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**Supernatural, Tragic and Comic in
Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor***

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Introduction

When I started writing this dissertation, I did not immediately realize that 2021 would be the year marking the 250th anniversary of Sir Walter Scott's birth. Considering the importance of this celebration, it has been a further reason of pride for me to work on this project, and, in a way, give my own small contribution to the rediscovery of this extraordinary author and his novels. In fact, notwithstanding his enormous popularity during his lifetime and, in general, throughout the 19th century, unfortunately, at the beginning of the 20th century, Scott was dismissed by both the reading public and the critics, and, despite his recent rediscovery, today he is still largely unread, or at least, not as read as he would deserve.¹ This is terribly unfair: for without Scott, the United Kingdom would have lost one of its most influential writers, and Scotland, the man who "invented" Scotland itself, as with his *Waverley Novels* Scott shaped the sublime image of his beloved land in the eyes of the world. Without Scott, France would not have had its Honoré de Balzac, Italy its Alessandro Manzoni, Russia its Lev Tolstoy, the United States their James Fenimore Cooper. Being the father of the historical novel, with the cycle of the *Waverley Novels* Scott revolutionised the entire genre, thus influencing both European and American Literature. The *Waverley Novels* are extraordinary works, revealing the brilliant mind of their author, his sensitivity, his irony, his deep understanding of historical change and the necessity to preserve the good of the past to enrich our present.

In this dissertation, I have chosen to concentrate on one of the twenty-six *Waverley Novels*. Indeed, I will analyse in depth Scott's eighth novel *The Bride of Lammermoor*, particularly focusing on its perfect intertwining between its supernatural-gothic, tragic, and comic dimensions. Published in 1819 with *A Legend of Montrose* as the third series of *Tales of My Landlord* when Scott was "the greatest established novelist of the day",² *The Bride of Lammermoor*, represents an exception in the cycle of the *Waverley Novels*, as it develops the typical features of Scott's historical novels in an

¹ Cf. Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination* [1979], London, Routledge, 2016, p. 1.

² *Ibidem*.

untypical way. Indeed, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which has always been praised for its perfect internal construction, cohesion, unity, and intensity, is the most romantic, passionate, and especially the most tragic among Scott's novels. That is why, in the first chapter of this dissertation – '*The Bride of Lammermoor*': exploring its peculiarities – after briefly introducing Scott's role as the inventor of the historical novel and the mutual influence of Romanticism and Enlightenment in his works, I will endeavour to identify all those aspects which make *The Bride of Lammermoor* such a peculiar novel, from its imprecision with the dating of the events and the adoption of a pictorial-descriptive strategy in the narrative, to its uniquely tragic form, the unusual role of its protagonist, its perfect internal cohesion and the conflicting modes of writing – historical plot and Gothic romance – that characterize it.

As the title *Gothic and Supernatural in 'The Bride of Lammermoor'* suggests, the second chapter is devoted to the Gothic component of the novel, which indeed represents one of the most striking features of this work. Starting with a brief examination of the relationship between the Gothic genre and historical fiction, I will concentrate on Scott's viewpoint and use of the Gothic, noticing not only his authentic enjoyment of the genre, but also how, in his writings, he managed to bring innovation on the conception of the Gothic mode itself. Then, drawing inspiration from his own famous essays *On the Supernatural in Fictitious Compositions*, and on the Gothic novelists Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe, I will try to detect which forms of the Gothic mode he particularly appreciated, took up, used, and re-elaborated in his historical fiction, first in general, and then specifically focusing on *The Bride of Lammermoor*. In this way, all the dark omens, ancient legends, prophecies, and supernatural events sinisterly opposing Edgar and Lucy's love affair will be analysed. In doing so, I will also reflect on Scott's sober and almost rational treatment of the supernatural and on the purposes of its use in the novel. Finally, the last part of this chapter will focus on the Gothic portrayal of the remarkably powerful female characters of the novel. I will analyse the figures of Old Blind Alice, Ailsie Gourlay and her two companions, Lady Ashton, and finally Lucy, showing how all these

figures can be interpreted as witches, and discussing Scott's own conflicting and ambiguous attitude towards the social role of women.

The last chapter of this dissertation – *Tragic and Comic in 'The Bride of Lammermoor'* – deals with the intermingling of the tragic and comic styles within the novel. Although the mixture of different, contrasting styles generally characterizes all the *Waverley Novels*, it is in *The Bride of Lammermoor* where this trait emerges with impressive strength. Drawing from Erich Auerbach's essay on Shakespeare in *Mimesis*, and from Franco Moretti's *Serious Century*,³ I will argue that serious, tragic, and comic, are the styles that characterize the *Waverley Novels*, and that perfectly interweave also in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, where Scott manages to combine a curiously domineering tragic plot with an incredibly contrasting comic subplot. In particular, I will show how, in the mixture of different narrative styles and in the creation of the novel characters, Scott was not only influenced by Shakespeare's plays, but also by Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, even in its subsequent reception and interpretation on behalf of British authors. Therefore, taking inspiration from Enrica Villari's essay *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*,⁴ I will argue that the *Waverley Novels* present three kinds of quixotic figures embodying three different forms of quixotism – a Bildungsroman-kind of juvenile romantic quixotism, tragic quixotism, and comic quixotism – which, in turn, respectively correspond to the serious, tragic, and comic styles at the basis of Scott's novels. As in *The Bride of Lammermoor* it is possible to find all these forms of quixotism, embodied by Lucy Ashton, Edgar Ravenswood, and Caleb Balderstone, I will conclude this chapter by analysing these characters as quixotic figures, comparing them to the quixotic characters of Scott's very first novel *Waverley*, and evidencing their tragic and tragicomic dimensions.

³ Auerbach, E., *Mimesis* [1946], Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003, pp. 312-333; Moretti, F., *Serious Century*, in ed. F. Moretti, *The Novel* [2001], Vol. I, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006, pp. 364-400.

⁴ Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, in AA. VV. *Storie su Storie*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 1985, pp. 5-30.

CHAPTER 1. *The Bride of Lammermoor*: exploring its peculiarities

1.1 The birth of the Historical Novel between the Enlightenment and Romanticism

No other Scottish personality is more representative of the old, heroic, bonnie, and sublime Scotland than that of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832). It is quite surprising that such an exceptional novelist could be – and perhaps unfortunately still is – largely unread, if we take into consideration not only his greatness as an author but also the incredible popularity he enjoyed during his lifetime and, in general, in the 19th century. A novelist, poet, literary critic and historian, Sir Walter Scott is considered the father of the historical novel, and therefore detained a crucial role in the development of English, European, and American Literature. Born in 1771 in Edinburgh, to Walter Scott senior, a lawyer, and Anne Rutherford, both coming from ancient Border families, the Author of *Waverley* lived during a time of crucial historical and social changes, as well as significant literary and cultural movements. If we think about the exceptional amount of upheavals that the European nations had to face in the period between 1789 and 1815, we must admit that there could have been no better time for the inventor of the historical novel to be born. At European level, these were the years of “the French Revolution, the revolutionary wars, and the rise and fall of Napoleon, which for the first time made history a mass experience”.⁵ As a matter of fact, the publication of *Waverley*, Scott’s first novel, in 1814, coincides with Napoleon’s first abdication in the same year.⁶ Moreover, at British level, the huge political and social changes caused by the English Civil Wars, the rise and fall of Oliver Cromwell’s Commonwealth, the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy, and finally, the Glorious Revolution of 1688, “awoke in England too the feeling for history, the awareness of historical development”.⁷ This awareness, however, was even more deeply felt in Scotland. Its union with

⁵ Lucáks, G., *The Historical Novel* [1937], London, Merlin Press, 1989, p. 23.

⁶ Cf. Lamont, C., *Introduction to Scott, W., Waverley* [1814], ed. C. Lamont, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. vii-xxvi, p. xviii.

⁷ Lucáks, G., *The Historical Novel*, cit., p. 32.

England caused its anglicization, a process of political and cultural assimilation, which, James Kerr argues, represents the general historical subtext of Scott's historical novels, as well as a regional version of the kind of relationship that England will develop with the great colonies of its empire.⁸ Indeed, after the Union of 1707, the establishment of the Hanoverian monarchy, and the eradication of the Jacobite party in 1745, Scotland underwent a significant process of economic and social transformation, which implied the decline of the old world of feudalism, and the rise, instead, of the new world of modernity, commerce and industry. Scott's Edinburgh was an important centre of the European Enlightenment, and during his lifetime, Scotland distinguished itself in both the industrial, commercial, and agricultural fields.⁹ This is surprising considering that only sixty years before Scott started to work on his first novel, the Jacobite party and the feudal system were still strongly present in the Scottish Highlands. As Scott himself notices in *Waverley*'s final chapter,

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. [...] The gradual influx of wealth and extension of commerce have since united to render the present people of Scotland a class of beings as different from their grandfathers as the existing English are from those of Queen Elizabeth's time. [...] The change, though steadily and rapidly progressive, has nevertheless been gradual; and, like those who drift down the stream of a deep and smooth river, we are not aware of the progress we have made until we fix our eye on the now distant point from which we have been drifted. Such of the present generation as can recollect the last twenty or twenty-five years of the eighteenth century will be fully sensible of the truth of this statement; especially if their acquaintance and connexions lay among those who in my younger time were facetiously called 'folks of the old leaven,' who still cherished a lingering, though hopeless, attachment to the house of Stuart. This race has now almost entirely vanished from the land, and with it, doubtless, much absurd political prejudice; but also many living examples of singular and disinterested attachment to the principles of loyalty which they received from their fathers, and of old Scottish faith, hospitality, worth, and honour.¹⁰

⁸ Cf. Kerr, J., *Fiction against History: Scott as a Storyteller* [1989], Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 3.

⁹ Whether Scotland's economic progress was exclusively due and genuinely increased by its union with England, is still a matter of discussion. For a more exhaustive account of the matter, see Whatley, C. A., *Economic Causes and Consequences of the Union of 1707: A Survey*, "The Scottish Historical Review", Vol. 68, No. 186, Part 2, 1989, pp. 150-181.

¹⁰ Scott, W., A Postscript, in *Waverley*, cit., pp. 375-376.

This passage allows us to understand that the Author of *Waverley* regarded the Union between England and Scotland positively, but also believed that all the worthy values of the past had to be preserved in modern times. Scott's general attitude towards Scotland was indeed "a mixture of regret for the old days when Scotland was an independent but turbulent and distracted country, and of satisfaction at the peace, prosperity, and progress, which he felt had been assured by the Union with England".¹¹ His European contemporaries, who lived in a post-revolutionary and post-Napoleonic Europe and were split between supporters of the old order and supporters of the new, found it natural to sympathize with this sort of feelings. In reading *Waverley* (1814), through the protagonist's eyes, the European reader saw, depicted in the ancient world of the Highlands, the world and culture of that *Ancien Régime*, which had been erased by the French Revolution some years before. This complex background of feelings and historical changes not only explains the enormous popularity of the *Waverley Novels*, but also confirms that all the historical events that took place both in Europe and in Britain "form the economic and ideological basis for Scott's historical novel",¹² a genre that indeed began with a Scottish novelist because the tension between tradition and modernity, past civilization and progress, first manifested in Scotland.

From a cultural viewpoint, the years between 1780 and 1830 constitute a very complex period too, because, as Andrew Sanders notes, although "a variety of ways of writing, thinking about, criticizing, and defining literature co-exist in any given age, in this particular period the varieties are especially diverse and the distinctions notably sharp".¹³ Indeed, this is the age of Romanticism clashing and simultaneously intertwining with the Enlightenment, the age in which the culture of sensibility develops as a reaction to the culture of reason. The mutual influence of these two cultures is definitely perceived in Walter Scott's novels. The profoundly romantic spirit of that dreamy reader

¹¹ Daiches, D., *Scott's Achievement as a Novelist. Part One*, "Nineteenth-Century Fiction", Vol. 6, No. 2, 1951, pp. 81-95, pp. 84-85.

¹² Lucáks, *The Historical Novel*, cit., p. 31.

¹³ Sanders, A., *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, [1994], Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994, pp. 334-335.

who delighted in listening to old Scottish legends and ballads, melted with the enlightenment ideas on man, society and history, in this way shaping his peculiar vision of the past, allowing him to recognize its value with nostalgic admiration, but also its obsolescence and, therefore, the rational necessity for future advancement. In particular, from the philosophical historians of the Edinburgh Enlightenment – such as Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, and Dugald Stewart – Scott derived not only the belief in the inevitability of progress, but also the classicist notion of the uniformity of human nature throughout history.¹⁴ Yet, according to the Scottish novelist, the element which grants uniformity to human nature, linking the past with the present, is not reason but passion. Certainly, as Shaw underlines, in his narratives Scott points out the risks of overindulging in one’s own emotions, “a dangerous pastime, likely to lead to morbid results”¹⁵ or to commit serious mistakes, as it happens to Edward Waverley or to Lucy Ashton. On the other hand, however, he claims that only emotions have the power of allowing identification with our ancestors. In the *Dedicatory Epistle to Ivanhoe* (1819), Scott declared that although manners, costumes and laws certainly vary in time, passions “are generally the same in all ranks and conditions, all countries and ages”,¹⁶ and for this reason constitute an “extensive neutral ground [...] common to us and our ancestors”,¹⁷ who were indeed, Scott wrote quoting Shylock’s monologue from *The Merchant of Venice* “ ‘fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer’ as ourselves”.¹⁸ Likewise, at the very beginning of his career as a novelist, in the *Introduction to Waverley* (1814), he had affirmed that passions:

have alike agitated the human heart, whether it throbbed under the steel corslet of the fifteenth century, the brocaded coat of the eighteenth, or the blue frock and white dimity waistcoat of

¹⁴ For a more exhaustive account, see Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination* [1979], London, Routledge, 2016, pp. 83-97; Shaw, H. E., *The Forms of Historical Fiction – Sir Walter Scott and his Successors* [1983], London, Cornell University Press, 1983, pp. 100-149; Garside, P. D., *Scott and the “Philosophical” Historians*, “Journal of the History of Ideas”, Vol. 36, No 3, Jul.-Sep. 1975, pp. 497-512.

¹⁵ Shaw, H. E., *The Forms of Historical Fiction*, cit., p. 137.

¹⁶ Now in Scott, W., *Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction*, ed. I. M. Williams, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, pp. 435-439, p. 437.

¹⁷ Ivi., p. 436.

¹⁸ Ivi., p. 437.

the present day. Upon these passions it is no doubt true that the state of manners and laws cast a necessary colouring; but the bearings, to use the language of heraldry, remain the same, though the tincture may be not only different, but opposed in strong contradistinction.¹⁹

Indeed, Scott strongly believed in the potential of passion, but at the same time held a great interest in the individual colouring and differences of the various historical periods, and “found it difficult indeed to conceive of human beings, good or bad, without reference to some set of social norms or beliefs”.²⁰ That is why his works are also characterized by accurate and individualized historical portrayals of events, settings, and individuals. Therefore, in his novels, Scott manages to maintain the balance between individual and universal, passion and rationality, going beyond both the culture of Romanticism and the culture of the Enlightenment, and paving the way to the

new aesthetics of the nineteenth-century novel, where the interest for the local, the singular, and the highly individualized went hand in hand with the firm belief that each new detailed case contributed a new plug to the vast and variegated fabric of representation of the human condition of modern life.²¹

1.2 *The Bride of Lammermoor*: its genesis between fiction and history

The tension between individual and universal, romance and realism, regret for the past and belief in the present, determine the uniqueness and the complexity of the so-called *Waverley Novels*, the cycle of historical novels written by Sir Walter Scott between 1814 and 1832, which represents his greatest achievement. The best among them are arguably the Scotch or Scottish novels – such as *Waverley* (1814), *Guy Mannering* (1815), *Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1817), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), and *Redgauntlet* (1824) – which deal with Scottish history, settings, and manners. According to David Daiches, the special quality of the

¹⁹ Scott, W., *Waverley*, cit., p. 5

²⁰ Shaw, H. E., *The Forms of Historical Fiction*, cit., p. 141.

²¹ Villari, E., *Walter Scott, the Birth of the Historical Novel and the Romantic Legacy: Locality, Emotions and Knowledge*, in *Narrating the passions*, ed. by Simona Corso and Beth Guilding, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2017, pp. 129-146, p. 139.

Scottish novels is that they “all possess Scott’s characteristic virtues, and they represent his particular kind of fiction at its very best”,²² depicting historical conflicts with peculiar insight, and presenting plots and characters that perfectly convey the paradox of modern life. This is particularly true for *The Bride of Lammermoor*, a novel that “exhibits Scott’s art at its most mature”²³ and is considered Scott’s best performance by certain critics. Francis R. Hart affirms that *The Bride of Lammermoor* is the novel that best summarizes the meaning and value of the whole cycle of the *Waverley Novels*,²⁴ and Edgar Johnson classifies it as “the most perfectly constructed”²⁵ among them; opinions certainly shared by David Brown, who claims that “the whole novel is characterized by a cohesion, a unity, and an intensity [...] nowhere equalled in the *Waverley Novels*”.²⁶

Published in 1819 with *A Legend of Montrose* as the third series of *Tales of My Landlord*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*²⁷ is a story of tragic love and family feud set during the politically unstable period of the Act of Union of 1707, which decreed Scotland’s legislative and administrative union with England and united the two countries in the new kingdom of Great Britain. However, differently from the other *Waverley Novels*, the dating of the novel’s events is equivocal, as it is not clear whether *The Bride of Lammermoor* is set before or after the Union. This peculiar ambiguity, which generated one of the most controversial debates regarding the novel, was caused by the fact the two principal editions of *The Bride of Lammermoor* have different dating. While the original version, published in 1819, is set before the Union, the conscious changes and additions introduced by Scott for the Magnus Opus edition of 1830, situate the action shortly after the Act of Union.²⁸ However, Scott failed to produce a uniform revision of the novel, as while adding passages implying a post-Union dating, he

²² Daiches, D., *Scott’s Achievement as a Novelist. Part two*, cit., p. 84.

²³ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 129.

²⁴ Cf. Hart, F. R., *Scott’s novels: The Plotting of historic survival* [1966], Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1966, p. 307.

²⁵ Johnson, E., *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown* [1970], 2(1), London, Hamish Hamilton, 1970, p. 670.

²⁶ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 129.

²⁷ Hereafter referred to as *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

²⁸ For a more exhaustive account, see Millgate, J., *Text and context: dating the events of ‘The Bride of Lammermoor’*, “The Bibliothek: a Scottish Journal of Bibliography and Allied Topics”, Vol. 9, No. 6, 1979, pp. 200-213; Robertson, F., *Note on the Text*, in Scott, W., *The Bride of Lammermoor* [1819], ed. F. Robertson, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008 (hereafter referred to as *The Bride of Lammermoor*), pp. xxx-xl.

forgot to modify the many comments still suggesting a pre-Union one. Besides, the fact that even the 1819 edition contains certain imprecisions in the handling of dates, allows us to affirm that neither version is wholly free from ambiguity.²⁹ That is why the question of the dating has been highly debated by critics, who indeed hold discording opinions on the subject. Among the advocates of the pre-Union setting, we find Hart, who affirms that the circumstances created by “the corruption and instability of Scottish rule just before the Union, and in the aftermath of Ashton’s most powerful and acquisitive period in the 90s”³⁰ are essential to the tragedy. In the same way, Jane Millgate argues that the Magnum Opus edition is characterized by a diminished historical consonance because “the destruction of Ravenswood takes on an element of the gratuitous”³¹ as it occurs in a changed political time and situation. On the contrary, critics such as David Daiches, R.C. Gordon, and Fiona Robertson defend the Magnum Opus edition and the post-Union setting. In particular, Robertson affirms that the Magnum Opus not only “clarified speakers, subjects and confusing sentences, embellished punctuation, modernized spelling, and avoided repetitions”, but also presented “a more considered text with some inspired revisions and additions”, which “add to the qualities of the novel rather than detract from them”.³² One of the crucial additions of the Magnum Opus is indeed the new historical introduction which reveals the real source-story of *The Bride of Lammermoor*. When the novel was first published in 1819, Scott’s identity as the author of the *Waverley Novels* had not been officially revealed yet, nor was the source which provided the subject for *The Bride of Lammermoor*, whose only introductory preamble was the bizarre story of Peter Pattieson, *The Bride of Lammermoor*’s fictitious narrator, and Dick Tinto, a dead unsuccessful provincial artist. In order to maintain his authorial anonymity, Scott had indeed started to create complex frame-stories for his novels, which involved an almost quixotic game of fictitious narrators, editors, and characters.³³ In the case of *The*

²⁹ Cf. Millgate, J., *Text and context: dating the events of ‘The Bride of Lammermoor’*, cit., p. 204.

³⁰ Hart, F. R., *Scott’s Novels*, cit., p. 329.

³¹ Millgate, J., *Text and context: dating the events of ‘The Bride of Lammermoor’*, cit., p. 211.

³² Robertson, F., *Introduction to Scott, W., The Bride of Lammermoor*, cit., pp. vii-xxix, p. xxxviii, p. xxxi.

³³ All the four series of *Tales of My Landlord* are presented as the work of Peter Pattieson, a collector of folk stories and legends, who, after his death, leaves his works to be published by his editor, Jedediah Cleishbotham. Both Peter Pattieson

Bride of Lammermoor's frame-story, which occupies the first chapter, Pattieson reveals that he based his novel on the manuscript notes of his friend Tinto, who in turn had heard the tale of an undefined domestic tragedy from an old woman and was thus inspired to produce a sketch. In showing his sketch to Pattieson, Tinto criticizes him for his incapacity to recognize its full meaning with "instant and vivid flash of conviction".³⁴ Besides, after insisting on the communicative strength of pictures rather than written words, he urges him to adopt a pictorial strategy in his narrative and to privilege description over dialogue, which Pattieson half mockingly accepts to do, as he declares at the end of the chapter: "following in part, though not entirely, my friend Tinto's advice, I endeavoured to render my narrative rather descriptive than dramatic".³⁵ Indeed, "no other novel by Scott refers to quite so many paintings or shows such an interest in the artists' efforts to fix characters on canvas"³⁶ than *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which not only contains references to "physical" portraits of certain characters – such as those of Sir William and Lady Ashton, Malise Ravenswood, and Gibbie Girder – but whose own protagonists, landscapes, and architectures are so vividly described that they seem to emerge from a painting. Therefore, despite being evasive, the original frame story illuminates both the aesthetic principles and the general orientation of *The Bride of Lammermoor*,³⁷ and "enables Scott to pass off as a technical experiment suggested by someone else his creation in *The Bride of Lammermoor* of the immediate, overwhelming imaginative moments he elsewhere uses narrative to diffuse".³⁸

Differently from the original frame-story, the Magnum Opus introduction discards the whimsical tone and the fictitious narrator, as it presents us with Scott himself as the narrator. In this case, Scott gives an elaborate account of the real source on which he based the novel, namely, the Darlymple legend, which tells of the unfortunate marriage of Miss Janet Darlymple – daughter of James

and Jedediah Cleishbotham appear in the novels' frame narratives, where other fictional characters can be introduced for metafictional purposes (such as Dick Tinto in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, or Miss Buskbody in *Old Mortality*).

³⁴ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. I, p. 24.

³⁵ Ivi, p. 25.

³⁶ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xiii.

³⁷ Cf. Ivi, p. xii.

³⁸ Shaw, H. E., *The Forms of Historical Fiction*, cit., p. 217.

Darlymple (1619-1695), 1st Viscount Stair and one of the most important Scottish lawyers and statesmen of his age – to David Dunbar of Baldoon, in 1669. Before her betrothal to Baldoon, Janet Darlymple had secretly engaged herself to Lord Rutherford, Baldoon’s uncle, who was not politically and economically acceptable to her parents, and particularly to her mother, Lady Stair, “a woman accustomed to universal submission”,³⁹ who forced her daughter to marry Baldoon, and to renounce her engagement to her first suitor, even in his very presence. In her last meeting with Rutherford – a scene that is reported in the novel and represents its climax – Janet was indeed too overwhelmed by her family’s pressure, and especially her mother’s, even to speak. On her wedding night, however, the bride found the strength to oppose herself, but at a great price: she went insane, stabbed her husband, and died some days later. Baldoon recovered but would never talk of that terrible night again.

Scott mainly followed the second of the four existing versions of the Darlymple legend,⁴⁰ and in narrating it in the 1830 *Introduction*, he drew from both historical accounts of the events – Robert Law’s *Memorials*, edited by Scott’s friend and researcher Charles Kirckpatrick Sharpe – and also from popular tradition – particularly from Sir William Hamilton of Whitelaw’s satirical verses on the bride’s family, and from Andrew Symson’s elegy. However, Scott had heard the sad story of Janet Darlymple from his own relatives, as he confirms in the *Introduction* to the *Chronicles of the Canongate* (1827):

The terrible catastrophe of *The Bride of Lammermoor* actually occurred in a Scottish family of rank. The female relative, by whom the melancholy tale was communicated to me many years since, was a near connection of the family in which the event happened, and always told it with an appearance of melancholy mystery which enhanced the interest. She had known in her youth the brother who rode before the unhappy victim to the fatal altar, who, though then a mere boy, and occupied almost entirely with the gaiety of his own appearance in the bridal

³⁹ Scott, W., *Introduction* (1830) to *The Bride of Lammermoor*, cit., pp. 1-11, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Cf. O’ Parsons, C., *The Darlymple Legend in The Bride of Lammermoor*, “The Review of English Studies”, Vol. 19, No. 73, 1943, pp.51-58, p. 52.

procession, could not but remark that the hand of his sister was moist, and cold as that of a statue.⁴¹

The ‘female relative’ Scott is referring to could be both his great-aunt Margaret Swinton or his mother Anne Rutherford, whose ancient Scottish tales he had enjoyed listening to since he was a child. Indeed, Scott’s mother knew “with great accuracy the real story of *The Bride of Lammermuir*” as “she had all the names of the parties, and detailed (for she was a great genealogist) their connexion with existing family”.⁴² When Scott had just started to write *The Bride of Lammermoor*, in a letter addressed to James Ballantyne, half-jokingly and half-seriously he communicated his concern about the difficulties of transforming a rather brief story into a novel, and about not being as efficient as his mother in narrating the novel’s events: “The story is a dismal one, and I doubt sometimes whether it will bear working out too much length after all. Query, if I shall make it so effective in two volumes as my mother does in her quarter of an hour’s crack by the fireside? But *nil desperandum*.”⁴³ Certainly, there was no need to despair, as Scott could count on his innate gift as an incredible storyteller. According to Claire Lamont, Scott deployed this talent with impressive mastery especially in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which represents “an example of where he succeeded in the tricky art of turning a story into a novel”,⁴⁴ and where he equally demonstrated himself to be both storyteller and novelist. In fact, while in other novels he ended up deviating from the primary source, in the case of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Scott filled out “the story just where the psychological preoccupation of the novel required it, and without spoiling or distorting the story in the process”,⁴⁵ but only adding a specific historical period for the novel’s action, a more precise time-scheme for the development of

⁴¹ Scott, W., *The Prefaces to the Waverley Novels*, ed by Mark A. Weinstein, Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1978, pp. 73-74.

