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REVISITING LITERATURE

From Theories of Deviation to Theories of Fictionality: The Definition of Literature

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This essay focuses on the various ways in which literature has been differentiated from non-literature. The criteria of differentiation show themselves to be quite heterogeneous, even incommensurable. Older – essentialist – theories, based on epic and lyric poetry, distinguished between poetic and non-poetic forms of language. Later – relational – theories, often based on the novel, have argued that it is the reference of language to reality that distinguishes fiction from non-fiction. Still more recent theories, accompanied by new forms of literature, see the difference in the eye of the beholder or, rather, reader – and this is a pragmatic criterion of differentiation. Since each perspective yields valuable insights, the question is how the three criteria – essentialist, relational and pragmatic – relate to one another.

1. Language and form as the distinguishing criterion of poetry

Until the 18th century, epic poetry and certain types of poems - ode, elegy, nature poetry - were the key genres of literature. A poet striving for honour and glory had to excel in these genres, in which Homer and Vergil were considered to be the greatest models, with Dante, Camões, Milton and others as the respective national examples.

These epic poems, odes, sonnets, and epistles differed from discursive texts – historiography, homilies, philosophical treatises, laws, or everyday speech, etc. – in their use of language, namely in such deviations from everyday speech as verse, metre, rhyme, poetic diction with liberties in vocabulary (archaisms, for instance) and syntax (a freer order of words).

Such poetic text-types with their ritualistic and magical elements corresponded to the world-view of pre-modern times. In a magical conception of language, the speaker is understood to act upon the world in a direct way. Speaking of the devil may make him appear. Ritualistic language usage – as in litanies – points to the fact that sometimes it is not so much the information that counts, but rather the way in which the message is conveyed.

This is the original, and proper, province of literature, not only in text-types like charms that are expressly magical, but more generally in all forms of poetry with devices like alliteration and rhythm, metaphor and simile, invocation, burden, etc. When more rational, critical conceptions of language superseded these older conceptions, poetry became the reserve of such ancient language usage. Imagery and all rhetorical and formal devices of more modern literary works of art became, as it were, the vanishing grade (“Schwundstufe”) of the former magical practices. As a consequence, poetry became the realm of speech where deviation from the norms of discursive speech is constitutive, and, again as a consequence, deviation from the norms of everyday and discursive usage of language became the decisive criterion of poetics.

2. The reference of language to reality and reader-expectation as the new criteria in defining fictional texts.

The situation changed with the rise of the novel to the position of literary key genre, if only slowly because at first the new genre had no aesthetic prestige. (This paper will confine itself to prose narratives, but a similar case could be made for drama.) The novel came along like everyday speech, without rhetorical ornamentation and it claimed to be the depiction of real events. An arbitrarily chosen passage taken out of context could not be recognised as poetic, and it was not meant to.

The development from epic poem to prose novel is connected with the rise of the bourgeoisie to the position of the economically and, later, politically dominant social class. Concomitant with this political and social revolution was a change in values: from a heroic and aristocratic ideal of life to an unheroic and bourgeois lifestyle, from an emphasis on the public sphere to an emphasis on privacy, from a cyclical conception of time to a conception of time as linear and with an open future, from an oral culture to a civilisation based mainly on writing and reading, and, in this process, the conception of language and speech changed dramatically, roughly speaking: from poetry to prose.

The rise of the natural sciences played an important role, too. The elimination of God and teleology from the understanding of nature in physics, geology, biology, etc., was accompanied by a purification of the language of the natural sciences. Nature was no longer regarded as a book, the meaning of which had to be interpreted, but was taken as pure facticity without meaning. The importance of the subject of perception and cognition was, accordingly, reduced, first-person sentences were given up in favour of passive constructions, finite verb-forms given up in favour of nominal constructions; all of this stresses the results rather than the research. Furthermore, rhetorical devices like metaphors, irony, hyperbole, etc. are avoided and literal expressions are favoured in order not to draw the reader's attention to the writer and not to give a chance to a subjective colouring of data, argumentation and conclusions. (The fear is that in being forced to accept the language of a researcher, one is forced to accept ideas that make sense only in the idiosyncratic mode of speaking of the writer.) Two other famous attempts to purify language of being affected by the object discussed is the introduction of distinctions between logical planes by Bertrand Russell and between semantic planes by Alfred Tarski; according to these distinctions, a statement may not refer at the same time to the facts of the case and to its own truth value. (An example is the ancient Liar Paradox,

where a statement is made about a Cretan and, at the same time, about the truth value of the statement itself.)

Thus, the language of science attempts, as much as possible, and in direct opposition to the language of poetry, to avoid the subjective colouring of results. It also, and more generally, denies any direct association with the objects discussed, because, if there were an iconic connexion between object and language, the definition of the object, the collection of data, the results of the argumentation would be influenced by the language used; language might even construe the problem which it then must clarify. (At this point, I will not discuss the question of whether this programme is fully possible.)

The rise of the novel belongs to this context. If the language of poetry can be defined by deviation from the norm of everyday speech and discursive statements, then linguistic non-deviation from the norm is equivalent to non-poetry, and the novel, therefore, appears as a discursive text, particularly close to the genre of historiography. Whoever wanted to present a story as history had to forego deviations of language, style, and form. Thus, the modern (realistic) novel belongs to the great movement of disenchantment of the world in Western civilisation since the Renaissance.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, often called the first modern novel, presents itself as the unadorned autobiographical report of a castaway; Goethe's epistolary novel, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, presents itself as the authentic collection of letters between two lovers and their circle of friends. Single passages here and elsewhere in novels cannot be recognised as part of a work of art – with exceptions, it must be admitted: Fielding's narrator in *Tom Jones* reveals himself as the creator and legislator of the world of his hero and, thus, reveals the novel as a novel; the grammar of Jane Austen's passages of free indirect style is clearly not in the way of everyday speech. (The genre of the romance is a different matter: Gothic Novel, Science Fiction, Fantasy, etc. are in another literary tradition than the novel.)

