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The Functions of Annotations in Charlotte Smith's "Beachy Head"

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Contents

I. Introduction

In her long poem "Beachy Head," Charlotte Smith extensively annotates her own lines of poetry and thereby creates a rich layering of different styles as well as traditions of writing to be found in the main text[1] of the poem and in her annotations. In order to get at "Beachy Head" in its whole, one does not only have to read the main text, but also the annotations, which enter into a dialogue with the main text on the page. While we encounter a blank verse poem mainly in iambic pentameter as the main text of "Beachy Head," the annotations are written in prose and convey seemingly objective truths as well as subjective experience. When beginning to read the poem one soon faces this interrelation between main text and annotation. The poem begins with a contemplation on what the speaker sees when standing on the landmark Beachy Head on the south coast of England:

> I would recline; while Fancy should go forth,
> And represent the strange and awful hour
> Of vast concussion; when the Omnipotent
> Stretch'd forth his arm, and rent the solid hills,
> Bidding the impetuous main flood rush between
> The rifted shores, and from the continent
> Eternally divided this green isle. (5-10)[2]

Smith supports the term "concussion" with a note:

> Alluding to an idea that this Island was once joined to the continent of Europe, and torn from it by some convulsion of Nature. I confess I never could trace the resemblance between the two countries. Yet the cliffs about Dieppe, resemble the chalk cliffs on the Southern coast. But Normandy has no likeness whatever to the part of England opposite to it. ("Beachy Head" 1993, note to line 6)

When in the main text the speaker assigns the concussion and its consequential division of the "green isle" from the continent to "the Omnipotent," in the note, the speaker gives a more scientific explanation, vaguely referring to "an idea" that this division was caused by "some convulsion of Nature." In the main text the topic of the division is dealt with more poetically, whereas in the note we find a more scientific explanation. Yet, the speaker in the note explicitly appears in the second sentence only to tell the reader, that this explanation must be doubted and that the speaker has never seen any resemblance between the cliffs on each side of the English Channel.

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[1] In this paper it will be assumed that Smith's annotations are an essential part of "Beachy Head." Yet, one can still differentiate between the poem itself and its annotations. The poem itself will be referred to as the 'main text' in order to distinguish it from the annotations.

[2] In this paper, all direct quotes of the main text of "Beachy Head" as well as of Smith's own annotations are taken from Curran's edition of the poem. If another edition is used, this will be made explicit.

Thus, only by looking at this first example of Smith's annotating practice one faces three different theories about this "concussion," reaching from religious to scientific explanations and on to the subjective opinion of the speaker. None of them is more authoritative than the other, but Smith rather seems to play with the discourses at hand. When the editor Labbe then adds another annotation to Smith's annotation, the reader will gain more knowledge about what Smith could have known about the continental drift back in the very beginning of the 19th century and that her thoughts have been quite innovative (cf. "Beachy Head" 2007, note 6, 245). All these different textual parts (main text, annotation by Smith and by editors), which all add up to "Beachy Head" as a whole, serve certain functions and convey different information. This paper will examine these different functions of annotations in "Beachy Head" in order to show how they all contribute to an understanding of the poem as a whole with its opposing paradigms of objectivity and subjectivity.

Since "from their earliest uses in criticism, the terms 'subjective' and 'objective' were both multiple and variable in their meaning" (Abrams 241), they require clarification for the use in this paper. The terms subjectivity and objectivity are "used alternately to define [among other notions] the salient character of a period of art [or] specific aesthetic qualities which may be found, separately or united, in any work of art" (241). The aesthetic quality of "[s]ubjectivity, when applied to writing, suggests that the writer is primarily concerned with conveying personal experience and feeling," whereas "[o]bjectivity suggests that the writer is 'outside' of and detached from what he is writing about" (*Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory* "Subjectivity and Objectivity"). Contrasted to subjectivity, another quality of objectivity is "the ability to consider or represent facts, information, etc., without being influenced by personal feelings or opinions" (*OED* "objectivity, n."). Furthermore, these aesthetic qualities can be attributed to the paradigms of Enlightenment and Romanticism which emerged in the 18th century. While the paradigm of Enlightenment is "used to describe a scientific and rational ethos, including freedom from superstition and religious intolerance," and takes side with more objective qualities, "Romanticism was in part a revolt against such pure rationality" (*The Oxford Companion to English Literature* "Enlightenment"). Romanticism favoured subjectivity, and as a movement "unleashed individualism and … privileged the particular experience over the general rule" (*The Oxford Companion to English Literature* "Romanticism"). In order to analyse the annotations in "Beachy Head," this short outline should be sufficient at this point and I will come back to it later, when it will be shown how Smith mixes subjective as well as objective qualities in her writing.

