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***Waverley's Scotland:
a Land Far Behind.***

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Contents

1. Introduction	p. 5
2. Walter Scott and Edward <i>Waverley</i>	p. 12
❖ Sir Walter Scott: an Enlightened Antiquarian	p. 13
❖ <i>Waverley</i> : the Importance of a “sigh”	p. 20
3. Travelling through Space and Time	p. 29
❖ A New Awareness of the Background	p. 30
❖ The Issue of Scottish Independence: Yesterday	p. 38
❖ History as Crisis and Survival	p. 51
❖ A Geographical Detour	p. 59
4. The Essentiality of Choosing	p. 74
❖ <i>Waverley</i> as a Pedagogic Tool	p. 75
❖ The Issue of Scottish Independence: Today	p. 87
5. Conclusion	p. 106
6. Bibliography	p. 113



Introduction

1. Introduction

Far from recognising itself and from being recognised as dwelling in a single identity, the United Kingdom appears as a melting pot of regional banners, each of which mingles with one another as much as oil and water can mix. Orderly self-righteous England and its Celtic outskirts of Wales, sturdy wild Scotland, uncomfortable half-forgotten Northern Ireland. Different identities under a same label, the UK. Much easier to apply a synecdoche: England. Much to the offence, though, of the three other countries. I used to make the same mistake, both out of a sense of practicality and a passion for anything related to the English culture. It was not a long time ago, however, as I found out that you can actually have an afternoon tea in London as well as in Edinburgh, that I started replacing ‘English’ with ‘British’, my perspective widening to embrace a much larger reality. Scotland had always been in the back of my mind, appreciatively but rather passively. Once, whilst entering the Christmassy-lit Dome in Edinburgh for a heart-warming afternoon tea, in front of a waiter with a strong Scottish accent, I took the unconscious decision not to order an English Breakfast Tea: I went for an Earl Grey, whose name I sensibly judged to be less offensive. Then I read Walter Scott’s *Waverley*, the story of an overly romantic English youth caught up in the passionate history of the 1745 Scottish rebellion. Shortly afterwards, I set off to that bewitching land and, once there, I fully recognised myself in his fascination with the Highland world, I felt togetherness with the stubbornly proud Highland men, but then, like him, I had to withdraw from them and glide back home. Yet, just like Edward Waverley in front of the “large and spirited painting”¹ immortalising his and Fergus Mac-Ivor’s Highland adventure at the end of the novel, I find myself, every now and again, staring nostalgically at the photographs hanging on

¹ Scott W., *Waverley* (1814), ed. C. Lamont, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, ch. LXXI, p. 338.

1. Introduction

my wall: the misty and eerie Loch Ness, grumpy, rain-stained Inverness, the out-of-this-world bright blues and greens of fairy Skye and royal, cobbled Edinburgh. Feeding a daydreaming imagination, anchored but loosely to the slippery awareness that one has to go back. Unless one is born in Scotland, one cannot but feel Scotland as a mesmerising (un)reality, never completely unravelling itself to the foreign eye. A place where the fast pace of History has prevailed, but where History is cracked and leaking with splinters of a time always behind the present, the Scottish Borders truly yet inconspicuously marking off a bounding line with England. Scotland's diversity is indeed perceived gently, as an unhurried adaptation of sight. Between the two north-west National Parks of the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales, the M6 still flows through England, yet, the metamorphosis of Cumbria into the Scottish borderlands is stumped by the purple brushing of thistles, more and more intense as Carlisle shades off into Dumfries. Scotland has its own way of living each century as if the latter were enveloped in a translucent layer of oblivion of the present, driving cars on roads fit for a single horse and refusing to call a hairy Highland cow a Coo: that is the name tourists from fashionable London call an ordinary bovine. This, at least, is what a man from Skye told me.

If the daydreaming Edward Waverley could have picked a background song for his travels, that would have probably been the *Skye Boat Song*. When I first heard one contemporary adaptation of this Scottish folk song, a traditional Gaelic “iorram” (pronounced ‘irram’, namely, a rowing song)², it was as if Scotland could cast a spell through the sound of bagpipes and take me back there. Its wistful melody, coupled with its historical subject, could best encapsulate Waverley's affecting approach towards wayward

² Cf. *The Skye Boat Song*, “The Fiddler's Companion” at http://www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers/SKA_SKY.htm

1. Introduction

Scotland, and, at the same time, any traveller's approach to the Scottish soil for the first time. Including me.

The *Skye Boat Song* probably takes its origins from the Gaelic song *Cuachan nan Craobh* or 'The Cuckoo in the Grove'. However, it was Sir Harold Edwin Boulton, an Englishman from Hertfordshire with a fervent passion for traditional British songs, who in 1884 wrote and published the lyrics, which recount the story of Bonnie Prince Charlie's escape to the isle of Skye, disguised as a maid and helped by Flora MacDonald after the disastrous defeat at Culloden³. Apparently, he would have heard the air for the first time when Miss Annie MacLeod hummed it to him: she had been to a trip to Skye and the men who were rowing her over Loch Coruisk (Coire Uisg, the 'Cauldron of Waters') had begun singing the Gaelic song. Miss MacLeod remembered the tune and, together with Sir Boulton, came up with the first official version of the *Skye Boat Song*. It was Sir Boulton who actually rearranged the words adding a Jacobite form, so that they could fit the (hi)story of Bonnie Prince Charlie⁴. Scotsman Robert Louis Stevenson, then, wrote his own version of the song in 1892 and it was his *Sing me a song of a lad that is gone* that inspired Bear McCreary to compose the theme song to the TV series *Outlander*⁵, through which it came to my ear. The protagonist of the series, Clare Fraser, finds herself thrown backwards in time through a magical Celtic stone circle: from 1945 post-II World War 'civilised' Scotland to 1743 Jacobite 'insubordinate' Scotland. And she cannot but fully plunge herself into the turmoil of pre-Culloden

³ Cf. *10 things you (probably) didn't know about Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobites*, "History Extra", 12 May 2016 at <http://www.historyextra.com/article/feature/10-facts-jacobites-bonnie-prince-charlie-culloden>

⁴ Cf. *The Skye Boat Song*, "The Fiddler's Companion", cit.

⁵ Cf. *The Skye Boat Song*, "Outlander Italy" at <http://outlander-italy.com/the-skye-boat-song-alla-scoperta-della-sigla-di-outlander/>

1. Introduction

Highland Scotland. A turmoil that will brutally enrapture her soul. Because Scotland is that powerful: it makes one forget about what is left behind the borders and it sweeps one away to its ahistorical present.

It is with this melody resounding inside my head that I set off to write the present dissertation.

Here are the three versions:

<u>Original Version</u>	<u>Stevenson's Version</u>	<u>McCreary's Version</u>
<i>Speed, bonnie boat, like a bird on the wing, Onward! the sailors cry; Carry the lad that's born to be King Over the sea to Skye.</i>	<i>Sing me a song of a <u>lad</u> that is gone, Say, could that lad be I? Merry of soul he sailed on a day Over the sea to Skye.</i>	<i>Sing me a song of a <u>lass</u> that is gone Say, could that lass be I? Merry of soul she sailed on a day Over the sea to Skye.</i>
<i>Loud the winds howl, loud the waves roar, Thunderclaps rend the air; Baffled, our foes stand by the shore, Follow they will not dare. [Chorus] Though the waves leap, soft shall ye sleep, Ocean's a royal bed.</i>	<i>Mull was astern, Rum on the port, Eigg on the starboard bow; Glory of youth glowed in <u>his</u> soul, Where is that glory now? [Chorus] Give me again all that was there, Give me the sun that shone!</i>	<i>Mull was astern, Rùm on the port, Eigg on the starboard bow; Glory of youth glowed in <u>her</u> soul, Where is that glory now? [Chorus] Give me again all that was there Give me the sun that shone!</i>
<i>Rocked in the</i>	<i>Give me the eyes, give</i>	<i>Give me the eyes, give</i>

1. Introduction

deep, Flora will keep
Watch by your weary
head.

me the soul,
Give me the lad
that's gone!

me the soul,
Give me the lass
that's gone

[Chorus]

Many's the lad fought
on that day,
Well
the claymore could
wield,

[Chorus]

Billow and breeze,
islands and seas,
Mountains of rain
and sun,
All that was good, all
that was fair,

[Chorus]

Billow and breeze,
islands and seas,
Mountains of rain
and sun
All that was good, all
that was fair

When the night came,
silently lay
Dead on Culloden's
field.

All that was me is
gone.⁷

All that was me is
gone.⁸

[Chorus]

Burned are their
homes, exile and
death
Scatter the loyal men;
Yet ere the sword cool
in the sheath
Charlie will come
again.⁶

To begin with, the *Skye Boat Song* in its original lyrics, as written down by Sir Boulton, lays out a combination of resignation in front of the inevitability of history and of celebration of the heroic value

⁶ *The Skye Boat Song*, "Education Scotland" at https://education.gov.scot/scotlandsongs/primary/genericcontent_tcm4555681.asp

⁷ Stevenson, R. L., *Songs of Travel, and Other Verses*, 1896, Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/487/487-h/487-h.htm>

⁸ McCreary B., *The Skye Boat Song*, "Metrolyrics" at <http://www.metrolyrics.com/outlander-the-skye-boat-song-extended-lyrics-bear-mccreary.html>

1. Introduction

of the sign of that unavailability, Culloden, at the same time not renouncing to the hopeful augury that “Charlie will come again”. On the other hand, Stevenson’s text focuses on a “lad” (Scottish word for “boy”), the Young Pretender Charles Edward Stuart, who is left with nothing to pretend anymore: the sun shines no more and “all that was good” and “fair” is now gone, together with his glory. Finally, McCreary’s adaptation, designed to fit the plot of the TV series, based on Diana Gabaldon’s best-selling *Outlander* novels, transforms Stevenson’s “lad” into a “lass”, the Scottish word for “girl”. Since the aim of this work is to provide a survey of Scotland’s bewitching spirit of diversity, strictly linked with a much-despised as well as inevitably necessary push towards modernity out of its sacred seclusion, an analysis which takes Walter Scott’s *Waverley* as its guiding line, it seemed as if the three lyrics could encapsulate the marrow of it all. The historical and social diversity of Scotland, in fact, came to an official end on 16 April 1746 at Culloden, yet what constitutes the upper North part of the United Kingdom always appears as the kingdom beyond a wall. Cross the wall, and “all that was me is gone”: Edward Waverley even gets to the point of standing side by side with the rebellious Highlanders. And I, like Clare Fraser, came to, if not truly despise, at least shrink doubtfully from upright England, so determined to have the edge on the entire Britain. Nonetheless, however much Scotland can be a seductive Calypso, in the end one has to retreat behind the borders: the Scottish kingdom belongs solely to its Scottish people, and no one will ever inhabit it fully. Not even History, which, despite taking a heavy toll from it, will never grasp a full dominion.

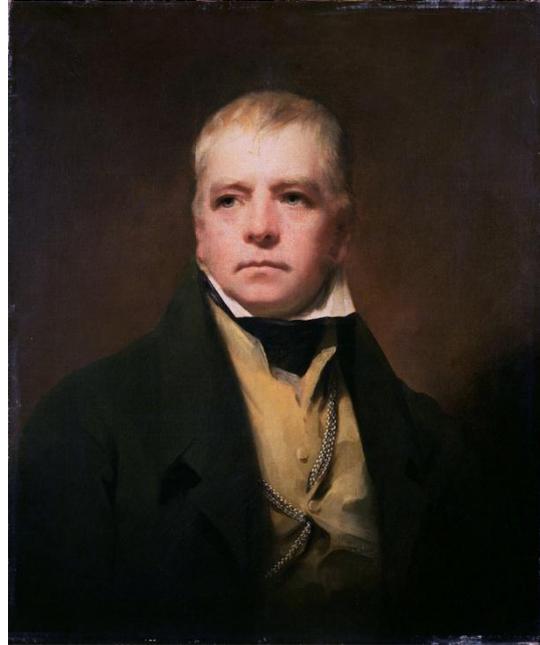


Walter Scott
and
Edward *Waverley*

Sir Walter Scott: an Enlightened Antiquarian

He who gave such luster to Scotland derives his very name from the land he loved.⁹

When he set himself up as a novelist, the legally trained and legal practitioner as well as renowned poet Walter Scott (1771-1832) turned his attention towards a reality which had never previously been at the centre of neither common thought nor traditional literature: the reality of Scotland “’Tis Sixty Years Since”. A peripheral world, detached both



Henry Raeburn. *Sir Walter Scott*. 1822.
Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh.

geographically and historically from the ‘now and then’ of centripetal England. His 1814 *Waverley* is indeed the successful attempt to bring to light an obsolete regional dimension which had to yield to historical progress, and yet which should not have been forgotten. Scott’s antinomic approach towards that Scottish state of things, romantically celebratory on the one hand and enlightenedly aware of the historical necessity of development on the other hand, can best be exemplified by the magnificence of his estate at Abbotsford, which he both meticulously kitted out with “up-to-date indoor plumbing and gas lighting and stocked with

⁹ Johnson E., *Sir Walter Scott: the Great Unknown*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1970, p. xxv.

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

antiquarian relics”¹⁰. His eye contemplating enthusiastically the progressive turn the present was taking, his hand not letting go of a precious tradition. It was indeed this last element to urge him, on June 20, to write his acceptance to the letter in which Dr. Douglas, the former owner, outlined the conditions of the sale on Whitsunday, 1812¹¹: “above all, this valley was steeped for him in the glamour of tradition and history”¹². So enthusiastic was Scott for his new estate of Newarthaugh (Cartleyhole to local people) that, even before taking actual possession of it, he had renamed it Abbotsford, since the abbots of the nearby Melrose Abbey used to use the ‘ford’ below the house to cross the river Tweed. By the time of this acquisition, Scott had become “the most internationally famous novelist as well as the most prolific writer of the day”¹³. So much so that, despite his somehow baffling efforts to keep the authorship of his novels a (however much open) secret, Jane Austen proved quick-witted in unmasking the author of *Waverley* and his mastery. From a cottage in Hampshire in September 1814, two months after the publication of Scott’s first novel, she lamented in her characteristic irony:

Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones.-It is not fair.-He has Fame and Profit enough as a Poet, and should not be taking the bread out of other people’s mouths.-I do not like him, & do not mean to like *Waverley* if I can help it-but I fear I must.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Sir Walter Scott*, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. S. Greenblatt and M.H. Abrams, New York, Norton, 2005, vol. II, pp. 406-423, p.407.

¹¹ Cf. Johnson E., *op. cit*, p. 371.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 372.

¹³ *Sir Walter Scott*, *cit.*, p.407.

¹⁴ Qtd. in Lamont C., *Introduction*, in *Waverley*, *cit.*, pp. vii-xx, p. vii.

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

As it happens, Scott had not been born a novelist. Novels were, in sooth, just the third professional undertaking of a life begun otherwise.

Born in the Old Town of Edinburgh on the 15th of August 1771, he was soon dispatched, as a small sickly boy whom an early poliomyelitis had cost a limp, to live with his grandparents on their family farmhouse in the healthier Scottish Borders. This region, stretching between Edinburgh and the northern frontier of England, was remarkably ripe with folklore and popular ballads, a land on which History had found a particularly fertile soil to sow seeds of glory and downfall and to grow the buds of adventure in a daydreaming imagination like young Scott's. He would read poetic romances and ballads voraciously and he would listen eagerly to any stories related to that mythical yet tangible past, especially those recounted by the survivors of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, which deeply fascinated his fancy and equipped his novelistic quill with "a sense of history as associated with a specific place and a sense of the past that is kept alive, tenuously, in the oral traditions of the present"¹⁵. It was indeed in his childhood that he began, though then with no structured plan in his mind, to gather material for *Waverley*. In a letter to Lady Louisa Stuart he, already a well-known writer, wrote:

I was always a willing listener to tales of broil and battle and hubbub of every kind and now I look back on it I think what a godsend I must have been while a boy to the old Trojans of 1745 nay 1715 who used to frequent my fathers house and who knew as little as I

¹⁵ *Sir Walter Scott*, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, cit., pp. 406-423, p. 406.

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

did for what market I was laying up the raw materials of their oft told tales.¹⁶

Nevertheless, his literary career had to be postponed. In 1779 he returned to Edinburgh to attend the Royal High School, in 1783 he entered Edinburgh University and in 1786 he commenced an apprenticeship in his father's legal office, thereby following him into the profession of the law. Then, in 1792, he was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates and became a barrister. In 1799 he obtained an appointment as Sheriff-Depute for the county of Selkirk, and in 1806 he was nominated Clerk of the Court of Session, roles that he continued to hold until his death. Notwithstanding the apparent incompatibility between law and a romantic literary imagination, Scott was able to exploit even his legal competence within the structure of his fiction as a tool for a better understanding of human behaviour and culture, "as embodying the changing social customs of the country and an important element in social history"¹⁷. Despite having taken up the legal profession, in fact, his literary soul had never been appeased. He started off his literary career as a poet, cutting his teeth translating German ballads into English, such as Bürger's *The Chase, and William and Helen* and Goethe's *Goetz of Berlichingen*. Then, in 1799, he embarked on a collecting expedition resulting in a compilation of Border ballads, heard firsthand from the authentic performances given by local peasants and shepherds. *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, which appeared in 1802-03, represented his attempt to unearth a whole system of values and "features of the Scottish character [that] were 'daily melting ... into those of her ... ally' (i.e., England)"¹⁸. Fame arrived soon afterwards, when he turned to writing long verse romances about

¹⁶ Lamont C., *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

¹⁷ *Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 406.

