The Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club

Curious Decorous Lanthorn at 200: The Limits of Probability and Possibility in Austen and Scott

*A talk given on Thursday 12th October 2017 at 5:15pm by **Anthony Mandal** to members of The Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club in Edinburgh and Edinburgh University English Department at The Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.*

The fortunes of Austen and Scott in popular culture sit in an interesting relationship with each other. Scott was the most popular novelist of the 19th century, while Austen enjoyed rather limited recognition (something about which she complained at various times). Contrastingly, since the late 20th century, Austen's popularity has reached stratospheric levels, while Scott's has declined. Despite this inversion, as Ann Rigney has noted:

> [E]ven if the figure of Scott himself is no longer very visible in contemporary culture, […] his long-term legacy continues to be felt not just in the historical epics of Hollywood but also, and more profoundly, in the widely expressed belief that representing the past is a condition for transcending it on behalf of a new future.[1]

In this context, I want to look at how the authors engage with concepts of history in a number of their works.

Austen's novels occupy a quintessentially English environment of modern-day manners, narrated from a clearly feminine perspective that celebrates the gentry world, while acknowledging its limitations. Her interest lies in 'the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effort after much labour' (16–17 Dec 1816), within which '3 or 4 Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on' (9 Sept 1814). Picking up on this precise focus a decade later, Mary Russell Mitford observed: 'Nothing is so delightful as to sit down in a country village in one of Miss Austen's delicious novels, quite sure before we leave it to become intimate with every spot and every person it contains.'[2] Just as Austen was midway through her publishing career, Walter Scott made his appearance in the novel market with *Waverley* in 1814, offering a kind of fiction that was fundamentally dissimilar. In the opening chapter of the novel, Scott rejects the sentimental, gothic, and fashionable models, in favour of one that is masculine and historiographical. Despite Austen's own similar rejection of melodramatic tropes in her fiction, unlike Scott, she invokes a restricted, private world that is essentially feminine. Conversely, Scott himself saw a clear distinction between their approaches, as he recorded in a diary entry for 14 March 1826:

> Also read again and for the third time at least Miss Austen's very finely written novel of Pride and Prejudice. That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow wow strain I can do myself like any now going but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary common-place things and characters interesting from the truth

> of the description and the sentiment is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early.

When he embarked upon project of the Waverley Novels, Walter Scott reshaped the discourse of Romantic-era fiction as masculine, historical and fundamentally public, distancing it from the feminine, didactic and essentially private. Approximating the non-fictional voice of the historical chronicle, Scott's novels reinvest the eighteenth-century romance with what contemporaries labelled 'accuracy' and 'variety' of incident, contextualized within a broader historical framework based in the classics, folk ballads, Shakespeare and other canonical writers. Against these dynamics, Austen's own texts refuse to engage in such a manifestly male, public field, maintaining a fictional enclave which is female, private, and internalized. In many ways, the difference between Scott and Austen couldn't be greater: while Austen's novels are provincial, feminine and contemporary, Scott's are national (if not international), masculine and historical. Franco Moretti notes:

> In *Waverley*, Charles Stewart never completes his march towards London: he lands in the North-West of Scotland, raises the Standard of Rebellion in the middle of the Highlands, crosses the Highland line, reaches Edinburgh, crosses the Anglo-Saxon border, reaches Derby—and then stops. He stops, in other words, exactly *where Austen's England begins* (Pemberley, the northernmost locality 'seen' in her novels, is also in Derbyshire). And that Scott's world should end exactly where Austen's begins, and Austen's end where Scott begins … such a perfect fit, of course, is only a (beautiful) coincidence. But behind the coincidence lies a solid reality: namely, *that different forms inhabit different spaces*.[3]

Significantly, Ina Ferris observes:

> *Waverley* reading offered a compelling alternative both to female reading and to feminine writing. In particular, in this period of conservative reaction, evangelical revival, and the domestic-didactic novel, *Waverley* and its successors licensed a nostalgic male-inflected romance of history that offered the satisfaction of emancipation from the necessary restraints of civil society even as it effectually absorbed male subjectivity into those restraints.[4]

Yet as other scholars have argued, Scott's own relationship with antecedent and contemporaneous women's fiction is far more complicated.[5] Despite its largely innovative nature, *Waverley* nevertheless references contemporary fiction in its paratextual 'bookend' chapters. While the 'Introductory' chapter dismisses the popular models of sentimental, Gothic and fashionable fiction as formulaic and exhausted, the 'Postscript' explicitly invokes female forms as sources of inspiration, in particular the national tales of Maria Edgeworth. Indeed, that the Regency period was a singularly significant moment in the history of women's writing is signalled by the experiences of Jane Austen. As Ian Duncan notes: 'the old commonplace of an antithetical relation between romance and reality, invoked by the novel in its own apologies of origin, produces a new, dialectical figure of romance as the fulcrum against which […] Reality can be turned around.'[6] In this context, the first part of

my talk considers a few textual encounters that took place between Scott and Austen; second part explores the relationship to history with which their characters and fictions engage; final part of my talk will complement these readings by looking at the question of futurity and inheritance, and how it coheres in issues of public and private worlds.

