, has become increasingly attractive to historians of reading because the presence of the reader is often absent from what John Brewer has described as the "inert sources for readership."¹ These sources, which include will inventories, subscription lists, booksellers' files, library catalogues, and borrowing records, often leave many questions unanswered: Did the owner of a book read it? What did the member of a library do with a text once they returned with it to their home? If a reading took place, what mode was employed, silent or aloud? This essay addresses the specific questions of how a member of the English middle class acquired and used texts. It does not attempt to establish Hunter as a typical reader--his youth, gender, class, and geographical location are warnings against such an assumption--but aims to add to our knowledge of the individual reader and institutions of reading at the close of the eighteenth century. Research on the Hunter diaries is part of a much larger project that aims to recover the reader from the archives in order to introduce some empirical depth to the theoretical speculation that currently dominates the history of reading. The evidence gathered during this project is being recorded in the Reading Experience Database (RED).²

Who was Joseph Hunter? Born in February 1783 in Sheffield, England, he was the son of Michael Hunter, a local cutlery manufacturer. His mother died when he was an infant and he spent most of his youth at the home of **[End Page 21]** his guardian, the Presbyterian minister Joseph Evans, who preached at the town's Upper Chapel. Hunter was apprenticed to his father's trade at fourteen, and between August 1797 and March 1799 worked in the shop and warehouse of the merchant and manufacturer Robert Hadfield. In 1805 the plans for his future career changed and he was sent to York to train as a dissenting minister. He qualified in 1809 and took charge of a congregation in Bath. While resident in the city, he published a number of sermons and antiquarian works that brought him to the attention of the commissioners of public records and, in 1833, he moved to London to take up the position of subcommissioner. He became Assistant Keeper of the Public Record in 1838 and continued to combine his work with publications on a wide variety of subjects until shortly before his death in 1861.³

Hunter's diary consists of three volumes, now held by the British Library, which include entries made in 1797, 1798, 1799, 1800, 1806, and 1807. I shall concentrate on the entries for 1798 because they provide the only complete sequence from the original diaries. The entries for the other years are either fragments from larger documents now lost or partial records that were abandoned by the diarist.⁴ Hunter suspended the diary in August 1797 because he believed that his new position as an apprentice would not allow him time for either reading or writing, but he began to make entries again on 14 May 1798. The twenty-seven pages of the 1798 sequence provide a daily record of his reading during the six months until 18 November 1798, when he halted the diary again because there was too little light to write by in the winter evenings. Each sequence of the diary provides a snapshot that is indicative of Hunter's reading experience at that moment. The close analysis of each year will provide a record of changing practises as Hunter



moved from schoolboy, to apprentice, to trainee minister, but such a survey is beyond the scope of this paper.

What kind of a document is the diary? Hunter recorded his reasons for keeping the diary when he began a new volume on 27 March 1797: "I intend to set down all & everything which occurs to me during this year & likewise an account of the books which I read &c &c."⁵ Hunter fulfilled this intention and recorded much of the everyday detail of his life, including his attendance at the Chapel, participation in national celebrations, and his visits to lectures, the theater, a fair, and the waxworks.⁶ It was his "account of the books," however, that dominated the majority of entries. Hunter recorded the date on which he acquired a text; the library, individual, or shop from which it was borrowed or bought; and, in the majority of cases, whether he completed the text in its entirety. The following entry, made on 9 June 1798, is typical: "I took Radcliffe's Tour to the Library; I was not so much entertained with it as I expected, tho her descriptions are very fine. Bought the 1st Vol of Lodge's Illustrations of British History, Biography & [End Page 22] Manners. . . . Went to Stannington" (fol. 18r).⁷ A number of dated marginal entries record that Hunter read the 1797 sequence of the diary in 1799 and, despite occasional references to "the reader" in some of the entries made in 1797, the diary appears to have been a private document.⁸ Hunter's record of the borrowing and consumption of texts provides hard evidence about the use of commercial libraries and bookshops that book historians usually have to guess at, but this is not an ideal source. Hunter often had little to say about his methods and modes of reading. Despite these limitations, the diary is one of the best sources of reading experience that we are ever likely to recover from this period, and it bears comparison with the records kept during the 1790s by Anna Larpent and Otto Van Eck, which have been investigated by John Brewer and Arianne Baggerman, respectively.⁹ Both Larpent, the professional reader living in London, and Van Eck, the beneficiary of a reading program organized by his parents, rarely refer to the text as an object or commodity. By contrast, Hunter is almost always concerned with the text as a material object to be retrieved from the library or purchased from the bookshop. Hunter's diary provides the "reliable personal witness" to the use of a subscription library that Paul Kaufman sought in order to test the hypothetical reader he had constructed from the borrowing records in Bristol, but the complex pattern of procurement and use revealed by the diaries also demonstrates the limitations of concentrating upon a single library in isolation.¹⁰ Section I of this paper investigates the various methods that Hunter used to acquire texts from a number of different libraries and from family and friends. Section II examines some of the diverse ways in which these texts were put to use.

I. Procuring Books

During the 1790s Sheffield was a rapidly expanding industrial town with a population that had reached 29,000 by the middle of the decade. In 1797 this population had access to a number of institutions of reading, including a subscription library, three circulating libraries, eight booksellers, one binder, and three printers.¹¹ During 1798 Hunter "procured" books, periodicals, newspapers, and pamphlets from the subscription library, a circulating library, and from several shops, as well as from a second subscription library (known as the Chapel or Vestry Book Society), and a stall or chapman not listed in the commercial directories. Each of these various sources of texts were within walking distance of his home in Norfolk Street and he used them in conjunction with the private libraries of family and friends.

Figure 1 provides a breakdown, by volume, of the texts that Hunter acquired [End Page 23] from these various venues.¹² The subscription library, known as the Sheffield Book Society, and referred to in the diaries as the "Surry Street Library," dominated Hunter's borrowing and reading experience with thirty-eight texts borrowed and thirty-three read, but he did not limit himself to one venue.¹³ Several references to reading texts in situ, such as a print exhibited in a shop window or a book displayed for sale in the marketplace, suggest the extent to which texts were available to be appropriated or consumed without payment within the urban environment. Hunter also included entries that describe his reading of the advertisements in ephemeral publications, such

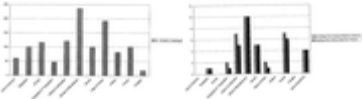
as newspapers, and of the packaging that came with commemorative coins.¹⁴ Despite this apparent inclusiveness, however, there is a hierarchy of texts within the diary. Books borrowed from the libraries are given the most space, and the times at which they were borrowed and returned are central to its structure.