¹⁸ *Ivi.*

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

medieval chivalry: *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *Marmion* (1808), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), and *Rockeby* (1813). Yet, regardless of the sensational success he attained through them, a success which had allowed him to move to Abbotsford in 1812, Scott resolved to quit poetry: “Byron beat me”¹⁹, he admitted, aware of his rival’s much more dazzling poetical accomplishments. Thus, at the age of 42, he took the decision to publish a novel whose manuscript had laid unconfident with back-and-forth dust fingerprints on his writing desk. *Waverley; or ‘Tis Sixty Years Since* was published anonymously on the 7th of July 1814 by the publisher Constable, and it took everyone by storm. In the mid-19th century Henry Cockburn called to mind the astounding effects of Scott’s first novel:

The unexpected newness of the thing, the profusion of original characters, the Scotch language, Scotch men and women, the simplicity of the writing, and the graphic force of the descriptions, all struck us with an electric shock of delight.²⁰

As to the reason why Scott persistently refused to reveal his authorship of the novel but to a close group of friends and relatives, that remains a mystery. Even though the identity of the author of *Waverley* could be effortlessly guessed, as in the case reported by his son-in-law and biographer J.G. Lockhart that “John Wilson, ‘Christopher North’, exclaimed of those who doubted the work to be Scott’s, ‘have they forgotten the *prose* of the Minstrelsy?’”²¹, Scott preferred to publish all his novels anonymously, a symptom which may point to the belief that even at the beginning of the nineteenth century “a gentleman-poet [...]

¹⁹ Qtd. in *Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 406.

²⁰ Qtd. in Lamont C., *op. cit.*, p. vii.

²¹ Ivi.

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

might find fiction a disreputable occupation”²². It was not until 1827 that, on the occasion of a dinner party in Edinburgh, the greatly acclaimed author of the *Waverley* Novels decided to unearth the much-debated secret identity of the writer who had until then gone under the epithet of “The Great Unknown”. Such considerable heights had his persona reached, that Edgar Johnson, in his 1970 eminent biography of Scott *The Great Unknown*, numbers Walter Scott, alongside Robert Bruce, Robert Burns and Mary Queen of Scots, among those Scottish names “that have echoed throughout the world”, but he soon remarks that “fame so widely diffused nearly always melts into the mists of legend”²³. Apparently, the author of *Waverley* would be no exception. In Johnson’s words, Robert Bruce becomes a “folk-hero”, Robert Burns “the peasant poet” who miserably drinks himself to death, Mary “the lovely and unhappy queen”²⁴ doomed to the axe, and

Among these fabled beings Scott looms as a classical victim of tragic fate – the gloriously successful author, showered with renown and gold, then suddenly struck down in the peak of pride, overwhelmed beneath a mass of mysterious debt, killing himself with the gigantic toil of discharging these liabilities. How much of the legend is truth?²⁵

Thus, Johnson coils the author of *Waverley* into myth. Rightly so, for Scott the man aroused mixed feelings as to his character even when he was still alive, so as to be highly unlikely, now, to be pinpointed as a definite persona. As Johnson reports, this “Great Unknown” of a man was esteemed by some, including his son-in-

²² *Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 407.

²³ Johnson E., *op. cit.*, p. xxv.

²⁴ *Ivi.*

²⁵ *Ivi.*

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

law John Gibson Lockhart, “with only a few reluctant qualifications ‘A GREAT AND GOOD MAN’”, a man whose “defects are blazoned by the intense light of genius and goodness”. But others had a different hunch on him: ostensibly, “his ambitions were worldly,’ and his work, empty of all message, had no other aim than to make the world ‘simply pay him for the books he kept writing’”²⁶. Indeed, in his later years, he had become more of an entrepreneur than a writer: “this glamorous persona of the Scottish laird depended on his hardheaded, unromantic readiness to conceive of literature as a business”²⁷. With the prestigious title of baronet granted to his name in 1820 and an “almost Hollywoodian”²⁸ income, Sir Walter Scott drudged to expedite his eccentric outlays at Abbotsford. In the disparaging words of Thomas Carlyle, he kept on writing “with the ardour of a steam-engine”²⁹, and, furthermore, he embarked on a risky series of publishing and printing activities, which resulted in a financial crash of his associate publisher Constable and, hence, in his own financial collapse. Accordingly, he exhausted himself to death trying to pen off his debts, which would have been paid off by his still best-selling novels only after his death.

²⁶ Johnson E., *op. cit.*, p. xxvi.

²⁷ *Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 407.

²⁸ Johnson E., *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

²⁹ Qtd. in *Sir Walter Scott*, cit., p. 407.

Waverley: the Importance of a “sigh”

“How do you like him?” was Fergus’s first question, as they descended the large stone staircase.

“A prince to live and die under,” was Waverley’s enthusiastic answer.³⁰

Seriously I am very glad I did not live in 1745 for though as a lawyer I could not have pleaded Charles’s right and as a clergyman I could not have prayed for him yet as a soldier I would I am sure against the convictions of my better reason have fought for him even to the bottom of the gallows. (Scott’s *Letters 1811-1814*)³¹

When the Highland chieftain Fergus Mac-Ivor asks English Captain Edward Waverley about the latter’s encounter with the Pretender Charles Edward Stuart, who at this point of the novel has besieged Edinburgh and has settled in Holyrood, the romantic Waverley cannot but bow down before the overwhelming power of those, worthy though ill-fated and always daydreamt about, Jacobite intentions. His rendezvous with the Prince, mediated by Fergus, represents the height of the inexperienced young man’s journey into the fascinating, mystery-wrapped world he had always read about in romances. The Prince, symbolizing everything that had been captivating Edward about that enchanting land, “his words and his kindness penetrated the heart of our hero, and easily outweighed all prudential motives”³². What follows in the

³⁰ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XLI, p. 196.

³¹ Qtd. in Lamont C., *op. cit.*, p. ix.

³² *Waverley*, cit., ch. XL, p. 193.

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

immediate future, namely the natural consequence of that fascination, if compared to the above extract from Scott's *Letters*, strikes the reader as deeply relatable to Scott the author's own empathy with his hero:

a prince, whose form and manners, as well as the spirit which he displayed in this singular enterprise, answered his ideas of a hero of romance; to be courted by him in the ancient halls of his paternal palace, recovered by the sword which he was already bending towards other conquests, gave Edward, in his own eyes, the dignity and importance which the prejudices of education, and the political principles of his family, had already recommended as the most just. These thoughts rushed through his mind like a torrent, sweeping before them every consideration of an opposite tendency, [...] and Waverley, kneeling to Charles Edward, devoted his heart and sword to the vindication of his rights!³³

That is where Scott and *Waverley* seem to merge: a Prince felt as honourable, a rebellion felt as just, a culture felt as in distress: a cause to join in. A cause that, however, was running against History. And *Waverley*, in the end, puzzles it out. First, at the sight of the disorderly throng of Highlanders gathering for the battle, whose "grim, uncombed, and wild appearance"³⁴ left the Lowlands and *Waverley* so bewildered as if they had witnessed "an invasion of African negroes, or Esquimaux Indians"³⁵. That scanty was then the knowledge of the northern kingdom. And this makes the hero wonder if it should really be they "to change the fate, and alter the

³³ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XL, p. 193.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, ch. XLIV, p. 214.

³⁵ *Ivi*.

dynasty, of the British kingdoms”³⁶. A further turning point comes shortly after. Houghton, son to a tenant of Edward’s uncle’s, is wounded to death in the battle of Prestonpans, but before dying his question to Waverley “Ah, squire, why did you leave us?” “rung like a knell in his ears”³⁷, and it will not be long before he, surrounded in the battle by both “the troop he had formerly commanded” and “the wild dress and appearance of his Highland associates”, hearing both “the well-known word given in the English dialect” and the Highlanders’ “whispers in an uncouth and unknown language”, asks himself: “Good god, [...] am I then a traitor to my own country, a renegade to my standard, and a foe [...] to my native England!”³⁸. Thereby, Waverley’s Jacobite Scottish dream is doomed to end: it had commenced as a padded adventure, it had turned into a “dream, strange, horrible, and unnatural”³⁹ and, in the end, by means of contemplating the misfortunes of the fallen Jacobites, it had given way to a more mature awareness:

he felt himself entitled to say firmly, though perhaps with a *sigh*, that the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced.⁴⁰ (italics mine)

Undoubtedly a pivotal quotation from the novel, it also discloses its fundamental key to its interpretation. It is precisely in that “sigh”, in fact, that paramount importance lies, the reason being that, had it not been for that “sigh”, sighed by both the mature hero and his creator Scott, Edward Waverley would never have existed and Scott would probably have left the manuscript to gather dust. The sigh is crucial inasmuch as it gives a measure of a groundbreaking

³⁶ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XLIV, p. 215.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, ch. XLV, p. 218.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, ch. XLVI, p. 221.

³⁹ *Ivi*.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, ch. LX, p. 283.

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

approach to life and literature. *Waverley* is the story of a youth who starts off as preferring daydreaming about life to actually living it, then his Whig father procures him a commission within the Hanoverian army headed north to rebellious Scotland, here he gets to live those daydreams, but, faced with the unflinching wheel of History, he awakens to the “real history” of his life, albeit with a heart forever nostalgically full of bittersweet memories. The sigh through which he awakens to that awareness marks a watershed between a ‘before’, namely the turmoil of the swirling *emotions* of a youth in the bloom of his reveries, and an ‘after’, that is the mature, willing acceptance of a *tranquil* state of things, even if that state of things has become such only by means of a turbulent process. Edward Waverley thus exemplifies what has become the catch phrase of English Romanticism in the early nineteenth century, that is what Wordsworth in his *Preface* to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* refers to as “emotion recollected in tranquillity”⁴¹. A re-creative process through which memory filters the emotion of the past and allots it in the aloof yet nostalgic present. A dimension which appears much more congenial to this armchair hero, whose true inclinations are self-evident to anyone but him. As piquant Flora Mac-Ivor remarks to candid Rose Bradwardine:

high and perilous enterprize is not Waverley’s forte [...] I will tell you where he will be at home, my dear, and in his place,- in the quiet circle of domestic happiness, lettered indolence, and elegant enjoyments of Waverley-Honour. And he will refit the old library in the most exquisite Gothic taste, and garnish its shelves

⁴¹ Wordsworth W. and S. T. Coleridge, *Preface* (1800) to *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones, London, Routledge, 1991, pp. 233-258, p. 251.

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

with the rarest and most valuable volumes;- and he will draw plans and landscapes, and write verses, and rear temples, and dig grottos;- and he will stand in a clear summer night in the colonnade before the hall, and gaze on the deer as they stray in the moonlight, or lie shadowed by the boughs of the huge old fantastic oaks;- and he will repeat verses to his beautiful wife, who shall hang upon his arm;- and he will be a happy man.⁴²

Now, does not the hero's profile mirror his author's? Scott does resemble his *Waverley* in that he remoulds, in the detached present of the novel, the emotions which stirred the past. With his invention of a new form, the historical novel, which casts the characters and their individual vicissitudes into the broader perspective of History, Scott accomplished a Wordsworthian synthesis. Moreover, in doing so, he marked a turning point in the history of literature. As Enrica Villari observes in her essay *Narrativa, storia e costume: Walter Scott*⁴³, Walter Scott, alongside Jane Austen, had brought the development of the English novel to a third step. The first, initial one had commenced with the newborn eighteenth-century novel of Defoe, which, according to Ian Watt, was "established when the old order of moral and social relationships was shipwrecked, with Robinson Crusoe, by the rising tide of individualism"⁴⁴. Soon afterwards, however, the stranded solipsism of Defoe's characters, such as Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders, had given way to a slightly more socially-integrated form of individualism: Fielding's characters, for instance

⁴² *Waverley*, cit., ch. LII, p. 250.

⁴³ Cf. Villari E., *Narrativa, storia e costume: Walter Scott in Storia della civiltà letteraria inglese*, ed. F. Marenco, Torino, Utet, 1996, Vol. 2, pp. 477-96, pp. 483-484.

⁴⁴ Watt I., *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), London, The Bodley Head, 2015, p.92.

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

Joseph Andrews or Tom Jones, are individuals moving and shaping themselves within a determining social grid; nonetheless, Fielding's novels fall within that "rising tide of individualism" as well, for the focus is on the individual. Then, in the second half of the century, the second phase: the Gothic novel, Ann Radcliffe's novel to name the most authoritative, with its hotchpotch "delle emozioni, di lacrime e di paura"⁴⁵. Now, with Jane Austen and Walter Scott, the third phase: "[i] romanzi della conoscenza"⁴⁶, as Villari calls them:

"The visions of romance were over. Catherine was completely awakened"⁴⁷

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*

"the romance of his life was ended, and [...] its real history had now commenced"⁴⁸

Walter Scott, *Waverley*

Novels of knowledge then, since the path of the *Bildung* of their protagonists culminates in their awakening from a fanciful world of dreams into a practical world of acceptance by dint of a forceful coming face to face with the un-dreamy reality of existence. Hence the imperative role of the background. The novel, now, does not revolve purely around an individual stranded on an island any more, nor does it include a social milieu only as the background element through which the character's personality emerges: the background, instead, becomes a foreground, the context becomes a character and, consequently, the protagonist's identity does not only emerge *through* it, but is first and foremost forged *by* it. In order better to clarify this groundbreaking feature of Scott's novel,

⁴⁵ Villari E., *Narrativa, storia e costume: Walter Scott*, cit., p. 483.

⁴⁶ Ivi.

⁴⁷ Austen J., *Northanger Abbey* (1817), ed. B.M. Benedict and D. Le Faye, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, ch. 10, p. 204.

⁴⁸ *Waverley*, cit., ch. LX, p. 283.

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

it will be helpful to throw light on a weakness Scott felt about himself, especially when compared to Austen. As a matter of fact, “in the *Waverley* Novels the psychological element is the weakest point”⁴⁹, and their author was much aware of his lacking it and of the possible dreadful outcome that would come out of an untalented attempt, particularly in a “field in which he recognized living superiors”⁵⁰. In Scott’s own words:

That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big bow-wow strain I can do myself, like any now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me.⁵¹

Yet, *Waverley* does show an endeavour, though unrefined, to outline a psychological portrait of the hero, but that was very likely due to the fact that Scott had not fully grasped an awareness of his own “comparative weakness” yet, given that he had started working on *Waverley* in 1805, much before the publication of Miss Austen’s first novels (*Sense and Sensibility* appeared in 1811, *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813, and *Mansfield Park* in 1814)⁵². It is indeed no coincidence that, having started writing in 1805 and “having proceeded as far [...] as the Seventh Chapter”⁵³, he shelved the manuscript and did not resume writing until 1813. Those first

⁴⁹ *A centenary view—Scott’s characters*, in *Athenaeum 1871* in *Walter Scott: The Critical Heritage*, ed. J.O. Hayden, London, Routledge, 2003, pp. 459-469, p. 461.

⁵⁰ *Ivi.*

⁵¹ Qtd. in *ivi.*

⁵² Cf. *ivi.*

⁵³ Scott W., *General Preface* (1829) to the *Waverley Novels*, in *Waverley*, cit., pp. 349-361, p. 352.

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

seven chapters dealing with the education of the main character, the world's first historical novel had not commenced as historical at all: it had started off, instead, precisely as a *Bildungsroman*. A deceiving “false start”, as James Anderson described it in his 1981 *Sir Walter Scott and History*:

There seems to be only one character in the novels who clearly represents Scott himself, and that is Edward Waverley of the early chapters, whose education and reading are Scott's own. These chapters might be explained as a false start. Perhaps it is no accident that Scott abandoned this novel for some years after writing them. The man who gave up poetry, wrote novels anonymously, shrank from intimate love-scenes, and criticised Byron for wearing his heart too openly on his sleeve, - such a man could never be expected to bare his soul in fiction.⁵⁴

Despite what Anderson argues, it would seem more likely that Scott “abandoned” those early chapters not out of a lack of willingness in displaying his own personal life through a fictitious character, but rather out of an inkling that that might have not been his literary forte. Speaking of which, it should be stressed that “the great fact that ‘the women do this better’ [he was here paying homage to Miss Austen in particular] was probably among those [motives] which deterred him from seeking popularity as a novelist of character”⁵⁵ and eventually made him abandon, “if he ever entertained, the idea of making the delineation of human nature for its own sake, unaccompanied by circumstances of a

⁵⁴ Qtd. in Villari E., *Romance and History in 'Waverley' in Athena's Shuttle. Myth Religion Ideology from Romanticism to Modernism*, ed. F. Marucci e E. Sdegno, Milano, Cisalpino, 2000, pp. 93-111, pp. 93-94.

⁵⁵ *A centenary view—Scott's characters*, in *Athenaeum 1871*, in *Walter Scott: The Critical Heritage*, cit., p. 462.

2. Walter Scott and Edward *Waverley*

striking or uncommon character”⁵⁶. That being so, he turned to history. History provided him with the necessary tool to grab that powdery “portion of manuscript” back, out of “the drawers of an old writing desk, which, on my first coming to reside at Abbotsford, in 1811, was placed in a lumber garret, and entirely forgotten”⁵⁷, and history allowed the transition between that emotional outset of the 1805 manuscript and the sensibleness of its continuation, the transition between “romance” and “history”.

⁵⁶ *A centenary view—Scott’s characters*, in *Athenaeum 1871*, in *Walter Scott: The Critical Heritage*, cit., p.461.

⁵⁷ Scott W., *General Preface* (1829), cit., p. 352.



Travelling
through
Space and Time

A New Awareness of the Background

The idea of enmeshing his young hero into the dense network of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion had been seeping through Scott's ingenious mind through his reading of a lady-writer, Miss Maria Edgeworth, whose accomplishments he admiringly acknowledges in the 1829 *General Preface to Waverley*:

[Miss Edgeworth's] Irish characters have gone so far to make the English familiar with the character of their gay and kind-hearted neighbours of Ireland, that she may be truly said to have done more towards completing the Union, than perhaps all the legislative enactments by which it has been followed up.⁵⁸

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) had been born and raised in fashionable England, when one day her father had made up his mind to go back to his native Irish estate, bringing his family with him. It was 1782, the exact year in which the Irish Parliament achieved independence from the British one. Like her father, she had been initially hostile to the Union, but she had soon recognised its legal necessity. A dichotomic attitude which seems to ooze out of her Irish novels, where she exhibits “a ready enough sympathy” with the Irish present state of things and society and “a complementary”, almost “contradictory [...] conviction of the superiority of English manners”⁵⁹. Walter Scott had appeared to be particularly enthusiastic about her 1800 *Castle Rackrent*, published shortly before the 1801 Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland and set before the 1782, when the Irish

⁵⁸ Scott W., *General Preface* (1829), cit., p. 352.

