2021

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Steven Olsen-Smith
Boise State University

Cheyene Austin
Boise State University

Denise Holbrook
Valdosta State University

Publication Information

Olsen-Smith, Steven; Austin, Cheyene; and Holbrook, Denise. (2021). "'Almost Unknown to the General Reader': Biographical and Conceptual Contexts of Melville's Marginalia in Thomas Warton's *The History of English Poetry*". In P. Spedding and P. Tankard (Eds.), *Marginal Notes: Social Reading and the Literal Margins* (New Directions in Book History series, pp. 205-239). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-56312-7_9

"Almost Unknown to the General Reader": Biographical and Conceptual Contexts of Melville's Marginalia in Thomas Warton's *The History of English Poetry*

Steven Olsen-Smith
Boise State University

Cheyene Austin
Boise State University

Denise Holbrook
Valdosta State University

Following the publication of his seventh book, *Pierre* (1852), Herman Melville's career declined both critically and commercially. This reputational eclipse precipitated the gradual loss or destruction of many of his papers and, owing to his own deliberate avoidance of public attention, a corresponding decline in first-hand testimony about his experiences and opinions. The documentary erosion reached a nadir immediately following his death in 1891, when Melville's personal library of some one thousand books was dispersed among family members and acquaintances and among used-book sellers.[1] Under thirty per cent of Melville's books have been preserved or have resurfaced since his death, offering incomplete but nonetheless compelling evidence of his reading and thought in the form of surviving marginalia in his hand.[2] Most of the books known to survive were acquired by Melville in the 1860s or later, with marginalia spanning the obscure period in question and casting dim but suggestive light on his reading of authors and figures ranging from Homer to Honoré de Balzac.[3] In this later period of Melville's career, he also abandoned fiction for poetry, both as an artistic and epistemological pursuit and as a subject of close study.

Indicative of his late absorption with poetry is Melville's marked and annotated copy of *The History of English Poetry, from the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century*, by Thomas Warton (1728–1790), originally published in three volumes over the years 1774–1781, and owned by Melville in a one-volume undated edition that was printed no earlier than 1872.[4] At 1,032 pages, the volume documents Melville's close attention to Warton's account and analyses of English literature, with markings applied also by Melville to Warton's copious notes and to the many inset examples of poetry excerpted by Warton. As it had been for many readers of English over the preceding hundred years, Warton's *History* was a source of poetic content to Melville, as well as a source of historiographic interest, and one to which he naturally inclined following his transition to verse. But whereas Melville undoubtedly acquired his copy of Warton as an act of that realignment, and whereas the marginalia may in due course reveal modest connections to his late poetic output, it is their unbroken alignment with early preoccupations and themes that distinguishes the evidence of his reading in the volume. In studying Warton's *History*, Melville revisited major writers whose works had profoundly influenced his prose writings earlier in his career; and even his encounters with lesser-known figures in the volume—figures by whom no works owned by Melville are known to survive—illustrate patently familiar interests. As a product, moreover, of conceptual dispositions that had played no small role in eroding his conventional career and accelerating his withdrawal from commercial authorship, Melville's marginalia in Warton's *History* offer striking testament to the durability of his views. As well as addressing the significance of the marginalia as a source of information for Melville's engagement with figures old and new, the present essay explores markings and notes in the volume that illustrate Melville's abiding interest in esoteric modes of literary expression that had propelled his own bids for literary greatness with *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre* and that gravitate, most

[1] Merton M. Sealts, Jr., *Melville's Reading: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 3–12. The authors are grateful to Cora Lee Oxley and John Grady Hansen for their contributions to analysis and research on Melville's marginalia to Warton.

[2] Approximately 290 titles from Melville's library are known to survive; see Steven Olsen-Smith, "An Update on Books Owned, Borrowed, and Consulted by Melville," *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 18, no. 2 (2016): 90.

[3] Sealts's "Checklist of Books Owned and Borrowed" by Melville—from *Melville's Reading*, 143–233—is digitised and continually augmented by Melville's Marginalia Online, ed. Steven Olsen-Smith, Peter Norberg, and Dennis C. Marnon, http://melvillesmarginalia.org. The online project also publishes digital copies of books that survive from Melville's library. See Walker Cowen, *Melville's Marginalia*, 2 vols., Harvard Dissertations in American and English Literature (New York: Garland, 1987). Cowen's dissertation was completed in 1965.

[4] Herman Melville, "Melville's Marginalia in Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry*," Melville's Marginalia Online, accessed 23 May 2017, http://melvillesmarginalia.org. The copy Melville owned is titled *The History of English Poetry, from the Eleventh to the Seventeenth Century* (London: Ward, Lock, and Tyler, Warwick House, n.d.), and references to Melville's marginalia refer to the digital copy of this work and are hereafter supplied parenthetically. First documented by Charles Olson in the 1930s, this copy was rediscovered in 1999 by Dennis C. Marnon and Steven Olsen-Smith. For an account of the provenance, which draws for the 1872 dating on bibliographical research and a survey of contemporaneous library accession dates performed by Marnon, see Steven Olsen-Smith, "A Fourth Supplementary Note to *Melville's Reading*," *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 2, no. 1 (2000): 105–11.

uncannily, to Warton's discussions of lost works, dispersals of libraries, recovered writings, texts concealed by ecclesiastical dictates, banned works, and to other topics that relate meaningfully to Melville's literary experience. They reveal familiar topics that had fascinated him from the early stages of his career up until his death, when obituaries commented that the author had long been assumed dead, and when Melville (to adopt an expression he underlined in Warton) had become "almost unknown to the general reader" (809).

Warton has been widely noted as England's "first true literary historian," credited with reviving interest in medieval romance and ballad forms as he traced the development of English literature, beginning with the Norman conquest.[5] In the words of René Wellek, the *History* "is one of the earliest and greatest monuments of literary historiography."[6] Conversely, since the original publication of *History*, Warton has also been criticised as a disseminator of false information and, by modern scholars, as a populariser of pseudo-medieval historical conceptions that fed the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century taste for gothic sensationalism and what is studied today as *medievalism* in literature and culture, from the eighteenth century to the present. Shortly preceded by the sensations surrounding Thomas Chatterton's forged "Rowley" poems and James MacPherson's spurious "Ossian" poems, the *History* was composed and published in the same era that saw the publication of Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), an anthology of putative medieval texts cited and praised by Warton but attacked, along with the *History*, by contemporary scholar Joseph Ritson as an amalgam of authentic and non-authentic content intentionally designed to promote and indulge romanticised notions of early English history and culture. Ritson called attention to Percy's practice of embellishing and augmenting the ancient manuscript texts he transcribed, improving upon crude compositions and composing new content to fill gaps or replace substandard content in the original texts, so that, in Ritson's words, "a parcel of old rags and tatters were thus ingeniously and haply converted into an elegant new suit." The effect on Percy's readers, Ritson pointed out, was an alluring idea of antiquity that was actually "perfect illusion."[7] In his *Observations on the First Three Volumes of the History of English Poetry* (1782), Ritson condemned Warton's historical method on similar grounds, ridiculing the *History* as "an injudicious *farrago*, a *gallimawfry* of things which both do and do not belong to the subject, thrown and jumbled together, without system, arrangement, or perspicuity."[8] In the notes to his own *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, in which Percy was his main target, Ritson called periodic attention to Warton's "habitual blunders."[9] Notwithstanding Ritson's condemnations, the literary tastes and sensibility engendered by the methods of both Percy and Warton kept the *History* before the public up through the nineteenth century as late as 1871, when William Carew Hazlitt described Warton's study as "emphatically slipshod" in the preface to his own corrected edition of the work, which the editor nonetheless appears to have considered market-worthy a century after its original publication.[10]

Melville's copy of Warton's *History* was probably issued opportunistically for the purpose of siphoning away sales from Carew Hazlitt's newly published corrected edition, conditions that support the probable publication date of 1872. In any case, since that year appears to be the earliest possible publication date of the Ward reprint, Melville's marginalia in the copy can be dated no earlier.[11] Melville's autograph and, presumably, his inscribed date of acquisition in the Ward reprint were long ago lost in the first of the two rebindings of the volume that occurred after his death. Also discarded were the original rear flyleaves and endpapers, where it is possible that Melville inscribed reading notes, which is a practice displayed in a number of surviving books from his library and one likely to have been undertaken by him in a resource of this nature.[12] Neither his marginalia in this volume, or in any other of his surviving books that mention Warton, nor his surviving papers and letters, give any indication that Melville was aware of the contemporaneous controversy surrounding the *History* or even of Carew Hazlitt's condemnations. On the contrary, Melville's marginalia to Warton, which exist among other markings by at least one subsequent owner in the copy, suggest attentiveness to detail and a seriousness of purpose no different from evidence in his hand in other volumes that survive from the period. Indeed, Melville's act of acquiring the book can be construed as part of an advanced

[5] David Fairer, "The Origins of Warton's History of English Poetry," *Review of English Studies* 32, no. 125 (February 1981): 37; David Fairer, "Thomas Warton," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 109 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1991), 276.
[6] René Wellek, "Introduction" to Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry in Four Volumes: A Facsimile of the 1774 Edition*, 4 vols. (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968), 1:v.
[7] Joseph Ritson, *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, ed. Edmund Goldsmid, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: E. and G. Goldsmid, 1884), 1:58, 70.
[8] Joseph Ritson, *Observations on the First Three Volumes of the History of English Poetry* (1782; rpt. New York: Garland, 1971), 48.
[9] Ritson, *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, 1:95n.
[10] Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry*, ed. William Carew Hazlitt, 4 vols. (London: Reeves and Turner, 1871), 1:x.
[11] Hershel Parker's claim that Melville's reading of Warton probably began in 1870 appears based on widespread erroneous datings of the Ward reprint in WorldCat; see OCLC no. 2657970 and Hershel Parker, *Herman Melville: A Biography*, vol. 2 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 710.
[12] For a discussion of the provenance and material details of the copy, see "Documentary Note on Melville's Marginalia in Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry*," Melville's Marginalia Online, accessed 23 May 2017, http://melvillesmarginalia.org.

stage in the deliberate and measured study of poetry and poetics he had commenced more than a decade earlier, and that had now reached a pitch during the composition of his epic poem *Clarel* (1876).[13] But it is also clear from what he marked that Melville relished some of the very topics and narrative conventions in the *History* that earlier and later scholars condemned as catering more to the tastes of readers than serving the work of historical research,[14] though his marginalia in the copy involve no content or observations containing outright factual errors corrected by Carew Hazlitt.