Fiction and Romance, Nature or Probability

When *Waverley* first appeared, Austen wrote to her niece Anna on 28 September 1814:

> Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones. It is not fair.—He has Fame & Profit enough as a Poet, and should not be taking the bread out of other people's mouths.—I do not like him, & do not mean to like Waverley if I can help it—but fear I must.

Mixing dry wit with raw honesty, Austen recognised that Scott's entry into the novel market would have profound implications for the novel market. Before even reading *Waverley*, she had already sensed the threat he presented to women writers like herself. A second remark by Austen on Scott, written two years later, establishes that she *did* read the Waverley Novels, despite her initial resistance, while simultaneously recording what was *not* new and innovative in them. Writing to her nephew James Edward, she commented:

> Uncle Henry writes very superior Sermons.—You & I must try to get hold of one or two, & put them into our Novels;—it would be a fine help to a volume; & we could make our heroine read it aloud of a Sunday Evening, just as well as Isabella Wardour in the Antiquary, is made to read the History of the Hartz Demon in the ruins of St Ruth—tho' I beleive, upon recollection, Lovell is the Reader. (16–17 Dec 1816)

This echoes Austen's earlier comments on another best-selling novel by another Edinburgh novelist, Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811), which appeared in the same year as her first novel, *Sense and Sensibility*:

> I am looking over Self Control again, & my opinion is confirmed of its' being an excellently-meant, elegantly-written Work, without anything of Nature or Probability in it. I declare I do not know whether Laura's passage down the American River, is not the most natural, possible, every-day thing she ever does. (11 Oct 1813)

Austen criticizes the popular taste for a novel in which exceedingly improbable events took place as a matter of course. In her reference to *The Antiquary*, Austen jibes at Isabella Wardour's gothic story, 'The Fortunes of Martin Waldeck', which is read aloud by her erstwhile suitor Lovel against the backdrop of a decaying convent. By 1815, the inset tale was an old motif, which many recent women novelists had abandoned, in favour of direct, uninterrupted narrative. Whether Scott was intentionally, even ironically, pastiching his romance predecessors or not, Austen considered this device to be an outmoded one, which could be used just as arbitrarily to spice up some sermons as it did purportedly pioneering fiction.

In December 1815, John Murray, the publisher of *Emma* and friend of Scott, approached him about writing a review of Austen's novel for the *Quarterly Review*: 'Have you any fancy to dash off an article on "Emma"? it wants incident and romance, does it not? None of the

author's other novels have been noticed [in the *Quarterly*] and surely "Pride and Prejudice" merits high commendation.' (25 Dec 1815)[7] The review appeared anonymously in the *Quarterly* for October 1815, which was actually published in March 1816. Scott begins by charting the explosion in novel reading, emphasizing the inherently intertextual practice it has become: 'gradually he [the reader] became familiar with the land of fiction, and adventures of which he assimilated not with those of real life, but with each other'.[8] The review traces the transformation of the novel from romance to realism, although the 'realism' under discussion is not quite what Scott wishes it would be. Austen's works 'belong to a class of fictions which has arisen almost in our own times, and which draws characters and incidents introduced more immediately from the current of ordinary life than was permitted by the former rules of the novel'. The best that modern novelists can hope to achieve is the precise, but only mildly interesting, documentation of contemporary manners. Scott overcomes his partial dissatisfaction with domestic fiction and suggests Austen's skill compensates for the lack of variety and incident. Nonetheless, he perceives that her depiction of 'the middling classes of society' restricts both plot and incident, and in an evocative passage we are told that 'at Highbury Cupid walks decorously, and with good discretion, bearing his torch under a lanthorn, instead of flourishing it around to set the house on fire'.

Despite some reservations, Scott's overall view of *Emma* is positive, while simultaneously conceding its limitations as he sees them. The lexicon used to define Austen's style is a restricted, feminized one: the story has a 'simple plan'; '[t]he subjects are not often elegant, and certainly never grand'; the author's merit 'consists much in the force of a narrative conducted with much *neatness* and *point*, and a *quiet* yet *comic* dialogue'. In Scott's account, fiction like Austen's replaces grandeur of romance with a narrative grounded in minutiae, resulting in a precision through which 'the characters of the speakers evolve themselves with dramatic effect'.