⁴² Scott, W., Letter to Lady Louisa Stewart of January 1820, in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, XII vols, ed by H. J. C. Grierson, London, Constable, Vol. VI (1819-1821), 1932-1937, p. 119.

⁴³ Scott, W., Letter to James Ballantyne of September 1818, in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, cit., Vol. V (1817-1819), p. 186.

⁴⁴ Lamont, C., *Scott as a Storyteller: ‘The Bride of Lammermoor’*, “Scottish Literary Journal”, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1980, pp. 113-126, p. 115.

⁴⁵ Ivi, p. 124.

the events, and psychological substance to the characters. The novel is indeed quite faithful to the original source, as it follows the unhappy romance of Edgar Ravenswood, the sole remaining heir of his aristocratic declining family, and Lucy Ashton, member of the newly rich Whig family which had been the main agent of the downfall of the ancient house of Ravenswood. Lucy's father, the crafty lawyer and politician Sir William Ashton, had taken advantage of the disorders at the time of the Union to rise to the station of Lord Keeper of Scotland, and by means of his legal power and intrigues, had dispossessed the Ravenswood family of their own estate, forcing Edgar to live in the desolate tower of Wolf's Crag. Edgar's initial wish for revenge following his father's death is ultimately defeated by his love for Lucy. But their love and hope for reconciliation are doomed from the start by supernatural omens, political divisions, and especially the cruel opposition of Lucy's mother, Lady Ashton, who forces Lucy to renounce her engagement to Ravenswood and marry Bucklaw, provoking in this way the tragic epilogue of the novel. Lucy, driven to desperation and insanity by her family's oppression and by Edgar's lack of faith, stabs Bucklaw on their wedding night, and dies shortly after. On the other hand, Edgar, overcome by remorse, accepts Lucy's brother's request for a duel, but while riding furiously to the established place, is swallowed up by the quicksand of Kelpie's Flaw.

1.3 The untypicality of *The Bride of Lammermoor*: its unicity among the *Waverley Novels*

Hart and Brown notice that *The Bride of Lammermoor*'s excellence as a historical novel is somehow indebted to the previous *Waverley Novels*, where some of the situations and ideas developed in *The Bride of Lammermoor* had already appeared. In terms of the male and female protagonists, the supernatural, and the historical situation, Hart notices *The Bride of Lammermoor*'s resemblance to *The Black Dwarf* (1816), while Brown points out its connections with *Guy Mannering* (1815).⁴⁶ Indeed, *The Black Dwarf* deals with a heroine persecuted by her father because she is in love with his main enemy, an enlightened man who, like Ravenswood, believes that reconciliation through

⁴⁶ For a more exhaustive account, see: Hart, F. R., *Scott's Novels*, cit., pp. 310-311; and Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., pp. 148-149.

marriage is possible. On the other hand, the main subject of *Guy Mannering* is the usurpation of the estate of an old aristocratic house on behalf of an upstart bourgeois family. Hart also argues that *The Bride of Lammermoor*'s "quest for enlightened humanity, thwarted by rival's fanaticism, and its milieu of moral and political chaos place it with *Old Mortality* [1816] and *Peveril* [1822]".⁴⁷ Moreover, Brown affirms that Scott owes much to *The Heart of Midlothian* and to the excellent characterization of Jeanie Deans for the skill with which *The Bride of Lammermoor*'s hero is presented.⁴⁸

However, notwithstanding the motifs in common with its previous companions, *The Bride of Lammermoor* develops the typical features of Scott's historical novels in an untypical way. The imprecision with the dating of the events as well as the adoption of a pictorial strategy in the narrative, which have been discussed previously, are only two aspects of the novel's peculiarity. According to Brown, the peculiarity of *The Bride of Lammermoor* stands especially in its uniquely tragic form, in its unequalled internal coherence and consistency, and "can be seen as the result of Scott's following his intuitions with respect to the historical situation and his chosen dramatic point of view more rigorously and determinedly than ever before".⁴⁹ Indeed, since its appearance, *The Bride of Lammermoor* has been regarded as an exception among the *Waverley Novels* for its tragic form, the unusual role of the protagonist, its perfect internal cohesion and the conflicting modes of writing that characterize it.

The Bride of Lammermoor is considered the most passionate, romantic, and tragic of all Scott's novels. Immediately after the book was published, a review in the "Blackwood's Magazine" asserted that:

Of all the novels of our author there is no one which has a catastrophe so complete, and which shakes the mind so strongly as that of *The Bride of Lammermoor*. It is the only true romance

⁴⁷ Hart, F. R., *Scott's Novels*, cit., p. 309.

⁴⁸ Cf. Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 149.

⁴⁹ Ivi, pp. 129-130.

of the whole set; - in purpose, tenor, and conclusion – it is a pure and magnificent tragical romance.⁵⁰

Similarly, in the “Quarterly Review” it was defined as “a tragedy of the highest order, that unites excellence of plot to our author’s usual merits of character and description”.⁵¹ Scott’s biographer, John Gibson Lockhart, went even further, affirming that *The Bride of Lammermoor* is “the most pure and powerful of all the tragedies that Scott ever penned”.⁵² *The Bride of Lammermoor* is a tragedy because, differently from the other *Waverley Novels*, it ends without achieving a compromise between past and present, and therefore without achieving historical balance. Certainly, all the *Waverley Novels* present a tragic narrative and component, for the theme of historical change implies a melancholic sense of inexorable loss. Normally, however, the tragic narrative is not the principal narrative of the novels, and the protagonist is usually saved from a tragic fate, ultimately achieving a happy ending. For example, if we take *Waverley* into consideration, the protagonist of the novel’s tragic narrative is actually not the eponymous protagonist, but rather Fergus McIvor, a believer in the Jacobite Cause and a genuine representative of the ancient feudal culture of the Highlands, whose death at the end of the novel symbolically marks the tragic disappearance of his own world. On the contrary, Edward Waverley, the English protagonist of the novel, achieves prosperity and a happy ending, and through his marriage to Rose Bradwardine, the daughter of a Scottish aristocrat, he guarantees the survival of the old in the new, making historical compromise possible. In *The Bride of Lammermoor*, instead, the situation is of a very different nature: not only is a happy ending totally excluded but the tragic pervades all the novel’s dimensions. For this reason, it is possible to affirm that *The Bride of Lammermoor* “is a tragic novel in the fullest sense of the word. It is a tragedy of

⁵⁰ Review in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 5, Apr-Sept 1819, pp. 340-353, p. 342.

⁵¹ Senior, N., *Unsigned review of Rob Roy, Heart of Midlothian, Bride of Lammermoor, Legend of Montrose, Ivanhoe, The Monastery, The Abbot, and Kenilworth*, “Quarterly Review”, Vol. xxvi 1821, pp. 109–48, now in *Walter Scott: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John O. Hayden, London, Routledge, 1995, pp. 215-255, p. 228.

⁵² Lockhart, J. G., *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, vol. 6, [1837], Toronto, George N. Morang and Company, 1901, p. 64.

character, a tragedy of politics, a tragedy of history, a tragedy of destiny, and a tragedy of chance”.⁵³

Because of the death of the two young protagonists, who are not allowed to live their love in the name of class and political antagonism, and the final extinction of both the feuding families, James Kerr points out that

The Bride not only lacks a compensatory narrative [...] but any symbol in which the conflict between classes and political parties can be resolved, or at least held in stable form. Even the familiar and comforting convention Scott had used so unabashedly in earlier novels, the social fiction of felicitous marriage is absent here.⁵⁴

Indeed, what distinguishes *The Bride of Lammermoor* from the other *Waverley Novels* is that Scott eliminates from it the crucial, unifying symbol of marriage. The marriage between Edgar Ravenswood and Lucy Ashton would allow the historical compromise: it would represent the union between the old family and the new, between Tories and Whigs, and could resolve all public hostility in the private sphere. In particular, according to Ian Duncan, this marriage symbolizes

a private treaty of Union, a formal reconciliation of historical class (rather than national) conflict in the liberal territory of the affections. However, like the Jacobite adventure in *Waverley*, it fails to transcend the political pressures which have set it in motion and end up defining it.⁵⁵

More specifically, their marriage fails because the two protagonists live in a present where “private desire cannot shape but is utterly vulnerable to public power”,⁵⁶ political circumstances, personal ambition, and avarice. As Daiches notices, the novel’s tragedy is determined by the fact that the attempted marriage of Edgar and Lucy is too much for the historical circumstances in which the two lovers find themselves, and their final death underlines that there is no direct solution of the

⁵³ Hollingworth, B., *The Tragedy of Lucy Ashton in ‘The Bride of Lammermoor’*, “Studies in Scottish Literature”, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1984, pp. 94-105, p. 94.

⁵⁴ Kerr, J., *Fiction against History*, cit., pp. 85-86.

⁵⁵ Duncan, I., *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* [1992], Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 136.

⁵⁶ Ivi, pp. 136-137.

problem.⁵⁷ For this reason, *The Bride of Lammermoor* “demonstrates Scott’s complex awareness that in the web of history not even the most enlightened and humane courses are necessarily destined to win the day and that compromise is no certain formula for success”.⁵⁸ Hart even argues that without Ravenswood and Sir William Ashton’s attempt at reconciliation, the tragedy could have been avoided.⁵⁹ This bitter awareness and the novel’s conclusion determine the tragedy and the pessimistic vision of historical change that characterizes *The Bride of Lammermoor*. As previously discussed, Scott’s attitude towards historical progress was of dualistic kind, as he felt a mixture of nostalgic regret for the old days and, at the same time, faith in the benefits that the present could bring. Nevertheless, Gordon asserts that *The Bride of Lammermoor* represents “a crucial upsetting” of the dangerous balance between Scott’s love for the past and his acceptance of the present,⁶⁰ and marks the triumph of a dark historical pessimism which had been increasing in the novels that preceded it.⁶¹ Therefore, all things considered, we may share Brown’s observation that *The Bride of Lammermoor* justly earns the title of tragedy because it shows “Scott’s determination to carry through the potential of his theme to its bitter conclusion”.⁶² However, also the special position of its protagonist, Edgar Ravenswood, contributes to the novel’s tragedy.

A far more interesting figure than other Waverley heroes, Edgar Ravenswood represents another aspect of the novel’s peculiarity, for in many ways he distinguishes himself from his companions, who are usually mediocre, never heroic, and especially passive, as Alexander Welsh described them. According to Welsh, the typical passive hero of the *Waverley Novels*

can best be defined by the words of Nigel Olifaunt - “a thing never acting but perpetually acted upon”. But he is nevertheless the protagonist. He stands at the centre of the struggle. He may not move but his chances, his fortunes, are at stake. He is a victim, at the mercy of good and

⁵⁷ Cf. Daiches, D., *Scott’s Achievement as a Novelist. Part two*, “Nineteenth-Century Fiction”, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1951, pp. 153-173, p. 165.

⁵⁸ Johnson, E., *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*, cit., p. 663.

⁵⁹ Cf. Hart, F. R., *Scott’s Novels*, cit., pp. 321-322.

⁶⁰ Gordon, R. C., ‘*The Bride of Lammermoor*’: a Novel of Tory Pessimism, “Nineteenth-Century Fiction”, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1957, pp. 110-124, p. 111.

⁶¹ Cf. Ivi, p. 121.

⁶² Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 145.

bad agents alike. He never aspires to property, nor actively courts the heroine. But he does not remain a victim, and he receives the heroine and the property in the end.⁶³

This description perfectly suits characters such as Waverley, Ivanhoe, Nigel Olifaunt, Arthur Philipson,⁶⁴ but clearly, Edgar Ravenswood does not entirely respond to this kind of scheme. Of course, he is the protagonist and stands at the centre of the struggle, but at the beginning of the book he has already been deprived of his fortunes, and differently from the other Waverley heroes, he does aspire to the heroine and to regain his properties, but does not receive them, remaining a victim until the end. Welsh indeed recognizes that Ravenswood may represent an exception to the typical Waverley heroes because of his passionate temperament, but despite this, he maintains that Edgar's posture is fundamentally passive.⁶⁵ However, the matter is much more complicated. If on the one hand Edgar is bitterly resigned to the inescapable decay of his house and violently accepts it, on the other, it is not true that he suffers his fate passively for the simple fact of venturing into a dangerous engagement with Lucy in the hope to find a reconciliation with his enemies. As Kerr notices, "the paradox of Ravenswood's position is that he must use the opportunity which history presents to him in order to escape the fatality with which history threatens him",⁶⁶ although in the end history defies him because his enlightened attempt to find a compromise is too ahead of his time. For these reasons, George Levine was probably more accurate than Welsh in defining Ravenswood as an active individual almost reduced to powerlessness and passivity, not because of his personality, but because of the inflexibility that surrounds him and the historical circumstances which do not allow him to act as the real Master of Ravenswood, a politician, a warrior, and not even as a lover.⁶⁷ Due to his unhappy ending and his proud behaviour, it seems that Edgar may be more similar to what Welsh defines as the dark hero, that agent whose energy Scott usually employs to compensate the inactivity

⁶³ Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, [1963], Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 28.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ivi, pp 21-39.

⁶⁵ Cf. Ivi, p. 30.

⁶⁶ Kerr, J., *Fiction against History: Scott as a Storyteller*, cit. p. 91.

⁶⁷ Cf. Levine, G., *Exorcising the Past: Scott's 'The Bride of Lammermoor'*, "Nineteenth-Century Fiction", Vol. 32, No. 4, 1978, pp. 379-398, pp. 391-393.

of the passive hero – such as Fergus Mac Ivor, Elshie the Dwarf, Rob Roy, George Staunton, Allan M’Aulay, Hugh Redgauntlet.⁶⁸ Following Welsh’s description, we could say that, like the dark hero, Edgar is not only a physically strong man, but also a loyal, passionate, and generous individual, whose “relationship to other men, friendly or unfriendly, is direct and warm”, and who “submits with little grace to the artificial strictures of polity and reality”.⁶⁹ Therefore, certain features of both the passive and the dark hero are combined in the figure of Edgar, creating a fascinating and peculiar protagonist. This is quite uncommon because in the *Waverley Novels*, the passive and the dark heroes are normally two separate characters, the former being the protagonist and the latter a secondary tragic character, who “represent a favourite dualism of critics of the novel, that of society and that of individual”.⁷⁰ While the passive protagonist accepts historical progress, submits to prudence and conforms to society, becoming its perfect representative, the dark and tragic secondary character acts from passion and refuses historical progress, placing himself outside society, and is thus condemned to disappear or to die. Interestingly, however, this dualism does not take its usual shape in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, where, as Shaw observes, Scott deviates from his favourite fictional technique of creating split and doubled characters, by having instead “single characters possess dual natures of deeply problematic kind”.⁷¹ For example, Caleb Balderstone, Ravenswood’s loyal servant and principal agent of the comic subplot which surprisingly mingles with the novel’s tragedy, is an incredible mixture of pathetic and poetic, comic and tragic. Lucy Ashton’s sweetness, meekness, and passivity are ultimately transformed into fierceness, madness, and activity, as her desperate final gesture shows, making her a tragic character, as well as a curious combination between Scott’s blonde and dark heroines, to borrow again Welsh’s terms.⁷² But Edgar Ravenswood, with his contrasting feelings, his rationality and passion, his restlessness and simultaneous acceptance of history, not only is the most prominent example of this dualism, but also an authentically tragic character. Indeed,

⁶⁸ Cf. Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., pp. 40-41.

⁶⁹ Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., p. 44.

⁷⁰ Ivi, p. 46.

⁷¹ Shaw, H. E., *The Forms of Historical Fiction*, cit., p. 218.

⁷² Cf. Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., pp. 48-55.

Villari notices that tragic character and protagonist, which are usually two separated figures in the *Waverley Novels*, coincide instead in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, where the dimension of passion and individuality, and the dimension of historical awareness and society, blend in the figure of Ravenswood, making him the most tragic and the most active among Scott's protagonists.⁷³ Throughout the whole novel, Ravenswood appears "tragically at war with his own hereditary identity",⁷⁴ "torn between an emotional tie to the old system of feud and vengeance and an intellectual acceptance of the new"⁷⁵ because of his love for Lucy, which allows him to assume an enlightened position that "suggests reconciliation and progress as the proper responses to the loss of his ancestral inheritance".⁷⁶ Therefore, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, the conflict between old and new, between acceptance and refusal of the present, is located within a single individual and his own psychology. All these features certainly make Ravenswood an original protagonist, in line with the novel's tragedy and peculiarity.

Another fascinating aspect regarding Scott's novels is that within them "the boundary between fiction and fact, romance and reality, is crossed and recrossed repeatedly".⁷⁷ The intertwining of fiction and history is a pivotal feature shared by all the *Waverley Novels*, but particularly in *The Bride of Lammermoor* this trait manifests itself in a remarkably successful way. Indeed, the perfect interplay between *The Bride of Lammermoor*'s different narrative modes and its peculiar amalgam of genres distinguish *The Bride of Lammermoor* from the other novels and render its classification particularly tough. According to Hart, *The Bride of Lammermoor* can be considered a Jacobite novel for its satiric representation of Jacobitism; a romance of decadent chivalry for its primitive and violent atmosphere, and even a Border ballad because of its use of the preternatural and of folk chorus.⁷⁸ Above all, however, he insists on the Gothic quality of the novel and on its impact as a tragedy of domestic

⁷³ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, in AA. VV. *Storie su Storie*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 1985, pp. 5-30, pp. 25-26.

⁷⁴ Hart, F. R., *Scott's novels*, Op. cit., p. 314.

⁷⁵ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xvii.

⁷⁶ Ibidem.

⁷⁷ Kerr, J., *Fiction against History: Scott as a Storyteller*, cit., p. 17.

⁷⁸ Cf. Hart, F. R., *Scott's Novels*, cit., pp. 307-308.

fidelities and conflicts, hence classifying it as a unique fusion of domestic novel and historical romance,⁷⁹ characterized not only by a uniquely potent sense of fatality, but also by a unique guise of historicity.⁸⁰ *The Bride of Lammermoor* can indeed be regarded as a representative instance of modal mixture, for its attempt to fuse together conflicting or even apparently irreconcilable representational modes:⁸¹ on the one hand there is a historical plot about the downfall of an ancient aristocratic family at the time of the Act of Union, with an extremely realistic portrayal of the social and political context of the period; on the other, there are supernatural elements, prophecies, and legends, which surround Edgar and Lucy's love story from the very beginning, and which are instead typical of the Gothic. These two modes – historical plot and Gothic romance – are not separated, but masterfully intertwine in the novel, creating a striking combination of realistic action and supernatural mystery. As Johnson says, *The Bride of Lammermoor*'s “brooding fatality is fused with the reality it envelops; its Gothic warnings are dark mists swirling through a solid world”.⁸² Kerr argues that the most fascinating feature of *The Bride of Lammermoor* is precisely “its mingling of a historical narrative about the relations between classes with a complex love story, its intertwining of political allegory with sexual fantasy”⁸³ as “linked with the novel's political register is the sexual narrative of a rejected lover's fantasy of revenge”.⁸⁴ Interestingly, that rejected lover is Scott himself. Although, in general, Scott tended to leave his personal experience out of the *Waverley Novels*,⁸⁵ this is not the case of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which once more turns out to be an exception to the rule as Scott's private life powerfully enters in the novel. According to Shaw's biographical reading, it is possible to identify in Scott's biography the very source of the darkness and the turbulent feelings that characterize the

⁷⁹ Hart, F. R., *Scott's Novels*, cit., pp. 307-308.

⁸⁰ Ivi, pp. 328-329.

⁸¹ Cf. Kerr, J., *Fiction against History: Scott as a Storyteller*, p. 86.

⁸² Johnson, E., *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*, Op. Cit., p. 670.

⁸³ Kerr, J., *Fiction against History: Scott as a Storyteller*, p. 96.

⁸⁴ Ivi, p. 97.

⁸⁵ Cf. Grierson, H., *Sir Walter Scott, Bart*, London, 1938, quoted in Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., p. 37.

whole novel, which reflects Scott's youthful and unhappy love affair with Williamina Belsches, in the late 1790s. As Shaw points out,

The story of their relationship is well known. As a youth, Scott grew increasingly attached to Williamina over a number of years; finally, he more or less proposed to her. Exaggerating what seem to have been her ambiguous replies to his advances, he grew to believe that she had pledged herself to him at the very time when she had fallen in love with another man, more nearly her social and economic equal than Scott [The man in question was William Forbes, Scott's friend and companion]. When their engagement was announced, Scott was shattered and angry.⁸⁶

Indeed, Scott was passionately in love with Williamina and believed that both she and her parents had, if not encouraged him, at least allowed him to hope: no wonder that his disappointment and grief were violent and bitter. As Johnson tells in his detailed account of the affair, after hearing the news of the engagement, in a Ravenswood-like manner, Scott is reported "to have rushed to Fettercairn to insist upon seeing Williamina, and, on receiving his dismissal from her own lips, to have left her, vowing angrily 'that he would be married before her'".⁸⁷ Precisely like Edgar Ravenswood towards Lucy Ashton, Scott believed that Williamina had betrayed him, weakly submitting to the tyranny of her parents, who had forced her into a marriage with a socially higher and richer party. The truth, however, was entirely different: Williamina had really fallen in love with William Forbes, and her parents had simply agreed to their union, despite being deeply sorry for Scott, who was indeed ignorant of the real situation, and for this reason "was torn between seeing Williamina as a coquette, as greedy for rank and wealth, or as dominated by paternal rule".⁸⁸ Apparently, with time, his negative feelings and resentment towards Williamina diminished, probably thanks to his long and happy marriage with Charlotte Carpenter. Nevertheless, this unhappy love affair "left a wound whose scar never disappeared. 'Broken hearted for two years' he wrote in his *Journal* thirty years later, '– my

⁸⁶ Shaw, H. E., *The Forms of Historical Fiction*, cit., p. 215.

⁸⁷ Johnson, E., *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*, cit., p. 120.

⁸⁸ Ivi, p. 121.

heart handsomely pieced – but the crack will remain to my dying day”⁸⁹ And so it was: not only did this youthful suffering quietly accompany him throughout his entire life, but it also “shaped and coloured his rendering of passion both as poet and as novelist”,⁹⁰ as *The Bride of Lammermoor* especially shows. Indeed, *The Bride of Lammermoor* distinguishes itself from other works containing possible references to this love affair because

its central formal principle reflects the wish to revivify these emotions and transmit them to the reader. Ravenswood is the substantial centre of *The Bride* so that he can focus and express a rejected lover's sense of horror, loss, and betrayal, and above all his violent ambivalence concerning himself and the woman who rejected him.⁹¹

Therefore, *The Bride of Lammermoor* unites realistic action and historical detail with gothic elements and personal emotions. For some critics, however, the balance between such contrasting tendencies is not respected. Indeed, Shaw claims that “*The Bride* has a unique power to fascinate and disturb us because it expresses a complex of personal emotions with less historical mediation than any other of Scott’s works”.⁹² Therefore, he seems to suggest that in this specific case, romance and emotions overcome the novel’s realism and rationality, so much so that he defines *The Bride of Lammermoor* as “the only major novel by Scott where history does not function as the primary subject”.⁹³ However, other critics highlight instead the rationalism of *The Bride of Lammermoor*. For example, Levine affirms that Scott is meticulous about maintaining an enlightened stance toward the mysterious, and notices that notwithstanding all its Gothic trappings – legends, prophecies, and omens – *The Bride of Lammermoor*’s central action is deeply anchored in historical fact and its rhetoric implies a world which is rational and comprehensible.⁹⁴ Similarly, Andrew. D. Hook argues that Scott is so anxious about the extravagant Gothic atmosphere of the novel, that “he employs a technique of

⁸⁹ Quoted in Ivi, p. 124.

⁹⁰ Johnson, E., *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*, cit., p. 123.

⁹¹ Shaw, H. E., *The Forms of Historical Fiction*, cit., pp. 215-216.

⁹² Ibidem.

⁹³ Ivi, p. 225.

⁹⁴ Cf. Levine, G., *Exorcising the Past: Scott’s ‘The Bride of Lammermoor’*, cit., p 381.

explaining away, of rationalizing the unlikely but often characteristic romantic incident”,⁹⁵ hence affirming that “it is possible to feel the presence, in the form of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, of the unromantic Scott, the Scott of enlightened common-sense and moderation, the Scott who is the typical modern man of his own day”.⁹⁶ Differently from the above-mentioned critics, Hart and Brown recognize both the enlightened and the romantic components of *The Bride of Lammermoor* in equal measure. On the one hand Hart affirms that the novel’s “imaginative grounding in Gothic vision and folk or primitive fatalism makes it seem more remote from historical reality than almost any other of the novels”,⁹⁷ but on the other, he also declares that “its historic truth is perhaps more particularized than that of any other *Waverley Novel*”.⁹⁸ In the same way, Brown pays the best compliments to *The Bride of Lammermoor*, stating that “both 'romance' and 'rationalist' modes are used here to convey the truth of human experience of historical change, as Scott understood it: it is therefore no paradox that Scott's most 'Romantic' novel should also turn out to be his greatest essay in historical realism”.⁹⁹

Despite the relatively contrasting opinions critics have on *The Bride of Lammermoor*’s protagonists and on its intertwining of romance and realism, in general they agree that Scott’s eighth novel not only distinguishes itself from the others for manifesting certain peculiarities, but also represents one of Scott’s most perfect creations for its intensity, its internal cohesion, its historical portrayal, and its superbly unified atmosphere, which perfectly mixes reality with fatality, rational with supernatural.

⁹⁵ Hook, A. D., ‘*The Bride of Lammermoor*’: a Reexamination, “Nineteenth-Century Fiction”, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1967, pp. 111-126, p. 114.

⁹⁶ Hook, A. D., ‘*The Bride of Lammermoor*’: a Reexamination, cit., p. 116.

⁹⁷ Hart, F. R., *Scott’s Novels*, cit., p. 328.

⁹⁸ Ivi, p. 329.

⁹⁹ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 150.