Figs. 1a and 1b. Marked word counts for marginalia attributed to Herman Melville in Thomas Warton's *The History of English Poetry*.

Fig. 2. Marked word counts for marginalia attributed to Herman Melville in Thomas Warton's multi-section account of Geoffrey Chaucer in *The History of English Poetry*.

The size of the volume and the presence of marginalia by later readers present challenges for original research. The volume contains 451 distinctly marked passages totalling approximately 16,485 words on 275 of its 1,032 pages (including abbreviations, digits, and ampersands). Eight of the marking instances are in ink, and 133 are unattributed. There are 318 total instances of marking attributed to Melville (all in pencil) across 46 of the book's 66 chapter sections as well as its index. Attributed instances of marking amount to approximately 13,887 words, and thirteen pencil annotations in Melville's hand amount to approximately 50, several of which are erased and remain unrecovered. Of the attributed pencil markings, sixty-eight apply to Warton's copious inset quotations of poetry by various figures, amounting to 3,605 words of marked verse. (For charts tabulating attributed marked content in prose and verse across the volume by topical sections, see figures 1a and 1b.) Many of these supplement our knowledge of Melville's engagement with other writers from records and documents that are likewise fractured and incomplete. For instance, Melville's knowledge of Homer is clear both from his reading and from epic conventions in his writings. But Melville's copy of Alexander Pope's translations of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, which he acquired as part of the thity-seven-volume Harper Classical Library series in 1849, is not known to have survived.[15] A decade later, in 1858, he received a set of Chapman's translation of Homer from George R. Duyckinck, the brother of his friend Evert A. Duyckinck, and he subsequently wrote to George that "as for Pope's version (of which I have a copy) I expect it,—when I shall put Chapman beside it—to go off shrieking, like the bankrupt deities in Milton's hymn."[16] Melville's copy of George Chapman's translation survives, marked throughout, but it is clear that he also consulted the Pope translation closely, as he inscribed passages from it into his set of Chapman's Homer as well as into his copy of Dante's *Commedia*. According to R. W. B. Lewis, whose 1950 essay "Melville on Homer" was the first focused analysis of its marginalia, Melville responded with intensity to Chapman's translation, attending in his marginalia to ideas and conceptions that had been central to *Moby-Dick*, such as the swift finality of death, the prevalence of impersonal and implacable external forces, and the obscurity of man's relationship to the divine.[17] The scope and regularity of his marginalia in the set largely bear out Lewis's description of Melville's markings in *The Iliad* as "flashes illuminating the book and the reader and, more significantly, the human experience both were involved in."[18] Yet recent research and analysis by Tony McGowan qualifies Lewis's claim that Melville found Chapman's translation "incomparably better" than Pope's—a judgement based more on Melville's jocular remark in his letter to Duyckinck than to the presence of any material evidence in the surviving set. There, Melville's practice of inscribing lines from Pope's translations into the margins alongside parallel passages in his set of Chapman documents instances of comparison and analysis, but without accompanying qualitative verdicts of any kind.[19]

[13] See Hershel Parker, *Melville: The Making of the Poet* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008). That Melville had begun formulating *Clarel* as early as 1869 is suggested by his documented use of the "Eastern Travels" alcove of the Astor Library on 1 February of that year (see Olsen-Smith, "Update" 99).

[14] See Joseph M. P. Donatelli, "The Medieval Fictions of Thomas Warton and Thomas Percy," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (1991): 435–51.

[15] For the set of the Harper Classical Library owned by Melville, see Sealts no. 147, *Melville's Reading*, 167. For the edition of Pope's translation of Homer, see Sealts no. 275c in the "Online Catalog," Melville's Marginalia Online, accessed 23 May 2017, http://melvillesmarginalia.org.

[16] Melville to George R. Duyckinck, 6 November 1858, in Herman Melville, *Correspondence*, ed. Lynn Horth, vol. 14 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1993), 327.

[17] R. W. B. Lewis, "Melville on Homer," *American Literature* 22, no. 2 (1950): 166–76.

[18] Lewis, "Melville on Homer," 167.

[19] See Tony McGowan with Marcus Blandford, Cyrus Garner, and Kenzington Price, "Melville's Hand in Chapman's Homer: A Poet's Pagan Education," *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 20.2 (June 2018), 17–36. See also Herman Melville, "Herman Melville's Marginalia in Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*," Melville's Marginalia Online; *The Iliad*, 1:192, 222, 264; 2:15; and *The Odyssey*, 2.44.

Alone among the subjects and names listed in the index to Warton's *History*, Melville marked the entry on Chapman, and he took special interest in the historian's remark that "a complete and regular version of Homer was reserved for Geo. Chapman" (911). In the margin alongside that passage, he drew double cross-checks—for Melville a sign of heightened interest. The longest passage marked by Melville in the discussion that follows is Warton's unflattering assessment of the translator's abilities:

> He is sometimes paraphrastic and redundant, but more frequently retrenches or impoverishes what he could not feel and express. In the meantime, he labours with the inconvenience of an aukward, inharmonious, and unheroic measure, imposed by custom, but disgustful to modern ears. Yet he is not always without strength or spirit. (912)

The vehemence of this denunciation, unabated by Warton's begrudging and weakly-compensatory closing observation, is out of keeping with post-Keatsean conceptions regarding Chapman's unquestioned superiority to Pope as a translator of Homer. (This nineteenth-century homage to Chapman is present in Melville's own words to Duyckinck, which invoke the flight of deities in John Milton's poem "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity.") Yet Melville's actual practice of reading and marking Homeric content and the subject of Homeric translation, in both his surviving set of Chapman and in his copy of Warton's *History*, is applied studiously and, insofar as can be determined from marginal markings, neutrally. Far from indicating that he considered the rival translations incomparable, Melville's marginalia suggest a detached historical interest in the Chapman and Pope translations as literary phenomena and products of their respective eras. Melville acquired Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism* in 1869, only three years or so before the release of this Ward reprint of Warton's *History*, and his reading of Arnold's essay "On Translating Homer," which is heavily marked, suggests a similar critical bent toward study and comprehension rather than advocacy.[20]

Such erudite interests behind Melville's marginalia to Warton are further apparent in his marginalia on another poet addressed at various points in the *History*, who, like Homer, is not specifically a figure within its stated subject. In 1848, Melville acquired his copy of *The Vision*, Henry Francis Cary's translation of Dante's *Commedia*. He drew from imagery in "Paradise" while writing the climactic dream sequence of his third book, *Mardi* (1849). Like the copy of Warton, Melville's copy of *The Vision* contains marginalia in the hand of at least one later reader, complicating attribution of many of its markings. Whereas faded inscriptions in the back of the volume have been largely recovered, erased and overwritten notations in the front matter have proven only partially decipherable to date. Nevertheless, the incomplete evidence is compelling. One passage contains Melville's reference to "The Monk's Vision" (also known as the "Vision of Alberic"), a putative manuscript source for Dante's poem, and additional erased content alludes to "Ulysses's descent into hell" in the eleventh Book of *The Odyssey*.[21] Melville's references to these precedents in his copy of Dante illustrate his interest in the origins of great works, and his gravitation toward source-related information in Warton's *History* is of a piece with this career-long predilection. In the *History* he marked the historian's claim of a source for Dante's opening exordium in "a poem called Tesoretto … composed by his preceptor Brunetto Latini" (779), as well as Warton's observation that "the torments of hell, in which the punishment by cold is painted at large, had [already] formed a visionary romance, under the name of saint Patrick's Purgatory or Cave, long before Dante wrote" (786).

