In Parisian Salons and Boston's Back Streets: Reading Jefferson's "Notes on the State of Virginia"

David W. Lewes

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IN PARISIAN SALONS AND BOSTON'S BACK STREETS:
READING JEFFERSON'S *NOTES ON THE STATE OF VIRGINIA*

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the American Studies Program
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

David W. Lewes
2002
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Approved, December 2002

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Robert A. Gross

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Richard S. Lowry
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. PUBLICATION HISTORY</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. RECEPTION AND RESPONSE</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

    Physical Attributes of Fifteen Editions of the *Notes on the State of Virginia*
ABSTRACT

The publication history and reception of Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* were examined for further insights about its place in early American intellectual and publishing history. Written by a famous and controversial author, the work was heavily reprinted and generated a vast body of material about its reception and the public’s reaction. Research involved examining ephemeral and periodical literature from the 1780s through the mid-nineteenth century available from The College of William and Mary, the University of Virginia, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Published correspondence and selected printers’ records also were used. The book’s history traces a path from a rather exclusive Enlightenment audience to a wide array of readerships. Some general trends of reception include, but are not limited to, (1) general transatlantic admiration for Jefferson’s argument with French naturalist Buffon over natural history of the New World and for his sublime descriptions of nature in the late eighteenth century; (2) large circulation and discussion from 1796 through the end of Jefferson’s presidency as supporters and detractors used the work for political ends; (3) from the late 1820s, abolitionists’ praise for Jefferson’s anti-slavery positions and downplaying of his negative racial assessments. Throughout the entire period examined, the book remained an authoritative source of facts about Virginia. The analysis of reception and reaction also shows the scale of the *Notes*’ impact in the early Republic and antebellum world of print. This thesis also reveals the various channels of print culture that allowed an initially exclusive publication to reach a wide assortment of social groups who then used the work for purposes far beyond the original intent of its author.
IN PARISIAN SALONS AND BOSTON’S BACK STREETS
INTRODUCTION

Many contemporary scholars recognize the contribution of Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* to the literature of the early Republic. Articles have analyzed the *Notes*’ internal structure, assessed its literary value, analyzed the contents to understand Jefferson’s views on race, religion, and industrialism, or treated these topics in the context of the period’s intellectual history.¹ Surprisingly, though, the extent of the book’s popularity is less widely appreciated. As recently as 1993, a psycho-literary analysis of the *Notes* in *Eighteenth Century Studies* referred to the work’s “lack of popularity.”² Nothing could be further from the truth. A quick glance at the results of intensive bibliographical research in the 1950s reveals no less than twenty-two separate editions produced in Paris, London, and American cities from Richmond northward between 1785 and 1853. For a book by an American writer in this period, the distribution was almost unparalleled. Among non-fiction books, the *Notes* was edged out perhaps only by Parson Weems’ *Life of Washington* and some reference works like Webster’s speller.³ Even more revealing of the book’s impact than surviving publishing records is the steady stream of extracts, quotes, references, even whole works devoted to commenting on various passages. Far from a mere reference work on Virginia, Jefferson offered the *Notes* as his contribution to the Enlightenment, building from copious facts into controversial argument and speculation about religion, race, slavery, and science.⁴ Both critics and admirers from a surprisingly wide range of backgrounds responded voluminously and continued to do so through the Civil War.

One of the more striking aspects of the response is that it extended far beyond the
elite circle of Jefferson’s initial audience of friends and salon acquaintances, penetrating deeply into popular culture. As an extreme example of the phenomenon, we find the free black abolitionist David Walker quoting the *Notes* in his *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*. Best known as an incitement of violent slave rebellion, Walker’s pamphlet also calls for an end to social injustice and prejudice against free blacks in the North. Jefferson’s negative speculations about blacks’ intellectual capacities offered Walker a pointed example of whites’ rationalizing their denial of equal rights to African-Americans. As a black man in antebellum America, Walker would have been far removed from the *Notes*’ expected readership. Despite his prominence as an activist, at least one of his parents was probably a North Carolina slave and he earned his living in Boston as a used clothes dealer—hardly the reader one might expect for a book originally intended for a rather exclusive audience. Yet other black activists such as John Parrish, for example, also responded to Jefferson’s work in their own different ways. Supporters of slavery voiced their reaction as well. In fact, the *Notes* seemed to contain something for almost anyone who was reading the book (or grazing its contents through quotes and extracts).

Copious materials survive to document reception and response to Jefferson’s speculation on slavery, race, many other topics, and the work as a whole. At least three substantial reviews in European periodicals met the initial European publication. As Jefferson’s fame grew during his vice-presidency beginning in 1797 and two subsequent presidential terms, his *Notes* provided ample controversial material to praise or vehemently condemn the controversial Republican leader, especially for his views on religion, race, and slavery. In particular, numerous pamphlets and newspaper articles by abolitionists and black activists refer to or quote passages from the *Notes*. A passage
extolling the qualities of Native Americans even drew charges of slander against Jefferson for naming a Marylander responsible for murdering Chief Logan’s family. Others were grateful for Jefferson’s description of events on the early frontier and its native population as they quickly receded before relentless westward settlement. Following Jefferson’s death in 1826, biographers and eulogists gauged the merits of the work and weighed it against Jefferson’s other achievements. By mid-century, encyclopedic literary histories of the United States added to the assessment of Jefferson’s literary status, and the Notes in particular. Also telling are continued references in American periodicals through the Civil War and finally the appearance of a complete revised edition at mid-century. Tracking such an unusually well documented response, while also referring to surviving records of the Notes’ publication history, gives us an appreciation of who in this formative period of American publishing might gain access to this initially exclusive publication, the various mechanisms that channeled the books’ ideas to its extensive readership, and how readers reacted to its contents.
The following discussion provides an important parallel track to the Notes’ reception and the readership’s abundant printed response. Understanding the book’s scale of distribution and the context of its printing can help us make sense of the abundant response. Much of the groundwork for the book’s publication history was laid by bibliographer Coolie Vemer in the 1950s. Through research at dozens of libraries and a large correspondence network centered around the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, Vemer identified twenty-two definite imprints and tracked 170 of the 200 recipients of the first edition. Other short bibliographical articles by Vemer and others explain certain aspects of various editions. Jefferson’s papers and extensive editors’ notes in the published catalog of his library provide important details. Incomplete records of printers and booksellers contribute documentation of the Notes’ transition from exclusivity to accessibility. All of this disparate, essentially “raw” bibliographical information provides a base for the following more comprehensive analysis of the book’s history from inception in the 1780s through the mid-nineteenth century. Extrapolating the implications of the various steps in the publication history is also essential in understanding the book’s path from an exclusive author’s circle to a diverse and extensive readership.

Instigation to write the Notes came from a questionnaire submitted by French diplomat François Marbois to various state legations at Philadelphia in 1780. During the following year, Jefferson compiled responses to Marbois’ queries drawing on the copious
notes about Virginia he had amassed over the years. In December 1781, Jefferson submitted his manuscript to Marbois, professing them merely “a proof of my respect for your wishes.” In response to interest from close friends, Jefferson decided to have the manuscript privately printed. Marbois’ compliments on the “candor and frankness in explaining topics that short-sighted politicians would call state secrets” partly explains Jefferson’s reluctance to publish the Notes openly. To be specific, he correctly anticipated the furor his opinions on slavery and religion would arouse later during his years at the top of the executive branch of the national government in Philadelphia and Washington. Finding print estimates too high in Philadelphia, he postponed the project until 1785, after he had settled into his post as Minister Plenipotentiary to France. The reputable and innovative Parisian “printer to the king,” Philippe-Denis Pierres, agreed to print 200 copies for one-fourth the cost quoted in Philadelphia. Jefferson distributed at least 29 copies to European friends and acquaintances, while the rest of the known copies made their way to America. Among the notable European recipients was the Comte de Buffon to whom the most famous passages on natural history are respectfully directed. Besides the expected circle of American recipients such as future president James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams, Jefferson sent a whole box of the Notes to his mentor George Wythe. At Jefferson’s request, Wythe distributed 37 copies to students at the College of William and Mary, judiciously selecting the recipients so as not to “offend some narrow-minded parents.”

Upon the death of Charles Williamsos [sic], the copy of the private edition that Jefferson had presented him found its way to the Parisian bookseller Théophile Barrois the elder who immediately made plans to publish a translation. Jefferson’s work may
have fitted into a family specialty for the Barrois family as the son styled himself “Bookseller for the Foreign Living Languages” in an early nineteenth-century publication. When Jefferson saw the truncated and inaccurate text translated by Barrois’ “hireling,” he allowed the learned Abbé Morellet to improve the translation. In 1786 Barrois published the Morellet translation titled *Observations sur la Virginie...*, but it still fell far short of Jefferson’s expectations.

A superficial review of the errors and changes from the original text in the Barrois edition may lead some modern readers to dismiss Jefferson’s criticisms a mere postures, designed to minimize his desire for more widespread publication. He may well have sought a more extensive audience despite his pleas to recipients not to indiscriminately circulate their personal copies of the private edition. However, evidence should be sought beyond his seemingly petty complaints to Barrois and Morellet. In her study of the Barrois edition, Dorthy Medlin describes how Jefferson’s philosophy of literal translation clashed with the more liberal French views of the craft held by Morellet and encyclopedist Jean Le Rond d’Alembert. Morellet took the liberty of rearranging sentence structure to better suit the French language or even improving the style in certain passages. Morellet also reorganized the subject matter so that some major discussions, such as slavery for example, are grouped together rather than spread out apparently at random among multiple queries by Marbois. Fear of government censorship also led Morellet to alter the tone of Jefferson’s discussion of religion. He also left out “An Act for Establishing Religious Freedom” (passed in 1786) which Jefferson had added as an appendix to remaining copies of the 1785 edition. Changes from Jefferson’s manuscript, therefore, were substantial.
A letter in 1818 best illustrates Jefferson's exacting expectations for careful printing. When Wells and Lilly of Boston (who would also publish the Notes posthumously in 1829) sent the ex-president their edition of Cicero's works, Jefferson took the opportunity to compare it with other editions:

Having been extremely disgusted with the Philadelphia and New York Delphin editions, some of which I had read, and altho executed with a good type on good paper, yet so full of errors of the press as not to be worth the paper they were printed on, I wished to see the state of the classical press with you. Their editions had on an average about one error for every page. I read therefore the portions of your's above mentioned with a pretty sharp eye, and in something upwards of 200 pages I found the errors noted on the paper inclosed, being an average of one for every 13 pages. ... the errors in the Variorum editions however are fewer than these, the Elzevirs still fewer: but the perfection of accuracy is to be found in the folio edition of Homer by the Foulis of Glasgow. I have understood they offered 1000 guineas for the discovery of any error in it, even of an accent, and that the reward was never claimed. 15

Jefferson displays an idiosyncratic concern with accuracy in his disgust over typographical errors, his taking the time to proof-read and calculate average errors per page, and his reverence for the impeccable Glasgow edition. Medlin has spotted nine errors in the first thirty pages of the Barrois edition. 16 At about one error per three pages, Barrois would have ranked closer to the "worthless" Cicero editions than Wells and Lilly's more acceptable ratio of one error per thirteen pages. Barrois clearly was not the meticulous "printer to the King" that Jefferson had initially dealt with in Paris. At the
same time, his irregular printing habits and Jefferson and Morellet’s schedules did not permit them to view all the proofs. Whether or not Jefferson’s blame for these errors was entirely fair, it was not inconsistent with his obsession with accuracy. Unfortunately, Medlin’s discussion of the Barrois edition omits independent examples of Jefferson’s views on printing accuracy such as the letter to Wells and Lilly. As a result, his “picayune criticisms” of the Barrois edition might be construed as disingenuous protest from an author who secretly sought very public exposure by pursuing the subsequent London edition.