Scott's review contrasts Austen's microcosmic attention to detail with a more general, 'historical' realism. This latter is conceptual and panoramic, rather than specific and domesticated—the sweeping communal view of a broad landscape rather than the parochial life of the individuals within it. If Austen's fiction resembles 'cornfields and cottages and meadows', it is clear whose style Scott has in mind when he mentions, by comparison, the 'highly adorned grounds of a show mansion, or the rugged sublimities of a mountain landscape'. Nevertheless, as William Galperin has noted, 'Unlike some of Austen's lay readers, who recognized her divergence from realistic practice as it been prescribed and defined at the time, Scott may well have been the first to install Austen as the realist par excellence.'[9]

Throughout Scott's review, the word 'history' recurs in meaningful ways. For example, we're told that the closest fiction can approximate to history is in the form of romance:

> Such a history [as romance] resembles an ingenious, fictitious narrative, exactly in the degree in which an old dramatic chronicle of the life and death of some distinguished

> character, where all the various agents appear and disappear as in the page of history […]

Scott's opinions on fiction and history expressed in the review of *Emma* are reified in his Waverley Novels. For instance, romantic and tragic figures—such as Fergus Mac-Ivor, Edgar Ravenswood and Hugh Redgauntlet—are introduced in order to illustrate the workings of history upon men. Irresponsibly and idealistically joining the 1745 Jacobite insurrection, Edward Waverley endangers the delicate social fabric of a newly formed Britain. The novel's praxis detaches Waverley from his romantic imaginings (and the unfeasible, bygone world that Mac-Ivor and Stuart represent), bringing him into the real, societal world of Hanoverian Britain. Similarly, the earliest kind of novel—'the legitimate child of the romance'—is described as a 'history' that appeals to readers by taking them outside of their own conceptual worlds. The romance excites the imagination through its sublimity and grandeur, while the sentimental novel appeals to one's better nature in celebrating the power of virtue. In a similar vein to the old romances, Scott's historical novels transpose the hero, a 19th-century reader-surrogate, from his familiar world into one permeated with historicity. As a result, Scott's historical fiction does not employ the specificity of Austenian realism, offering instead a broad chronicle that juxtaposes events and characters, favouring an essentially public model, which lends itself to a masculine discourse, in opposition to the private boundaries of female experience that typify Austen's novels.

The Work of History

A number of critics have pointed out how the influence of 'philosophical history' on Scott aligns the historical novelist's authenticity less in the slavish adherence to facts, than in conveying to the reader a convincing sense that what happens in the fiction is likely to have happened.[10] Of course, this is what Georg Lukács saw as Scott's crowning achievement,[11] which traces an accommodationist vision of the past that would appeal to the modern reader through its combination of the historical with the dramatic, the personal and the affective, bringing together the aristocratic and bourgeois perspectives into balance. Yet, this meliorism is not without its own tensions, as Daniel Cottom pointed out in *The Civilized Imagination* over 30 years ago, and Catherine Jones has suggested more recently.

> [T]he vision of history that Scott explicitly proposes as the controlling vision in these novels is directly challenged in every situation of these novels—and there are many of them—in which their protagonists experience themselves as being helpless before essentially impersonal forces responsible to no order or reason, progress, or truth. […] Scott's narrative itself often seems to incline toward favoring the disordered point of view of the characters rather than the orderly point of view that otherwise is proposed as the author's own. One notes, for example—and here lies a similarity to Austen—that the marriages, reconciliations, and inheritances that occur in the conventional endings of most of Scott's novels generally are given succinctly, abruptly, and self-consciously, as if begrudged.[12]

> Scott's analysis draws upon the general theoretical principles of Scottish philosophical history, and within that framework highlights the distinctiveness of Scotland's historical path. Yet Scott's relationship to philosophical history is one of disorientation as well as cooperation.[13]

Scott's novelisation of history renders it multifaceted and dialogic, drawing together other marginal discourses into the master narrative of History, while demonstrating the often-violent contingency that moulds future outcomes through the sublimation of the past. Likewise, Austen's seemingly cosy domestic narratives often adumbrate hidden stories that typically, but not always, occur off-stage, darkening the well-regulated world of manners.

In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland discusses the merits of literature and history with Eleanor Tilney:

> [Catherine:] 'I can read poetry and plays, and things of that sort, and do not dislike travels. But history, real solemn history, I cannot be interested in. Can you?'
>
> [Eleanor Tilney:] 'Yes, I am fond of history.'
>
> [Catherine:] 'I wish I were too. I read it a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all—it is very tiresome:
>
> and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention. The speeches that are put into the heroes' mouths, their thoughts and designs—the chief of all this must be invention, and invention is what delights me in other books.' (ch. 14)