The well-known words inscribed above the gates of hell—in Cary's translation, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here"—are unmarked in Melville's copy of *The Vision*. But in Warton's *History*, Melville scored Warton's description of the words, the convention behind them, and his reference to a later manifestation of gateway inscriptions from the third Book of Spenser's *The Fairie Queene*:

> There is a severe solemnity in these abrupt and comprehensive sentences, and they are a striking preparation to the scenes that ensue. But the idea of such an inscription on the brazen portal of hell, was suggested to Dante by books of chivalry; in which the gate of an impregnable enchanted castle,

[20] Herman Melville, "Melville's Marginalia in Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism*," Melville's Marginalia Online, accessed 23 May 2017, http://melvillesmarginalia.org.

[21] Herman Melville, "Melville's Marginalia in Dante's *The Vision*" (xlviii), Melville's Marginalia Online, accessed 23 May 2017, http://melvillesmarginalia.org. For a discussion of "the monk's vision," see Steven Olsen-Smith and Joshua Preminger, "Newly Deciphered Erased and Faded Inscriptions in Melville's Copy of the *Commedia*," *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 17, no. 2 (2015): 41–58; the erased content pertaining to Homer was deciphered in the process of research for the present essay on Melville's marginalia in Warton's *History*.

> is often inscribed with words importing the dangers or wonders to be found within. Over the door of every chamber in Spenser's necromantic palace of Busyrane, was written a threat to the champions who presumed to attempt to enter. (781)

Melville took special interest in the content of this passage, applying double cross-checks to the reference to Spenser, as he had to the opening of Warton's discussion of Chapman's translation of Homer. Warton goes on to point out the possible influence of Dante's conception on Milton's depiction of hell in the first Book of *Paradise Lost*. In these marginalia, we witness what Melville considered an experience of elucidation about the transmission of imaginative conceptions and content across writers and periods. He subsequently marked Warton's pronouncements on Dante's signal achievements: gripping imagery that is "at once great and ridiculous" (785), and a transcendent quality that redeems the work's crudities as the product of a backward and unrefined age. In Warton's assessment, the *Commedia* is a

> wonderful compound of classical and romantic fancy, of pagan and christian theology, of real and fictitious history, of tragical and comic incidents, of familiar and heroic manners, and of satirical and sublime poetry. But the grossest improprieties of this poem discover an originality of invention, and its absurdities often border on sublimity. (782)

Having studied Dante's *The Vision* early in his career, closely and with no evident reservations, and having relied upon Cary's translation for creative purposes in *Mardi*, Melville here reveals characteristic interest in the paradoxical compounds of the *Commedia* as art and in the poet's triumphant reconciliation of these qualities.

Fig. 3. Word cloud of marked verse in marginalia attributed to Herman Melville in Thomas Warton's *The History of English Poetry*.

Fig. 4. Word cloud of marked prose in marginalia attributed to Herman Melville in Thomas Warton's *The History of English Poetry*.

The marked content on Dante appears in Warton's section on the English Poet Thomas Sackville's "Induction" to the *Mirror for Magistrates*, indicating both the historian's penchant for wandering digressions and Melville's willingness to follow him closely among disparate topics. Given the loose organization of the *History* and Melville's apparent embrace of this format, visuals for the marginalia provide useful points of reference for studying his engagement with the volume. In figures 3 and 4, separate word clouds for verse and prose marked by Melville provide a sense of subject matter to which he gravitated in both modes. The most prominent word in poetry marked by Melville is "death," including (as with all high-frequency terms in the following discussion) singular, plural, and possessive variants. Although it occurs 13 times, "death" is concentrated in only a few marked passages. It appears twice in Warton's excerpt from section 20 of William Langland's "Vision of Pierce Plowman" (188), where Kynde, an archaic conception for the collective phenomena of the physical universe, sends disease and causes aging and death to all people on the order of Conscience. In Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Romaunt of the Rose," the term "death" appears twice in his portrayal of the palace of Old Age (252). Labour, Travaile, Sorowe, Wo, Pain, Distresse, Sicknesse, Ire, and Melanc'ly are counsellors in her court. They continually warn her that Death is armed outside her gate and remind her of the foolish actions of her youth. "Death" occurs three times in the excerpts from Thomas Sackville's allegorical personifications of the inhabitants of hell in the "Induction" to *Mirror for Magistrates.* First, Remorse of Conscience, or guilt, yearns for death but is unable to die (772). The next two instances of the word "death" in this poem refer to the death of Revenge.

As might be expected, "like," which with 9 instances is the next highest-frequency term that occurs in poetry marked by Melville, figures most prominently as the vehicle for imaginative and picturesque similes. In the excerpt from John Skelton's "The Bouge of Court," one of the faces of dissimulation, or pretense, is described as "lene and lyke a pyned ghost" (550). Other marked similes include William Brown's "Softly lyke a streame of oyle" from "The Inner Temple Masque" (586); Joseph Hall's "And leers like Esop's foxe vpon the crane" from Book V, Satire I of "Virgidemiarum" (980); and Hall's "Her lids like cupid's bow-case" from Book VI, Satire I (983). Although none of the similes are marked in isolation by Melville, all contribute to the rhetorical fabric and imagery in larger marked passages of which

they are a part. The prevalent frequency of "like" in Melville's marginalia to poetic excerpts in Warton corresponds to frequencies in his reading of poetry in other volumes from his library recently or currently elucidated by digital text analysis.[22]

"Night" and its variants are slightly more prevalent in marked poetry than variants of "day," tending to be linked to dark and potentially metaphorical subject matter. In Warton's excerpt from Part III, Book VI of *Fall of Princes* by John Lydgate, "serpents and adders" are seen flying throughout the night (358); the black-clad figure of Sorrow in Sackville's "Induction" appears in the night (770); in the ninth satire of Book I of "Virgidemiarum," Hall's narrator condemns the Muses and states that "hatefull luckless birds" belong to the night (962); and in Hall's third satire of Book II, the injustice of law is compared by simile (with yet another instance of "like" in figure 3) to a falling star on a winter night (964). In contrast, the variants of "day" in the marked content are mainly used without symbolic associations. For example, the word "day" appears three times in "A Dialogue Contayning in Effect the Number of Al the Proverbes in the English Tongue Compact in a Matter Concerning Two Marriages" by John Heywood: "The day of her wedding" (685), "Stoode she that day" (686), and "That day her eares might wel glow" (686). Easily interchangeable with words like "moment" or "occasion," marked instances of "day" do not contribute significantly to meaning in the marked excerpts. The same observation cannot be made for its symbolic inverse, "night."

"Grace" occurs 6 times in marked verse, where its link to the concept of death is noteworthy. Two instances appear in poems commemorating persons who have died. The first of these occurs in "An Epitaph on S.P. a child of queen Elizabeth's chapell" by Ben Jonson (582). The speaker of the poem claims the child "so did thrive in grace and feature" that both heaven and nature contested ownership of him, which here implies "grace" is the possession of God's favor or blessing. The second instance is in an elegy to Sir Thomas Wyatt, titled "Wyatt Resteth Here," by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (639). Its subject, Howard asserts, stood firm "Amid great stormes, whom grace assured so, To live upright, and smile at fortune's choyce." In contrast, the term is applied in the other four instances within meanings and contexts that are all too worldly. First, in an excerpt from Chaucer's "The Squire's Tale," the Squire's military experiences are praised, and he hopes they will allow him "to standin in his ladies grace" (298). Next, in Heywood's "A Dialogue" an old and unlovely widow is seen preparing for her wedding. In mock-serious fashion, the speaker lists ways her appearance could be improved, such as "Her wast to be gyrde in, and for a boone grace, Some wel favoured visor on her yll favoured face" (685). In Hall's Book II, Satire I of "Virgidemiarum," the narrator criticizes the indecent subject matter of works by authors such as Poggio Bracciolini and Francois Rabelais. He questions, "Who conjur'd this bawdie Poggie's ghost … Or wicked Rablais, drunken reuellings, To grace the misrule of our tauernings" (963). The final instance in marked verse is again used to mean "favor." It appears in Hall's first satire of Book V, in which the landlord of the poem smiles at the tenant, "feigning that he will grant him further grace" (980).

Among high-frequency terms in prose marked by Melville, "Church" and its variants occur 27 times, making it the most frequent substantive term. Many of the specific passages Melville marked focus on the positive and negative influences that religion has had on literature. Warton's *History* clearly shows how religious institutions have both contributed to and hindered literary advancement throughout the centuries. In one marked passage, Warton describes religious dramas that were performed in churches during holy festivals, and he quotes the depiction of a theatrical performance of Christ's resurrection from William Lambarde's *Topographical Dictionary* (160). In another marked section Warton describes the relaxed customs of Florence in the wake of the plague and the "secular indulgences" of the clergy. Boccaccio, having made the monasteries "the scenes of his most libertine stories" in this period, "did not escape the censure of the church" (280).