During the six months recorded in the 1798 sequence of the diary, Hunter purchased only two new books, George Smith's *Sermon to the Odd-Fellows* and James Montgomery's *The Whisperer*, both of which were the work of local authors.¹⁵ His purchase and reading of Montgomery's book provides important evidence of the way in which he selected and bought texts. Hunter first discovered that this book had been published from a note contained in the *Iris*, a local newspaper edited by the author, which he read on 25 May 1798 (fol. 16v). The book was bought by his guardian for £1 2s. 6d. on 15 July, probably from the shop belonging to Ann and Elizabeth Gales, booksellers located near Montgomery's printshop, and given to **[End Page 24]** Hunter, who completed reading it on 9 August (fols. 22r, 25v).¹⁶ In this instance the newspaper, which had featured material from the book in 1795, was central to the act of consumption. This process suggests something of the complex relationship between the newspaper as a source of information and the other cultural institutions located within the town that benefited from the spread of news about publications and cultural events. The newspaper encouraged the purchase of this text in the same way that it encouraged Hunter to attend the local lectures also advertised in its pages (fol. 10r). The delay of nearly two months between reading the advertisement and acquiring the text indicates that Hunter did not have the freedom to purchase new books with his own money and that he had to come to an agreement with Evans about the value of this text.

By far the greatest number of new texts purchased by Evans and Hunter were periodicals and newspapers. Evans bought the *Iris* on a weekly basis throughout the first year of the diary, but in July 1798 he became part of a group who purchased the paper collectively (fol. 21v).¹⁷ Hunter's inclusion of this text as lunchtime reading in the hourly breakdown of his everyday life, entered into the diary on 10 August, suggests that he probably read it more often than is apparent from the rest of the diary (fol. 25v). Its very ubiquity as part of the fabric of everyday family life may have prevented its being mentioned on a weekly basis, but several entries recording the transcription of passages from the paper into a commonplace book suggest that it was not simply regarded as an ephemeral publication. Similarly, Hunter regularly noted that he had purchased the *Oeconomist; or, Englishman's Magazine*, but he did not record when or how it was read.¹⁸

During 1797 Hunter bought a number of secondhand books, pamphlets, and handbills from "Book John," who is described as "a person who stands in the Market place and sells books" (fol. 30v). Evans persuaded him not to make any further purchases in this manner, however, after he bought a *Petition to the House of Commons* for 6d. in September of that year.¹⁹ Evans disapproved of this purchase because he thought Hunter would not "read much" of it (fol. 8v). As a consequence, during the following year Evans bought a number of secondhand texts that were designed to be consulted regularly. These included eighteen volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* acquired for £8 8s., which, Hunter noted with disdain, "had never been opened" by their previous owner (fol. 15v).²⁰ This evidence reveals that new and secondhand books were easily available in Sheffield in the late 1790s. Hunter and his family, however, chose to concentrate on the purchase of new periodicals and newspapers. These texts were central to their local reading community, and the fact that even this relatively wealthy family purchased the *Iris* collectively indicates that regular access to new texts came at a cost that was still beyond the means of the majority of readers. **[End Page 25]**

The collective purchase of the *Iris* offers an example of the informal exchange of texts among friends and family that is often recorded in the diary. Hunter borrowed or was given a number of books by a friend of the family, but the majority of exchanged texts were copies of the *Monthly Magazine* and the *Monthly Review*. These "ephemeral" publications were at the center of his reading experience, and their significance is underlined by their frequent transformation into book form through binding. Hunter recorded reading only eleven of the twenty-eight texts that he

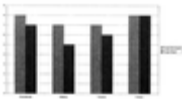


received from friends and family during 1798 (see [Fig. 1](#)), but much of this deficit is accounted for because he did not record reading each of the twelve numbers of the *Monthly Magazine* that were lent to him by Miss Haynes.

Hunter also acquired texts from the "Vestry" or "Chapel" book society and a commercial circulating library. He was connected to the book society by his attendance at the Presbyterian chapel and must have become a subscriber during the early months of 1798, but it played a significant role in his reading only after 24 June, when he noted: "The Vestry Library has lately been new-modelled, they take in any kind of books whereas, previously they had only divinity. There are at present about 70 vols and 22 subscribers" (fol. 20r).²¹ His interest was stimulated by the expansion into subjects and genres other than "divinity," and during the next few months he borrowed thirteen volumes, including Mary Wollstonecraft's *Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1794). However, Hunter often made little progress with these texts once he returned home with them, or borrowed them for his friends to read rather than for his own consumption.²² He read Wollstonecraft in full, and borrowed it a second time for Miss Haynes to read, but several texts are recorded as read "in part" or "looked at." These incidences reveal some of Hunter's strategies of consumption. By patronizing several libraries he was able to access a number of new texts each week and to assess them at home in order to decide which ones he was going to complete. On 4 November 1798 he borrowed Anthony Robinson's *A View of the Causes and Consequences of English Wars* (1798) from the Vestry, but after having "looked at" it he decided to continue reading a volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, borrowed from Surrey Street (fol. 41r).²³

As an alternative source of reading to Surrey Street, the Vestry performed a function partially fulfilled in the previous year by Thomas Lindley, who is described as "a hairdresser and owner of a circulating library" in a local trade directory.²⁴ Hunter did not subscribe to Lindley's library but paid to borrow fiction at the rate of 1d. for "2 days & 1 night" (fol. 10r). He used this institution only once during 1798, and recorded his disappointment with the novel *The Castle of Mowbray* (1788), borrowed because its title echoed that of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) (fol. 17v).²⁵ This **[End Page 26]** suggests that Brewer is correct in assuming that subscription library users increased their access to fiction by visiting circulating libraries, but in this case that use was infrequent and does not significantly alter the pattern of reading revealed by the diaries.²⁶ As [Figure 2.1](#) demonstrates, Hunter did not need to rely on the circulating library for fiction because Surrey Street had a large selection of contemporary novels as well as works by Richardson, Swift, and Fielding. This particular instance of borrowing seems to have occurred because Hunter was prevented from completing *The Castle of Otranto* by Evans, who had lent the volume to one of his friends. Hunter must therefore have searched Lindley's catalogue for the same title and, unable to find it, chosen another which promised the same gothic locale. His disappointment with *The Castle of Mowbray* demonstrates one of the perils of choosing a novel from the catalogue by title. In the previous year the circulating library had been used to complete a novel borrowed from Surrey Street: "I brought the 2d Volume of the 'Minstrel or Anecdotes of Distinguished Persons in ye 15 Century'. . . . The 1st volume being lost at our library I got it at Lindley's Library in Church Lane" (fol. 9v, 29/04/1797).²⁷ This evidence suggests that the notion of the subscription library as an institution dominated by texts concerned with the "civic preoccupations and commercial interests of their members" may need to be modified, and underlines Hunter's ability to move with ease between different libraries.²⁸

The Sheffield Book Society or Surrey Street Library was an important institution. Founded in 1771, shortly after the inauguration of a subscription **[End Page 27]** library at Leeds, it had 117 members in 1798 and regularly published its catalogue and regulations. To join the library a prospective member had first to be nominated, and once this nomination was approved by at least two-thirds of the members, to pay three guineas as an admission fee and a further ten shillings annually.²⁹ Joseph Evans acted as president of the library on several occasions during its early years and he undoubtedly encouraged Hunter to use this institution.³⁰ [Figure 2.1](#) and [2.2](#) reconstruct Hunter's borrowing using the subject divisions of the 1798 catalogue. This catalogue



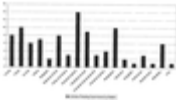
was an important document in Hunter's reading experience: in May 1798 he bought a copy to consult at home (fol. 16v).