As a consequence, the traditional characteristics lost their importance as the defining criteria of literary works of art. Verse, rhyme or dense imagery which had determined a text as a work of art, showed themselves as mere decoration, as externals. (The case is similar to that of discarding the ancient definition of fish as animals living in water, in favour of a less superficial definition where, for instance, whales and dolphins are grouped as mammals.) This meant that the relationship between text and reality became the decisive distinguishing mark between discursive texts and literary works of art, now called fictional texts. Broadly speaking, discursive texts refer to a reality existing or presupposed as existing independently of them; their function lies in the description, explanation, elucidation, and criticism of this reality. Fictional texts, in contrast to that, create the world which they seem to describe in the very act of description. And if explanations or argumentations appear in a novel – speech acts typical of discursive texts – then this argumentation is 'only' the *representation* of an argumentation, at least as long as the reader or hearer takes the fiction as fiction.

This last remark reminds one of the role the recipient plays in the act of reading. Readers or hearers react differently to what they think is a discursive text than when they think it is a fictional text. When a theatre-goer begins to understand Iago's treachery, he normally does not jump onto the stage to warn Othello.

The appropriate mode of reception of a work of fiction is, in the famous words of S. T. Coleridge, "willing suspension of disbelief" (*Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XIV), in other words, the suspension of such critical questions as we normally pose, concerning a discursive text. Most importantly, we suspend our awareness that fictional worlds are worlds that exist only because their existence has been declared by the text, and this is, of

course, a *petitio principii*. We accept the fictional world as it is presented to us, and it is only from there that we proceed with our critical questions.

3. Results and consequences

Let us now review our results on a more abstract level. Lyric poetry and epic poetry are recognisable as different from discursive speech by their form, respectively by their deviation from the form of discursive speech. Their poetic character is a property of the works themselves, and thus the distinguishing mark is an ‘essential’ criterion, and the theory is ‘essentialist’. “Willing suspension of disbelief” is the appropriate mode of reception, but it is not a necessary element of the definition and is, therefore, normally neglected.

In contrast, modern types of prose narrative – the novel, but other realistic subgenres, too, the short story, for instance – are not defined by their language, and their “literariness” or “poeticity” is not necessarily recognisable in the text itself. Its distinguishing mark is its fictional status, that is, its special relationship to reality. This criterion is ‘relational’ because it is a relation between objects, not a property of an object. The mode of reception, “willing suspension of disbelief”, is a constitutive element in the framework of this definition and, thus, appears for the first time as a problem. A mode of reception, however, is a ‘pragmatic’ category.

Thus, there is a combination of two defining categories, one relational, the other pragmatic. Each alone is insufficient as a definition. If the pragmatic category alone sufficed, the definition of what a work of art is would be entirely a matter of subjective choice. This would clearly not be a useful definition. Most people, in fact, agree in most cases on whether a text is fictional or not. However, there are cases where one can disagree or where, in one context, one can take a text as fiction and, in another, as a report. Historical novels are obvious examples.

The categorisation of a literary work of art as fiction is, thus, much more complex than the traditional categorisation as ‘poetry’, because two categories are involved. It is also more difficult, because relational and pragmatic categories are less definite than essential properties.

But this is not all. Even when a work of art is defined by its fictionality, a certain share of essential properties remain: a great portion of dialogue, for instance, points to the fictionality of a text and is not expected in a work of astronomy or economics, and the same is true for interior monologue, irony of the narrator, structural symmetries, etc. There seems to exist a certain affinity between fiction and certain forms of speech felt to be ‘poetical’.

All in all, then, fictionality is a hybrid category: chiefly relational, but requiring, even promoting, a special way of reception, and with an affinity to certain forms of expression. (This also explains why the craftsman-like aspect of literature no longer plays an important role. Fictionality has nothing to do with aesthetic quality. ‘Ugly’ fiction is fiction, too, third-rate fiction is fiction, too.)

Arranged in the form of a table:

I

	ontological status defined by	distinguishing criterion	type of foregoing category
lyric and epic poetry, etc.	Language	deviation from norm	essentialist
novel, etc.	relationship of language to reality (with affinity to certain forms of expression)	fictionality (with affinity to certain deviations from norm)	relational (with affinity to essentialist categories)

II

	mode of reception defined by	type of foregoing category
lyric and epic poetry, etc.	("willing suspension of disbelief" not a necessary element of definition)	(neglectable for all practical purposes)
novel, etc.	"willing suspension of disbelief"	Pragmatic

This survey shows why it is so difficult to differentiate between fiction and discursive texts, between novel and historiography, ultimately between art and life. The distinguishing criteria are quite different, even heterogeneous, perhaps incommensurable.

To take an example, a novel is different from a work of historiography in three ways, distinguished by three characteristics: (1) by the (relational) criterion of the relation of its language to reality, (2) by remains of the (essentialist) criterion of certain modes of expression, and (3) by the (pragmatic) criterion of certain modes of reception. A definition by three distinguishing marks as heterogeneous as these is a difficult matter. Apples and oranges are famously difficult to compare, but what about comparing apples and distances and main clauses? Is one of the above-mentioned criteria – essentialist, relational, pragmatic – more decisive than the others? What about Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*: is its literary form as epic poem more important than its non-fictional aspect as discursive text? What about Jonathan Swift's *Modest Proposal*: is its non-fictional form as discursive text more important than its 'poetical' aspects (irony of the author, the author speaking through a persona)?

I hope to have shown that there is no general answer to all possible cases. Each case is an individual case. One can use a cannon as a seat and a chair as a weapon. However, it still makes sense to speak of a cannon as a weapon and of a chair as a seat.

Walter Scott and the Restoration of Europe

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The changing of the old order in country manors and mansions may be slow or sudden, may have many issues romantic or otherwise, its romantic issues being not necessarily restricted to a change back to the original order; though this admissible instance appears to have been the only romance formerly recognized by novelists as possible in the case.