In a marked footnote to Skelton's "Colin Clout," Warton comments on the "absurdities committed by the clergy of the middle ages," and quotes a source on the intermixture of aristocratic paraphernalia with religious ceremony: "the lord of Sassay held some of his lands, by placing a hawk on the high altar of the church of Evreux, while his parish priest celebrated the service, booted and spurred, to the beat of drum, instead of the organ" (548). This footnote and the poem to which it is attached reveal the leniency and secular inclinations of church leaders and members—a subject developed further by Warton as he goes on to describe the declining literary climate after the Reformation in England. The Catholic Church was stripped of its wealth, and this negatively impacted scholarly and literary pursuits: "Avarice and zeal were at once gratified in robbing the clergy of their revenues, and in reducing the church to its primitive apostolical state of purity and poverty. The opulent see of Winchester was lowered to a bare title" (620). On the

[22] For examples, see essays on Melville's marginalia to Homer, Milton, and Shakespeare by McGowan et al., Norberg et al., and Ohge et al. in "Melville's Hand: Computation and Digital Text Analysis at *Melville's Marginalia Online*," Christopher Ohge and Steven Olsen-Smith, eds., *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 20.2 (June 2018), 17–89.

following page, Melville marked a passage regarding Thomas Wilson's system of rhetoric and logic in English, which, according to Warton, was considered as audacious as conducting church services in English. Melville also marked a lengthy paragraph concerning the English translation of the Bible and the prohibition of its use in church (757).

Melville attended to Warton's observation that the eventual admittance of the English Bible into worship services "is supposed to have fixed our language," prolonging the use of "many ancient words which would otherwise have been obsolete or unintelligible" (758). "English" and its variants occur 21 times in Melville's marginalia to Warton, the second-highest frequency in marked prose. While unsurprising in light of Warton's subject, his various uses of the term make it worth examining in passages marked by Melville. "English" is frequently used to mean both the language and the nationality. In several marked passages, Warton comments on various poets' styles of English. For example, in one scored section, Warton writes, "But instead of availing himself of the rising and rapid improvements of the English language, Longland prefers and adopts the style of the Anglo-Saxon poets" (176). In another marked section regarding "The Knight's Tale" from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Warton writes, "We are surprised to find, in a poet of such antiquity, numbers so nervous and flowing: a circumstance which greatly contributed to render Dryden's paraphrase of this poem the most animated and harmonious piece of versification in the English language" (243). The other meaning of English as a national identity is apparent in Warton's claim that "our old English bards abound in unnatural conceptions, strange imaginations, and even the most ridiculous absurdities" (425); his reference to an unnamed but gifted youth who "would have proved the first of English poets, had he reached a maturer age" (419); and, in reference to Rustichello da Pisa's "The Life of Sir Meliado a British Knight," the explanation that a misunderstanding of the term "Brittish" has "converted many a French knight [from Bretagne, or Brittany] into an Englishman" (934).

In an extensive marked passage combining references to "church" and "English," Warton describes King Henry VIII's attempts to censor and restrict religious materials. The introduction of the English translation of the Bible into the churches was soon followed by the creation of plays that either debased the scriptures or misrepresented them. The king's "ecclesiastical supremacy" was consequently threatened. Henry VIII banned William Tyndale's translation of the Bible, as well as sermons, plays, songs, and "English books on religious subjects." He made several exceptions, however, for "some not properly belonging to that class, such as the Canterbury Tales, the works of Chaucer and Gower, Cronicles, and Stories of Men's Lives" (757). Henry VIII also imposed restrictions on who may use a corrected English Bible—a translation authorized by the king himself—including where and when it is acceptable to read from it. Warton writes that "the reservations … are curious for their quaint partiality, and they shew the embarrassment of administration, in the difficult business of confining that benefit to a few, from which all might reap advantage, but which threatened to become a general evil, without some degree of restriction" (757). Melville's attention seems to have been drawn to King Henry VIII's attempts to impose rigid and arbitrary restrictions on such a chaotic landscape of religion and language, as well as the disorganized and imprecise tendencies of institutionalized censorship.

Marked references to "English" also appear in Warton's discussions of other translated works. For example, Warton compares the difficulty of translating Horace's satirical works and odes with efforts to translate epic poetry, such as works by Homer, the latter being much easier to translate due to their dependence on "things" and not words. Warton writes, "Nor is it to be expected, that his satires and epistles should be happily rendered into English at this infancy of style and taste, when his delicate turns could not be expressed, his humour and his urbanity justly relished, and his good sense and observations on life understood" (902). Melville's marginal score here may suggest his interest in the evolution of English literature and its reception. The current condition of English literature and language at the time did not allow for a precise, nuanced translation of Horace, although Thomas Drant, according to Warton, "succeeded best" in the "Epistle to Tibullus."

Of the many English poets discussed by Warton, Melville most consistently marked passages in the *History* pertaining to Geoffrey Chaucer, on whom Warton's six sequential sections devoted to a "General View of the Character of Chaucer" generated the largest quantity of marked content in the volume (see figures 1a and 2). Melville owned two editions of Chaucer: Charles Cowden Clarke's two-volumes-in-one abridged compilation, *The Riches of Chaucer* (1835), which survives, and Robert Bell's eight-volume edition of the *Poetical Works* (1854–55), Melville's set of which may have been incomplete, and no volume of which is known to survive.[23] Chaucer's influence in a number of

[23] Sealts nos. 138 and 141, *Melville's Reading*, 165–66.

Melville's writings, most especially *Clarel*,[24] has been documented, but scholarship has been hampered by the absence of what probably constituted his primary reading set of the poet's works; annotations in the surviving copy of *Riches* (which are presumably by Melville) have all been erased and remain unrecovered. Marginalia in the shorter collection are applied sparingly to "The Clerk's Tale" and "Romaunt of the Rose," and more heavily to "The Franklin's Tale" and "Troilus and Creseida." The marginalia in Warton's *History* include marks to passages from the "The Franklin's Tale" and "Troilus and Creseida" that are not included in Clarke's abridgements, and reveal Melville's heightened interest in "The Squire's Tale," which is entirely unmarked in *Riches*. In this way, marginalia in his copy of Warton's *History* add to existing evidence of Melville's engagement not only with the broad historical arc of the book and the prominent position granted Chaucer in Warton's narrative, but with the individual works Warton discusses and excerpts. In the case of Chaucer, particularly, the evidence is potentially of great value because Melville's presumed primary copy of the poet's works is not known to survive, and the marked excerpts add to the record of sparsely marked content in a copy that was secondary to his main set. Consistent with his interest in sources and precedents for Dante's *Commedia*, Melville marked Warton's claims that the Temple of Mars in Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale" was modelled on content in "the Thebaid of Statius" (238) and that the Clerk's tale of Griselda was drawn from the writings of Petrarch (275).

As well as commenting on writers he was familiar with, when they were excerpted and discussed by Warton, Melville also left marginalia in the *History* relating to writers for whom there is no other evidence of his having read. The most compelling instance is Thomas Sackville's "Induction" to "The Complaynt of Henry Duke of Buckingham" in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, a multiple-authored sequence of poems patterned after *The Fall of Princes* by John Lydgate and alleged by Warton to have been assembled by Sackville. Melville's prior familiarity with Sackville is doubtful and may have been limited to his 1561 tragedy *Gorboduc* or even, at most, to the brief excerpt from *Gorboduc* printed in Charles Lamb's *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, which Melville acquired in 1849 and where the excerpt is unmarked.[25] Encountering Warton's discussion of Sackville over two decades later was for Melville like discovering a new planet. The triple cross-checks at the head of the section introducing the writer signify an intensity of interest matched by only two other instances of this mark in the whole copy of *History*.[26] Melville closely studied Warton's excerpts from the "Induction," noting Miltonic antecedents in Sackville's reference to night's "thick-powdred" stars in the early lines of the poem and, later, in the "dart" wielded by the poem's allegorized portrayal of Death (770, 775). He also read closely its personified representations of Sorrow, Dread, War, and, most especially, Remorse of Conscience. Double-scoring Sackville's description of Remorse, Melville was likely captivated by the moving psychological truth underlying the poet's fanciful description:

> Her eyes unsteadfast, rolling here and there,
> Whirl'd on each place, as place that vengeance brought,
> So was her mind continually in fear,
> Tost and tormented with the tedious thought
> Of those detested crimes which she had wrought
> With dreadful cheer, and looks thrown to the sky,
> Wishing for death, and yet she could not die.

Sackville's attention to unalleviated guilt corresponds to qualities in Melville's own characterisations of Jonah and Ahab in *Moby-Dick*, of the unnamed narrator in "Bartleby, the Scrivener," and of the title-character in *Pierre*. Indeed, these portrayals combined with knowledge of his early but apparently unrealised plan for a work of fiction "intended to illustrate the *principle* of *remorse*" casts a familiar light on his marginalia here and elsewhere in the "Induction."[27] In another passage scored twice by Melville, he noted Warton's praise for the "fulness of proportion" displayed in the excerpts, their "invention of picturesque attributes, distinctness, animation, and amplitude," and noted yet another instance of source attribution: "We may venture to pronounce that Spenser, at least, caught his manner of designing

[24] See William Ellery Sedgwick, *Herman Melville: The Tragedy of* Mind (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945), 207; and Walter E. Bezanson, "Discussions," in Herman Melville, *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land*, vol. 12 of *The Writings of Herman Melville* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1991), 759.
[25] Sealts no. 318, *Melville's Reading*, 192.
[26] The two other instances of triple cross-checked content are Warton's printing of Ben Jonson's "Epitaph on S[alvadore]. P[avy]. a child of queen Elizabeth's chapel" (Melville's sons Malcolm and Stanwix died before him in 1867 and 1886) and Warton's section on the effects of the Reformation on English poetry (729–40).
[27] Thomas Powell, "Herman Melville, Romancist," in *Melville in His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life, Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*, ed. Steven Olsen-Smith (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015), 103.

allegorical personages from this model" (777). These marginalia, inscribed by Melville in the early 1870s or later, decades after formulating related themes in the work of his fame, illustrate the striking persistence of his characteristic ideas.