It is immediately apparent that Hunter did not borrow any texts from certain subject areas within the catalogue (Arts & Sciences, Divinity, Politics, and Voyages) and that his reading was dominated by texts from the imprecise category "Moral and Miscellaneous."³¹ This contained any prose fiction that could not be included in the Novels section of the catalogue and the majority of monthly periodicals. Of the items borrowed from this category, three can be reclassified as fiction, but the majority were current issues of periodicals such as the *European Magazine*. [Figure 3](#) redistributes texts from the "Miscellaneous" category into their nearest modern equivalents (Periodicals and Fiction), but we need to remember that their original categorization may have played an important role in Hunter's selection process. In this modified picture of Hunter's borrowing and reading from Surrey Street, the balance is more even, with an almost equal spread of texts among Travels, History, Periodicals, and Fiction. The figures for the last are **[End Page 28]** boosted by the four volumes of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) that he read for a second time between 13 August and 3 September 1798 (fols. 26r-30r).³²

Kaufman found that the texts most frequently borrowed in Bristol came from the subject division "History, Antiquities and Geography," which included texts listed under Travels and Voyages in the Surrey Street catalogue. The dominance of these subjects is reflected in Hunter's borrowing record, which includes sixteen texts that fall into these areas, but the record does not simply confirm Kaufman's picture. The fifth most popular category in Bristol, Theology, does not feature at all in Hunter's borrowing.³³ Hunter did not need to borrow sacred texts because he had access to them from friends and family and from among the seven hundred books in his guardian's library.³⁴ Given this background, it is perhaps not surprising that he chose to use the subscription library as a source of travel, history, and fiction, but it is significant that throughout 1798 he recorded only five instances of the private reading of sacred texts. Two of these instances refer to "Sunday reading" (fol. 37r) and suggest that he treated sacred texts as significantly different from those that he consumed during the week. His main mode of access to sacred material came via the pulpit rather than from print. Hunter attended the chapel to hear sermons at least once each week, but the diary is at best vague about how he reacted to them. He occasionally noted the chapter and verse from which the subject of the sermon was taken, but, in the majority of instances, he recorded only the names of the speaker and the members of the social gathering that took place afterward.³⁵ **[End Page 29]** The reading aloud of sacred texts framed Hunter's reading experience, but his very lack of response to these texts suggests that they were perceived as part of a mechanistic, ritual practice, in which interpretation was the work of the speaker rather than the listener.

Although it is not surprising that Hunter should restrict his borrowing from Surrey Street to texts not available from other informal sources, the amount of contemporary material that he borrowed is remarkable. Of the thirty-nine texts borrowed, thirty-one were first published in the 1790s, with twenty-three of these published in 1797-99. Texts found in the Geography-History-Travels area of the subject divide, which Hunter most frequently used, were notoriously expensive. Thus, in common with many readers, Hunter could afford to borrow but not to buy these texts, and it is significant that his only source for travel books was Surrey Street, with a large number of subscribers who could defray the cost.³⁶ We can therefore conclude that he used this institution to supply new and expensive secular texts that were not available from any other source.

Hunter's diaries reveal the interaction of the reader with available networks of distribution, and confirm that it was possible for a young middle-class reader to access texts with apparent ease from a number of different institutions, including both a subscription and a circulating library. They record that he regularly visited many of the booksellers located in the town, and provide evidence of the way in which he used different institutions to supply different sorts of texts. The reading life that they describe is far more complex than that which would be revealed by a study of either the borrowing records of one of the libraries to which he belonged, should they be discovered, or of



the contents of his family library. As Wallace Kirsop has argued, evidence of the ways in which readers acquired and consumed texts is vital to book history because it is this relationship that provides the vital connections among production, distribution, and reception that completes the communication circuit on which the discipline is based.³⁷

II. Consuming Texts

[Figure 1](#) revealed that Hunter borrowed or was given more texts than he actually read. [Figure 4](#) breaks down this reading by subject.³⁸ It confirms that his reading experience was dominated by texts and genres available from the various libraries to which he belonged and underlines the importance of periodicals. However, the diary undoubtedly underrepresents the number of periodicals that he read, and his consumption of sermons at the chapel also needs to be taken into account. These figures demonstrate the **[End Page 30]** complexities of Hunter's reading life, but the diary is also important because it reveals the various modes of consumption that he applied to these texts.

Hunter's reading experience was in part determined by the rules of the subscription library. Up to two texts could be borrowed at any one time, as long as one of them was a play or periodical, and the size of the text and the date of its acquisition by the library determined the date on which it had to be returned. A periodical could be kept for just two nights and a quarto a month, but this time was halved if the book had been purchased within the last six months, as many of those that Hunter read were. Fines were imposed for late returns and the volume had to remain in the library for at least one day before it could be borrowed again by the same reader.³⁹

Because titles were borrowed by the volume rather than in their entirety, the completion of a work could be a long and fragmented process entailing several visits to the library. This meant that Hunter sometimes read the volumes of a text in a different order than was intended by the author, and that he had to wait for the relevant volume to be returned by another reader in order to complete a title.⁴⁰ For example, he borrowed the second volume of Helen Maria Williams's *A Tour in Switzerland* (1798) on 22 October along with a copy of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which needed to be returned after two nights. After making notes from the *Tour*, he returned it to the library on 24 October and replaced it with the first volume, which he kept until 5 November. To complete the entire text took just over two weeks, and during that time he also read a number of periodicals via the two-night loan system (fols. 38v, 41r). Some texts, such as George Staunton's **[End Page 31]** *An Authentic Account of an Embassy* (1797), which Hunter described as "in universal demand," were more difficult to complete. He returned volume 1 of this text after noting in the diary that he intended to read the second, but until it became available a few days later he had to content himself with Robert Townson's *Travels in Hungary* (1797) (fols. 30v, 31v). He also sometimes returned a volume before completing a reading and had to wait until it became available again: "As I had not finished 'Zimmerman On Solitude' when it became time to return it to the library, I brought it again today" (fol. 35v).⁴¹ By contrast, texts owned, such as the *Encyclopaedia*, were regularly consulted throughout the year, and he took a considerable number of weeks to complete a copy of *Tristram Shandy* borrowed from a friend.