Jefferson’s displeasure over Morellet’s reorganization of the Notes also cannot be dismissed as a trivial excuse to authorize a more public dissemination of his work the next year. Although Morellet’s reorganization may have its merits for modern readers, recent thoughtful scholarship shows Jefferson’s organization also was purposeful and would have been appreciated by an eighteenth-century audience. Late-eighteenth-century critical praise (outlined below) might seem puzzling to modern readers who find the work “choppy” or oddly organized when read beginning to end. However, the positive reviews (discussed below) did not just respond to the interest or eloquence of individual sections but also favorably assessed the sum of the parts as a well-integrated work. By characterizing Jefferson as an “ingenious Author,” London’s Monthly Review implied the excellence of the whole work, including its organization. Indeed, Jefferson himself had rearranged Marbois’ queries from simple guidebook form to better conform with his expansive arguments and speculation on complex, controversial topics. George Alan Davy astutely observed that Jefferson had grouped sections on nature together in the first forty percent of the volume, followed by a discussion of “the people of Virginia and their
political, social, and economic concerns.” Finally, having supplied the reader with abundant facts, Jefferson made proposals for change. In effect, his organization constitutes “a system that emphasizes factual statements about nature as a basis for reasoning about society”—a system that conformed to Enlightenment understanding of the “hierarchy” of knowledge.19 In an earlier article, Robert Ferguson sketched a similar outline of the Notes’ purposeful structure but went further by setting the organization in the context of theories about positive law built on the foundation of nature. Ferguson points to precedents for such organization in Montesquieu and Grotius and emphasizes Jefferson’s familiarity with the common law’s “order through accumulation leaving room for later elaboration.” Having so purposefully applied this structure to support his arguments, Jefferson understandably would have resented Morellet’s reorganization.

In an effort to reassert some measure of control over a work that had escaped into the roguish print culture of the day, Jefferson sent a copy of the 1785 private edition with minor corrections to the London bookseller John Stockdale, who published a satisfactory edition in 1787. The 1,000-copy Stockdale edition attracted critical comment in London and spawned numerous unauthorized editions, almost all American.20 In 1788 and 1789, the contents of the Stockdale edition (except Query XXIII and appendices) appeared in a Leipzig geography annual.21 The first American edition appeared in Philadelphia in 1788. Through the middle of the nineteenth century, at least seventeen subsequent American printings were made in Baltimore, Boston, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Richmond, and Trenton in 1794, 1800 (3), 1801(5), 1802, 1803(2), 1825 (2), 1829, 1832, 1853. These do not include reported “phantom” editions of which no copies have been found as well as a separately published appendix of documentation supporting the story of the
An obvious boon to the *Notes*’ publication resulted from Jefferson’s presidential career, as eleven editions appeared from the year of his first successful election in 1800 through 1803. The well-documented publication records of Baltimore’s William Pechin gives a sense of how the book trade capitalized on this famous and controversial author. After moving from Philadelphia in 1795, Pechin had pursued one of those hybrid early American careers in print by publishing, jobbing, and writing as the opportunity arose. His imprints include the typical New England primer and almanacs, but also the ambitious 727-page complete works of Josephus Flavius for which he found 690 subscribers. Besides providing an income, Pechin’s printing shop was an outlet for his radical political views. His second briefly published newspaper, the triweekly *Baltimore Intelligencer*, counterbalanced the city’s conservative *Federal Gazette*. As a freelance writer, Pechin also voiced his radical views in the *Maryland Journal*. Pechin’s Republican sympathies were emphasized in a broadside advertisement for subscribers to his second imprint of the *Notes*. Addressing “the Friends of Thomas Jefferson, Esq.,” Pechin intended the publication to offset misconceptions about the new president. His views on religion especially had been quoted and twisted by his opponents. By allowing readers to see these passages first-hand and in their proper context, Pechin sought to “present to you the *man* through the medium of his *writings*.” In case Jefferson’s statements alone did not quiet suspicions of irreligion, Pechin appended a “Dissertation on Mr. Jefferson’s *Religious Principles*” by the Rev. Samuel Knox. Pechin had also printed this pamphlet in 1800 “for the editor of the American.” Perhaps in fit of advertising hype, the publisher hoped for a large subscriber base among “patriotic fellow-
citizens” because of the book’s scarcity. If truthful, Mathew Carey’s 1,500 copies only six years earlier must have been well absorbed into the market. Clearly, both political sympathy and perception of growing demand motivated Pechin to produce two imprints in one year. We can assume that a combination of similar reasons impelled other printers to dash off so many editions in such a brief span.

Many of the printers or booksellers involved in publication of the editions that appeared at the turn of the century remain obscure. Motivation to publish mainly rested on the commercial potential of a book by the best-known political personality in the land. At least three others besides Pechin, however, had strong Republican affiliations or close connections with Jefferson. One edition of 1800 was printed by Samuel H. Smith. This is presumed to be the learned “gentleman” printer of Philadelphia, whom Jefferson chose to run the National Intelligencer newspaper. Smith had several degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and, like Jefferson, was a member of the American Philosophical Society. In his discussion of newspaper politics of the early Republic, Jeffrey Pasley identifies Matthew Livingston Davis as a “Republican” printer. Even though he later printed a Burrite mouthpiece, he may have been motivated by party sympathies when he printed the 1801 New York edition of the Notes. Finally, the Trenton edition of 1803 also was printed by a highly partisan figure. James Jefferson Wilson, though by then living in Delaware, had become a partner in the party’s True American published in Trenton.

Other publishers of this phase seem to have filled different niches of the market. As a distinction among his competitors, R. T. Rawle of Philadelphia offered a luxury “hot-pressed” edition in 1801. In tribute to Jefferson’s attaining the highest office in the
land, Rawle imbued the book with official importance. He used the smoother, hot-pressed paper that the proud and autocratic Napoleon Bonaparte decreed for all biographies about himself. Even though many printers already were shifting to smoother paper at this time anyway, “hot-pressed” denoted a kind of pretentious luxury to some consumers. Rawle’s edition also boasted large generously leaded type, a portrait of the author, and a newly engraved map with updates. Other turn-of-the-century editions were smaller and printed on cheap paper. One edition was aimed at a large market with low investment risk as it bore the imprint of seven booksellers, five from Boston, one from Salem, and another from Walpole, New Hampshire.

Surviving publishers’ records and other data allow us to estimate a very rough total circulation. Although documentation of print runs was found for only six editions, this includes the first three. Jefferson’s well-documented private edition ran 200 copies. Although we do not know the total number of copies Barrois printed, it may have reached 1,500 as he printed that many copies of the companion map of Virginia and neighboring states. It is of course possible that Barrois intended some of the maps for sale without the book. The map folded into the English edition is a large, handsome colored sheet that would have been appealing on its own. Only a year later, Stockdale circulated 1,000 copies of his approved English-language edition. A generous estimate, then, might presume close to 3,000 copies of the work were circulating in the transatlantic world before the first American edition in 1788. Publishing details for the Leipzig edition have not been found, and no business records survive for Prichard and Hall, the first American publishers of the Notes. The second American edition of 1794 is particularly indicative of the continuing demand for the book as Jefferson entered national politics. Initially,
Mathew Carey had planned a run of 1,000 copies. Before his printer could finish all of the signatures, however, he had died in the 1793 Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic. After a second printer had resumed the project, Carey decided to add another 500 copies. Unfortunately, no printing totals are known for the flurry of imprints surrounding Jefferson’s first election to the presidency, although one abortive edition had aimed for a subscriber list of 1,000. Two later editions are on a similar scale: 500 for another Mathew Carey imprint by a Trenton printer in 1803 and 750 copies in 1825 by H. C. Carey and Lea, a partnership involving Mathew Carey’s son. In all, the documented circulation alone amounts to 5,450 copies. If we discount the extra-market private edition, the average for these documented runs is 1,050. Multiplying this average by the fourteen remaining American editions through 1832 and adding it to the documented total yields 20,150 copies during the most active period publication. Given the shortage of data, a more conservative total discounted by several thousand seems fair. Still, the number of printed copies is impressive and important to consider when presented with the high volume of response.

Before examining the ever-widening readership of the Notes, it is useful to look at the physical characteristics of the various editions and their prices, where available. After all, less expensively produced editions would support the indications of wider availability. Table 1 compares key indications of luxury/cheapness for fifteen editions examined, from the initial private publication of 1785 to the “authoritative” 1853 Richmond edition. Throughout much of this period, paper made up a large portion of the total production cost of a book. Therefore, the extravagance of its use was deemed a good measure of luxuriousness. To achieve a rough quantitative comparison of this factor
between editions, the area of the block of text was divided by the total area of the page to arrive at the percentage of the page taken up by the text block. Similarly, generosity of point size and leading indicated degree of luxury through use of paper. Although paper quality could not be measured, thickness, stiffness, brightness, and lack of foxing determined gross ratings of poor to excellent. Finally, the tabulation also includes a subjective comparison of print quality determined by sharpness and by alignment of text blocks back to back.

All three European editions exhibited excellent quality paper and cleanly impressed type. Point size and leading were amply proportioned for the octavo format and margins were generous and well proportioned. Despite Jefferson's complaints about inaccuracies in the 1786 edition, Barrois produced an attractive volume. All of the subsequent American printers used paper less liberally: in every case the text block occupies more than fifty percent of the page. In most cases, the American printers produced more modest volumes than the first three European editions. Rawle's is the major exception, as one might expect for an edition that proudly advertised its paper quality on the title page. Not only did he lead his type more generously than the European printers, but he also took care to produce clean impressions. Randolph's 1853 edition is also of good quality, but with advances in technology almost belongs to a different era of printing. With the exception of Rawle's, the editions produced in rapid succession from 1800 through 1803 are of moderate to poor quality, and the last of this group use smaller type/leading and small margins. The 1825, 1829, and 1832 editions suggest inexpensiveness with the use six point type.