Vivid among the long-standing preoccupations apparent in Melville's marginalia to Warton is his abiding identification with and reverence for *genius*—"that explosive sort of stuff" he had extolled in his 1850 essay "Hawthorne and His Mosses" while striving to achieve it in Ahab's defiant speeches against a malevolent universe in *Moby-Dick*.[28] His attention to the concept in Warton's *History* corresponds to Harold Bloom's observation that a defining originality is central to all literary genius but that "this originality itself is always canonical, in that it recognizes and comes to terms with precursors."[29] Bloom's formulation helps us to grasp the motivations behind Melville's dogged study of Warton's *History*, which was the first work of its kind to attempt a continuous narrative approach to its subject. Bloom's combination, moreover, of originality and engagement with predecessors helps us to understand Melville's simultaneous attentiveness to Warton's qualitative assessments of great literary achievements, on the one hand, and his attributions of probable sources and influences for these writings, on the other. In addition to the examples cited above involving Dante, Spenser, and Milton, Melville marked Warton's assertion that, in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare relied for Prospero on earlier models of magicians and necromancers (936), and Warton's stated fascination with the "structures which he forms, and even without labour or deliberation, of the basest materials" (940). As indicated by his attention to Miltonic antecedents in Sackville's "Induction," Melville was himself engaged in source study while he read Warton, further identifying a forecast of "Milton's dirge" in George Turberville's "Epitaph on the Death of Maister Arthur Brooke" (marked and annotated at 932).

The exclusivity of genius, too, was an abiding conceptual value of Melville's, and accordingly he was attentive to pronouncements by Warton about the socially detached and solitary character of literary creation. Noting that the "Induction" was written during the politically turbulent reign of Queen Mary, Warton puts forth Sackville as an example of how "true genius, unseduced by the cabals and unalarmed by the dangers of faction, defies or neglects those events which destroy the peace of mankind, and often exerts its operations amidst the most violent commotions of a state" (761). By the 1870s, however, Melville's conception of the relationship between great writers and their own times had undergone a change not unlike the transition from Ahab's aggressive heterodoxy to the muted nonconformity and indifference of Bartleby. Accordingly, we see Melville marking Warton's claim that Sackville's verse was "too beautiful to have been relished by his cotemporaries" (777) and, that as a first minister under Queen Elizabeth, Sackville "preserved the integrity of a private man" and remained "uncorrupted amidst the intrigues of an artful court" (762). In reality, Sackville's aloofness from factions and intrigues owed much to his kinship with Elizabeth I.[30] But Melville's marginalia to Warton's praise for the administrator-poet unavoidably call to mind the words used by Melville's brother-in-law, John C. Hoadley. In an 1873 letter, Hoadley describes Melville's trials as a Deputy Inspector of Customs, working in a different environment but under conditions no less degrading to professional and moral integrity:

> Surrounded by low venality, he puts it all quietly aside,—quietly declining offers of money for special services,—quietly returning money which has been thrust into his pockets behind his back, avoiding offence alike to the corrupting merchants and their clerks and runners, who think that all men can be bought, and to the corrupt swarms who shamelessly seek their price;—quietly, steadfastly doing his duty, and happy in retaining his own self-respect.[31]

When Hoadley wrote this, Melville was far along in the composition his epic poem *Clarel*—a work he would later describe as "eminently adapted for unpopularity."[32] In this context it is natural to imagine Melville finding gratification in the words about Sackville that he marked, particularly in contrast to Warton's assessment of Sackville's contemporary Richard Edwards. In Warton's analysis, Edwards was a poet who "united all those arts and accomplishments which minister to popular pleasantry," but whose "popularity seems to have altogether arisen from those pleasing talents of which no specimens could be transmitted to posterity" (810, 811). With similar awareness,

[28] Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," in *The Piazza-Tales and Other Prose Pieces*, vol. 9 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Alma A. MacDougall, G. Thomas Tanselle, et al. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1987), 247.
[29] Harold Bloom, *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), 11.
[30] "Sackville, Thomas, first Baron Buckhurst and first earl of Dorset (c. 1536–1608)," in *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 48 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 544.
[31] John C. Hoadley to George Boutwell, 9 January 1873, in Olsen-Smith, *Melville in His Own Time*, 125.
[32] Herman Melville to James Billson, 10 October 1884, in Melville, *Correspondence*, 482.

he marked an account of how Thomas Drant's seminal translations of Horace into English, though "wyse and ful of learnyng," were met with skepticism by book sellers, who knew from experience that "slim slames, and gue gawes [i.e., love stories cheaply issued in pamphlet form], be they neuer so sleight and slender, are sooner rapte vp thenne are those which be lettered and clarkly, makings" (900). In 1886, Melville commented on the failure of James Thomson's essays to "hit the popular taste. They would have to be painstakingly diluted for that" (492). By this point in his career Melville had become resigned to pursuing his craft without courting contemporary fame, as he declared in the same letter about Thomson: "As to his not acheiving 'fame'—what of that? He is not the less, but so much the more. And it must have occurred to you as it has to me, that the further our civilization advances upon its present lines so much the cheaper sort of thing does 'fame' become, especially of the literary sort."[33] But he had always detected a secret absurdity in the relations of writers to their own times, having reflected sardonically as early as 1849 that "all ambitious authors should have ghosts capable of revisiting the world, to snuff up the steam of adulation, which begins to rise straightway as the Sexton throws his last shovelfull on him" (128). His response to the problem was to withdraw himself socially, thus illustrating an image he marked in Warton's excerpt from the sixth Book of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, which as well as having inspired Sackville had itself been modelled on Boccaccio's *Fates of Famous Men*. The passage in question portrays the visit paid to Boccaccio by Fortune:

> Whyle Bochas pensyfe stode in his lybrarye,
> Wyth chere oppressed, pale in hys vysage,
> Somedeale abashed, alone and solitarye;
> To hym appeared a monstrous ymage,
> Parted in twayne of color and corage,
> Her ryght syde ful of sommer floures,
> The tother oppressed with winter stormy showres.

Though doubtless taken up with the power of the allegorical depiction in these lines, Melville was no less drawn to the humane and realistic imagery of the writer and thinker alone among his books, contemplating life's perplexities and—through those meditations—arriving at a visionary state.

Among books that survive from Melville's library, Melville's marginalia to Warton is unparalleled as a testament to the staying power of major themes and perspectives in his intellectual life. This is partly due to the sheer length of Warton's study, but also to the historian's eclectic practices, ranging far and wide among precedents and traditions within and outside of English literary history, and including copious excerpts from texts and manuscripts to illustrate his critical observations. But Melville's predilections were elicited in larger part by the author's historiographic method. Warton's decision to organise the work chronologically has often been pointed out as an aspect of his approach that distinguished the *History* from earlier attempts at literary history, such as Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, which presents its subjects biographically and critically.[34] As his detractors have observed, Warton's choice enabled him to elide and adumbrate content where he wished to serve his purposes of prioritising medieval and gothic origins of English verse.[35] He exploited other rhetorical advantages in order to emphasise forgotten periods in the historical record from which intriguing and hitherto unknown writings could be resurrected, and to spotlight abrupt social disclosures of hidden and forbidden knowledge as central to the history he was writing. In this vein, Melville noted with interest Warton's accounts of the historical monopolisation and control of knowledge and texts in England, such as those carried out by ecclesiastic powers (563, 621); the outright destruction and abeyance of knowledge and letters attending religious and social conflicts, such as Henry VIII's break with Catholicism and dissolution of its monasteries (614); and the eventual recovery and expansion of knowledge and learning that followed the Reformation in England (613, 619–20, 944).