⁵⁹ Sanders A., *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 378.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

Parliament became independent. *Castle Rackrent* could in fact be considered as the first novel intent on representing a specific society in a specific environment and in a specific historical period: it revolves around four generations of an aristocratic Irish family in decay, thus displaying the inevitable clash between the old order and the new, triumphant one. Much more than that, Edgeworth had decided that the characters, members of the Rackrent's family, were to be the spokespersons themselves for the history they were being overwhelmed by: she had decided to break up with the *auctoritas* of omniscient narration in favour of a more spontaneous narration entrusted to the witness testimony of somebody who features as a character in the novel, the old steward Thady. Only in that way could the reality of which she wrote truly emerge:

After we have beheld splendid characters playing their parts on the great theatre of the world, with all the advantages of stage effect and decoration, we anxiously beg to be admitted behind the scenes, that we may take a nearer view of the actors and actresses.⁶⁰

A narration aimed at looking precisely “behind the scenes” of Great History, away from the unemotional papers of the official History and deep into the lives and customs of the everyday protagonists of private history. *Castle Rackrent* thus provided Scott with a fundamental model. In the *General Preface* he disclosed the purpose behind *Waverley*:

I felt that something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland—something which might introduce her natives to those

⁶⁰ Edgeworth M., *Castle Rackrent* (1800), ed. S.K. Howard, Indianapolis, Hackett, 2007, pp. 3-4.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

of the sister kingdom, in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles.⁶¹

Still not renouncing the omniscient narrator, however little omniscient the narrator of *Waverley* might appear, Scott managed, as Villari points out, to maintain “una funzione puramente informativa: raramente esprime opinioni e più che sapere tutto sembra avere piuttosto tutto ascoltato o letto – sulle epoche narrate – e avere tutto fedelmente registrato per il suo lettore”⁶². Scott did in fact insist on underlining the utmost importance of his unofficial, often first-hand sources for the novel. The characters were indeed portrayed as if they could spring out of the pages at any moment, so as to render the job of the reader a very difficult task: as easy as it can be when it comes to judge a one-dimensional historic personage, but as baffling as it proves when it comes to judge a fully characterised character whom the reader knows History proved wrong, but to whom sympathy cannot be denied. That being so, it looks as though one of the key terms for a better understanding of Scott’s *Waverley* should be ‘relativism’: through the opening novel of the *Waverley Novels* and the following ones of the series, the Great Unknown gave voice to a reality which was and was felt as a far-off appendage, thereby educating the reader’s eye to have a second look and to unveil humanity even in the unwelcoming depths of a snow-carpeted glen. As George Eliot was to claim: “The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies”⁶³. Scott had managed to do precisely that, namely to teach everyone, as Carlyle was to say, that “le età passate del mondo erano in

⁶¹ Scott W., *General Preface* (1829), cit., p. 353.

⁶² Villari E., *Narrativa, storia e costume: Walter Scott*, cit., p. 480.

⁶³ Qtd. in *ivi*.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

realtà riempite da uomini viventi e non da protocolli, documenti statali, controversie e astrazioni di uomini”⁶⁴. But more than that, in doing so, he succeeded in maintaining a neutral, accurate position towards those living men whom he portrayed with his ink. Even though his sympathies did lie with the Stuart cause, Johnson observes, Scott was far from idealizing the rebellious Jacobites⁶⁵: Donald Bean Lean is a dishonest, “wily trickster”, Callum Beg “would shoot even the Prince if Fergus told him to”, and the latter comes across as “Machiavellian”, “ridden by personal ambition, and avid to be created Earl of Glennaquoich”⁶⁶. This focus on reality and the intention not to indulge in the alluring epic which the background scenery would suggest is also visible in the scenes of war:

Here [...] an ardent writer of romance might have allowed himself free rein – fluttering banners, clanging swords, thunderous volleys, rattle of musketry, screaming horses, streaming wounds. But Scott not merely restrains himself in length and melodrama, he restricts himself to what *Waverley* can see.⁶⁷

So much so that at one point, after having briefly described the onset of the battle, he simply rounds off with a “The rest is well known”⁶⁸. No clangour of swords, no hyperbolic descriptions of epic deeds performed by some larger-than-life hero and set against dramatic historic landscapes. Instead:

The eccentrics, the heroic, and the spiritually elevated among Scott’s characters are made authoritatively

⁶⁴ Qtd. in Villari E., *Narrativa, storia e costume: Walter Scott*, cit., p. 490.

⁶⁵ Cf. Johnson E., *op. cit.*, p. 528.

⁶⁶ *Ivi.*

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 529.

⁶⁸ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XLVII, p. 225.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

convincing by being portrayed against a broad backdrop of the normal and the average. Their success, as Walter Bagehot notes, depends upon establishing an identity between their extremes and “the ordinary principles of human nature...exhibited in the midst of, or as it were by means of, the superficial unlikeness. Such a skill, however, requires an easy, careless familiarity with normal human life and common human conduct.” That familiarity Scott demonstrates not only in the creation of “normal” people like Major Melville and Colonel Talbot, and Waverley himself, but also in his full and revealing picture of the entire social background of his story.⁶⁹

Following Edgeworth’s example, Scott provided the novel with a historical, as much as geographical, setting, taking the novel away from the rampant predominance of the centre and the present of England as portrayed in the literature of his period. Furthermore, as anticipated before, he gave to this peripheral historical dimension the quality of a fully determinant factor in the shaping of the hero’s *Bildung*. Fellow Scotchman Robert Louis Stevenson, in an unsigned article entitled *Victor Hugo’s Romances*, was quick in recognising Scott’s merits in comparison with “the man of genius who preceded him”⁷⁰, namely Henry Fielding. Notwithstanding the similarities between the two (both possessing “as much human science” as good-humour), he firmly asserts that “with Scott the Romantic movement, the movement of an extended curiosity and an enfranchised imagination has begun”⁷¹. But what even more

⁶⁹ Johnson E., *op. cit.*, p. 528.

⁷⁰ Stevenson R.L., *R.L. Stevenson on Scott’s place in literary history*, *Cornhill Magazine* (1874), in *Walter Scott: The Critical Heritage*, ed. J.O. Hayden, London, Routledge, 2003, pp. 475-478, p. 475.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 475-476.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

truly distinguished Scott from Fielding? Stevenson provides a thorough explanation:

In the work of [Scott], true to his character of a modern and a romantic, we become suddenly conscious of the background. Fielding, on the other hand, although he had recognised that the novel was nothing else than an epic in prose, wrote in the spirit not of the epic, but of the drama. [...] To the end he continued to see things as a playwright sees them. The world with which he dealt, [...] was a world of exclusively human interest. As for landscape he was content to underline stage directions, as it might be done in a play-book: Tom and Molly retire into a practicable wood. As for nationality and public sentiment it is curious enough to think that *Tom Jones* is laid in the year forty-five, and that the only use he makes of the rebellion is to throw a troop of soldiers into his hero's way. [...] Fielding tells us as much as he thought necessary to account for the actions of his creatures [...] The larger motives are all unknown to him; he had not understood that the configuration of the landscape or the fashion of the times could be for anything in a story; and so, naturally and rightly, he said nothing about them. But Scott's instinct, the instinct of the man of an age profoundly different, taught him otherwise; and, in his work, the individual characters begin to occupy a comparatively small proportion of that canvas on which armies manoeuvre, and great hills pile themselves upon each other's shoulders. Fielding's characters were always great to the full stature of a perfectly arbitrary will. Already in Scott we begin to

3. Travelling through Space and Time

have a sense of the subtle influences that moderate and qualify a man's personality; that personality is no longer thrown out in unnatural isolation, but is resumed into its place in the constitution of things.⁷²

Stevenson's accurate comparison highlights the key difference between the two writers: Fielding's characters are chiselled in the magnificence of a statuary isolation, Scott's characters are instead the figures emerging from the basso-rilievo of history. As Johnson faultlessly puts it, they "fuse, as in the work of no novelist before him, the power of the historical past, of the social present, and of the human eternal", thus achieving a golden middle mean "between the extremes of innate and external determinism, and between fate and free will"⁷³.

Waverley, set against the backdrop of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, puts forward a theme which was to remain central throughout his first novels: the unintentional yet fascinating involvement and exposure of an English gentleman to the exciting but alien Highland culture represents the leitmotiv linking together *Waverley* (1814), *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816), *Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1817) and *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818). All these novels set forth the motif of the "evolutionary clash of opposites, the gradual convergence of which opens up a progressive future"⁷⁴. A literary realm in which the protagonist holds a mediating role in the process of transition from a valiant yet brutal and backward world to a new, modern, safer world, no matter how duller and "shop-keeping"⁷⁵ the latter is. Thus, Walter Scott can be seen as a nostalgic promoter of the retrieval of a

⁷² Stevenson R.L., *R.L. Stevenson on Scott's place in literary history*, *Cornhill Magazine* (1874), cit., pp. 476-477.

⁷³ Johnson E., *op. cit.*, p. 522.

⁷⁴ Sanders A., *op. cit.*, p. 381.

⁷⁵ Ivi.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

traditional culture doomed to yield to “the iron laws of historical development”, whilst, at the same time, well meeting his Unionist and Tory ends, he advocated the necessity of the enforcement of those same laws⁷⁶.

The 1745 Jacobite Rebellion, which had such a strong influence on the shaping of *Edward Waverley*, was the last of many attempts through which Scotland endeavoured to gain independence.

⁷⁶ *Sir Walter Scott*, cit., pp. 406-407.

The Issue of Scottish Independence: Yesterday

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,
Welcome to your gory bed
Or to victorie!

Now's the day and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour,
See approach proud Edward's pow'r—
Chains and slaverie!

Wha will be a traitor-knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a Slave?
Let him turn and flie.

Wha for Scotland's king and law,
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Free-man stand, or Free-man fa',
Let him follow me.

By Oppression's woes and pains!
By your Sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud Usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe;
LIBERTY's in every blow!
Let us DO—or DIE!!!

Robert Burns "Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled", 1793⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Burns R., *The Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. D.A.Low, London, Routledge, 1993, pp. 717-718.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

Scotia's Bard Robert Burns wrote this patriotic song in 1793, celebrating the warrior spirit of his Scottish ancestors and the victorious outcome of what had turned out to be the First War of Scottish Independence: on 24 June 1314 the Battle of Bannockburn had seen the defeat of the English king, Edward II, by the hands of the King of Scots, Robert the Bruce. Clearly, Bannockburn, a small town on the southern outskirts of Stirling, was not to be the last battlefield in the history of the rivalry between the kingdoms of England and Scotland. A rivalry that peaked on 16 April 1746 at Culloden and was to reverberate in most recent events.

Between 1685 and 1688, King James II of England and VII of Scotland had provided the nation with many a reason to be disposed of. Openly catholic, autocratic and fiercely hostile to the Parliament, he was soon and bloodlessly dethroned, and through the 1688 Glorious Revolution the power was trusted in the care of his Anglican daughter Mary and her Protestant husband, William of Orange, who came to be declared as joint sovereigns of England. The Revolution and the 1689 Bill of Rights that followed, enshrining the settlement for the world's first constitutional monarchy, were aimed to ensure the key role of the Parliament in the government of the nation. Despite having to share the same monarch, the kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland were separate states with distinct legislatures, hence the not formally compulsory yet sensibly advisable need to make the northern kingdom embark on this momentous historical transition as something which would not seem superimposed on it by its self-important, decision-making sister England, but rather granted by mutual consent. Thus, in 1689 a Convention followed in Scotland with the purpose of 'offering' the Scottish Crown to William and Mary.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

The friction between the two kingdoms, barely latent until then, finally gathered momentum with Queen Anne's ascent to the throne. At William's death in 1702, Queen Anne, second daughter to James II of England and VII of Scotland, had come to the throne. Given that she had no surviving children out of her seventeen unsuccessful pregnancies by her husband, Prince George of Denmark, the 1701 Act of Settlement decreed that the line of succession to the throne would have continued through the person of her second cousin George Ludwig, Elector of the German State of Hanover and a descendant of the Stuarts through his maternal grandmother, Elizabeth, a daughter of James I of England (and VI of Scotland). When the Westminster Parliament voted for the Act of Settlement in 1701, the Scottish dissent from the prospect of being ruled by a foreign king was not far below the surface. Notwithstanding their similarities and common Stuart inheritance, the two kingdoms were profoundly diverse, not only from a legal, religious and parliamentary point of view, but above all in culture and mentality, thereby coming across as latently, fiercely hostile. One single spark could have set off another war, as it had indeed often already happened.

However, from 1705 onwards, that spark had been temporarily domesticated through a frail game of diplomacy and common interests. So much so that a Treaty of Union came to be debated on both sides of the borders in 1706 and then came into effect the following year as the "Act for a Union of the Two Kingdoms of England and Scotland". The Act welded together England and Scotland into the unified kingdom of Great Britain by means of merging their distinct Parliaments into one, sited in the Palace of Westminster in London. With a single royal succession and national flag, but still with separate legal and religious systems, with Scotland gaining access to the merchant trades with North

3. Travelling through Space and Time

America and England in full possession of the island, “an ideal of providential harmony, of co-operation, and of a political order reflecting that of nature seemed to many to be realized in the triumph of practical reason, liberal religion, and impartial law”⁷⁸. As a matter of fact, however, this all came to resemble a complacent illusion of political stability rather than an actual historical accomplishment. Nothing had been truly accomplished, besides the backfiring result of sharpening the animosity across the borders. In 1714, when Queen Anne died and the troublesome Act of Settlement brought to the British throne a king from abroad, ardent Scotland promptly drew the line and took action. As Yeoman argues, “Jacobitism became a magnet for almost anyone with a grudge against the government”⁷⁹. These grudges had been accumulating over the years and had exploded in three major uprisings. The first one, in 1689, baptized the movement: on 16 April 1689 a slapdash, tiny army of Roman Catholic supporters of the deposed James VII of Scotland and II of England and Ireland, named ‘Jacobites’ (‘Jacobus’ being the Latin name of the exiled king) gathered around the most devout of them, John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, and against all odds they wiped out the new king William’s forces at the battle of Killiecrankie. Nevertheless, the sudden death of their leader together with the scepticism of the surrounding population, made the Jacobites’ movement lose strength.

It had not been so long, however, before another grudge propelled the second uprising: the ascent to the throne of the outlandish King George I.

⁷⁸ Sanders A., *op. cit.*, p. 280.

⁷⁹ Yeoman L., *The Jacobite Cause*, “BBC History”, 17 February 2011, at http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/civil_war_revolution/scotland_jacobites_01.shtml

3. Travelling through Space and Time

Harrowed by economic disasters and tactless government practices acted out by William, who, most notably, had refused to support the foundation of a Scottish colony in Panama in the late 1690s (the so-called 'Darien Scheme'), and outraged by the 1707 Act of Union, Scotland was ripe for upheaval. France, meanwhile engaged in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) against England, saw restless Scotland as an exploitable ally in its war against iron-handed England. Thus, in 1708, the French planned to land James Edward, the Old Pretender, born James Francis Edward Stuart (London, 1688 - Rome, 1766), son of the dethroned Roman Catholic James II, in his hereditary kingdom as the Jacobite spark that would ignite the rebellion against the Union and, consequently, against the enemy England. However, little went as planned: owing to the prompt presence of the Royal Navy in the Firth of Forth, James was prevented even from landing.

Nonetheless, the flames of Jacobitism were far from having being extinguished. As Yeoman remarks, the Union had not lived up to any of the beneficial promises it had made to Scotland, vexing instead the northern region with heavy excise tax and humiliations⁸⁰. Therefore, when the already scarcely tolerated George I discharged one of Scotland's most eminent politicians, John Erskine, Earl of Mar, in 1715, the latter provided his Jacobite comrades with the ultimate reason to take up arms. The 1715 rebellion had begun. James II the Old Pretender was being used as a pawn in much more serious games than in a mere folk dance of loyal bows and curtsies to the legitimate mythical 'king over the water', as he was often reverentially called. Discontent towards the Union had been spreading from the north-east trading counties to the proud, impervious Highlands. As historian Bruce Lenman

⁸⁰ Cf. Yeoman L., *op. cit.*

3. Travelling through Space and Time

argued, the buttress of the rising was “Patriotic Scots and Disgruntled Britons” as well⁸¹.

In the northern Scottish territories, the Jacobites, led by the Earl of Mar on direct appointment by the exiled James, managed to take control of almost every county above the Firth of Forth. Only Stirling remained under the Union government. Despite this confident outset, Mar turned out quite an irresolute commander, which gave time to the Duke of Argyll, at the head of the Hanoverians, to swell the strength of his army. As the Jacobite army was trying to approach Stirling, on 13 November at Sheriffmuir, just north of Stirling, the two forces clashed. With the victory almost savoured in their mouth, the rebels were, however, forced to retreat to Perth, owing to either the indecisiveness or over-confidence of their leader. On the same day Inverness was lost to the Union and the battle of Preston decreed the surrender of the Jacobite force. Much belated turned out to be the landing at Peterhead of the Old Pretender on 22 December: the Jacobite army was but an exiguous 5000 men, nothing compared to Argyll’s much more florid army. Soon the Pretender realized there was nothing to pretend and bade farewell to Scotland. Many Jacobites were made prisoners, tried and sentenced to death. Yet, this defeat did not quench the rebellious Highlandish spirit.

After a ruinous attempt on the part of the Spanish to exploit the Scottish turmoil to their benefit in the frail politics of the European chessboard had ended miserably in the battle of Glen Shiel, everything seemed to have resumed the status quo. Lowland Scotland had been definitely tamed under the civilized Hanoverian regime, and the majority of the Scots “preferred to keep a hold of their Hanoverian nurse 'for fear of finding something worse'”⁸².

⁸¹ Qtd. in Yeoman L., *op. cit.*

⁸² *Ivi.*

3. Travelling through Space and Time

Clearly, it was not a complete surrender. And something seditious was still being stirred in the cauldron of Scottish independence.



