THE WORLD'S CLASSICS

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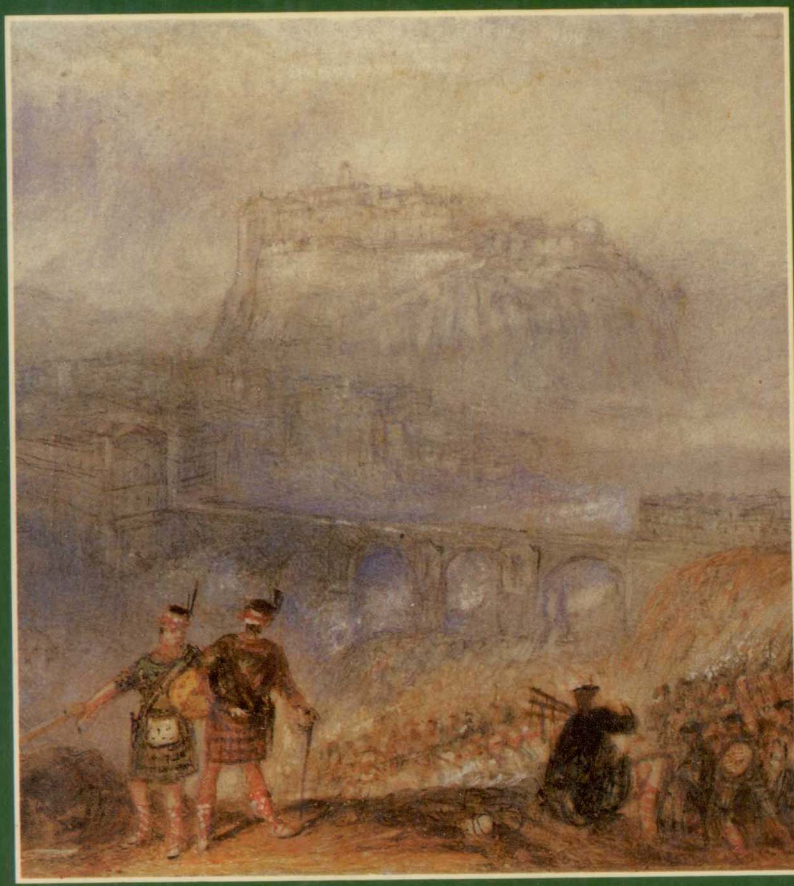

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INTRODUCTION

In his first novel *Waverley* (1814) Scott immersed his fictional English hero in the actual events of the 1745–6 Jacobite rebellion, by which the young Stewart prince, Charles Edward, sought to overthrow Britain's established Hanoverian monarchy and reclaim the throne for his father James Francis, son of the banished James VII (of Scotland) and II (of England). Later, in *Rob Roy* (1817), his sixth novel, another Englishman finds himself embroiled in the events which led to the earlier Stewart uprising of 1715. In *Redgauntlet* (1824), the last of his major Scottish novels, Scott wrote his third and final study in fiction of Scotland's Jacobite past. Again a young Englishman is caught in the web of history, but this time the pattern is importantly changed: the Englishman proves to be Scottish, the unwitting descendant of a fanatical line of Jacobites, and the historical events he confronts prove to be illusory, fictional in every sense. Set in 1765, the narrative posits the return to Scotland at that time of Charles Edward and progresses slowly towards a third Jacobite rebellion. Unchronicled by any historian, both events prove fictionally abortive too, and the ageing prince departs without a weapon being drawn in his cause.

For Scott, as for his contemporary Wordsworth, the written products of the adult imagination find their origins in recollections of childhood; and Scott's own childhood in the 1770s and early 1780s was vividly informed by tales of the Stewart insurrections of the first half of the century. In a letter of 1806 he acknowledged:

> I became a valiant Jacobite at the age of ten years old; and, even since reason & reading came to my assistance, I have never quite got rid of the impression which the gallantry of Prince Charles made on my imagination. Certainly I will not renounce the idea of doing something to preserve these stories, and the memory of times and manners, which, though existing as it were yesterday, have so strangely vanished from our eyes.[1]

In the previous year he had projected and then temporarily abandoned the opening chapters of *Waverley*; *or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* in which the outline of a semi-autobiographical hero is drawn. Working with new time laws, Scott reschedules history in the eventually completed novel, as the final chapter, the appropriately dislocated 'A Postscript, which should have been a Preface', suggests.