The Surrey Street Library operated via a monthly meeting at which the members were invited to nominate texts. If these texts met with the approval of a majority of members, they were then bought and housed within the library. Hunter decided which texts he wanted to nominate by reading a number of periodicals, including the *Monthly Review* and the *Monthly Magazine*: "The Monthly Magazine contains an account of the publication of that long expected work by Mr Conder of Ipswich, 'an Arrangement of Provincial Coins, Tokens and Medalets Issued in Great Britain, Ireland and the Colonies, Within the Last Twenty Years, from the Farthing to the Penny Size.' Price 7s 6d in Boards. I intend to get this proposed at the Surry Street Library" (fol. 35v, 06/10/1798).⁴² Each number of the *Monthly* contained "a correct list of new publications," which gave full details about the size, price, and publisher of a text just published and, on occasion, a

brief sketch of its contents. Full reviews of texts only appeared in the "half-yearly retrospect of domestic literature" printed in January and July. The *Monthly Review*, as its title suggests, provided full reviews of recently published texts. In this instance the *Monthly Magazine* kept Hunter informed about a subject that he was already interested in--it was for him a "long expected" publication--but the diaries also reveal that reading the periodicals stimulated his desire to read new (and expensive) texts:

Brought also the European Magazine for June '98 [from Surrey Street], & the Monthly Review for Aug '98 from Miss Haynes. Took the 2 vols of Monthly Magazines to Miss Haynes's & brought 5 other numbers. The Reviews and Magazines are full of Walpole's works in 5 vols 4to L10 10s. It appears to contain very curious things from what I have seen in the Reviews &c. If their funds should allow it I wish they should get it into the Surry Street Library. (fol. 30r, 04/09/1798) **[End Page 32]**

Walpole's *Works* were not bought by the library when they were published in July 1798 because the committee thought them too expensive, but Hunter's account of the periodicals as "full" of reviews of this text is very accurate.⁴³ A serialized review appeared in the *Monthly Review* between July and October 1798, and Hunter's description of the size and price of the text directly echoes the announcement of its publication in the *Monthly Magazine* for May 1798, which also contained four pages of "Walpoliana."⁴⁴ The diaries thus provide important evidence of the way in which the periodicals stimulated Hunter's desire to see a particular text or to read a particular author. Unable or unwilling to buy these texts, he either put them forward for nomination or hoped that another member of the subscription library would nominate them.

Through the process of nominating texts for inclusion, the subscription library encouraged the public discussion of texts and the use of the periodicals as a measure of the quality, or indication of the contents, of a text. The system of nominations was democratic, but its purpose was to negotiate difference. It is this process of meeting and selection that constitutes the subscription library as a reading community. The committee prevented the entry of books that did not meet majority approval and allowed periodicals already taken by the library to be discontinued if the majority no longer wanted them:

Brought "Anecdotes of the Founders of the French Revolution." . . . A second volume has since appeared but they have not voted it into the library, as they have probably found the 1st volume to be too "jacobinical" for them to digest. (fol. 34v, 29/09/1798)

Brought the 2[n]d number of the Anti-Jacobin Review & Magazine, which is got into the Surry Street Library instead of the Analytical which they have turned out. It is a most virulent attack upon all the friends of liberty or *jacobins*, as they are pleased to stile them; it is ornamented with caricature prints. (fol. 40v, 31/10/1798)

In these entries Hunter implies that the committee had begun to deliberately exclude "Jacobinical" material from the library. The context of the decision to replace the *Analytical Review* with the *Anti-Jacobin* is important. Britain was engaged in the revolutionary wars against France and the news of Nelson's famous victory on the Nile reached Sheffield on 3 October 1798, three weeks before Hunter made this entry. It is possible that, in the political climate engendered by the war, the library began to consider the political content of texts in a new light and excluded material that could be interpreted **[End Page 33]** as supporting the revolutionary ideas of the French.

Whatever the motives for these exclusions, they had the effect of making Hunter conscious of his own difference from the majority of readers, who had voted for the exclusion of a text from which he regularly transcribed passages. His critical reading of the *Anti-Jacobin* demonstrates that it was possible for a young reader to adopt a reading strategy that was resistant to the library's acquisitions.

Periodicals were central to the reading community to which Hunter and his family belonged. He borrowed them from the subscription library and shared them with friends and, as [Figure](#)

⁴⁴demonstrates, he used them as a source of information about new texts, and copied poetry from their pages into his manuscript books. The diary also contains evidence that suggests that they influenced the selection and interpretation of texts that the library already held. For example, on 11 October 1798, Hunter recorded that he had borrowed Samuel Pratt's *Gleanings Through Wales, Holland, and Westphalia* (1795) from Surrey Street because "the Reviewers gave it a very good character" (fol. 36v), and many of the texts that he read in 1798 had received extensive critical attention in the *Monthly Review*.⁴⁵ Of course, they were not his only guides to selection, and he recorded the opinion of other readers on works of history and travel, but he was often deferent to the authority of the magazines and reviews on the subject of fiction:

Took the "Castle of Otranto" to the [Surrey Street] Library. It is one of the most entertaining novels I ever read--There is a note of his in [the] Monthly Magazine for May under the article Walpoliana, written in the year 1784, wherein he says he thinks that a romance may be formed wherein every incident shall appear supernatural & yet turn out natural at last. In this manner the romances of Mrs Radcliffe are formed. Brought from thence Mrs Radcliffe's Tour in Holland, Germany & to the lakes in England. (fol. 17v, 02/06/1798)⁴⁶

In this instance, the reading of the novel and the periodical interacted, although it is hard to distinguish whether the magazine was read in the context of the novel or the novel read in the context of the magazine. Nevertheless, Hunter applied Walpole's "new idea of a novel" to a series of texts that he had already completed, the novels of Ann Radcliffe, and the recognition of the applicability of Walpole's theory to these texts obviously influenced his decision to borrow Radcliffe's *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (1795).⁴⁷

Hunter's deference to the cultural authority of the periodicals, and the influence of the interpretative strategies deployed by the reviewer, can be **[End Page 34]** seen in his reading of the anonymously authored *Fragments; in the Manner of Sterne* (1797): "Mr E[vens] brought 'Fragments in the Manner of Sterne' '1797' from the library. The Monthly Review says it is the best imitation of Sterne that has ever appeared. I finished it that night & was very pleased with it; I think I will read 'Tristram Shandy.' . . . Wrote out of Fragments the piece upon war" (fol. 19r, 13/06/1798, 17/06/1798).⁴⁸ It is significant that Hunter refers to the opinion of the periodical reviewer rather than his guardian and, as his reference to what "the Monthly Review says" suggests, he appears to have read the review and text in tandem. That the review had some influence over the way in which the *Fragments* were interpreted is proven by the fact that he transcribed "the piece upon war" that is also reproduced in the magazine. This chapter was central to the reviewer's deliberately ambiguous "party" or "political" reading of the text, but it is impossible to tell from the diaries whether Hunter also engaged in a political reading.⁴⁹ In this instance Hunter's own enjoyment of the text and critical opinion combined to make him consider reading *Tristram Shandy*. Hunter's reading of Sterne's novel between 8 July and 7 August 1798 illustrates the way in which the various sources of texts combined and interacted. Hunter came across the imitation of Sterne by chance when his guardian brought it from the Surrey Street Library and he immediately placed it within the critical discourse of the *Monthly Review*, borrowed either from the library or from Miss Haynes. He acquired the novel itself from Mr. Meanley, a friend of the family, and on completing the text he again situated it within current critical opinion: "It has of late become the fashion to cry down Sterne as the greatest plagiarist but if he made free with other peoples writings, we may excuse him, for he has put them into such beautiful language that they are hardly known" (fol. 25v, 07/08/1798). This passage uses the language of Ferrier's "Comments on Sterne," available in the library in a periodical cited by Hunter, and reflects the liberal critical stance taken toward "plagiarism" by the *Monthly Magazine* in the article "Poetical or Prose Imitations and Similarities," included in the May 1798 issue.⁵⁰