(Thomas Hardy, 1896 Preface to *A Laodicean*)¹

When diplomats representing more than twenty European states and principalities assembled in Vienna in September 1814 to define the shape of post-Napoleonic Europe, their negotiations were guided by the apparently simple, but in fact exceptionally complex, principle of restoration. By the terms agreed at Vienna, the Bourbon royal families of France, Spain, and Naples were to be restored to power; the boundaries of

¹ *A Laodicean; or, The Castle of the De Stancys. A Story of To-Day* (1881), ed. and introd. John Schad, London: Penguin, 1997: 380. Hardy echoes Tennyson's 'Morte d'Arthur' (1842), in which Arthur claims 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new'.

France as they had been in 1792 were to be reinstated; while the resolution of territorial issues, especially in central Europe and Scandinavia, involved an intricate combination of established sovereignties and the creation of new entities, like the new confederation of German states. In practice, the French monarchy under Louis XVIII was twice 'restored': first in April 1814 after Napoleon's abdication as Emperor of France on 7 April, and again on 8 July 1815 after the Battle of Waterloo had brought to an end what could retrospectively be regarded as the 'adventure' of the 'Hundred Days'. Moreover, what was called the 'restored' Bourbon monarchy in France was a constitutional monarchy, incorporating the principles of revolutionary change: a polity claimed as old was patently new-fashioned. Far from being a principle or a code of practice, political restoration was an imagined construct which drew on the resonances of the term outside politics, and which in turn further complicated the implications of the term in other discourses, especially in the fields of art and architecture. In Switzerland, Ludwig von Haller's *Restauration der Staatswissenschaften* (begun in 1816) combined the language of monarchic 'legitimacy' with an ideal of restoration which emphasised the state as family, sovereign territories as family estate. The rhetoric of the domesticated political state has a long history, but became crucial to the construction of post-Napoleonic Europe.

Two months before the assembling of the Congress of Vienna, Walter Scott's first novel, *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, was published, anonymously, in Edinburgh, on 7 July.² *Waverley* is a tale of the Jacobite uprising of 1745-6, in which a young English officer, Edward Waverley, heir presumptive to a great fortune and an ancient estate, takes up the Stuart cause for reasons which are always more emotional than ideological. It ends, controversially, with the hero's historically improbable pardon, social reinstatement, and discordantly happy marriage amid the wreck of post-Culloden Scotland. The penultimate chapter of the novel (Volume 3, Chapter 24; Chapter 25 provides 'A Postscript, which should have been a Preface') follows the travels of the wedding-party, and describes the extensive restoration work undertaken at the Baron of Bradwardine's manor-house and estate of Tullyveolan, substantially damaged and despoiled during the uprising. We do not know how many of the European diplomats gathering in Vienna in September 1814 had read, or were in the process of reading, the publishing success-story of the summer, *Waverley*. A letter written a few years later by Metternich suggests that he, at least, knew the novel.³ But it is important to recognise the conjuncture of ideas, and to reinstate the restoration fantasy at the end of *Waverley* to a pressing, and controversial, European context. In doing so, this essay seeks to re-examine the traditional grounding of Scott's new form of historical fiction in revolutionary change and the emergence of new national identities. Instead of approaching Scott's work as a reaction to change in Europe, it sets out the grounds for resituating Scott as a theorist of the contradictory, but widely influential, politics of restoration. If restoration, in monarchic terms, means putting back in place someone who ought not to have been removed, that is not at all the story of *Waverley*, which tells of the *failed* attempt to restore the Stuart monarchy. Instead of political or dynastic restoration, Scott provides an architectural and heritage version, an aesthetic substitute for a Stuart return which he could not endorse politically.

'To restore' is to bring something back to an earlier condition, but also to return, to build up again, reinstate, renew, re-establish – each of these terms implying subtly

² The novel was printed by James Ballantyne & Co. for Archibald Constable & Co. in Edinburgh and for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown in London, where it was issued on 30 July. The first edition of 1,000 copies was followed by three further editions by the end of 1814.

³ Metternich's letter is quoted by Paul Hamilton in *Realpoetik: European Romanticism and Literary Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013:128. Hamilton's study more generally suggests the importance of restoration as a political concept in the literature of the period.

different activities. In politics as well as in aesthetics, however, restoring the appearance of something always involves introducing something new. In aesthetics, especially architectural aesthetics, ‘restoration’ in the years of Scott’s lifetime (1771-1832) was a vehemently contested topic. Batty and T.Langley’s fantastical treatise *Ancient Architecture, Restored, and Improved, by a Great Variety of Grand and Usefull Designs, Entirely New in the Gothick Mode for the Ornamenting of Buildings and Gardens* (1742) had set up the terms of debate and helped inspire the adoption of older forms in domestic architecture, especially architectural experimentations with Gothic styles (and, in the work of Sanderson Miller, stylistic reworkings of existing Gothic structures). The long public dispute between the architect James Wyatt and the architectural draughtsman and antiquarian John Carter, most prominent in their contributions to *The Gentleman’s Magazine* from 1797 to 1817 is, now, the best-known example of the contentiousness of ecclesiastical and college restorations, ‘repairs’, and ‘improvements’. (The public debate was soon to spread to domestic and regal-domestic restorations, notably of Windsor Castle in the mid-1820s.) Existing scholarship on the wider aesthetic implications of these disputes concentrates on the 1790s as the decade in which the language of architecture was most strongly and designedly politicised (see especially Chui 2004; Townshend 2011:712-738; the introduction and first two chapters of Duggett 2012). This essay proposes that the historical moment of *Waverley* in 1814 sees new inflections of ‘restoration’ in aesthetic as well as in the more obvious political terms; and that this can provide a new understanding of Scott’s importance as a historical novelist.

To involve Scott in the ‘restoration’ of Europe might seem to reinforce a role he has sometimes played in literary history, and in wider public perception, as a writer whose art promotes conservative social resolutions, takes a moderate line between opposed ideologies, or even idealises the past. Quite the contrary: this essay argues for the creative tensions of restoration, and for the creativity, riskiness, and idiosyncrasy of Scott. It considers two strands of critical response to Scott’s work which differ considerably from each other, but which share a tendency to regard him as a recipient of tradition and a respondent to historical change, rather than as someone shaping history. These strands are represented by the influential views of his contemporary, William Hazlitt, and those of his greatest early twentieth-century interpreter, Georg Lukács. Some of the oddities of Scott’s representation of historical process are traced in a reading of a generally-overlooked passage from *Waverley*, preparing for a more extended consideration of the fantasy of restoration at the end of the novel. The argument concludes by taking up the challenge implicit in Thomas Hardy’s claim in the 1896 Preface to his 1881 novel *A Laodicean* – quoted as epigraph to this essay – that earlier novelists, among whom he would have taken for granted Scott’s supremacy, had found ‘romance’ only in ‘a change back to the original order’ in the history of houses and estates.