[1] *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson, 1932–7, i, 343.

Here the martial adventures and 'wild and hair's-breadth 'scapes' of 1745–6, the kernel of the narrative, are made to exist coterminously with Scott's own lost youth ('the last twenty or twenty-five years of the eighteenth century'), whose guardians were those Jacobite warriors turned story-tellers. Scott, who tells his story 'for the purpose of preserving some idea of the ancient manners of which *I* [my italic] have witnessed the almost total extinction',[2] discovers in the events of an impersonal past the context for a self-confrontation which transforms him into history's chief recorder. The awareness of loss, inseparable in Scott's understanding from any evidence of historical progress, is referable to an equivalent in personal experience and, more specifically, to that sense of differentiation in the face of continuing existence which is symptomatic of the life of the individual in time. Through the 'objective correlative' of history,[3] Scott experienced with Wordsworth

> The vacancy between me and those days,
> Which yet have such self-presence in my mind
> That sometimes when I think of them I seem
> Two consciousnesses—conscious of myself,
> And of some other being.[4]

Hence Scott's Jacobite enthusiasm, a recurrent thread in the fabric of his texts, is less to be investigated as evidence of political equivocation behind a loyal Hanoverian façade than as signalling the temper of his essentially Romantic imagination. As late as 1831, the year before his death, he was contemplating a new undertaking, 'the personal history of Charles Edward',[5] and in the spring of 1832 on his visit to Naples and Rome in search of health he found more to interest him in the mausoleum of the Stewarts in St Peter's and the evidence of their lives in exile than in Italy's classical past.[6]

It is, then, imaginatively consistent that Scott should combine in *Redgauntlet* a Jacobite tale and his most autobiographical narrative to date, both relocated in time. With more accuracy than the resumed *Waverley*, *Redgauntlet* can be described as a tale of 'Sixty Years Since'. Set in the decade before Scott's birth, it focuses precisely on the summer of 1765 and more generally on Scotland's emergence in the

[2] *Waverley*, ch. LXXII.

[3] T. S. Eliot's phrase is used with different implications in David Daiches's pioneering article 'Scott's *Redgauntlet*' (1958), reprinted in *Walter Scott: Modern Judgements*, ed. D. D. Devlin, 1968, p. 148.

[4] *The Prelude* (1805 text), ii, 29–33.

[5] *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. W. E. K. Anderson, 1972, p. 645.

[6] See J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 2nd edn., 1839, x, 168.

1760s from an isolated, medieval society into a component state of a modern, commercial Britain. The distant Jacobite grumblings which threaten to reverse this process belong, as the novel's 1832 Introduction suggests, to a period more than ten years earlier again, to 1750–3, to the time of Charles's secret visit to London, of the Elibank Plot and Archibald Cameron's Highland mission,[7] while details in the portraits of the young heroes, Alan Fairford and Darsie Latimer, bring the narrative more than twenty years forward, to Scott's own days as a law student at Edinburgh University in the late 1780s and early 1790s. Occasionally awkward, the time-scheme has the overall appropriateness of linking memories of the passage into adult identity with the final dissolution of feudal values.

Following J. G. Lockhart, Scott's son-in-law and early biographer, critics have scrutinized the novel's autobiographical signs, its celebration and exorcism of its author's past:[8] the devoted but suffocating relationship of Saunders and Alan Fairford, mirroring Scott's troubled dealings with his own father; the portrait of the mysterious 'Green Mantle', a re-creation of Scott's traumatic early love affair; Darsie Latimer, identified with various of Scott's student friends, but also an aspect of Scott's own dual nature, the irresponsible romantic, a foil to the cautious good sense which Alan Fairford represents. Interesting as these connections may be, however, *Redgauntlet* is concerned with more problematic formulations of identity and of the relation between a sense of fiction and a sense of self. Restless in the uncongenial environment of business-obsessed, Presbyterian Edinburgh, haunted by his uncertain parentage and by early recollections of a very different world, Darsie Latimer sets off on a holiday jaunt which takes him to the Solway Firth, that stretch of water dividing Scotland at its south-west corner from England, to him forbidden territory. A mythic quest, sharing features of the traditional romance with others of Scott's narratives, the journey proves a passage into a border world in every sense.