CHAPTER 2. Gothic and Supernatural in *The Bride of Lammermoor*

2.1 Scott's viewpoint and use of the Gothic

In the previous chapter, we have noticed that the Author of *Waverley* lived during a culturally complex period, characterized by the clashing and the intertwining of the Enlightenment with Romanticism, which originated a surprisingly huge variety of ways of thinking, writing and perceiving reality, as the literature of the time clearly mirrors. Among the many literary varieties, we find the so called Gothic fiction, a genre which developed out of an exceptional reaction against the culture of reason, whose primary intents consisted in subverting the paradigms of realism and rationality, and in arousing terror and fear in the readers, through narratives generally set in an archaic past and remote places, and characterized by an atmosphere of horror and mystery, supernatural events, highly stereotyped characters, and great emphasis on extreme actions, emotions, and psychological states.¹⁰⁰ The Gothic conventionally starts in 1764 with the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole, and primarily encompasses a group of novels written between 1760s and the 1820s, among which some of the most important are Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777), Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), and Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth The Wanderer* (1820).¹⁰¹ Although these novels arguably constitute the major expression of this genre, it would be quite limiting to consider Gothic fiction as a historically circumscribed mode of literature. Throughout time, the Gothic has indeed demonstrated to be "a way of relating to the real, to historical and psychological facts", and has developed as a wide-ranging and persistent tendency that continued to survive in later fiction, and that has even reached the current day.¹⁰² Therefore, the Gothic

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Punter, D., *The Literature of Terror* [1996], Vol. 1, New York, Routledge, 2013, pp. 1-19.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Ivi, p. 1.

¹⁰² Cf. Ivi, pp. 12-13.

continued to flourish in novels, ghost and horror stories throughout the entire 19th century, and affected the major writers of that time, so much so that it is possible to detect a clear Gothic vein running in works that are not necessarily or completely Gothic. As a matter of fact, Scott's historical fiction was deeply influenced by the Gothic, and *The Bride of Lammermoor* in particular, was defined by Birkhead as "the only one of Scott's novels which might fitly be called a 'tale of terror'".¹⁰³ For this reason, it is interesting to briefly examine the relationship between Gothic and historical fiction, and especially Scott's point of view and use of the Gothic.

Since the very beginning, Gothic fiction and historical fiction have intertwined in a very complex relationship, so much so that at first it was hard to draw a line between the two modes, because

Gothic itself seems to have *been* a mode of history, a way of perceiving an obscure past and interpreting it. In the 1770s and 1780s, several different kinds of new fiction arose to challenge the realist tradition, but what they all had in common was a drive to come to terms with the barbaric, with those realms excluded from the Augustan synthesis, and the primary focus of that drive was the past itself.¹⁰⁴

Indeed, Gothic novels were usually set in an obscure and Medieval past, but their authors, who privileged the sensational and irrational dimension, did not put great effort in their historical accuracy, apart from employing some old-fashioned terms or referring to certain historical events.¹⁰⁵ On the contrary, Scott, who had been able to recognize the authentic romanticism of reality,¹⁰⁶ and marked a great turning point by introducing a realist dimension in historical fiction, depicted the historical aspect of his novels with great precision, taking a genuine interest in the manners of ancient times, and making the past seem real and near to his readers. However, Scott also distanced himself from those works that, despite being historically accurate, were characterized by an excessive display of

¹⁰³ Birkhead, Edith. *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance* [1921], London Constable & Company Ltd, 1921, p. 153.

¹⁰⁴ Punter, D., *The Literature of Terror*, cit., p. 52.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Ivi, p.2.

¹⁰⁶ "The most romantic parts of this narrative are precisely those which have a foundation in fact" in Scott, W., A Postscript, in *Waverley*, cit., pp. 375-377, p. 376.

antiquarian knowledge and ancient language, which rendered them appreciable only to a highly specialised minority, as he clearly states in the 1829 *General Preface to the Waverley Novels*, when referring to Joseph Strutt's *Queen-Hoo-Hall*,¹⁰⁷ or in his essay *On the Supernatural in Fictitious Compositions*, when he talks about the Baron de la Motte Fouqué.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, notwithstanding his Gothic taste for the past and his antiquarian enjoyment of history – perfectly exemplified by Abbotsford House – Scott managed to distance his writings from both the excessively Gothic and the excessively antiquarian, thus reaching a peculiar balance which brought innovation in the conception of both historical and Gothic fiction. Indeed, “whereas before him historical fiction had proceeded on a parallel course with Gothic, or intertwined with it, Scott's novels mark a radical break in the process of mythologisation which characterises his predecessors”.¹⁰⁹ Such break is clearly evidenced in *Waverley*'s first chapter, when the author comments on the choice of the novel second title, *'Tis Sixty Years Since*, which was supposed to introduce the reader to a mode of literature different from the already existing ones:

My second or supplemental title was a matter of much more difficult election, since that, short as it is, may be held as pledging the author to some special mode of laying his scene, drawing his characters, and managing his adventures. Had I, for example, announced in my frontispiece, *Waverley, a Tale of other Days*, must not every novel-reader have anticipated a castle scarce less than that of *Udolpho*, of which the eastern wing had long been uninhabited, and the keys either lost, or consigned to the care of some aged butler or housekeeper, whose trembling steps, about the middle of the second volume, were doomed to guide the hero, or heroine, to the ruinous precincts? Would not the owl have shrieked and the cricket cried in my very title-page? And could it have been possible for me, with a moderate attention to decorum, to introduce any scene more lively than might be produced by the jocularly of a clownish but faithful valet, or the garrulous narrative of the heroine's fille-de-chambre, when rehearsing the stories of blood and horror which she had heard in the servants' hall? Again, had my title borne, *Waverley, a Romance from the German*, what head so obtuse as not to image forth a profligate abbot, an oppressive duke, a secret and mysterious association of Rosycrucians and Illuminati,

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Scott, W., *General Preface to the Waverley Novels* (1829), in *Waverley*, cit., pp. 384-397, p. 389.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Scott, W., *On the Supernatural in Fictitious Compositions*, [1827], now in *Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction*, ed. I. M. Williams, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, pp. 312-353, pp. 324-325.

¹⁰⁹ Punter, D., *The Literature of Terror*, cit., p. 140.

with all their properties of black cowls, caverns, daggers, electrical machines, trap-doors, and dark-lanterns? ¹¹⁰

Although this passage highlights the distance Scott evidently intends to put between his first novel and those of the Gothic writers – he gently mocks Ann Radcliffe’s most notable work – his vivid description of the typically Gothic features that the reader, however, should not expect from his novel, shows us his authentic enjoyment of the Gothic genre, which had certainly held a special place in that “great kingdom of fiction”¹¹¹ where, as a young voracious reader, he loved to immerse himself. Indeed, “that secret and reserved feeling of love for the marvellous and supernatural, which occupies a hidden corner in almost every one’s bosom”,¹¹² was certainly present in Scott’s, who had felt a deep fascination for the legendary, the supernatural and the distant past since his childhood, when he was enchanted by the ancient Scottish ballads which his mother, his grandmother, and his aunts used to tell him. Being such a lover of ballads and of ancient times, clearly Scott could not help but appreciate Gothic novels and tales, which combined a remote past with mysterious, supernatural incidents. In the *General Preface* of the 1829 edition of the *Waverley Novels*, Scott himself declares how important ballads had been to him and how his taste inclined to Gothic fiction:

It makes no part of the present story to detail how the success of a few ballads had the effect of changing all the purpose and tenor of my life, and of converting a painstaking lawyer of some years’ standing into a follower of literature. It is enough to say, that I had assumed the latter character for several years before I seriously thought of attempting a work of imagination in prose, although one or two of my poetical attempts did not differ from romances otherwise than by being written in verse. But yet I may observe, that about this time (now, alas! thirty years since) I had nourished the ambitious desire of composing a tale of chivalry, which was to be in the style of *The Castle of Otranto*, with plenty of Border characters and supernatural incident. ¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Scott, W., *Waverley*, cit., pp. 3-4.

¹¹¹ Scott, W., *General Preface*, cit., p. 385.

¹¹² Scott, W., *Horace Walpole*, now in *Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction*, cit., pp. 84-93, p. 87.

¹¹³ Scott, W., *General Preface*, cit., pp. 386-387.

In fact, Scott also drew inspiration from Walpole's famous novel to create his narratives, and throughout his career as a writer, he did publish some works of Gothic style. It is indeed interesting to notice that the inventor of the historical novel, the romantic defender of reality, started his literary career with ballads and Gothic tales. Scott's very first publication was *The Chase, and William and Helen* (1796), a translation of ballads by the German author G. A. Bürger, which was followed by *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-1803), a three-volume collection of traditional Scottish border ballads, and by *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), the first of a series of verse romances of great success, which transformed him into a national celebrity. In the very same years, he also published an anthology of Gothic short stories, called *An Apology for Tales of Terror* (1800), and in 1801 he contributed to Matthew Lewis's Gothic collection *Tales of Wonder*. Among his Gothic works are also to be included two plays, *House of Aspen* (1799) and *Doom of Devorgoil* (1817); three tales of terror, *The Tale of the Mysterious Mirror* (1828), *The Tapestry Chamber* (1828) and *Wandering Willie's Tale in Redgauntlet* (1824), still considered as models of this genre; and finally, his *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830), a study on witchcraft and on the supernatural in the form of letters addressed to J. G. Lockhart.¹¹⁴ But the impact of Scott's relation to the Gothic is especially seen in his novels, where he enacts his own personalization and refinement of the Gothic tradition. Indeed, if on the one hand, Scott's novels are filled with lifelike images of the past that approach the real more closely than it had ever happened before, on the other, such realistic images are accompanied by a multitude of Gothic and supernatural elements. For this reason, Kerr points out that:

Scott defined his position as a novelist within and against the Gothic mode. His historical romances are not just one kind of challenge to Gothic conventions, but a dialectical response to Gothic romance. To grasp properly the place of Scott's fiction in literary history, we must see his novels as a countergenre to the Gothic, in which the forms of the Gothic are taken up

¹¹⁴ Cf. Punter, D., *The Literature of Terror*, cit., p. 140-141; Cf. Lamont, C., *A Chronology of Sir Walter Scott* in Scott, W., *Waverley*, cit, pp. xl-xlv.

and rendered as the conventions of an obsolescent literature, and at the same time preserved and modified.¹¹⁵

There is no better source than Scott's own words to understand which forms of the Gothic mode he appreciated, took up and used in his historical fiction. In *Lives of the Novelists* (1825), Scott reunites his essays on various contemporary authors, including some Gothic novelists, whose works he obviously views with critical eye, but also admiring and treasuring some of their techniques. In doing so, he reveals a great deal about his own perspective on the past, and his own use of the supernatural and Gothic imagery in fiction. Scott's appreciation especially emerges for the two Gothic authors par excellence, Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe, whom he both recognizes as leading personalities in this peculiar style of literary composition. As regards Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Scott particularly applauds the author's capacity "to draw such a picture of domestic life and manners, during the feudal times, as might actually have existed, and to paint it checkered and agitated by the action of supernatural machinery, such as the superstition of the period received as a matter of devout credulity".¹¹⁶ According to Scott, through such a faithful historical portrayal, Walpole goes beyond the art of arousing terror, allowing the reader to adopt the perspective of his novel feudal inhabitants in their perception of the supernatural:

The remote and superstitious period in which his scene is laid, - the art with which he has furnished forth its Gothic decorations, - the sustained, and in general, the dignified tone of feudal manners, - prepare us gradually for the favourable reception of prodigies, which, though they could not really have happened at any period, were consistent with the belief of all mankind at that in which the action is placed. It was, therefore, the author's object, not merely to excite surprise and terror, by the introduction of supernatural agency, but to wind up the feelings of his reader till they became for a moment identified with those of a ruder age, which 'held each strange tale devoutly true'.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Kerr, J., *Fiction against History: Scott as a Storyteller*, cit., pp. 5-6.

¹¹⁶ Scott, W., *Horace Walpole*, now in *Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction*, cit., p. 87.

¹¹⁷ Ivi, pp. 88-89.

Scott also praises Walpole's purity of language, characterized by a sustained chivalric tone achieved not by employing difficult antiquarian terms but by excluding the modern ones, as well as the simplicity of his narrative, whose lack of descriptive passages makes the dialogue its greater strength.¹¹⁸ However, it is for Ann Radcliffe that the Scottish novelist arguably reserves the warmest compliments, praising her exuberant imagination, the vividness of her works, and defining her not only as the "mistress of the art of exciting curiosity", but also as "the first poetess of romantic fiction".¹¹⁹ Indeed, Scott admires Radcliffe's sapient use of obscurity and suspense, and finds great inspiration in her "luxuriant, florid, and high-varnished landscape painting",¹²⁰ which is typical of her novels and which made her "the first to introduce into her prose fictions a beautiful and fanciful tone of natural description" that up until then had been a prerogative of poetry.¹²¹ In Scott's eyes, Ann Radcliffe represents a sort of unrivalled queen of the Gothic mode; and yet, there is one thing he does criticize about her writings:

the rule which the author imposed upon herself, that all the circumstances of her narrative however mysterious, and apparently superhuman, were to be accounted for on natural principles, at the winding up of the story. It must be allowed, that this has not been done with uniform success, and that the author has been occasionally more successful in exciting interest and apprehension, than in giving wither interest or dignity of explanation to the means she has made use of.¹²²

Scott affirms that Radcliffe's unhappy resolution to attribute ordinary, rational causes to the extraordinary, supernatural events of her narratives, not only extinguishes the effect of their suspense, but also the reader's enthusiasm and interest in them, ultimately discouraging to go beyond one single reading of her novels.¹²³ Therefore, we may deduce that, according to Scott, in order to achieve a successful Gothic narrative and keep its ominous atmosphere intact, the supernatural events of a novel

¹¹⁸ Cf. Scott, W., *Horace Walpole*, now in *Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction*, cit., pp. 92-93.

¹¹⁹ Scott, W., *Ann Radcliffe*, now in *ivi*, cit., pp. 102-119, p. 103, 118.

¹²⁰ Scott, W., *Horace Walpole*, now in *ivi*, p. 93.

¹²¹ Scott, W., *Ann Radcliffe*, now in *ivi*, p. 118.

¹²² *Ivi*, p. 115.

¹²³ Cf. *Ivi*, pp. 115-118.

should be left unexplained and preserved in their mystery until the end. With the very same purpose, in his essay *On the Supernatural in Fictitious Compositions*, Scott also adds that “the exhibition of supernatural appearances in fictitious narrative ought to be rare, brief, indistinct”,¹²⁴ because exaggerating this kind of events, both in amount and in description, would weaken rather than increase their effect. That is why, for example, a supernatural creature such as a ghost, should not appear too often, mingle too much in the events of the story, or become too chatty.¹²⁵

Such suggestions about the Gothic mode and the use of the supernatural find direct realization in Scott’s novels. *The Bride of Lammermoor*, in particular, is a clear example of how he imitates but also discards certain aspects of the works of his Gothic predecessors, thus overcoming what he thought to be their limits. As a matter of fact, thanks to his interest and knowledge of Scottish history, Scott portrays the historical reality of *The Bride of Lammermoor* more accurately than Walpole does in his narratives. Besides, while adopting and privileging Radcliffe’s Gothic descriptive mode, he certainly does not abandon the dramatic one, in this way finding a narrative balance between description and dialogue – or we should say, between Radcliffe’s considerable quantity of descriptions and Walpole’s lack of them. Finally, differently from Radcliffe, he leaves all the supernatural events and mysteries of the novel unexplained, but, at the same time, he never exaggerates in their quantity or depiction. Indeed, the novel supernatural incidents and Gothic component are constantly balanced by an extremely rational narration of the events. After all, as noticed in the previous chapter, the perfect intertwining between such contrasting modes – Gothic romance and realistic, historical plot – is one of the features that contributes to the unicity of *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

For all these reasons, *The Bride of Lammermoor* is a wonderful example of Scott’s appropriation and refinement of the Gothic tradition, and the *Waverley Novels* in general show how the Scottish

¹²⁴ Scott, W., *Ann Radcliffe*, now in *Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction*, cit., p. 316.

¹²⁵ Cf. *Ibidem*.

author clearly “breathed new life into the old forms”,¹²⁶ contributing to reinvent the Gothic mode itself:

For the outworn motifs and machinery of the romance of sentimental adventure, Scott offered equivalents which afforded the reader the same excitement while they carried all the conviction of real life. The wicked marquis’s, the scheming monks, the savage banditti, and phantoms of the Gothicists were transformed by the Wizard of the North into the genuine outlaws, clerics, border barons, and ghosts of Highland tradition; the operatic landscapes with castles and ruins metamorphosed into the actual mountains, forests, glens, caverns, and impregnable fortresses of the North country.¹²⁷

2.2 Gothic and Supernatural aspects in *The Bride of Lammermoor*

Notwithstanding Scott’s own attempt to dissociate *The Bride of Lammermoor* from the tale of terror by claiming that it is “an OWER TRUE TALE”,¹²⁸ the strength of the Gothic vein in the novel is undeniable. The simple fact that the novel is based on a legend – the Darlymple legend – further highlights Scott’s taste for the mysterious and for ballads, which is strictly connected to his appreciation of Gothic fiction. It is certainly not by chance that various critics recognize the novel Gothic quality as intertwined with its ballad-like action and use of the preternatural.¹²⁹ Even the very circumstances of the novel composition, as recounted by Lockhart in his influential account, are somehow Gothic and “encouraged interpretations which make it seem the product of Scott’s deepest desires and fears, released by the delirium of illness”.¹³⁰ Indeed, when the Third Series of *Tales of My Landlord* was written and published, Scott was so gravely ill that not only his family, but almost

¹²⁶ Mayo, R. D., *How long was Gothic Fiction in Vogue?*, “Modern Language Notes”, Vol. 58, No.1, 1943, pp. 58-64, p. 64.

¹²⁷ Ibidem.

¹²⁸ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXIV, p. 340.

¹²⁹ While recognizing the Gothic quality of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Hook comments on its ballad-like action, Levine affirms that it employs “traditional folk and ballad materials far more centrally than most of Scott’s other novels”, and Hart declares that it could be considered a Border ballad because of its use of the preternatural and of folk chorus. See: Hook, A. D., ‘*The Bride of Lammermoor*’: a Reexamination, cit., p. 111; Levine, G., *Exorcising the Past: Scott’s ‘The Bride of Lammermoor’*, cit., p. 394; Hart, F. R., *Scott’s Novels*, cit., p. 308.

¹³⁰ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. x.

all Edinburgh believed that he would die.¹³¹ In particular, Lockhart reveals that the acute physical suffering had even obliged him to dictate part of *The Bride of Lammermoor* to two amanuenses, William Laidlaw and John Ballantyne:

John Ballantyne told me, that after the first day he always took care to have a dozen of pens made before he seated himself opposite to the sofa on which Scott lay, and that though he often turned himself on his pillow with a groan of torment, he usually continued the sentence in the same breath. But when the dialogue of peculiar animation was in progress, spirit seemed to triumph altogether over matter – he arose from his couch and walked up and down the room raising and lowering his voice, and as it were acting the parts.¹³²

However, the oddest and most surprising thing is that when Scott received the ultimate published version of *The Bride of Lammermoor*,

he did not recollect one single incident, character, or conversation it contained! He did not desire me to understand, nor did I understand, that his illness had erased from his memory the original incidents of the story, with which he had been acquainted from his boyhood. These remained rooted where they had ever been [...] but he literally recollected nothing else – not a single character woven by the romancer, not one of the many scenes and points of humour, nor anything with which he was connected as the writer of the work.¹³³

In suggesting that Scott produced part of *The Bride of Lammermoor* in an almost “drugged-near somnambulism”,¹³⁴ this account has not only increased the attractiveness of the novel, adding a new aspect to its Gothic component, but has also influenced the way in which it is read. Although the extant manuscript in the Signet Library of Edinburgh shows that Scott dictated only the last fifth of the novel in the painful conditions described by Lockhart, critics generally tend to accept and justify with Scott’s altered psychological state *The Bride of Lammermoor*’s special emphasis on the

¹³¹ Cf. Johnson, E., *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*, cit., p. 653.

¹³² Lockhart, J. G., *Life of Scott*, cit., p. 49.

¹³³ Ivi, pp. 64-65.

¹³⁴ Johnson, E., *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*, cit., p. 670.

emotional, the irrational, and supernatural dimension,¹³⁵ which surprised the author himself, who, on reading the novel during his recovery, declared it to be “monstruous and grotesque”.¹³⁶

The Gothic and supernatural dimension of *The Bride of Lammermoor* is particularly strong because, notwithstanding the extremely realistic historical depiction of a politically tormented Scotland at the time of the Union, and of the socio-political and class factors that determine the failure of the protagonists’ engagement, Edgar and Lucy’s love affair is developed in an atmosphere of growing foreboding, and constantly threatened by dark omens, ancient legends, and prophecies, which sinisterly anticipate their tragic fate. The strength of the novel Gothic component is evident from the very second chapter, where the historically accurate description of the decline of the House of Ravenswood is accompanied by the exquisitely Gothic scene of Edgar’s father’s funeral, which is said to be “worthy of an artist’s pencil”,¹³⁷ thus confirming the novel adoption of the pictorial narrative strategy announced in the introductory story of Dick Tinto. In the description of “the ancient and half-ruinous tower” of Wolf’s Crag, which is perched on the edge of a foggy ocean cliff and dramatically symbolises its inhabitants’ decay, of the feudal funeral procession, in which “banner after banner”, armed knights on horseback are solemnly followed by trumpeters and “an immense train of inferior mourners”, and finally, of “the charnel vault, where mouldering coffins showed their tattered velvet and decayed planting, the head of the corpse which was to be their partner in corruption”,¹³⁸ Scott seems to give full rein to the Radcliffian descriptive mode of Gothic picturesque. Such mode characterizes the whole novel, and “stressing emotive ambience and symbol, facilitates significant and powerful unity of mood, thus strengthening the reader-observer’s sense of motive force or fatality”.¹³⁹ The novel sense of fatality is also underlined by the narrator’s voice, who often intervenes to remind the reader of the inevitability of the tragedy. For example, as soon as Lucy is introduced, her tragic fate is also preannounced: “Her life had hitherto flowed on in a uniform and

¹³⁵ Cf. Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xi.

¹³⁶ Lockhart, J. G., *Life of Scott*, cit., p. 65.

¹³⁷ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. II, p. 32.

¹³⁸ Ivi, pp. 31-33.

¹³⁹ Hart, F. R., *Scott’s Novels*, cit., pp. 327-328.

gentle tenor, and happy for her had not its present smoothness of current resembled that of the stream as it glides downwards to the waterfall!”¹⁴⁰ Similarly, we are essentially told that all the efforts made by Edgar to reconcile with his enemies are useless, because those vows of vengeance he had initially pronounced at his father’s funeral against the Ashtons “had been heard and registered in the book of fate”.¹⁴¹ Such sinister comments and predictions are often uttered also by the characters themselves, in particular by the female sibyl figures of the novel, Old Alice and Ailsie Gourlay,¹⁴² and occasionally even by the protagonists. After their separation, Lucy manages to write a few lines to Ravenswood, prophetically fearing her mental breakdown and telling him “I will be true to my word, while the exercise of my reason is vouchsafed to me”.¹⁴³ Likewise, the very last words the heart-broken Edgar directs to Lucy after their engagement is destroyed in the contract-signing scene – “I have nothing farther to say, except to pray to God that you may not become a world’s wonder for this act of wilful and deliberate perjury”¹⁴⁴ – turn out to be ominously prophetic, because in the end, the heroine does become a world’s wonder. In the same way, even sinister omens and old legends about the Ravenswood family reinforce the novel sense of fatality, indicating that the characters “engage in a losing struggle against the evil, inescapable past, and a predetermined future”.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, Sir William Ashton’s fear of a possible vengeance on Edgar’s behalf is evoked by the Ravenswood family’s motto “I bide my time”, which he sees carved upon the vaulted roof of the library at Ravenswood Castle, and whose origin dates back to the ancient legend of Malisius de Ravenswood and his violent revenge against a previous usurper, which occurred in that very same room – once a banqueting hall – where the statesman is now thinking to condemn Edgar for the riot at his father’s funeral. As a matter of fact, the portrait of Malise Ravenswood, still kept in the laundry room at Ravenswood Castle, indicates that Edgar bears a striking resemblance with his ancestor, a disturbing

¹⁴⁰ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. III, p. 42.

¹⁴¹ *Ivi*, Ch. XVII, p. 181.

¹⁴² For further discussion of Old Alice and Ailsie Gourlay, see here 2.3 Female Power: Witch Figures in *The Bride of ‘Lammermoor’*.

¹⁴³ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXVII, p. 290.

¹⁴⁴ *Ivi*, Ch. XXXIII, p. 328.

¹⁴⁵ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xxii.

coincidence which immediately alarms little Henry Ashton, who, at his first meeting with the master, says to his father that Edgar “is the picture of old Malise of Ravenswood, and he is as like it as if he had loupén out of the canvass”.¹⁴⁶ Such portrait stands at the centre of another ominous occurrence when, during Lucy’s wedding, it mysteriously appears in the castle hall, taking the place of Sir William Ashton’s father’s picture, and frowning “wrath and vengeance upon the party assembled below”,¹⁴⁷ especially upon those usurpers who had just inflicted another terrible blow on a Ravenswood. Although we later find out that the old hag Ailsie Gourlay was responsible for the substitution, this incident certainly makes a strong impression on Lucy’s already broken nerves. Indeed, it almost seems that through the portrait, Malise Ravenswood’s violent spirit descends on the heroine, who shortly after stabs Bucklaw, finally taking revenge on the usurpers and destroyers of her future with Edgar. The legend of Malise Ravenswood, however, is not the only one in the novel. Edgar and Lucy’s first encounter at the Mermaid’s Well – universally acknowledged as a fatal spot for the House of Ravenswood, whose Gothic style and ruinous state, like Wolf’s Crag, reflects the decay of the family– is marked by the legend of the Mermaid’s Fountain, which mirrors the tragic romance of the novel protagonists. According to the legend, the love story between Raymond of Ravenswood and the beautiful nymph of the fountain, is tragically destroyed when Edgar’s ancestor decides to disobey her mysterious request that their encounters should last until the hour of vespers, thus provoking the death of the nymph, who plunges into the fountain, arising bubbles “crimsoned with blood”.¹⁴⁸ Aware that his lack of faith caused the death of his beloved, and overcome by remorse, Raymond dies shortly after on a battlefield. Significantly, the Mermaid’s fountain is also the place where Ravenswood and Lucy pledge their troth, and where the truly great supernatural event of the novel, that is, the apparition of Old Alice’s ghost, takes place. Indeed, Alice’s ghost appears to an

¹⁴⁶ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XVIII, p. 195.

¹⁴⁷ *Ivi*, Ch. XXXIV, p. 336.