Unfortunately, price trends are difficult to track due to the unevenness of available
records. Searches for bookseller catalogs among the Early American Imprints series yielded only a handful of prices. In 1803 a Boston bookseller advertised two unidentified editions of the *Notes*, one at $1 and the other at $2.\textsuperscript{34} By 1819, the Rawle hot-pressed edition appeared among “scarce and valuable” books in a Philadelphia catalog, but no price was indicated.\textsuperscript{35} The following year, two New York catalogs listed the *Notes* respectively at $2 and $2.50.\textsuperscript{36} With such a small sample, it is hard to gauge accessibility, but evidence of a second-hand market points to a potentially wide range of prices.
TABLE 1

PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF FIFTEEN EDITIONS OF THE
NOTES ON THE STATE OF VIRGINIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Overall Page Size (cm)</th>
<th>Text Block Size (cm)</th>
<th>Percent of Page</th>
<th>Type Size/ Leading</th>
<th>Paper Quality</th>
<th>Print Quality</th>
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<td>1785</td>
<td>12.4 x 19.7</td>
<td>7.5 x 14.3</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<td>1786</td>
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<td>7.9 x 14.3</td>
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<td>14.6 x 22.6</td>
<td>7.5 x 16.4</td>
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<td>8.3 x 16.2</td>
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<td>6/12</td>
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<td>poor</td>
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<td>1794</td>
<td>11.8 x 19.5</td>
<td>8.3 x 16.5</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>8/14</td>
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<td>good</td>
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<td>1800a</td>
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<td>9.1 x 18.9</td>
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<td>7.8 x 14.8</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>6/12</td>
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<td>1829</td>
<td>9.5 x 15.9</td>
<td>7.3 x 12.4</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>good</td>
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<td>1832</td>
<td>9.9 x 15.9</td>
<td>7.5 x 12.1</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>6/8</td>
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(1800a = Baltimore, Pechin; 1801a = Boston, Carlisle et al.; 1801b = Phila., Rawle; 1801c = NY, Davis et al.)
CHAPTER II

RECEPTION AND RESPONSE

The European editions of Notes did not appear quietly. Even though Jefferson obviously did not yet possess the same fame in Europe in the 1780s that he would acquire by the turn of the century when most of the American editions appeared, his book-length description of a key American state drew considerable attention. Following the appearance of the private edition, the Marquis de Chastellux received Jefferson’s permission to publish extracts of the Notes in the Journal de la Physique, as long as the sections on slavery and religion were excluded.37 In June 1787, twenty-two pages of the weekly Mercure de France were devoted to a review of the 1786 Morellet translation.38 The piece more closely resembles an in-depth summary than a review. Perhaps the premise for presenting the long review was to promote enlightened leaders. For the reviewer, the Notes showed that a statesmen could also be an accomplished “philosophe” and vice-versa. Jefferson, like Franklin, exhibited a good balance of the two roles. The most striking example of philosophical competence was the dismantling of Buffon’s vague assertions with a barrage of “facts.” Even a general reader not intensely interested in natural history could appreciate and learn from the “example of sound logic and superb reasoning” (33-35). Besides writing with “eloquence suited to the subject matter,” Jefferson also was an “astute observer of the great spectacles” in the American landscape (30-31). The French reviewer was the first to commend the passages on the Natural Bridge and the Potomac crossing through the Blue Ridge Mountains, which would become perennially favorite selections. As the remainder of the review summarizes
virtually every section of the book, it is hard to say what most interested the reviewer. The physical descriptions and natural history appear to carry as much weight as the socio-political discussions. Throughout, the tone remains enthusiastic and any disagreements with Jefferson are trivial.

With the appearance of the 1787 English edition, Johann Forster, a professor from Halle, and his colleague Matthias Sprengel translated the Notes into German and published them in two parts (1788 and 1789) in their geography annual Beiträge zur Völker und Länderkunde (Contributions to the Knowledge of Peoples and Countries). In the introduction to the first part (Queries 1 through 6), the editors promoted Jefferson’s credentials as “a native Virginian who has occupied the most important offices of his fatherland.” Furthermore, the editors had respectfully waited to translate from the corrected Stockdale edition, rather than the earlier botched Barrois translation. For the German reader, the Notes represented an important new contribution about a “famous North American free state” of interest to the “investigator of nature and the politician.” Jefferson’s publication clearly filled a perceived demand for a more comprehensive and current description to replace antiquated works such as John Smith’s General History (1624) and even the more recent, but prewar Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North America (1775) by Andrew Burnaby. The introduction to the second part (Queries 7 through 22) highlighted Jefferson’s observations on climate and his estimates of population. Forster and Sprengal expressed excitement about Jefferson’s presentation of documents previously unknown to German audiences, such as the 1651 Act of Indemnity presented by colonial Virginia’s royalist administration’s to the “Rump Parliament.” Even though the Beiträge editors were biased by their involvement in the Notes’
publication, their statements nonetheless suggest the potential appeal of Jefferson’s *Notes*
to its German audience.

The Stockdale edition also drew attention in the *Monthly Review* (1788) and the
*Critical Review* (1787), the two principal London periodicals devoted to reviewing
general audience books. The absence of mention in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the
Royal Society places Jefferson’s scientific reputation well below fellow Americans with
more serious credentials such as Benjamin Franklin or David Rittenhouse. For the more
casual reader, however, the *Notes* could not fail to attract attention as a comprehensive
and up-to-date description of a well-known American state. Nor did the work suffer from
any shortage of interesting arguments about politics, race, disestablishing religion, and of
course the rebuttal of arguments by Buffon and Guillaume Raynal on New World
biological degeneracy. It also should be noted that Stockdale’s advertising campaign
probably helped generate critical notice. He invested £30 to advertise in all the English
and Scottish newspapers (which he estimated about 70 or 80), banking on “the Merit of
the Work & the advantage of [Jefferson’s] Name” for a return.45

Perhaps the *Notes*’ broad subject matter qualified it for attention in the *Monthly
Review*. During his long tenure from the magazine’s founding in 1749 until 1803, editor
Ralph Griffiths promoted the *Monthly* as a “compendious account of those productions of
the press...that are worth notice.” Other magazines catered to specialized audiences, but
the *Monthly* aimed to be as comprehensive as possible in reviewing books that would
interest the general reader. Though Griffiths made plain his Whig political leanings, the
magazine’s book reviews enjoyed a reputation for fairness. Reviewers were carefully
chosen to avoid any personal connection with the authors they reviewed.47 The reviewer
of the Notes began by praising Jefferson as an “ingenious Author” of a natural and political history of a “generally known” state which had attracted greater interest following the events of the American Revolution. On the subject of natural history, Jefferson’s comprehensive account had brought to light new information on such topics as climate and mineral resources. With regard to the argument over America’s biological degeneracy, the reviewer concluded that Jefferson “strongly controverts Buffon’s position.” The defensiveness about American literary achievements drew some sarcasm, however. After all, Americans should have had no trouble producing great literature soon after founding their country. Unlike the British, they came to America fully civilized, unhampered by the toil of “emerging from barbarism.” With equal cynicism, the reviewer challenged Jefferson to “inform us how far [Americans] have proceeded in the grand undertaking” of creating an ideal government free from the flaws of corrupt European governments. Likewise, Jefferson’s opinions on education and manufactures drew mild criticism for being unrealistic or short-sighted. In typical eighteenth-century fashion, about two-thirds of the two-part review consists of extracts, with a large portion devoted to Jefferson’s justification for deporting emancipated slaves and discussion of the intellectual and moral characteristics of blacks. The reviewer endorsed these views as further support for “the opinion of Hume and other philosophers.” Interest in Jefferson’s ranking of human traits suggests the Enlightenment obsession with what Garry Wills has called the “continuity of the animal spectrum.” Overall, the reviewer commended Jefferson’s work, only reserving criticism for portions that portrayed Britain in an unfavorable light.

Likewise, the Critical Review only mildly disapproved of portions of Jefferson’s
Notes. Since the founding editorship of Tobias Smollet in 1763, the magazine had tended to be more conservative, pro-Tory, and pro-established church than its older rival the Monthly Review. That said, the review of the Notes is polite and fair, only briefly mentioning religious or political differences with Jefferson. Instead, the reviewer quickly dismissed Jefferson’s provocative stance toward European naval power in the first paragraph and proceeded with an extended summary and brief critical comments regarding the book’s inherent merits. Jefferson was commended for his “spirit and feeling” in his description of the Potomac’s passage through the Blue Ridge, which was included as an extract. Like the German editors, the reviewer highlighted the Notes’ value as a geographical description, summarizing the sections on climate, natural history, Native Americans, population, and history (368-376). The longest critical comments were reserved for Jefferson’s speculations about geology where “he seems pretty clearly to insinuate, that the deluge of the Old Testament was partial only.” The reviewer mildly contested the reasoning and characterized the discussion as a “sceptical dispute” hinting at “Deism” (370). He found, however, that Jefferson’s disputes against Buffon’s theories were conducted “with great success.” The reviewer concluded by complimenting Jefferson as “an accurate enquirer” and “well informed philosopher” (371). Like the Monthly Review, this magazine gave the book a quietly positive endorsement, encouraging to readers already interested in the subject matter and intrigued by the book’s increasingly famous author.

The first published evidence of American reception of the Notes came surprisingly early. In fact, The New Haven Gazette and Connecticut Magazine published extracts more than two months before Stockdale’s edition appeared. Both the text itself and the
brief preface indicate that the passages came directly from the private edition as the editor referred to Jefferson’s “never before published” work, rather than a re-translation of the Barrois edition. Like so many subsequent magazines, the Gazette highlighted the most eloquent descriptions on America’s natural grandeur beginning with the passages on the Potomac at Harper’s Ferry and the Natural Bridge. The lengthiest extract was a natural history piece drawing on native accounts of the “Big Buffalo,” or mammoth, followed by measured speculation that the great beast still roamed somewhere in the American wilderness. A postscript to the extracts advertised more to follow in subsequent issues, but only these first ones were ever published.

Further south that same month, America’s largest intellectual and political hub would also have access to this intriguing book through the Columbian Magazine. This Philadelphia periodical had begun in 1786 as a collaborative venture of publishers/booksellers (including briefly Mathew Carey) and an engraver. At the time the extracts were published, the magazine’s varied contents included fiction, poetry, noteworthy current events, and articles on agriculture and mechanics, with only a subdued political voice. In a monthly column called “Characters,” the editors’ publication of a few anonymous paragraphs, later attributed to his friend the Marquis de Chastellux, is suggestive of their regard for Jefferson. Chastellux listed Jefferson’s roles in public service and concluded the sketch by idealizing his “mind” which he had placed “as he had done his house, upon an elevated situation from which he might contemplate the universe.” Besides the celebrated description of the Potomac crossing through the Blue Ridge, some of the extracts in the Columbian included the kind of controversial material that Jefferson had avoided circulating in the United States, such as his entire Query XVII
on religious freedom. Given the unregulated state of American publishing, however, Jefferson should have expected American printers to capitalize on his “Name” (where it would have been even more recognizable than in Europe) by using the work as soon as it became available.\textsuperscript{60} In any case, Jefferson’s own London publisher mentioned shipping 400 copies to Richmond and Philadelphia shortly after printing in 1787. Clearly, Jefferson must have abandoned any feeble hope of controlling distribution when he enlisted a bookseller with transatlantic connections such as Stockdale to redeem his work from Barrois’ carelessness.