Geographically placed between two countries, the immediate area on either side of the Solway is a testing ground where stable values disintegrate, a priori cognition is no longer verified, and events take on alarming new shapes. The detached curiosity and flippant historical judgements which Darsie assumes as the proper manner of the tourist in his early account of Dumfries will be startlingly transformed by the discovery that Robert Bruce's action there in 1306 for

[7] See pp. 5–8.

[8] See, for example, Lockhart, *Life of Scott*, i, 218, 249–53; *Journal*, p. 597 n. 2; and R. C. Gordon, *Under Which King? A Study of the Scottish Waverley Novels*, 1969, pp. 151–2.

Scotland's independence is a determining factor in his own identity.[9] The law, an arid subject of study which he gladly abandoned, is none the less an institution whose protection he confidently invokes. But here again Darsie is deceived. Confined by a man who has been, to his confusion, both 'protector' and 'oppressor',[10] he finds that the laws of neither England nor Scotland are enforced in this traditional no man's land. As Alan Fairford also must learn, when he attempts to use his brand-new legal qualifications to rescue his kidnapped friend, local officials like Provost Crosbie live a double existence: avowing allegiance to the established Hanoverian government, they have irreconcilable family ties with the Stewart past; and the Borderers themselves 'are a kind of amphibious deevils, neither land nor water beasts—neither English nor Scots—neither county nor stewartry'.[11]

Names on the Border are aliases, disguises, and nicknames, an index of hypocrisy and concealed and shifting identity. Edward Hugh Redgauntlet has 'no certain name',[12] and is called variously 'the Laird of the Lakes', Herries of Birrenswork, and Squire Ingoldsby. Maxwell of Summertrees is known as 'Pate-in-Peril', and Thomas Trumbull as Tam Turnpenny. The Jacobite Prince Charles Edward, the King, the Chevalier or the Pretender, depending on the speaker's political sympathies, is also the Catholic priest Father Buonaventure and the Wanderer; and Nanty Ewart, the drunken smuggler, compounds the confusion by drawing attention to the possible extension of his own name to Stewart.[13] Even Lilias Redgauntlet, eventually discovered to be Darsie Latimer's sister, seems compelled to adopt the thin and coy disguise of 'Green Mantle', while Darsie himself, centrally preoccupied with identity, is transformed on the Border into Sir Arthur Darsie Redgauntlet. Alan Fairford, who in this world of constant variation clings significantly to his own name when challenged to adopt an alias, finds it 'deconstructed' regardless of his wishes into Fairword, Fairweather, Fairbairn, Fairport, and Fairbird.[14]

Not only identity, but experience too is subject to bewildering reformulations. *Redgauntlet* is a novel which experiments richly with its own fictionality. Its undergraduate heroes parade their classical quotations and literary allusions with self-conscious and tedious

[9] Cf. pp. 29 and 338.
[10] p. 176.
[11] p. 228.
[12] p. 72. See Mary Cullinan, 'History and Language in Scott's *Redgauntlet*', *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, xviii, 1978, 672–3.
[13] p. 279.
[14] pp. 271, 281, and 284.

regularity. Darsie, in particular, strains the connection between the enigmatic blanks in his own story and the biographies of characters in romance, and merits Alan's accusation that he nurses 'Quixotical expectations', conceptions of himself as 'the hero of some romantic history'.[15] Like Don Quixote, Darsie misconceives reality, making his experiences reflect the literature he has read. 'All that happens to thee gets a touch of the wonderful and the sublime from thy own rich imagination', writes his exasperated friend; and he continues, 'Didst ever see what artists call a Claude Lorraine glass, which spreads its own particular hue over the whole landscape which you see through it?—thou beholdest ordinary events just through such a medium.'[16] Seeing differently from others the same event or person—more significantly, the fact that history itself is only constructed in the mediating consciousness of the individual—is one of the novel's most important statements. For Darsie when his adventures begin in earnest, books prove sadly inadequate to experience. He is, after all, a hero only like every other novel reader. The 'novel of action', argued Edwin Muir, 'externalizes with greater power than we ourselves possess our natural desire to live dangerously and yet be safe . . . It is a fantasy of desire rather than a picture of life'.[17] Once the exploits and vicissitudes of the heroes of romance threaten to become part of external reality, then fiction loses its charms for Darsie. At the same time, his life assumes the shape of the most bizarre nightmare vision, offering as normative the irrationalities of the wildest Gothic romance. It is a predicament which others of Scott's young heroes must face; and it is, of course, a persuasive image for the passage from the untransformed everyday world to the world of the imagination. To find sense in it all Darsie's only recourse is to writing: he keeps a journal during his captivity and finds in it 'a sedative' for his 'agitated thoughts and tumultuous passions'.