The historical narrative of suppression, fragmentation and disclosure, and the central figurative role of the lost or neglected manuscript or book in Warton's *History*, spoke directly to thematic preoccupations and figurative conceptions in Melville's craft that were intimately connected to his own imaginative writings. In *Mardi*, Melville's first work of philosophical substance, a fascination with the image of the "ponderous tome" relegated to obscurity by arcane content manifests itself in a wide array of epistemological tropes, including the resonant image of the "lost

[33] Herman Melville to James Billson, 20 December 1885, in Melville, *Correspondence*, 492.
[34] See Fairer, "Thomas Warton," 276, and Hugh Reid, "Warton, Thomas (1728–1790)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 57 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 519.
[35] Donatelli, "Medieval Fictions," 442.

work,"[36] "lost chronicles" (397), "wisdom lost" (385), "perished books" (397), "black letter" texts (367, 374, 385), "chronicles of old" (525), ancient "lore" (197, 464, 487), and "recondite lore" (563). With his next book *Redburn*, Melville would exploit the potential of the printed and bound book-image as a reference point for digressions on death and on the passage of time. Perceiving in the figure of old, ravaged, and neglected books an apt emblem for mortal sorrow and vulnerability, he repeatedly employed the book-image to communicate his tragic conception of historical experience. These preoccupations originated in Melville's childhood experience of losing his father Allan Melvill, Sr. to bankruptcy, mental derangement, and death, and the devastating results of this early loss on his own educational and financial prospects. An 1851 commemorative ink inscription in his hand on the front fly leaf of his father's copy of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* documents his serendipitous recovery of the book more than two decades after it had been lost "with many others," when sometime in the late 1820s or early 1830s, shortly before his death, declining business fortunes first compelled Allan Melvill to auction off his own library.[37]

Against this background of personal experience, Melville underlined both of Warton's references in *History of English Poetry* to the "dispersed" library of his late friend William Collins (679, 815), who Melville correctly identified as "The poet" in a third reference made by Warton to Collins's claim of a source for Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (935). Melville owned a copy of *The Poetical Works of William Collins* that was examined by the early twentieth-century Melville biographer Raymond Weaver, but which is now unlocated and may no longer survive.[38] Separated from one another by over a hundred pages of Warton's text, and both times invoked by Warton in connection with "black-letter" texts he recollected seeing among Collins' holdings, the two marked references to the poet's lost library suggest an interest by Melville infused with figurative, conceptual, and indeed emotional associations. Similarly fascinated by arcane and obscure knowledge, Melville took note of Warton's observation that English history and, by extension, English literary history, was until the appearance of the Chronicles of Holinshed "almost unknown to the general reader" (809), that Boccaccio borrowed liberally from "a vast work entitled Collectivum, now lost" (361), and that many ancient works lost to records and "imported into Italy by the dispersion of the Constantinopolitan exiles, are only known at present through the medium of his writings" (362). As well as portraying antiquarian research as both a subject of reflection and a source of imagery in *Mardi*, Melville's portrayal of rare and unknown texts and writers ranges from the early chapters of *Moby-Dick,* where the narrator Ishmael professes to quote from a black-letter volume by "an old writer—of whose works I possess the only copy extant," to his final prose work, *Billy Budd, Sailor,* left unfinished at his death in 1891, in which the narrator professes to quote "a writer whom few know."[39]

In a manner evocative of Lydgate's description of Boccaccio standing contemplative in his library, Melville made a peculiar sequence of annotations while he was reading Warton's account of the repression of learning and of religious persecutions during the social conflicts of the Tudor era. These are the most responsive and focused series of marginalia in the volume, and appear in Warton's section on the causes of the increase in vernacular composition in English society. Warton begins with an account of theological disputes, in which he digressively observes that the Dutch classical scholar and humanist Erasmus employed rhetorical skills in satire and wit that "made more protestants than the ten tomes of John Calvin." Melville double scored the passage while also underlining "protestants," a word which he queried in the top margin as signifying "unbeleivers [*sic*]—pagans?" (614). The annotation seems to reflect on the extent of Protestant apostasy as construed by Catholics, and speaks indirectly to the severity and irrationality of papist denunciations. Melville's line of apprehension here coincides with his attention elsewhere in the text to Warton's observation that during the Reformation "psalm-singing and heresy were synonimous terms" in the language of orthodox Catholics (marked by Melville at 731). Melville's response is concerned both with the entrenchment of Christian ideological divisions, a condition he considered to be rooted more in politics, power, and control than in sincere religious devotion, and with the hysterics of religious extremism. That awareness resonates also in his response to Warton's description five pages later of the Reformation in England as "the happiest event in our annals" (scored and underlined by Melville at 619). The description evoked Melville's respectful but cynical acknowledgment that "this is the excusable concession of the good professor. I blame him not at all." The remark sprang from Melville's awareness that the Reformation in England was the all-too-worldly result of Henry VIII's political and marital ambitions, that the Anglican church was recognisably Catholic in all but name and papal allegiance, and that the

[36] Herman Melville, *Mardi, and a Voyage Thither*, vol. 3 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1993), 297, 385; hereafter, cited parenthetically.
[37] Sealts no. 103, *Melville's Reading*, 160–61; see also Herman Melville, "Melville's Copy of *Melancholy … Drawn Chiefly from the Celebrated Work Intitled, Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy*," Melville's Marginalia Online, accessed 23 May 2017, http://melvillesmarginalia.org.
[38] Sealts no. 156, *Melville's Reading*, 168.
[39] Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, vol. 6 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, eds. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1988), 10; Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor*, ed. Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 114.

Reformation eventually unleashed severe repression in England by Protestants under the Commonwealth. Melville attributed the historian's treatment of this topic to an ideologically accommodating stance toward readers, an approach that conciliated the religious prejudices which were still alive in Warton's own age.

Melville continues this line of interpretation on the next page, where Warton describes the plundering of churches and the persecution of the ecclesiastical hierarchy committed during the reign of Henry's son Edward VI. In permitting these institutional abuses, Warton states, the protestants under Edward "countenanced the clamours of the catholics; who declared, that the reformation was apparently founded on temporal views, and that the protestants pretended to oppose the doctrines of the church, solely with a view that they might share in the plunder of its revenues" (620). As an indictment of protestant policies under Edward, the criticism is ambidexter: Melville asserts that the actions of the perpetrators "countenanced" or gave weight and legitimacy to catholic descriptions of governmental avarice and cupidity, rather than directly accusing the proponents of reformation. Melville's annotation on the passage, "He puts it cautiously and—wisely," corresponds to the earlier annotation on Warton's "concession" to readers in its regard not just for the subject matter but for the rhetorical character of the passage. The annotations point out the practices of indirect rhetoric and deft navigation of ideologically-charged subject matter that Warton was obliged to adopt on matters of religious history in his study of English poetry.

Grounded within the context of Queen Mary's reign, Warton's assessment of Sackville's genius demonstrated for Melville the intersection of historically arcane and suppressed texts with turbulent historical periods. Later in the same section, he follows Warton's account of prohibitions such as that against Thomas Wilson's *Rule of Reason*, a treatise on rhetoric and logic published in 1551, where the historian states,

> This display of the venerable mysteries of the latter of these arts in a vernacular language, which had hitherto been confined within the sacred pale of the learned tongues, was esteemed an innovation almost equally daring with that of permitting the service of the church to be celebrated in English: and accordingly the author, soon afterwards happening to visit Rome, was incarcerated by the inquisitors of the holy see, as a presumptuous and dangerous heretic. (621)

Themes of heresy based on Gnostic theology inform Ahab's speeches in *Moby-Dick*, one of which is based on reading notes regarding witchcraft Melville inscribed on the endpapers of his surviving set of Shakespeare's *Dramatic Works*.[40] A discarded manuscript leaf from his last novel, *The Confidence-Man*, reveals that Melville considered dedicating the book to "victims of Auto de Fe," invoking in mid-nineteenth-century America the punishment to which Wilson was subjected for advancing knowledge. A surviving letter by his mother, Maria Melville, documents Melville's resentment at hearing *Moby-Dick* condemned by neighbours as "more than blasphemous," and Melville's acquaintance Titus Munson Coan reported that Pittsfield residents considered him "worse than a heathen."[41] Given the prominence of heresy within his writings and in his professional experience, and his clear interest in the subjects of intellectual suppression and religious persecution in this section of *History*, it was natural for Melville to linger over the above passage. He scored it and wrote in the top margin of the page, "Very curious, and—," terminating the annotation *in medias res* with an elongated dash. Deliberately curtailed, the remark may indicate Melville's formulation of a judgement that failed to gel. But it is also possible that he questioned the nature of the charges against Wilson, perhaps realising that no less a free thinker than Seneca—one of his favourite heterodox writers—had already been translated into English at the time of Wilson's imprisonment. Warton apparently did not know that the official objections to Wilson's writings were merely a pretext for political grudges nursed by his enemies in England who had denounced him to authorities in Rome while he was in exile during Mary's reign.[42] To Wilson, who a year after his release commented wryly on the ordeal and the scheming behind it in a second edition of *Rhetorique*, it was indeed

> a strange matter, that thinges doen in Englande seven yeres before, and the same universallie forgiven, should afterwardes be laied to a mannes charge in Roome. But what can not malice doe? Or what will not the wilfull devise, to satisfie their mindes, for undoing of others?[43]

[40] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 955–70.
[41] Olsen-Smith, *Melville in His Own Time*, 105, 106.
[42] Susan Doran, Jonathan Woolfson, "Thomas Wilson (1523/4–1581)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn. January 2008).
[43] Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique, for the use of all soche as are studious of Eloquence, set forthe in Englishe … And now newlie sette for the again, with a Prologue to the Reader* (London: Kingston, 1560).

Melville could not have been aware of the full circumstances or of Wilson's reflection upon them in print, but his intuitive wariness of Warton's account is noteworthy, and he would have identified profoundly with the above rhetorical questions posed by the aggrieved rhetorician.

In 1860, Melville had remarked to Evert A. Duyckinck (as Duyckinck reported in his diary) "that the mealy mouthed habit of writing of human nature of the present day would not tolerate the plain speaking of Johnson, for instance, in the Rambler—who does not hesitate to use the word *malignity*!"[44] In what survives of his letters, journals, and testimonials, Melville made such pronouncements with a directness not to be found in his published writings. In William Hazlitt's lecture "On Wit and Humour," he read of Aesop's conception of man as "a talking, absurd, obstinate, proud, angry, animal," and remarked of the description, "one more adjective wanting—cruel."[45] He not only underlined Warton's reference to the "dreadful martyrdoms" during the reign of Queen Mary, but in a second annotation to the page described above, which is erased and almost completely unrecovered, Melville referred to London's "Southwark" jails, which were full of political dissidents during the period (this is the only content of the erasure deciphered to date). Whatever his as-yet unrecovered precise responses to Wilson's fate, or Mary's brutal reign, it is clear enough that religious prohibition and repression interested Melville not only historically but for its sensitivity—on which ground he believed Warton was obliged to tread "cautiously and—wisely."