*Prince James Francis Edward
Stuart*

by Alexis Simon Belle
oil on canvas, circa 1712
National Portrait Gallery,
London

Prince Charles Edward Stuart
by Allan Ramsay

oil on canvas, 1745
Scottish National Portrait Gallery,
Edinburgh

James Stuart the Old Pretender had two sons: Charles Edward and Henry, the later cardinal duke of York. The former, who came to be known as the Young Pretender, or ‘Bonnie Prince Charlie’⁸³, assembled his own small army and sent it from France to Scotland with the purpose of invasion: on 23 July 1745 he secretly landed at Eriskay in the Outer Hebrides. Nonetheless, his plan, however

⁸³ ‘bonnie’ was a Latin-derived French word used for females with the meaning of “pretty”; with that meaning it had passed from France to Scotland, and there the French-raised Pretender had been nicknamed as such after having disguised as a female to escape the disastrous defeat at Culloden. During his five-month flight across the Highlands, he had indeed dressed up as a maid ‘Betty Burke’ and had been accompanied by the Jacobite heroine Flora MacDonald.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

much brave and noble, soon proved rather reckless, with the Prince being advised against any attempted advances by the very men who had declared allegiance to him. Among the latter ones there was Alexander 'Mor' MacDonald of Boisdale, half-brother to Ranald MacDonald, Chief of Clanranald, who

refused to join the prince himself, adding that he would do everything in his power to discourage his brother [...]. He then stated 'there was nothing to be expected from the contry, [that] not a soul wou'd joyn wth him, & [that] their advise was [that] he shou'd go back & wait for a more favourable occasion'. [...] It is during this tense interview that Boisdale is said to have told the prince to return home, to which Charles replied, 'I am come home, sir, and I will entertain no notion at all of returning to that place from whence I came; for that I am persuaded my faithful Highlanders will stand by me'.⁸⁴

Speaking these words after having landed on his ancestral soil, devoid of a sensible number of men, money and weapons, and equipped only with self-importance and enthusiasm to counterbalance his lack of practical sense, he raised the Stuart standard at Glenfinnan on 19 August: the 1745 rebellion was set in motion. With a lean bunch of men recruited from the western Highland clans, for the most part from the Cameron and the Macdonald clans, Edinburgh was set as the first target and on 17 September it was occupied. Soon afterwards, Charles's fast-paced and inflamed Jacobite army surprised Sir John Cope's unprepared British troops at Prestonpans and subdued them. Then it all happened in rapid succession: with now 6,000 men, not only

⁸⁴ Riding J., *Jacobites. A New History of the '45 Rebellion*, London, Bloomsbury, 2016, pp. 1669-1698 (Kindle version).

3. Travelling through Space and Time

Scottish but English and Irish as well, Tory supporters for the most part, the Jacobites stepped beyond the English border and took possession of Carlisle and, in December, even Derby, dangerously close to London. However, the exuberant pretender was advised to push his good luck no further and to make a judicious retreat to Scotland. There, at the beginning of 1746 and with twice the men, Charles won another victory against the British at Falkirk and then conquered Inverness, capital of the Highlands. Nevertheless, Charles was in desperate need of money and the French ships sent to support economically the Jacobite troops had been destroyed by the Royal Navy shortly before. Against the advice of his commanders, the Young Prince decided to give battle to the now better prepared British troops sooner than later. It proved a catastrophe. On 16 April 1746 George II's son, William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, later to be known unsympathetically as the 'Butcher of Cumberland', massacred the Jacobite army on the plain of Culloden. It was the last battle fought on the British mainland and it apparently decreed the end of the Highland culture. 'Bonnie' Prince Charlie spent five months as a fugitive in the Highlands⁸⁵, then fled back to France and, with the latter ceasing to toy with the idea of invading Britain and hence to support the cause, any pretensions to restore a Stuart king on the British throne were banished.

⁸⁵ See footnote 83, p. 44 of this dissertation.

3. Travelling through Space and Time



An Incident in the Rebellion of 1745.
By David Morier,
oil on canvas, circa 1745-85.
Royal Collection Trust, London.

At Culloden, not only did the Hanoverian regime slaughter each and every Jacobite rebel, but it also began a process of dismantling the core of Scottish society and culture, lest another flame of insurgence could possibly break out: the Highland clans were disassembled, whether or not they had taken part in the rebellion; the power of their chiefs was outlawed and the ancient, quasi-feudal bond of military service forbidden; the very symbol of Highlandish culture, the tartan garment with all its appurtenances, was banned from wearing. It had been an utter debacle. Yet, paradoxically, it quietly set in motion a long-term process of recovery of that same culture, whose society had so miserably been overcome by the merciless yet necessary wheel of history. In the words of Sanders:

The failure of the Stuart cause in the eighteenth century became a matter of self-congratulation amongst those in England and Scotland who had

3. Travelling through Space and Time

invested in, or benefited from, the success of the Hanoverian dynasty. *Yet*, the incursion of rebellious Highland clansmen into Lowland Scotland and into the middle of England was a reminder of the existence of an alternative mode of government and of a distinct, if increasingly archaic, form of society.⁸⁶ (italics mine)

After Culloden, Scotland found itself thrust into modernity. The dividing line between what it was and what it had been forced to become occupied the time span of nothing more than some 60 years. In chapter LXXII of *Waverley*, which according to the author should have been a preface rather than a last chapter, Walter Scott accurately summarizes the harsh, momentous transition undergone by the northern country:

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 effects of the insurrection of 1745, - the destruction of the patriarchal power of the Highland chiefs, - the abolition of the heritable jurisdictions of the Lowland nobility and barons, - the total eradication of the Jacobite party, which, averse to intermingle with the English, or adopt their customs, long continued to pride themselves upon maintaining ancient Scottish manners and customs, commenced this innovation. 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

⁸⁶ Sanders A., *op. cit.*, p. 282.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

their grandfathers, as the existing English are from those of Queen Elizabeth's time.⁸⁷

Scotland condensed in a considerably short period of time all the changes and the effects of a historical evolution that her sister England had needed more than two hundred years to enact. So much so that, Villari observes, despite the 1745 setting, Edward Waverley is a "contemporary character" through and through, well suited to the type of "the post-revolutionary youth of romantic literature, who rejects what Hegel termed the 'actual prosaic conditions' of life"⁸⁸. Yet, Scott landed him in a pre-contemporary world, that Jacobite society in arrears of 1745. Hence, it may seem as if Edward Waverley travelled not only through space to reach that much daydreamt land of swords and kilted loyalty, but also through time, from first-of-the-class England to riotous, barbarian Scotland. The changes later undergone by the latter, in fact, had been indeed so mesmerizingly brisk that it would have been perfectly plausible to bring a young English man of 1745 close to a young Scottish man of 1805 and not to be able to tell the difference⁸⁹. That much had Scotland changed "'tis sixty years since".

As Scott observes, however, this transition was indeed sudden, yet it was also "gradual", so that "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 set out"⁹⁰. A winding progress through which the "hybrid character of Scotland"⁹¹ was made to flow into the safer settlement of sturdy England. In his novels, thus, Scott displays "the ethnic,

⁸⁷ *Waverley*, cit., ch. LXXII, p. 340.

⁸⁸ Villari E., *Romance and History in 'Waverley'*, cit., p. 96.

⁸⁹ Cf. *ivi*.

⁹⁰ *Waverley*, cit., ch. LXXII, p. 340.

⁹¹ Fry M., *A New Race of Men: Scotland 1815-1914*, Edinburgh, Birlinn, 2013, p. 202.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

political and religious rough edges being smoothed down into the stable structure of the modern, polite and commercial nation”⁹².

⁹² Fry M., *A New Race of Men: Scotland 1815-1914*, cit., p. 202.

History as Crisis and Survival

When Walter Scott published *Waverley* in 1814, Scotland and its neighbourly sister England now occupied the same up-to-date position within the progressive game towards an ever-adjusting modernity. So much so that the so typically English “rule of law [...] as an ideology of efficient government, had in part been created on Britain’s internal frontiers”⁹³. Many were indeed the Scots who contributed to tug their country out of its pre-Culloden backwardness. The renowned Scottish Enlightenment saw the downpour of intellectual and scientific attainments through the works of Adam Smith, William Robertson, Adam Ferguson and David Hume among others. “A higher world”⁹⁴, “a new race of men”⁹⁵, ring the enthusiastic titles of Fry’s works on post-Unionist Scotland. Scotland was born anew. And England was to take the credit for it. Indeed it should have; nevertheless, with any change, however much positive it is, comes loss. The loss, in this case, of the Highland culture. It is on that loss that Scott insists in the *Waverley Novels*. *Waverley* itself depicts a staggering society, on the knife-edge of decline. Far from being in full bloom, the Highland culture is crumbling under the tension between history and modernization. What drives Scott’s novel is the unrestrainable avalanche of historic adaptation, which, in its customary stream of rise-and-fall, alternates vanquished and victors. Yet, Scott does not rise to the merciless role of a headfirst scribe of History, pitilessly recording how many victims it had taken to make a change. Instead, as Lukács asserts, the author of the *Waverley Novels*, recognising that “the great transformations of history” entail and

⁹³ Harvie C. and H.C.G. Matthew, *Nineteenth-Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 7.

⁹⁴ Fry M., *A Higher World: Scotland 1707-1815*, Edinburgh, Birlinn, 2014.

⁹⁵ Fry M., *A New Race of Men: Scotland 1815-1914*, cit.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

are entailed by the “transformations of popular life”, becomes the “great poet of history, because he has a deeper, and more genuine and differentiated sense of historical necessity than any writer before him”⁹⁶. A poetry of history, capable of mediating between the *humana pietas* and the blind reasons of historical development. However, Villari points out⁹⁷, Scott’s philosophy cannot be reduced to Hegel’s tripartite movement flowing into a satisfying synthesis, as Lukács often does. The clash of cultures portrayed in *Waverley* cannot simply be represented as a *thesis* (the Jacobite cause) grappling with an *antithesis* (the Hanoverian regime), the two finally begetting a *synthesis*: the new, modern Scotland. It would be too simplistic. By contrast, it would be more appropriate to think of Scott’s philosophy of history as adhering to a great extent to Herder’s, as outlined by Isaiah Berlin in 1975:

the development of human civilization was conceived not as a single linear movement, now rising, now declining, nor as a dialectical movement of clashing opposites always resolved in a higher synthesis, but as the realization that cultures are many and various, each embodying scales of value different from those of other cultures and sometimes incompatible with them, yet capable of being understood, that is, seen by observers endowed with sufficiently acute and sympathetic historical insight, as ways of living which human beings could pursue and remain fully human. The principal, officially recognised exponent of this view was Herder; but it may be that the man who first gave it flesh and substance was Walter Scott. [...] Scott is the first writer to achieve what Herder preached: the

⁹⁶ Qtd. in Johnson E., *op. cit.*, p. 521.

⁹⁷ Cf. Villari E., *Narrativa, storia e costume: Walter Scott*, cit., pp. 487-489.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

conveying of a world that the reader apprehends as being as full as his own, equally real yet profoundly different, but not so remote as not to be understood as we understand contemporaries whose characters and lives differ greatly from our own.⁹⁸

A philosophical approach that, accordingly, comes into conflict with that Hegelian justificationism according to which “the real is rational and the rational is real”, the first principle of reality to be understood as a creative process moving historical development: if something actualises itself in reality, then it is rational, and philosophy, Minerva’s owl, flies off when the night creeps in to fly over what has been done and wrap everything in world-conscious words⁹⁹. Walter Scott’s own philosophy, hiding beneath the grain of his novels, is something different. It does not share the apparent passivity of his almost twinly contemporary Hegel (1770-1831); instead, it is much closer to the Scottish Enlightenment of Adam Smith (1723-1790). Scott’s *Waverley* truly seems to have been written along the lines of Adam Smith’s concept of “sympathy”, that moral principle which makes us see ourselves as others see us, thereby enabling the self to conceive of the other as another self¹⁰⁰. In that lies the imaginative and ethical power of Scott’s *Waverley*: a celebration of particularity and a hymn to non-oblivion within the ever-changing frame of historical development. And he manages to accomplish this epoch-making result by means of exploiting the narrative possibilities offered by the concept of travel. As soon as young English Edward Waverley crosses the Scottish border, he enters a completely different land, both from a

⁹⁸ Berlin I., *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 61.

⁹⁹ Cf. Abbagnano N. e G. Fornero, *Itinerari di filosofia: dall'Illuminismo a Hegel*, Torino, Paravia, 2003, pp. 908-909.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 578.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

geographical and historical point of view: the Lowlands with their unflagging feudalism and the Highlands with their die-hard clans. So much so that Ian Duncan locates precisely in the “border” the most significant *topos* of the historical novel: the border marks off the distance and at the same time the unmanageable proximity of two different systems, whether they be social or economic or cultural¹⁰¹. Edward Waverley crosses the border, puts down his luggage of romantic dreams and, like Friedrich’s *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, gazes at the misty, spine-chilling, sublime scenery of “the pass of Bally-Brough”:

It was towards evening as they entered one of the tremendous passes which afford communication between the high and low country; the path, which was extremely steep and rugged, winded up a chasm between two tremendous rocks, following the passage which a foaming stream, that brawled far below, appeared to have worn for itself in the course of ages. A few slanting beams of the sun, which was now setting, reached the water in its darksome bed, and showed it partially, chafed by a hundred rocks and broken by a hundred falls. The descent from the path to the stream was a mere precipice, with here and there a projecting fragment of granite, or a scathed tree, which had warped its twisted roots into the fissures of the rock.¹⁰²

Poetry of the hazy sublime. A land whose every inlet hides a fragment of never attainable mastery. But when the misty veil is lifted, disclosing the “grim, uncombed and wild appearance”¹⁰³ of

¹⁰¹ Cf. Duncan I., *Waverley* in *The Novel: Forms and Themes*, ed. F. Moretti, Princeton, Princeton University Press, vol. 2, pp. 173-180, p. 174.

¹⁰² *Waverley*, cit., ch. XVI, p. 76.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, ch. XLIV, p. 214.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

the armed Highlanders, a new scenario unravels for the dreamy hero: the reality of a backward, rickety kingdom. Hence, the necessity of the imperialistic intervention of prosperous England. Waverley, up until then an innocent witness of an alien magnificence, acknowledges now the political significance of his presence there, stranger among strangers. Accordingly for the reader: the hero's cross-border journey becomes "the act that converts a cultural difference into historical anteriority"¹⁰⁴.

The harsh line dividing England and Scotland had to be shaded off. The modernization brought about by England would worm its way into the Scottish cracks left open at Culloden and reach John O'Groats. The white of England would cover up the black of Scotland to create a marble United Kingdom. This, at least, is the reading key which Franco Moretti seems to suggest when classifying *Waverley* as a reading suitable to a child in virtue of its ostensible dichotomised display of 'good' and 'evil', constitutive of the very essence of fairy tales¹⁰⁵. Following this logic, civilised England would stand for "good" and barbarian Scotland would stand for "evil", at least in view of how the novel ends. Yet, as Moretti suggests, nothing is less childlike than the discernment of who is right and who is wrong¹⁰⁶. Is not Cosmo Comyne, Baron of Bradwardine, right in his will to defend the Stuart pretension to the throne? Is not Flora Mac-Ivor right in supporting a cause in which she believes? Is not Evan Dhu Maccombich right in offering to sacrifice his own life in exchange of his chief Fergus Mac-Ivor's life? For the sympathising reader, these seem rethorical questions: each of them is right, as ambassadors of a culture they belong to. For History, these are legitimate questions with a clear answer: each of them is wrong. And, on the eve of Culloden, History wore a

¹⁰⁴ Duncan I., *op. cit.*, p. 174.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Moretti F., *Il romanzo di formazione*, Torino, Einaudi, 1999, p. 206.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 207.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

Hanoverian red uniform. Evan Dhu's request seemed indeed inconceivable within the context of a military court, deprived as it is of any form of sympathetic relativism whatsoever. In front of the British Judges, after Fergus Mac-Ivor has taken the floor to claim loyalty to the Stuart cause, Evan Dhu stands the test of clansmanship:

Evan Maccombich looked at [Fergus Mac-Ivor] with great earnestness, and, rising up, seemed anxious to speak; but the confusion of the court, and the perplexity arising from thinking in a language different from that in which he was to express himself, kept him silent. There was a murmur of compassion among the spectators, from the idea that the poor fellow intended to plead the influence of his superior as an excuse for his crime. The Judge commanded silence, and encouraged Evan to proceed. 'I was only ganging to say, my lord,' [...] 'that if your excellent honour and the honourable Court would let Vich Ian Vohr go free just this once, and let him gae back to France, and no to trouble King George's government again, that ony six o' the very best of his clan will be willing to be justified in his stead; and if you'll just let me gae down to Glennaquoich, I'll fetch them up to ye mysell, to head or hang, and you may begin wi' me the very first man.' Notwithstanding the solemnity of the occasion, a sort of laugh was heard in the court at the extraordinary nature of the proposal.¹⁰⁷

"Startled laughter"¹⁰⁸. That is what History holds in store for the old guard, threatening to sweep away even the slightest trace of the

¹⁰⁷ *Waverley*, cit., ch. LXVIII, p. 320.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

culture that was. A culture, the semi-feudal Highland one, which has been clinging to its soil with tooth and nail, struggling for dear life against a wheel fraught with promises of disintegration. A “resistance to history”, as Villari calls that draining, futile attempt, which, paradoxically, fills Scott’s historical novel with anti-historical values¹⁰⁹, at the same time being telltale of a society on the wane. A first, blatant instance of the Scottish guileless and together intricate attempt to resist, almost deny history is offered by the comical figure of the Baron of Bradwardine. Soon after the short-lived success of the battle of Gladsmuir, the Baron appears thoroughly disquieted about the nature of a prestigious service, the matter of the “caligas regis”, which he should perform on the person of Charles Stuart:

‘Now, two points of dubitation occur to me upon this topic. First, whether this service, or feodal homage, be at any event due to the person of the Prince, the words being, *per expressum, caligas regis*, the boots of the king himself; and I pray your opinion anent that particular before we proceed farther.’

‘Why, he is Prince Regent,’ answered Mac-Ivor, with laudable composure of countenance; ‘and in the court of France all the honours are rendered to the person of the Regent which are due to that of the King. [...]’

‘Ay, [...] But here lieth the second difficulty—The Prince wears no boots, but simply brogues and trews.’

[...]

‘That will apply to the brogues,’ said Fergus.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Johnson E., *op. cit.*, p. 526.

¹⁰⁹ Villari E., *La resistenza alla storia nei romanzi giacobiti di Walter Scott in Storie su storie*, AA.VV., Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 1985, pp. 5-30., p. 5.