> A thousand vague fears, wild expectations, and indigested schemes, hurry through one's thoughts in seasons of doubt and of danger. But by arresting them as they flit across the mind, by throwing them on paper, and even by that mechanical act compelling ourselves to consider them with scrupulous and minute attention, we may perhaps escape becoming the dupes of our own excited imagination . . .[18]

This is a total reversal of all his previous conceptions. Moreover, in suggesting a link between his well-being and his journal, 'the history

[15] p. 24.
[16] p. 46.
[17] Edwin Muir, *The Structure of the Novel*, 1957 edn., p. 23.
[18] p. 219.

of the life of an unfortunate young man', as he entitles it in true eighteenth-century fashion,[19] Darsie alerts the reader to his complicity in fiction at a deeper level than ever Quixote reached. Darsie's ancestor is not, after all, that self-deluding romancer, bound against all his desires to the unenchanted world, but Richardson's Pamela Andrews, for whom writing was an act of personal deliverance from an imprisoning and horrifyingly re-formed reality.

Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela* was published in 1740. In January 1824 Scott's critical biography of Richardson appeared prefixed to his major works in volume six of Ballantyne's Novelist's Library, and in the spring of the same year *Redgauntlet* began to take shape. The two novels have much in common. Like a large part of *Redgauntlet*, *Pamela* is a narrative in letters and journal-form, the heroine's story in her own words. Pamela is confined at the mercy of a man whose lawless behaviour is apparently sanctioned by the law and by a network of conventional relations: not only is her oppressor, Mr B, a JP and so the law's representative, but he is also a member of the gentry and she his mother's waiting-maid whom no social code will protect. Similarly, Hugh Redgauntlet may be an attainted man, but Border justice is corrupt and Darsie is his ward, legally bound to his authority. 'Under a legal pretext, I am detained in what must be a most illegal manner', writes Darsie.[20] In comparable dilemmas, both hero and heroine write in an attempt to master those experiences which threaten to master them and annihilate personal autonomy. Writing for their lives in the midst of turbulent events, they are conscious of the material requirements for the act of writing—privacy, the 'weapons' of pen, ink, and paper, the presence of a reader—those conditions which sustain the narrative illusion but which normally do not form its subject.[21]

This was Richardson's customary method as a novelist, but *Redgauntlet* is unique among Scott's fictions, which apart from *Rob Roy* and the long introductory section to *Chronicles of the Canongate* (1827), both first-person retrospective accounts, are told by an omniscient third-person narrator. The novel-in-letters was much in vogue in the second half of the eighteenth century and coincides neatly with *Redgauntlet*'s internal dating, but the form was unfashionable in the 1820s. *Redgauntlet* appeared anonymously, Scott's usual practice, in June 1824 and was given a cool reception by the reviewers and reading public. Lady Louisa Stuart, his friend and one

[19] p. 161.

[20] p. 217.

[21] Cf., for example, pp. 180–1; and *Pamela*, ed. Margaret Doody and Peter Sabor, Penguin English Library, 1980, p. 150.

of his acutest contemporary critics, wrote to Scott on 29 June with her comments on the new work:

> It has taken my fancy very particularly, though . . . I could almost wonder why, for there is no story in it, no love, no hero unless Redgauntlet himself who would be such a one as the Devil in Milton . . .[22]

The absence of a basic, orderly sequence of events has been one of the main criticisms levelled against Scott's novels since the time when he became one of his own earliest critics. Defending the irregularities of his plots in the fictive context of the 'Introductory Epistle' to *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822), Scott invoked the eighteenth-century precedents of Smollett and Le Sage who