The argument developed here is underpinned by an emphasis on the European contexts of all Scott’s work. This is far more than a matter of his role in shaping other national literatures. Although Scott’s approach to writing about Scottish history influenced many other nations, worldwide, he did not create a specifically ‘Scottish’ template which could then be exported and adapted. Other cultures and traditions inform all his writing. In particular, Scott had deep European roots. His earliest publication, in 1796, was a translation of two ballads by Gottfried Bürger (‘a publication reflecting the fact that his interest in ballads had been in part inspired by Johann Gottfried Herder’s ground-breaking collections of *Volkslieder* (1778-9)’, as Ina Ferris (2012:10) has emphasised). He translated Goethe’s drama *Götz von Berlichingen* and adapted one of Veit Weber’s prose *Sagen der Vorzeit*, *Der heilige Vehme*, as his first (unperformed) play, *The House of Aspen* (1799). Scott edited Old Norse sagas; he had a lifelong

enthusiasm for older French and Italian romance; and he had a far-reaching command, evident throughout his writings, of European legends, mythology, superstitions, and folklore. Scott's early work in ballad-collecting, the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, was part of a much broader interest in preserving the records of folk culture, particularly when it had survived in oral or sung form; and, from much later in his life, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830) pioneered the collection and analysis of local and national legend. His 1822 novel *The Pirate*, set in seventeenth-century Orkney and Shetland, familiarised readers with Norse traditions; in *The Talisman*, one of his *Tales of the Crusaders*, 1825, he turned to Saracen legend; *Anne of Geierstein* in 1829 features the rituals of the Germanic Secret Tribunal, the Vehme Gericht, which he had already discussed in the preface to his translation of *Götz von Berlichingen* and dramatized in *The House of Aspen*. He visited Belgium and Paris in the summer of 1815, two months after Waterloo, and published his reflections on the immediate aftermath of Napoleonic empire as *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk* (1816); the fullest account and analysis of his visit is provided by Donald Sultana, 1993. His poem *The Field of Waterloo* (1815) encapsulates not only the heroism of those who fought, but also his own personal experience of visiting the battlefield after the event. In 1827 he published his most extensive study of recent history, *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French: With a Preliminary View of the French Revolution*, in nine volumes. When he visited Malta and Naples in the winter of 1831-2, in a (vain) attempt to shore up his failing health, he took notes on Maltese history and wrote part of a novel, *The Siege of Malta*, which reflects a lifelong interest in the knights of the Order of St John of Jerusalem and in the Great Siege of 1565. He also worked during this visit on the last of his fictions, a novella, *Bizarro*, about an early nineteenth-century Calabrian brigand. In addition to his work as translator and editor, he reviewed contemporary European writing (contributing an especially important early evaluation of the stories of E. T. A. Hoffmann). His knowledge of European literatures and legends is apparent not only in allusions and quotations, but also in the various paratextual layers of his introductions and notes. For the 'Magnum Opus' edition of *The Pirate* he provided extended notes on the Norwegian sword-dance, on fortune-telling traditions in the Norse sagas, and on druidical standing-stones; the 'Magnum' edition of *Quentin Durward* provides notes on 'Religion of the Bohemians', the murder of the Bishop of Liege, and the astrologer Martius Galeotti. In addition to the material on the Vehme Gericht in *Anne of Geierstein* (expanded in the 'Magnum' introduction and notes by lengthy quotations from Francis Palgrave's *Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth*), the text and 'Magnum' notes elaborate on the Provençal court and Troubadour poetics (finely presented as 'a species of poetry describing and inculcating a system of metaphysical affection, as inconsistent with nature as the minstrel's tales of magicians and monsters' Scott 2012: 575; for the Vehme Gericht material, and extracts from Palgrave, see 558-66). Scott was an intellectually and imaginatively European Scot, his interests in earlier literatures anchoring a comparative range which manages to be both magisterial and eclectic.

In turn, Scott's significance in national literatures across Europe was profound and long-lasting, as the essays on different countries in Murray Pittock's collection, *The Reception of Sir Walter Scott in Europe* (2006a), and those on individual national literatures in Alexander and Hewitt (1983) demonstrate. Emphasising that Scott's was the age of Herder, Fichte, the 1798 Irish Rising, the end of the Holy Roman Empire, and the struggle for Greek independence, Pittock (2006b: 2) characterises it as 'the age of the Platonization of the nation-state as an expression of value (France) or an incarnation of it (Hegel's Prussia); of the widespread use of history and language as reasons for nationhood among those without a nation-state'. Historical fiction became a dominant genre in nineteenth-century culture, and a major way in which political and national

reconfigurations – such as the unifications of the Italian and later the German states – could be envisaged and then reinforced. Scott's writings reached a worldwide audience not just in translation, though translations of Scott are increasingly recognised as an important gauge of cultural differences; but also through a vast industry of song collections, theatrical adaptations, operas, burlesques, parlour games and entertainments. They did so rapidly, but not instantaneously. Paul Barnaby's 'Timeline' of European reception of Scott's works records no reviews or notices of *Waverley* in continental Europe until an allusion by Stendhal in 1815. However, the fame of *Waverley* demonstrably prepared the way for rapid notice of Scott's second novel, *Guy Mannering; or, The Astrologer*. Extracts from *Guy Mannering* appeared in Austria, France, and Germany in the year of the novel's publication, 1815; and there is a French review of *Guy Mannering* in 1815.⁴