This evidence suggests that the critical strategies and reviews of texts available via the periodical press helped Hunter to make sense of texts, but he approached each of his own reviews of fiction with a confident, independent voice. Hunter's reading constantly acknowledges the importance of the periodical reviews, and there are several examples in the diary of him paying special attention

to passages highlighted by the reviewers, but they did not enforce a particular reading, and he sometimes explicitly disagreed with them.⁵¹ In his reading of Radcliffe's novel *The Italian* (1797), Hunter referred to the same passage highlighted in the *Monthly Review*, but he disagreed with the reviewer's opinion that this was the best of her novels (fol. 5r).⁵² That some of the diary entries mimic the structure of reviews by including **[End Page 35]** a summary of a text followed by an extract or discussion of a particular scene suggests that the reviews influenced the way he approached texts and contributed to his sense of self as a reader. His summary of the *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) provides a balanced account of the "merits" and defects of the work, and he confidently describes himself as "one of that class of readers who delight in the Marvellous" (fol. 30r). Unlike Anna Larpent, who was twenty-five years his senior, Hunter did not express a censorious view of novels and enjoyed them to the full without placing them within a purposive reading program.⁵³

Hunter read all four volumes of the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, in order, before producing his summary of the text. This procedure is typical of his reading of fiction, but he engaged in a number of other different reading practices, as is apparent in his approaches to the Travels section of the Surrey Street catalogue. He borrowed Campbell's *Journey Overland to India* (1795) on 27 July because "we had a very high character given of it," and read some of it that day, possibly aloud to his guardian. Before returning the book to the library on 6 August, he transcribed a large section of it into the diary and recorded that it contained both humorous and affecting narratives (fols. 23r-25v). In contrast, he did not read any of the text of Pennant's *Outlines of the Globe: The View of Hindoostan* (1798), borrowed on the day that he returned Campbell: "Took Pennant's View of Hindoostan to Library; I have not read it but, Mr E says it is very entertaining. There are some beautiful plates in it" (fol. 26r, 13/08/1798).⁵⁴

Hunter often recorded his response to the nonverbal elements of texts, and the copying of illustrations is an important feature of his reading of travel literature. For example, he drew "the view of Strawberry Hill" contained in Ireland's *Picturesque Views on the River Thames* (1792) on the day that he borrowed this book, but he did not proceed to read the text until several days later (fol. 22v). Hunter undoubtedly focused his reading on this image of Walpole's home because of his growing enthusiasm for the author. Similarly, he borrowed Radcliffe's *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (1795) because he had completed reading her fictional works, and both of the entries that record his reaction to this text suggest that he focused on "her descriptions" of landscape in order to produce an experience that was close to his reading of the novels.⁵⁵

In the wake of the French Revolution, travel literature was often explicitly political, but Hunter rarely seems to have responded to this content. In confronting this kind of material in *A Tour in Switzerland* (1798), he applied Williams's experience to his own hometown and class, rather than to the postrevolutionary political climate: "Thought the following remarks in Miss Williams was exceeding applicable to the manufacturers of Sheffield: 'There is a spirit in that class, in all countries, more favourable to inquiry & **[End Page 36]** consequently more hostile to unconditional submission.' Vol 2 p. 227" (fol. 38v, 23/10/1798).

Such instances of transcription from this genre are rare. Volume 1 of the *Tour* was read rapidly, and Hunter did not always complete a text once borrowed: "Brought 'Townson's Travels in Hungary'. I have read part of Townson, but I think I shall read no more as it consists of nothing else but mineralogical & botanical remarks" (fol. 31v, 15/09/1798). Townson failed to provide the level of "entertainment" (fol. 31v) that Hunter experienced in reading other texts from this genre; no further reading took place and the volume was returned after five days (fol. 33r). That Hunter used books from this genre in many different ways underlines some of the difficulties that we experience in confronting "inert sources," such as library borrowing records and family library inventories. The study of Hunter's reading experience provides evidence that he used travel literature in ways far different than we may have expected from an examination of their contents.⁵⁶ Hunter often read texts in part, or plundered them for illustrations, rather than engaging with

them in their entirety. His experience provides a useful corrective to theories of reader response that assume that historical readers dealt with the text as an organic whole.⁵⁷

Both Roger Chartier and John Brewer have demonstrated that the space in which a reading took place and its mode (silent or aloud) could significantly alter the meaning of a text that was stable in its letter and fixed in its form.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, Hunter was more concerned with recording provenance than either the place or mode that characterized his reading, but it is possible to draw some tentative conclusions about these aspects of his reading experience. The "account of how I spent the day hour by hour," made on 10 August 1798, was designed to represent a typical working day. He rose at 7:00 a.m. and "drew part of a Landscape," wrote in his diary and "read a little in" the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, before walking to work at 9:00. He read "part of the Iris" while eating his lunch at home between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m., and after returning from the warehouse at 5:00, spent nearly three hours reading "in the Encyclopaedia" before retiring to bed at 10:15 (fol. 25v). Each of these readings took place in the home from a text that he owned, but he does not record whether he read in company or alone, in his own room or with the family, in silence or aloud. That home was the most common venue for his reading is suggested by the fact that he notes when he is reading in an unusual space such as his workplace or a carriage.⁵⁹ The type of reading, like the location, was too much a part of the fabric of everyday life to have received much comment in the diary, but there is enough evidence to suggest that texts were read both silently and aloud within the home. In April 1797, Hunter recorded that he was unable to summarize the plot of Macklin's *Man of the World* (1785) because he had **[End Page 37]** "neither heard, nor read it all" (fol. 7r), and he appears to have read at least one text aloud in 1798: "Brought Donald Campbell's 'Journey Over Land to India'. We had a very high character given of it & the little I have read has not disappointed us" (fol. 23r, 27/07/1798).⁶⁰

That Hunter only occasionally recorded such instances suggests that he did the majority of his reading silently. This conclusion is supported by those occasions on which he noted that the texts he had borrowed from the library were passed on to other readers. For example, he discussed Pennant's *View of Hindoostan*, which he had borrowed and given to his guardian, but he did not listen to him read it aloud, and instead continued with his own private reading of one of Radcliffe's novels (fol. 26r). The public performance of texts was far less significant to Hunter than it was for Anna Larpent, whose family regularly read aloud together, but the discussion of texts with his family and friends was an important feature of his reading experience.