> have written rather a history of the miscellaneous adventures which befall an individual in the course of life, than the plot of a regular and connected epopeia, where every step brings us a point nearer to the final catastrophe. These great masters have been satisfied if they amused the reader upon the road, though the conclusion only arrived because the tale must have an end, just as the traveller alights at the inn because it is evening.[23]

The scant respect Scott has been awarded among a wide educated and academic readership in the twentieth century comes down to just this—the apparent formlessness of his narratives, as distinct, for example, from the intricately reworked structures of his contemporary Jane Austen. E. M. Forster and F. R. Leavis can take much of the blame for undervaluing Scott's greatest talent of story-telling for its own sake. Forster, who detested story, dismissed Scott rather wittily for that sad defect: 'Who shall tell us a story? Sir Walter Scott of course.'[24] Leavis, with more missionary zeal and a lower tolerance of fiction altogether, remarked in *The Great Tradition*:

> Scott was primarily a kind of inspired folk-lorist . . . He was a great and very intelligent man; but, not having the creative writer's interest in literature, he made no serious attempt to work out his own form and break away from the bad tradition of the eighteenth-century romance.[25]

As the writings of Northrop Frye and Frank Kermode among others attest, however, an educated enjoyment of story has begun to generate a more complex framework within which to explore its peculiar authority; and Scott's novels can only benefit from this. In particular, the considered creative and critical principles lying

[22] National Library of Scotland MS 3898, fo. 244.
[23] *The Fortunes of Nigel*, 1822, I, xv.
[24] E. M. Forster. *Aspects of the Novel*, Pelican, 1962, p. 38.
[25] F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, Pelican, 1972, p. 14 n.

unassumingly behind those simple comments on Smollett and Le Sage may reach some attentive ears.

Redgauntlet takes narrative invention as its subject and firmly declines to accommodate the now traditional if restrictive critical distinction between 'story' and 'plot' by refusing to concentrate the details of its telling around some single originating structure which they can be said to illuminate or complicate. In this Scott is a true story-teller as Walter Benjamin, the Marxist critic, defines the story-teller:

> it is half the art of story-telling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it . . . The most extraordinary things, marvellous things, are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks.[26]

When Darsie writes in his journal of 'the rage of narration' which besets him in every peril,[27] he points to the novel's essentially revisionary structure. Itself a record of history (the preparations for a third Jacobite rebellion) unfolding within a specific temporal dimension (the summer of 1765), *Redgauntlet* distinguishes the real from the illusory, its true centre of interest from its merely incidental concerns, through a progressive redescription of its materials. Moving from a novel-in-letters, to a third-person narrative, back to a form of personal correspondence, a journal, and subsequently back again to a third-person narrative, it establishes a world in which reality is a matter of differing perception and in which all its major characters have their perceptions authorized by their powers as story-tellers. Darsie's early plea to his friend to 'make up my history'[28] is replaced by his own 'history of a little adventure which befell me';[29] into that is interpolated Wandering Willie's tale of a slice of Redgauntlet history, which is in its turn adjusted in the light of Hugh Redgauntlet's account of the much earlier Alberick Redgauntlet and the medieval wars for Scotland's independence; that again is to be set against Pate-in-Peril's old soldier's tale of escape after Culloden, which is soon followed by Nanty Ewart's fragment of autobiography and by Lilias Redgauntlet's final episode of family history; and interpolated at various points is the tale of Peter Peebles's law-suit, begun, as Peebles himself emphasizes, in the

[26] Walter Benjamin, 'The Story-teller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov', in *Illuminations*, Fontana, 1973, p. 89.
[27] p. 169.
[28] p. 17.
[29] p. 29.

year of 'the Grand Rebellion' of 1745.[30] The novel only ends, as Scott remarked of the romances of Smollett and Le Sage, because the travellers stop travelling and alight at the inn—Father Crackenthorp's inn on the English side of the Solway, to be exact. What never comes is the pre-emptive narrative which will draw together all these disparate narratives in a moment of shared illumination and verification. For the anticipated point of convergence for tales and tellers—the inception of a third Jacobite rebellion—is an event which never happens and a tale which cannot therefore be told. The novel's 'true centre' turns out to be story-telling itself—how stories are told and received. Significantly, it is a subject only understood in the withholding of the ultimate story.