¹⁴⁸ *Ivi*, Ch. V, p. 58.

astonished Master of Ravenswood to warn him one last time about the danger he runs with his engagement to Lucy:

As he approached, she arose slowly from her seat, held her shrivelled hand up as if to prevent his coming more near, and her withered lips moved fast, although no sound issued from them. Ravenswood stopped; and as, after a moment's pause, he again advanced towards her, Alice, or her apparition, moved or glided backwards towards the thicket, still keeping her face turned towards him. The trees soon hid the form from his sight; and, yielding to the strong and terrific impression that the being which he had seen was not of this world, the Master of Ravenswood remained rooted to the ground whereon he had stood when he caught his last view of her.¹⁴⁹

Despite the exceptionality of the event, we may notice that its description is quite sober. In fact, this passage represents the actual realization of those ideas on the use of the supernatural which Scott confidently expresses in the essay *On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition*, where not only does he affirm that if a ghost appears and speaks too much it is no longer scary, but also claims that the credibility and the horrific effect of supernatural incidents is achieved when they are scarce and not described in exaggerating terms.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, Alice's ghost simply stares at Edgar in complete silence and never appears again.

Even the animal world opposes Edgar's reconciliation with his enemies. At the beginning of the novel, Edgar kills a wild bull to save Sir William and Lucy as they are taking a walk in the Ravenswood estate. This action, which has enormous consequences on the story, acquires symbolic significance precisely because it is performed by Edgar. The narrator explains that, in the past, the protection of the wild cattle was "a point of state [...] of the Scottish nobility", and that although these animals, which descended from "the savage herds which anciently roamed in the Caledonian forests", "had degenerated from the ancient race in size and strength [...] they retained, however, in some measure, the ferocity of their ancestry".¹⁵¹ Clearly, these wild bulls symbolize the declining

¹⁴⁹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXIII, p. 246.

¹⁵⁰ See above pp. 32-33, notes 123-124.

¹⁵¹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. V, p. 54.

aristocratic order and, for this reason, are to be associated with the House of Ravenswood, whose heraldic symbol is, in fact, a black bull's head.¹⁵² Therefore, "when the bull attacks Ashton, we cannot but feel that the animal is symbolically expressing the animosity of the ancient estate towards its bourgeois usurper".¹⁵³ Indeed, the bull's attack represents the vengeful action Edgar should naturally take on his enemy according to his historical position. And probably, if it had not been for Lucy's presence, we suspect that Edgar, who certainly did not find himself by chance in the estate, would have shot Sir William, or, at least, he would have let the bull kill him. Instead, by choosing to shoot the bull, Edgar seems to abandon his vows of revenge and to betray history itself, sacrificing "the natural enmity that exists between the Ashtons and the Ravenswoods".¹⁵⁴ Later in the novel, another animal strictly connected to the Ravenswoods is killed. Immediately after Edgar and Lucy pledge their troth at the Mermaid's Fountain, an arrow unexpectedly shot by Henry Ashton strikes a raven – the only witness of their secret promise – which had been sitting strangely close to them, and which falls dead at Lucy's feet, staining her dress with blood. Like the wild bull, the raven, which obviously inspired the name of the ancient family and is reported to be "one of the wildest birds that flies",¹⁵⁵ embodies the fierceness of the House of Ravenswood. However, as Edgar explains, "ravens are all under the protection of the Lords of Ravenswood, and to kill one in their presence is such bad luck that it deserves the stab".¹⁵⁶ For this reason, the raven's death can only symbolise Edgar's own death, and the bloodstains on Lucy's dress tragically anticipate "her night-clothes torn and dabbled with blood"¹⁵⁷ of her wedding-night.

Like the animal world, even nature intertwines with the supernatural to ominously discourage any kind of relationship between the two rival families.¹⁵⁸ This is particularly evident when, after the hunt and without knowing their identity, Ravenswood feels compelled to give shelter to Sir William and

¹⁵² Cf. *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. III, p. 38.

¹⁵³ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 134.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁵ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XX, p. 210.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁷ *Ivi*, Ch. XXXIV, p. 337.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., pp. 134-135.

Lucy at Wolf's Crag due to an approaching storm. Despite being the cause of such visit, the storm, which continues to rage for the whole stay of Sir William and Lucy at the tower, seems to strongly oppose the encounter between the two enemies, and anticipates the violent tempest that will finally shake the protagonists' life. In fact, no sooner has Edgar kissed Lucy in greeting than:

the apartment was suddenly illuminated by a flash of lightning, which seemed absolutely to swallow the darkness of the hall. Every object might have been for an instant seen distinctly. [...] Its disappearance was almost instantly followed by a burst of thunder, for the storm-cloud was very near the castle; and the peal was so sudden and dreadful, that the old tower rocked to its foundation, and every inmate concluded it was falling upon them. The soot, which had not been disturbed for centuries, showered down the huge tunnelled chimneys; lime and dust flew in clouds from the wall; and, whether the lightning had actually struck the castle or whether through the violent concussion of the air, several heavy stones were hurled from the mouldering battlements into the roaring sea beneath. It might seem as if the ancient founder of the castle were bestriding the thunderstorm and proclaiming his displeasure at the reconciliation of his descendant with the enemy of his house.¹⁵⁹

However, it is through Kelpie's flow quicksand that nature most evidently opposes the reconciliation between the two rival families, apparently murdering those who dare alter ancient customs and enmities.¹⁶⁰ The quicksand of Kelpie's flow stands at the centre of Thomas the Rhymer's prophecy, which foresees Edgar's death and the definitive destruction of the House of Ravenswood:

When the last Laird of Ravenswood to Ravenswood shall ride,
And woo a dead maiden to be his bride,
He shall stable his steed in the Kelpie's flow,
And his name shall be lost for evermoe!"¹⁶¹

Recited by Caleb Balderstone, Edgar's faithful and superstitious servant, as he tries to dissuade his master from joining Sir William and Lucy at Ravenswood Castle, this prophecy is disregarded by

¹⁵⁹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. X, pp. 125-126.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, in AA.VV. *Storie su Storie*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 1985, pp. 5-30, p. 10.

¹⁶¹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXVIII, p. 185.

Edgar, who apart from his initial Gothic debut at his father's funeral, turns out to be an extremely rational character that does not believe in superstitions. Indeed, Edgar simply tells his servant that he particularly fears Kelpie's Flow quicksand after it swallowed an entire patrol of dragoons and assures him that, as he is a man of sense, he absolutely intends to avoid the place. However, things go quite differently: at the end of the novel, the hero, who is mad with pain and remorse for Lucy's death, accepts her brother's request for a duel, and while riding furiously to the established place, does not realize that he has taken the direction of Kelpie's flow, where he is finally swallowed up by the quicksand. In this way, Thomas the Rhymer's prophecy is ultimately and disturbingly fulfilled.

All in all, as regards the supernatural in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, we may notice that the novel presents more symbolic omens, prophetic comments, and legends, rather than grand preternatural phenomena. In fact, the truly great supernatural event of the novel is the apparition of Old Alice's ghost, which as we have already pointed out, Scott describes in a quite sober way, following his own ideas on the fictional treatment of this kind of incidents. In general, such sober tone characterizes the narration of all the ominous events and legends of the novel, and that is probably why Hook thinks that the form and the style of *The Bride of Lammermoor* seem to rationalize its romantic incidents.¹⁶² Indeed, the whole treatment of the supernatural in *The Bride of Lammermoor* "is ambiguous and subtly suggestive, rather than overt and manifestly incredible",¹⁶³ so much so that Punter even asserts that Scott makes "a non-Gothic use of the supernatural".¹⁶⁴ As a matter of fact, the supernatural does not enter *The Bride of Lammermoor* to frighten and provide the excessive horrors of the Gothic novels, but to emphasize its sense of fatality, the role of destiny, and the inevitability of the final tragedy. On the other hand, it is worth noticing that, although the novel supernatural incidents may not be narrated as vivaciously as in other Gothic tales, all of them are entirely preserved in their gloomy mystery. Indeed, differently from Ann Radcliffe, Scott is careful about not spoiling the final

¹⁶² Cf. Hook, A. D., 'The Bride of Lammermoor': a Reexamination, cit., pp. 112-113.

¹⁶³ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 135.

¹⁶⁴ Punter, D., *The Literature of Terror*, cit., p. 144.

effect of the novel ominous occurrences, legends, and prophecies, by eventually justifying them with a natural, disappointing cause; nor does he deprive them of their truth: all in all, the legends of Malise Ravenswood and of the Mermaiden's Fountain accurately anticipate the future, and ultimately, Old Alice's and Ailsie's predictions, and especially, Thomas the Rhymer's prophecy, are fulfilled. Clearly, Scott does not wish nor need to translate the novel supernatural events in ordinary and historical terms: he simply leaves them unexplained, in this way maintaining their unsettling effect.

However, although Scott does not attribute ordinary causes to supernatural occurrences, interestingly he does provide a parallel, separate account of these incidents according to a rational perspective. Indeed, as Cockshut points out, Scott "was writing with great intelligence and control about the relation between fact and legend. But instead of analysing the difference as most people would do in a like case, he places the fact and the legend side by side at every point in the story".¹⁶⁵ For example, the bull's attack is not only explained symbolically, but also rationally, as caused "by the scarlet colour of Miss Ashton's mantle, or by one of those fits of capricious ferocity to which their dispositions are liable".¹⁶⁶ Similarly, when Edgar sees Lucy sitting on the stones of the Mermaiden's Fountain, the narrator comments that "to a superstitious eye" she might have seemed the Nymph of the legend, but that to the rational Ravenswood she simply appeared as "a female exquisitely beautiful".¹⁶⁷ Likewise, if on the one hand Edgar's tragic ending at Kelpie's flow determines the fulfilment of Thomas the Rhymer's prophecy, on the other, a parallel, reasonable explanation of the circumstances of his death is given when we are told that:

it only appeared that the late winds and high tides had greatly extended the usual bounds of the quicksand, and that the unfortunate horseman, as appeared from the hoof-tracks, in his precipitate haste, had not attended to keep on the firm sands on the foot of the rock, but had taken the shortest and most dangerous course".¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Cockshut, A. O. J., *The Achievement of Walter Scott*, London, 1969, quoted in Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 136.

¹⁶⁶ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. V, p. 55.

¹⁶⁷ *Ivi*, Ch. XX, p. 205.

¹⁶⁸ *Ivi*, Ch. XXXV, pp. 347-348.

In this way, the reader is allowed to see the same event in both a natural and a supernatural light, that is, according to a modern, rational view, or an ancient, superstitious perspective. Indeed, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, supernatural occurrences and beliefs are clearly ascribed to the past and to the obsolete consciousness of its feudal inhabitants,¹⁶⁹ while rational thought is instead associated with the present, thus implying a clear separation between the old and the modern world, where such unrealistic convictions and events are not contemplated.¹⁷⁰ In order to further strengthen the connection between past consciousness and supernatural incidents, Scott usually employs those characters who are the most deeply rooted in local folklore and in superstition to narrate them. In his essay *On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition*, he indeed declares that “the legend of the common people, by assigning peculiar features, localities, and specialities to the incidents which it holds in memory, gives life and spirit to the frigid and dry narrative which tells the fact alone”.¹⁷¹ That is why it is Caleb Balderstone, Edgar’s superstitious butler, who recites the prophecy of Thomas the Rhymer, while the deadly predictions on the protagonists’ fate are respectively made by an old servant and an old village hag; all these characters being the last survivors of a fading feudal world, who ignore the economic and political factors causing its decline, which they can only justify with ancient superstitions and a sense of supernatural fatality. Therefore, it appears that Scott aims at giving a realistic portrayal of the novel historical period not only by recreating its social and political situation, but also by depicting the mindset of the people who lived at that time, as he wrote in his essay on Walpole, as genuinely “agitated by the action of supernatural machinery”.¹⁷² For this reason, it is possible to affirm that, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Scott also carries out the task he believed Walpole had accomplished in *The Castle of Otranto*.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Kerr, J., *Fiction against History: Scott as a Storyteller*, cit., p. 7.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Levine, G., *Exorcising the Past: Scott’s ‘The Bride of Lammermoor’*, cit., pp. 381-385.

¹⁷¹ Scott, W., *On the Supernatural in Fictitious Compositions*, now in *Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction*, cit., pp. 319-320.

¹⁷² Scott, W., *Horace Walpole*, now in *ivi*, p. 87.

¹⁷³ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 136.

However, Scott's use of the supernatural goes even further. As Villari argues, in the *Waverley Novels*, not only does the supernatural attribute the historically determined decline of the aristocracy – which Edgar represents – to an eternal recurrence of ancient guilts, but it also seems to put up a sort of resistance to the inexorable unfolding of history towards a certain direction.¹⁷⁴ We have indeed seen how in *The Bride of Lammermoor* legends, prophecies, sinister omens, natural elements, and even animal attacks, tend to encourage past resentment, and denounce Edgar's replacement of his feudal vows of vengeance with his love for Lucy as a betrayal of his own identity as a Ravenswood. In fact, it clearly appears that not only the real world of politics and society, but also the supernatural is not ready to give up ancient enmities and embrace that reconciliation between classes which the marriage of Edgar and Lucy would prospect, and which history will demonstrate as inevitable. Therefore, in decisively opposing Edgar and Lucy's engagement, the novel supernatural forces try to resist the natural course of history, which is not only moving towards a reconciliation, but even a fusion between the new bourgeois nobility – represented by Lucy – and the ancient feudal aristocracy – represented by Edgar. In the case of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, such forces do succeed, for Edgar and Lucy's attempt to end the feud between their families is tragically too ahead of their time. Nevertheless, the victory of the backward movement of the supernatural towards the past is only temporary, for the inexorable movement of history towards the future will show that the fusion between the once rival classes will be total.

2.3 Female Power: Witch Figures in *The Bride of Lammermoor*

One of the most fascinating features of *The Bride of Lammermoor* is certainly Scott's Gothic portrayal of its surprisingly powerful female characters. Lady Ashton in particular, but also Blind Alice, Ailsie Gurlay, and eventually even the novel heroine, Lucy Ashton, display an exceptional

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., pp. 5-16.

amount of influence and strength, which exceeds that of their male counterparts, who, due to their insecure personality, or their obliviousness and inexperience, appear as totally vulnerable to female power. Indeed, the novel presents rather weak male characters, and is instead characterized and “profoundly troubled by images of female rule and female violence”,¹⁷⁵ so much so that, significantly, the only surviving character of the story – Lady Ashton – is evil and female.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, Hart notices that although the novel “motivating conflict is between two ostensibly well-meaning men, the ultimate antagonists are women, one tragically strong, the other tragically weak”.¹⁷⁷ The opposition between hapless damsels and strong, dangerous women already featured in Scott’s narrative poetry, where Nancy Moore Goslee identifies two main female figures: the pawns, usually heiresses and victims of struggles over money and land; and the witches, romantically dominant women who try to alienate men from social responsibility in a stable culture, or to replace them in that culture.¹⁷⁸ Evidently, *The Bride of Lammermoor* inherits such opposition, for Lucy Ashton clearly appears as the pawn of her imposing and masculine mother, Lady Ashton, a witch-virago who completely dominates her husband and is willing to sacrifice anything, even her daughter’s happiness and sanity, to raise the family power and status. However, things are rendered even more interesting by the novel final twist, when Lucy herself transforms into a dark, murderous, and powerful predator, who, nevertheless, in her extreme, desperate gesture does not cease to be a victim.

Such ambiguous portrayal of *The Bride of Lammermoor* female characters shows Scott’s own conflicting attitude toward the social role of women: if on the one hand, through the tragic figure of Lucy, he strongly denounces the conditions of women as victims of social and political injustice, on the other, he also clearly exposes the evils of female power, especially through the character of Lady Ashton. What is more, the novel certainly reinforces that association of femininity with insanity and

¹⁷⁵ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xxiii.

¹⁷⁶ Ivi, p. xviii.

¹⁷⁷ Hart, F. R., *Scott’s Novels*, cit., p. 327.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Goosle, N. M., *Women in Scott’s Narrative Poetry*, in *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. by Anne K. Mellor, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988, pp. 115-136, p. 115.

irrationality typical of nineteenth-century literature,¹⁷⁹ especially by showing “Lucy’s madness as a pattern of female behaviour in the novel as a whole”.¹⁸⁰ In fact, the heroine’s final rebellion is just the culmination of a series of transgressive actions performed by the other novel female characters, who are all sucked into association with the supernatural, thus forming a “demonic matriarchy”¹⁸¹ of witch figures that belong to three different generations. Indeed, Lady Ashton, who is the pivotal point of such matriarchy, combines features of both the older generation – represented by Old Alice and the three hags – and the younger – represented instead by Lucy.¹⁸² Evidently, *The Bride of Lammermoor* privileges the depiction of older rather than younger women, for the only girl of the novel is the heroine, who notably lacks the company of a peer, but knows instead “all the old women in the country”.¹⁸³ Apparently, Scott ignored the conviction according to which “a woman who has outlived her primary role in the economy of sexual reproduction, should also have a lesser part to play in the narrative economy of romance”,¹⁸⁴ for his novels, as *The Bride of Lammermoor* clearly shows, considerably explore the potential of old female figures. The most influential among this kind of characters is probably the earliest Scott created, Meg Merrilies, the sibylline old queen of gypsies in *Guy Mannering* (1816); but also Mause Headrigg and Lady Margaret Bellenden in *Old Mortality* (1816), Helen MacGregor in *Rob Roy* (1818), Meg Murdockson in *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1818), Ulrica in *Ivanhoe* (1820), and Norna in *The Pirate* (1822) are to be included in this category.¹⁸⁵ Finally, the presence of Lady Ashton, Old Alice, and the three hags in *The Bride of Lammermoor* proves that this novel, in particular, contains a peculiar concentration of such older fascinating female figures. Among them, those who appear as immediately and evidently associated with the

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Martin, P. W., *Mad Women in Romantic Writing* [1987], Brighton, The Harvester Press Limited, 1987, p. 6.

¹⁸⁰ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xxiii.

¹⁸¹ Duncan, I., *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* [1992], Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 142.

¹⁸² Cf. Jackson Houlston, C.M., *Gendering Walter Scott: Sex, Violence, and Romantic Period Writing* [2017], London, Routledge, 2017, p. 50.

¹⁸³ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. III, p. 45.

¹⁸⁴ Jackson Houlston, C.M., *Gendering Walter Scott*, cit., p. 41.

¹⁸⁵ Ivi, p. 42.

supernatural are Old Alice and the sinister hag-trio composed of Ailsie Gourlay, Annie Winnie, and Maggie.

Old blind Alice Gray is “the last retainer of the House of Ravenswood”,¹⁸⁶ who, against her will, accepted to remain on the estate after it had passed into the Ashtons' possession, and who constantly regrets the decline of her previous masters and the change of times and property. She inspires respect and fascination from the first moment Lucy introduces her not only as “the best authority” and custodian of the ancient stories regarding the Ravenswood family, but also as “the very empress of old women”, a countess both in language and in behaviour, who despite being old, blind and paralytic, has an impressive acuteness of perception and dignity of manners.¹⁸⁷ The description of “her air at once of majesty and of dejection”,¹⁸⁸ of her commanding figure, and her masculine beauty at her first appearance by her miserable cottage during Lucy and Sir William's visit, denote her as “a potential Meg Merrilies, at once Wordsworthian relic and sybilline guardian of a vanishing way of life”,¹⁸⁹ whose sober pride and unbreakable spirit transpire from her extraordinarily expressive face. Indeed, Alice's sightless eyes cannot “mar the countenance to which they could add nothing”,¹⁹⁰ and do not preclude her neither from being a perspicacious observer nor from using the prophetic power which instead the eyes of her understanding grant her. Such ability is evident from the very beginning, when Lucy tells her father that, despite being blind, the old woman “has some way of looking into your very heart”.¹⁹¹ Later in the novel, it is Alice herself who admits that, although her mortal sight does not allow her to see the objects that surround her, she may have instead the gift to look with more steadiness into future events,¹⁹² thus confirming her genuine powers of prophecy. In fact, not only is Alice referred to as an old sibyl by both Sir William Ashton and Edgar, but is also generally thought

¹⁸⁶ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXIII, p. 247.

¹⁸⁷ Ivi, Ch. III, p. 45.

¹⁸⁸ Ivi, Ch. IV, p. 48.

¹⁸⁹ Duncan, I., *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel*, cit., p. 142.

¹⁹⁰ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. IV, p. 49.

¹⁹¹ Ivi, Ch. III, p. 45.

¹⁹² Cf. Ivi, Ch. XIX, p. 201.

to be a witch, who escaped from being burnt many years before.¹⁹³ Therefore, Old Alice's connection with the supernatural mainly stands in her reputation as a sybil and in her prophetic discouraging Edgar and Lucy from any possible relationship. Addressing the Master of Ravenswood during his stay with the Ashtons, she passionately declares:

I would have you depart these fatal bounds, where your love as well as your hatred, threatens sure mischief, or at least disgrace, both to yourself and others. I would shield, were it in the power of this withered hand, the Ashtons from you, and you from them, and both from their own passions. You can have nothing in common – ought to have nothing in common with them – Begone from among them [...] I will tell you the source of my apprehensions, whether my candour be for good or for evil. – Lucy Ashton loves you, Lord of Ravenswood! [...] if you remain here, her destruction, or yours, or that of both will be the inevitable consequence of her misplaced attachment. [...] If you remain an hour under Sir William Ashton's roof without the resolution to marry his daughter, you are a villain – if with the purpose of allying yourself with him, you are an infatuated and predestined fool.¹⁹⁴

Like the threatening tall rock beetling over Alice's cottage, such oracles ominously menace the protagonists. Indeed, the sibyl's warnings to Lucy and especially Edgar about their ill-fated relationship, as well as her solemn admonitions to Sir William Ashton about his being on the brink of a precipice for having “drawn on matters too hardly with so fierce a race as those of Ravenswood”,¹⁹⁵ should have certainly been listened and followed, for eventually they prove accurate as both the lovers and their families are tragically destroyed. Alice's connection with the preternatural, however, does not end with her oracles: as previously noticed, she is also the great protagonist of the sole supernatural event of the novel, when her ghost appears to Edgar at the Mermaiden's Fountain to fulfil the wish she had expressed before dying, that is, to “see her master's son once more, and renew her warnings”.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, after learning that Alice died as the clock tolled one without meeting him one last time, Edgar “remembers with internal shuddering, that he had heard

¹⁹³ Cf. *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XV, p. 162; Ch. XIX, p. 199; Ch. XXIII, p. 245.

¹⁹⁴ *Ivi*, Ch. XIX, pp. 201-203.

¹⁹⁵ *Ivi*, Ch. XV, p. 168.

¹⁹⁶ *Ivi*, Ch. XXIII, pp. 247-248.

the chime sound through the wood just before he had seen what he was now much disposed to consider as the spectre of the deceased”.¹⁹⁷ Certainly, the fact of being both a sibyl and the only ghost in the novel highlights the Gothic and mysterious dimension of Old Alice, who is generally presented as a positive witch figure. Her blindness as well as her elegant manners, intelligence, and cleanliness grant her the respect of her social superiors, who also regard her with sympathy because she had to endure the loss of her husband and children. Alice was also a wife and a mother, a detail which certainly contributes to humanize her; and if on the one hand, outliving her whole family denotes a female strength that aligns her with Lady Ashton – who, eventually, is the sole survivor among the Ashtons – on the other, the genuinely affectionate and motherly attitude Alice shows not only when talking about her dead husband and children,¹⁹⁸ but also towards the novel young protagonists, clearly distances her from Lucy’s cruel mother. In fact, although Alice’s prophetic warnings may be disturbing, they certainly mean no harm, and prove her concern for the safety of both Ravenswood and Lucy. For all these reasons, Alice distinguishes herself from the other witch figures of the novel: while she appears as a positive sibyl, Ailsie Gourlay, her two companions, and Lady Ashton are instead portrayed as real demonic forces.¹⁹⁹

Like Alice, also the eighty-year-old Ailsie Gourlay, the lame Annie Winnie, and the paralytic Maggie are referred to as sibyls; but they are described as “ill-boding sibyls”, addressed to as “damned hags”, and even compared to croaking churchyard “ravens that anticipate pestilence”.²⁰⁰ Throughout the novel, they are constantly associated with images of death, for when they are not laying out corpses, they sit in cemeteries making deadly predictions and hoping for future funerals. Their spiritual corruption, their rough and filthy external look, and their use of Scot dialect instead of standard English, clearly mark them as morally and socially inferior to Old Alice. In depicting the hags, Scott clearly found inspiration in the Shakespearean tradition, for they are three and remind us

¹⁹⁷ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXIII, pp. 247-248.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Ivi, Ch. IV, p. 50.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Jackson Houlston, C.M., *Gendering Walter Scott*, cit., p. 52.

²⁰⁰ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXIV, p. 334; Ch. XXXV, p. 342.

to the three witches in *Macbeth*, as Edgar himself thinks when he meets them at Alice's hut, where they have come to prepare her corpse for the funeral rites, in one of the most Gothic scenes of the novel.²⁰¹ As the narrator explains, among the Scottish peasants such task was destined to women, and Ailsie, Annie Winnie and Maggie find a singular, ghastly delight in laying out the dead, especially if they are corpses of men. Indeed, talking about a young man killed by Edgar's father some years before, Annie Winnie refers to the physical beauty of his body in a much directly sexual way: "I was at the winding of the corpse; and when the bluid was washed off, he was a bonny bouk of man's body".²⁰² Her fantasies about Edgar are even gloomier, considering that he is alive but "viewed sexually only through the lens of his projected death".²⁰³ "He's a frank man and a free-handed man, the Master [...] and a comely personage – broad in the shouthers, and narrow around the lungies – he wad mak a bonny corpse – I wad like to hae the streaking and winding o' him".²⁰⁴ Such appreciation is part of a dialogue in which Annie and Ailsie also confirm their reputation as witches and their contact with the occult:

"[...] They prick us and they pine us, and they pit us on the pinnywinkles for witches; and, if I say my prayers backwards ten times ower, Satan will never gie me amends o' them."

"Did ye ever see the foul thief?" asked her neighbour [Ailsie].

"Na!" replied the other spokeswoman [Annie Winnie]; "but I trow I hae dreamed of him mony a time, and I think the day will come they will burn me for't." ²⁰⁵

Although neither of them reveals a direct knowledge of Satan, we soon find out that especially Ailsie, the most clever and diabolical of the witch trio, perfectly knows how to use her reputation as a witch both to evoke fear and make profit among her neighbours. Ailsie Gourlay is indeed the "female agent of hell"²⁰⁶ whom Lady Ashton employs as a nurse to break Lucy's fragile spirit and

²⁰¹ Cf. *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXIII, p. 249.