¹¹⁰ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XLVIII, pp. 230-231.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

Facetious as it is, the whole situation comes across as farcical as well, revealing the pointless, blind adherence to a by-gone Latin-written practice, even older than the already hoary Young Pretender. In Fry's words, "in the character of Bradwardine, Jacobite futility comes across yet more clearly. His undying devotion to the cause is matched by his own punctilious, not to say pedantic, sense of honour"¹¹¹. It is through his undismayed loyalty to the cause, then, that "the first we learn of Jacobitism is that it has lost all connection with reality"¹¹². The Hanoverian regime offered instead a just, more practical tool for the modern United Kingdom, as Colonel Talbot tried to suggest to a Waverley wavering dangerously towards the Jacobites:

I wish you to be aware that the right is not with you; that you are fighting against the real interests of your country; and that you ought, as an Englishman and a patriot, to take the first opportunity to leave this unhappy expedition before the snow ball melt.¹¹³

Thus, the novel exhibits two opposing trends: the Jacobite idealistic, anti-historical resistance and the Hanoverian relentless, modern progressivism. Scott's "revolutionary significance as a novelist", Johnson argues, would lie in his view of history not as a mere "causation" or as a "logic", but as "the struggle between opposing schemes of values"¹¹⁴. "He was the first artist to conceive of history as the evolution of competing styles of life", Karl Kroeber remarked¹¹⁵.

¹¹¹ Fry M., *A New Race of Men: Scotland 1815-1914*, cit., p. 360.

¹¹² Ivi.

¹¹³ *Waverley*, cit., ch. LV, p. 258.

¹¹⁴ Johnson E., *op. cit.*, p. 530.

¹¹⁵ Qtd. in ivi.

A Geographical Detour

He now entered upon a new world, where, for a time, all was beautiful because all was new.¹¹⁶

Captain Edward Waverley bids farewell to uncle Everard, aunt Rachel and his tutor Mr. Pembroke, and leaves Waverley-Honour, in the south of England, to venture out into the northern territories of Scotland alongside his regiment of English dragoons, his head full of the prospects of all the romantic adventures which those Gothic lands seem to promise. He thus sets off on a journey towards the North destined to shape his character and to frame the scope of Scott's groundbreaking historical novel. The journey, and particularly the cross-border journey, assumes paramount importance in that it puts into contact two different areas. In crossing a border, the hero experiences a cultural difference directly related to a geographical as well as historical gap: that between Jacobite Scotland and Hanoverian England. Villari touches on the momentousness of the new horizon offered by Scott's novel:

Se Jane Austen rappresentava il centro e il presente dell'Inghilterra e la Edgeworth rappresentava la periferia e l'Irlanda che stava scomparendo, la prospettiva scottiana del romanzo storico si allarga e mette in relazione periferia e centro, passato e presente.¹¹⁷

Edward Waverley becomes therefore the emissary of a culture engaged in a process of self-discovery through the acknowledgement and then discovery of the other: through

¹¹⁶ *Waverley*, cit., ch. VII, p. 30.

¹¹⁷ Villari E., *Narrativa, storia e costume: Walter Scott*, cit., p. 481.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

Waverley, the self, England, crosses the border and enters the realm of the other, Scotland. The hero sets off as a dragoon, dressed up inside a red coat and an imperialistic Hanoverian banner, then the Highland culture unravels before him and wraps him up in a tartan garb, finally disentangling him from its backward Jacobite intentions but not from its precious cultural values, for him to be retrieved as a reminder of the importance of cultural relativism. The novel revolves around what Moretti refers to as the “phenomenology of the border”¹¹⁸: the frontier works as Gabaldon’s Craigh na Dun Stone Circle, a Pagan gateway that, when crossed, hurls the traveller into another place, another epoch, another culture. Moreover, besides the historical *when* of the setting, Scott’s novel hinges also upon a geographical *where*, the choice of which comes across as off-centre, precisely because it brings the novel *off the centre*. In the historical novel, Moretti argues, it is as if there were no force of gravity anchoring the plot to a geographically central hinge¹¹⁹.

On this point it will be extremely useful to compare Walter Scott’s centrifugal geography with his great contemporary Jane Austen’s centripetal geography. Resorting to the extremely fascinating maps employed by Moretti in his literary atlas¹²⁰ (which are readapted here on page 61), it is possible to pinpoint a striking feature within the spatial universe of the two great novelists: the most northern part of Austen’s fictional world, Pemberley, and the most southern part of Scott’s *Waverley*, Derby, which, by the way, gets but a fleeting hint in the novel, are both in Derbyshire, about an 8-hour journey on horseback apart. A “beautiful coincidence”, as Moretti

¹¹⁸ Moretti F., *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, London, Verso, 1999, p. 35.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 33.

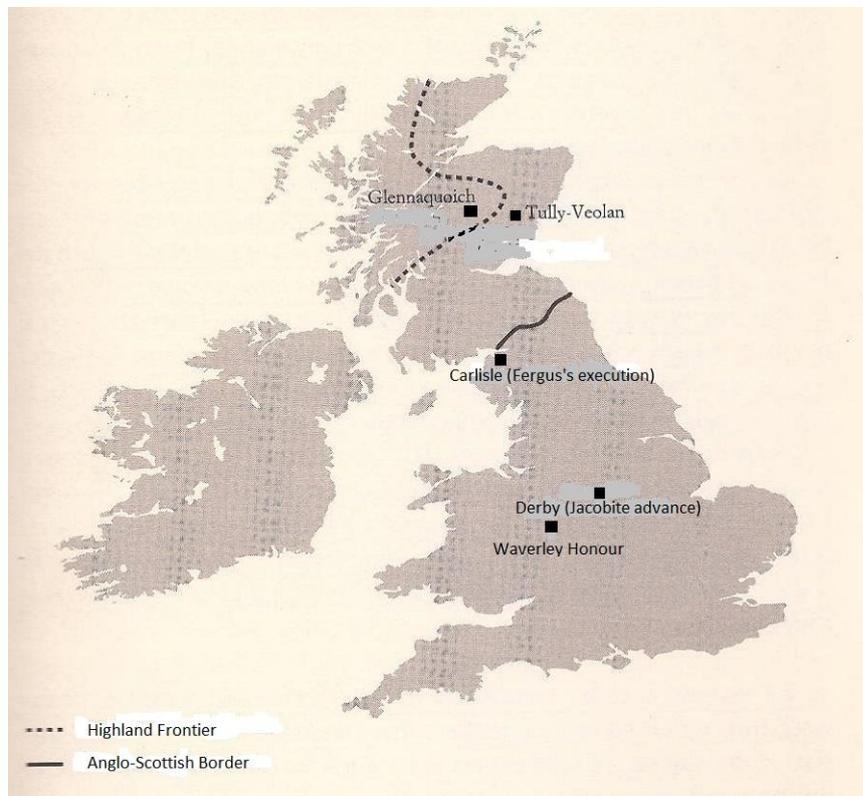
¹²⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 12, 39.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

Jane Austen's England



Walter Scott's Scotland



Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel*, maps 1 (p. 12) and 14 (p. 39)

3. Travelling through Space and Time

calls it, which nonetheless highlights a deep truth: “different forms inhabit different spaces”¹²¹.

In reading Jane Austen and Walter Scott comparatively, one is offered a glimpse of the utter difference existing between Austen’s England and Scott’s Scotland, as the two passages below show:

Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe’s works, and charming even as were the works of all her imitators, it was not in them perhaps that human nature, at least in the Midland counties of England, was to be looked for. Of the Alps and Pyrenees, with their pine forests and their vices, they might give a faithful delineation; and Italy, Switzerland, and the south of France might be as fruitful in horrors as they were there represented. Catherine dared not doubt beyond her own country, and even of that, if hard pressed, would have yielded the northern and western extremities. But in the central part of England

For, as [the Baron] used to observe, ‘the lands of Bradwardine, Tully-Veolan, and others, had been erected into a free barony by a charter from David the First, cum liberali potest. habendi curias et justicias, cum fossa et furca (LIE, pit and gallows) et saka et soka, et thol et theam, et infang-thief et outfang-thief, sive hand-habend, sive bak-barand.’ The peculiar meaning of all these cabalistical words few or none could explain; but they implied, upon the whole, that the Baron of Bradwardine might, in case of delinquency, imprison, try, and execute his vassals at his pleasure. Like James the First, however, the present possessor of this authority

¹²¹ Moretti F., *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, cit., p. 34.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

there was surely some security for the existence even of a wife not beloved, in the laws of the land, and the manners of the age. Murder was not tolerated, servants were not slaves, and neither poison nor sleeping potions to be procured, like rhubarb, from every druggist. Among the Alps and Pyrenees, perhaps, there were no mixed characters. There, such as were not as spotless as an angel might have the dispositions of a fiend. But in England it was not so; among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad.¹²²

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*

was more pleased in talking about prerogative than in exercising it; and excepting that he imprisoned two poachers in the dungeon of the old tower of Tully-Veolan, where they were sorely frightened by ghosts, and almost eaten by rats, and that he set an old woman in the *jougs* (or Scottish pillory) for saying “there were mair fules in the laird’s ha’ house than Davie Gellatley,” I do not learn that he was accused of abusing his high powers. Still, however, the conscious pride of possessing them gave additional importance to his language and deportment.¹²³

Walter Scott, *Waverley*

These two passages, apparently put pell-mell together, show two different sides of the same nation: the “central part of England” on

¹²² *Northanger Abbey*, cit., ch. 10, pp. 205-206.

¹²³ *Waverley*, cit., ch. X, pp. 41-42.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

the one hand, and the “lands of Bradwardine” on the other hand, the latter coming to represent the backward civilization of Lowland Scotland. If in this second-mentioned land a Baron could “imprison, try, and execute his vassals at his pleasure”, then one can only imagine what could have actually been carried out in feudal, barbarian Highland Scotland. To the contemporary English youth of 1745 and to the contemporary reader, Scotland must appear thus just as Gothic as those Alps and Pyrenees mentioned by Catherine Morland, so much so that what she deems impossible to happen in safe England could easily be thought plausible in Scotland. In England, in fact, as Catherine has said in the above extract:

murder was not tolerated, servants were not slaves, and neither poison nor sleeping potions to be procured, like rhubarb, from every druggist.

Whereas, instead, all of the above could easily happen in Scotland. Had not, in fact, in Lowland Scotland, a woman, Janet Gellatly, been “imprisoned for a week in the steeple of the parish church, and sparely supplied with food, and not permitted to sleep until she herself became as much persuaded of her being a witch as her accusers”¹²⁴, whilst in modern England the 1735 Witchcraft Act, making it a crime to accuse and condemn for witchcraft, was dutifully applied? Moreover, the “horrors” that quicken Ann Radcliffe’s novels, impossible to find in modern England according to an awakened Catherine, now aware that General Tilney has not ghoulishly murdered his wife, can indeed be represented by those “ghosts” and “rats” by which the “two poachers”, imprisoned in “the dungeon of the old tower of Tully-Veolan” are “frightened” and “almost eaten”. Besides that, the gobbledygook flaunted by the

¹²⁴ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XIII, p. 61.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

Baron, a quirky mixture of Latin, French and an abstruse form of English, is a confirmation of the Scottish backwardness. That being so, the United Kingdom gives the impression of being the arranged marriage between an uncompromising husband and an unbridled bride: two nations entirely unlike and incompatible. So much so that, every now and again, like a Mr. Rochester with a Bertha, England locks up his tearaway of a Scottish wife in the attic of the North and runs his estate on his own. Indeed, as Moretti points out:

England has long enjoyed an ambiguous and privileged position within the United Kingdom: *part* of it (like Scotland, Ireland, Wales) – but a *dominant* part, that claims the right to stand in for the whole.¹²⁵

He goes on to argue that the geography displayed in Jane Austen's novels stands out as "an extremely successful version of this opaque overlap of England and Britain"¹²⁶. As it happens, Catherine Morland does draw a comparison between "her own country" and "the northern and western extremities", as if the latter were precisely mere, far-off appendages: that "Celtic fringe"¹²⁷, as Michael Hechter calls the Nordic periphery repeatedly throughout his work *Internal Colonialism*, as opposed to the "home-land" of England, a comfortable and safe "*core*" dwelling, unaware of the problematic fringe, a "middle-sized world"¹²⁸, which, in Kiernan's words, appears "large enough to survive and to sharpen its claws on its neighbors, but small enough to be organized from one center and to feel itself as an entity"¹²⁹. So much so that the

¹²⁵ Moretti F., *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, cit., p. 15.

¹²⁶ Ivi.

¹²⁷ Hechter M., *Internal Colonialism. The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*, Berkley, University of California Press, 1975.

¹²⁸ Moretti F., *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, cit., pp. 15, 22.

¹²⁹ Qtd. in *ibidem*, p. 22.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

estate of Waverley-Honour itself, in the south of England, epitomises this description: at the very beginning of the novel one reads about “that portion of the world of which Waverley-Honour formed the centre”, a portion which is immediately afterwards described as a “microcosm”¹³⁰.

Roughly detached from lowland England and hilly Lowlands by the Highland Boundary Fault, the Highlands, the most mountainous region in the United Kingdom, seemingly endeavour to guard a treasured, self-contained culture from suspicious eyes and ravenous hands. This mountainous boundary, offered by nature as a defensive barrier, actually contributes to define the place it aims to shield as one, in Braudel’s words, “whose history consists in not having one, and remain at the margins of the great currents of civilization”¹³¹. As a result, not only does this natural divide keep apart two different geographical areas, but it also separates two different historical periods, so that the traveller, in crossing the border, crosses a time gap as well. In his novel, thus, Scott seems to anticipate Ernst Bloch’s concept of *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, that is the non-simultaneity of certain aspects of the present, simultaneous reality, an element of backwardness resistant to the progress of history which is likely to be found in every culture and country¹³². Moretti interestingly draws special attention to a tripartite quality of this border: in a historical novel, the border is shown to be “the site of adventure”, the site of “treason” and an “anthropological” “demarcation” as well¹³³, all three qualities deeply intertwined with one another. In fact, the anthropological quality of the frontier, which allows the hero to come into contact with the value of another culture in a relativistic

¹³⁰ *Waverley*, cit., ch. II, p. 8.

¹³¹ Qtd. in Moretti F., *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, cit., p. 34.

¹³² Cf. Villari E., *Narrativa, storia e costume: Walter Scott*, cit., p. 481.

¹³³ Moretti F., *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, cit., pp. 35, 37.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

perspective, offers him the possibility of adventure too, since it allows the passage towards the unknown and the exotic sublime, whilst at the same time it poses the risk of fascinating the adventurer so much as to throw him into a state of oblivion for what has been left behind, hence the threat of betrayal.

The maps here below show how massively significant the geographical barrier represented by the Highland Boundary Fault is in separating and defining the two areas.



Satellite image of the UK



The Highland Boundary Fault

In *Waverley*, the very first image the reader grasps of Scotland is the one depicted by Edward's tutor, Mr. Pembroke, who, parting from his tutee, warns him against the "darkness" of Scotland:

It had pleased Heaven, he said, to place Scotland (doubtless for the sins of their ancestors in 1642) in a more deplorable state of darkness than even this unhappy kingdom of England. Here, at least, although

3. Travelling through Space and Time

the candlestick of the Church of England had been in some degree removed from its place, it yet afforded a glimmering light; there was a hierarchy [...]; there was a liturgy [...]. But in Scotland it was utter darkness; and, excepting a sorrowful, scattered, and persecuted remnant, the pulpits were abandoned to Presbyterians, and, he feared, to sectaries of every description.¹³⁴

An utterly negative depiction of Scotland, against whose bewitching power the hero's "unwilling ears"¹³⁵ must apparently be admonished. Soon afterwards, in fact, Aunt Rachel feels the same need as, in her "brief and affectionate" farewell, she cautions "her dear Edward, whom she probably deemed somewhat susceptible, against the fascination of Scottish beauty"¹³⁶. And indeed "susceptible" he is, for that beauty will enrapture him to the point of almost betraying his own country. It is here that the anthropological value of the frontier comes to the fore, revealing the unequivocal diversity of Scotland. Initially, Scotland floats onto the surface as a blurred image enveloped in shadows, "the Highlands of Perthshire" appearing first as "a blue outline in the horizon" and then "swell[ing] into huge gigantic masses, which frowned defiance over the more level country that lay beneath them"¹³⁷. A "stupendous barrier"¹³⁸, that of the Highlands, which tints the observing eye with the misty brushes of a painting by Turner and wrong-foots the traveller. On a wrong path indeed Edward Waverley feels he has set his foot, when arriving at the village of Tully-Veolan, in the Lowlands, where the Baron of Bradwardine's estate is located:

¹³⁴ *Waverley*, cit., ch. VI, p. 28.

¹³⁵ *Ivi.*

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

¹³⁸ *Ivi.*

3. Travelling through Space and Time

The houses seemed miserable in the extreme, especially to an eye accustomed to the smiling neatness of English cottages. They stood, without any respect for regularity, on each side of a straggling kind of unpaved street, where children, almost in a primitive state of nakedness, lay sprawling, as if to be crushed by the hoofs of the first passing horse.¹³⁹

Nothing romantic to kindle the hero's fancy at first, then. Here again, Scotland emerges negatively from its comparison with England, almost "primitive": to Edward's alien eyes "the whole scene was depressing"¹⁴⁰. "Yet"¹⁴¹, a couple of lines after, something more deep-rooted begins being perceived: "the physiognomy of the people [...] was far from exhibiting the indifference of stupidity; their features were rough, but remarkably intelligent, grave, but the very reverse of stupid", revealing the true nature of "a hardy, intelligent, and reflecting peasantry"¹⁴². Then, on entering the Baron's estate, majestically stony and overgrown with climbing plants, an "enchanted mansion"¹⁴³, as it will be called later on, Edward starts to truly feel himself as if inside one of his youthful romantic readings:

The solitude and repose of the whole scene seemed almost monastic, and Waverley, who had given his horse to his servant on entering the first gate, walked slowly down the avenue, enjoying the grateful and cooling shade, and so much pleased with the placid ideas of rest and seclusion excited by this confined and

¹³⁹ *Waverley*, cit., ch. VI, p. 32.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, ch. VIII, p. 33.