Silent reading was the dominant rather than the only reading practice in which Hunter engaged. The theory of the "reading revolution" ties "silent" and "extensive" reading together into a teleological model, but, as other studies have demonstrated, the reader who consumed a large number of texts from a wide range of genres could participate in diverse modes of reading, and did not necessarily pass from one text to another without close study.⁶¹ Hunter read at least eighty-eight texts during the six months in which he kept the 1798 sequence of the diary and many of these he read rapidly, or in part, before returning them to the library or friend from whom they were borrowed.⁶² That Hunter left such a detailed record of his reading, however, demonstrates that he was a far from passive reader, and the diary was only one of several manuscript books into which he transcribed extracts. Much of this manuscript material has been lost, but entries in the diary describe his use of a commonplace book, a notebook in which he recorded the plots of novels, and a number of manuscript volumes into which he transcribed material relating to the history of Sheffield. Summary and transcription were thus very important elements in Hunter's reading experience, and many of the entries in the diary contain the phrases "copied," "wrote out of," and "began to write into my common place book."⁶³

Hunter made transcriptions from many different forms and genres, mainly from texts acquired from the libraries, and extracts copied into the diary could often be as short as the sentence from Williams's *Tour*, reproduced above. Entries in the commonplace book, however, could be extensive. On 31 August 1798 he transcribed the entire first chapter of Zimmerman's *On Solitude* (1797), and on several other occasions he copied complete poems from the magazines and

reviews (fol. 29r). As I have demonstrated elsewhere, transcription provided the borrower with a library of [End Page 38] extracts from texts that they could not otherwise afford, and suggests both an interrogative reading practice and the desire to reread.⁶⁴ The diary and the commonplace book contained notes on provenance and detailed references that allowed a text to be retrieved from the library and the relevant passage discovered, but Hunter does not record that this occurred during 1798.⁶⁵ Unlike Larpent, Hunter did not return repeatedly to texts that included favorite passages or intensely scrutinize sacred texts. His wide reading program did not exclude the close study of texts, but it is difficult to characterize this reading as "intensive" without emptying this term of much of its meaning. Hunter did not read texts closely in order to reconfirm his religious faith or sense of self, as Larpent did, but as part of an autodidactic project that would help to transform him from a manufacturer's son into a leading intellectual figure.⁶⁶

This evidence confirms Brewer's assertion that a "diversity of reading practices" existed at the end of the eighteenth century, but for Hunter this diversity of practice was founded upon access to a wide range of texts from the various public and private libraries that he visited. The diary emphasizes both the mobility of texts in Hunter's immediate circle--they move between the library and home and are exchanged by friends--and the modernity of his reading. Hunter's reading experience was filled with contemporary books and periodicals, but they came at a cost that not every reader could afford. His reading experience provides valuable evidence about a specific reading community, but it is important to remember that there are a diversity of reading communities at any one historical moment.

Hunter's diary is important because it reveals the concrete historical practices of the reader. It provides valuable evidence about the social distribution of texts, the importance of libraries to the urban middle class, and the influence of new critical discourses upon interpretation. It discovers the importance of practices, such as transcription, otherwise lost to the historical record, and confirms that readers could engage in a number of different reading practices. Such evidence suggests that the study of reading experience will play a vital part in raising questions about the way in which we theorize and discuss the history of reading. To establish Hunter's typicality, his place in the history of reading, however, will entail examining other contemporary diaries, self-made anthologies, and annotated books alongside the evidence of representations of the reader in reviews and other published materials.

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Notes

1. John Brewer, "Reconstructing the Reader: Prescriptions, Texts and Strategies in Anna Larpent's Reading," in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Raven et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 226-45, 227. For an examination of the limitations of inventories and other sources that record the possession of books, see Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 1-23. For a discussion of representations of the reader, see Arianne Baggerman, "The Cultural Universe of a Dutch Child: Otto Van Eck and His Literature," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 31, no. 1 (1997): 129-34.

2. Stephen Colclough, "Recovering the Reader: Commonplace Books and Diaries as Sources of Reading Experience," *Publishing History* 44 (1998): 5-37. For the Reading Experience Database, see Simon Eliot, "The Reading Experience Database: Problems and Possibilities," *Publishing History* 39 (1996): 87-97.

3. [Sylvester Hunter], *A Brief Memoir of the Late Joseph Hunter, F.S.A. With a Descriptive Catalogue of his Principal Separate Publications and Contributions to the "Archaeologia"* (London: John Edward Taylor, 1861). Both this memoir and the entry for Hunter in the *Dictionary of National Biography* do not mention the time that Hunter spent as an apprentice. He is best known as the author of *Hallamshire: The History and Topography of the Parish of Sheffield* (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones, 1819), and as the editor of *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F.R.S.* (London: Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1830).

4. "The Journal of Joseph Hunter," British Library Add MSS 24,879. This fifty-seven-page document begins and ends in mid-sentence. It contains entries for 3-25 March 1797 (fols. 1r-4v), 27 March-29 August 1797 (fols. 5r-15r), 14 May-18 November 1798 (fols. 15v-42r), and 2 February-20 July 1799 (fols. 42v-57v). The original pagination suggests that the entries for 3-25 March 1797 were once part of a separate volume. "Fragment of a Journal of Joseph Hunter," British Library, Add MSS 24,880, contains entries for 20 April-May 23 1800 (fols. 1-18v), and also begins and ends in mid-sentence. "Collectanea Hunteranea," British Library, Add MSS 24,441, contains a limited number of diary entries made between 2 January and 20 September 1806 (fols. 2r-9v), many in shorthand, and for 26-28 [January ?] 1807 (fols. 10r-11r).

5. "The Journal of Joseph Hunter," British Library, Add MSS 24,879, fol. 5r. Hereafter, references to this manuscript are given in the text.

6. Hunter gives an extended account of the victory celebrations that took place in Sheffield during October 1798 (fols. 39r-39v).

7. Edmund Lodge, *Illustrations of British History, Biography and Manners in the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, and James I*, 3 vols. (London: G. Nicol, 1791).

8. The diary of Otto Van Eck, who was Hunter's senior by just two years, was regularly scrutinized by his parents. Baggerman, "The Cultural Universe of a Dutch Child," 130.

9. Brewer, "Reconstructing the Reader, 226-45. Baggerman, "The Cultural Universe of a Dutch Child," 129-34. For a discussion of audience formation in the 1790s, see Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 18-47.

10. Paul Kaufman, "Some Reading Trends in Bristol 1773-84," in *Libraries and Their Users* (London: Library Association, 1969), 28-35. For an examination of a single subscription library, see M. Kay Flavell, "The Enlightened Reader and the New Industrial Towns: A Study of the Liverpool Library, 1758-1790," *British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies* 8 (1985): 17-35. For an overview of the institutions of reading available at this time, see James Raven, "From Promotion to Proscription: Arrangements for Reading and Eighteenth-Century Libraries," in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England, 175-201*.