²⁰² Ivi, p. 250.

²⁰³ Jackson Houlston, C.M., *Gendering Walter Scott*, cit., p. 52.

²⁰⁴ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXIII, p. 251.

²⁰⁵ Ibidem.

²⁰⁶ Ivi, Ch. XXXI, p. 314.

attain the absolute subjugation of her mind, with the cruel purpose of marrying her to Bucklaw instead of Ravenswood. A task in which the old hag masterfully triumphs: taking advantage of Lucy's vulnerability and gradually narrowing "her magical circle around the devoted victim",²⁰⁷ Ailsie tells the heroine exaggerated versions of the legends about the Ravenswood family, interprets her dreams, and directs her "thoughts to the means of inquiring into futurity – the surest mode perhaps, of shaking the understanding and destroying the spirits".²⁰⁸ In this way, the malign sybil manages to conquer Lucy's confidence and to become her malefic guide, thus occupying the place which had previously belonged to Old Alice. For this reason, Ailsie, whose name is significantly an agrammatical version of "Alice",²⁰⁹ can be regarded as Alice's evil alter ego: if Alice was a wise monitor and benign counsellor, Ailsie is instead an "old Sycorax"²¹⁰ – to continue with Shakespearean parallels – who plays a decisive role in driving Lucy to insanity. Being sybils, Alice and Ailsie also share the gift of prophecy. However, while Alice's prophetic words are mainly warnings aiming to protect both Lucy and Edgar, on the contrary, Ailsie sinisterly cherishes her predictions about the protagonists' death, which prove to be sinisterly accurate. At Lucy's grand wedding, she announces that her funeral will soon follow: "her winding sheet is up as high as her throat already, believe it wha list. Her sand has but few grains to rin out; and nae wonder--they've been weel shaken. The leaves are withering fast on the trees, but she'll never see the Martinmas wind gar them dance in swirls like the fairy rings".²¹¹ Similarly, she also foresees Edgar's death on two occasions; the first after meeting him at Alice's hut: "It is written on his brow [...] that hand of woman, or of man either, will never straught him: dead-deal will never be laid on his back, make you your market of that, for I hae it frae a sure hand."²¹² The second, after spotting him in the procession of mourners at Lucy's funeral: "There's a thirteenth amang them that they ken naething about; and, if auld freits say true, there's ane o' that company

²⁰⁷ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXI, p. 312.

²⁰⁸ Ivi, p. 313.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Duncan, I., *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel*, cit., p. 143.

²¹⁰ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXI, p. 312.

²¹¹ Ivi, Ch. XXXIV, p. 334.

²¹² Ivi, Ch. XXIII, p. 251.

that'll no be lang for this world”²¹³ For all these reasons, Ailsie Gourlay clearly appears as a truly detestable character, and the narrator thinks to give us some comfort by telling us she was tried, condemned, and burnt for her crimes. However, as Fay points out, “Ailsie, the witch who is finally punished by the law for her part in the tragedy, is only a scapegoat for the evil mother and the real witch of the novel, Lady Ashton”²¹⁴

The unloving and manipulative Lady Ashton, “condemned as a false mother and an overbearing wife, is the most obvious image of female insubordination and the misrule to which it leads”²¹⁵ A new Lady Macbeth, Lady Ashton is a skilled social climber and politician with limitless ambitions, ready to do and sacrifice anything – even her own children – in the name of power. Her ability in politics is undeniable: like her opportunist husband, she clearly feels at home in “the troubled waters of a state divided by factions”, but has “more decided views of aggrandizement” and is more determined than him to pursue the family’s interests.²¹⁶ At the beginning of the novel, while Sir William is at home with the family, she is instead notably absent from Ravenswood Castle, because engaged in some political intrigue, first in Edinburgh and then at court, in London. She is also reported to be “immovably attached to the party now in power, with whom she maintained a close correspondence and alliance”,²¹⁷ and to have great ambitions for her eldest son Sholto, whom she hopes one day will become a member of the British Parliament.²¹⁸ From the very first chapters, she is therefore presented as an uncommonly strong, domineering, and masculine woman, who maintains a wifely and motherly attitude only for the sake of appearances, for she clearly turns out to be a dehumanized mother incapable of tenderness. Highly-born as a Douglas – an ancient Scottish aristocratic family, much superior to that recently enriched of her husband – majestically stately and strict, extremely religious, and apparently impeccable in manners and etiquette, Lady Ashton is

²¹³ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXV, p. 342.

²¹⁴ Fay, E. A., *A Feminist Introduction to Romanticism* [1998], Malden, Blackwell Publishers, 1998, p. 141.

²¹⁵ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xxiii.

²¹⁶ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. II, p. 27, p. 30.

²¹⁷ Ivi, Ch. XV, p. 164.

²¹⁸ Cf. Ivi, Ch. XXII, p. 228.

generally regarded with respect, but never with affection, not even by her husband, who indeed regards her “with jealous fear, rather than with love or admiration” and trembles at “her proud, vindictive, and predominating spirit”.²¹⁹ On the other hand, Lady Ashton too looks on Sir William’s weaknesses and lower origins with contempt, and “in the haughtiness of a firmer character” – for which she is said to resemble Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, “the embodiment of female domination over a fond queen”²²⁰ – she carries out a female domination over her husband, whose insecurity and middle-way solutions make him the perfect man to be subjugated. Indeed, it is not by chance that Bucklaw defines Lady Ashton as “the Lord Keeper’s Lady Keeper”.²²¹ However, Bucklaw himself ignores to what extent Lady Ashton’s manipulative manoeuvres extend towards him as well: not only has she established his union with Lucy without consulting him, but she has also resolved “to be herself the person who should take the management of the political influence of her destined son-in-law, for the benefit of her eldest-born, Sholto, and all other parties concerned”.²²² Nevertheless, the major masculine victim of Lady Ashton’s machinations and ferocious hatred is Edgar Ravenswood, whom she despises not only for his superior aristocratic origins – he is more strictly related to the Douglasses than she is – which throw “discredit on the newly acquired grandeur of her husband”,²²³ but also for his different political and religious positions – he is a Tory and an Episcopal, she is a Whig and fervent Presbyterian – and for his destitute economic conditions – the bitter irony being that her wealth is hugely based on his poverty. We are told that Lady Ashton “hated, without fearing, the Ravenswood family [...] to such a degree that she would have periled the interest of her own house to have the prospect of altogether crushing that of her enemy”.²²⁴ And so it will be, for the ultimate, probably unsuspected result of her hatred for the House of Ravenswood is the destruction of her own family. In her thirst for violence and revenge – which make her a great representative of

²¹⁹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. II, p. 30; Ch. XV, p. 164.

²²⁰ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xxiii.

²²¹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXI, p. 223.

²²² Ivi, Ch. XXII, p. 228.

²²³ Ivi, Ch. XV, p. 164.

²²⁴ *Ibidem*.

ancient Scottish nobility and very similar to Edgar's own father ²²⁵ – she certainly helps Fate in opposing with all her strength the reconciliation represented by Edgar and Lucy's engagement, and forever destroys their chances of happiness, determined to marry her daughter to Bucklaw, whom she instead favours for being rich and, most importantly, for not being a Ravenswood. Lady Ashton cannot possibly resist such a perfect chance to “strike a blow of deep and decisive vengeance upon one whom she esteemed as her mortal enemy; nor did she hesitate at raising her arm, although she knew that the wound must be dealt through the bosom of her daughter”.²²⁶ Indeed, Lucy is the greatest victim of her mother's unscrupulous manipulations and impositions. Unconcerned about her daughter's feelings and mental sanity, and with the brutal determination of a falcon that never loses sight of his destined quarry,²²⁷ Lady Ashton decides to employ “every species of dire machinery”²²⁸ to break Lucy's mind and resistance. She transforms Ravenswood Castle into a prison, ensuring the control of all the people surrounding her daughter; she intercepts and burns all the letters Lucy and Edgar try to exchange; she has Lucy believe that while abroad, Ravenswood has contracted a marriage to another woman; and, as we already know, she inflicts her the final coup de grâce by employing Ailsie Gourlay as her personal attendant.

In such a destructive female relation, it is possible to recognize the typically Gothic victim-oppressor dynamic, in which Lucy clearly appears as the helpless, virginal, and persecuted heroine, trapped in the old Gothic Castle of Ravenswood – the castle being the major Gothic symbol of masculine repressive power – but where the role of the oppressor is interestingly not played by a male tyrant, but by an equally tyrannical, overbearing woman. It is indeed Lady Ashton that “reconstitutes by herself the patriarchal authority in abeyance, as a Gothic machinery of captivity, surveillance and persuasion”²²⁹ and that, in adopting such manipulative behaviour towards her daughter, also turns out to be as much a witch as Ailsie is, who significantly declares that “there's mair o' utter devilry in that

²²⁵ Shaw, H. E., *The Forms of Historical Fiction*, cit., p. 220

²²⁶ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXX, p. 305.

²²⁷ Cf. Ivi, Ch. II, p. 30.

²²⁸ Ivi, Ch. XXX, p. 306.

²²⁹ Duncan, I., *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel*, cit., p. 142.

woman ... than in a' the Scotch witches that ever flew by moonlight ower North-Berwick Law".²³⁰ In this way, the figures of the witch, of the evil mother, and of the oppressive patriarch, symbolically merge in the character of Lady Ashton. In fact, Fay argues that, for Scott, the witch figure: "replaces the absent or dead good mother as the evil mother who focuses the Gothic; the monstrous woman whose desire for power allows her to manipulate the patriarchal law that should subdue her".²³¹ Therefore, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Scott aligns the destructive power of mothers with witchcraft on the one hand, and with patriarchal law on the other, implying that witchcraft need not be supernatural to be effective, and that sometimes even women may contribute to the patriarchal suppression of their own rights. Indeed, it is not Sir William, but Lady Ashton who uses the patriarchal power to oppress Lucy, and her witchcraft precisely consists in manipulating the patriarchal and religious law according to her own designs.²³² For example, in her confrontation against Ravenswood, she claims that his engagement to Lucy is not valid by applying to the patriarchal Levitical law, which forbids a young woman in her father's house to marry someone of whom her father disapproves – we may also notice that, as the passage does not mention mothers, Lady Ashton abrogates the father's role to herself.²³³ Although Edgar is not willing to give up Lucy for something written in the Old Testament, he is nevertheless obliged to surrender at the evident validity of the legal marriage contract, which Lady Ashton has carefully prepared and has forced Lucy to sign. Being a woman, Lucy is obviously the main victim of the patriarchal law, which allows her mother to decide of her own destiny. For this reason, Fay argues that through the victimized figure of Lucy, Scott directs a strong critique to the patriarchal system of laws and social costumes which allows such an abuse of parental authority.²³⁴ Such critique is then extended by also seeing "in the execution of Ailsie a woman victimized (like Lucy) by the political system's hatred of real or imagined female power":²³⁵

²³⁰ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXIV, p. 334.

²³¹ Fay, E. A., *A Feminist Introduction to Romanticism*, cit., pp. 140-141.

²³² Cf. Ivi, pp. 141-142.

²³³ Cf. Jackson Houlston, C.M., *Gendering Walter Scott*, cit., p. 54.

²³⁴ Cf. Fay, E. A., *A Feminist Introduction to Romanticism*, cit., pp. 142-143.

²³⁵ Ivi, p. 143.

while rank prevents powerful women of higher classes from being directly accused of witchcraft, the women of the lower classes, like Ailsie, are instead scapegoated. Indeed, those very laws that oppress Lucy and execute Ailsie Gourlay, do not punish Lady Ashton, who, saved by both her rank and power, eventually triumphs over the legal system.²³⁶ Ironically, the greatest author of the tragedy is not only “the sole survivor of the group of unhappy people whose misfortunes were owing to her implacability” but is also the only one to be commemorated by “a splendid marble monument [...] while her victims remain undistinguished by tomb or epitaph”.²³⁷

Because of her radical metamorphosis from a reserved, gentle girl into an active, beastly madwoman, Lucy Ashton is probably the most controversial female character of the novel, combining both the figures of the blonde and the dark heroine, and of the hapless victim and the dangerous murderer. To borrow Welsh’s terminology, Lucy initially corresponds to the proper blonde heroine of Scott: like Rose Bradwardine, Brenda, Rowena, Alice, Jeanie, and Margaret, she is blonde, eminently prudent, and passive, and as soon as she meets Ravenswood, her destiny seems to reside in a happy marriage and prosperous future life with him. However, surprisingly, she shares the same unhappy ending of Scott’s dark heroines – Flora McIvor, Minna, Rebecca, Effie, and Hermione.²³⁸ Possibly, Lucy’s story is even more miserable, not only because her “domestic” happiness might have been perfectly attainable, but also because it is the story of a madwoman: “for her, the future is not a promise but a curse. Her world does not unfold outwards into a community in which she finds her rightful place; rather it shrinks into itself, shrivelling into a prison of painful obsession, loneliness, and prolonged suffering”.²³⁹ Reduced to madness by the pressure of her family and the lack of faith of her lover, the victimized Gothic heroine, who had once refused to use a knife against a stag out of compassion, eventually disappears, to unleash instead a powerful, murderous fury, capable of rebelling against her tyrannical oppressors to the point of stabbing her own groom on their wedding

²³⁶ Cf. Fay, E. A., *A Feminist Introduction to Romanticism*, cit., p. 143.

²³⁷ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXV, pp. 348-349.

²³⁸ Cf. Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., pp. 70-82.

²³⁹ Sharon, A. R., *A Living Death: The Madwoman in the Novels of Sir Walter Scott*, PhD Thesis, Toronto, University of Toronto, 2001, p. 4.

night. Even the supernatural figures associated to Lucy mirror her dual role as a victim and an assassin. At first, the heroine reflects “the fabulous Naiad”²⁴⁰ of the legend of the Mermaiden’s Fountain, not only for her beauty and for being in love with a member of the House of Ravenswood, but also for ominously sharing the same unhappy destiny, dying as a victim of her lover’s lack of faith. Lucy herself declares to particularly enjoy the ancient fountain, and while seated on its stones waiting for Edgar, we are told that “to a superstitious eye, Lucy Ashton, folded in her plaided mantle, with her long hair, escaping partly from the snood and falling upon her silver neck, might have suggested the idea of the murdered Nymph of the fountain”.²⁴¹ At the end of the novel, however, the graceful, victimized nymph turns into a diabolic witch. After stabbing Bucklaw, Lucy is indeed found in the chimney “couched like a hare upon its form”,²⁴² a significative simile that, apart from animalizing Lucy, specifically refers to a hare, an animal that, as Jackson-Houlston notes, “is commonly a witch’s familiar or a form of the witch herself”.²⁴³ In a novel that greatly emphasizes the supernatural and the symbolic, such comparison cannot be accidental. As a matter of fact, in his *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, Scott deals with the superstition about the metamorphoses of witches into animals such hares, and even relates a couple of anecdotes about witches in the shape of hares being chased and bitten by hounds.²⁴⁴

Interestingly, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Scott depicts with particular attention the progress of Lucy Ashton’s fall from a state of grace to insanity, evidencing her initial potential as well as those personal traits that will contribute to her tragic ending. At the beginning, Lucy is indeed presented as the ideal heroine of her society. Pale and beautiful as a Madonna, extremely sweet, delicate, and feminine, her softness of temper and passiveness of disposition render her particularly dependent on the guidance of her relatives, and willing to put aside her own wishes for the benefit of others, thus

²⁴⁰ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. V, p 59.

²⁴¹ Ivi, Ch. XX, p. 205.

²⁴² Ivi, Ch. XXXIV, p. 337.

²⁴³ Jackson Houlston, C.M., *Gendering Walter Scott*, cit., p. 51.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Scott, W., *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* [1830], London, George Routledge and Sons, 1885, p. 203, p. 213, p 233.

inspiring the warmest affection in her worldly father, her brothers, and in Ravenswood. Indeed, Edgar is immediately captured by her beauty and tender devotion, and feels “that the softness of a mind, amounting almost to feebleness, rendered her even dearer to him, as a being who had voluntarily clung to him for protection, and made him the arbiter of her fate for weal or woe”.²⁴⁵ Similarly, also Sir William thinks that Lucy’s fragility seems destined to be completed by “the commanding spirit” and “the muscular strength” of Ravenswood,²⁴⁶ in this way indulging in the reassuring fantasy of masculine activity and feminine passivity that the relationship between Edgar and his daughter may represent,²⁴⁷ and which stands in stark contrast to the disturbing nightmare of masculine passivity and feminine activity embodied instead by his relationship with his wife. Obviously, Lady Ashton is the only character who does not show great affection for Lucy, whose softness she regards with contempt and whom she considers as a feeble-minded creature only “fit for the sheep-fold in the cloister”.²⁴⁸ But Lady Ashton, too busy despising her daughter, is completely blind to the fact that Lucy’s docility is also accompanied by an extremely romantic spirit and ardent feelings; and such ignorance, eventually, will be paid at a great cost. Clearly, the meek and dreamy Lucy could not be more different from her ambitious and Machiavellian mother. The two women indeed express two opposite poles of female influence, Lady Ashton being the most evident example of negative female rule, and Lucy, instead, embodying the potential benefits of female influence. Differently from her mother, Lucy shows a sincere and rather active interest in the immediate, domestic world that surrounds her – as her knowledge of the estate and its inhabitants demonstrates during the walk with her father, – tends to promote harmony, and functions as “a conciliatory force capable of bringing together her father and her lover, and of eliciting the best qualities from the men by whom she is surrounded”.²⁴⁹ Had it not been for a Fate so decisively set against the two lovers and for the cruelty of Lady Ashton, thanks to Lucy, the reconciliation of the two families would have been complete.

²⁴⁵ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXI, p. 216.

²⁴⁶ *Ivi*, Ch. XXVII, p. 181.

²⁴⁷ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xxvi.

²⁴⁸ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. III, p. 42.

²⁴⁹ Sharon, A. R., *A Living Death: The Madwoman in the Novels of Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 148.

Lucy's descent into a world of insanity starts when Lady Ashton returns to Ravenswood Castle and begins a psychological torture on her daughter, determined to destroy her engagement to Ravenswood. Feeling abandoned by Edgar and forced into a match she does not want, Lucy is not only imprisoned in her own home, but also actively prevented from having any kind of contact with others, and finally overwhelmed by the superstitious stories of Ailsie Gourlay. In this way, she gradually collapses under the pressure of a persecution she endures in total isolation for more than a year, and "enters an impenetrable mental enclosure of madness":²⁵⁰

She became gloomy and abstracted, and, contrary to her natural and ordinary habit of mind, sometimes turned with spirit, and even fierceness, on those by whom she was long and closely annoyed. Her health also began to be shaken, and her hectic cheek and wandering eye gave symptoms of what is called a fever upon the spirits.[...] Her temper became unequal, her health decayed daily, her manners grew moping, melancholy, and uncertain.²⁵¹

This passage shows Scott's particular attention in depicting the changes of the heroine's behaviour. Lucy's parents, however, do not realize the gravity of the situation and mistake the first signs of her madness for resignation and fading resolution. Indeed, although Lucy appears calm most of the times, nobody understands that what she truly feels is the "calm indifference of despair" and that "the oppressed and stupefied state of her feelings"²⁵² is not only driving her mad, but also rendering her unable to speak about her own misery, which she barely expresses through gestures, wild glances, and silent appeals. Robertson indeed underlines that "the link between powerlessness and voicelessness is a particularly interesting aspect of Lucy's plight".²⁵³ If at the beginning of the novel, Lucy does not speak much because of her timidity and because she is subjected to the customs of the time, which, as the narrator disapprovingly affirms, "did not permit a young woman to offer her sentiments on any subject of importance",²⁵⁴ at the end of the novel, when she becomes mad,

²⁵⁰ Sharon, A. R., *A Living Death: The Madwoman in the Novels of Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 1.

²⁵¹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXX, pp. 308-309; Ch. XXXI, p. 313.

²⁵² Ivi, Ch. XXXII, p. 317.

²⁵³ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xxvii.

²⁵⁴ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. V, p. 54.

Lucy completely loses the power of communication and speech. Lady Ashton takes full advantage of Lucy's vulnerability and appropriates her voice, usurping and supplanting her daughter in every possible way. Such usurpation most publicly appears when at the wedding, Lady Ashton opens the dances instead of Lucy, "with a grace and a dignity which supplied the charms of youth".²⁵⁵ However, this is only the last of a long series of usurping actions. Before the wedding, we know it is Lady Ashton who dictates to Lucy her final letter to Ravenswood; and when this letter is secretly destroyed and Lucy has the chance to send another, she is so broken that instead of revealing her true feelings, she rewrites her mother's words. Most importantly, Lady Ashton speaks on her daughter's behalf in her final encounter with Ravenswood, during which the heroine seems almost unconscious: "stiffened to stone", her understanding paralyzed by "terror and yet stronger and more confused feeling", and with "a gaze from which perception seemed to have been banished", the only words she manages to utter to her passionate and heart-broken lover significantly are "it was my mother".²⁵⁶ And it is indeed her mother who returns Lucy's trothplight, who cuts the ribbon with the broken piece of gold Lucy had so intimately treasured, and which later, in a state of stupor, she searches in vain, muttering "it was the link that bound me to life".²⁵⁷ Lady Ashton clearly ignores the depth of her daughter's feelings, and unfortunately, so does Ravenswood, who has always partly doubted Lucy's capacity of keeping faith to their engagement, and understands too late the price she actually pays to maintain her promise. Indeed, although Lady Ashton forces Lucy to marry Bucklaw and manages to break her mind, she will never succeed in breaking her faith to Ravenswood: silently, helplessly, and eventually violently, the heroine remains loyal to her first lover to the point of becoming a murderous lunatic. On her wedding night, Lucy finally enacts those feelings and words she had long repressed, stabbing her groom in their bridal chamber, in the most horrifying scene of the novel:

Here they found the unfortunate girl seated, or rather couched like a hare upon its form--her head-gear dishevelled, her night-clothes torn and dabbled with blood, her eyes glazed, and her

²⁵⁵ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXIV, p. 336.

²⁵⁶ Ivi, Ch. XXXIII, pp. 321, 323, 326, 327.

²⁵⁷ Ivi, Ch. XXXIV, p. 330.

features convulsed into a wild paroxysm of insanity. When she saw herself discovered, she gibbered, made mouths, and pointed at them with her bloody fingers, with the frantic gestures of an exulting demoniac.²⁵⁸

This passage certainly marks the climax of Lucy's madness and her irreversible transformation into a creature of darkness. The act of stabbing Bucklaw has various interpretations. First, it represents Lucy's refusal of a marriage which has been imposed on her, and especially, a refusal of sex. As Jackson-Houlston notes, "where one might expect in a bridal chamber a symbolic representation of the blood that signals the sexual penetration of a woman, here the penetrative act is reversed as part of Lucy's defence against an enforced union".²⁵⁹ Therefore, Lucy's gesture maybe also be interpreted as a clear rebellion against her family's impositions, and consequently, against a patriarchal society which allows parents to dispose of their daughters as they please, denying them the right to decide about their own destiny. Lucy's violent action also represents the strongest and most disturbing manifestation of female power in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, aligning the heroine with the other witch figures of the novel. The gentle, passive girl of the beginning has regressed to a bestial state, and has been replaced by a dangerous, active lunatic, whose very last words "So you've ta'en up your bonny bridegroom?";²⁶⁰ unusually uttered in dialect, directly associate her with the other dialect-speaking witches of the novel, Ailsie Gourlay and her companions. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that Lucy's family name and the names of most of the novel witches, share the same initial letter.²⁶¹

Although this bloody revenge qualifies Lucy as an assassin, Scott has been so careful about raising our sympathy for his heroine since the very beginning, that we cannot but feel that she is still a victim, and in this moment probably more than ever. If on the one hand, Lucy's madness suggests an outburst of power, energy, and activity, on the other, it also represents a terrible loss of her own humanity, tenderness, empathy, and especially of her reason, delineating a condition of emptiness and absence

²⁵⁸ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXIV, pp. 337-338.

²⁵⁹ Jackson Houlston, C.M., *Gendering Walter Scott*, cit., p. 51.

²⁶⁰ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXIV, p. 338.

²⁶¹ Cf. Jackson Houlston, C.M., *Gendering Walter Scott*, cit., p. 51.

that can only anticipate death itself. Indeed, her extreme gesture is followed by a delirium in which she dies, still speechless and yet, tragically conscious of what she has suffered and what she has become:

so soon as she put her hand to her neck, as if to search for the fatal flue ribbon, a tide of recollections seemed to rush upon her, which her mind and body were alike incapable of bearing. Convulsion followed convulsion, till they closed in death, without her being able to utter a word explanatory of the fatal scene.²⁶²

Evidently, the sole presence of characters such as Lady Ashton and Lucy – the former provoking our bitterest hatred, the latter our deepest sympathy – would be enough to make the novel memorable. The strength with which *The Bride of Lammermoor* female component sticks in the readers' mind is particularly important, for it demonstrates that, regardless of the positive or negative light, Scott gave great space to the portrayal of womankind in his novels, probably without realizing the importance of the service he was rendering to women. As Harriet Martineau points out, through his unforgettable female characters, "much has Walter Scott also done, and done it also unconsciously, for woman [...] by his exhibition of what women are [...] We thank him for the very term *womankind* [...] He has advocated the rights of woman with a force all the greater for his being unaware of the import and tendency of what he was saying".²⁶³ Indeed, Scott's narratives issue challenges to conventions, and inspire deep reflection on reality, demonstrating the worth of the weaker side, of the defeated by history: and women, whose rights have always been trampled on by society and politics, are not certainly to be counted among the victorious. That is why, although it would be too bold to define Scott as a feminist, yet his writings "commitment to the equality of women, clan loyalties, and the primacy of the domestic affections",²⁶⁴ denote a feminine touch. Indeed, it is possible to say that Walter Scott, the incomparable unifier of historical contrasting tendencies, in *The Bride of*

²⁶² *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXIV, pp. 338-339.

²⁶³ Martineau, H., *The Achievements of the Genius of Scott*, "Tait's Edinburgh Magazine", Vol. 2, No. 10, 1833, pp. 445–460, quoted in Jackson Houlston, C.M., *Gendering Walter Scott*, cit., p. 1.

²⁶⁴ Mellor, A. K., *Romanticism and Gender*, New York and London, Routledge, 1993, pp. 171 – 208, p. 186, quoted in Jackson Houlston, C.M., *Gendering Walter Scott*, cit., p. 2.

Lammermoor also combines the masculine and the feminine forms in which Gothic fiction is traditionally divided, so as “to produce a radically unresolved critique of individual will, inheritance, history, and social construction”.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Cf. Fay, E. A., *A Feminist Introduction to Romanticism*, cit., p. 114.