The impossibility of disentangling fact from fiction, historiography from narrative technique, the belief that to recount what has passed constitutes an act akin to literary fabrication, justify the dominance of interpretation over event in *Redgauntlet*. In this respect, 'Wandering Willie's Tale' is paradigmatic. Seen by some critics as encapsulating the novel's thematic concerns and isolated from its surroundings by others, as one of the finest short stories in the language, it is about the meeting of inner and outer worlds. The tale of a tenant, Willie's grandfather Steenie Steenson, who goes to hell to claim from his landlord, Sir Robert Redgauntlet, a rent-receipt, it refuses precise classification. Neither documented history nor simply superstition, neither within the experience of its teller nor completely uncoloured by personal interest, its authority rests with a drunken man to whom it may have happened or who may have dreamed it. One critic who has examined the evidence for Scott's careful revision of the tale confirms the level of teasing discrepancy admitted to its final form:[31] was it, for example, Steenie or the old servant Hutcheon who saw the devil (or was it the monkey Major Weir that they saw) sitting (or was he capering) on Sir Robert Redgauntlet's coffin? At different points different readings are given. To move from small to large, what the novel as a whole comprises is a series of distinct but locally effective accounts of the past which are modified, even overturned, by the larger structuring principles of parallel and juxtaposition, causing each added narrative to set up corresponding reverberations in the others.

Hugh Redgauntlet's understanding of history as the working out of inevitable destiny in the lives of men is as tyrannical and narrowly hereditary as his notions of kingship; and believing in the necessary

[30] p. 198.

[31] See Mary Lascelles, 'Scott and the Art of Revision', in *Notions and Facts*, 1972, especially pp. 226–8.

accomplishment of the family curse—'that the cause which they espoused should never prosper'[32]—he reads events in its light. But Redgauntlet family history provides another reading of the curse, as 'Wandering Willie's Tale' reveals. When Sir Robert dies he is succeeded by a son, Sir John, a man of very different interests and loyalties. Sir Robert had been a Royalist soldier during the Civil War, and he remained a bloodthirsty and unrepentant survivor of the old Stewart order. His son, a smooth-talking city advocate, has made his peace with the post-Revolution settlement and subsequently plays his part in engineering the Union of 1707, by which Scotland gained participation in the English economy but lost a separate parliament and along with it the power to choose a different king from England and to pursue policies inimical to English interests. Willie comments, 'if his father could have come out of his grave, he would have brained him for it on his awn hearthstane'.[33] The detail, though extraneous to Willie's main concern, is a significant one: embedded in his supernatural narrative is discovered another tale, of a father and son on opposite sides over Scotland's independence; and it is that which will form the subject of Hugh Redgauntlet's aetiological legend of the fourteenth-century Alberick Redgauntlet.

In the struggle for the Scottish crown Alberick supports David Bruce's independent tenure while his son has thrown in his lot with the English-backed Edward Balliol. Face to face after Edward's flight from Annan, father accidentally kills son by a blow to the forehead from his horse's hoof.[34] So originates the horseshoe frown which is said to be transmitted from father to son, on to Darsie Latimer. What these highlighted moments of history suggest as the family curse, and what Hugh Redgauntlet fails to read, is that each generation of Redgauntlets will rebel against the last. Viewed in this way, Darsie's adherence to the victorious Hanoverian side has not, as his Jacobite uncle imagines,[35] broken the curse but fulfilled it. That this switching of allegiance is no longer the prelude to catastrophe derives from the spirit of comedy which dominates the novel's closing scenes and carefully restores the past to the future in which Scott is writing.[36] General Campbell's prescient remark in his role as fairy godfather—that 'Jacobite will be henceforward no

[32] p. 211.
[33] p. 106.
[34] p. 210.
[35] p. 399.
[36] There are exceptions of course: Nanty Ewart's tragic history remains untransformed. His conviction, comparable to the troubled father–son

longer a party name'[37]—promises tolerance and heralds an end to political division. The contemporary fears which Dr Dryasdust reports were rife in this forgiving atmosphere—that the young King George III 'might himself be induced to become one of the Stewarts' faction'[38]—are ultimately proved unfounded, but in the comic transformation of Scotland's cursed history *his* son plays a leading role: a nationalistic fervour which could be quickened, as it was in 1822, at the sight of a fat George IV entering Edinburgh in kilt and flesh-pink stockings suggests not tragedy but pantomime as its proper medium.