11. [John Robinson], *A Directory of Sheffield Including the Manufacturers of the Local Villages* (Sheffield: James Montgomery, 1797), 12. Robinson compiled the population figures from the parish registers. He estimated that the population of Sheffield had increased by nearly four thousand between 1788 and 1796.

12. Hunter's normal practice was to record the date on which he borrowed or purchased a text and then to record his response to it on the day he returned or completed it. The figures are a record of the number of volumes that he acquired and read rather than the number of titles, as this provides a more accurate representation of his reading experience. Texts that he read in part have been included in the figures for texts read.

13. The name of this institution does not seem to have been formalized until the nineteenth century, when it became the Sheffield Library. In the diary, Hunter refers to this subscription library as the "book society," "the library," and the "Surry Street Library." Each of these descriptions is used in the 1798 catalogue, *A Catalogue of the Library Belonging to the Book Society Held at the House of Esther Caterer in Surry Street, Sheffield* (Sheffield: Pierson, 1798).

14. "Saw in Woollen's (the caricature shop) a neat view of the Cotton Mill" (fol. 38r). "Saw at Book Johns . . . New Memoirs of Literature for the Year 1725" (fol. 30v). Hunter transcribed a passage from "the printed description" that accompanied a medal given to him by Mr. Scholfield (fol. 19v).

15. Gabriel Silvertongue [James Montgomery], *The Whisperer* (Sheffield: Montgomery, 1798); George Smith, *A Sermon Delivered in the Parish Church of Sheffield to the Original United Lodge of Odd Fellows . . . July 9 1798* (Sheffield: Montgomery, 1798).

16. Hunter recorded a visit to this shop to buy ink on 19 May 1798 (fol. 16r). It acted as the main retailer of texts printed by Montgomery, as the title page of Smith's *Sermon* records, and Evans undoubtedly also purchased both that volume and the *Iris* there.

17. Evans purchased the paper in conjunction with Mr. Meanley and Miss Haynes, both of whom regularly supplied Hunter with texts.

18. Hunter regularly read a number of periodicals that Klancher has argued had distinctly different ways of addressing their audiences. They included the recently founded *Oeconomist* (1798), the *Monthly Magazine* (1796), and the *Analytical Review* (1788), as well as the long-established *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *Monthly Review*. Klancher, *Making of English Reading Audiences*, 44-45.

19. I have been unable to identify this text with any certainty. Numerous volumes published in the seventeenth and eighteenth century include in their title the phrase a "Petition to the House of Commons."

20. Evans's other main purchase was William Enfield, *Prayers for the Use of Families* (London: Newry, 1771), for which he paid four shillings (fol. 16v). Evans attempted to buy an encyclopedia for Hunter at an auction on 20 April 1797, but he stopped bidding when the price reached seven guineas (fol. 8v).

21. Hunter recorded that he attended the monthly meeting of the Vestry book society on 2 September 1798: "voted in only one book . . . & one member" (fol. 29r).

22. Kaufman has noted that the main problem with library borrowing records is determining whether readers actually completed the texts that they had borrowed: "Some Reading Trends in Bristol," 34. Hunter borrowed texts that were read by both his guardian and Miss Haynes: "Took [Mary Wollstonecraft's] 'Letters from Norway &c' back to the vestry library. I did not read them but Mr E. said they were very entertaining and instructive" (fol. 20v, 01/07/1798).

23. Anthony Robinson, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of English Wars* (London: Johnson, 1798).

- [24.](#) [John Robinson], *A Directory of Sheffield*, 34.
- [25.](#) [Mrs. Harley], *The Castle of Mowbray: An English Romance by the Author of St. Bernard's Priory* (London: C. Stalker & H. Setchell, 1788).
- [26.](#) John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 182.
- [27.](#) *The Minstrel; or, Anecdotes of Distinguished Personages in the Fifteenth Century. A Novel* (London: Hookham & Carpenter, 1793).
- [28.](#) Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 180.
- [29.](#) *A Catalogue of the Library Belonging to the Book Society Held at the House of Esther Caterer in Surry Street, Sheffield* (Sheffield: Pierson, 1798), i-iv. For an analysis of the class background of the membership of the library, see Sara E. Joynes, "The Sheffield Library, 1771-1907," *Library History 2* (1971): 91-116.
- [30.](#) Evans was president in 1773, 1776, and 1784. T. A. Ward, *Short Account of the Sheffield Library* (Sheffield: Bacon, 1825), 4.
- [31.](#) Four of the texts that he borrowed were new acquisitions and therefore not included in the 1798 catalogue. These include John Gifford, *A Short Address to the Members of the Loyal Association* (London: T. N. Longman, 1798), and Frederick Morton Eden, *The State of the Poor; or, An History of the Labouring Classes in England*, 3 vols. (London: J. Davis, 1797), which may be classified as political texts.
- [32.](#) Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 4 vols. (London: G. G. & J. Robinson, 1794).
- [33.](#) Kaufman, "Some Reading Trends in Bristol," 31.
- [34.](#) Hunter catalogued the 723 volumes contained in Evans's library in April 1797 (fol.7r).
- [35.](#) For example, the entry for 17 June 1798 records that "Mr Evans preached at Sheff[ie]ld. We afterwards drank tea with my grandmother & Mr Williams at Miss Haynes's" (fol. 19v).
- [36.](#) Brewer suggests that in the last quarter of the eighteenth century "a substantial history or a piece of travel literature or biography was more expensive than an annual subscription"; *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 178. The annual fee to belong to the Surrey Street Library was ten shillings in 1798. The advertised prices for George Leonard Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy From the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, 2 vols. (London: Nicholson, 1797), and Robert Townson, *Travels in Hungary with a Short Account of Vienna, in the Year 1793* (London: Robinson, 1797), were £1 13s. 6d. and £4 4s., respectively. Hunter borrowed both of these texts during a single week in September 1798.
- [37.](#) Wallace Kirsop, "Booksellers and Their Customers: Some Reflections on Recent Research," *Book History 1* (1998): 283-303, 284.
- [38.](#) Hunter borrowed 123 texts in total. He read at least 88 and recorded 97 separate acts of reading in the 1798 sequence.
- [39.](#) Fines were imposed at the rate of "a halfpenny for every day the book is kept after the time limited," *A Catalogue of the Library*, iii.

40. Alternatively, he could use a different institution to complete the text as occurred in April 1797, when he used Lindley's library to acquire the first volume of a novel (fol. 9v).