CHAPTER 3. Tragic and Comic in *The Bride of Lammermoor*

3.1 Contrasting styles in the *Waverley Novels* and in *The Bride of Lammermoor*

Since his very first novel, Walter Scott intentionally embraced as well as recognized the mutability of styles which generally characterizes his works.²⁶⁶ In chapter XIX of *Waverley*, Scott refers to the Spanish picaresque literature to justify the reason which brings him to depart from the description of the Scottish bandit Donald Bean Lean, and to introduce instead the proud highland chief Fergus McIvor:

The ingenious licentiate Francisco de Úbeda, when he commenced his history of 'La Picara Justina Diez,'—which, by the way, is one of the most rare books of Spanish literature,—complained of his pen having caught up a hair, and forthwith begins, with more eloquence than common sense, an affectionate expostulation with that useful implement, upbraiding it with being the quill of a goose,—a bird inconstant by nature, as frequenting the three elements of water, earth, and air indifferently, and being, of course, 'to one thing constant never.' Now I protest to thee, gentle reader, that I entirely dissent from Francisco de Úbeda in this matter, and hold it the most useful quality of my pen, that it can speedily change from grave to gay, and from description and dialogue to narrative and character. So that if my quill display no other properties of its mother-goose than her mutability, truly I shall be well pleased; and I conceive that you, my worthy friend, will have no occasion for discontent. From the jargon, therefore, of the Highland gillies I pass to the character of their Chief.²⁶⁷

Through this ironic passage, Scott is sending a crucial message: in his works we are to expect frequent changes not only “from description and dialogue to narrative and character”, but also “from grave to gay” subjects, that is, from tragic to comic scenes, depending on the social class of the characters involved, whether they are chiefs and gentlemen or dialect-speaking gillies and servants.²⁶⁸ Clearly, this passage could not make Scott’s stance more explicit, and as Welsh correctly notices, “of

²⁶⁶ On the contrast of styles in the *Waverley Novels*, see Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., pp. 178-190.

²⁶⁷ Scott, W., *Waverley*, cit., p. 100.

²⁶⁸ Since antiquity, the tragic has been associated with the aristocracy, while the comic with the lower classes.

the alternative methods of representing reality that Erich Auerbach traced in Western Literature, the separation and the mixture of styles, Scott instinctively and consciously chose the latter”, inheriting it directly from Shakespeare.²⁶⁹ In the chapter of *Mimesis* devoted to the bard of Avon, Auerbach indeed observes that “Shakespeare mixes the sublime and the low, the tragic and the comic in an inexhaustible abundance of proportions”,²⁷⁰ and that not only do his fabulous comedies occasionally present some tragic overtones, but even in those plays

which have a generally tragic tenor there is an extremely close interweaving of the tragic and the comic, the sublime and the low. This effect is brought about by the joint use of several methods. Tragic actions in which public or other tragic events occur, alternate with humorous popular and rowdy scenes which are now closely, now somewhat more loosely connected with the principal action. Or again in the tragic scenes themselves, and with the tragic heroes, there appear fools and other humorous types who accompany, interrupt, and-each in his own way-comment upon what the heroes do, suffer, and say.²⁷¹

Interestingly, the peculiar mixture of tragic and comic that Auerbach identifies in Shakespeare’s plays, can also be recognized in the *Waverley Novels*, where, in a similar manner, serious and tragic episodes intermingle with surprisingly comic scenes, and where an incredibly rich assortment of comic characters encounter and comment on the action of the high ones. However, tragic and comic are not the only styles to be found in Scott’s works. The *Waverley Novels* are indeed a product of nineteenth century realist novelistic literature, which was dominated by the so-called serious style, that is, an “intermediate” kind of style to be placed between “the aristocratic heights of tragic passion and the plebeian depths of comedy”, and which, as such, represents the great expression of the middle class.²⁷² In particular, at the origin of the 19th century realist novel, based on what Auerbach calls “the serious imitation of the everyday”, is the encounter between bourgeois realism and political conservatism.²⁷³ Moretti notices that the influence of bourgeois mentality is especially felt in the

²⁶⁹ Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., pp. 179-180.

²⁷⁰ Auerbach, E., *Mimesis* [1946], Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003, pp. 312-333, p. 317.

²⁷¹ Ivi, 315.

²⁷² Cf. Moretti, F., *The Novel* [2001], Vol. I, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006, pp. 368-370.

²⁷³ Cf. Ivi, p. 368, p. 392.

novels' plots, which recount the regularity of everyday life and present only a few major turning points.²⁷⁴ Indeed, in the *Waverley Novels*, Scott reawakens the everyday “by reviving the daily rituals of the past”.²⁷⁵ The influence of political conservatism, instead, especially “surfaces in the novels' descriptive pauses, where the persistence of the past is the dominant reality”,²⁷⁶ as it is again confirmed by Scott's novels, in which “description as such, as form, embodies a project that is not neutral at all: *to bring history to a halt*”.²⁷⁷ Therefore, in conciliating regular, bourgeois plots with conservative descriptions, the nineteenth-century serious novel may be defined as “a half-bourgeois, half-conservative form”, whose “main vocation lies in forging compromises between different ideological systems”.²⁷⁸ Again, such vocation is confirmed by the *Waverley Novels*, whose crucial project, both singularly and as a cycle, is precisely to find a compromise between past and present, so that worthy ancient values may continue to survive in modern times, despite the inevitable necessity of historical progress. As a matter of fact, Scott himself could be considered as a sort of authorial embodiment of the peculiar compromise-equilibrium between bourgeoisie and conservatism lying at the basis of nineteenth century novels: starting as a lawyer to later become a laird, Scott was both a strong believer in the present and a nostalgic lover of the past and can be perfectly defined as an optimistic conservative bourgeois.

Therefore, serious, tragic, and comic, are the styles that characterize the *Waverley Novels*, and that perfectly interweave also in *The Bride of Lammermoor*. In this novel, the serious theme is given by the conflict between Sir William Ashton and Edgar Ravenswood, which symbolises the class antagonism between the rising bourgeoisie and the declining aristocracy, and by Edgar and his ancient House's destiny, metaphorically indicating both the fall of the Scottish feudal aristocracy, and the defeat of the Tory Party.²⁷⁹ Such theme is interestingly developed through the romance between Edgar

²⁷⁴ Cf. Moretti, F., *The Novel*, cit., pp. 376-381, p. 392.

²⁷⁵ Ivi, p. 376.

²⁷⁶ Ivi, p. 392.

²⁷⁷ Ivi, p. 391.

²⁷⁸ Ivi, p. 400, p. 391.

²⁷⁹ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., pp. 7-8.

and Lucy, two pure-hearted youths, whose forbidden love caught between their rival families and final death recalls *Romeo and Juliet*. Scott himself directly refers to the famous Shakespearean tragedy in the opening epigraphs of chapters V and XXXIII. Indeed, *The Bride of Lammermoor* is filled with literary references to Shakespeare: not only do Edgar and Lucy remind the unfortunate lovers Romeo and Juliet, but taken singularly, Edgar's resentment towards his father's usurper, his inheritance of revenge, and continuous internal torments and doubts may recall Hamlet, while we are expressly told that Lucy identifies herself "with the simple yet noble-minded Miranda"²⁸⁰ of *The Tempest*, obviously before her final madness and death, a fate which directly links her to the unhappy Ophelia. But Shakespearean parallels do not end here: in the previous chapter, we have already pointed out that the cruel Lady Ashton is explicitly likened to Lady Macbeth, and the three village hags to the three witches of *Macbeth*, with Ailsie Gourlay specifically referred to as an "old Sycorax", evoking Caliban's mother in *The Tempest*. Welsh notices that even the sexton of chapter XXIV, "who officiates at weddings with his fiddle and at funerals with his spade, is copied from Shakespeare", more specifically, from the grave diggers' scene in *Hamlet*, as the chapter introductive epigraph suggests.²⁸¹ However, apart from the characters, we have already pointed out that Scott takes inspiration from Shakespeare especially in his choice to adopt different styles within his novels. In fact, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Scott brilliantly combines the serious theme of class conflict not only with an extremely tragic plot, but also with a memorable comic subplot. Surprisingly, however, this novel marks the triumph of the tragic even over the compromise-seeking serious style, which usually dominates the *Waverley Novels*. Indeed, as noticed in the first chapter, *The Bride of Lammermoor* is considered a unicum for its tragic form, which has struck reviewers and critics since its publication. Regarded as "the most pure and powerful of all the tragedies that Scott ever

²⁸⁰ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. III, p. 40.

²⁸¹ Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., p. 181.

penned”,²⁸² *The Bride of Lammermoor* is “a tragedy of the highest order”²⁸³ because it ends without achieving a historical compromise between past and present, thus disrupting “the moral design of the *Waverley Novels* by refusing to imagine a pattern of progress in the order of history”.²⁸⁴ Indeed, differently from the other *Waverley Novels*, *The Bride of Lammermoor* ends without achieving what Lukács calls the glorious English middle way of compromise between warring extremes,²⁸⁵ perfectly exemplified by *Waverley*’s happy ending, where the novel eponymous English protagonist, by marrying a Scottish woman, manages to mediate between the old Jacobite Scotland and the new Hanoverian England, thus guaranteeing the survival of the old in the new. As a matter of fact, what *The Bride of Lammermoor* lacks is precisely the crucial, unifying symbol of marriage. The marriage between Edgar Ravenswood and Lucy Ashton would represent the extinction of the feud between the two rival families, thus the solution to the historical conflict of class antagonism, and the highly desirable union between aristocracy and bourgeoisie, Tories and Whigs, Episcopal and Presbyterian, past and present, old and new. A fusion that, as the course of history demonstrates, will happen. But not in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, where such a marriage is not celebrated and where there is neither a happy ending nor hope for the future, not only because the protagonists die, but also because both the feuding families ultimately become extinct – not only the already doomed House of Ravenswood, but significantly, even the powerful and promising Ashtons. That is why the tragic is the dominating component in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which shows “Scott’s determination to carry through the potential of his theme to its bitter conclusion”.²⁸⁶

²⁸² Lockhart, J. G., *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, vol. 6, [1837], Toronto, George N. Morang and Company, 1901, p. 64.

²⁸³ Senior, N., *Unsigned review of Rob Roy, Heart of Midlothian, Bride of Lammermoor, Legend of Montrose, Ivanhoe, The Monastery, The Abbot, and Kenilworth*, “Quarterly Review”, Vol. xxvi 1821, pp. 109–48, now in *Walter Scott: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John O. Hayden, London, Routledge, 1995, pp. 215-255, p. 228.

²⁸⁴ Farrell, J.P., ‘*The Bride of Lammermoor*’ as Oracular Text in *Emily Brontë, Tennyson, and Hardy*, “South Central Review”, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1984, pp. 53-63, p. 53.

²⁸⁵ See Lukács, G., *The Historical Novel* [1937], London, Merlin Press, 1989, p. 32: “He [Scott] attempts by fathoming historically the whole of English development to find a ‘middle way’ for himself between the warring extremes. He finds in English history the consolation that the most violent vicissitudes of class struggle have always finally calmed down into a glorious ‘middle way’”.

²⁸⁶ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 145.

Yet, to the readers' amazement, the novel tragic ending, its dark atmosphere, and marked pessimism, did not prevent Scott from inserting an incredibly contrasting comic subplot. Alongside Edgar and Lucy, who are tragic figures belonging to the high spheres of society, Scott creates the memorably comic, dialect-speaking Caleb Balderstone, Edgar Ravenswood's loyal butler. The comic component in *The Bride of Lammermoor* is precisely given by all the troubles, lies and efforts this amazing character makes in order to save the reputation and the honour of the ancient, but decaying House he has been proudly and faithfully serving his entire life. Caleb's antics surprisingly intertwine with the story even in its darkest moments, bringing vitality to the main serious action. However, it would be reductive to affirm that, in Scott's novels, "scenes of comedy in the low style are brought in to supply comic relief from the serious action".²⁸⁷ And although we must admit that in *The Bride of Lammermoor* oppressive atmosphere, Caleb's adventures do bring some freshness and entertainment, his presence signifies much more than offering simple relief. Indeed, Caleb's ingenious tricks, his moving devotion to his master, his obstinacy in refusing the decline of the feudal world and incapacity to adapt to the new, function as "a brilliant commentary on the theme of fallen fortunes and lost honour",²⁸⁸ which, as we have seen, is at the very basis of this novel. Therefore, through Caleb Balderstone's antics and loyalty, Scott offers a tragicomic interpretation of the serious theme of the fall of the ancient Scottish aristocracy.

In conclusion, we may say that, among the *Waverley Novels*, *The Bride of Lammermoor* par excellence shows to what extent Scott dared to interweave the tragic with the comic, the high and the low. Yet, we may wonder why he made the choice to adopt such a mixture of styles within his works. Georg Lukács thought that, "like every great popular writer, Scott aims at portraying the totality of national life in its complex interaction between "above" and "below"; his vigorous popular character is expressed in the fact that "below" is seen as the material basis and artistic explanation for what

²⁸⁷ Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., p. 185.

²⁸⁸ Ivi, p. 181.

happens "above".²⁸⁹ Therefore, the contrast of styles which characterizes the *Waverley Novels* may be seen both as "one way to construct an impression of totality" and an "inclusive picture of society".²⁹⁰ We may also add that the contrast of styles is not only "one way", but an extraordinary brilliant way to construct an impression of reality: for the novel in general, more than any other literary genre, aims at coming very close to real life, which is made of laughter and tears, happiness and sadness, comedy and tragedy.

3.2 The Cervantes of Scotland: quixotic influence on the *Waverley Novels*

In a passage from *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, John Gibson Lockhart perfectly highlights the variety of styles and modes of writing which characterize the *Waverley Novels* as well as their importance for having collected the heritage of the most important literary traditions which preceded them. Scott's works are reported to be:

of original creative genius, worthy of being placed by the side of the very few real masterpieces of prose fiction. Loftier romance was never blended with easier, quainter humour by Cervantes. In his familiar delineations he had combined the strength of Smollett with the native elegance and unaffected pathos of Goldsmith; in his darker scenes he had revived that real tragedy which appeared to have left our theatre with the age of Shakespeare; and elements of interest so diverse had been blended and interwoven with that nameless grace, which, more surely perhaps than even the highest perfection in the command of any one strain of sentiment, marks the master-mind cast in Nature's most felicitous mould.²⁹¹

Indeed, in the *Waverley Novels*, Scott managed to treasure, revivify, and combine the tradition of the 18th century English novel with the Gothic, and the Shakespearean tradition with the Cervantean. Among them, the Cervantean and quixotic tradition certainly had a crucial role not only in shaping Scott's nostalgic conception of the past and in inspiring the characters of his novels, but also in

²⁸⁹ Lucáks, G., *The Historical Novel* [1937], London, Merlin Press, 1989, pp. 48-49.

²⁹⁰ Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., p. 182, p. 190.

²⁹¹ Lockhart, J. G., *Life of Sir Walter Scott* [1837], New York, Crowell Company, 1870, p. 245.

showing him that mixing different styles and modes of writing within the same work is possible. As Bell notices, “the great debt of Scott to Cervantes may plausibly be stated thus: that he learnt from him how a vast mass of matter might be included in his art”,²⁹² for Scott apparently conceived *Don Quixote* “to be a comprehensive work of art with an unmistakable foundation in reality, a kind of comic romance that combined the marvellous, the humorous, and the realistic”.²⁹³ For this reason, in the mixture of different narrative modes and styles that characterize the *Waverley Novels*, we perceive not only the influence of Shakespeare (1564-1616), but also that of his great Spanish contemporary, Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616), and more precisely, that of his masterpiece *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (First Part, 1605 – Second Part, 1615), even in its subsequent reception and interpretation on behalf of British authors. As a matter of fact, Scott was not only deeply interested in Cervantes, but also in all those British novelists – such as Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Laurence Sterne, and Oliver Goldsmith – who emulated Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* and may be placed within the British Cervantean tradition of the 18th century.²⁹⁴

Scott was a great lover of Spanish Literature and especially of Cervantes, as clearly signalled by the presence of seven different editions of *Don Quixote* in his library at Abbotsford.²⁹⁵ In fact, he had even planned his own edition of *Don Quixote*, although he ultimately handed it over to Lockhart, whom he considered a better Spanish scholar than himself.²⁹⁶ But Scott’s deep enjoyment of *Don Quixote* especially emerges from his works. As Clara Snell Wolfe notices:

An examination of the *Waverley Novels* [...] shows over a hundred references to *Don Quixote* alone. These occur not only among his writings on literary criticism, but in the midst of his composition of

²⁹² Bell, A., *Scott and Cervantes*, in *Sir Walter Scott Today: Some Retrospective Essays and Studies*, ed. by H. J. C. Grierson, London, Constable, 1932, pp. 69-90, quoted in Moro Martín, A., *Transformaciones del Quijote en la novela inglesa y alemana del siglo XVIII*, Alcalá de Henares, Universidad de Alcalá Servicio de Publicaciones, 2016, p. 239.

²⁹³ McDonald, W. U., Scott’s Conception of Don Quixote, “Midwest Review”, 1959, pp. 37-42, quoted in Moro, *Transformaciones del Quijote en la novela inglesa y alemana del siglo XVIII*, cit, p. 239.

²⁹⁴ Cf. Welsh, A., *The Influence of Cervantes*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Cervantes*, ed. By A. J. Cascardi, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 80-99, pp. 80-87; Cf. Moro Martín, A., *Sir Walter Scott y la Literatura Europea: el ejemplo de Cervantes y de la Tradición Cervantina*, “1616: Anuario de Literatura Comparada”, 6, 2016, pp. 29-43, pp. 32-33.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Snell Wolfe, C., *Evidences of Scott’s Indebtedness to Spanish Literature*, “The Romanic Review”, vol. XXIII, No. 4, 1932, pp. 301-311, p. 301.

²⁹⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*.

romantic fiction, in his work on political and educational reform, among his familiar letters and even in his diary, where he is setting down his most intimate personal feelings”.²⁹⁷

She even claims that “if the novels alone were considered it might be said that Scott had Cervantes in mind most during the period of his best work”.²⁹⁸ This is probably true, for Lockhart reveals that the author of *Waverley* held “the most unbounded admiration for Cervantes and said that the ‘novelas’ of that author had first inspired him with the ambition of excelling in fiction, and that, until disabled by illness, he had been a constant reader of them”.²⁹⁹ Indeed, Scott’s devotion to Cervantes was lifelong: if, in his youth, he had been attracted by the chivalric – although parodic – dimension of *Don Quixote*, and had even learnt Spanish to read Cervantes’s works and Spanish literature in the original language, in his last days of life, he expressed the wish to hear one last time the prologue of the *Persiles* (1617)³⁰⁰ – Cervantes’s last and posthumously published work, – a highly symbolic choice considering that, through this prologue, Cervantes took leave of his life, bidding farewell to his friends and readers: “¡Adiós, gracias; adiós, donaires; adiós, regocijados amigos; que yo me voy muriendo, y deseando veros presto contentos en la otra vida!”.³⁰¹ Lockhart even notices that Scott’s and Cervantes’s literary careers are curiously similar. Both writers decided to turn to prose fiction only when they realized the scarce possibility of being successful in the literary paths they had originally embraced: while Cervantes gave up his aspiration to be a dramatist because of the success of Lope de Vega, Scott abandoned poetry to the rising star of Byron.³⁰² This choice, initially based on a renunciation, ultimately turned out to be a victory that consecrated both writers to literary history. Indeed, while Cervantes and his *Don Quixote* “outlived Lope’s two thousand triumphant dramas” and laid the foundation for the modern novel, Scott invented the genre of the historical novel, writing “the

²⁹⁷ Snell Wolfe, C., *Evidences of Scott’s Indebtedness to Spanish Literature*, p. 301.

²⁹⁸ Ivi, p. 312.

²⁹⁹ Lockhart, J. G., *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, vol. 10, [1837], Toronto, George N. Morang and Company, 1901, p. 137.

³⁰⁰ Cf. Moro Martín, A., *Transformaciones del Quijote en la novela inglesa y alemana del siglo XVIII*, cit., pp. 234-235.

³⁰¹ Cervantes, M., Prólogo, in *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* [1617], ed. by Laura Fernández, Madrid-Barcelona, Real Academia Española, 2018, pp. 13-15, p. 15.

³⁰² Cf. Lockhart, J. G., *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 281.

only prose romances, which seem to be classed with the masterpiece of Spanish genius, by the general judgement of Europe”,³⁰³ and which even gained him the nickname of the “Cervantes of Scotland” among his Spanish audience and translators.³⁰⁴

Obviously, Scott would not have gained such reputation if Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* had not found great success in Britain. After its first translation into English in 1612, *Don Quixote* continued to be translated in the following century, inspiring plays, poems, critical commentaries, and novels,³⁰⁵ which interestingly brought a gradual evolution also in the conception of the original protagonist. As Susan Staves points out:

No national literature assimilated the idea of *Don Quixote* more thoroughly than the English. During the eighteenth century especially, *Don Quixote* came into its own; not only was it read and enthusiastically appreciated, but it also found many imitators. In this process of assimilation, the knight undergoes a fascinating metamorphosis. There are three stages. At first, we see *Don Quixote* as a buffoon, a madman who belongs in a farce. Then ambiguities begin to creep in, and we have a Don Quixote who is still ridiculous, still a buffoon, but who, at the same time, is beginning to look strangely noble, even saintly. Then, finally, toward the end of the century we begin to glimpse the romantic Don Quixote, an idealistic and noble hero. The metamorphosis goes on not just in the critical comments about Cervantes' work, where would be expected, but also in the English imitations. In fact, treatments of the quixote idea in the English novel change quite parallel to the changes in critical responses to Quixote himself.³⁰⁶

Indeed, at the time of its publication – during the so called *Siglo de Oro* – and in the first phases of its European and British reception, *Don Quixote* was intended as a *libro de entretenimiento*, that is, as a purely comic book devoted to the entertainment of its readers. It is only during Romanticism that especially British authors attribute a truly heroic and noble dimension to Don Quixote, adopting a serious and tragic conception of both the novel and its protagonist. Certain writers, however,

³⁰³ Lockhart, J. G., *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 281.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Moro Martín, A., *Transformaciones del Quijote en la novela inglesa y alemana del siglo XVIII*, cit., p. 234.

³⁰⁵ Cf. Cox, R. M., *Don Quixote in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, in *The Rev. John Bowle: The Genesis of Cervantean Criticism*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1971, pp. 27-47, pp. 39-47.

³⁰⁶ Staves, S., *Don Quixote in Eighteenth-Century England*, “Comparative Literature”, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1972, pp. 193-215, pp. 193-194.

followed a more moderate interpretation of *Don Quixote*, finding a happy medium between its original farcical perception and its Romantic tragic conception.³⁰⁷ Among them, we find Walter Scott, whose opinion on *Don Quixote*, positioned “between the earlier extremes which regarded the novel as satire or pure farce and some contemporary extremes which regarded it as essentially tragic”,³⁰⁸ allowed him to recognize both the entertaining and comic dimension of its memorable protagonist, together with his noble, idealistic, and melancholic potential. Scott’s opinion on *Don Quixote* emerges from his *Essays on Chivalry, Romance, and the Drama*, where, in dealing with the origins and development of Chivalry as well as with chivalric romances, he also refers to Cervantes’s famous hidalgo, analysing and adding his personal view of his ridiculous dimension. Indeed, Scott was perfectly aware that through his *Don Quixote*, Cervantes was mocking books of chivalry, but also affirms that:

although the Knight of La Mancha was, perhaps, two centuries too late in exercising his office of redresser of wrongs, and although his heated imagination confounded ordinary objects with such as were immediately connected with the exercise of Chivalry, yet at no great distance from the date of the inimitable romance of Cervantes, real circumstances occurred, of a nature nearly as romantic as the achievements which Don Quixote aspired to execute.³⁰⁹

In other words, according to Scott, Don Quixote’s ridiculous chivalric behaviour and comic side are not so much due to his madness as to his ahistoricism, anachronism, and inability to understand and adapt to those historical changes which were gradually happening in the Spain of his time, and which were inevitably erasing that feudal, chivalric world he loved.³¹⁰ For this reason, Scott looks at Don Quixote and his outdated ideals with a comic eye, but, at the same time, with the awareness that they are also the last remnants of a fading past, whose influence is still weakly felt in the present.

³⁰⁷ Cf. Moro Martín, A., *Cervantismos Olvidados: Sir Walter Scott*, in *Comentario a Cervantes: Actas selectas del VIII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación de Cervantistas* (2012), Oviedo, Fundación María Cristina Masaveru Paterson, 2014, pp. 300-309, pp. 301-303.

³⁰⁸ Mc Donald, W. U., *Scott’s Conception of Don Quixote*, “Midwest Review”, 1959, pp. 37-42, p.42, quoted in Moro Martín, A., *Cervantismos Olvidados: Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 303

³⁰⁹ Scott, W., *Essays on Chivalry, Romance, and the Drama* [1818, 1824], London, Frederick Warne & co, 1887, p. 45.

³¹⁰ Cf. Moro Martín, A., *Transformaciones del Quijote en la novela inglesa y alemana del siglo XVIII*, cit., pp. 237-238.

That is why the quixotic figure is the most appropriate to reflect on the theme of historical change,³¹¹ and the *Waverley Novels* are highly populated by quixotic characters. Indeed, in the *Waverley Novels*, quixotism takes on various shades, and depending on the character, we may distinguish between different *tipos quijotescos*: often the novel protagonists are young, romantic Don Quixotes with a fervent imagination and great ideals that eventually must give up to come to term with reality,³¹² while all those other characters who appear eccentric because they are deeply rooted in the past and obstinately resist historical change, are presented as either tragic or comic Don Quixotes.³¹³ Therefore, we may affirm that the most recurrent forms of quixotism in the *Waverley Novels* are, in general, a Bildungsroman-kind of juvenile, romantic quixotism, tragic quixotism, and comic quixotism.

3.3 Quixotic characters between the tragic and the comic

The three forms of quixotism listed above – the Bildungsroman juvenile quixotism, the tragic quixotism, and the comic quixotism – most evidently appear in Scott's first novel *Waverley*, where the figure of Don Quixote is clearly declined into three different characters: Edward Waverley, the novel protagonist, is the young romantic Don Quixote; Fergus McIvor is instead the tragic, while the Baron of Bradwardine is the comic. It is Scott himself that, in describing Waverley's solitary delight in reading and daydreaming, makes a direct reference to *Don Quixote*, although to partly distance his protagonist from Cervantes's original hero:

From the minuteness with which I have traced Waverley's pursuits, and the bias which these unavoidably communicated to his imagination, the reader may perhaps anticipate, in the following tale, an imitation of the romance of Cervantes. But he will do my prudence injustice in the supposition. My intention is not to follow the steps of that inimitable author, in describing such total perversion of intellect as misconstrues the objects actually presented to

³¹¹ Cf. Moro Martín, A., *Transformaciones del Quijote en la novela inglesa y alemana del siglo XVIII*, cit., p. 238.