The sequence of annotation described above is remarkable for its intimate relation to the roles played by illicit themes and esoteric expression in Melville's own development as an author more than two decades earlier. In 1850, when the developing manuscript of *Moby-Dick* was still likely a market-oriented adventure narrative without either Ahab or Queequeg, Melville temporarily postponed composition in order rapidly to write an exultant essay on the literary craft of Nathaniel Hawthorne. He had newly befriended the older author while on a visit to western Massachusetts, where he would shortly relocate partly to be near his friend. Melville's oft-quoted pronouncements in the essay concerning Hawthorne's and even Shakespeare's methods relate to strategies that would shape the development of his own whaling narrative, a work radically transformed into the religiously heterodox narrative eventually published in 1851. As he said of Shakespeare in the 1850 essay, "it is those deep far-away things in him; those occasional flashings-forth of the intuitive Truth in him; those short, quick probings at the very axis of reality;—these are the things that make Shakespeare, Shakespeare." But these disclosures were only to be grasped by the "eagle-eyed" reader, attuned to what the bard "craftily says, or sometimes insinuates": "the things, which we feel to be so terrifically true, that it were all but madness for any good man, in his own proper character, to utter, or even hint of them."[46] Melville's observations anticipate twentieth-century philosopher Leo Strauss's theory of exoteric and esoteric forms of literary expression, whereby a great literary work is said to communicate meaning at two levels: a popular teaching of an edifying character, which is in the foreground; and a philosophic teaching, concerning … basic truths which would not be pronounced in public by any decent man, because they would do harm to many people who, having been hurt, would naturally be inclined to hurt in turn him who pronounces the unpleasant truths" (36).[47] The esoteric forms of expression in Shakespeare were necessitated by what Melville referred to in a letter to Evert A. Duyckinck as "the muzzle which all men wore on their souls in the Elisebethan [*sic*] day" and which prevented "Shakspere's [*sic*] full articulations."[48] Research and analysis by Brian Yothers on marginalia to the New Testament traces Melville's sense of rhetorical strategies toward the above ends in the Gospels themselves, as indicated by his marking of Christ's use of parables in Matthew 13:11 and 13:35.[49] Melville nurtured similar conceptions of Shakespeare's contemporary dramatists, of Dante, and of Milton, among other writers he re-encountered in Warton's *History*.

According to Melville's sense of history, the "muzzle" that constrained earlier writers was still firmly in place when Warton performed his own research into the influence of religious conflict on the development of poetry in England. While the narrative strategies of the historian hardly rise to the level of Shakespeare and "other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth,"[50] Melville's annotations in the *History* indicate how prone he remained, even as late as the 1870s and beyond, to construe literary discourse as an esoteric pursuit and indirect exploration of forbidden truths and discomfiting realities. As Strauss observes, the forms of persecution that give rise to esotericism can range from the

[44] Olsen-Smith, *Melville in His Own Time*, 31.
[45] Herman Melville, "Melville's Marginalia in William Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* [and] *Lectures on the English Poets*," Melville's Marginalia Online, accessed 23 May 2017, http://melvillesmarginalia.org.
[46] Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," 244.
[47] Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952).
[48] Melville to Evert A. Duyckinck, 3 March 1849, in Melville, *Correspondence*, 122.
[49] Brian Yothers, "One's Own Faith: Melville's Reading of *The New Testament* and *Psalms*," *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 10, no. 3 (2008): 39–59.
[50] Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," 244.

obvious, like the Spanish Inquisition, to milder forms such as social ostracism (32). That Melville's isolation in the 1870s was largely voluntary does not diminish its roots in the social alienation he experienced as a result of his greatest prose works. Warton acknowledged the esoteric tradition in his section on George Chapman's translation of Homer, for he depreciatively refers there to the "doctrine that an allegorical sense was hid under the narratives of epic poetry" (911). In check-marking that passage, Melville seems to register the historical persistence of the perception rather than Warton's late eighteenth-century dismissal of it. He found other confirmation in Warton's excerpts from Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*, where the aggrieved logician asks, "For what other is the painful trauaile of Vlisses, described so largely by Homere, but a liuely picture of mans miserie in this life?" (843). Melville check-marked the rhetorical question, affirming his abiding philosophical concern with the problem of human suffering as well as his long-standing fascination with symbolic expression. In a succeeding passage scored by Melville, Wilson declares,

> The Poetes are Wisemen, and wisshed in harte the redresse of thinges, the which when for feare thei durst not openly rebukq, they did in colours paint them out, and tolde men by shadowes what thei shold do in good sothe: or els, because the wicked were vnworthy to heare the trueth, they spake so that none might vnderstande but those vnto whom thei please to vtter their meanyng, and knewe them to be men of honest conuersacion. (843)

Melville may have little credited Wilson attributing didactic and socially beneficent intentions to Homer and to succeeding masters of rhetorical expression, but his convictions about the prevailingly gloomy nature of human experience remained with him to the end of his life. "For in this world of lies," he wrote in his essay on Hawthorne, "truth is forced to fly like a scared white doe in the woodlands; and only by cunning glimpses will she reveal herself … even though it be covertly, and by snatches."[51] The persistence of this perspective on artistic and literary expression, with other life-long preoccupations and ideas, is borne out by Melville's marginalia in Warton's *History of English Poetry*—his acquisition of which might well signal his commitment to the later medium of expression, but his actual reading of which provides ample confirmation of long-held entrenched interests that he early on explored as a popular writer of prose fiction. Along with furnishing abundant evidence of Melville's engagement with other poets and his understanding of literary history and heritage, his copy of Warton's *History* illustrates his career-long commitment to conceptions of genius, to its heterodox character, and to its inevitable conflict with its times.

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[51] Ibid.

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Fig. 1a. Marked word counts for marginalia attributed to Herman Melville in Thomas Warton's *The History of English Poetry*.

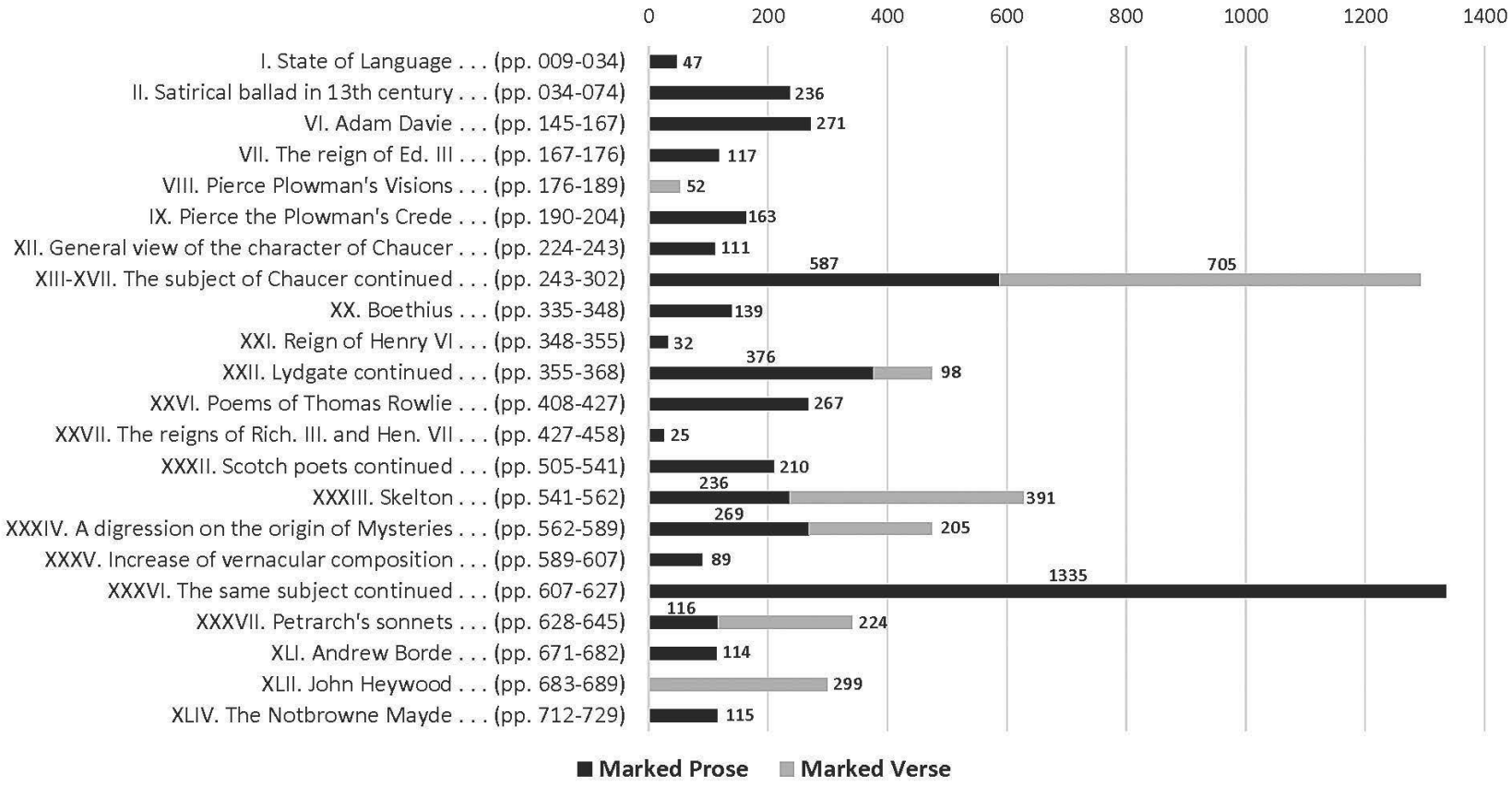

Fig. 1b. Marked word counts for marginalia attributed to Herman Melville in Thomas Warton's *The History of English Poetry*.