41. Helen Maria Williams, *A Tour in Switzerland; or, A View of the Present State of the Government and Manners of those Cantons, with Comparative Sketches of the Present State of France*, 2 vols. (London: G. G. & J. Robinson, 1798); Staunton, *Authentic Account*; Townson, *Travels in Hungary*; Johann Georg Zimmerman, *Solitude Considered With Respect to Its Influence Upon the Mind and Heart . . . Translated From the French of J. B. Mercier* (London: C. Dilly, 1797). Hunter recorded that he was reading the 1797 edition of Zimmerman on 26 August 1798 (fol. 27r).

42. Hunter quotes directly from the notice of publication that appeared in the *Monthly Magazine* 6 (September 1798): 214.

43. "They voted the works of H. Walpole . . . into the Library before they were published but now they are published they have not sent for them, probably on account of the price" (fol. 30r).

44. On 4 August 1798, Hunter recorded: "I am much pleased with the account of Mr Lambton in the *Monthly Mag*. The *Walpoliana* is also very entertaining" (fol. 24r). The *Monthly Magazine* began to publish "Walpoliana; or Bon-mots, Apothegms, Observations on Life and Literature, with Extracts from the Original Letters of the Late Horace Walpole" in March 1798. Such was the popularity of this section of the magazine that it was published in book form as *Walpoliana*, 2 vols. (London: R. Phillips, 1799).

45. Samuel Jackson Pratt, *Gleanings through Wales, Holland and Westphalia, with Views of Peace and War at Home and Abroad* (London: T. N. Longman & L. B. Seeley, 1795). The *Monthly Magazine* argued that this volume would be "particularly acceptable to the sentimental reader," 2 (July 1796): 486-87. Staunton's *An Authentic Account* and Townson's *Travels in Hungary* received extensive serialized reviews in the *Monthly Review* 24 (1797), 1-9, 67-77, 121-36, 169-76. Williams's *A Tour in Switzerland* was the subject of a review that contained long extracts from the text in the *Monthly Magazine* 6 (September 1798): 131-44.

46. The "New Idea of a Novel" is item 51 in the *Walpoliana*. It reads, "I am firmly convinced that a story might be written, of which all the incidents should appear supernatural, yet turn out natural. [This remark was made in 1784]," *Monthly Magazine* 5 (May 1798): 358.

47. *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return Down the Rhine, to which are Added Observations during a Tour to the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland and Cumberland* (London: Robinson, 1795). Hunter borrowed the first volume of *The Italian* (1797) on 20 March 1797 (fol. 3v). The same entry notes that he had already read Radcliffe's *The Castle of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).

48. [William Coombe], *Fragments; in the Manner of Sterne* (London: Debrett, Murray & Highley, 1797). It was reviewed in the *Monthly Review* 24 (October 1797): 271-74.

49. "Some readers may, *in the present temper of the times*, censure the author for giving to it the appearance a *party* production, in which occasion is often taken . . . to display the cruelty of war. . . . In a word the political cast of this performance will appear to different persons in different lights"; *ibid.*, 272.

50. John Ferrier, "Comments on Sterne," *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester* 4 (1793): 45-86. Ferrier wrote: "It has been fashionable of late, to decry the analysis of objects of admiration" (45). Hunter cites a later issue of this periodical some two weeks after

completing the novel (fol. 26v). "Extracts form the Port Folio of a Man of Letters: Poetical or Prose Imitations and Similarities," *Monthly Magazine* 5 (May 1798): 365-67.

51. For an assessment of the interpretative strategies contained in reviews, see James L. Machor, "Historical Hermeneutics and Antebellum Fiction: Gender, Response Theory, and Interpretive Contexts," in *Readers in History: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Contexts of Response*, ed. Machor (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 54-84.

52. *Monthly Review* 22 (1797): 282-84.

53. Brewer argues that for Larpent "reading, even the reading of fiction, . . . becomes purposive, disciplined, a means of overcoming rather than encouraging female frivolity"; "Reconstructing the Reader," 235.

54. Thomas Pennant, *Outlines of the Globe Volume One: The View of Hindoostan* (London: Henry Hughes, 1798).

55. "I took Radcliffe's Tour to the Library. I was not so much entertained with it as I expected, tho her descriptions are very fine" (fol. 18v, 09/06/1798).

56. As Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton have noted, the study of the concrete practices of actual readers is of vital importance to the history of reading: "If we use our own understanding of the salient features of the text of Livy (say) to identify the points of crucial importance to an Elizabethan reader, we are very likely to miss or confuse the methods and objects at which reading was directed"; Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy," *Past and Present* 129 (1990): 30-78, 31. Adrian Johns takes a similar position in his *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 46. For a study that attempts to reconstruct reading experience from the inventories of family libraries, see William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

57. For a discussion of the limitations of reader response theory, see Jonathan Rose, "Rereading the English Common Reader: A Preface to a History of Audiences," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53 (1992): 47-70.

58. Chartier, *The Order of Books*, 16-17. Brewer, "Reconstructing the Reader," 239-42.

59. "Returned from Stannington. Read as I came along a considerable part of 'Cottoni Posthuma' which Mr M[eanley] lent me" (fol. 19r, 11/06/1798). "Saw also in the possession of one of our men the Spy, a periodical . . . in which were some very keen things against the Ministry." (fol. 38, 22/10/1798).

60. Charles Macklin, *The Man of the World: A Comedy* (London: John Bell, 1785); Donald Campbell, *A Journey Over Land to India, Partly by a Route Never Gone Before by Any European*, 4 vols. (London: Cullen & Co., 1795).

61. The terms "intensive" and "extensive" originated in the work of Rolf Engelsing. See his "Die Perioden der Lesergeschichte in der Neuzeit: Das Statistische Ausmass und die Soziokulturelle Bedeutung der Lektüre," *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 10 (1970): 945-1002. They have been popularized in English by David D. Hall, "The Uses of Literacy in New England, 1600-1850," in *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book*, ed. David D. Hall (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 36-76. Brewer has argued that "intensive" and "extensive" reading

acted as alternate, rather than exclusive, reading strategies in the 1790s, "Reconstructing the Reader," 239-44.

[62](#). A further thirty-five texts were borrowed and remained unread or their reading remained unrecorded (see [Fig 1](#)).

[63](#). Hunter was inspired to keep a commonplace book after reading John Locke's "A New Method of a Commonplace Book" in April 1797 (fol. 6r). He recorded that he had started "another paper of anecdotes for my collection of writings relative to Sheffield" on 28 May 1798, that he had begun "a book" in which he intended to write "the plans of some of the best novels" on 14 August 1798 (fol. 26r), and that he was transcribing material from the *Gentleman's Magazine* into his "commonplace" on 5 July 1798 (fol. 21r).

[64](#). "Recovering the Reader: Commonplace Books and Diaries as Sources of Reading Experience," *Publishing History* 44 (1998): 5-37.

[65](#). "Brought the 2[n]d volume of the Antiquarian Repertory; I have read it before but there was a picture in it I wished to draw" (fol. 12r, 03/07/1797).

[66](#). "Intensive" reading implies the reverential examination of familiar texts. Hunter did not engage in this kind of reading, but he did regularly listen to sermons on biblical texts.