While the \textit{Columbian Magazine} was still printing extracts in 1788, Prichard and Hall of Philadelphia published the first American edition. None of the major contemporary American magazines such as the \textit{Columbian or American Magazine} (New York) ran reviews of this pirated version.\textsuperscript{61} With so much exposure already in the London and Philadelphia press, a review was superfluous. Besides, Americans would provide abundant criticism and discussion of the work in a variety of forms for decades to come. The Philadelphia publishers merely sought to fill a growing demand. Some of the book’s appeal stemmed from Jefferson’s arguments refuting Buffon and Raynal. One of the \textit{Columbian} excerpts reproduced a passage on the degeneration debate from an appendix to the \textit{Notes} by Continental Congress secretary Charles Thomson. Essentially, Thomson’s “commentary” buttressed Jefferson’s observations on the sophistication of Native American mores.\textsuperscript{62} A letter from Joel Barlow, bundled with a presentation copy of his \textit{Vision of Columbus}, captures some of the enthusiasm for Jefferson’s successful presentation. Americans felt “vindicated from those despicable aspersions which have long been thrown upon us & echoed from one ignorant scribbler to another in all the
languages of Europe.\textsuperscript{63} The Notes also served the same need for Americans as they did for their instigator, François Marbois: a badly needed geographical reference book. As early as the 1786 Barrois edition, the Notes included a folded map depicting the region from Lake Erie to Albemarle Sound. Jefferson had drafted it himself, relying on the Virginia map carefully produced by his father Peter Jefferson and Joshua Fry as well as the most accurate maps available from surrounding states. The map in the Notes added many details such as more precise latitudes and the latest state boundaries drawn since the Treaty of Paris.\textsuperscript{64} By 1790, a “citizen of Pennsylvania” submitted “NOTES” to the Pennsylvania Gazette about the commonwealth for the benefit of its legislators. His detailed description with evocative title referred the reader first to the “map of Pennsylvania in the Honorable Mr. Jefferson’s ‘Notes’ on ‘Virginia.’”\textsuperscript{65}

Interestingly, he also referred the reader to a map in Morse’s Geography. For Morse, the appearance of the Notes was a godsend as he prepared the first edition of his American Geography in 1789. After crediting Jefferson with a footnote, Morse quoted approximately 22 of the 30 pages on his Virginia section from the Notes. He also reproduced Jefferson’s tables on population and militias. Although Morse acknowledged the role of Virginia in the Revolution, his borrowing from some less flattering travelers’ accounts also drew criticism. In a later gazeteer, Joseph Scott accused Morse of “strong prejudices...against the citizens of the middle and southern states” as he represented “a whole people as immoral and irreligious, as cockfighters, gamblers, and drunkards.”\textsuperscript{66} Scott’s accusation against Morse should be tempered by a recent discussion of this textbook writer’s role in the project of forging a national identity in the early Republic.
Where Scott merely saw slurs on Southerners, recent scholars see a "typing' of the American social body." Moreover, his stereotypes of hard-working Yankees and "lazy" Virginia gentlemen drew from a tradition of assigning moral and cultural distinctions based on latitude. Instead of dwelling on Morse's disparagement of Southern traits while borrowing so heavily from a native son, it is more important to recognize the connection of the Notes with an important promoter of a national imaginary.

Although Jefferson initially tried to conceal his vexing passages on slavery and religion from his opponents, it was his presentation of Chief Logan's speech and its prologue that provoked the earliest and most enduring controversy. In the long parade of proofs refuting Buffon and Raynal's contention of animal and human degeneracy in the New World, Jefferson declared that apparent differences between Native Americans and Europeans stemmed from culture rather than any innate inferiority. Due to the absence of "compulsion," or set laws, in their societies, the native peoples relied on "personal influence and persuasion" to maintain order and consensus. As a consequence, judgment of their intellectual abilities should focus on eloquence, the emphasis of "all their faculties." With a dearth of ethnographic material to support his argument, Jefferson chose a speech that circulated in Williamsburg following Lord Dunmore's western expedition. Jefferson recounted the events leading to Logan's speech of defiance and pathos. A petty theft from white settlers along the Ohio frontier had been avenged with the slaughter of the family of the friendly Chief Logan by a Maryland-born frontiersman, Captain Michael Cresap. In return, Logan acknowledged that he had "killed many" and "fully glutted" his vengeance, ending his terse speech with "Who is there to mourn for Logan—Not one." Jefferson's undisguised implication of the militia captain along with
his portrayal of the honorable Native American victim presented an irresistible target for his critics.

In 1797 the Federalist attorney general for Maryland, Luther Martin, who also was the late Cresap's son-in-law, bitterly challenged Jefferson's veracity in the public arena of the newspapers. Ultimately, the dispute prompted Jefferson to publish an extensive appendix of supporting documents to defend his assertions. Despite a life-long interest in publishing a revised and corrected edition of the Notes, this appendix was Jefferson's only venture into print with regard to his book following the Stockdale edition. In fact, the separately issued appendix generated enough interest when published in 1800 to warrant its own review, unlike any of the American pirated editions of the complete Notes. Charles Brockden Brown's Monthly Magazine and American Review declared that the documents presented in the appendix "abundantly prove" the speech took place and that the story of the murders was "substantially true." The same magazine also reprinted the first document in the compilation, a letter delivered with "simplicity, candour, dignity, and moderation" from Jefferson to Maryland Governor Henry Martin.

Jefferson's characteristic piling on of evidence did little to convince Cresap's defenders. In 1826, the year of Jefferson's death, John Jacob published his Biographical Sketch of Michael Cresap. Jacob hinted at the book's purpose with his "Advertisement" apologizing for the timing of the publication when Jefferson could no longer defend himself (apparently the manuscript had been sent to the printer in March). The book fulfilled a long-harbored "design of refuting the unfounded and unjust charges...against my deceased friend Captain Michael Cresap." Jacob claimed to have urged the well-known Luther Martin to challenge Jefferson in the press. As a relative unknown, a
pamphlet by Jacob would have been as ineffectual "as the efforts of a mosquito to
demolish an ox." Ignoring the weight of documentary evidence in the Logan appendix,
Jacob sought to portray Jefferson as a bully trampling on Cresap's character, while
defended by his popularity "among his brethren of the great and respected Republican
party."73

The issue continued to wrangle Marylanders who were well removed from the
personal and political animosities of the turn of the century. In 1851, Brantz Mayer
published a lecture he had delivered to the Maryland Historical Society regarding the
Cresap/Logan story. Mayer's dedication of the little volume is a testimony to the
perceived reach of the Notes and the weight of Jefferson's name. Besides recounting the
story of Maryland pioneers, Mayer sought to "reverse the decree of history between an
Indian and a meritorious Marylander."74 He needed to meticulously expose the falsity of
the story because it had "become incorporated with our English literature." By this he
meant some verses by the British poet Thomas Campbell which the speech had inspired.75
Mayer described the two protagonists in some detail. The favorable traits of Logan's
character were easily corrupted, however, as "fire water" turned him into a depraved
murderer.76 Mayer even went on to discredit the celebrated speech as fiction or, at best,
drunken rambling.77 The portrayal reduces Jefferson's Enlightenment portrayal of the
"noble savage" to the kind of feeble moral character that Buffon had assigned to Native
Americans.

Not all readers reacted so negatively to the portrayal of Logan and Cresap. In fact,
the story generated one of the Notes' most reverential tributes. In 1842, John S. Williams
used the Logan story as the centerpiece in a new magazine devoted to documenting the
fast-receding western frontier. The monthly *American Pioneer*, published in Cincinnati, would pursue the Logan Historical Society’s mission of “collecting and publishing sketches relating to the early settlement and successive improvement of the country.”

The first pages of the magazine’s opening number acknowledge the society’s debt to Jefferson as a “pioneer” in the documentation of the old frontier. On the handsomely designed title page, an artist had embellished the scene described by Jefferson. The society’s namesake and frontiersman John Gibson sit side by side on a log with a belt draped loosely over their laps. As Logan delivers his famous speech, bow, arrows, and musket lean innocuously against the log. Further emphasizing a romanticized frontier, a dove rests on a branch that frames a peaceful landscape complete with teepees and ambling deer. In the opening article, Williams further establishes the description found in the *Notes* as inspiration for further historical research about the early frontier. Meeting on the presumed site of the speech in Pickaway County, Ohio, the founding members decided upon a grandiose memorial to the chief and, by extension, his historian. They would attempt to recover Logan’s remains for reburial under a monument engraved in gilt letters with the entire speech from the *Notes*. The base of the monument would contain “a copy of Jefferson’s *Notes on Virginia*, and the Declaration of Independence, and constitutions of the States and United States, the previous proceedings of the Society, and the name of every member thereof.”

Williams continued with more than twenty pages detailing the controversy over Jefferson’s narrative and supplying further evidence of its truthfulness. Although the ambitious monument apparently never was built, the society’s plans and their showcasing of the story more than fifty years after its first publication further establish the impact of Jefferson’s account.
As noted above, the increasing celebrity of Jefferson as he pursued national politics brought a flurry of editions at the turn of the century. Over the course of his presidential years, with the wider distribution of the Notes, Jefferson’s controversial opinions expressed in the book became more familiar. To his detractors and political opponents, the Notes became a favorite source of material for attacking him. One example of an incidental use of the book in a political attack on the author appears in a Federalist speech from the 1800 campaign reprinted in The Pennsylvania Gazette. The speech warned of the dangerous tendencies of the Republican party toward social disorder, inciting alarm from the example of the French Revolution. To attack the Republican presidential candidate, the speaker made direct reference to Jefferson’s “indifference...whether his neighbour believes in twenty Gods, or no God.” Jefferson’s admiration of Native Americans also provided material to associate him with anarchy. He preferred the “tempestuous sea of liberty...and the savage state, where no laws exist to a government of laws.” To support these characterizations, the reprint provided footnotes referring the reader to page numbers in Jefferson’s Notes.80

In 1804, Clement Moore, best known for his Christmas poem, devoted an entire pamphlet to assailing arguments presented in the Notes.81 As a conservative New York patrician, Moore exemplified Federalist hostility to Jefferson’s populist politics. As a clergyman, he strongly opposed Jefferson’s deism.82 In a “formal answer” to the book’s “infidelity” and attempted to reverse the damage done by its twenty years of circulation “in a Christian country.”83 The American public had received ample exposure indeed, as the booklet’s “Advertisement” noted that citations referred to the third American edition of 1801; in fact, it was at least the fourth.84 Moore represented Jefferson as a subtle atheist
who couched his infidel views in soothing qualifiers. Portraying Jefferson as deceptive and the vainly lusting after knowledge (by associating him with the Encyclopedists and philosophes) may have subtly enhanced Moore’s attack by endowing the Notes’ author with satanic qualities described in Milton’s epic poetry.