For his contemporaries, an important part of Scott's authority as a novelist and historian lay in the supposed factuality and accuracy of his depictions of the past. This part of his appeal, however, was always – implicitly even when not expressed explicitly – in tension with his claims to originality and independent artistry. In his essay on Scott in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825), the testiest and most brilliant of Romantic-Period critics, William Hazlitt, surveys the whole range of Scott's poems and novels (for, by 1825, seventeen novels had followed *Waverley*; a further eight were yet to come), and reflects:

Sir Walter has found out (oh, rare discovery) that facts are better than fiction; that there is no romance like the romance of real life; and that if we can but arrive at what men feel, do, and say in striking and singular situations, the result will be 'more lively, audible, and full of vent,' than the fine-spun cobwebs of the brain. With reverence be it spoken, he is like the man who having to imitate the squeaking of a pig upon the stage, brought the animal under his coat with him. Our author has conjured up the actual people he has to deal with, or as much as he could get of them, 'in their habits as they lived.' He has ransacked old chronicles, and poured the contents upon his page; he has squeezed out musty records; he has consulted wayfaring pilgrims, bed-rid sibyls; he has invoked the spirits of the air; he has conversed with the living and the dead, and let them tell their story their own way; and by borrowing of others, has enriched his own genius with everlasting variety, truth, and freedom. He has taken his materials from the original, authentic sources, in large concrete masses, and not tampered with or too much frittered them away. He is only the amanuensis of truth and history. It is impossible to say how fine his writings in consequence are, unless we could describe how fine nature is. (Wu (ed.) 1998, vol. 8: 128)⁵

Provocatively, Hazlitt declares that Scott only copies down what those convenient fictions, truth and history, tell him: he has no artistic volition of his own. The passage wavers between metaphors of conjuration and magic, and of despoliation – 'ransacked', 'squeezed out', 'taken', to the 'enrichment' (a loaded term) of his own genius. Later in the essay, Hazlitt declares that Scott's world is only half the real world: all that exists for him is the past. To Hazlitt, Scott seemed a political reactionary, conservative in his social views, a loyal monarchist who used the fortune gained by his poems and novels to build a baronial mansion, Abbotsford. Made a baronet, the first creation of George IV's reign, he masterminded the king's visit to Edinburgh in 1822 – the first time for two centuries that a ruling monarch had visited Scotland, not to mention a Hanoverian monarch dressed in the tartan which had been banned for its associations with Jacobite sympathies in the aftermath of the uprising of 1745. The romantic Scotland visited and sentimentally ritualised by George IV was in large part the creation of Walter Scott, and the early

⁴ Paul Barnaby, 'Timeline of the European Reception of Sir Walter Scott, 1802-2005', in Pittock 2006a: xxv. Stendhal's 1815 allusion to *Waverley* is in a manuscript note to Richard Payne Knight's *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805), so was not in the public domain.

⁵ The quotations from Shakespeare in this extract are from *Coriolanus* IV. v. 222-3 and *Hamlet* III. iv. 135.

nineteenth-century understanding of the 1745 uprising was dominated by *Waverley*. Scott was not simply looking backwards, but also creating a present and a future, not just for Scotland or even for Great Britain, but also for post-Napoleonic Europe.

European perspectives have always been key to the assessment of Scott and to the perception of his importance as a historical novelist. Since the start of serious modern intellectual assessment of Scott, in the great Hungarian critic Georg Lukács's 1937 study, *The Historical Novel*, it has been clear that the conditions for the rise of historical fiction, beginning as Lukács judged with *Waverley* in 1814, were the French Revolution and its consequences across Europe. As Lukács (1962: 23) writes: 'The Napoleonic wars everywhere evoked a wave of national feeling, of national resistance to the Napoleonic conquests, an experience of enthusiasm for national independence.' And, although Napoleon's armies did not invade Britain, the fear of imminent invasion was widespread in the 1790s (as in Coleridge's poem 'Fears in Solitude', 1798, and in the background of Scott's third novel, *The Antiquary*, 1816, set in north-east Scotland in 1794). In addition, war with France blocked off the routes of the Grand Tour and helped to create the conditions for the explosion of interest in local antiquities and national architectural styles in Britain. All Scott's works tell stories of what Lukács calls 'great crises of historical life'; crises in which many readers and critics have found the stamp of the great political and national crises of his own age. The analyses of Scott which Lukács's arguments generated, and which to a large extent they made possible, have been central to subsequent scholarship and to a now-widespread recognition of the sophistication of Scott's representations of the past. In all Scott's work, the popularisation of history, in which the past is reinvented to suit the tastes of the present, is always a self-conscious and self-critical process. As he wrote in his biographical essay introducing Clara Reeve's novel *The Old English Baron* for *Ballantyne's Novelist's Library* (1821-24), the writer who 'would please the modern world' must always invest an account of past times with 'language and sentiments unknown to the period assigned to his story; and thus his utmost efforts only attain a sort of composition between the true and the fictitious' (Lockhart 1834-6, vol.3: 333). Historical fictions, in all the genres Scott experimented in, are complex works of restoration and reinvention.

New ideas about Scott's tangled web of historical artifice may be suggested by a passage in *Waverley* which has received only passing attention from critics.⁶ The title of Chapter 4 in Volume 1 of *Waverley* is 'Castle-Building', an evocatively architectural term for the imagination (and, in itself, characteristic of Scott's conceptualisation of creative process). In this chapter, Scott describes the making of his fanciful, introspective, idealistic young hero, who has been transplanted from his father's house to Waverley-Honour, the estate presided over by his childless uncle Sir Everard and spinster aunt Rachel. Waverley reads voraciously, and especially loves older romance literatures, the works of Spenser and Tasso and Ariosto. He also listens:

The hours he spent with his uncle and aunt were exhausted in listening to the oft-repeated tale of narrative old age. Yet even there his imagination, the predominant faculty of his mind, was frequently excited. Family tradition and genealogical history, upon which much of Sir Everard's discourse turned, is the very reverse of amber, which, itself a valuable substance, usually includes flies, straws, and other trifles, whereas these studies, being themselves very insignificant and trifling, do nevertheless serve to perpetuate a great deal of what is rare and valuable in ancient manners, and to record many curious and minute facts which could have been preserved and conveyed through no other medium. If, therefore, Edward Waverley yawned at times over the dry deduction of his line of ancestors, with their various intermarriages, and inwardly deprecated the remorseless and protracted accuracy with which the worthy Sir Everard rehearsed the various degrees of