³¹² Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., p. 17; Cf. Moro Martín, A., *Sir Walter Scott y la Literatura Europea*, cit., p. 34.

³¹³ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., pp. 17-18.

the senses, but that more common aberration from sound judgement, which apprehends occurrences indeed in their reality, but communicates to them a tincture of its own romantic tone and colouring.³¹⁴

Waverley is indeed a Don Quixote in the sense that he is filled with dreams and heroic aspirations, but he is also the typical passive hero of the *Waverley Novels*: his imagination does not distort reality, it only gives it a romantic colouring, and, eventually, he does understand the necessity to give up his aspirations, conform to society and adapt to historical change. Therefore, his quixotism is not a perpetual condition of life, but a juvenile, transitory, form of illness, destined to disappear together with his youth.³¹⁵ On the contrary, quixotism becomes a perpetual condition of life in the tragic and comic characters of the *Waverley Novels*. These are truly quixotic figures because they are alone in their eccentric, stubborn adherence to past values and rituals, and in their desperate, obstinate resistance to historical change.³¹⁶ The fervent Jacobite and proud Highland chief Fergus Mc Ivor is a tragic Don Quixote in that he violently refuses historical progress, and because, after losing his fight against it, he accepts to die almost peacefully, aware that he has no reason to exist in a world which is cancelling everything he represents or loves. On the contrary, the Baron of Bradwardine is a comic Don Quixote in his radical conviction that the only possible political and social order is the feudal one, in his pompous, antiquated use of language – which even includes legal Latin, – in his ridiculously obsessive concern that feudal rituals may always be respected as the only true source of authority.

However, *Waverley* is not the only novel pervaded by quixotism. As a matter of fact, also *The Bride of Lammermoor* presents a strong quixotic influence, although, at first, the connection may not be as immediate as it is in *Waverley* and readers may be more attracted by other aspects of the novel – such as its dark, Gothic atmosphere. For instance, we may consider the never-occurred event around

³¹⁴ Scott, W., *Waverley*, cit., Ch. V, p. 20.

³¹⁵ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., p. 17.

³¹⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*.

which the novel tragedy unfolds. Although it completely lacks a comic side, the attempted marriage between Edgar and Lucy may be regarded as a quixotic enterprise in that it is clearly idealistic and destined to failure: if, in *Waverley*, the Jacobite cause is the quixotic enterprise condemned to failure for being anachronistic in its intent to re-establish the feudal order and a monarchy which has *de facto* lost its power,³¹⁷ in *The Bride of Lammermoor* the focus shifts from the public to the private sphere. Certainly, like the Jacobites, Edgar and Lucy are obliged to confront themselves with a harsh reality that does not favour them. But differently from the Jacobite cause, their marriage does not fail because it is anachronistic but, on the contrary, because their wish to stop the feud between their families and find peace is too ahead of their times and too much for the historical circumstances in which they find themselves: the thirst for revenge is still too strong, factionalism reigns in the country, and consequently, neither their families nor political factions are ready to accept such a compromise. What is more, like *Waverley*, *The Bride of Lammermoor* presents extraordinary quixotic characters. Indeed, in the novel it is possible to find the romantic juvenile, the tragic, and the comic forms of quixotism, respectively embodied by Lucy Ashton, Edgar Ravenswood, and Caleb Balderstone. Certainly, the tragic ending of both the quixotic heroine and the comic quixote, and especially the fact that a woman represents the romantic kind of quixotism, while Edgar, the novel great protagonist, is the representative of tragic quixotism, marks a certain distance and a peculiar evolution from *Waverley*. For all these reasons, it is particularly rewarding to investigate quixotism in *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

Let us begin by considering the novel heroine. Lucy Ashton's strong passion for reading, dreamy disposition, and powerful imagination make her a great representative of the juvenile and romantic form of quixotism. In this respect, she is more akin to Don Quixote than any other character in the novel, for no one there reads, dreams, and romanticises reality the way she does. However, a substantial difference distances her from the original Cervantean model: she is a woman, and as such,

³¹⁷ Cf. Moro Martín, A., *Cervantismos Olvidados: Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 306.

we may say that she belongs to the long quixotic tradition of the female literary Quixote, so named after Charlotte Lennox's famous novel *The Female Quixote, or The Adventures of Arabella*. Indeed, after the publication of Lennox's novel in 1752, "the trope of the overly absorbed woman reader who misconstrues her reality via the conventions of prose fiction featured in many novels until the end of the eighteenth century and beyond",³¹⁸ such as in George Colman's *Polly Honeycombe* (1762), Tabitha Tenney's *Female Quixotism* (1801), Eaton Barret's *The Heroine* (1813), Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817), Maria Edgeworth's *Angelina* (1839), notably reaching even the second half of the nineteenth century with Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871).³¹⁹ Notwithstanding the heterogeneity within this category, in general, the female Quixote may be defined as a kind-hearted young woman and a devoted reader of romances and novels, who interprets the world according to her literary models and romanticizes reality, thus misinterpreting it and committing certain mistakes, which, however, are part of a process of personal growth and are usually resolved, allowing her to get rid of her quixotism, conform to reality, and finally be rewarded with a happy ending. Certainly, Lucy Ashton responds to this description, though not entirely, for later in the novel she also takes the role of the Gothic heroine, and her epilogue is tragic. However, when she is introduced at the beginning, she clearly appears as a female Quixote, for we are told that "under a semblance of extreme indifference", shyness, and docility, not only did she nourish "the germ of those passions which sometimes spring up in one night [...] and astonish the observer by their unexpected ardour and intensity",³²⁰ but also alimanted her powerful imagination through her many readings:

Left to the impulse of her own taste and feelings, Lucy Ashton was peculiarly accessible to those of a romantic cast. Her secret delight was in the old legendary tales of ardent devotion

³¹⁸ Wyett, J. L., *Quixotic Legacy: The female Quixote and the Professional Woman Writer*, "Authorship", Vol. 4, No. 1, 2015, pp. 1-19, p. 1.

³¹⁹ Cf. Welsh, A., *The Influence of Cervantes*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Cervantes*, cit., p. 89; Pawl, A. J., *Feminine Transformations of the Quixote in Eighteenth-Century England: Lennox's Female Quixote and Her Sisters*, in *The Cervantean Heritage, Reception and Influence of Cervantes in Britain*, ed. by J.A.J. Ardila, New York, Modern Humanities Research Association and Routledge, 2009, p. 166.

³²⁰ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. III, p. 42.

and unalterable affection, chequered as they so often are with strange adventures and supernatural horrors. This was her favoured fairy realm, and here she erected her aerial palaces. But it was only in secret that she laboured at this delusive though delightful architecture. In her retired chamber, or in the woodland bower which she had chosen for her own, and called after her name, she was in fancy distributing the prizes at the tournament or raining down influence from her eyes on the valiant combatants: or she was wandering in the wilderness with Una, under escort of the generous lion; or she was identifying herself with the simple yet noble-minded Miranda in the isle of wonder and enchantment.³²¹

Apart from describing her literary taste, her fantasies, and identifications – with Edmund Spenser’s Una of *The Faerie Queene* (1590) and Shakespeare’s Miranda of *The Tempest* (1611) – this passage highlights a crucial feature that Lucy and, in general, all quixotic characters have in common, which is their solitude, their isolation from the world.³²² Indeed, Lucy hides her literary dreams and romantic feelings because neither can she expect to find sympathy from her worldly family, nor has she the company of a friend with whom to share such sentiments. That is why she unleashes her fantasy only in private and in total solitude. In this sense, she is very similar to Waverley and could be regarded as his female counterpart, for she has the same passive-romantic disposition and the same secret delight in indulging in fantasies. As a matter of fact, in describing his hero and heroine’s imaginative power, Scott even employs the same architectural image of “castle-building”: if the solitary Waverley builds his castles of fancies in the sombre library of Waverley-Honour, the solitary Lucy erects her aerial palaces in her room at Ravenswood Castle. On the other hand, however, Millgate notices that “Lucy could not be more distinct from the wandering heroes of Scott’s earlier novels”³²³ because her condition as a woman completely deprives her from the possibility of leaving her home and embarking on the same formative journey Waverley has instead the chance to undergo as an independent young man. As she cannot gain experience from the real world, Lucy has no other

³²¹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. III, p. 40.

³²² Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., p. 17.

³²³ Millgate, J., *The Bride of Lammermoor and A Legend of Montrose: The End of the Beginning*, in *Sir Walter Scott: The Making of the Novelist*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1987, pp. 169-192, p. 181.

option but to abandon herself to the ideal one of her dreams: for Lucy “the dream is all”, since her “actual condition – psychological, sexual, familial, social, and historical – precludes direct action on her part”.³²⁴ Consequently, Edgar too is inevitably absorbed in the realm of her fantasies. His extraordinary rescue from the bull’s attack makes a strong impression on Lucy’s vivid imagination, who, having no distraction and no other company than her own, constantly recalls and romanticises her saviour and starts “weaving her enchanted web of fairy tissue”:

Visions of terror, both in sleep and in waking reveries, recalled to her the form of the furious animal, and the dreadful bellow with which he accompanied his career; and it was always the image of the Master of Ravenswood, with his native nobleness of countenance and form, that seemed to interpose betwixt her and assured death. [...] She had never happened to see a young man of mien and features so romantic and so striking as young Ravenswood; but had she seen a hundred his equals or his superiors in those particulars, no one else would have been linked to her heart by the strong associations of remembered danger and escape, of gratitude, wonder, and curiosity. [...] Lucy Ashton, in short, was involved in those mazes of the imagination which are most dangerous to the young and the sensitive. Time, it is true, absence, change of scene and new faces, might probably have destroyed the illusion in her instance, as it has done in many others; but her residence remained solitary, and her mind without those means of dissipating her pleasing visions. [...] and thus, no cavalier appeared to rival or to obscure the ideal picture of chivalrous excellence which Lucy had pictured to herself in the Master of Ravenswood.³²⁵

Lucy’s feelings and romanticization of Ravenswood continue to grow as their acquaintance develops during her visit at Wolf’s Crag, when she is again captured by his “noble forms and fine features [...] the mellow and expressive tones of his voice, the desolate state of his fortunes”,³²⁶ and during his stay at Ravenswood Castle, when they become engaged. Clearly, Lucy’s quixotism and romantic imagination play a crucial role in her falling in love with Ravenswood. Her love for Edgar is indeed the true great adventure of her life and shows both her courage and the extent to which she

³²⁴ Millgate, J., *The Bride of Lammermoor and A Legend of Montrose: The End of the Beginning*, cit., p. 181.

³²⁵ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. V, pp. 63-64.

³²⁶ Ivi, Ch. XVI, p. 172.

is willing to challenge her own family to defend it. But this adventure turns out to be fatal, for Lucy is no Miranda, and Ravenswood Castle is no Prospero's island; the Lord Keeper is no powerful wizard but a politician running out of time, a weak father, and a powerless husband tragically incapable of protecting his daughter from the cruel ambitions of her mother,³²⁷ whose main objective becomes to destroy Lucy's engagement to Ravenswood, even at the cost of sacrificing her daughter's mental sanity. Indeed, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, "the breaking of the female Quixote is women's work",³²⁸ as it is the combined, diabolical action of Lady Ashton and Ailsie Gourlay that drives Lucy to insanity. And although Lucy's madness, in its tragic nature and in the total depersonalization and dehumanization it brings, could not be more different from that of Don Quixote, we are clearly told that her descent into a world of insanity is somehow similarly affected by both her readings and her impressionable imagination:

We have described her in the outset of our story as of a romantic disposition, delighting in tales of love and wonder, and readily identifying herself with the situation of those legendary heroines with whose adventures, for want of better reading, her memory had become stocked. The fairy wand, with which in her solitude she had delighted to raise visions of enchantment, became now the rod of a magician, the bond slave of evil genii, serving only to invoke spectres at which the exorcist trembled.³²⁹

The heroine's impressionability is particularly evident in the way "Ailsie Gourlay dominates her imagination by telling her stories, poisoned versions of the old romances she once loved to read",³³⁰ thus inflicting the final coup de grâce to Lucy's already profoundly distressed mind:

She [Ailsie] soon led her [Lucy's] attention captive by the legends in which she was well skilled, and to which Lucy's habit of reading and reflection induced her to "lend an attentive ear." Dame Gourlay's tales were at first of a mild and interesting character [...] Gradually, however, they assumed a darker and more mysterious character [...] Her legends began to relate to the fortunes of the Ravenswood family [...] Lucy might have despised these tales if

³²⁷ Cf. Millgate, J., *The Bride of Lammermoor and A Legend of Montrose: The End of the Beginning*, cit., p. 182.

³²⁸ Duncan, I., *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel*, cit., p. 142.

³²⁹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXX, p. 308.

³³⁰ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xv.

they had been related concerning another family, or if her own situation had been less despondent. But circumstanced as she was, the idea that an evil fate hung over her attachment became predominant over her other feelings; and the gloom of superstition darkened a mind already sufficiently weakened by sorrow, distress, uncertainty, and an oppressive sense of desertion and desolation.³³¹

While Don Quixote's madness is all about chivalric ideals and dreams, this passage instead indicates how Lucy's madness forever cancels her dreams and leaves space only for despair. In fact, her romantic quixotism disappears as her mental decline increases, and Lucy suddenly falls into the role of the imprisoned Gothic damsel in distress, which is a figure that, paradoxically, has often inspired great fantasies in many female quixotic characters – the Gothic motifs of confinement and abduction being the only keys to adventure and to mobility for a woman living in a patriarchal world.³³² But Lucy's confinement, far from being an exciting adventure, marks the beginning of her tragic epilogue. In *The Bride of Lammermoor*, there is no happy ending for the female Quixote, whose romantic dreams and vivid imagination are progressively replaced by oppressive nightmares and madness. As a matter of fact, differently from Waverley and other female quixotic characters, Lucy's formative journey or *Bildung* does not culminate in her awakening from an ideal world of dreams into an ordinary world where to achieve a certain happiness; on the contrary, it culminates in her descent from a world of dreams into a dark world of insanity and, finally, in death, which certainly makes her a tragic heroine. For this reason, we may question whether she has a *Bildung* at all, for all circumstances tragically prevent her from growing into that promising woman she initially appears to be.

The Bride of Lammermoor, however, is not only the tragedy of Lucy Ashton, but also of the great protagonist of the novel, Edgar Ravenswood. As noticed in the first chapter, he represents one of the

³³¹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXI, pp. 312-313.

³³² Cf. Pawl, A. J., *Feminine Transformations of the Quixote in Eighteenth-Century England: Lennox's Female Quixote and Her Sisters*, cit., p. 171. For instance, Pawl notices that in Lennox's *The Female Quixote*, the protagonist Arabella is continually imagining herself to be the target of abduction plots or rape attempts. Similarly in Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, the heroine Catherine Morland, deeply influenced by the reading of Ann Radcliffe's novels, imagines herself to be at the centre of a great Gothic adventure during her stay with the Tilneys.

major peculiarities of the novel, for he distinguishes himself from the usual Waverley heroes not only because he is active, but also because of his tragic ending. Indeed, *The Bride of Lammermoor* disrupts the typical opposition of the *Waverley Novels* between passive protagonist and tragic active hero by creating a protagonist that reunites features of both these kinds of heroes, that is tied to the past but also inclined towards the acceptance of the present, and that eventually dies. As Villari notices, in combining the dimension of historical awareness and society – usually embodied by the passive protagonist – and the dimension of passion and individuality – embodied instead by the dark hero – in the figure of Edgar Ravenswood, *The Bride of Lammermoor* boasts the most tragic and the most active among Scott’s protagonists.³³³

That Ravenswood is an unconventional protagonist is quite clear from his very first apparition at his father’s funeral, when he is introduced as the last doomed member of an ancient feudal House, passionately vowing revenge against Sir William Ashton: “Heaven do as much to me and more, if I requite not this man and his house the ruin and the disgrace he has brought on me and mine!”³³⁴ Such an outburst of “violent and unresisted passions”³³⁵ seems to align Edgar with the anachronistic passionate dark heroes of the *Waverley Novels*, rather than with their passive, prudent protagonists. However, despite professing such fierce intentions, the Master of Ravenswood acts quite differently. Indeed, when the morning after the funeral his enemy is attacked by one of the wild bulls which have roamed in the Ravenswood estate for centuries, and which are a symbol of his decayed family, Edgar surprisingly intervenes as a protector, killing the animal and saving his enemy and his daughter from certain death:

It seemed inevitable that the father or daughter, or both, should have fallen victims to the impending danger, when a shot from the neighbouring thicket arrested the progress of the animal. He was so truly struck between the junction of the spine with the skull, that the wound,

³³³ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., pp. 25-26.

³³⁴ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. II, p. 33.

³³⁵ Ivi, p. 35.

which in any other part of his body might scarce have impeded his career, proved instantly fatal.³³⁶

Apart from the symbolic and supernatural significance of this gesture— which has been discussed in the previous chapter — this episode highlights some crucial aspects of Edgar’s characterization. First, it certainly marks his capacity for action. Indeed, however passive Alexander Welsh claims him to be,³³⁷ “Edgar’s exploit, as well as the atmosphere of romantic success that Scott bestows upon it”, certainly distinguishes him from his inert and sometimes clumsy companions of the *Waverley Novels*, and “significantly establishes him as unique in heroic potential”.³³⁸ With his shot, Edgar successfully preserves two lives, demonstrating unusual skill and violence, physical strength, courage, presence of mind, and especially a great capacity in taking immediate and concrete action. Of course, Edgar’s violent act is not directed to a man, but to an animal, thus confirming Welsh’s generalization that the *Waverley* hero “never kills anyone”.³³⁹ But this fact neither cancels his capacity for brilliant deeds of violence, nor his capacity for action in general, not to mention the fact that his success in such a violent act certainly denotes “an amoral potentiality that would have served him equally well had he be stalking Sir William with an intent to kill”.³⁴⁰ The blood of Malise Ravenswood runs in his veins, after all, and that Edgar may “bide his time” is particularly evident at the very climax of the novel, during the contract-signing scene, when he rushes into the room, looking as “one returned from the dead”, with “a sword by his side and pistols in his belt”,³⁴¹ threatening everyone, as he asks Lucy if she wishes to break their engagement:

I must and will hear the truth from her own mouth; without this satisfaction I will not leave this spot. Murder me by numbers you possibly may; but I am an armed man – I am a desperate man, and I will not die without ample vengeance. This is my resolution, take it as you may. I

³³⁶ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. V, p. 56.

³³⁷ Cf. Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., p. 30.

³³⁸ Gordon, R.C., *The Marksman of Ravenswood: Power and Legitimacy in The Bride of Lammermoor*, in “Nineteenth-Century Literature, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1986, pp. 49-71, pp. 69-70.

³³⁹ Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., p. 150.

³⁴⁰ Gordon, R.C., *The Marksman of Ravenswood: Power and Legitimacy in The Bride of Lammermoor*, cit., p. 53.

³⁴¹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXIII, p. 321.

WILL hear her determination from her own mouth; from her own mouth, alone, and without witnesses, will I hear it. Now, choose," he said, drawing his sword with the right hand, and, with the left, by the same motion taking a pistol from his belt and cocking it, but turning the point of one weapon and the muzzle of the other to the ground – "choose if you will have this hall floated with blood, or if you will grant me the decisive interview with my affianced bride which the laws of God and the country alike entitle me to demand."³⁴²

Even Welsh recognizes that "there is no comparable scene in *The Waverley Novels*".³⁴³ Yet, again, Edgar does not enact his revengeful propositions, and leaves Ravenswood Castle without striking anyone. As in the episode of the bull's attack, Edgar is angry, heartbroken – then, he had just lost his father, now, he is about to lose Lucy – and especially armed: he has a sword, a pistol, and we know that he is an infallible marksman. In short, he has, once again, the perfect chance to take his revenge, but again, he does not. Such decision, however, does not make him passive, but moderate. Indeed, both this episode and that of the bull show that, despite the gloomy vows of revenge initially pronounced at the funeral, Edgar is not as vengeful as his ancestors. On the contrary, he is more inclined towards compromise, so much so that when he is compelled to host Sir William and Lucy at Wolf's Crag, he tormentedly realizes that although

His mortal foe was under his roof, yet his sentiments towards him were neither those of feudal enmity nor of a true Christian. He felt as if he could neither forgive him in the one character, nor follow forth his vengeance in the other, but that he was making a base and dishonourable composition betwixt his resentment against the father and his affection for his daughter.³⁴⁴

This passage clearly indicates that the Master of Ravenswood appears tragically aware but also "at war with his own hereditary identity".³⁴⁵ On the one hand, being the heir of an ancient aristocratic family, he is very proud, fiery, and emotionally tied to the old system of feud and vengeance which

³⁴² *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXIII, pp. 323-324.

³⁴³ Cf. Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., p. 30.

³⁴⁴ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XIV, p. 160.

³⁴⁵ Hart, F. R., *Scott's novels*, cit., p. 314.

prompts him to act in accordance with tradition.³⁴⁶ He violently accepts the inescapable decay of his House, but regards with great resentment the man who accelerated the ruin of his family, caused the death of his father, and deprived him of his own properties. In this perspective, he is conscious that his engagement to Lucy and his possible alliance with the Ashtons are to be highly condemned, as they represent the betrayal of his own familial identity. That is why Lucy is reminded of “the price at which he has bought her love”³⁴⁷ even in the contract-signing scene, when Edgar’s hurt aristocratic pride prevents him from seeing that her spirit is completely broken and that she is a victim as much as he is. On the other hand, however, it is precisely the love he feels for Lucy which allows him to assume an enlightened position³⁴⁸ that “suggests reconciliation and progress as the proper responses to the loss of his ancestral inheritance”.³⁴⁹ Although Ravenswood is more mature than the heroine, and less inclined towards a quixotic romanticization of events because of the difficulties he already had to face, he is deeply affected by her charm and sweetness, so much so that we are told that, since their first meeting, Lucy “had become a favourite of his imagination, both when awake and when slumbering”.³⁵⁰ But Lucy’s presence in Ravenswood’s thoughts goes beyond the mere – although powerful – romantic fantasy, for it leads him to more moderate views and to consider compromise with the enemy as something possible:

"If, in reality," such were the calmer thoughts that followed the first tempest of his passion – "If, in reality, this man desires no more than the law allows him – if he is willing to adjust even his acknowledged rights upon an equitable footing, what could be my father's cause of complaint? – what is mine? – Those from who we won our ancient possessions fell under the sword of my ancestors, and left lands and livings to the conquerors; we sink under the force of the law, now too powerful for the Scottish cavalry. Let us parley with the victors of the day, as if we had been besieged in our fortress, and without hope of relief. This man may be other than I have thought him; and his daughter – but I have resolved not to think of her." He wrapt

³⁴⁶ Cf. Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xvii; Millgate, J., *The Bride of Lammermoor and A Legend of Montrose: The End of the Beginning*, cit., p. 182.

³⁴⁷ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XX, p. 209.

³⁴⁸ Hart deals with Edgar’s enlightenment. See: Hart, F. R., *Scott’s novels*, cit., pp. 315-317.

³⁴⁹ Robertson, F., *Introduction*, cit., p. xvii.

³⁵⁰ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. X, p. 126.

his cloak around him, fell asleep, and dreamed of Lucy Ashton till daylight gleamed through the lattices.³⁵¹

Later in the novel, when talking to Old Blind Alice, he even refuses the very thought of a possible revenge against the Ashtons, recognizing the anachronism of such a gesture:

‘You drive me to madness, Alice’, said Ravenswood; ‘you are more silly and more superstitious than old Balderstone. Are you such a wretched Christian as to suppose I would in the present-day levy war against the Ashton family, as was the sanguinary custom in elder times?’³⁵²

These passages show that Edgar is rational, open-minded, not affected by superstitions – he ignores and dismisses all the omens, legends, and prophecies against his relationship with Lucy – and most importantly, he acknowledges the defeat of his class, and is moved by a desire to integrate himself into the present. As Millgate notices, “Ravenswood's intelligence, self-awareness, and moral sense seem to carry with them the possibility of the kind of wise judgment and right action that would make him, within the normal limits of the human condition, a free man”.³⁵³ However, the truth is that his historical position is difficult, and Edgar finds himself constantly torn between his attachment to the past and his intellectual acceptance of the present, and between his Toryism and his love for Lucy.³⁵⁴ As a matter of fact, what distinguishes *The Bride of Lammermoor* from the other *Waverley Novels* is that the typical confrontation between past and present, or we could say, between refusal and acceptance of the present, instead of being embodied by two different characters, is located within the psychology of its protagonist, who is destroyed in the process of conciliating such contrasting tendencies. That is why Edgar is a tragic character and a tragic victim of history.³⁵⁵ And a tragic quixote too, for his death not only marks the tragic disappearance of the best values of the past, but

³⁵¹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XIV, p. 160.

³⁵² *Ivi*, Ch. XIX, p. 201.

³⁵³ Millgate, J., *The Bride of Lammermoor and A Legend of Montrose: The End of the Beginning*, cit., p. 184.

³⁵⁴ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., p. 26.

³⁵⁵ Gordon, R. C., ‘*The Bride of Lammermoor*’: a Novel of Tory Pessimism, “Nineteenth-Century Fiction”, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1957, pp. 110-124, p. 117.

also of his own enlightened ideas on the present. Indeed, apart from some aristocratic pride which never abandons him, Edgar represents the ancient Scotland and the old feudal world in its most worthy aspects: he rejects revenge and embodies courage, nobility of mind and feelings, an ancient sense of integrity and dignity, an old-fashioned loyalty to the land and to the people he is acquainted with. In this sense, Edgar is a Don Quixote and a chivalric man of the past. However, differently from the other tragic quixotic characters of the *Waverley Novels* and from Don Quixote himself, Edgar is not an anachronist extremist, but a moderate man of the past that understands the necessity of historical change, and “seeks to adapt notions of honour, inherited from a past tradition, to conditions in the modern world”,³⁵⁶ which is precisely what Scott’s passive protagonists would do. But the difficult historical period in which the novel is set makes Edgar’s hopes for a political and social reconciliation as something idealistic, thus quixotic:

"I hope to see the day when justice shall be open to Whig and Tory, and when these nicknames shall only be used among coffee-house politicians, as 'slut' and 'jade' are among apple-women, as cant terms of idle spite and rancour."