The first great heresy was Jefferson’s denial of the biblical versions of creation and the deluge, inspired by the sublime scene of the Potomac crossing through the Blue Ridge. According to Moore, Jefferson ambiguously proposed his rejection of the six-day creation story by telling the reader that “the first glance of the scene...hurries our senses into the opinion that the earth was created in time.”\(^85\) (emphasis added) Further into the book, Jefferson became more forthright in his dismissal of biblical views. At least Jefferson saw no scientific proof of the deluge in the presence of shells on high mountains in Virginia. Instead, he proposed elaborate calculations to deny that a deluge could have reached that high and admitted only the possibility of a partial deluge.\(^86\) Despite Jefferson’s equivocal style, Moore had found him out: “Now this is an open denial...without an if or perhaps to save it.”\(^87\) (Moore’s emphasis). Further evidence of Jefferson’s anti-biblical views come from his use of linguistic principles to push Native Americans’ first settlement of North America “perhaps not less than many people give to the age of the earth.”\(^88\) Again, Moore condemns Jefferson for his “little doubting words [if, perhaps]” as “the passports by which modern philosophers introduce into their writings the wildest absurdities and grossest impiety.”\(^89\)

The second major attack focused on Jefferson’s assignment of blacks to an inferior, barely human subspecies. Moore’s main concern was the anti-biblical, Enlightenment confusion of humans on the high end of an animal continuum with biblical
mankind created in God’s image.90 Here he successfully exposed the flaws in the unfair choice of evidence used to belittle the intellectual abilities of blacks. Instead of including the documented achievements of free blacks in Africa, Jefferson focused solely on enslaved African-Americans, “rendered sullen by ignominy, and broken down by labour.” (24-25). Likewise, Moore pointed to the unfair comparison with classical slaves from Greece who adapted with ease to the similar literate culture of Rome (27). Jefferson even chose to ignore available examples of pride and dignity among slaves, such as the story of a Jamaican slave who threw himself into a sugar boiler rather than submit to being whipped for the first time (23-24). All of Jefferson’s flawed evidence served only to advance the anti-Christian views of the philosophes who placed a fractured mankind among the species and subspecies of the animal kingdom.

Besides Moore’s main attacks on Jefferson’s religious views, he critiqued the Notes for its tone and style. He briefly condemned one of Jefferson’s rare attempts at humor (declaring that an atheist or pagan “neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg”) as “unbecoming levity” with regard to religion.91 As for Jefferson’s literary talents, Moore dismissed him as “one of the most confused and unintelligible writers that the world ever produced.”92

Counterbalancing the kind of sustained criticism leveled by Moore, the Reverend Samuel Knox used passages in the Notes to defend Jefferson and portray him as a faithful Christian. This “Vindication of the Religion of Mr. Jefferson” first appeared as a pamphlet in 1800 and shortly afterward appeared in Pechin’s edition of the Notes the same year.93 Amid the heated party rhetoric of 1800, Knox felt bound to defend Jefferson because the “clamour and calumny...on account of religion is mere electioneering
imposition (15).” Knox used a grab-bag of evidence for his vindication, including references to the “creator” and “Nature’s God” in the Declaration of Independence and, despite Jefferson’s omnivorous reading habits, his subscription to the Philadelphia hot-press Bible. Most importantly, Knox set about properly characterizing the tone of the Notes, unlike his detractors who took selected quotes out of context. His argument is so general, however, as to make his reference to the book ambiguous. Knox contended that Jefferson “speaks of the divine perfections and attributes, in a manner and style which could only be derived from his acquaintance with, and belief in the word of God (17).” Possibly, he was referring to the portrayal of God in Query 18. By enslaving their fellow beings, Virginians had shown more contempt than gratitude for liberties that were a gift from God. For this offense, they could expect harsh punishment from their Creator.94 Also, rather than condemn the liberal attitude toward religious freedom, Knox celebrated the fact that the Notes showed Jefferson was largely responsible for that bill in Virginia.

During the 1796 presidential election, Jefferson’s views on race and slavery in the Notes had generated another extended attack, but for decidedly different reasons than Clement Moore’s theological objections. As a Federalist representative from South Carolina,95 William Loughton Smith sought to alarm Southern slaveholders of the dangers to their human property if Jefferson were elected. In his lengthy pamphlet, Smith compared the suitability of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson for the presidency. The elaborate critique of the Notes was directed toward a letter in a Richmond paper that ranked Jefferson’s “merits as a philosopher” as his most important qualification for president (reminiscent of the French reviewer in Mercure de France). Smith pulled apart several passages from the Notes to show Jefferson’s ineptitude as a philosopher, even if
one assumed that was an important qualification for office. He exposed the contradiction of Jefferson’s plan to emancipate slaves “to vindicate the liberty of the human race” while consigning blacks to “a different race from the human race.” An attempt to reconcile the incongruous statements also was to be found in the Notes. Jefferson proposed his astounding transhipment scheme to “preserve [the] dignity and beauty” of human nature. Smith quoted in full Jefferson’s bizarre arguments of racial inferiority, letting the “ridiculous and elaborate attempt” speak for itself. But Smith’s purpose was to discredit Jefferson, not to defend the equality of blacks. Jefferson’s letter to Benjamin Banneker acknowledging the intellectual abilities of blacks might serve to paint him as a hypocrite “fraternizing with negroes” to gain the favor of free blacks. Alternatively, Smith suggested Jefferson’s sojourn in France had completely changed his fickle views, further exposing the weakness of his philosophical reasoning and demonstrating the danger to “the citizens of southern states...whose slaves are guaranteed to them as their property by the constitution.”

Other political opponents responded with equal alarm, but more briefly, to the candidate’s emancipation proposals. A national leader with such ideas posed a serious threat to southern slaveholders. In response, “A Southern Planter” issued an election broadside that would allow carefully selected passages from the Notes to speak for themselves. The “faithfully transcribed” opinions were “submitted, without comment to the readers’ discretion.” The author quoted almost all of Query 18 on “Manners,” where Jefferson exposes slavery’s damning influence on whites’ morality and industry. Like Smith he brought up the letter to Banneker, “who had, [according to the planter] with the help of some Abolition Society, composed an Almanack.” To a reader who might be
familiar with the speculations on racial inferiority in the *Notes*, the letter showed that even this tempering of Jefferson’s sympathies was gone. For further reading, the broadside also recommended William Loughton Smith’s pamphlet and St. George Tucker’s “alarming” *Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery in Virginia.* Associating Jefferson with abolition could invoke powerful and politically effective images for both slaveholders and racially prejudiced southern voters. Freeing “three hundred thousand slaves...in Virginia” threatened “safety, property, the importance, perhaps the very existence of the Southern States.”

The “Southern Planter” was astute in selecting Query 18 as a key inflammatory passage. Over the years, it added weight to many an abolitionist argument. One very early example of its use actually took place in a political setting. In 1789, William Pinkney gave a speech in the Maryland legislature opposing a law that forbade owners from manumitting slaves in their wills. According to the law’s supporters, such acts of benevolence might impoverish the decedent’s offspring. Pinkney listed several reasons for ending slavery, including the arbitrariness of enslaving people based on skin color and its unsuitability in a nation founded in a struggle against oppression (3, 8). Pinkney’s most persuasive reasoning expanded on Jefferson’s arguments in Query 18 about slavery’s degrading moral impact on young white citizens. By referring to slave owners as “despots,” Jefferson had only implied that civic decay would follow private cruelty. Pinckey made this consequence explicit, warning of danger to the republic where “youth are reared in the habit of thinking that the great rights of human nature are not so sacred” (4). When the speech was published fifty years later, the printer emphasized the *Notes’* inspiration to abolitionists by printing the entire Query 18 at the end of the pamphlet.
As evident from numerous pamphlets and other published materials, discussion of race and slavery in the *Notes* also attracted interest among black anti-slavery activists throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Most famous among these is David Walker’s “Appeal,” which appeared in 1829 just as more demanding rhetoric gained rapidly throughout the abolition movement. Even though several black activists had previously called for total and immediate abolition, the movement had been dominated up to this point by elite lawyers and politicians gradually chipping away at the legal infrastructure that supported slavery. Walker’s language reflects the more impatient approach. In an emotional style reminiscent of an evangelical sermon, he warned of impending black violence and divine retribution if slavery did not end soon. Walker’s discussion goes further than these inflammatory remarks about ending southern slavery, however. Much of the pamphlet is directed toward shaking northern free blacks out of submissiveness, resignation, and apathy and pointing to colonization as the consequence of inaction. Northern blacks had to demand an end to prejudice and social injustice for themselves as well their southern “brethren.”

With this aim, Walker used Jefferson’s speculations about blacks’ racial inferiority to great effect. Even though Walker most likely knew about the supposed change of views brought about by the Banneker letter, he chose to ignore them for rhetorical reasons. Instead of delving into the more subtle implications of Walker’s criticism, Merrill Peterson focused on the “crude” and “sensational” *Appeal’s* implication that Jefferson’s speculations furthered racial prejudice. Peterson also noted how some abolitionists borrowed from Walker’s criticism. In fact, Walker’s references to the *Notes* had less to do with criticizing Jefferson than encouraging blacks to be more
assertive and aspire higher. Much of the onus for Jefferson’s “suspicion” that blacks “are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind” fell upon blacks themselves. Such notions could only result from whites such as Jefferson hearing examples of submissiveness like the one Walker cites in the “Appeal” of a slave woman informing on a band of coffle runaways. In a separate set of quotes, Walker used material in the *Notes* to emphasize the dishonor of allowing a slave owner to take one’s life “by the inches.” He also used the speculations about racial characteristics in challenging free blacks to aspire beyond their current lot. Walker appeals to the honor, self-respect, and even the very manliness of free blacks by asking “each of my brethren, who has the spirit of a man, to buy a copy of Mr. Jefferson’s ‘Notes on Virginia,’ and put it in the hand of his son.” Even though several whites had convincingly disputed these views, he wanted “to see the charges...refuted by the blacks themselves” by acquiring education and demonstrating their abilities. Eventually, the wrath of God would punish Americans for oppressing blacks and they would be ready to assume their rightful place in society.