Similarly, *Persuasion* features a brief but notable debate between Captain Harville and Anne Elliot regarding the fidelity of the sexes. When he proclaims that ' "all histories are against you, all stories, prose and verse" ', her response is an explicit rejection of the public sphere: ' "if you please, no reference to examples in books. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. […] I will not allow books to prove any thing" ' (ch. 23). As Claire Lamont has suggested: 'Austen's novels describe a modern world in which most of the characters find history tedious to read, irrelevant to their concerns, and limiting to their wishes. But the past cannot be entirely denied, and the novels show several negotiations with it.'[14] Indeed, in *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland constructs her own counter-history of the Tilney family, relocating the modern abbey as a site of gothic disturbance and comparing its patriarch, General Tilney, as the enforcer of domestic oppression, to the villain of Ann Radcliffe's popular gothic novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*: 'It was the air and attitude of a Montoni! What could more plainly speak the gloomy workings of a mind not wholly dead to every sense of humanity, in its fearful review of past scenes of guilt? Unhappy man!' (ch. 23) For Austen's heroines, then, the past offers a catalogue of displacements and distortions, which work together in limiting their mobility and burdening them with various forms of sanctioned behaviour that depends on notions tradition and duty. Public history exists in the realm of the masculine, excluding women, who are obliged to employ other forms of writing, most particularly fiction, in order to find self-expression.

Indeed, Janine Barchas argues that the distinction between Austen and Scott is more nuanced than one might initially think, given the ostensible differences in their writing:

> Austen's own work narrows the perceived gap between history and novel reading, between writers of fact and fiction. Austen writes just as Sir Walter Scott is about to emerge with overwhelmingly successful hybrids of history and fiction. […] Her 'labour' as a novelist remakes, as does her contemporary Scott, historical fact into realist fiction.[15]

Notwithstanding their different approaches, Austen and Scott scrutinize the relationship between individuals and this historical awareness. Ignoring the lessons of the past or locking oneself within it, which both writers show to be much the same thing, leads to paralysis and stagnation. In *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Edgar Ravenswood is suspended between his desire for Lucy Ashton and his filial duty to enact vengeance on Lucy's father, Sir William Ashton—resulting in his Lucy's descent into madness and Edgar's erasure in the quicksand of Kelpie's Flow. Similarly, *The Antiquary*'s Earl of Glenallan is destroyed, emotionally and physically, by a gothic history of potential incest, kidnapping and suicide. Sir Arthur Wardour isolates himself from the Fairport community by an obsessive adherence to past glories, despite the fact that he is on the verge of bankruptcy. As Jonathan Oldbuck tells him, ' "the gratitude of the poor people naturally turns to the civil virtues of your family. You don't hear them talk of Redhand, or Hell-in-Harness [Sir Arthur's ancestors]" ' (ch. 22). As a result, the self-important Sir Arthur is swindled by the German conman Dousterswivel and ends up imprisoned.

Austen's own misguided baronet, Sir Walter Elliot, is as obsessed with the glories of the past and blind to the responsibilities of the present as Sir Arthur. We first see him poring over the *Baronetage*, which serves as both an exercise in self-elevation and an evasion of his responsibilities as a landlord: 'there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest patents; there any unwelcome sensations, arising from domestic affairs, changed naturally into pity and contempt' (ch. 1). His interest is purely solipsistic, with Kellynch Hall operating as an enervating arena of social decorum-turned-ritual (much like Lady Catherine's Rosings in *Pride and Prejudice*). The entropy of Sir Walter's habits is literally inscribed by the Elliot entry in the *Baronetage*, which portentously notes his inability to produce a direct male heir: ' "a still-born son, Nov. 5, 1789" '. This takes on added resonance in Mrs Clay's remark about the similarity between the baronet and his heir, Mr William Walter Elliot, who are ' "[e]xactly like father and son" ' (ch. 22). If Mr Elliot is not the ideal inheritor in Scottian terms, he certainly is the appropriate heir to Sir Walter. Just as Sir Arthur's obsession with the past leads him to lose his own estate, so Sir Walter would rather revel in the status entailed upon him from the past rather than secure his property present, when it becomes clear that their debts force the Elliots to abandon Kellynch. Both Anne and Lady Russell enjoin upon Sir Walter the necessity of sacrificing some of his luxuries to maintain his estate with due dignity and reverence, but his response is to sacrifice the dignity of the family to continue the luxuries of the day. For Sir Walter, the estate does not represent the social inscription of the prerogatives and obligations of the landed interest, but an index of his to eminence and

privilege. Similarly, for Sir Arthur, the promise of renewed prosperity that arises from the Misticot treasure is not a provision against the errors of the past, but a chance for self-aggrandizement: 'He corresponded with an architect of eminence, upon a plan of renovating the castle of his forefathers, in a style of extended magnificence that might have rivalled that of Windsor, and laying out the grounds on a suitable scale' (ch. 20).