II. Smith's Annotations

Smith's annotations have already been discussed by Jaqueline Labbe, and Christoph Reinfandt has developed her ideas further in his paper "The Textures of Romanticism." In her articles, Labbe identifies different speaking positions in "Beachy Head": "The poem's speaker … occupie[s] three separate identities: a masculinized 'I', feminine Contemplation, and the gender-neutral 'mind'" (Labbe 2003, 147). These three speaking positions can be found in the main text of "Beachy Head" and yet another one, which Labbe terms 'the historian,' 'speaks' in Smith's annotations (cf. Labbe 2008, 2). Thus, the annotations by Smith are regarded as an important part of the poem since they add another – sometimes competitive or questioning, or even supportive – perspective to the positions taken by the speaker in the main text and thereby establish a dialogue between the main text and the annotations. This voice of a 'historian' has strong autobiographical traces, which will be also shown later, and I will argue that it is far from stating only historical facts, but rather engages with subjective experience. Therefore, the labelling of the speaker in Smith's notes as 'historian' is not sufficing since history was supposed to be objective in Smith's time and this speaker goes beyond an objective account of historical facts.

So far, scholarship has been concerned only with Smith's own annotations in "Beachy Head," since they have been identified as being a constitutive part for understanding the poem as a whole (cf. Labbe 2003 & 2008). No research has been done on the annotations that are added to "Beachy Head" by other editors and on the way they influence the understanding of the main text and of Smith's own annotations. I will therefore focus on Smith's annotations and will add yet another layer to the poem by consulting also the annotations of three different editors of "Beachy Head," namely Labbe, Wilson and Curran. This then creates three textual layers, which will be examined in this paper: the main text of "Beachy Head," [3] Smith's annotations, and the editor's annotation. Each of the editors has a different annotating approach and this paradoxically complicates our view on "Beachy Head," while at the same time it clarifies the different positions taken in Smith's annotations and the main text of the poem. I will be examining this aspect in chapter III of the present paper.

Another important point to consider is the position on the page of Smith's own notes: In the original edition of "Beachy Head" the notes were endnotes, although Smith expressed the wish that they should be footnotes (cf. Reinfandt 107). This wish has been

[3] For the use in this paper, the main text will not be further differentiated into different speaking positions as it has been suggested by Labbe and Reinfandt. It suffices to see the annotations as opposed to one main text in order to examine the function of Smith's annotations.

fulfilled in the editions by Curran and Labbe, where the notes appear both times as footnotes. Reinfandt explains this change in the light of publishing practices: Printing the notes as footnotes is "in fact common practice in most recent editions of the poem as opposed to the common practice of poetry publishing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century" (107). It is furthermore remarkable that Smith's notes are printed at all and have not fallen prey to the "consequences of the Romantic ideology of organicism [with its] tendency to omit notes entirely" (108). The position of the notes makes a fundamental difference in the communication and discourse of the different voices we find in the poem with regard to "the 'presence' of the … speaker [of the notes] in the reading process" (108). When the – sometimes prosaic, sometimes matter-of-fact – tone in the notes is printed at the bottom of the page as a footnote, this stands in direct contrast to the lines of poetry above. Then, a mixture of poetic style and prose style comes together and the different discourses, which are led in the main text and the annotations directly communicate on the page. Whereas, if they are printed as endnotes, these discourses are held separately, each confined to its own space in a more radical way than this might be the case with footnotes. Although footnotes appear also clearly at the bottom of the page – in terms of hierarchy they are secondary on the page –, they are still visible for the reader when reading the main text and are waiting in the margin to be read. Endnotes are out of sight and banished to the end of the main text, thus establishing a greater distance to the main text and a greater obstacle for the reader to turn to when he or she longs for an explanation.