Walker’s background also tells us about the *Notes*’ accessibility. Having estimated earlier the large total number of copies in existence by this period, use of the book by a black man of moderate means does not seem so extraordinary—we can no longer consider it a rare, esoteric item. Still, it is useful to examine how these passages in the *Notes* might have come to Walker’s attention. After all, up to this point, review of response has focused mainly on white politicians, professionals, and other upper classes. In his pamphlet, Walker does not merely quote passages but also documents them with footnotes and urges his audience to read the book themselves. As most books during this
period (i.e., through 1829 when the “Appeal” was published) were set from standing type and not stereotyped, each edition bore different pagination due to variations in typography. By checking Walker’s citations against various editions published through 1829, a single exact match was found. Walker was reading from a rather old edition. All three citations match the pagination of the 1801 imprint David Carlisle had produced in Boston for a large group of New England booksellers. A more recent edition was available in Boston from Wells and Lilly, whose names appeared with Philadelphia, New York, and London booksellers on an 1825 imprint. Walker also might have been in time to read another Wells and Lilly imprint dated 1829. Besides the pagination evidence, Walker’s careful weaving of Jefferson’s quotes to support his rhetoric indicates that he read the book itself rather than extracts or quotes in another publication. Moreover, his quotes are scrupulously exact, with only one comma added and one semicolon substituted for a period. All of this textual evidence clearly shows that Walker’s use of the Notes came from having access to the entire book, perhaps a reasonably priced second-hand copy available near his neighborhood.

Despite Walker’s humble means, he nevertheless associated with other members of the abolition movement who may have had greater access to books. Although the lack of available records have made Walker a rather inaccessible figure, several details of his life have emerged thanks to an exhaustively researched biography by Peter Hinks. The book’s subtitle, *David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance*, concedes that too little of Walker’s can be recovered to fill a conventional biography. Nevertheless, Hinks is able to sketch Walker’s movements along the eastern seaboard. Walker was probably born in the Cape Fear region of North Carolina, spent some time in Charleston
about the time of the Denmark Vesey plot, then moved northward to Boston where he settled in 1824. Walker not only drew from a powerful tradition of black resistance in the coastal regions of the Carolinas. He also was connected to a network of educated blacks in Philadelphia and New York. According to “circumstantial” evidence, Hinks postulates that Walker spent some time in Philadelphia on his way northward and probably knew Bishop Richard Allen.107 As a contributor to *Freedom’s Journal*, he also knew other black activists and writers in New York.

Walker’s association with Philadelphian activists links him with the largest free black community of the antebellum period, which included a well-educated minority. A brief look at the genteel literary activities of this educated corps reminds us that Walker was not uniquely well read. Although the vast majority of free African Americans had little or no formal education and got by with menial jobs, a small group of middle class and moderately wealthy blacks in this city and beyond read widely and supported the publishing business. Besides exhibiting familiarity with the *Notes*, Walker laced his pamphlet with numerous other references from ancient history, modern history, and current politics in addition to the expected biblical sources. Two giftbook albums acquired in the last decade by the Library Company of Philadelphia illustrate broad exposure to print culture and interest in liberal education among some black Philadelphians in the 1830s and 1840s.108 The handsomely bound volumes belonged to Mary Anne and Martina Dickerson, two young African-American women whose father had bought his own freedom and made his living as a male nurse. Relatives and close friends expressed their love and good wishes to the girls by filling the blank pages with original verse, quotations, calligraphy, and painting. Prominent members of the black
activist community contributed to the books, including James Forten or his son of the same name and Robert Douglass Jr., an accomplished painter, pioneer of photography, and supporter of the Library Company of Colored People and Banneker Institute. Among the selections are transcriptions of a poem by George Tucker and a poem in French. A watercolor by Douglass reproduced a famous British painting called “The Boroom Slave,” which had circulated as the frontispiece to an antislavery book by Lydia Maria Child. Douglass’s sister Sarah, who directed a school for blacks from the 1820s through 1870s, also contributed watercolors and an essay. The books may have been gifts from Sarah Douglass to further the Dickerson girls’ cultural education.

Besides this participation in genteel culture, Philadelphia’s black activist community also promoted publishing as evident in a subscription list for a translated edition of a French slave autobiography entitled The Negro Equalled by Few Europeans... Among the subscribers to this 1801 edition were activists Rev. Richard Allen, James Forten, and William Douglass. Appended as a second volume were the poems of Phyllis Wheatley. Interestingly, the book refuted Jefferson’s discussion of racial qualities. In introducing himself, the slave (originally a prince from Senegal) wrote that he would describe the person behind “the veil” of his outward appearance. This person behind the veil had “a profound sensibility, patience which approached to obstinacy, a courage of mind bordering on fierceness, a disdain for obstacle,” quite the opposite of Jefferson’s generalizations. As Walker had emphasized in his Appeal, his black colleagues in the abolition movement clearly placed a premium on education, reading, and print culture. When Joseph Willson wrote about the “Higher Classes of Colored Society in Philadelphia” in 1841, he highlighted six black literary institutions, including the
Philadelphia Library Company of Colored Persons and the Rush Library Company and Debating Association. Education and reading were key components in acquiring broader rights and being able to advocate for enslaved southern blacks. As one black speaker to an abolitionist convention put it, “Next to correctness of conduct nothing will tend to raise your standing in Society than the acquisition of school learning; knowledge is emphatically power.”

Although the “Appeal” is by far the best known material from the antebellum black protest movement, it is also rather exceptional in its critical stance toward Jefferson. Blacks had been referring to the Notes to support arguments for emancipation since at least the turn of the century. In 1806, John Parrish wrote and published an abolitionist pamphlet that quoted heavily from the “present chief Magistrate’s opinion” on slavery from Query 18 in arguing against the evils of slavery. Clearly, such a memorably worded public indictment of slavery by the nation’s president would add impressive authority to any abolitionist publication. Unlike Walker, Parrish deliberately ignored Jefferson’s negative speculations about blacks. From the Notes, Parrish cites Jefferson’s translation of a verse from the Odyssey that illustrates the moral degeneration caused by slavery. Even though this verse falls in the middle of Jefferson’s negative racial assessment in Query 14, Parrish simply uses it to further support the argument against slavery. At one point, he even endows Jefferson’s warnings of slavery’s moral degradation with a prophetic aura. An incident from three years earlier illustrated how a slave-owning parent’s “lineaments of wrath” had indeed “stamped” his child with “odious peculiarities.” Parrish reported how, in a fit of rage, the son of a deceased slaveholder had thrown a rock at a slave over a trivial affront and broken the man’s skull.
The whole business of slavery was bad for individuals and bad for the nation, Parrish argued, quoting Jefferson’s dire prediction of divine wrath. Yet Parrish advocated a gradual emancipation, following Jefferson’s model, rather than demanding a total and immediate end to slavery. After all, the pamphlet’s subtitle directed Parrish’s words not only toward citizens, but also political leaders and slaveholders. Even though most black abolitionists favored more immediate action, their attitude toward the Notes was closer to Parrish’s than Walker’s confrontational criticism of Jefferson’s speculations on black inferiority.

Black activist groups quickly turned against colonization, which Jefferson endorsed in his Notes. Rather than benefitting African Americans, the movement was dominated by racists seeking to better control those who remained in America. Nonetheless, the Notes’ value for its condemnation of slavery as a moral evil outweighed the arguments about race and colonization. In the 1840s, magazines and newspapers brought to light private correspondence that set certain passages of the Notes in a more favorable context. In 1833, the Genius of Universal Emancipation published “Jefferson’s Opinion” of emancipation in an 1814 letter the ex-president had written to Edward Coles, the former governor of Illinois.117 Jefferson explained why he had not been more forceful about the issue during the Revolution given his eloquent opinion expressed in Query 18. Caught up in other political concerns and diplomatic duties, Jefferson had expected a good dose of Republican virtue in the rising generation to bring about change. Despite the lack of progress, he continued to endorse it, pledging “all my prayers...the only weapons of an old man.” In 1849, the same letter was again published in Washington’s National Era newspaper.118 A colonizationist organ, The African Repository and Colonial Journal,
had also found the letter useful in 1846, as it repeated the need for gradual emancipation
and expatriation—albeit in a humane tone that lamented how slaves’ former total
dependency made them unfit to be cast all at once free upon the nation.\textsuperscript{119}

Eight months earlier, the same magazine also had reminded readers of Jefferson’s
reconsideration of blacks’ intellect, publishing an article-length biographical “memoir” of
Benjamin Banneker read earlier before the Maryland Historical Society. Unlike the
“Southern Planter” who had discredited Banneker’s authorship, the \textit{African Repository}
provided authentication, noting that Banneker had sent Jefferson the almanac in
manuscript “that you might view it in my own hand-writing.” Moreover, Jefferson had
given the book further endorsement than his private reply to Banneker by sending copies
to Condorcet and the Academy of Science.\textsuperscript{120} Much later, during the Civil War, William
Wells Brown referred to the Banneker episode in writing a defense against mid-century
aspersions on black intellectual capacity (including perhaps the period’s trendy theory of
polygeny).\textsuperscript{121} Again Jefferson was absolved for the comments in Query 14 because
Banneker had changed those views.\textsuperscript{122}

With this tempering of the negative racial assessment expressed in Query 14, the
\textit{Notes} acquired an almost iconic status and the author became a hero of abolition from his
death through the Civil War. In 1859, a group of black abolitionists invited Salmon P.
Chase to a special celebration in honor of Jefferson’s birthday. Although Chase declined
the invitation, he commended the move to honor Jefferson. As the “leader of a party in a
time of sharp contentions,” he had not received his due, but lately his commitment to
abolition and preventing the spread of slavery in the old Northwest were being recognized
more widely.\textsuperscript{123} A striking example of this recognition occurred five years later in the
form of a banner commemorating the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. The gigantic illuminated transparency completely draped three stories of the Free Military School for Applicants for Commands of Colored Troops in Philadelphia. Five large illustrations depict valiant fighting by black troops, as well as a slave auction, and a black women sending her children off to a country schoolhouse. The banner also contains several quotes about slavery by famous abolitionists. Just below the large upper illustration, flanked by pro-emancipation quotes from Washington and Patrick Henry is a statement by “Jefferson, The Father of Democracy.” His stern warning from Query 18 that God will not take the side of slavery’s supporter is credited to his “Notes on Virginia” with a page citation. Furthermore, his quote from Homer made famous in the Notes is written above the illustration of the slave auction (albeit with “Jove” changed to “God”). Finally, Jefferson’s portrait appears among four other champions of emancipation at street level.

Moving beyond the references to the Notes among widely published abolitionist publications, a sign of the general reading public’s familiarity with the Notes occurs in Washington Irving’s satirical History of New York (1812). Just like fellow knickerbocker Clement Moore, Irving belonged to the group of Federalists intellectuals who deplored Jefferson’s populism. This critique extended even to Jeffersonian science. Emphasis on natural history threatened the patrician-dominated world of scientific discourse. As Linda Kerber has pointed out, “Any man who stumbled on a fossil in his backyard...might demand recognition as a scholar.” Before lampooning Jefferson as Governor Kieft, Irving specifically ridicules the geological speculation from Query IV, shifting it to a New York setting. “In process of time...[the Hudson became] very mighty and obstreperous, and the mountains waxing pursy, dropsical, and weak...by reason of their extreme old
age, it suddenly rose upon them and after a violent struggle effected its escape.”¹²⁶ Such a
spoof of a passage in the Notes only would have been effective, however, if the audience
could identify the original work. It is true that the reference only tells us about the
circulation of the Notes (or extracts) among a relatively well educated and well read
segment of the population—they would have had to be urbane enough to understand
Irving’s jabs at pedantically learned history writing, too. Nonetheless, reference to
Jefferson’s book in a work of general literature provides further evidence of the Notes’
penetration into American culture.