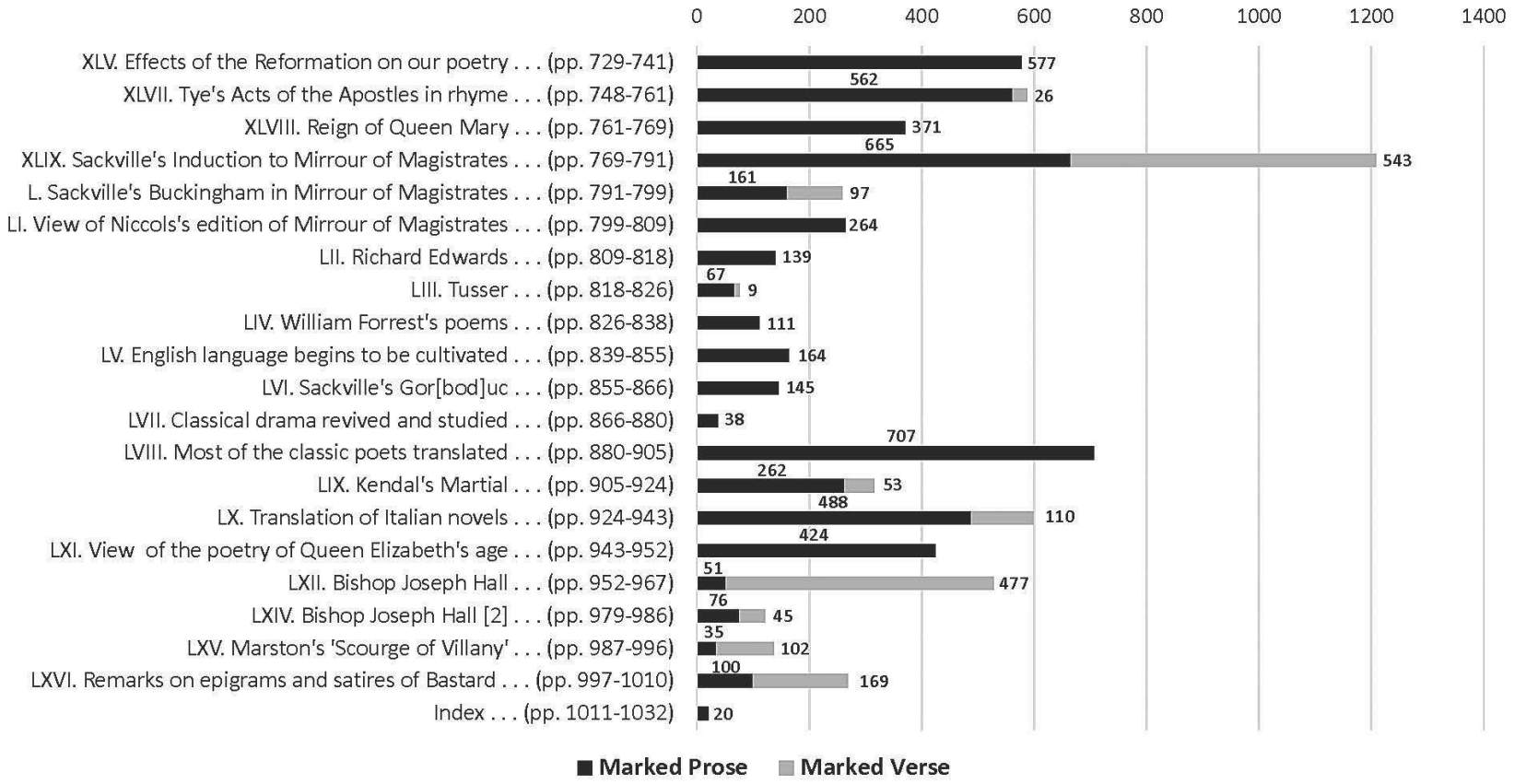

Fig. 2. Marked word counts for marginalia attributed to Herman Melville in Thomas Warton's multi-section account of Geoffrey Chaucer in *The History of English Poetry*.

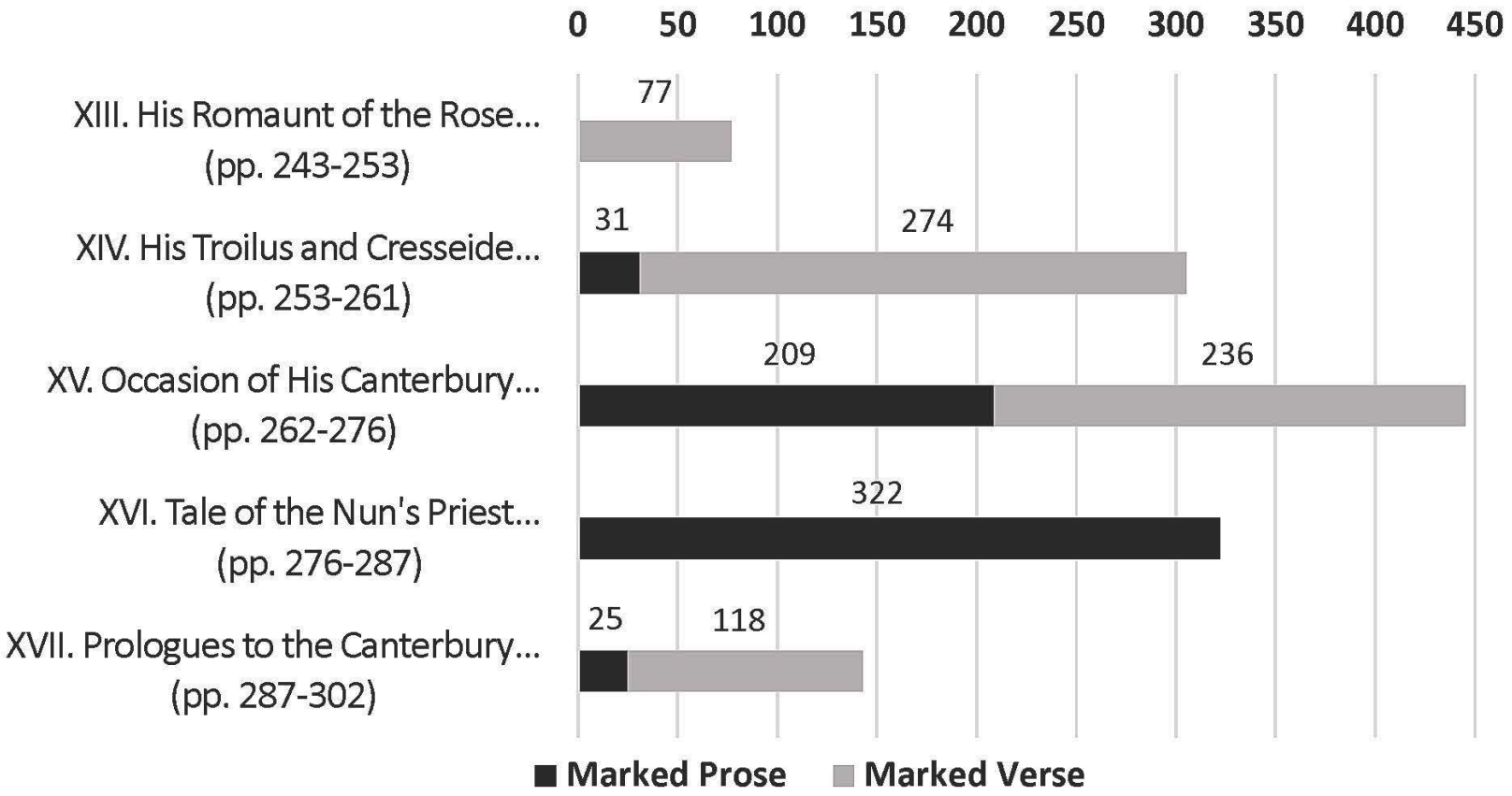

Fig. 3. Word cloud of marked verse in marginalia attributed to Herman Melville in Thomas Warton's *The History of English Poetry*.

Fig. 4. Word cloud of marked prose in marginalia attributed to Herman Melville in Thomas Warton's *The History of English Poetry*.