⁶ 'O, what a tangled web we weave, / When first we practise to deceive!', *Marmion* (1808), Canto Sixth, xvii.

propinquity between the house of Waverley-Honour and the doughty barons, knights, and squires, to whom they stood allied; if (notwithstanding his obligations to the three ermines passant) he sometimes cursed in his heart the jargon of heraldry, its griffins, its moldwarps, its wyverns, and its dragons, with all the bitterness of Hotspur himself, there were moments when these communications interested his fancy and rewarded his attention. (Scott 2007: 17)

This extraordinary passage is disconcertingly flagrant in its ambiguity about the value of history, relayed to Edward here in the form of family history and genealogy. The opening conceit – which is surely the right word for the observations on ‘the very reverse of amber’ – may be more fully explained than one would expect from Donne, Cowley, Vaughan, or Crashaw, but it is dense and complicated, even perverse in what it sets up and then sets askew. Scott’s suggestion is that whereas the fossilized vegetable resin, amber, valuable in itself, contains the worthless remnants of flies, straw, and other ‘trifles’; family history is *not* valuable in itself, but preserves materials of value. The medium in which actual things are preserved, Scott seems to say, is not intrinsically important; yet considerable imaginative force lies behind the intriguing, elusive, phrase, ‘the very reverse of amber’. It sounds so specific and so physical, as if Scott were inviting his readers to turn around a piece of amber and investigate what is on the other side, like one of De Quincey’s secret inscriptions on the mind; yet it is also oblique. The whole passage is driven by vivid, concentrated, negatives or reverses. Quite distinct from popular perceptions of Scott as a storyteller, a quick-sketcher of theoretically simple concepts, here is Scott crystallising a contrast which, as far as I know, is entirely original. Amber, too, is associated in classical legend with mourning and commemoration, being the concentration of the tears of the sisters of Meleager, bewailing the death of their brother: by implication, family history, as amber’s ‘reverse’, might be imagined as a form of forgetting, of *not* commemorating those who have been lost.

As the passage goes on, Scott proleptically self-subverts, if it may be so expressed: that is, his account of Sir Everard’s tedious communications and their clauses and sub-clauses, anticipates exactly what contemporary readers complained about in the opening chapters of *Waverley* – as, perhaps, some readers have since. The phrase about the historical enthusiast’s ‘remorseless and protracted accuracy’ takes great risks with readers, and indeed the whole passage is complicated in terms of both narratorial and readerly perspectives. Scott brings his readers close to the consciousness of Edward, growing bored, at the same time delighting stylistically in the moldwarps and the wyverns. This passage from Chapter 4 is also complicated as an exercise in intertextuality and misprision. Scott says that Waverley, ‘like Hotspur’, curses the details of his uncle’s and aunt’s heraldic retrospectives, yet only the moldwarps and nothing else (including the subject) of this passage come from Harry Hotspur’s speech about prophecy in *Henry IV Part I*, III.i. Hotspur is not reflecting on heraldry, or even on genealogy, when he complains about ‘the moldwarp and the ant’, ‘a dragon and a finless fish, /A clip-wing’d griffin and a moulten raven, / A couching lion and a ramping cat’. Scott’s attention has been caught by an unusual word, surviving in northern English dialect only, for a mole, and he has then associated, in memory, the ‘couching’ lion and ‘ramping’ cat with beasts couchant and rampant in heraldry. Consequently, he introduces moles or moldwarps (literally earth-movers, diggers-up) in this passage from *Waverley* as if they were part of ‘the jargon of heraldry’ or devices predominantly associated with heraldic practice; but they are not. The heraldic mole is an extremely rare creature, though moles appear in English heraldry in the arms of the Mitford and Twistleton families, in which they are

depicted ‘as if flattened outward and seen from above’. (Brooke-Little 1975: 143)⁷ Within the longer passage quoted above, the misprision of Shakespeare serves as an exemplar and test of the conceit of the ‘very reverse of amber’. Scott would not have included *Henry IV Part I* among the flies and straw of historical remnants (‘The blockheads talk of my being like Shakespeare – not fit to tie his brogues’, he wrote in his *Journal* in 1826 (Anderson 1972: 252)), but Hotspur’s moldwarps are strangely transplanted, trapped by accident or creative misremembering in a medium far from their own. The passage as a whole is certainly a preserving narrative, a narrative caught by idiosyncrasy and local idiom and unusual words. Historians of entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary* note that Scott is the most frequently-cited author in nineteenth-century records of the language: that is, he preserved, adapted, and reintroduced words which would not otherwise have remained almost-current, or recognisable (see Brewer 2010). But, as this passage shows, he also changed the implications and contexts of the words he preserved, questioning the medium of genealogy and the saturated detail of his own representations of the past.