"That will not be in our days, Master: the iron has entered too deeply into our sides and our souls."

"It will be, however, one day," replied the Master.³⁵⁷

This brief dialogue, in which Ravenswood seems a sort of Don Quixote, while Bucklaw acts as a practical Sancho Panza trying to bring him back to reality, confirms that Edgar’s “instincts are toward a mediatorial role, one which would conserve the best of the past and present and transcend party politics”.³⁵⁸ The problem is that such “political attitudes and breadth of sympathy set him somewhat in advance of his contemporaries”,³⁵⁹ thus “out of step with his own historical circumstances”.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Franklin, C., *Feud and Faction in 'The Bride of Lammermoor'*, “Scottish Literary Journal”, Vol. 14 No. 2, 1987, pp. 18-31, p. 26.

³⁵⁷ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. VIII, p. 101.

³⁵⁸ Levine, G., *Exorcising the Past: Scott's 'The Bride of Lammermoor'*, “Nineteenth-Century Fiction”, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1978, pp. 379-398, p. 390.

³⁵⁹ Millgate, J., *The Bride of Lammermoor and A Legend of Montrose: The End of the Beginning*, cit., p. 184.

³⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

Even Caleb laments his master's ignorance of "the ways of this world" and thinks he will never learn them.³⁶¹ In his mediatorial role and enlightenment, Edgar is indeed alone, and we know that a sense of solitude and isolation from the world is a typically quixotic feature.³⁶² Eventually, Edgar's enlightened ideas make him blind to his own fate,³⁶³ as his concrete attempt at reconciliation by getting engaged to Lucy Ashton, unfortunately, leads to the final tragedy. Therefore, curiously, Edgar is a tragic quixote not only because of his moderate anachronism, but also because of his moderate enlightenment.

Another trait which makes Edgar a quixotic character is his purity, and also a certain gullibility, which is particularly evident in his direct and warm relationship to other men, and which renders him "admirable, too simple and true for this world".³⁶⁴ In this sense, the scene where Sir William Ashton shows Edgar the papers of his proceedings with the Privy Council, presenting himself as the "peacemaker betwixt him and the jealous authorities of the day",³⁶⁵ is particularly emblematic. Although these documents represent another opportunist manoeuvre on behalf of the statesman, Ravenswood is touched by his intercession, shakes hands with him, and freely and frankly admits his friendship, so much so that the Lord Keeper himself – who is certainly an hypocrite, but is also capable of kind feelings – is "moved and affected by the fiery, unreserved and generous self-abandonment with which the Master of Ravenswood renounced his feudal enmity".³⁶⁶ This scene clearly indicates how, in his purity, Edgar becomes "a virtuous victim of social injustice"³⁶⁷ and of the machinations of the sly politicians of the novel – Sir William Ashton, Lady Ashton, and even the Marquis of A–, Edgar's own powerful relative. In this trinity, Sir William and the Marquis represent the political opportunism and chicanery of the present. Indeed, despite belonging to opposing political

³⁶¹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXV, p. 273.

³⁶² Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., p. 17.

³⁶³ Hart, F. R., *Scott's novels*, cit., p. 316.

³⁶⁴ Shaw, H. E., *The Forms of Historical Fiction – Sir Walter Scott and his Successors* [1983], London, Cornell University Press, 1983, p. 137.

³⁶⁵ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XVII, p. 179.

³⁶⁶ Ivi, p. 181.

³⁶⁷ Gordon, R. C., *'The Bride of Lammermoor': a Novel of Tory Pessimism*, cit., p. 113.

factions – for the Lord Keeper is a Whig and the Marquis a Tory – both the statesmen are two opportunists who “have in common a cynical tendency to adjust ideological principles to the prevailing political winds”,³⁶⁸ and who take advantage of Edgar for their own self-interest. The worst opportunist of the novel, however, is Lady Ashton, who, as shown in the previous chapter, is a truly diabolic and detestable character not only on a human level, for driving her own daughter to insanity and destroying her chance of happiness with Edgar, but also on a political-historical level, for being in favour of the prosecution of the feud between the Ashtons and the Ravenswoods. Of course, there are also other characters in the novel that condemn the relationship between Edgar and Lucy, such as Old Alice, Caleb Balderstone, at times even Edgar himself. But while Alice and Caleb want the safety of the two youths and oppose Edgar’s love for Lucy because it represents a tragic betrayal of his familial identity and of all those ancient values they are so strictly tied to, Lady Ashton opposes it out of pure wickedness, and has no scruples in sacrificing her daughter’s happiness to hurt Ravenswood. Indeed, it seems that Scott chooses to concentrate in Lady Ashton all the worst features of both the new order and the feudal one, for in her ambitious opportunism and excessive thirst for violence and revenge, not only does she embody the most negative aspects of the present, but also of the feudal past. For this reason, Edgar, whose noble spirit already places him in stark contrast with the opportunism of Sir William and the Marquis, may also be regarded as the very opposite of Lady Ashton. Differently from the diabolic woman, he seems to reunite all the potential benefits of both the past and of the present, because, as we have already noticed, not only does he represent the worthy values of the feudal world, but also has an advanced view of the modern one, which allows him to overcome opportunism and factionalism, and to look for a compromise. Indeed, differently from the other tragic quixotes of the *Waverley Novels*, Edgar does not die because he refuses the present – on the contrary, he dies despite all his efforts to adapt to the present. This makes his tragedy even greater:

³⁶⁸ Gordon, R. C., ‘*The Bride of Lammermoor*’: a Novel of Tory Pessimism, cit., p. 113.

with his death, not only the good of a vanishing past, but also the good that could come from the present, is tragically lost.

In a novel like *The Bride of Lammermoor* where the tragic pervades every single dimension, it would seem impossible even to imagine a comic subplot. Apparently, however, the gloomy atmosphere and the extremely tragic ending of Lucy Ashton and the Master of Ravenswood did not prevent Scott from inserting in the narrative the extraordinary comic figure of Caleb Balderstone, Edgar's loyal butler, who "provides a crucial test for the formal and tonal integrity"³⁶⁹ of the novel, and whose presence, consequently, has been strongly criticized. In the "Quarterly Review" of 1821, Caleb was indeed defined as "a serious blemish. Of all our author's fools [...] he is the most pertinacious, the most intrusive, and, from the nature of his one monotonous note, the least pardonable in his intrusion".³⁷⁰ As a matter of fact, Caleb's entertaining antics unexpectedly intertwine with the story even in its darkest moments, so much so that even Scott allowed that "he might have sprinkled rather too much parsley over his chicken."³⁷¹ However, Caleb's "intrusion" is certainly pardonable, because "exactly in the manner of Jacobean tragedy, Scott uses Caleb and the comic sub-plot to underline the events of the main action".³⁷² Indeed, Caleb is a sort of Shakespearean Fool, "who utters deep thought in seemingly shallow words, and wisdom in apparent folly",³⁷³ and whose presence functions as "a brilliant commentary on the theme of fallen fortunes and lost honour".³⁷⁴ That is why it is necessary to recognize the "seriousness of implication" of this extraordinary character, who, "under the heading of 'comic relief' [...] embodies the essence of the tragedy" itself.³⁷⁵ Moreover, Caleb is probably the most quixotic among the quixotic characters of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, because in his being "ludicrous and devoted, infuriating and pathetic",³⁷⁶ he embodies the true,

³⁶⁹ Hart, F. R., *Scott's novels*, cit., p. 330.

³⁷⁰ Senior, N., *Unsigned review of Rob Roy, Heart of Midlothian, Bride of Lammermoor, Legend of Montrose, Ivanhoe, The Monastery, The Abbot, and Kenilworth*, "Quarterly Review", Vol. xxvi 1821, pp. 109–48, now in *Walter Scott: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John O. Hayden, London, Routledge, 1995, pp.215-255, p. 231.

³⁷¹ Lockhart, J. G., *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 345.

³⁷² Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 145.

³⁷³ Milward, P., *Wise Fools in Shakespeare*, "Christianity and Literature", Vol. 33, No. 2, Winter 1984, pp. 21-27, p. 22.

³⁷⁴ Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., p. 181.

³⁷⁵ Hart, F. R., *Scott's novels*, cit., p. 331, p. 333.

³⁷⁶ Ivi, p. 330.

original essence of Don Quixote. At the same time, however, he distinguishes himself from Cervantes's famous hidalgo, and from other comic quixotic characters of the *Waverley Novels*, in that he also has a lot in common with Don Quixote's memorable squire, Sancho Panza. Indeed, differently from Cervantes's hero, and for example, from the Baron of Bradwardine in *Waverley* and Lady Bellenden in *Old Mortality*,³⁷⁷ Caleb is not a member of the aristocracy, but a servant. Therefore, in his social status, which determines his pragmatism and craftiness, and in his constant association with food – which he does not eat but is obliged to steal – he is much more akin to Sancho than to Don Quixote. Like Sancho, Caleb is cunning and loyal, ridiculous but wise in his own way, and especially, he is ready to resort to the craziest expedients to save the honour of the decaying House of Ravenswood: from telling absurd lies on the castle abundance of domestic staff, rich furniture, and culinary delights, to taking a range of concrete actions, which go from stealing food from the village to setting fire to Wolf's Crag. His Sancho-like shrewdness is particularly evident in the way he takes advantage of the newly established relationship between his master and the Lord Keeper to regain favour and power over the opportunist inhabitants of Wolf's Hope, by telling them “stories of what he could do with his master, his master with the Lord Keeper, the Lord Keeper with the Council, and the Council with the King”.³⁷⁸ Hart points out that, in his deceit, the cunning butler resembles Sir William and the Marquis on a low comic level.³⁷⁹ However, Caleb's lies and antics are not motivated by the opportunist hunt for favouritism which characterizes the statesmen and the villagers, but by a much more noble reason, that is, his moving devotion to his young master. Caleb's timeless loyalty to the House of Ravenswood, his obstinate attachment to the vanishing past which does not allow him to accept historical progress, his deep bond to the values of the old world, which, in vain, he tries to maintain by keeping up outmoded rituals, make him certainly comic and ironic, but also pathetic, sympathetic, and even tragic,³⁸⁰ thus a perfect tragicomic Don Quixote.

³⁷⁷ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., p.22.

³⁷⁸ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXV, p. 272.

³⁷⁹ Cf. Hart, F. R., *Scott's novels*, cit., p. 332.

³⁸⁰ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., pp. 22-24.

Like Don Quixote, Caleb is the “personification of the virtues and absurdities of the old order”,³⁸¹ “the enlightened modernist’s mockery of anachronistic feudal virtues” and times,³⁸² which he constantly regrets: “These times are not like the gude auld times, when authority had its rights”.³⁸³ Indeed, Caleb loves the memory and resents the downfall of the feudal authority to such an extent, that, despite being a domestic, he appears prouder and more aristocratic than Edgar himself. That is why, in his fanatic aristocratic pride, he may be regarded as an incredible parodic version of Lady Ashton.³⁸⁴ Caleb’s pride especially arises in his dealings with the villagers of Wolf’s Hope, when, determined to exercise the ancient feudal rights of his master, either he comically threatens them by concentrating “all the lightnings of the aristocracy in his eye”³⁸⁵ or tries to win them over by assuming a “lordly air”: “as he spoke he changed his shambling , skulking, dodging pace, into a manly and authoritative step, re-adjusted his cocked hat, and suffered his brow to emerge from under it in all the pride of the aristocracy, like the sun from behind a cloud”.³⁸⁶ Obviously, such a display of aristocratic pride in Caleb is as comic as Don Quixote’s knightly behaviour. In this sense, comic and particularly significant are also the narrator’s two comparisons of Caleb with Louis XIV,³⁸⁷ which aim at highlighting that the butler behaves with the independent ex-vassals of Wolf’s Hope not only as if he were the great representative of an absolute power which, in truth, has already disappeared, but as if, like the Sun King, he was the legitimate possessor of that power.³⁸⁸ But Caleb’s “conception of the ties binding Wolf’s Hope to Wolf’s Crag is sadly out of accord with the villagers’ changed sense of their relationship to the Ravenswoods”.³⁸⁹ Indeed, in the novel, the theme of the clash between new order and old one especially emerges in the way the inhabitants of Wolf’s Hope – which is “a microcosm of bourgeois Scotland emerging from the shadow of feudalism”³⁹⁰ – resist to Caleb’s

³⁸¹ Kerr, J., *Fiction against History: Scott as a Storyteller* [1989], Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 138.

³⁸² Hart, F. R., *Scott’s novels*, cit., p. 331.

³⁸³ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XIV, p. 154.

³⁸⁴ Cf. Hart, F. R., *Scott’s novels*, cit., p. 332.

³⁸⁵ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XII, p. 139.

³⁸⁶ Ivi, Ch. XXV, p. 272.

³⁸⁷ See *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. X, p. 119 and Ch. XIII, p. 153.

³⁸⁸ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., p. 23.

³⁸⁹ Kerr, J., *Fiction against History: Scott as a Storyteller*, cit., p. 137.

³⁹⁰ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 117.

attempts at levying dues, butter and eggs from them, by reminding him that “new times were not as old times; that they lived on the south of the Forth, and far from the Highlands”,³⁹¹ and by claiming that “their hens had caickled mony a day for the Lords of Ravenswood, and it was time they suld caickle for those that gave them roosts and barley”.³⁹² If on the one hand, their resistance is understandable, as modern life in the village is positive and Caleb’s idealization of the old times is sometimes exaggerated, on the other, the depiction of Wolf’s Hope is not entirely sympathetic, for it clearly appears that the villager’s old feudal loyalty has been replaced by modern selfish calculation, opportunism, and thirst for personal aggrandizement, which is not admirable at all.³⁹³

Therefore, through Caleb’s dealings with Wolf’s Hope, “Scott shows the inevitable degradation of the feudal ideal in the modern age”,³⁹⁴ which is mirrored, on a smaller scale, by the concrete degradation of the House of Ravenswood. As a matter of fact, Caleb’s antics are motivated by the absolute necessity he feels to hide his master’s poverty from the world. “Resolved not to sacrifice one jot of honour”³⁹⁵ of the family he has been faithfully serving for his entire life, Caleb’s main priority is indeed “to never let the credit o’ the house suffer”.³⁹⁶ For this reason, although the Ravenswoods’ wealth has clearly gone, “Caleb is driven by an overwhelming desire to keep up appearances”,³⁹⁷ deeply convinced that some pompous etiquette rituals or generous apologies may compensate for the family’s lack of substance. Caleb himself explains his own philosophy, affirming that “in some sort, a gude excuse is better than the things themselves”.³⁹⁸ Even when it comes to food – and in this case it should be particularly difficult to supply for the lack of substance – Caleb does not surrender, praising the excellent quality of Wolf’s Crag water when he cannot serve wine, or justifying a rather depressing meal of four herrings as “a convenient fashion, and used [...] in an honourable and thriving

³⁹¹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XII, p. 139.

³⁹² Ivi, p. 137.

³⁹³ Cf. Hollingworth, B., *The Tragedy of Lucy Ashton in ‘The Bride of Lammermoor’*, “Studies in Scottish Literature”, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1984, pp. 94-105, p.99.

³⁹⁴ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 145.

³⁹⁵ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XII, p. 138.

³⁹⁶ Ivi, Ch. VII, p. 88.

³⁹⁷ Gordon, R. C., *‘The Bride of Lammermoor’: a Novel of Tory Pessimism*, p. 117.

³⁹⁸ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXVI, p. 279.

family”.³⁹⁹ In adopting such a behaviour, however, the old butler ends up exposing his master’s indigence even more. Indeed, Edgar cannot share his servant’s views of things, nor can he bear to be regarded with pity or amusement, so he frankly and bitterly admits his poverty. However, Edgar’s disapproval only serves to encourage Caleb even more, whose “bold and inventive genius”⁴⁰⁰ especially arises when his master has guests. For instance, when Sir William Ashton and Lucy visit Wolf’s Crag, the old butler starts boasting about the sumptuous dinner he would have served, had not the thunderbolt, which had shaken the entire tower, entered the kitchen and destroyed all the food with it – which is an absurd lie, for it is Caleb himself who wrecks the kitchen, seeing in the thunderbolt an opportunity “to give his master an alibi for failing to provide his distinguished guests with an appropriate meal”.⁴⁰¹ And when the mortified Edgar tries to stop him, the cunning servant scolds him: "Haud your tongue, for heaven's sake, sir; if it's my pleasure to hazard my soul in telling lees for the honour of the family, it's nae business o' yours; and if ye let me gang on quietly, I'se be moderate in my banquet; but if ye contradict me, deil but I dress ye a dinner fit for a duke!"⁴⁰² As Welsh notices, sauciness and dialect are two key features of Scott’s low comic characters,⁴⁰³ and this small passage is enough to demonstrate that Caleb, who always speaks dialect, has them both. Welsh also points out that “the low style is characterized by the obtrusiveness of things, and by the freedom to descend to details. This is why the catalogue is a prominent device in the dialect passages”.⁴⁰⁴ Indeed, after scolding Edgar, Caleb proceeds “to enumerate upon his fingers” all the delicacies of his imaginary banquet:

"No muckle provision—might hae served four persons of honour—first course, capons in white broth—roast kid—bacon with reverence; second course, roasted leveret—butter crabs—a veal florentine; third course, blackcock—it's black enough now wi' the sute—plumdamas—

³⁹⁹ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. VIII, p. 102.

⁴⁰⁰ Ivi, Ch. XI, p. 128.

⁴⁰¹ Kerr, J., *Fiction against History: Scott as a Storyteller*, cit., p. 138.

⁴⁰² *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XI, p. 130.

⁴⁰³ Cf. Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., p. 185.

⁴⁰⁴ Ivi, p. 184.

a tart—a flam—and some nonsense sweet things, and comfits—and that's a'," he said, seeing the impatience of his master—"that's just a' was o't — forbye the apples and pears."⁴⁰⁵

But Caleb's hilarious show does not end here. Not content with his fictitious banquet and determined to procure a real dinner for his master's guests, the old butler embarks on a Sancho-picaro-like expedition and steals a fat goose from the wealthy cooper of Wolf's Hope. The absolute climax of Caleb's follies, however, is seeming to set fire to Wolf's Crag, so as not to host the Marquis and show him the tower's degradation. He tells Edgar: "I wad rather set fire to the tower in gude earnest, and burn it ower my ain head into the bargain, or I see the family disonohoured in the sort".⁴⁰⁶ Clearly, there is no absurd lie he would not tell nor foolish action he would not take in order to save the honour of the House of Ravenswood, although "it is an essential irony that he should resort to measures which are completely dishonourable and discreditable in order to maintain a public façade of honour and credit".⁴⁰⁷ As a matter of fact, in all his antics, Caleb "satirises the aristocratic obsession with honour"⁴⁰⁸ and becomes the "absurd embodiment of the house's tragic degeneracy".⁴⁰⁹ On the other hand, however, like Edgar, Caleb is also the last moving "embodiment of ancient virtues in a world that has abandoned those virtues",⁴¹⁰ and his unfailing devotion to Edgar indicates that he should be regarded not only ironically, but also sympathetically. Indeed, "Scott's delineation of the feudal mentality in him sometimes evokes pathos rather than laughter".⁴¹¹ This is particularly evident when, at the end of the novel, the old butler tries in vain to dissuade his master from duelling and implores him to stay:

"Oh, sir! oh, master! kill me if you will, but do not go out on this dreadful errand! Oh! my dear master, wait but this day; the Marquis of A---- comes to-morrow, and a' will be remedied."

⁴⁰⁵ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XI, p. 130.

⁴⁰⁶ Ivi, Ch. XXVI, p. 276.

⁴⁰⁷ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 145.

⁴⁰⁸ Ivi, p. 146.

⁴⁰⁹ Levine, G., *Exorcising the Past: Scott's 'The Bride of Lammermoor'*, "Nineteenth-Century Fiction", Vol. 32, No. 4, 1978, pp. 379-398, p. 395.

⁴¹⁰ Gordon, R. C., *'The Bride of Lammermoor': a Novel of Tory Pessimism*, cit., p. 112.

⁴¹¹ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 147.

"You have no longer a master, Caleb," said Ravenswood, endeavouring to extricate himself; "why, old man, would you cling to a falling tower?"

"But I HAVE a master," cried Caleb, still holding him fast, "while the heir of Ravenswood breathes. I am but a servant; but I was born your father's--your grandfather's servant. I was born for the family--I have lived for them—I would die for them! Stay but at home, and all will be well!"⁴¹²

Significantly, these are Caleb's last words in the novel, marking his passage from the comic to the tragic domain, as clearly signalled not only by the passionate tone he uses, but also by the suddenly elevated style: for the first time in the entire novel, Caleb does not speak dialect, but standard English, as required by the pathos of the moment.⁴¹³ Not accompanied by any absurd lie or action, these words are also the purest and most desperate expression of Caleb's moving loyalty to his master, and indicate how his life entirely revolves around the House of Ravenswood. Caleb's shift from the comic to the tragic dimension is also interestingly signalled by the different animals to which he is compared throughout the novel: if at the beginning, in his determination to defend the honour of the House, he is defined as a "bold lion" and as a "high-spirited elephant",⁴¹⁴ at the end of the novel, it is Caleb himself that, reflecting on his loyalty, admits to be an old dog: "I am a dog, and an auld dog too [...] and I am like to get a dog's wages; but it does not signification a pinch of sneeshing, for I am ower auld a dog to learn new tricks, or to follow a new master"⁴¹⁵. Indeed, Caleb's indefatigable fidelity to Edgar and absolute dependence on the house clearly make him more akin to a dog than to a lion, and even to a man.⁴¹⁶ Significantly, at the end of the novel, Scott's description of Caleb's death recalls this passage: "Life had lost to him its salt and savour [...] He ate without refreshment and slumbered without repose; and with a fidelity sometimes displayed by the canine race, but seldom by human beings, he pined and died within a year".⁴¹⁷ Therefore, eventually, even the hilarious Caleb is

⁴¹² *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXV, pp. 346-347.

⁴¹³ On the elevation of style on behalf of low characters see Welsh, A., *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, cit., p. 180.

⁴¹⁴ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XI, Ch. XII, p. 132, p. 135.

⁴¹⁵ Ivi, Ch. XXVI, p. 275.

⁴¹⁶ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 148.

⁴¹⁷ *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Ch. XXXV, p. 348.

absorbed in the domineering tragic dimension of the novel: he dies, totally consumed by his loyalty to an extinguished family and a dying past,⁴¹⁸ “a victim of changes he hardly understands”,⁴¹⁹ or better, that he refuses to understand. Indeed, as Villari notices, Caleb’s obsessive adherence to outmoded feudal rituals, rights and etiquette is hilarious because outmoded, but at the same time, it also represents his own way to resist to historical change, a shield he uses to protect himself from a new reality which would be too painful to accept.⁴²⁰ But when his master dies, there is no use resisting, because there is no use existing. The comic, moving Caleb tragically dies, taking with him that outmoded, but admirable virtue of feudal loyalty, which in the new opportunist modern world is condemned to disappear. Therefore, in conclusion, we may say that, far from being a “serious blemish”, Caleb is an extraordinary character that incredibly enriches the narrative and that, in reuniting both a comic and tragic dimension, embodies that mixture of styles which makes *The Bride of Lammermoor* such a special novel.

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Levine, G., *Exorcising the Past: Scott’s ‘The Bride of Lammermoor’*, cit., p. 395.

⁴¹⁹ Brown, D., *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, cit., p. 147.

⁴²⁰ Cf. Villari, E., *La Resistenza alla Storia nei Romanzi Giacobiti di Walter Scott*, cit., p. 24.

Conclusions

The purpose of this detailed analysis was to highlight the unicity and the perfect combination of different styles in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which Thomas Hardy himself defined as "an almost perfect specimen of form".⁴²¹ Undoubtedly, this novel is an extraordinary work, which, as we have already noticed, collected and revived the heritage of the most important literary traditions that preceded it: not only is it a wonderful example of Scott's appropriation and refinement of the Gothic tradition, but also, in its intertwining of the tragic and the comic with the serious style, of the Shakespearean and even of the Cervantean traditions. I confess I am still amazed by the incredible juxtaposition of such contrasting characters, styles, and modes that this quixotic-Cervantean author managed to blend. For I realized that Scott's nostalgic attitude towards the past and extensive use of quixotic figures not only make him the Cervantes of Scotland, but also a Don Quixote, and consequently an Edward Waverley, a Baron of Bradwardine, a Caleb Baderstone, a man "dreaming of the past as still present and capable of being revived".⁴²²

As a final reflection, I would like to point out that, although this dissertation concentrates on Scott's re-elaboration of past literary traditions, *The Bride of Lammermoor* detained a crucial role not only in breathing "new life into the old forms",⁴²³ but also new life into the future ones, as it turned out to be a deeply influential text during the Victorian age, when "it became a major source for three of the most powerful and radically disturbing works of the period: Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Tennyson's *Maud*, and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*".⁴²⁴ Not to mention the

⁴²¹ Hardy, T., *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, ed. by Harold Orel, Lawrence, Kansas, 1966, pp. 120-121, quoted in Millgate, J., *Two Versions of Regional Romance: Scott's 'The Bride of Lammermoor' and Hardy's 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles'*, "Studies in English Literature, 1500-19", Vol. 17 No. 4, 1977, pp. 729-738, p. 729.

⁴²² Grierson, H. J. I., *Don Quixote: Some War-Time Reflections on its character and influence*, Oxford, Oxford University press, 1921, p. 9, quoted in Moro Martín, A., *Transformaciones del Quijote en la novela inglesa y alemana del siglo XVIII*, cit., p. 235.

⁴²³ Mayo, R. D., *How long was Gothic Fiction in Vogue?*, "Modern Language Notes", Vol. 58, No.1, 1943, pp. 58-64, p. 64.

⁴²⁴ Farrell, J.P., '*The Bride of Lammermoor*' as Oracular Text in Emily Brontë, Tennyson, and Hardy, "South Central Review", Vol. 1, No. 4, 1984, pp. 53-63, pp. 53-54.

eight operatic adaptations inspired by the novel melodramatic intensity, especially Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*,⁴²⁵ which debuted at Teatro di San Carlo in Naples in 1835,⁴²⁶ and is still one of the most regularly performed operas in the theatres of the world. Certainly, only a true masterpiece could have inspired other wonderful masterpieces in literature and music.

⁴²⁵ Cf. Showalter, E., *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, New York, Penguin Books, 1985, pp. 14-15.

⁴²⁶ *Libretto di Lucia di Lammermoor*, Teatro la Fenice, Stagione Lirica e Balletto 2016-2017, "VeneziaMusica e dintorni", p. 10.

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