II.1. Methodology

In order to analyse the annotations by Smith, as well as the ones by the editors, the categories to work with will be taken from the Tübingen Annotating Literature project. These categories include language, form, intratextuality, intertextuality, context and interpretation. Using this model for the annotations in "Beachy Head" is a very good starting point, yet, it needs to be slightly modified by introducing an extra category of 'comment'. This would be helpful for the use in this paper since I will also examine annotations of several editors who critically annotated "Beachy Head," and furthermore, one has to take into account the specificity of Smith annotating her own work. The category 'comment' can be further divided into a) comment on Smith's annotation by herself or an editor, b) comment by an editor on another editor's annotation and c) substituting Smith's annotation with one of the editor's. In this 'comment' category,

annotators comment from their subjective perspective on different parts of the text. In contrast to the original Annotating Literature model, levels will not be considered when evaluating the annotations in "Beachy Head." The introduced categories will be used in the following to classify the annotations we encounter in "Beachy Head" in order to examine their functions.

II.2. Categories of Smith's Annotations

When analysing Smith's annotations in "Beachy Head" nearly all kinds of categories can be detected. She has simple language annotations giving only a Latin designation of a bird or plant, such as "vetch. *Vicia sylvatica*" (note to line 351) or intertextual ones such as "'With blossom'd furze, unprofitably gay.' Goldsmith" (note to line 221). Such annotations are pure explanatory notes and appear frequently in the poem in a "matter-of-fact tone" (Reinfandt 110), which supports their objective content. Smith knew a lot about natural history in her time and also wrote two books for children about this topic, which have been popular among her contemporaries (cf. Bode 251-252). Typical for Smith are her detailed listings of different flowers and birds to whom she can then add an explanation and display her knowledge. Anne Mellor described this "minute particularity of the natural world" (Mellor qtd. in Bode 258) as a characteristic of Smith and as different from and challenging to the Wordsworthian 'egotistical sublime' (cf. 258). By adopting this learned and scholarly voice she presents herself as "thoroughly educated and at home in all walks of life and discourse" (Reinfandt 110) and strengthens her position as a respectable and authoritative voice in the literary market. These annotations are mostly short and stand in stark contrast to her extensive context annotations. In these context annotations a new text emerges in which Smith transmits her encyclopaedic knowledge as well as her own subjective experience. Such an impressive annotation is attached to "the huge unwieldy Elephant" (l. 412) to whom she refers as a special elephant by capitalising the term and thus gives herself a cue for further developing its story in a note. In this note, the reader is told about the discovery of elephant bones in 1740 in Sussex, on which a detailed account of the findings follows including mentioning the people who are in possession of them. The speaker further tells the reader that elephants were brought by Romans into Britain and refers to Milton's "Second Book of his History" (note to line 412). Scholarly opinions are then discussed on how this elephant and its bones might have come to Sussex. And eventually, the highly autobiographical speaker appears explicitly in the annotation stating that

> I had often heard of the elephant's bones at Burton, but never saw them; and I have

> no books to refer to. I think I saw, in what is now called the National Museum at Paris, the very large bones of an elephant, which were found in North America: though it is certain that this enormous animal is never seen in its natural state, but in the countries under the torrid zone of the old world. I have, since making this note, been told that the bones of the rhinoceros and hippopotamus have been found in America. (note to line 412)