Hugh Redgauntlet's belief in a hereditary curse is the belief that in history everything recurs, and it is a view which the novel's interlinked episodic structure endorses. But the endorsement is ironic: events recur in *Redgauntlet* in a spirit dangerously close to mockery. That such is the typical course of history was to be suggested by Karl Marx in 1852 in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, where he notes that those social oppositions which surface as tragic conflict in one generation will often, if repeated in a later age, become the subject of comedy. It is a critical commonplace that Scott's novels enact the confrontation and displacement of an older heroic world by the necessary laws of progress as embodied in the new.[39] That older world is glamorous, often brutal; the new is cautious, often commercial. The old hero is fiercely individual, at the centre of a last desperate activity; the modern hero is peripheral, an ineffective creature, acted upon but rarely acting. These are Scott's legacies to the later nineteenth-century novel. Darsie's search for a distinguishing self—the search which so many Victorian heroes and heroines will take up—generates the novel's most complex statement about history, one which lays claim to truth through this notion of ironic inversion.

From an early stage, the problem of Darsie's identity is linked to the wider issue of Scotland's national identity (that has been the point of the interpolated tales of family history); and both, individuality and nationhood, are interwoven in the Jacobite politics of his uncle with notions of hereditary tenure and vassalage, with absolute monarchy, and ultimately with the authority of the exiled House of

relationships in the Redgauntlet family, that he is a parricide confines him irremediably to the past, and his only release is in death.

[37] p. 398.

[38] p. 400.

[39] The classic statement of this view is Alexander Welsh, *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, 1963. See also a more recent study, George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination*, 1981, chs. 4 and 5.

Stewart. But just as the exercise of prerogative and arbitrary power has been curbed in the monarch since the 1688–9 Revolution, so too the autonomy of the individual is discovered to be outmoded and unattainable. To emphasize the point, in the process of his transformation into Sir Arthur Darsie Redgauntlet of that Ilk, heir of an ancient and noble family, Darsie first becomes a baby and then a woman. Captured during the raid on Joshua Geddes's fishing station, tied up and bundled into a cart to make the journey to England, where his uncle's legal authority over him is effective, Darsie comes near to drowning in the dangerous currents of the Solway. In a scene which repeats the details of an earlier incident, he is rescued by his mysterious captor. This time helplessness and fear rob Darsie of any vestigial heroism: 'I chattered and howled to the howling and roaring sea . . . he seized me, as if I had been a child of six months old.'[40] Once in England, his humiliation is completed when he is forced to put on female clothing as a travelling disguise:

> Darsie permitted Cristal Nixon to place over his face, and secure by a string, one of those silk masks which ladies frequently wore to preserve their complexions, when exposed to the air during long journeys on horseback. He remonstrated somewhat more vehemently against the long riding-skirt, which converted his person from the waist into the female guise, but was obliged to concede this point also.
>
> The metamorphosis was then complete . . .[41]

There are sinister aspects to Darsie's transformation: his mask is reinforced with steel and secured behind with a padlock, and his skirts have been fastened under his feet to prevent escape. Literally imprisoned in his female identity, Darsie suffers some of the tribulations of the heroine of the Gothic romance, a kind of fiction with which *Redgauntlet* has much in common. Like the realistic novel to which it is usually opposed, the Gothic romance concerns itself with life in society. But where the realistic novel espouses narrative verisimilitude in its attempt to secure and validate a commonly held view of everyday reality, in Gothic fiction 'the subjective vision *became* the crucial event . . . external reality paled before it or fused with it, but never dominated it'.[42] Preoccupied with the family as its significant social unit, the Gothic impulse runs riot in the domestic world, fascinated by those possibilities in family life which are too threatening and too little understood to be openly acknowledged in the realistic novel. Instead of charting that convergence of traditional

[40] p. 176.
[41] p. 310.
[42] Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England*, 1972, pp. 20–1.

male and female characteristics which is essential to the stability and prosperity of the family, as outlined in the realistic novels of Richardson and Jane Austen, the Gothic maximizes difference and polarizes the sexes: Gothic hero-villains are tyrannical, demonic, and monomaniacal in their energy, representing that individuality which threatens to undermine and destroy community; heroines are passive, powerless in their innocent suffering; they epitomize human helplessness in the face of seemingly random and unconnected terrors. In both cases it is the isolating, subjective nature of experience which is stressed and the accompanying abuse of family relations. It is possible to trace such a pattern in *Redgauntlet*: in the process of learning his identity, Darsie uncovers a family history which has been shaped by the early crime of a father who kills his son; he develops a romantic attachment to a woman who proves to be his sister; and he finds in his uncle and guardian a parent-figure who is both attractive and repellent, a protector and a gaoler whose final despotic act is to emasculate him.