Much as the Waverley Novels focus neither on the remote past nor the immediate present, but on the liminal relationship of both (the 'since' of *Waverley*'s subtitle), *Persuasion* compares 'then' with 'now'. The novel's discourse is shaped by this perspective, not only in its focus on the stultifying effects of the past upon the present, but also in its persistent recourse to the past as a means of explaining the present. This relationship can be seen in the opening sequence which moves smoothly from Sir Walter's obsession with the *Baronetage*, to a history of Elizabeth's disappointment in Mr Elliot 13 years earlier. Throughout *Persuasion*, the narrative moves between past and present so persistently that they become almost indivisible. Or, more precisely, they become such blurred concepts that the narrative is generated from the tension between these poles, so that the world which is created falls between memory and experience. Anne paradigmatically employs her past memories of Wentworth as an index to her current encounters with him. This culminates in the scene of mutual recognition that occurs near the end of the novel, when the lovers

> returned again into the past, more exquisitely happy, perhaps, in their re-union, than when it had been first projected; more tender, more tried, more fixed in a knowledge of each other's character, truth, and attachment; more equal to act, more justified in acting. (ch. 23)

Here, Anne and Wentworth employ the past to gain a better understanding of the present—unlike Sir Walter and Elizabeth, whose adherence to the past isolates them in the cold rituals of social decorum. Despite their similar perspectives on history, Scott and Austen depart in one fundamental way. For Scott, the past imbricates with the present in order to *substantiate* the pre-existing socio-historical world order which the hero inherits. By contrast, a novel like *Persuasion* proposes a forward-looking view that critiques and subsequently abandons inherited social structures. For Austen, the mistakes of the past inform the present and enable the protagonists to *create* a new future for themselves, detached from the burdens of past inheritance and an inherited past. The result is a condition of being entirely detached from estates, entails, and titles—a future which is quintessentially personal and romantic.

Futures (Im)Perfect

In the previous part of my talk, I spoke about Sir Arthur's and Sir Walter's obsession with naming and identity, their fixation with a chimerical past. I want now to think a little about how concepts of futurity and legitimacy mesh with these preoccupations. The focus of *Guy Mannering* falls upon the dispossessed heir of the Ellangowan, Harry Bertram, whose story recounts a double-reclamation: of both personal identity and aristocratic privilege. It passes from its rightful owners (the Bertrams) to a sly usurper (Gilbert Glossin). In *The Antiquary*,

the paradigm of multiple identities is mirrored in the issues surrounding the ownership of the Glenallan estate, which is itself bifurcated into 'The Old Place' and 'The New Place'. Similarly, in *Bride of Lammermoor*, the old Laird of Ravenswood is forced to give up ownership of his estates to William Ashton, leaving his son Edgar with the decaying Wolf's Crag and a vendetta. *Redgauntlet*'s Darsie Latimer begins the novel with no sense of his paternity, leading him to speculate on his identity at the start of the novel. Although the Scottian hero is the protagonist of the novel, his role is to receive his inheritance, not to create it. As numerous critics have argued,[16] his passivity both establishes him as a reader-surrogate and allows him to travel the topography at the author's whim, enabling much of the 'variety' lauded by Scott's contemporaries. The colourful but anarchic world of the past is safely contained within the master-narrative of the historical chronicle, consequently serving the present without threatening it. In these terms, Scott's passive heroes are metonyms for contemporary society, establishing their rights within the context of social structures rather than outside of them. Those who cannot fit, like Edgar Ravenswood, are compelled to being quite literally erased from the landscape. The successful Waverley hero ameliorates past and present, through his restorative, but largely figurative, role.

If, by and large, Scott presents passive heroes whose reinstatement, or otherwise, to their rightful inheritance generates the impetus of the novel, Austen's response subversively dismantles such processes. In *Sense and Sensibility*, John Dashwood is the legally entailed heir to Norland Park, and in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Collins will secure Longbourn after Mr Bennet's death. In both cases, deserving female relatives are ousted or under threat of exile in a system where moral deservingness and legal processes conflict with each other. More particularly, in *Persuasion*, as the legitimately entailed heir of the novel, Mr Elliot's social right to Kellynch Hall is undisputed. He is first presented *in absentia*, as an entry in Sir Walter Elliot's beloved *Baronetage*: ' "Heir presumptive, William Walter Elliot, Esq., great grandson of the second Sir Walter" ' (ch. 1). Austen maintains a kind of historicity, almost chiming with the Scottian view, by providing a chronicle of the past of the living generations of Elliots in the first chapter. Unlike Scott's heroes, however, Mr Elliot disregards Sir Walter, despite being courted by the baronet as a match for his eldest daughter Elizabeth:

> Instead of pushing his fortune in the line marked out for the heir of the house of Elliot, he had purchased independence by uniting himself to a rich woman of inferior birth. […] Mr. Elliot had attempted no apology, and shewn himself as unsolicitous of being longer noticed by the family, as Sir Walter considered him unworthy of it: all acquaintance between them had ceased. (ch. 1)

If the Laird of Ellangowan and the Earl of Glenallan are wracked by grief at the loss of their heirs, who later return seeking restitution, the baronet of Kellynch has for 13 years disdained communication with an heir who has deemed it unnecessary to visit the ancestral home.