¹⁴¹ *Ivi.*

¹⁴² *Ivi.*

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*, ch. IX, p. 37.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

quiet scene, that he forgot the misery and dirt of the hamlet he had left behind him.¹⁴⁴

Thus, Scotland has already begun to bewitch the travelling hero. Nonetheless, instead of *bewitch*, it would be more correct to say that the Scottish spell has begun to *educate* the travelling hero, to teach his eye to look at things from a different perspective and to recognise the value of difference, so that, by the end of this IX chapter, the narrator could already report that “Waverley learned two things [...]; that in Scotland a single house was called a *town*, and a natural fool an *innocent*”¹⁴⁵. This is the anthropological role played by the border: to unveil the existence of those living and bleeding men beyond the wall, for one’s ‘beyond the wall’ is at the same time another’s ‘beyond the wall’. And this is precisely what Scott set out to do, “the object of [his] tale [being] more a description of men than manners”¹⁴⁶:

Upon these passions [of the characters] it is no doubt true that the state of manners and laws casts 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.¹⁴⁷

Thus, aiming to “read a chapter to the public” from “the great book of Nature, the same through a thousand editions”¹⁴⁸, Scott resolves to entangle a romantic English youth in the Scottish turmoil of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion. In doing so, he established a geo-historical guideline for any historical novel to follow, that is to say he

¹⁴⁴ *Waverley*, cit., ch. VIII, p. 35.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, ch. IX, p. 40.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, ch. I, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁸ *Ivi*.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

provided the genre with a specific “chronotope”, namely the combination of past and periphery. In Bakhtin’s words:

The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic generic significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions.¹⁴⁹

Nevertheless, Scott did not confine his novel to a fixed chronotope. 1745 Scotland receives more from his chronicler than a merely touristy overview. The author of *Waverley* chooses to portray the northern land as a changing land through the eyes of a changing protagonist. And the reader is taken on this ride of evolution, following an adventure of fascination and betrayal turning into a new awareness. Thus, Edward’s enraptured imagination when Evan Dhu leads him towards the Highland robber Donald Bean Lean’s cave is the reader’s own as well:

The light, which they now approached more nearly, assumed a broader, redder and more irregular splendour. It appeared plainly to be a large fire, but whether kindled upon an island or the mainland Edward could not determine. As he saw it, the red glaring orb seemed to rest on the very surface of the lake itself, and resembled the fiery vehicle in which the Evil Genius of an Oriental tale traverses land and sea. [...] The boat now neared the shore, and Edward could discover that this large fire, amply supplied with branches of pine-wood by two figures, who, in the red reflection of its light, appeared like demons, was

¹⁴⁹ Qtd. in Moretti F., *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, cit., p. 35.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

kindled in the jaws of a lofty cavern, into which an inlet from the lake seemed to advance.¹⁵⁰

As the passage shows, everything is transfigured by the hero's imagination, so as to resemble a mythical painting. Nonetheless, however strongly Scotland could exercise its fascinating beauty on the traveller's eye, at the end Waverley will be forced to acknowledge the unflinching truth of reality and history. Just as that "large fire [which] resembled the fiery vehicle" of "Evil Genius" was soon identified by his sound mind as a plain "charcoal fire, round which were seated five or six armed Highlanders", and not "demons"¹⁵¹, that is to say, just as the border loosens its metaphorical halo to make room for a well grounded reasoning¹⁵², so too, at the end, the hero will renounce the heady pleasures of a Highlandish "Stag-hunting"¹⁵³ and will espouse, literally, the moderate Hanoverian cause. David Lipscomb calls attention to this process of maturation, both of the hero and of the nation:

In the Waverley novels [...] there is a three-estate timeline, running from a civilized estate [...] up the king's highway to a semi-civilized estate (or the 'Lowland estate') at the base of a 'formidable topographical barrier', and finally over the barrier to a fully-feudal estate (or the 'Highland estate', the realm of Fergus [...]) The final marriage between the Waverley hero (who has Hanoverian political ties) and the Jacobite heiress does not cross the novel's topographical barrier. [...] What exactly happens to the Highland space is not entirely clear, but no doubt it has lost the

¹⁵⁰ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XVII, p. 79.

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

¹⁵² Cf. Moretti F., *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, cit., p. 44.

¹⁵³ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XXIV, p. 115.

3. Travelling through Space and Time

fearsome aspect that it first shows to the Waverley hero [...] Scottish culture, in the form of the Lowland estate, is incorporated into the nation, but Scottish political nationalism is left in the past, on the other side of the topographical barrier.¹⁵⁴

That being so, it is clear that the historical novel does not only represent anthropologically the two halves across the border, but it also illustrates those two different spatial and temporal set-ups *converging* towards the border to create a stumped unity, where, finally, a Scottish Baron and an English Colonel could drink together a toast to “the Prosperity of the united houses of Waverley-Honour and Bradwardine!”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Qtd. in Moretti F., *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, cit., p. 41.

¹⁵⁵ *Waverley*, cit., ch. LXXI, p. 339.



The Essentiality of Choosing

‘Waverley’ as a Pedagogic Tool

When a man deliberates aesthetically upon a multitude of life’s problems he does not easily get one either/or, but a whole multiplicity [...] because when one does not choose absolutely one chooses only for the moment, and therefore can choose something different the next moment.¹⁵⁶

Kierkegaard coaxes man into living an ethical life, and the ethical begins with the act of choosing, regardless of *what* one actually chooses. For the most part of the novel, Edward Waverley lives an aesthetical existence, letting himself be run by events so as to perfectly adhere to the well-chosen definition Lukács provided to refer to this new figure of protagonist: the “middle hero”, who

generally possesses a certain, though never outstanding, degree of political intelligence, a certain moral fortitude and decency which even rises to a capacity for self-sacrifice, but which never grows into a sweeping human passion, is never the enraptured devotion to a great cause.¹⁵⁷

A “passive hero”, according to Alexander Welsh’s definition¹⁵⁸, who is overwhelmed by history rather than taking a proactive role in it. So much so that, when Flora MacIvor sings her Gaelic song to him,

¹⁵⁶ Kierkegaard S., “Equilibrium between the Aesthetical and the Ethical in the Composition of Personality”, in *Either/Or* (1843), translated from the German by D.F. and L.M. Swenson and W. Lowrie, 2 vols., London, 1944, II, 131-278, 141. As qtd. in Enrica Villari, *Romance and History in ‘Waverley’*, cit., p. 107.

¹⁵⁷ Qtd. in Herman L., *Concepts of Realism*, Columbia, Camden House, 1996, p. 96.

¹⁵⁸ Qtd. in Villari E., *Narrativa, storia e costume: Walter Scott*, cit., p. 485.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

the hero fails to acknowledge the hints at the rebellion hidden in it, but only plunges himself into the aesthetic pleasure of daydreaming about the romantic scenario the song depicts:

Mist darkens the mountain, night darkens the vale,
But more dark is the sleep of the sons of the Gael:
A stranger commanded—it sunk on the land,
It has frozen each heart, and benumb'd every hand!

The dirk and the target lie sordid with dust,
The bloodless claymore is but redden'd with rust;
On the hill or the glen if a gun should appear,
It is only to war with the heath-cock or deer.

The deeds of our sires if our bards should rehearse,
Let a blush or a blow be the meed of their verse!
Be mute every string, and be hush'd every tone,
That shall bid us remember the fame that is flown.

But the dark hours of night and of slumber are past,
The morn on our mountains is dawning at last;
Glenaladale's peaks are illumined with the rays,
And the streams of Glenfinnan leap bright in the blaze.

O high-minded Moray! the exiled! the dear!
In the blush of the dawning the STANDARD uprear!
Wide, wide on the winds of the north let it fly,
Like the sun's latest flash when the tempest is nigh!

Ye sons of the strong, when that dawning shall break,
Need the harp of the aged remind you to wake?
That dawn never beam'd on your forefathers' eye,
But it roused each high chieftain to vanquish or die.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing



Flora MacIvor At The Waterfall
Original Etching By R. W. Macbeth

O sprung from the Kings who in Islay kept state,
Proud chiefs of Clan Ranald, Glengarry, and Sleat!
Combine like three streams from one mountain of
snow,
And resistless in union rush down on the foe!

True son of Sir Evan, undaunted Lochiel,
Place thy targe on thy shoulder and burnish thy steel!
Rough Keppoch, give breath to thy bugle's bold swell,
Till far Coryarrick resound to the knell!

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

Stern son of Lord Kenneth, high chief of Kintail,
Let the stag in thy standard bound wild in the gale!
May the race of Clan Gillean, the fearless and free,
Remember Glenlivat, Harlaw, and Dundee!

Let the clan of grey Fingon, whose offspring has given
Such heroes to earth and such martyrs to heaven,
Unite with the race of renown'd Rorri More,
To launch the long galley and stretch to the oar.

How Mac-Shimei will joy when their chief shall display
The yew-crested bonnet o'er tresses of grey!
How the race of wrong'd Alpine and murder'd Glencoe
Shall shout for revenge when they pour on the foe!

Ye sons of brown Dermid, who slew the wild boar,
Resume the pure faith of the great Callain-More!
Mac-Neil of the islands, and Moy of the Lake,
For honour, for freedom, for vengeance awake!

Awake on your hills, on your islands awake,
Brave sons of the mountain, the frith, and the lake!
'Tis the bugle—but not for the chase is the call;
'Tis the pibroch's shrill summons—but not to the hall.

'Tis the summons of heroes for conquest or death,
When the banners are blazing on mountain and heath:
They call to the dirk, the claymore, and the targe,
To the march and the muster, the line and the charge.

Be the brand of each chieftain like Fin's in his ire!
May the blood through his veins flow like currents of fire!
Burst the base foreign yoke as your sires did of yore,

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

Or die like your sires, and endure it no more!¹⁵⁹

Waverley cannot but linger over the sublime images provided by the Highlandish subject of the song, without realizing that Flora is actually invoking the muse of war to inflame the Scottish people to “burst the base foreign yoke”¹⁶⁰. So much so that, when listening to Flora’s notes, the daydreaming hero is described as enraptured in a “wild feeling of romantic delight”, which “amounted almost to a sense of pain”¹⁶¹:

He would not for worlds have quitted his place by her side; yet he almost longed for solitude, that he might decipher and examine at leisure the complication of emotions which now agitated his bosom.¹⁶²

However, the hero’s absorption in his own reveries would make him guilty only of a naivety coming from a certain “inexperience of youth”¹⁶³, which Major Melville holds Edward responsible for whilst the latter is placed under arrest after shooting the blacksmith at Carinvreckan. In fact, as magistrate Major Melville discusses about Waverley’s predicament with clergyman Mr Morton, a discussion which puts face to face “the laird [who] knew only the ill in the parish”, namely the rather severe magistrate, and “the minister [who knew] only the good”¹⁶⁴, namely the sympathetic clergyman, the reader may truly grasp the reason behind the hero’s supposed innocence, as argued by Mr Morton:

Hundreds of misguided gentlemen are now in arms against the government, many, doubtless, upon

¹⁵⁹ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XXII, pp. 107-109.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 107.

¹⁶² *Ivi*.

¹⁶³ *Ibidem*, ch. XXXI, p. 160.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, ch. XXXII, p. 162.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

principles which education and early prejudice have gilded with the names of patriotism and heroism; - Justice, when she selects her victims from such a multitude (for surely all will not be destroyed), must regard the moral motive. He whom ambition, or hope of personal advantage, has led to disturb the peace of a well-ordered government, let him fall a victim to the laws; but surely youth, misled by the wild visions of chivalry and imaginary loyalty, may plead for pardon.¹⁶⁵

According to benevolent Mr Morton, Edward Waverley's case would be one of "visionary chivalry and imaginary loyalty"¹⁶⁶. It seems clear, then, that what guides the hero's actions is indeed his fancy rather than his will, the idea of pursuing ideals of chivalry and beauty rather than ideals of common sense and history. Ideals, the ones which he pursues, that are not wrong themselves, but that, at the same time, determine both his guilt and his innocence. As Ian Duncan observes:

Scott's narrative sustains a dissociation, often drastic, between Waverley's intention and his experience: a divorce of consciousness from historical process that (acquitting him from free assent to treason) will eventually guarantee his survival.¹⁶⁷

Waverley himself will recognize his own fault, later on in the novel, when, on his journey to Stirling Castle,

he contemplated the strangeness of his fortune, which seemed to delight in placing him at the disposal of

¹⁶⁵ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XXXII, p. 163.

¹⁶⁶ *Ivi.*

¹⁶⁷ Duncan I., *op. cit.*, p. 176.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

others, without the power of directing his own motions.¹⁶⁸

In that lies the hero's passivity. On his own admission, he appears to be "the very child of caprice"¹⁶⁹, when he realizes that his affection is moving towards Rose Bradwardine. If one bears in mind how the hero's education had developed over the years spent at his uncle's estate at Waverley-Honour, an education that is compared, at the very beginning of the novel, to a rocking journey by sea, with the young hero driving "through the sea of books, like a vessel without a pilot or a rudder"¹⁷⁰, it is easy to put one's finger on the origin of his wavering affections. Few lines earlier we read that:

the youth was permitted, in a great measure, to learn as he pleased, what he pleased, and when he pleased. [...] he was thus permitted to read only for the gratification of his amusement, [...] To our young hero, who was permitted to seek his instruction only according to the bent of his own mind, and who, of consequence, only sought it so long as it afforded him amusement, the indulgence of his tutors was attended with evil consequences, which long continued to influence his character, happiness, and utility. Edward's power of imagination and love of literature, although the former was vivid and the latter ardent, were so far from affording a remedy to this peculiar evil, that they rather inflamed and increased its violence.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XXXIX, p. 186.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, ch. LIV, p. 254.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, ch. III, p. 13.

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 11-13.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

“This peculiar evil”, which Scott deems responsible for Edward’s “defective education”¹⁷², may be representative of that solipsistic attitude which, as Ruskin observed, was characteristic of those artists who tended to see the world and relate to it according to their own swinging emotions, what he referred to as “pathetic fallacy”:

The temperament which admits the pathetic fallacy, is [...] that of a mind and body in some sort too weak to deal fully with what is before them or upon them; borne away, or over-clouded, or over-dazzled by emotion; and it is a more or less noble state, according to the force of the emotion which has induced it.¹⁷³

A state typical of those “men who feel strongly, think weakly, and see untruly”¹⁷⁴, among whom Edward Waverley should hence be numbered. Although this “pathetic fallacy” characterizes only the initial attitude of the hero, it represents nonetheless an essential stage of his *Bildung*. It has been argued about the passivity characterizing Scott’s protagonist, yet the hero does not always come across as a “sneaking piece of imbecility”¹⁷⁵ as Scott himself once defined him, that is as someone who is totally helpless and at the mercy of events. Waverley is gullible, to be sure, as in the case of the interception of his letters by Donald Bean Lean¹⁷⁶, but most of the time he cannot entirely be described as passive: instead, he willingly embraces an aesthetic conception of life. He is active, sincere, authentic in his world view. He sees the world according to the colours his eyes capture. In this sense, for instance, it cannot

¹⁷² Villari E., *Romance and History in 'Waverley'*, cit., p. 95.

¹⁷³ Ruskin J., *Of the Pathetic Fallacy*, in *Modern Painters*, vol. III (1856), in *The Works of John Ruskin*, vol. 5, ed. E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, London, Library Edition, 1903-1912, pp. 201-220, p. 208.

¹⁷⁴ Ivi.

¹⁷⁵ Qtd. in Villari E., *Romance and History in 'Waverley'*, cit., pp. 95-96.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. *Waverley*, cit., ch. LI, p. 243.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

really be maintained that he misunderstands Flora's song, because he does actually understand it: he does according to his own vision. Yet, at the same time, his personal understanding of reality does not grow out of a sense of subjectivity as traditionally intended, but it is only one of the possible visions reality has the power to produce in the observer's eye. As Ruskin maintained, a gentian is not blue only when we look at it and ceases to be of that colour when it is not observed¹⁷⁷; the blue of a gentian is not simply a "sensation"¹⁷⁸, it is instead

the *power* of producing that sensation; and this power is always there, in the thing, whether we are there to experience it or not, and would remain there though there were not left a man on the face of the earth.¹⁷⁹

Indeed, it is Scotland to have the power to produce that aesthetic attitude in Waverley, it is not simply his distorting view of reality. Thus, his romantic outlook on reality is not a mere veil: it is reality itself, his reality. He is authentically sincere in his intentions, as the Latin etymology of the word 'sincerity' suggests: something which is *sine cera*, without covering wax.¹⁸⁰ Edward Waverley is thus authentic in his aestheticism, since he aestheticizes reality innocently. Yet, by sticking to a quixotic representation of the world, he risks of falling into the trap of inauthenticity, characterised by the refusal of taking up any responsibilities and therefore the consequent danger of never growing up, for, as Kierkegaard teaches, the aesthete dissolves into the experience of the moment. Hence the impossibility to have an aesthete as the

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Ruskin J., *Of the Pathetic Fallacy*, cit., p. 202.

¹⁷⁸ Ivi.

¹⁷⁹ Ivi.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Trilling L., *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1972, p. 11. (Kindle version)

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

protagonist of a Bildungsroman, whose pedagogic aim is to show the process of *Bildung* of a character. As Lionel Trilling observes:

Walter Benjamin speaks of the impulse to impart instruction as a defining characteristic of story-telling and as a condition of its vitality. Story-telling, he says, is oriented towards 'practical interests'; it seeks to be 'useful'; it 'has counsel' to give; the end it has in view is 'wisdom'. In so far as this is true, the novel [...] is of its nature opposed to the heroic.¹⁸¹

Waverley cannot live in a romantically heroic world forever. The hero has to grow into a man. This is why in the novel, which is a mirror to real life, the protagonist is made to undergo a dialectical movement which brings him from an initial stage of aesthetic contemplation to a final stage of ethic engagement, by means of his active, though unwilling, participation in history and his coming to terms with the essentiality of choosing. Ian Duncan on this point:

[Another] crux of [the hero's] subjectivity is its dialectical formation through a quixotic indulgence and disciplinary refinement of the aesthetic faculty. *Waverley* narrates the triumph of the aesthetic, threatened by the trauma of a repressed historical knowledge but then absorbing it, in the production of a critical consciousness for modern life.¹⁸²

When turning his back on the Jacobites and finally espousing the Hanoverian cause, that is, on realizing that "the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced"¹⁸³, Waverley makes an ethical choice. 'Ethical' not because it involves

¹⁸¹ Trilling L., *op. cit.*, p. 84.