In the annotations the speaker frequently enters the scholarly discussion that has been established in the annotation, and adds her own opinion to it. In this case, this subjective view does not run counter to the facts stated before, but instead adds another layer of knowledge to it. It is expressed in a rather vague language, as if she was hesitant to state her experience, when she for example says "I think I saw." This hesitation might come from her lack of "books to refer to." Labbe lets the reader know on this note that here "Smith alludes to the sale of her library to pay her mounting debts, in 1803" ("Beachy Head" 2007, note 95, 249). Subtly, the speaker introduces Smith's personal fate of having to sacrifice her books, which are an important source of knowledge for her and on which much of her education is based, for paying off debts. At the same time as she is seemingly not trusting herself about what she has seen, she is showing that, although she has no longer books to refer to, she is a well-travelled woman who can count on her own memory for information with which she can support her annotations. The last sentence of this note on the rhinoceroses and hippopotamuses in America seems completely out of context here and does not at all refer back to the main text of the poem. With this annotation one can clearly observe how the annotation establishes its own text that runs parallel to the main text and which leaves the reader perplexed, without forging any links back to the main text. By containing more than one point of view, this annotation mirrors the main text with its different speaking positions identified by Labbe (cf. Labbe 2003 & 2008). By doing so, Smith counteracts exactly what Hamilton has identified as a guideline for writing helpful annotations: "No facts should be brought to a poem – historical background, identification of allusions, or ideas – without demonstrating their direct relevance to the reader's understanding of the text" (Hamilton 159). Smith's annotation rather "distract[s] the reader, only interrupt[s] the imaginative response to a poem" (135) and thus creates the appearance of a learned poet with a clear intention to teach the readers facts and to share her knowledge with them. This is tending more towards the functions and qualities of an author propagated by Alexander Pope, for whom the distinction of a poet from 'ordinary' men is "a question of education … and the difference lies in the degree of learning and of discipline," while for William Wordsworth the difference lies in the poet's "extraordinary sensibility" (Nowak 134). We could then argue that Smith takes in this annotation the side

of an Enlightenment author rather than of a Romantic one. Yet, Smith cannot be seen to be at home in any tradition, but she rather tries to assume authority by establishing a "marginal personae" (Labbe 2003, 44) in her notes that smoothly moves through different discourses at hand.

Throughout her annotations this marginal personae shifts between a more questioning and self-doubting voice, as seen in the annotation discussed before, and a more self-confident one. Often the speaker is self-confidently questioning such "established authorities" (54) like Linnaeus, Gilbert White, and Shakespeare. The note that questions Shakespeare's competence is full of several information and smoothly includes an intertextual reference without putting it too much into the foreground. The note is attached, as it so often is the case in "Beachy Head," to a flower mentioned in the main text:

> cukoo-flowers. *Lychnis dioica.* Shakespeare describes the Cukoo buds as being yellow. He probably meant the numerous Ranunculi, or March marigolds (*Calta palustris*) which so gild the meadows in Spring; but poets have never been botanists. The Cukoo flower is the *Lychnis floscuculi.* (note to line 591).

This intertextual reference serves not only the function of displaying her knowledge, but also to introduce a dialogue with one of the most famous English authors. Yet, she is not praising him for any of his works but ironically refers to his seemingly weak botanical knowledge. Indirectly she is then hinting at herself as a poet with the phrase "but poets have never been botanists." This remark gives her the opportunity to show the reader her 'superior' role in designating flowers in an indirect comparison with Shakespeare.

Remaining in the realm of botany, Smith links it to the art of writing in another annotation, again attached to a flower:

> anémones. *Anemóne nemorosa.* It appears to be settled on late and excellent authorities, that this word should not be accented on the second syllable, but on the penultima. I have however ventured the more known accentuation, as more generally used, and suiting better the nature of my verse. (note to line 364)

Here, the speaker does not identify any of these "late and excellent authorities" by name since Smith might assume that they are not relevant for the information she wants to transmit. This information is then only used in order to establish a meta-commentary on her own writing and this is now one exceptional note by Smith herself in the newly introduced category 'comment'. In this meta-comment on the style of the main text, the speaker explicitly appears and gives an explanation on a small detail thereby showing that the poetry in the main text is minutely crafted art. By explaining that this accentuation is "suiting better the nature of my verse," the speaker rejects the formal and seemingly correct pronunciation of anemones, and prefers the more commonly used accentuation.

This is another act of taking a side between the Enlightenment paradigm and the Romantic paradigm, this time the other way round than in the annotation presented at the beginning of this chapter: Now, Smith takes the side of a more Romantic author, going away from formal rules and preferring the accentuation used by 'common' people. She chooses poetry over exactness, thereby attributing a bigger importance to her poetic voice than on the scholarly one in the annotation. Taking into account the sum total of her annotations, Smith makes use of the best of both paradigms, the Enlightenment and the Romantic one, since she displays both in their appropriate setting. This setting, however, is not confined to spatial boundaries, such as the main text and the space for the footnote. Smith rather moves between them, always adapting the voice to the context and choosing the one that is required to achieve a desired effect upon the reader.