When Mr Elliot does re-enter the family circle, he appears a changed man: seems prudent and rational, ungoverned by passions, certainly not a man of extremes, 'steady, observant, moderate, candid; never run away with by spirits or by selfishness, which fancied

itself strong feeling'. Nevertheless, Anne senses that there is something amiss in his private persona: 'He certainly knew what was right, nor could she fix on any one article of moral duty evidently transgressed; but yet she would have been afraid to answer for his conduct. *She distrusted the past, if not the present*'.

Anne soon discovers that her instincts were correct, and that Mr Elliot wears merely a mask of social decorum, when her school-friend Mrs Smith reveals his duplicity and hypocrisy. A historical perspective emerges here, with the past providing a key to the present, offering the promise of revelation as well as resolution. Mr Elliot's attitude inverts those of the Waverley heroes: while the latter search for their identities through their names, he wishes to shed both of his like a skin, commenting in a youthful letter: ' "I wish I had any name but Elliot. I am sick of it. The name of Walter I can drop, thank God!" ' (ch. 21) Not only is this a snub towards the present owner of Kellynch, as 'Walter' is the ancestral forename of the family, Mr Elliot wishes to obliterate his entire familial identity, with Mrs Smith stating: ' "I have often heard him declare, that if baronetcies were saleable, any body should have his for fifty pounds, arms and motto, name and livery included" '. His feelings echo that of another of Austen's undeserving heirs, Frank Churchill in *Emma*, who claims to be sick of England.

Scott's victorious heirs typically redeem the mistakes of their ancestors, serving to unite a cross section of the community as they do so. Most of Austen's heirs, however, rather than offering restitution, replicate the vanity of their predecessors. Indeed, in *Persuasion*, 'interlopers' such as the Crofts are shown to be worthier landlords of the estate than either Sir Walter or Mr Elliot. Whereas the entail works in Bertram's favour and is socially approved, in *Persuasion* it represents the failure of a decadent gentry. The foolishness of passing their estates to middling-class arrivistes kill Godfrey Bertram and the Laird of Ravenswood, but Sir Walter is more than happy to live in exile rather than give up his luxuries. In *Redgauntlet*, Darsie learns how to translate the romantic dreams of his unfixed youth into a productive commitment to family and modernity. By contrast, figures like Frank and Mr Elliot articulate a break with tradition and the vanity of Regency consumptiveness, devoid of any connection to social benefit. As such, their success in maintaining the external equanimity necessary for social decorum demonstrates that, for Austen, the presumed heir of the estate is not necessarily the heir presumptive of the text. Whereas the Scottian plot correlates sociability with decency, underscoring the hero's legitimate and moral rights to inherit, Austen's narratives bifurcate the social and moral strands into mutually dichotomous energies.

In this context, the past plays vital role in renegotiating the present for both Scott and Austen; however, the fundamental difference that underpins their historical perspectives lies in the manner in which they prioritize the public and the private respectively. In the Waverley Novels, the private is portrayed as essentially untrustworthy, a hindrance to social cohesion, and a force which must ultimately be subsumed by the broader workings of historical inevitability. In *Guy*, the secret veil Sophia Mannering casts over her daughter's romance with Bertram leads to ambiguity and family tragedy. Again, in *The Antiquary*,

Elspeth admonishes Glenallan that his own clandestine marriage to his cousin, Eveline Neville, partly aided the Countess's machinations. Of course, the secret betrothal between Edgar and Lucy drives the narrative of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, with tragic consequences. For Austen, the opposite obtains: the public world intrudes upon the private life of the individuals, preventing meaningful communications or suppressing the opportunity for individual expression. The congruence of public and private is rare, however, and social rituals typically vitiate the heroines' chances of personal happiness. For instance, the first important conflict between duty and desire in *Persuasion* occurs in ch. 19 when Anne encounters Wentworth in Bath, but being part of Mr Elliot's party, however, she is forced to leave grudgingly. A more telling second episode occurs shortly afterwards, when Anne's composure is ruffled when Mr Elliot rouses Wentworth's jealousy by claiming her attention:

> Anne could not refuse; but never had she sacrificed to politeness with a more suffering spirit. […] How was such jealousy to be quieted? How was the truth to reach [Wentworth]? How, in all the peculiar disadvantages of their respective situations, would he ever learn her real sentiments? It was misery to think of Mr. Elliot's attentions.—Their evil was incalculable. (ch. 20)