¹⁸² Duncan I., *op. cit.*, p. 176.

¹⁸³ *Waverley*, cit., ch. LX, p. 283.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

moral questions of right or wrong, but because it entails an assumption of responsibility towards his own existence. Returning to Kierkegaard, the very act of choosing averts the risk of remaining stuck into that quicksand of an aesthetic, passive life. The exposure to the Jacobite world helps Waverley poke his head out of his daydreams into the real world and, once there, acquire an ability to choose. However, had Waverley chosen to stand by the Jacobites, it would have been an ethical choice as well. What matters is in fact only his “risveglio della coscienza intenzionale”¹⁸⁴, an awakening of the intentionality, which now leaves the aesthetic to enter the ethic.

Waverley’s awakening is not so far removed from what the call to the ballot boxes in the most recent debates of the 21st century United Kingdom entailed for the subjects of its crown. The 2014 referendum on Scottish independence and the 2016 Brexit referendum actually made English and Scottish citizens alike face the necessity of choosing much in the same way of Scott’s hero, and engaged them in the responsibility of choice. A choice which revives a more-than-three-century-old hostility, which has been taking different forms over the course of history. Scott’s Waverley lived within a Union where England was basically the decision-maker, with the resulting attempt on the part of the Scots not only to retrieve their autonomy but also to restore the legitimate Stuart dynasty to the throne of the entire island. The modern Waverley lives in a shattered nation, where Scotland’s diversity has always raised a doubt as to whether the Kingdom is effectively United and where, once again, the fact that England decided on behalf of the entire United Kingdom to exit the European Union may trigger a Scottish attempt to finally take back, if not the entirety of the

¹⁸⁴ Madrussan E., *Il relazionismo come paideia*, Trento, Erickson, 2005, p. 69.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

island (which would seem however an a-historical pretension), at least its own independence.

The Issue of Scottish Independence: Today

The clash of two projects.

On Christmas Day 1950, four young Scots, inflamed by an urge of proud nationalism, presented their dear mother Scotland with the most symbolic of gifts: the ancient Scottish Coronation Stone, also known as the Stone of Destiny. There was, however, a small problem. The Stone, in fact, was not something the four youngsters simply came across during Christmas shopping; they had stolen it from Westminster, London. The Stone was said to have travelled all the way from Ireland in the ninth century to Scone, near Perth, and to have ever since sanctioned the coronation of the Scottish Kings, who had to seat on the stone during the ceremony, until 1296, when King Edward I of England took it to London. The Stone was therefore to outline the Destiny of the two kingdoms, a destiny of conflicting identities and hurt feelings, and its theft was saluted “by many Scots as the righting of an ancient wrong, as a symbol of their re-emerging national identity”¹⁸⁵. Despite having officially been returned to its legitimate Scottish home in 1996, the Stone could be taken as a token of a never-ending feeling of nationalistic pride running through the veins of a nation born both with the chains of subjugation and with the untameable wings of independence.

In order to trace back the origins of nationalist discontent in the 20th century, it is necessary to go back to the post-war period, when Scotland had to depend entirely on the intervention of the British government to ensure its socio-economic welfare and to foster its entrance into a modern era made of new infrastructures,

¹⁸⁵ Munro A., *The Democratic Muse: Folk Music Revival in Scotland*, Aberdeen, Scottish Cultural Press, 1996, p. 27.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

up-to-date public services as well as “Italian fridges, Japanese televisions and German cars”¹⁸⁶. The more the government failed to boost Scotland’s economy, the stronger a bitter urge of nationalism grew in the hearts of the Scottish people, until in 1967 the Scottish National Party won the by-elections at Hamilton. Menzies observes:

As Britain’s economic position progressively worsened, there was a tendency for more Scots to turn to the SNP. [...] Yet the opinion polls from the time show that only 12 per cent of the electorate believed in the nationalist flagship policy of independence, which tends to suggest that many nationalist voters were using the SNP as a means to register their dissatisfaction with government policy.¹⁸⁷

A dissatisfaction that continued undaunted with the advent of Margaret Thatcher. Despite being regarded by a scoffing Conservative Party as decades of failure, the 1960s and 1970s had actually granted Scotland many achievements, including the easier access to consumerist purchases, greater opportunities for women, health improvement and full employment. What the Thatcher revolution in the 1980s was planning to carry out seemed to many Scots to represent a threat to everything they had achieved that far:

Espousing, as it did, the demise of the nanny state, the virtue of the free market and an end to state subsidy, many Scots instinctively feared that what was being proposed was, in fact, an attack on the values which had served them well in the past. [...] Conservative unpopularity was aided and abetted by the imposition

¹⁸⁶ Menzies G., *In Search of Scotland*, Edinburgh, Polygon, 2001, p. 221.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 221-222.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

of unpopular policies which seemed to have no mandate north of the border. [...] many Scots turned to home rule as a means of circumventing the degree of power which was exercised by the Westminster parliament. The creation of a Scottish parliament would restore some democratic accountability and also intervene to prevent the worse excesses of Conservative rule being imposed on Scotland. [...] home rule was the best way of stopping the frustrations of the Scottish populace from turning towards nationalism.¹⁸⁸

Politically, Scotland openly demonstrated to be against Thatcherism at the 1997 elections, when not a single Tory won a seat north of the border. Culturally, the Scottish people did turn towards nationalism as a means through which they could reject the superimposing decisions of a central Parliament which was felt not to respect their specific cultural and political identity. Paradoxically, as Menzies points out:

The more prosperous and similar to England Scotland became, the more its political behaviour diverged from its southern neighbour.¹⁸⁹

Nonetheless, the destruction of the British bond uniting the nations of the United Kingdom, caused by the collapse of the welfare state felt particularly by the working classes, is only one of the possible explanations for the rising tide of Scottish nationalism in the 1970s. According to Keating, the crumbling of the Union would date back to before the birth of the Union itself, on the grounds that the

¹⁸⁸ Menzies G., *op. cit.*, pp. 224-225.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 226.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

pre-British identities were not fully national in the modern sense and should be seen, rather, as the seeds of alternative modernizing projects that never came to fruition.¹⁹⁰

Scotland could thus be seen as a project left unfinished, or rather suffocated right at the beginning by the politics of the strongest. Moreover, Scottish nationalism could also be accounted for by taking into consideration “the influence of European integration as Scots have embraced Europe while the English reject it”¹⁹¹, an issue that will become crucial on the occasion of the Brexit referendum.

Be that as it may, the reasons behind Scotland’s discreet hostility being numerous and multi-faceted, signs of an upcoming, modern upheaval have been quite apparent, such as the utter lack of public jubilation and official celebration on the occasion of the third anniversary of the Union of England and Scotland in May 2007¹⁹², or when, a few months before, in January 2007, during David Cameron’s election campaign in Scotland, a member of his shadow cabinet, the Conservative Oliver Letwin, “commented that ‘the nearest foreign country is on our own border, is Scotland’”¹⁹³. The Union was thus felt to have been a forced marriage, rather than an arranged one. Born sickly and grown up sick and tired. Yet, things are not as straightforward as to allow a simple divorce. Keating’s explanation sheds a light:

Almost everybody would concede that a separation mutually agreed between two parts of a state is morally

¹⁹⁰ Keating M., *The Independence of Scotland. Self-government and the Shifting Politics of Union*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

¹⁹² Cf. *ibidem*, p. 45.

¹⁹³ Pittock M., *The Road to Independence? Scotland Since the Sixties*, London, Reaktion Books, 2008, p. 85.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

permissible. The problem arises when one part wishes to secede unilaterally. For nationalists, there is no problem, since nations have the right to self-government and if these do not correspond to the state, then they are justified in setting up their own. Unfortunately, [...] Nationalists are [...] caught in a scholastic trap by their opponents. If they are not culturally or ‘ethnically’ distinct in some way, they are dismissed as not a real community [and, hence, as not a legitimate nation]; but if they are distinct, they are told that they are particularists who represent an obstacle to universal human equality. [...] The ethical status of the two claims, for the state and the stateless nation, are thus morally equivalent.¹⁹⁴

That is to say, both claims would be morally right in their own way. On the one hand, in fact, Scotland, if seen as a proper nation which should be granted its own “right to self-government”, would be right in demanding independence; on the other hand, however, it is right as well for those who advocate a cohesive Union, and, consequently, who implicitly champion the supremacy of England within the same Union, to turn down the claim to independence of Scotland, on the grounds that it would not be a distinct nation but just a particular community. That claim would hence be seen not as a nationalists’ claim but as a particularists’ claim, and as such it would be felt as illegitimate.

Anyway, whether the Scottish case is a question of nationalism or particularism, it is clear that what has been going on in Great Britain, between England and Scotland, for centuries is still topical

¹⁹⁴ Keating M., *op. cit.*, p. 79.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

today and will be for a long time, since it all comes to “the clash of two projects occupying the same moral ground”¹⁹⁵.

The Referendums.

On the 18th September 2014 what many believed impossible happened: Scotland was called to vote for independence. The Scottish National Party, guided for more than twenty years by Alex Salmond, had won the 2011 Scottish Parliament election by a landslide, allowing its leader to remain First Minister of Scotland for the fourth time. The SNP, the largest political party after the Labour Party and the Conservative Party as for membership and representation in the House of Commons, is characterised by a strong progressive, social democratic imprint. Among its aims, such as the extirpation of poverty, the building of social houses, the fight against nuclear power, the furtherance of higher education and renewable energy, the promotion of same-sex marriages and the lowering of the voting age, perhaps the single most notable one is the advocacy of Scottish independence. The 300-year-old Union would only represent a shackle for a country wealthy with oil and a proud sense of self-sufficiency. The ballot box, however, decided differently. Proving the pro-Unionist feeling of Mr Cameron to be right, Scotland voted to stay in the kingdom, with the Better Together campaigners exceeding the supporters of independence 55% to 45%, with 2,001,926 NO votes over 1,617,989 YES¹⁹⁶. Bonnie Prince Charlie, for whom the independence of Scotland would have represented at least a first major step towards the accomplishment of his greater mission of taking back the entire kingdom, would still be forced to hide on the Isle of Skye, defeated once more.

¹⁹⁵ Keating M., *op. cit.*, p. 79.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *Scotland Decides*, “BBC News”, 20 September 2014 at <http://www.bbc.com/news/events/scotland-decides/results>

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

Despite the result, Scotland sent a telltale message: out of the 5,295,403 inhabitants of the northern kingdom (according to the 2011 Scotland's Census¹⁹⁷), over 1.5 million people wanted independence. In 1755, ten years after Culloden, the Scottish population was about 1,265,380 persons, as shown by what is generally acknowledged to be the first reliable census in Scotland, carried out by the Reverend Alexander Webster¹⁹⁸. In 1745 the strength of the Jacobites could count on 12,000 French soldiers, 4,000 Highlanders and some 700 Irish volunteers, not counting the general implied consent of the mainly country population, responding to a tartan-specific clan and speaking fluent Scottish Gaelic. Less than 300 years later, an army of 1,617,989 jeans-wearing, Scottish-accented British rebels tried to call themselves off the Union. They were defeated at the ballot battlefield. What goes around comes around, History teaches. And things do not seem to have come full circle yet.

There is a Union. A Union is made by means of merging together individual entities into a unifying whole capable of overcoming the singular discrepancies in favour of a more profitable (ideally, for each and every member; actually, for the surviving fittest one) common good. There is the European Union, and then there is the United Kingdom, or better, England, seeing the results of the Brexit referendum. On Thursday 23 June 2016 England managed once again to take a decision about a union without realizing the actual dissent of what was supposed to be its partner, namely Scotland: if more than 300 years before England had pushed for the creation of a union, the United Kingdom, now it has pushed for the withdrawal from a union, the European Union. Scotland, instead,

¹⁹⁷ Cf. "Scotland's Census" at <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ods-web/area.html>

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Cullen K., *Famine in Scotland - the 'ill Years' of the 1690s*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2010, pp. 123-124.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

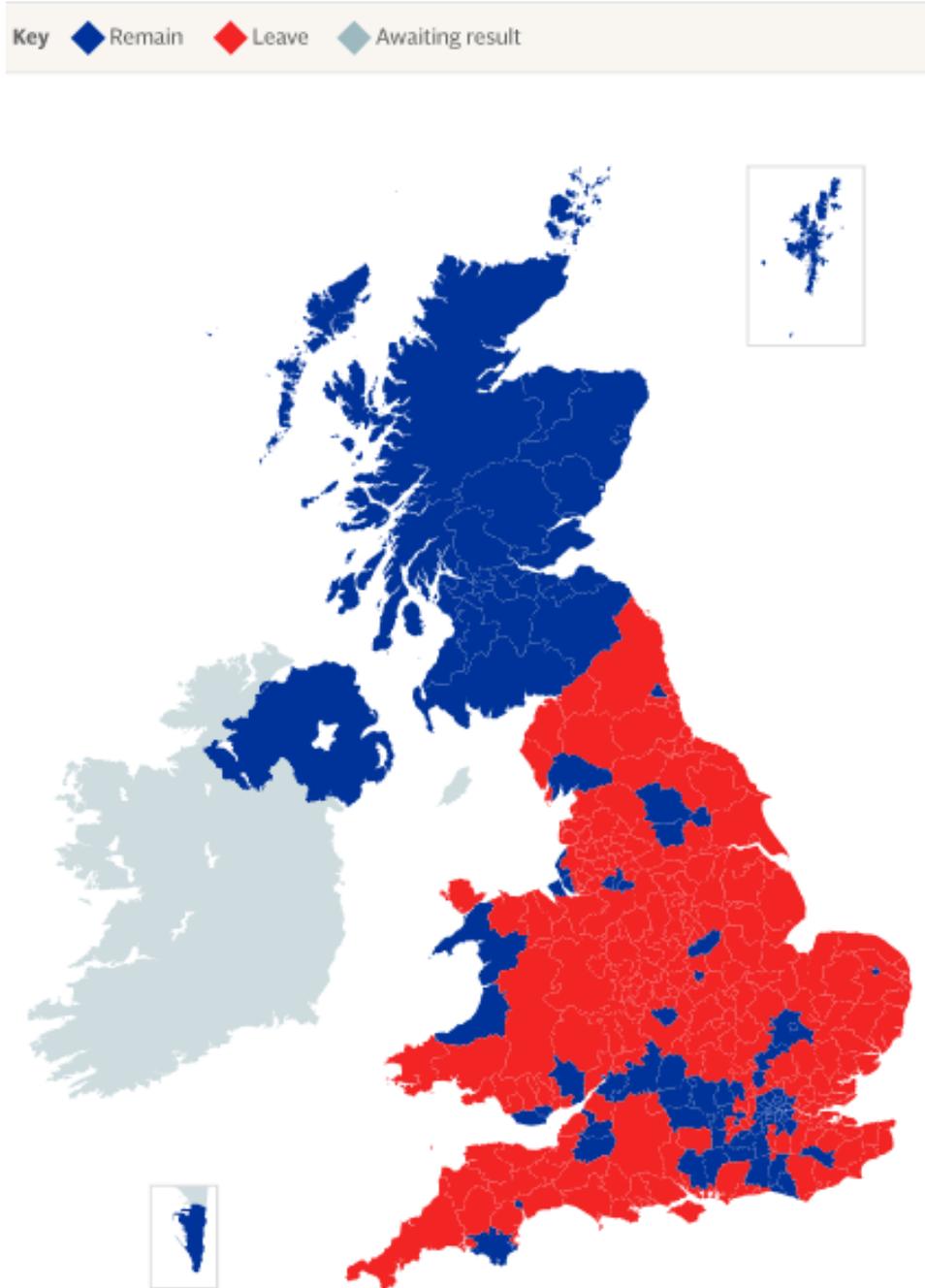
as much as it did not want a union back in the 18th century, would now rather stay united (with Europe), with the paradoxical consequence that, in order for that to happen, the other union (with England) would likely have to crumble. The two rival kingdoms seem then to be doomed to play a see-saw game of dancing without touching, a love-hate fraternal coexistence, hoping one day to grow up and live on one's own. "Now's the day, an now's the hour" sang Robert Burns¹⁹⁹ thinking of Bannockburn; but, apparently, the day and the hour keep turning up every now and again.

On 23 June 2016 a referendum was held across the whole of Great Britain to decide on a possible British independence from what a reluctant David Cameron suspected many felt as a burden: the European Union and the groundswell of European migrants, both so thoroughly denounced by Nigel Farage's Ukip (United Kingdom Independent Party). With a turnout of 72.2%, the final result was weighty: the Leave outnumbered the Remain 51.9% to 48.1%²⁰⁰. Great Britain was to exit the EU. Yet, this headline outcome had been decided by a discordant population, inhomogeneous as per age and per territory. It was the old guard to take the decision: the Leave was supported for the most part by the 45+ age group, who got the better on the younger generation thanks also to their scarcer turnout. Anyway, what is truly fascinating is the upshot coming from territorial vote. The following chart, showing how the not-so-United Kingdom voted, is extremely to the point:

¹⁹⁹ See footnote 77, p. 38 of this dissertation.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Coles M., Kirk A. and Krol C., *EU referendum results and maps: Full breakdown and find out how your area voted*, "The Telegraph", 1 July 2016 at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/23/leave-or-remain-eu-referendum-results-and-live-maps/>

4. The Essentiality of Choosing



Map of the 23/06/2016 Brexit Referendum
via The Telegraph

As it can clearly be seen, the Remain campaign was the strongest, if not even unrivalled, in those areas which have always been, in a way, less British, those which History had compelled to kneel down to England, namely Scotland, Northern Ireland and the small, half-

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

forgotten Gibraltar, holding to the EU for dear life. On the other hand, old grumpy England wanted ‘things to change so that everything could remain the same’²⁰¹. With the exception of few, though consistent, younger or anyway progressive areas, namely London’s multiethnic agglomeration, Brighton and Hove, Oxfordshire, Bristol, Bath and Cardiff, part of Wales just to name a few, the Britons voted to take back their island and re-establish a bygone, almost oxymoronic status quo: Britain as an island. Writing in 1513, Niccolò Machiavelli extrapolated an a-historical truth:

And it should be considered that nothing is more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage, than to put oneself at the head of introducing new orders. For the introducer has all those who benefit from the old orders as enemies, and he has lukewarm defenders in all those who might benefit from the new orders. This lukewarmness arises partly from fear of adversaries who have the laws on their side and partly from the incredulity of men, who do not truly believe in new things unless they come to have a firm experience of them.²⁰²

But what will be this new order of things? Will Great Britain actually exit the EU and stand alone in the world as an island? Would that finally trigger a Scottish independence? Or will unity be

²⁰¹ “Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi.” Tomasi di Lampedusa G., *Il Gattopardo* (1958), Milano, Feltrinelli, 1973, cap. I, p. 21. These are the words uttered by Tancredi, the Prince of Salina’s nephew, to comment Garibaldi’s landing in Sicily in Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa’s 1958 *The Leopard*, set in Sicily during the unsettling Risorgimento, when Italy found itself in the process of being unified. This comment, articulated by a member of the Sicilian privileged class, expresses the awareness that, in going along with the flow of change, they would have retained their honourable position.