Another gauge of the Notes’ reception can be found in the biographical writings
about Jefferson that appeared from his death in 1826 until mid-century. Although the
biographers presented as biased a viewpoint in the opposite direction of his political
critics, their comments are still important. Discussion of the Notes in these writings
shows us where the authors ranked the book among Jefferson’s other accomplishments
and what parts had the most enduring impact. With the dramatic close to the lives of
Jefferson and Adams on July 4, 1826, exactly fifty years after the signing of the
Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Congress established a special commemoration
committee to pay proper tribute to these two legendary figures. William Wirt, best known
for his 1817 biography of Patrick Henry, was chosen to deliver a eulogy on the floor of
the House of Representatives.¹²⁷ Wirt devoted a long paragraph of his speech to explain
the most important purpose served by the Notes. The book provided an accurate
description of America to Europeans. Lack of information had led the learned of Europe
into “unfounded and degrading speculation,” namely theories of degeneracy in man and
animals. To illustrate the triumph of Query VI, Wirt mentioned only how Jefferson
brought attention to the great talents of Washington, Franklin, and Rittenhouse. Besides vindicating the new nation, the Notes served the more private purpose of Jefferson's "passport into the highest [European] circles of science and literature."128

Detailed biographies in the 1830s could devote far more space to assessing the Notes than Wirt's speech. In 1834 B. L. Rayner, covered some of the same critical ground as Moore and Smith regarding religion and race, but in a softened and apologetic tone. Jefferson's views on freedom of religion had passed the gauntlet of controversy and were now almost universally accepted as "orthodox and unquestionable."129 Rayner also felt the need to downplay Jefferson's portrayal of blacks as heuristic and within the context of the scientific understanding of the 1780s; he also commended Jefferson for pointing out the moral degradation caused by slavery.130 It is interesting that Rayner discussed socio-political content but ignored the argument with Buffon which had garnered such interest in the late eighteenth century. He also omitted discussion of the famous descriptions of nature and made no comment on Jefferson's literary talent.

George Tucker's biography, published three years later, also barely mentioned Jefferson's role in the degeneracy debate, only calling it a quaint response to "follies of the wise" of the previous century.131 Even though some of the information in the Notes was dated, the book remained, in the late 1830s, one of the most accurate and comprehensive sources of information about Virginia. However, Tucker chose to praise Jefferson's "neat flowing style" as "often apt and felicitous."132

The final major biography before the Civil War, by Henry Randall, includes the most comprehensive discussion of the Notes. More than twenty years after Tucker, the book still held its own as a useful and accessible reference on Virginia. Though dated in
some areas such as geology, the Notes dwarfed other books of its class as “a model for a compact description of a commonwealth.” In places, Jefferson’s “concise, vigorous, and simple” prose rose to “passages of great beauty,” such as his description of the Potomac crossing through the Blue Ridge and his retelling of the Big Buffalo legend (365). By 1858, Randall did not hesitate to dismiss some of the more lumbering arguments with Buffon and Raynal. “Mr. Jefferson’s arithmetical rule [about the length of time a nation needed to produce genius] seems to us inapplicable and preposterous” (369). Different countries produced different kinds of greatness, and one could not expect a one-to-one correlation of Shakespeares and Washingtons (367-369). Randall’s criticism did not imply any personal animosity toward Jefferson, however, as he defended the freedom of religion Query as “misconstrued” (369). Randall also qualified Jefferson’s outrageous comments on blacks as “diffident” and justified the transportation scheme by repeating the grounds of white prejudice and the resentment of ex-slaves. Like Jefferson’s other prewar biographers, Randall characterized the Notes as a tribute to its author and an eloquent and useful description of Virginia. At the same time, he played down sections that had garnered the highest praise and severest condemnation at the turn of the century.

With three quarters of a century since independence, Americans set about addressing the touchy question of the nation’s literary output. In 1855 the brothers Evert and George Duyckinck cautioned that a literary history as brief as America’s had to be inclusive beyond the traditional canon of “art and invention.” Instead, their Cyclopaedia of American Literature would also stand as a “record of mental progress” comprising the “products of the pen on American soil.” Such a work could then include figures such as Jefferson whose literary production did not fit into canonical genres such as poetry,
novels, or essays. With their inclusive strategy, the New Yorker Duyckincks also wished to show their lack of bias toward the South, an agricultural region with few cities and professional authors. According to the *Cyclopaedia*, Jefferson’s literary reputation rested largely on the Declaration of Independence and his correspondence. A paragraph in the biographical sketch detailed the instigation and publication history of the *Notes*, but offered no critical opinion. The absence of an extract also indicates the brothers’ apathy toward the work’s literary merits (251).

In 1847, Rufus Griswold had produced a far more opinionated literary history. In the fifty-page introductory essay to *The Prose Writers of America*, he betrayed his bias against the literary output of the South. To Griswold, Southern planters constituted the kind of leisured, wealthy class that late eighteenth-century apologists for American literature considered essential for literary production and patronage. Despite this advantage, however, the South had “done comparatively nothing in the fields of intellectual exertion.” Griswold’s sectional bias translated into a harsh treatment of Jefferson in his literary history. Unlike the Duyckincks, he dismissed the literary value of the Declaration of Independence. Perhaps alluding to the *Notes*’ treatment of religion and the views attacked by Moore, Griswold condemned Jefferson for his antipathy toward Christianity, made all the more harmful by his influence as a statesman. Griswold’s account of the *Notes*’ publication history quotes an inscription from the private edition indicating Jefferson’s fears of his more controversial views becoming public (72-73). Among four selected extracts in the Jefferson article is the description of the Potomac crossing through the Blue Ridge (77-78). Its inclusion marks the *Notes* as representative of the best, or at least best known, of Jefferson’s writing.
In the mid-nineteenth century, Jefferson’s moving descriptions of nature were not accessible exclusively to literary historians. A sampling from a contemporary woman’s magazine also suggests the Notes’ continuing relevance to a large portion of the reading public. In a travel section for an 1844 issue of The Ladies’ Repository (published in Cincinnati), a female traveler explained her party’s inspiration for visiting Harper’s Ferry. “Our wish to see [the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah] had relied on the animated description given of it by Mr. Jefferson, in his ‘Notes on Virginia.’” To behold the same inspiring view, the traveler climbed to the vantage point that had become enshrined in the popular imagination as “Jefferson’s Rock.”136 She then described her own sublime experience of a lonely cemetery high above the roaring currents. Only a year later, another anonymous writer praised Jefferson’s description of the same scene while idealizing him for his “science and wisdom.”137 In 1855 the Reverend C. Collins described a Virginia natural stone bridge not described in the Notes. Deferring to Jefferson’s “eloquent chapter,” he playfully wrote, “We do not essay to become the Homer of the Stock creek bridge.”138 To mid-nineteenth-century Americans increasingly enamored with the picturesque, portions of the Notes had become canonized as a source of inspiration.

Articles in Southern magazines in the late antebellum period confirm the judgment of Jefferson’s biographers that the Notes remained an important reference on many subjects. Articles on agriculture, minerals, and geography in Debow’s Review (New Orleans) cited the Notes as a source.139 More commonly, historical articles about the South or Virginia in Debow’s or the Southern Literary Messenger (Richmond) relied on Jefferson’s useful treatment of historic government documents in Queries XIII and
In a speech to the Virginia General Assembly reprinted in an 1844 issue of the
_Southern Literary Messenger_, George Moore recognized Jefferson along with William
Byrd and Patrick Henry as pioneering enthusiasts of the state’s history. While Jefferson
was respected for careful documentation, he did not escape criticism from in this pro-
slavery region. Two later articles in _Debow’s_ (1856, 1860) faulted him for portraying
slavery as a morally degrading institution. In the charged atmosphere of 1860, such a
condemning statement by a Southern slaveholder provided encouragement to
abolitionists.

As evident from this small sample of magazines, the _Notes_ remained familiar to
readers at mid-century, especially in its region of origin. Sensing a sufficient demand for
a new edition, the bookseller Joseph Randolph published the last edition before the Civil
War in Richmond in 1853. Through a distant family connection, he was able to produce
an edition worthy of some fanfare. The executor of Jefferson’s estate permitted Randolph
to use of a copy of the 1787 edition in which Jefferson had periodically jotted corrections
during his lifetime. The _Southern Literary Messenger_ enthusiastically announced the
“valuable” new edition of the “work of worldwide celebrity” in the small Southern city.
Evidently, the _Notes_ had become a source of regional pride.
CONCLUSION

The Notes on the State of Virginia represent far more than the short-lived expression of the fragile confidence of Revolutionary elites venturing down the dangerous road toward building a new, republican nation. Interest in the book did not languish from the 1780s until “rediscovery” by enthusiastic scholars of the early republic in the second half of the twentieth century. Instead, the private Parisian publication of 1785 began a firestorm of interest and republication of the work that roared through the tumultuous election of 1800 and Jefferson’s two presidential terms and continued to smolder through the first half of the nineteenth century. Abundant reaction began in the expected sources such as reviews and extracts read by educated middle- and upper-class magazine subscribers. Erudite criticism like the small books and pamphlets of Moore and Smith also would have targeted the upper classes. With plenty of political controversy surrounding the author, critics and defenders of the candidate and president gave ample exposure to the book’s ideas and no doubt piqued the interest that drove a rapid succession of editions at the turn of the century. Conveniently, Jefferson had first published the book abroad. As a result, copyright barriers were cleared for American publishers to produce as many editions as the market could absorb (though Jefferson might have distanced himself from the unseemly demand for compensation). Publishing for profit in the early republic depended on “pirating” the tested books and authors of Britain and Europe—faster than one’s competitors. Unlimited rights (combined with high interest) made the Notes an unusually attractive publishing opportunity for a book by an American author. The resulting large number of copies made the book relatively accessible, compared with
works by other American authors, especially of non-fiction. In its whole and in parts, the *Notes* reached many levels of popular culture. With snippets and quotes appearing in newspapers and political speeches, the *Notes* already had already begun to reach popular culture by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Common folk receiving the basic education Jefferson so valued in a republic would also have had access through Morse’s extensive borrowing for his geography text. Even more striking is the penetration of the book and its ideas into the black community. In itself, the phenomenon of black activists reading and quoting the work points to the era’s widening literacy, even beyond working class whites. These black leaders were necessarily educated in order to be able to participate in a large print forum of abolitionist ideas. Though some may have been quite wealthy, such as James Forten, many of them, like Walker, were of modest means or even held menial jobs. Nor were many prominent African Americans more than a generation or two removed from bondage. Yet, through libraries and other cooperative societies, disadvantaged blacks pooled resources to become educated and gain access to books, and some of them became accomplished writers themselves. As these leaders made use of the *Notes*’ powerful condemnation of slavery (or more unusually, like Walker, the assessment of racial qualities), an even wider audience became acquainted with Jefferson’s work. Even the semiliterate or illiterate could be reached by pamphlets read at anti-slavery meetings or large visual displays such as the transparency in Philadelphia. Walker explicitly sought to reach slaves in the South who could not read. Indeed, educated blacks were expected to read his pamphlets to groups of the illiterate to generate mass resistance to slavery.145