III. Influence of the Editors' Annotations on the Poetic Discourse in the Poem

When the layer of an editor's annotations is added to the already annotated poem, the identified functions of Smith's annotations are influenced, challenged and disturbed. This chapter will explore how different editors' annotations and their layout influence the transmission of meaning in "Beachy Head." As Jahnson has pointed out, when

> annotating a text the editor occupies a fairly powerful position in the literary commerce. For one thing, he or she as well as the publisher decide which texts are worth extensive commentary, normally with the aim of creating a definitive edition with some lasting validity. Annotated texts, in the first place, help to establish a literary canon. (Jahnson 211-12)

By looking at three different editions of "Beachy Head" one can say that each one contributes to Charlotte Smith's work entering the literary canon. However, in these editions the editors do not only enhance the awareness of an author's work, but also influence the texts themselves, since annotators are "always enveloping [the] author, [are] always in the act of invading [and] delimiting his [or her] possible meaning and relevance" (Hanna III 182).

Each of the analysed editions deals differently with both the annotations of Smith herself and with the editors' own annotations. Curran has both Smith's and his own annotations printed as footnotes, so that they appear together below the main text of the poem. Labbe has Smith's annotations in footnotes and her own annotations in endnotes, which creates a different reading experience since a direct interaction with the main text on the page is no longer possible. Wilson has yet another, and the most radical version of

annotating: Smith's own annotations are deleted (!), the few annotations by Wilson can be found as endnotes and they often describe and comment on Smith's original annotations. Thus, we have a kind of second-order-observation annotations in Wilson's edition. This last version can be really questioned as it changes the poem "Beachy Head" in its core, because the speaker position in the annotations disappears completely. What exactly is gone when the footnotes by Smith are gone and substituted by Wilson's annotation? This is, for instance, the endnote by Wilson that substitutes Smith's annotation on the elephant bones discussed in the previous chapter and qualifies thus as an annotation in the category of 'substituting annotation': "Smith writes at length about the excavation of elephant bones in Sussex in 1740, and theories of their possible origins" ("Beachy Head" 2003, note on line 412-19, 62). The effect of this footnote is hugely different from Smith's annotation. Smith's annotation is lengthy and demands a lot of attention. It pulls the reader into the story of the elephant bones in Sussex and shows that Smith is well informed about what is going on in the local area of the South Downs and that she is also well-travelled when telling of the bones she has seen in Paris. All this is missing now and the autobiographical speaker in Smith's notes is muted, no longer opposing its prose voice to the poetic diction of the main text. Yet, it is an interesting experiment, probably not in accordance with Smith's intention, but Wilson thereby plays with the main text and tries out if it can also stand for itself. This clearly changes the poem and maybe creates a more organic whole in accordance with the Romantic ideology and its tendency to leave out footnotes (cf. Reinfandt 108). Only the poetic voice is left, which might be split into different speaking positions, but the overall poetic diction, the blank verse and iambic pentameter persists without any major disturbance of factual notes and context information.

While in Wilson a total suppression of the speaker in Smith's notes is accomplished, Labbe and Curran are less radical. Both of them have Smith's notes printed as footnotes, and the editorial annotations are added. Between the annotations of the editors and "Beachy Head" "a very close and sometimes even a symbiotic relationship" can develop and it "can be intensified by the decision to publish the annotations right under the text as footnotes instead of relegating them to a separate appendix, which will certainly produce a different effect on the reader" (Jahnson 214). We encounter both versions in the other two editions of "Beachy Head." Curran enhances the effect of communication between the different textual parts directly on the page by adding his own annotations below Smith's ones and by interfering into her notes with square brackets. Labbe seems to be less intrusive here, as she prints her own annotations as endnotes. This leaves Smith's voices in "Beachy Head" alone and separates Labbe's voice spatially from them. This version