At moments, the fascination which the ambiguous Hugh Redgauntlet exerts leads Darsie to the verge of the dark and hidden places in his own unexplored personality. One such occasion comes when, after an exchange of angry glances with his captor, Darsie catches sight of his own reflection in a mirror and is startled to see the stamp of the same horseshoe frown on both their foreheads. Recalling the incident later, he experiences 'a thrill of awe . . . not unmingled with a wild and mysterious feeling of wonder, almost amounting to pleasure'.[43] It is a moment of recognition, even complicity, between innocence and evil, victim and victor. As a psychological insight, however, it remains undeveloped.

On the whole, Darsie's need to learn about his past sits oddly with his unconcern at the details of that past. 'Indeed I hear it for the first time in my life'[44] may seem an unduly restrained response to the revelation that he is the heir to an old and rich estate; but it compares favourably with his wooden impassivity when told that his father's skull is still visible rotting over Carlisle's northern gate.[45] The fact is that Darsie's initial sense of alienation in the commercial and legal society of Edinburgh and the romantic Jacobitism of which Fairford senior early accuses him have both faded rapidly when he is faced with a distinctly different heritage and the opportunity of action in another sphere. This all makes sense as part of the novel's delineation of historical knowledge as essential to the effort to distance the past,

[43] p. 207.
[44] p. 319.
[45] pp. 338–9.

a necessity if life in the present is to be properly understood and assessed. History, Scott argues in *Redgauntlet*, needs to be confronted, not to be reactivated but to be distanced, in order to release the present. Once known, the past holds no interest for Darsie. This is only one in a series of reversals by which the novel repudiates its apparent concerns—the quest for individual identity, the possibilities for vast political upheaval and large heroic action—and returns its characters from the distorting world of subjective perception to the security of an everyday, shared reality. The process is enacted in the terms of that mocking transformation of events which, according to Marx's later analysis, characterizes the encounter of human progress with history's repetitious course.

Initially nightmarish in scope and implication, Darsie's 'metamorphosis' from male to female proves in fact to be the key to the novel's comic purpose. Arrived at Father Crackenthorp's inn, Hugh Redgauntlet hastens to secure the allegiance of the wavering band of conspirators assembled there by presenting to their number the acknowledged head of the Redgauntlet family, his nephew Darsie. As a necessary prelude, he removes Darsie's disguise, the riding-skirt and mask, trusting that 'with this feminine dress' he 'will lay aside all effeminate thoughts' and enter whole-heartedly into an enterprise which has so far drawn from him only circumspect disapproval. And he underscores his point with the injunction 'Do not blush at having worn a disguise to which kings and heroes have been reduced.'[46] The reference is specifically to Charles Edward's assumption of the clothes and identity of the Irish maidservant Betty Burke in the course of his escape after Culloden. As an exhortation to heroism it is sadly mistimed, however, and as the one certain link between past and present it is unreassuring. In 1746 female disguise may have provided the final romantic detail in the portrait of the darling prince of a heroic cause, but in 1765 it points to the essentially farcical nature of the attempt to resurrect his claim. Hugh Redgauntlet's moment of awakening to his own historical belatedness ('"Then, gentlemen," said Redgauntlet, clasping his hands together as the words burst from him, "the cause is lost for ever!"'[47]) certainly engages the compassion of narrator and reader alike; but the wider context manipulates our sympathies differently. The Prince, overshadowed by his mistress and improbably concealed inside Father Buonaventure, has become, as one critic neatly expresses it, 'a character in a bedroom farce'[48]; and the conclusion of

[46] p. 367.
[47] p. 396.
[48] R. C. Gordon, *Under Which King?*, p. 160.