In *Persuasion*, it is the public sphere that is essentially untrustworthy, and Mr Elliot's entrance into the Elliots' Bath circle establishes how social ritual chokes honest intercourse that merges desire and morality. Contrastingly, the private world of conversation and correspondence offer the most unambiguous indications of people's characters and relationships. In *Persuasion*, the romantic theme, imagined as a purely private correspondence of feelings, dominates, and Anne's earlier relationship with Wentworth is not revealed in the public world, existing as a purely private history contained within the Elliot family, and more potently in Anne's mind. In fact, the public belief is that Mr Elliot will marry either Anne or Elizabeth, and that Wentworth will marry Louisa Musgrove because of their flirtation. Whereas the flirtation between Wentworth and Louisa has been inscribed in the public domain, the rekindled love between him and Anne is a private, almost unvocalized act. Their first conversation in Bath, which reawakens the romance between them, operates on two levels, the first a public recapitulation of the events in Lyme (Louisa's fall and her subsequent engagement to Benwick), the second a sublimated concession of affection by Wentworth:

> His choice of subjects, his expressions, and still more his manner and look, had been such as she could see in only one light. […] sentences begun which he could not finish—his half averted eyes, and more than half expressive glance […] He must love her. (ch. 20)

Similarly, Anne's jousting with Harville about fidelity functions publicly as an amiable contest of wits, but also (and Anne is conscious of this) privately informs Wentworth of her own unbroken attachment towards him. The result of this is his letter to her in which he confesses his continuing love, using a pretext for leaving the letter before Anne 'with eyes of glowing entreaty fixed on her for a moment'. The direction itself is 'hardly legible', yet '[o]n the contents of that letter [depend] all which this world could do for her!' A purely private,

even feminized act, which ignores the public in favour of the intimate, Wentworth's letter is metonymic for the whole impetus of *Persuasion*: ' "A word, a look will be enough to decide" ' (ch. 23).

In the Waverley Novels, not only is the romantic plot subordinated to the historical chronicle, the fate of the heroine is also subordinated to the fortunes of the hero. In the closing dialogue of *Guy Mannering*, Lucy Bertram's inheritance of Singleside from Margaret Bertram is redirected from her hands to Bertram, who then elects to pass it back to his sister, before it is renamed 'Mount Hazelwood'. In Austen's hands, this story would have been treated as emblematic of women's marginalization; in Scott it is uncritically accepted. In *The Antiquary*, Oldbuck repeatedly refers to Lovel as a 'phoenix', underscoring how his personal rebirth will reinvigorate decadent social strata (the Wardour and Glenallan lines) with middle-class energy. As proof of this, he leads the military contingent which announces the safety of Fairport precisely at the moment of his recognition by his father. By contrast, while military valour is lauded in *Persuasion*—especially when contrasted with the calcification of the gentry—it is the domestic and private that is finally celebrated. It is revealing that Austen's closing image simultaneously contrasts the public and private role of Navy life, while clearly prioritizing the latter: '[Anne] gloried in being a sailor's wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance' (ch. 24).

Conclusion

Notwithstanding their differences in the treatment of past and present, of private and public, there is one key area of confluence, which I think links the perspectives Austen and Scott. Darsie Latimer begins *Redgauntlet* as an outsider from Edinburgh society in which he lives. He is an orphan of uncertain parentage, dissatisfied with commercial world of mid-c18th-century life. His holiday to the south-west borders of Scotland (Dumfrieshire) soon becomes a quest for self-identity. But as novel makes clear, identity is a precarious and shifting thing, mirrored early in novel by the dangerous Solway Sands from which Darsie has to be rescued. In many ways, his fate is emblematic of the various Waverley heroes who have preceded him, whether their ultimate fortunes are tragic as in the case of Edgar Ravenswood, or redemptive as in the case of Harry Bertram and Lovel. While Austen's heroines may not always be orphans, they are often threatened with a not too dissimilar fate: the Dashwood sisters, Elizabeth Bennet and Fanny Price all face lives of marginalisation which reshapes their identities in various ways. A number of them, like Elizabeth, end up travelling like Darsie on an adventure away from their home that enables them to reinterpret their relationship to society and modernity. Perhaps, the most relevant example here is Catherine Morland's sojourn in the all-too-prosaic Tilney estate, Northanger Abbey, serves to divest her of her romantic yearnings and lead her towards an accommodation with modernity and its consequent rewards (in this case, the hand of Henry Tilney in marriage).

Unlike the romantic hero, Scott's prudent heroes function as reader-surrogates, operating as a medium for introducing historical and topographical detail while sharing readers' unfamiliarity with world being described. Ultimately, Scott's novels are not about heroes and heroism (concepts that belong to past), but rather about the transition from one age to another, and moreover one world-view to another. Waverley's role, for example, is to grow from his youthful romanticism into a socialized adult, who is intrinsically committed to modern values of Scott's readers. In similar ways, Austen's heroines much dispatch their own kinds of romanticism, or what the narrator of *Emma* terms 'imaginism': an idealised, and ultimately, narcissistic view of the world that can threaten to overwhelm social decorum and meaningful fulfilment. If Austen's novels are set firmly within the readers' present, providing a recognisably modern world, they must undertake similar moral journeys to those of Scott's protagonist, overcoming the challenges of the past to reach an accommodation with the present, while negotiating between the public and private worlds.