emphasizes the role that Smith's own annotations play for the poem and acknowledges them as an important part of it that must not be disturbed. It seems to show that "Beachy Head" can only be fully grasped when including Smith's footnotes in the reading experience, and only her footnotes. As soon as one wants to know more about any detail in the poem one has to turn to the end of the book and consult Labbe's annotations. At least, this is not a way of suppressing Smith's footnotes in terms of layout. Curran's notes, in contrast, are a dominant feature on the page, as they obviously interfere with Smith's notes by invading them with square brackets and creating another direct subtext on the page that adds mainly information for today's reader in the categories of language or context. By doing so, Curran shows what Smith might have missed to annotate back then, and suggests that she has not worked carefully enough. At other times it serves the function to "open [the] text[…] to an audience with a different background and culture" (Jahnson 213). Such an annotation would be "lesser sails: the ships, not employing their main sails, proceed at half speed dragging their nets" ("Beachy Head" 1993, note to line 39, 218), which explains Smith's lines "a fleet / Of fishing vessels stretch their lesser sails" (l. 38-39). A reader who lacks any nautical background might find this interesting, yet it remains doubtful if this information is necessary at all for the understanding of the poem. At the same time, it might create a more impressive mental image when imagining the fishing vessels floating slowly over the surface of the sea, and thus it helps to enhance the atmosphere created by Smith's poetry. Doing so, already such a short annotation influences the reading of the poem a lot by sensitising the reader for information he might otherwise simply overlook.

Labbe is more straightforward when it comes to suppressing Smith's voice: since her annotations are printed as endnotes and thus cannot exert any influence directly on the page with Smith's annotations, they are as far as content is concerned definitely stronger than Curran's. When Smith's annotations already come on top of her own poetry, establishing a counter-voice to the main text, Labbe's voice again comes on top of them, having the last word. At the end of the poem, Smith introduces the figure of the hermit who is said to be based on a real person as she tells the reader in her note:

> In a cavern almost immediately under the cliff called Beachy Head, there lived, as the people of the country believed, a man of the name of Darby, who for many years had no other abode than this cave, and subsisted almost entirely on shell-fish. He had often administered assistance to ship-wrecked mariners; but venturing into the sea on this charitable mission during a violent equinoctial storm, he himself perished. As it is above thirty years since I heard this tradition of Parson Darby (for so I think) he was called: it may now perhaps be forgotten. (note to line 674)

When reading these lines, the style of the annotation is more like telling a story than merely conveying facts. The speaker is again vague and unsure about the correct retelling of the

story as it is thirty years ago since the speaker has first heard about it. This leaves space for Labbe as an annotator to intervene. She takes over the voice we elsewhere find in Smith's annotations, namely the one telling facts and impressing the reader with her knowledge. In this note on Smith's annotation, Labbe is correcting Smith and identifies the person of the hermit: "Parson Darby was Jonathan Derby or Darby (d. 1726), Rector of Wilmington" ("Beachy Head" 2007, note 125, 250). She names his burial place as well as the inscription on his headstone. Further, she corrects Smith: "Rather than living in his cave … he merely spent stormy nights in it, warning ships from the rocky costs [sic!] with strategically placed lanterns" (note 125, 250), making him thereby less heroic, compared to Smith's version in which he is "venturing into the sea" in order to save "ship-wrecked mariners". Then, Labbe is wandering from this topic to the next, as the speaker also did in Smith's annotation of the elephant bones. Labbe adds an intertextual reference to Smith's novel *Montalbert* and an intratextual one to lines that appeared before in "Beachy Head" going on to contextual information about the use of this cave by smugglers at Smith's time and finally reaching forward into today's time by informing the reader that a "landslide in 1999 buried the cave" (note line 125, 250). When trying to adapt the Tübingen Annotation model to this annotation, using only one category for an annotation, one has trouble in selecting one of them. There is too much information mixed up in this annotation, reaching from historical and geographical context to the categories of intertext and intratext. With this overload of information, contained in an annotation by Labbe on Smith's own annotation, the reader needs some time to readjust, turn back from the endnotes section to the actual poem and find his or her way back to it through first considering the impact of Labbe's annotation on Smith's annotation. Three different fields of knowledge are introduced by this layering: first, there is Smith's hermit figure who she uses to finish her poem with. This is written in a highly poetic voice, only telling that "Within a cavern mined by wintry tides / Dwelt one, who long disgusted with the world" ("Beachy Head" 1993, l. 673-74). This invites for more storytelling although it is not relevant for this story who exactly this "one" was. It is rather left open, thus establishing a prototype figure of the charitable, selfless hermit who sacrifices himself for the sake of others. Yet, Smith cannot leave it like this, having the created atmosphere to be the only impression that weighs on the reader. She has to annotate it and give it some ground. Here again, her 'enlightenment speaker' of the annotation steps in, leaving no implication unclarified. The speaker tells the story of a 'real' person, namely Parson Darby, which inspired Smith to tell his story in the main text. Smith's annotation is yet not really factual. She retells another story that might be more specific than the main text of the poem but it is still fiction. Only Labbe resolves all