Scott was a restorer in other ways: instrumental to the rediscovery of the Scottish Regalia in Edinburgh Castle in 1818 and to the return of the great gun, Mons Meg, to the Castle from the Tower of London in 1829; preserver of collections of ‘Border Antiquities’; the first textual editor of long-neglected works like the medieval romance *Sir Tristrem*; and, from 1811, when he bought the farm by the Tweed which became Abbotsford, the designer of a house to be filled with antiquities and recovered artefacts. It is tempting to read the penultimate chapter of *Waverley* – which P. D. Garside describes in his introduction to the 200th Anniversary Edition as ‘the Heritage-like refurbishment of Bradwardine’s estate (through English finance)’ – as a reflection of Scott’s work on Abbotsford (Garside 2014: vii). However, the complexities and material ambiguities of preservation, raised by my analysis of the ‘amber and moldwarps’ passage in Chapter 4, return in more extended form at the novel’s close. Emotionally, Chapter 24 of Volume 3 of *Waverley* is necessary, but profoundly resistible. To be restored to Edward Waverley, pardoned and married, after the devastating scenes of Fergus MacIvor’s and Evan Dhu’s trial and execution, is inevitably to re-enter a world of improbable fiction, and to feel that one has been forced to do so. Many readers have resented Scott’s cutting the story of the ’45 short before dealing with the Battle of Culloden, and seeming to wish to heal a raw national nerve by supplying a happy ending in which the union of Edward and Rose represents a new united future for England and Scotland and Edward becomes the protector of Fergus’s clan of MacIvor. This difficult chapter is prefaced by one of Scott’s many self-penned, invented, chapter epigraphs: “‘This is no mine ain house, I ken by the bigging o’t.” – OLD SONG’ (Scott 2007: 355). The epigraph establishes a suitably unstable point of reference for a chapter which *is* all about the Baron of Bradwardine’s own house, Tullyveolan, an old manor house with statues, images, and fountains everywhere in the shape of bears, the Bradwardine family crest, its greatest treasure being a large gold drinking-cup also in the shape of a bear rampant. Waverley has visited Tullyveolan in its ransacked state in Volume 3, Chapter 16, and has noticed that special violence has been wreaked upon the ‘accessories of ancient distinction’ to which the Baron ‘had attached so much importance and veneration’ (Scott 2007: 316). Like the Stuart line in exile, the Baron believes himself to be forever separated from the inheritance of his ancestors, but by a ruse he is brought back to Tullyveolan with the entourage of Edward’s and Rose’s wedding-party, and is told that his property has recently been bought by Waverley’s friend and protector, Colonel Talbot:

⁷ Brooke-Little (1975) specifies the Twistleton arms. I am grateful to Clive Cheesman, Richmond Herald, for informing me about the Mitford arms.

He [the Baron] fell into a deep study as they approached the top of the avenue, and was only startled from it by observing that the battlements were replaced, the ruins cleared away, and (most wonderful of all) that the two great stone Bears, those mutilated Dagon of his idolatry, had resumed their posts over the gateway. (Scott 2007: 355)

As he moves closer:

In truth, not only had the felled trees been removed, but, their stumps being grubbed up, and the earth round them levelled and sown with grass, it was evident that the marks of devastation, unless to an eye intimately acquainted with the spot, were already totally obliterated. (Scott 2007: 356)

After greetings from Talbot's wife, Lady Emily, who invites him and Rose to view 'what we have done towards restoring the mansion of your fathers to its former state':

Indeed, when he entered the court, excepting that the heavy stables, which had been burned down, were replaced by buildings of a lighter and more picturesque appearance, all seemed as much as possible restored to the state in which he had left it, when he assumed arms some months before. The pigeon-house was replenished; the fountain played with its usual activity, and not only the Bear who predominated over its bason, but all the other Bears whatsoever were replaced upon their stations, and renewed or repaired with so much care, that they bore no tokens of the violence with which they had so lately descended from them. While these minutiae had been so heedfully attended to, it is scarce necessary to add, that the house itself had been thoroughly repaired, as well as the gardens, with the strictest attention to maintain the original character of both, and to erase, as far as possible, all appearance of the ravage they had sustained. (Scott 2007: 356-357)

The Bradwardine bears come first in the Baron's – and, apparently, in Scott's – estimation, despite being described as 'these minutiae' a moment later.

From its prominence in the 1790s revolutionary debate in Britain, the topos of the renewed house has been read in the terms suggested by William Blackstone in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (volume 3, 1765-9) and taken up by Edmund Burke, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Hannah More as a type of the English constitution and of moderation and sympathetic development. As Dale Townshend (2011) and others have shown, the context of the fierce arguments about the architect James Wyatt's restoration work to historic buildings, especially cathedrals, focussed attention on the process of restoration, on the extent to which it could include 'improvement' as well as repair: destruction, depredation, vandalism. But Scott's use of it here marks an entirely different historical moment. After the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, Wellington sought to return, not to retain as spoils of war, artefacts taken from Italy by Napoleon's armies; though much of the material taken from Egypt found its way to the British Museum. Wellington's decision was widely advertised, and celebrated in poems like Felicia Hemans's 1816 'The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy'. (Such self-congratulation was ironic, inevitably, in the context of the British government's purchase (also 1816), for public display, of the so-called Elgin Marbles, which had been shipped to Britain between 1801 and 1812.) The specific context of 1814 allows an intellectual restoration implicitly denied in Lukács's analysis of the birth of the historical novel. That is, the importance for Scott of living not only in a time of actual and threatened revolution, which one must call the impact of the age upon his thinking; but of anticipating a time of restoration, in which his thinking helped shape post-revolutionary settlements and artistic rebirths across Europe. This is where Hazlitt's schema, too, is misleading; for restoration looks to the future and is always a work which reveals the aesthetic ideology of the present.

In *Waverley*, Colonel Talbot eventually reveals that, by a complicated transfer of properties and legal settlements, the house and estate have been restored to the Baron's

ownership and will be inherited, in time, by his daughter Rose, her new husband Edward Waverley, and their future children. Even in this miraculous recovery, the Baron adds a legal arrangement whereby the second son will inherit Tullyveolan and will 'carry the name and arms of Bradwardine of that ilk, without any other name or armorial bearings whatsoever' (Scott 2007: 360). Much critical attention has been paid to the main addition to the restored house, which is a large painting of Waverley and Fergus MacIvor in Highland dress, with the clan in the background; and it undeniably registers Scott's consciousness throughout this chapter, and the novel as a whole, that history is being refashioned as an aesthetic object.⁸ However, as I hope to have shown, the painting is only one element in a more detailed assessment of the implications of restoration. One item remains to be considered:

When the dinner was over, the Baron, about to propose a solemn toast, cast somewhat a sorrowful look upon the side-board, which however exhibited much of his plate that had been either secreted, or purchased by neighbouring gentlemen from the soldiery, and by them gladly restored to the original owner. (Scott 2007: 361)