The unique celebrity of the *Notes*’ author does not disqualify the book from contributing
insights about more general trends in the print culture of the early Republic through the Civil War. On the contrary, the unusual amount of associated documentation enhances its value for studying the place of books and their relation to readers during that period. If other provoking books might not enjoy as tremendous circulation or reaction, they were still part of the same structures of print culture. A sufficiently provoking book could be expected to elicit extensive commentary and filtered exposure to a wide audience through the lively print industry. Pamphlets, newspapers, liberal borrowing, quotation in other books, even oral transmission could bring the book to a much wider audience than the initial book publication alone.
NOTES


3 The comparison was suggested by a conversation with Jim Green, Library Company of Philadelphia.


7 Marbois to TJ, 22 April 1782, in Sowerby, Catalogue, vol. 1, 303.


9 Coolie Vemer, Mr. Jefferson Distributes his Notes: A Preliminary Checklist of the First Edition (New York: New York Public Library, 1952), 29, 8, 6. Bibliographical groundwork essential to researching the reception of the Notes was laid by Vemer, who completed an extensive checklist of recipients of the first printing and documented all editions through the end of the nineteenth century. See Vemer, A Further Checklist of the Separate Editions of Jefferson’s Notes on the State of Virginia (Charlottesville, Va., 1950).

10 Vemer, Mr. Jefferson Distributes his Notes, 19; James Madison to TJ, 15 November 1785 in Sowerby, Catalogue, vol. 1, 306.

54


13 TJ to James Madison, 8 February 1786 in Sowerby, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 312.

14 Jefferson also had the legislation printed as a pamphlet in 1786. He then made it an integral part of the 1787 Stockdale edition, where the appendices are paginated serially with the main text. Dorothy Medlin, “Thomas Jefferson, Andre Morellet, and the French Version of *Notes on the State of Virginia*,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 35, no. 1 (Jan 1978), 85-99; Vemer, *A Further Checklist*, 5-6, 8; Peden, *Notes*, 297 n1.


17 Ibid., 89, 91n.28, 92n.30.

18 Robert A. Ferguson, “‘Mysterious Obligation’”; George Alan Davy, “Argumentation and Unified Structure.”


24 William Pechin, *To the Friends of Thomas Jefferson, Esq., These Proposals Are Presented, for Publishing by Subscription, His Notes; With Appendixes Complete* ([Baltimore]: William Pechin, 1801), broadside advertising circular, Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Curiously, even though both book imprints are 1800, Pechin’s broadside is dated January 16, 1801.

25 Though Pechin does not name Samuel Knox in his broadside or the title page, a separately printed pamphlet with the same name is attributed to him in the Library Company of Philadelphia card catalog: [Samuel Knox], “A Vindication of the Religion of Mr. Jefferson, and a Statement of his Services in the


27 Ibid., 216.

28 Ibid., 321, 323-324.

29 Personal communication, Jim Green, Library Company of Philadelphia.

30 Verner, Further Checklist, 14.

31 In the August 13, 1796, edition of the Maryland Journal, P. Edwards and W. C. Smyth of Baltimore advertised that they would print the Notes "as soon as one thousand subscribers are obtained." Minick, A History of Printing in Maryland, 14-15.


33 The German market seems too remote from early America to make the Leipzig edition significant for this estimate of access to American readers; the 1853 edition belongs to a different era, though it likely had an impact on some of the reception documented for the mid-nineteenth century.

34 Joseph Nancrede, Fixed-price Catalogue of a Large Collection of Books ... Now Selling at Reduced Prices, by Joseph Nancrede (Boston: Joseph Nancrede, 1803), microcard, 12.


40 Forster and Sprengal translated in Richey, "Memorandum," 2.

42 Forster and Sprengal translated in Richey, "Memorandum," 3.

43 Ibid., 4.


45 Stockdale to TJ, 10 July 1787 and 13 February 1787, in Sowerby, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 319, 316.


52 *Monthly Review* 78 (June 1788), 462-463.


55 *Critical Review* 64 (1787), 368.

56 [Extracts from *Notes on the State of Virginia*], *The New Haven Gazette and the Connecticut Magazine* II, no. 10 (26 April 1787), 73-75.

57 Sowerby, *Catalogue*, vol. 5, 158. Before consulting Sowerby, the microfilms of the *Columbian Magazine* only were searched beginning with July 1787 since that was the month Stockdale completed the printing according to Verner, *Further Checklist*, 8. Appearance of an extract in the April issue indicates that the
publishers probably obtained the material from a copy of the privately printed and circulated 1785 edition. Extracts found with microfilm search: "Extract from Mr. Jefferson's Notes on Virginia" [description of Potomac crossing through the Blue Ridge from Query IV], *Columbian Magazine* (August 1787), 573-575; "The State of Religion in Virginia (From Mr. Jefferson's Notes)" [entire Query XVII], *Columbian Magazine* (February 1788), 86-89; "An investigation of the justice of Mons. Buffon's opinion respecting Man in America, by Charles Thomson, Esq." [from Appendix I], *Columbian Magazine* (March 1788), 135-137; "A Comparative View of the Faculties of Memory, Reason, and Imagination of Negroes" [from Query XIV], *Columbian Magazine* (March 1788), 141-144.


60 Stockdale to TJ, 13 February 1787, in Sowerby, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 316.

61 Contents pages for the (1787-1788) run were searched, but no reviews were found for the Notes. Reviews for March through June 1788 were dominated by discussion of the Federalist.


63 Barlow to TJ, 15 June 1787, in Sowerby, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 320.

64 Richard W. Stephenson, and Marianne M. McKee, eds., *Virginia in Maps: Four Centuries of Settlement, Growth, and Development* (Richmond: Library of Virginia, 2000), 55.

65 ["Citizen of Pennsylvania"], "To the Honorable MEMBERS of the LEGISLATURE OF PENNSYLVANIA, the following NOTES, on the subject of that Commonwealth...," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 28 April 1790.


70 Peden, ed., *Notes*, 298, n1. Peden weighs the different arguments presented by Jefferson and his opponents regarding the affair and vindicates Jefferson's position. Peden also cites the main sources relevant to the controversy.


73 John J. Jacob, *A Biographical Sketch of the Life of the Late Captain Michael Cresap* (Cincinnati: Reprinted from the 1826 Cumberland ed. for W. Dodge, by J. F. Uhlhorn, steam job printer, 1866), 7, 8.

74 Brantz Mayer, *Tah-Gah-Jute or Logan and Captain Michael Cresap: A Discourse by Brantz Mayer; Delivered in Baltimore, before the Maryland Historical Society, on its Sixth Anniversary, 9 May 1851* (Baltimore: Printed for the Maryland Historical Society by John Murphy & Co., 1851), dedication.


77 Ibid., 61.


79 Reply to author’s electronic mail inquiry from George M. Kane, Chief of Facilities Planning, Ohio Historical Society, August 29, 2002.

80 Anonymous, [Reprint of Federalist campaign speech], *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 8 October 1800.

81 Clement Clarke Moore, *Observations upon Certain Passages in Mr. Jefferson’s Notes on Virginia, Which Appear to Have a Tendency to Subvert Religion and Establish a False Philosophy* (New York, 1804).


89 Moore, *Observations*, 17.


93 [Knox], “A Vindication of the Religion of Mr. Jefferson.”


96 [William Loughton Smith], *The Pretensions of Thomas Jefferson to the Presidency Examined; and the Charges against John Adams Refuted.* (United States [sic, Philadelphia?], 1796), microfiche, 7.


98 [Smith], *Pretensions of Thomas Jefferson*, 10.

99 Ibid., 13-14, 10.

100 ["A Southern Planter"], “To the Citizens of the Southern States” (1796). Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

101 William Pinkney, *Speech of William Pinckney, Esq.: 1789, in the Legislature of Maryland, on the report of a Committee to consider the laws of that State, prohibiting the voluntary emancipation of slaves: also, an extract from Jefferson’s notes on Virginia* (Philadelphia: T. Van Court, 1839).


103 The sermonizing tone is also noted by Peter Hinks in David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, ed. Peter P. Hinks (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), xxxviii.


106 Ibid., 16-17.

108 Mary Anne Dickerson, Album, 1833-1882; Martina Dickerson, Album, 1840-ca. 1846, Print Department, Library Company of Philadelphia.


114 John Parrish, *Remarks on the Slavery of the Black people: Addressed to the Citizens of the United States, Particularly to those who are in Legislative or Executive Stations in the General or State Governments; and also to Such Individuals as Hold them in Bondage* (Philadelphia: Printed for the author, by Kimber, Conrad, & Co., 1806), 9.


117 “Jefferson’s Opinion,” *Genius of Universal Emancipation* 3d ser., vol. iii, no. 3 (June 1833), 38-40.

NOTES TO PAGES 43-46


121 See especially J. C. Nott, M.D., and Géo. R. Gliddon, Types of Mankind: Or, Ethnological Researches Based Upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, And Upon Their Natural, Geographical, Philological, and Biblical History: Illustrated by Selections from the Inedited Papers of Samuel George Morton, M.D., (Late President of the Academy of Natural Sciences at Philadelphia,) and By Additional Contributions from Prof. L. Agassiz, LL.D.; W. Usher, M.D.: and Prof. H. S. Patterson, M.D. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1854).


124 Free Military School for Command of Colored Regiments, Register and scrapbook 1863-1864, collected by Abraham Barker, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The colored lithograph of the transparency in this file appears to have been clipped, perhaps from the special edition of a newspaper. The only publication information on the document credits “Ringwalt & Brown, [printers], 111 & 113 South 4th St. Phila.”


129 B. L. Rayner, Life of Thomas Jefferson, with Selections from the most valuable portions of his Voluminous and unrivalled Correspondence (Boston: Lilly, Wait, Coman & Holden, 1834), 188.

130 Rayner, Life of Thomas Jefferson, 184-186.


134 Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia of American Literature: Embracing Personal and Critical Notices of Authors, and Selections from their Writings, from the Earliest Period to the Present Day; with Portraits, Autographs, and other Illustrations* (Philadelphia: Wm. Rutter & Co., 1875 [Republished, Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1965]), I, v. Even though the modern reprint cited here was not made from the original 1855 edition, the publishers of the 1875 edition clearly marked any additions or changes to the original. Based on those textual notes, all of the material mentioned in this paper appeared in the 1855 edition.


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