Of course, the dialogic nature of both authors' novels suggests that such accommodation comes at a price, and the two views (of what is lost from past, and what is gained in present) are always suspended simultaneously in our view. Critics have pointed to importance of crucial scene when Waverley bids farewell to his romantic dreams near end of novel: '[H]e felt himself entitled to say firmly, though perhaps with a sigh, that the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced. He was soon called upon to justify his pretensions to reason and philosophy.' (ch. 61) Likewise, in *Northanger Abbey* Catherine concludes that 'Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and charming even as were the works of all her imitators, it was not in them perhaps that human nature, at least in the Midland counties of England, was to be looked for' (ch. 25). Nonetheless Catherine's gothic intuitions about General Tilney have not been quite off the mark, and the penultimate chapter reflects that the pragmatic view might not always be sufficient, leaving room for imaginism after all: '[I]n suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she [Catherine] had scarcely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty.' (ch. 30)

At the close of *Waverley*, the sentimentalised portrait of Waverley and Fergus at the heart of a newly restored Tully-Veolan, echoes Edward's sigh in ekphrastic form, suggesting both an erasure of the doomed Jacobite past and the continuing power of the romantic vision in a world increasingly marked by hard pragmatism.

> It was a large and animated painting, representing Fergus Mac-Ivor and Waverley in their Highland dress, the scene a wild, rocky, and mountainous pass, down which the clan were descending in the back-ground. It was taken from a spirited sketch, drawn while they were in Edinburgh by a young man of high genius, and had been painted on a full length scale by an eminent London artist. Raeburn himself, (whose 'Highland Chiefs' do all but walk out of the canvas) could not have done more justice to the subject; and the ardent, fiery, and impetuous character of the unfortunate Chief of Glennaquoich was finely contrasted with the contemplative, fanciful, and enthusiastic expression of his happier friend. Beside this painting hung the arms which Waverley had borne in the

> unfortunate civil war. The whole piece was beheld with admiration and deeper feelings. (ch. 71)

Waverley's personal journey moves from metaphysical illusion through melancholy disenchantment to a reattachment to the world, achieved through perspective that is simultaneously ironic + sentimental. Solution not a celebration of new political structures but validation of personal ones, ironically in a movement that reverses Scott's male appropriation of a female genre. A counterpoint this moment of sorts occurs in a crucial scene in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet's first sight of Pemberley, the home of her misunderstood suitor and most eligible bachelor, Fitzwilliam Darcy. The episode at once endorses the materialistic, one might say vulgar, pronouncements of the novel's immortal opening line, while at the same time proffering a romantic Cinderella-story as a counter-narrative. It offers a description that in many ways takes us back to Scott's topographical account of the history of fiction in his review of *Emma*. Surveying the estate, and reflecting on its function as a moral and social emblem of Darcy's worth, Elizabeth lets out her own sigh of sorts:

> They gradually ascended for half-a-mile, and then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. It was a large, handsome stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of them warm in their admiration; and at that moment she felt that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something! (ch. 43)

Notes

[1] Ann Rigney, *The Afterlives of Walter Scott: Memory on the Move* (Oxford, 2012), 16.
[2] Mary Russell Mitford, *Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery* (1824), ch. 1.
[3] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900* (London, 1998), 33–34.
[4] Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca and London, 1991), 91.
[5] See Peter Garside, 'Popular Fiction and National Tale: Hidden Origins of Scott's *Waverley'*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 46 (1991), 30–53; Andrew Monnickendam, *The Novels of Walter Scott and his Literary Relations: Mary Brunton, Susan Ferrier and Christian Johnstone* (Basingstoke and New York, 2013).
[6] Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and the Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge and New York, 1992), 2.
[7] Quoted in Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and his Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray [...] 1768–1843*, 2 vols (London, 1891), I, 288.
[8] Sir Walter Scott, Review of *Emma*, *Quarterly Review*, 14 (Oct 1815), 188–201.
[9] William Galperin, *The Historical Austen* (Philadelphia, 2003), 66.
[10] See e.g. Robert P. Irvine, *Enlightenment and Romance: Gender and Agency in Smollett and Scott* (Oxford, 2000).
[11] Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (1937), trans. by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London, 1962).

[12] Daniel Cottom, *The Civilized Imagination: A Study of Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen, and Sir Walter Scott* (Cambridge, 1985), 133, 136.
[13] Catherine Jones, 'History and Historiography', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Walter Scott*, ed. by Fiona Robertson (Edinburgh, 2012), 65.
[14] Claire Lamont, 'Jane Austen and the Old', *Review of English Studies*, 54 (2003), 673.
[15] Janine Barchas, *Matters of Fact in Jane Austen: History, Location, and Celebrity* (Baltimore, 2012), 115–16.
[16] Alexander Welsh, *The Hero of the Waverley Novels* (1963; New Haven and London, 1968), 27.