The excess of explanation here, and the word 'gladly', marks a strain in Scott's narrative of restoration. It is not, I think, usual in the continuing debate about the repatriation and restoration of works of art to suppose that people – even gentlemen – willingly give back something they have paid for.⁹ Perhaps Scott means that the Waverley/Talbot financial deal has also involved recompensing the neighbouring gentlemen; but the narrative does not tell us so. The final touch is that the great drinking-cup, the Blessed Bear of Bradwardine, has also been 'restored through my means', as Talbot puts it: recovered from an army hanger-on who had purloined it. Scott adds: 'I question if the recovery of his estate afforded [the Baron] more rapture.' (Scott 2007: 361-362). Just as he does in concentrating on the restored bears while calling them 'these minutiae', Scott draws attention to the disproportion between the recovered objects (drinking-cups or estates) and the wider contexts of their recovery (states, and national histories). His slippages between the terms 'replenished', 'replaced', 'renewed or repaired' call into question whether all this work has restored the past, or erased it. To 'erase, as far as possible, all appearance of the ravage they had sustained' is to destroy the physical record of devastation. 'Erase', in this sentence, is what Scott originally wrote in manuscript; in the first edition, it had become the less violent and less implicitly pejorative 'remove'.¹⁰ Even in this single textual variation one can detect the ambivalence of his views. As I have argued elsewhere, although Scott represents the end of civil war by the marriage of Edward Waverley and Rose Bradwardine and the restoration of the Bradwardine estate, there is no pretence that this is a resolution commensurate with the loss and destruction of the '45. (Robertson 2014: 259) Edward and Rose settle on his family estate, in England, but the fantasy of the restored house, the house which is re-made as a legible house, is permanently displaced onto the Bradwardine house, Tullyveolan. As a result, the ending of *Waverley* emphasises fracture – in memory, sensibility, social change, even its 'Postscript, which should have been a Preface' – in the midst of a highly self-conscious fantasy of restoration. In this 'Postscript', too, Scott makes the claim that 'There is no European nation which, within the course of half a century, or little more, has undergone so complete a change as this kingdom of Scotland.' (Scott 2007: 363). Scott specifies the

⁸ See, most influentially, P. D. Garside 1977, 'Waverley's Pictures of the Past'. *English Literary History* 44, 659-682.

⁹ For continuing debates and the modern 'restoration establishment' in the fine arts, see James Beck with Michael Daley, *Art Restoration: The Culture, the Business and the Scandal*. London: John Murray, 1993, esp. ch. 6.

¹⁰ See Garside's 'Emendation List' for the Edinburgh Edition in Scott, *Waverley*, 2007: 492.

effects of the '45, the abolition of the heritable jurisdictions in Lowland Scotland, new wealth and extended commerce. He implicitly distinguishes this transformation from revolutionary change by saying that 'though steadily and rapidly progressive, [it] has, nevertheless, been gradual'. Even so, it is a remarkable claim to make at the still-fragile apparent end of war with revolutionary France, which had indisputably changed more than Scotland over the previous 50 years. Scott's comment is usually cited as evidence of his thorough understanding of Scottish affairs and manners, but it is strikingly odd in the comparative European context he explicitly invokes.¹¹

This essay has argued for the specificity of *Waverley* at a particular historical moment, not the generalised historical epoch of revolutionary change but a new moment of restoration. *Waverley*'s specificity is reinforced by the fact that its penultimate chapter is Scott's most optimistic statement about the possibilities of restoration. Indeed, despite Hardy's comments in the 1896 Preface to *A Laodicean*, quoted in the epigraph to this essay, which makes it sound as if all previous novelists had romanticized the reinstatement of the original owners of houses, *Waverley*'s treatment of the restoration of the manor house and estate is unique in Scott's fiction. Many of Scott's poems and novels, like many romance tales, turn on the plot of the restored lost heir; but that is different from *Waverley*'s lingering over details of architecture and interior, and exterior, embellishment, and also different from Scott's subtle ironizing of the contingencies of restoration. Scott quickly went on to subvert his own fantasy at the end of his second novel, *Guy Mannering* (which involves the building of a new house, nicknamed Mannering's 'bungalow') and in his third, *The Antiquary*, he is consistently, self-questioningly, ambivalent about the virtues of stuffing houses with rare editions, memorials, and arcana. His own architectural and design project, Abbotsford, proceeding as he wrote his novels, mixed old forms and new appurtenances, but crucially was an act of invention, not a restoration of property rightfully his from ancestry or inheritance. In both *The Bride of Lammermoor* from 1819 and *The Monastery* a year later, it is the ruins and empty remains of culture that preoccupy him. As the 1820s progressed, the houses in Scott's fictions became more sinister and perplexing, notably in *Woodstock* (1826) and *The Fair Maid of Perth* (1828). This essay's analysis of the close of *Waverley* has demonstrated Scott's awareness that 'A change back to the original order', as Hardy describes it, is always just as much a change as it is a turn 'back'. Writing fifteen years after the publication of his most architecturally-engaged novel, Hardy asserts for it a modernity which it is very far from endorsing. *A Laodicean* is about competing views of architectural restoration and the ironies of living amid the detritus of another family's art collections. Its curiously offhand ending, in which Stancy Castle and its contents are destroyed by fire, marks *A Laodicean* as a novel of 1881, unimaginable in the politically-charged language of ancient and restored structures of Scott's time. Yet *A Laodicean* is one of Hardy's most intricate (though largely silent) engagements with Scott, and with *Waverley* in particular. The figure imputed in 'the *Wavering Honour* of W-v-rl-y H-n-r' (Scott 2007: 133) has become female, the 'Laodicean' or waverer Paula Power, who inherits Stancy Castle without being (or ever becoming) its romantically-restored 'true heir', and whose marital choice between the old order and the new retraces moments of *Waverley* while depleting the cultural significance of the choice. Hardy's indictment of the supposed 'romance' of changing back to the original order shows how thoroughly a simplified version of Scott had become acceptable by 1896, and how important it is now

¹¹ I am grateful to James Robertson for this observation, made in response to the plenary lecture at the 12th ESSE conference in Košice in 2014 from which this essay has developed. I would like to thank the ESSE Board, and in particular the conference organiser, Slávka Tomáščíková, for the invitation to speak.

to reexamine *Waverley*'s formative place in the complex cultural politics of post-Napoleonic Europe.

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INTERVIEWS

Small Press Legends. The Best-Known of the Unknown Writers An Interview with Gerald Locklin

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