obscurity by giving the reader all the information he or she can possibly get, even including the headstone inscription of the historical hermit figure!

Another annotation by Labbe serves to illustrate the last new 'comment' subcategory: the one of annotating another editor's annotation. In this example, Labbe comments on Curran's insertion in Smith's annotation on "some island of the southern sea" (l. 663): "An allusion to the visionary delights of the newly discovered islands [Polynesia, particularly Tahiti]" (note to line 663, brackets by Curran). On this, Labbe comments that

> Curran identifies this as Polynesia, particularly Tahiti, but it could refer to any of the Pacific islands sighted and named by Captain Cook. Tahiti was discovered by Cook in 1769; the Cook Islands were sighted in 1773, and the Hawaiian Islands were discovered and named the Sandwich Islands in 1778. How 'newly discovered' these are is open to debate. ("Beachy Head" 2007, note 124, 250)

Here, again, the complex layering, which is achieved through annotating, becomes evident. An annotation on another annotator's work complicates the whole layering of the poem, but it also illuminates and discusses assumptions that are far from being fixed. By questioning Curran's insertion, Labbe this time questions another editor's authority and not Smith's. Here, the annotation by Labbe is not interacting with "Beachy Head," but it opens up a scholarly discussion at the margins of the poem. When one now contrasts the one line of poetry, which is the starting point for three different annotations – Smith's note on her poem, Curran's insertion, and Labbe's comment on Curran –, with the massive text these annotations create, the poetic voice is smothered and no longer heard. An imbalance is achieved while reading through the footnotes; but this is only the case until one gets back to the main text of the poem and is again immersed in the poetic diction.

IV. Conclusion

In "Beachy Head" it is not as simple as Labbe suggests in her article that "History [in Smith's notes] and Poetry [in the main text] have played off each other through the poem" (Labbe 2008, 4). The textual structure is more complex than that: there is also in the notes a speaker who does not stick to objective, factual and dry historical knowledge, but one who shares her experience with the reader, questions her own thought and loves to tell stories, if not in poetic diction then in prose. In Smith's annotations both objective and subjective paradigms come to the fore and create a rich layering of perspectives that

represents Smith's uncommonly wide knowledge and ability to be at home in a range of different discourses.

Leaving out this voice in Smith's annotations, as shown in Wilson's edition, can have distorting consequences: When muting this intelligent speaker in Smith's notes, another poem is created that lacks all the information Smith thought important for the reader to know to get at her poem in its entirety. It has been observed that "*Beachy Head* contains a complex poetics of multiplicity and simultaneity, symbolized by the myriad parts of [the cliff] Beachy Head itself" (Labbe 2003, 142). On top of these parts of "Beachy Head" the annotators of the poem recline, like the speaker at the beginning of the poem: "I would recline; while Fancy should go forth" (l. 5), and add another layer of knowledge to it. On this massive top, then, the reader can recline and embrace all the layers of "Beachy Head" that unfold.

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Eidesstattliche Erklärung zur Arbeit

Ich erkläre, dass ich die Arbeit selbständig angefertigt und nur die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Alle Stellen, die dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach anderen Werken, gegebenenfalls auch elektronischen Medien, entnommen sind, sind von mir durch Angabe der Quelle als Entlehnung kenntlich gemacht.

Ich erkläre weiterhin, dass die vorliegende Arbeit noch nicht im Rahmen eines anderen Prüfungsverfahrens eingereicht wurde.

Tübingen, 23. November 2016

Mascha Wieland