²⁰² Machiavelli N., *The Prince*, trans. by H.C. Mansfield, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1998, pp. 23-24.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

preserved both between England and Scotland and between them and Europe? What advantages and disadvantages would there be for an isolated Britain, which even risks to be shattered from within?

The image of Great Britain as a whole would suggest an evocative whirlpool of centrifugal forces pushing away from a however gravitational core of inescapable unity. An old, quarrelsome couple bound to share the same bed. Divorce would be unthinkable, one could not live without the other: they share a history, they know and bear each other's vices, from Irn-Bru, Scotland's beloved national drink, to the love-it-or-hate-it Staffordshire's Marmite. Yet, the divorce out of incompatibility is apparently every step closer.

Weighing up the outcome of the referendum, First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon, who succeeded Alex Salmond in leading the SNP, reflected that "the territory is uncharted, the page is blank"²⁰³, and Professor Neil Walker of the University of Edinburgh strongly believes that the actual incompatibility would lie in the irreconcilable clash between Scotland's desire to remain in the EU and at the same time its remaining in the UK²⁰⁴. If it is a matter of either/or, Scotland has to decide what to give its preference to: either the UK, hence sealing the sacredness of the 1707 Union, though through a cold handshake, *or* the EU, thus honouring the 1745 Jacobite sacrifice. Only time will tell. However, sympathy for the Scottish cause has been one of the first reactions among the EU officials Sturgeon met in Brussels shortly after the results of the Referendum²⁰⁵. In fact, there happens to be a certain supportive reaction to the Scottish aspiration to independence.

²⁰³ Mccall C., *Could Scotland legally remain a member of the EU, post-Brexit?*, "The Scotsman", 1 August 2016 at <http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/could-scotland-legally-remain-a-member-of-the-eu-post-brexit-1-4191495>

²⁰⁴ Cf. *ivi*.

²⁰⁵ Cf. *ivi*.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

Scottish and English people have their own specific ways of looking at things. As journalist Adam Ramsay interestingly observes, the perception of identity differs enormously between the Scots and the English²⁰⁶. Reporting the data of the 2011 census, Ramsay points out significant figures: only 8% of all the Scottish people saw themselves as 'British', 18% ticked both the 'British' and 'Scottish' boxes and an impressive 62% identified themselves only as 'Scottish', with all the consequences it bears on the concept of sovereignty. Whereas "the English tradition is that sovereignty lies with the crown in parliament", he further argues, on the other hand "the Scottish mythology is that the people of Scotland are sovereign"²⁰⁷. The keenness shown by the Scottish to assert their independence as a sovereign people does indeed date back to one of the most pivotal documents in the history of Scotland, the 1320 *Declaration of Arbroath*, which set in motion a tradition of claims of sovereignty more recently embodied in the 1989 *Claim of Right*. Here is an extract from the 1320 *Declaration of Arbroath*:

Yet if he (Bruce) should give up what he has begun, seeking to make us or our kingdom subject to the King of England or the English, we should exert ourselves at once to drive him out as our enemy and a subverter of his own right and ours, and make some other man who was well able to defend us our King; for, as long as a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be subjected to the lordship of the English. It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that

²⁰⁶ Cf. Ramsay A., *Nine reasons Scotland is more Remain, (and what will happen if it's dragged out)*, "Open Democracy UK", 14 June 2016 at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/adam-ramsay/eight-reasons-scotland-is-more-remain-and-what-will-happen-if-its-dragged-out>

²⁰⁷ Ivi.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

we are fighting, but for freedom alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself.²⁰⁸

Here, instead, is the text of the 1989 *Claim of Right for Scotland*:

We, gathered as the Scottish Constitutional Convention, do hereby acknowledge the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of Government best suited to their needs, and do hereby declare and pledge that in all our actions and deliberations their interests shall be paramount. We further declare and pledge that our actions and deliberations shall be directed to the following ends: To agree a scheme for an Assembly or Parliament for Scotland; To mobilise Scottish opinion and ensure the approval of the Scottish people for that scheme; and To assert the right of the Scottish people to secure implementation of that scheme.²⁰⁹

The Declaration of Arbroath, addressed to Pope John XXII, who had just authorized King Edward the First of England to exert his legitimate control over the northern kingdom, was intended to assert the independence of Scotland from any external dominion, more precisely from the English dominion. The threat to turn Bruce out if he had yielded Scotland to England was something of a bluff, a bluff that served Scotland's turn to make a strong point: Bruce was king not out of an elusive divine right, but because the people had chosen him, and, consequently, they may as easily have disposed of him. "One of the most eloquent statements of

²⁰⁸ *The Declaration of Arbroath*, "The National Archives of Scotland", April 2009 at <http://www.nas.gov.uk/downloads/declarationArbroath.pdf>

²⁰⁹ Priddy S., *Claim of Right for Scotland*, "House of Commons Library", Debate Pack Number 2016-0158, 2 September 2016 at <https://www.parliament.uk/commons-library>

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

regnal solidarity to come out of the middle ages”, produced in an epoch in which “its subjects did not even have a common language”²¹⁰, Susan Reynolds comments. That strong was the cohesion felt by the Scots, thus demonstrating, by the early fourteenth century already, that “a new sense of kingdom, country and people emerged which, of necessity, was based on something other than the logic of geography”²¹¹. Keeping that tradition alive, the 1989 Claim of Right aimed at asserting the Scottish people’s right to determine their own government, which contributed to the process of the devolution of powers from the Parliament of Westminster to a detached Parliament of Scotland, and finally led to the foundation in 1999 of *Pàrlamaid na h-Alba*, the Scottish Parliament. A devolution which is fuelled even more by the insouciant attitude of considering Scotland just like another Wiltshire or Lancashire. A sort of indifference which is doomed to serve the Union right. As Pittock observes:

The lack of understanding that the UK is a multinational polity is the key risk factor in the possibility of its future dissolution, and resentment of Scotland in England is fed by lack of understanding which is sustained by appallingly low news coverage from network [...] broadcasting: in the 2005 BBC General Election night programme, two minutes in the first five hours were spent in Scotland, less than in major English cities. Scotland and Scottishness are very different since 1945, thanks largely to changes in British policy and the British state. The signs are that unless the UK government considers the implications

²¹⁰ Qtd. in Broun D., *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2007, p. 38.

²¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 275.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

of the relationship between its different nations more carefully, the trajectory of British policy will continue to increase the intensity of Scottishness in the years to come.²¹²

So much so that, as the following table²¹³ shows, the Scottish demand for self-government has been proving high and constant over the past years:

Table: Trends in demand for more powers for Scottish Parliament						
	1999	2000	2001	2003	2005	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>The Scottish Parliament should be given more powers –</i>						
Agree strongly	14	23	20	13	17	22
Agree	42	43	48	46	47	44
Neither agree nor disagree	20	15	14	18	17	16
Disagree	18	12	13	17	13	14
Disagree strongly	4	5	4	6	5	3

Source: Scottish Social Attitudes, 1999–2007. Data for 2007 are provisional.

As it can clearly be seen, in 2007, the 300th anniversary year of the Union, 66% of the Scottish population were, moderately or even passionately, in favour of a stronger devolution of powers away from the geographically consanguine yet ideologically supposedly unrelated England.

Considering its seething spirit of independence, coupled with the contentious outcome of the Brexit referendum, through which England decided for the entire United Kingdom, Scotland is likely

²¹² Pittock M., *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

²¹³ Curtice J., *How firm are the foundations? Public attitudes to the Union in 2007, in Scotland and the Union 1707-2007*, ed. T.M. Devine, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2008, pp. 210-227, p. 222.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

to not automatically follow suit. Hence the figure reported by the Independent: “a poll by Survation conducted on behalf of the Scottish Daily Mail has found that 47 per cent of voters back an independence referendum just two years after the first one was held”²¹⁴, with a further 52 per cent of Scottish people believing that England should not decide for the rest of Britain. Strictly germane to the subject is the point Ramsay makes in comparing Scottish identity within Britain to a Russian doll: Scottish and British identities “sit comfortably inside [one another]”, with the resulting easiness to “add another one – European – on top”²¹⁵. On the other hand, when it comes to Englishness coupled with Britishness, things are different, the two being perceived by the English almost “as synonymous, as two sides of the same coin, with Englishness facing in and Britishness facing out”²¹⁶. That being so, Ramsay infers, “adding the ‘European’ identity to that feels like an imposition”²¹⁷.

What will happen next is an uncharted territory. As Ascherson reports:

The London-based media make three assumptions. One is that English resentment against the Scots is increasing rapidly. A second is that a waning sense of British nationhood and British values must be restored. A third, involving the state we still call the United Kingdom, is a gathering expectation that the Scots will march out of it. All three propositions, as I

²¹⁴ Stone J., *Scots favour second independence referendum following Brexit, poll finds Scotland does not want to leave the European Union*, “The Independent”, 29 June 2016 at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/scots-favour-second-independence-referendum-following-brexite-poll-finds-a7109431.html>

²¹⁵ Ramsay A., *op. cit.*

²¹⁶ *Ivi.*

²¹⁷ *Ivi.*

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

see it, are misunderstandings – some of them wilful deceptions, others defects of political imagination.²¹⁸

According to Ascherson, the first assumption, which he terms “Scotophobia”, was invented and fomented by the media, such as the newspaper *Daily Telegraph*, in cahoots with the Conservative Party, in order to balance off the Glasgow-born, Labour Party leader and future Prime Minister Gordon Brown²¹⁹. The other side of the coin is, by contrast, a certain attitude of “Anglophilia”²²⁰, that is to say, a felt necessity to protect an empire on the verge of crumbling, a “current of English national grievance, political and cultural, [whose] object [...] is not so much Scotland as Britain itself”²²¹: a necessity to restore the British values so that unity could be preserved as in opposition to an outside world, namely, to be more precise, continental Europe, which does not share those same values. And those values are the Victorian values, which have always been believed to mark Britain out: “austerity, industriousness, respect, stoicism, fortitude, fairness, regularity, decency”²²². On these grounds, Brexit would be the actualisation of a feeling of Victorian superiority. As *Observer* journalist Rafael Behr observes:

The Victorians were a bit snooty about European nationalism (which reeked of peasants, pitchforks and revolutionaries in grubby breeches). They didn’t want to be just a nation, so they promoted themselves to the status of “civilisation”.²²³

²¹⁸ Ascherson N., *Future of an Unloved Union*, in *Scotland and the Union 1707-2007*, cit., pp. 228-239, p. 228.

²¹⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 228-230.

²²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 230.

²²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 231.

²²² *Ibidem*, p. 235.

²²³ Qtd. in *ivi*.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

Yet, Scotland came to either exclude itself or be excluded from that privileged “civilisation” and to feel the need to express a different sense of identity which had been suffocated over the last 300 years and more. A nation confused about the why of that historic Union and the how of its present continuation:

Highlands as the most beautiful part of England are now unimaginable (though actually not that long ago). As for Scottish independence, polls as far back as the 1970s showed that most English people thought that it would be ‘a pity, after all we’ve been through together, but if they want that, I suppose they have a right to it’.²²⁴

Whether Scotland will become independent from the rest of the United Kingdom or the unity of the latter will be preserved cannot be predicted; nonetheless, there will undoubtedly be a dichotomy of reasons and sympathies, perhaps within the very same stance: a sensitive understanding of the Scottish genuine cause of rebellion together with a sensible understanding that no country can be a lonely island, let alone if it is shattered from within. Something similar to a Waverleyan stance indeed: drawing a Highland sword and then returning back home, in the south of England. The future of the United Kingdom is ridden with open questions and tough choices: will Britain remain Great? Is there still a Britain? Has the concept of Great Britain got any sense at all? As Ascherson puts it:

In the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, King Arthur rides up to a muddy peasant woman and announces: ‘I am the King of the Britons’. She asks: ‘King of the who? Who are the Britons?’ The king answers rather uncertainly: ‘We are *all* Britons!’ Well,

²²⁴ Ascherson N., *Future of an Unloved Union*, cit., p. 229.

4. The Essentiality of Choosing

perhaps we are now all muddy peasant women, because – in spite of Gordon Brown’s exhortations – the notion of Britain is plainly growing less convincing.²²⁵

²²⁵ Ascherson N., *Future of an Unloved Union*, cit., p. 231.



Conclusion

5. Conclusion

Whether dependent or independent, I have a feeling that Scotland will always remain a distinct land, standing apart on the grounds of historical or geographical incompatibility and out of a sense of pride, felt by each and everyone among her dwellers, by some more than others. It is still to be decided if the outstanding Scottish reality should be left to itself to be jealously guarded or if it ought instead to be preciously preserved through unity. One way or the other, the land above the border will not cease to exercise its fascination on both the domestic and the foreign eye. And the sight, enraptured in the beauty of the green glens and the spiky peaks, will not realize, nor would it care to, that the Scottish soil is ripe with historic seeds of dissent and political controversies. The gaze will simply be wandering from “Glenadale’s peaks [which] are illumed with the rays” to the “mist [which] darkens the mountain”²²⁶: Flora’s song as *Waverley* originally intended it. Now, the Jacobites of today may unsheathe their smart phones and twitter their dissent, but, for an Edward Waverley wearing jeans and touring Scotland by car, Jacobitism will still not matter facing the beauty of cultural difference. He will be singing Flora’s song again and again, but his romantic voice will blur the words with the gentle brush of conscious appreciation until it becomes what Scott’s *Waverley* imaginatively heard from the Gaelic voice of a Scottish girl: a song celebrating Scotland. A song the pure, tinkling voice of Gerda Stevenson could sing, keeping memory of bloody Culloden alive, whilst at the same time laying that memory aside to make room for the here and now. A home-coming where the dust of the past is swept by the wind of the glen and cherished within the bowels of the valley.

²²⁶ *Waverley*, cit., ch. XXII, p. 107.

5. Conclusion

I would like to conclude my dissertation with two of the works by award-winning Scottish poetess and singer, as well as actress, writer and director, Gerda Stevenson, one of the most representative voices of the contemporary Scottish scene. The historical poem *Hame-comin* (2013) gives new life to the post-Culloden grief striking the Scottish soul, whilst the song *I Come to You* (2014) could be read as a pacification of that tormented soul: the soldier of the poem, who cannot come back to his Scottish home for his heart has died, finally does come “to you” in the song: he comes back home to a fresh and unruffled Scotland, hoping there will not be another Culloden.

What Walter Scott had in fact managed to do with *Waverley*, was to show that Scotland was indeed a land far behind, far from the here and now of the English centre stage, but that it was at the same time a “hame”²²⁷, a home, a motherland for someone else. The relativistic value of Scott’s novel is given new life and form by Gerda Stevenson, whose voice conveys the sense of pain caused by the image of one’s own homeland being mangled, where “we blew tae hell like a smirr o eldritch confetti”²²⁸, where one’s own identity is shattered to pieces. But then, as if re-emerging from its own ashes like a phoenix, Scotland welcomes back the soldier, and wraps him up in an ahistorical peace, where “tall pines sway and sigh”, when “the mist lies low”, and “the glen is lost”²²⁹, much in the same way Edward Waverley felt on hearing Flora’s song.

²²⁷ See footnote 230, p. 109 of this dissertation.

²²⁸ *Ivi.*

²²⁹ See footnote 231, p. 110 of this dissertation.

5. Conclusion

Hame-comin²³⁰



Glencoe Massacre, 1692

Hame, hame, hame on the truck,
the wheels grind their grumly air,
hame tae ma mither, ma faither, ma lass,
but I canna come hame in ma hert nae mair,
noo that ma fieres are laid in the grund,
and the desert sun has blurred ma een,
stour in ma mind frae yon cramasie floer
that smoors aa pain on field and street,
no, I canna, canna come hame in ma hert
noo I've duin whit I've duin
(orders are orders, ye dae whit ye maun),
and I've seen whit I've seen:

oh, the bluid that brak through her skin
like a floer frae its bud, yon bairn
that cam runnin, birlin, lauchin, skirlin

²³⁰ Stevenson G., *Hame-comin*, 2013, at
<http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/hame-comi>

5. Conclusion

intae the faimily dance o mirth
we blew tae hell like a smirr o eldritch confetti;

and noo I'm here, hame on the truck,
ma fieres in the grund, but I canna come hame
nae mair in ma hert, for hame's naewhaur
when yer hert's deid – nae langer sair – juist deid
wi dule and the wecht o bluid fallin like floers,
cramasie floers, that kill aa pain, smoor yer mind,
deid, deid, as the wheels grind.

I Come to You²³¹



Glencoe, 2015

I come to you
When the sun is high,
Or falling low,
Down an evening sky.
I come by moonlight,

²³¹ Stevenson G., *I Come to You*, in *Night Touches Day* (CD), Gean Records, 2014.

5. Conclusion

Through wind and rain,
And when snow hangs on trees,
Like a white mare's mane.

I'll be with you, again and again.

I come to you
When the berries shine,
Rowan, hip and haw,
Blood red like wine.
I come where snowdrops throng
On every brae,
And when hawthorn wears
Her white skirts of May.

I'll be with you, again and again.

I come to you,
When the heron's wing
Sweeps down the burn,
Where blackbirds sing,
Where foxes hunt and hide,
And dragonflies glint
On the peat brown pool
By the green scented mint.

I'll be with you, again and again.

I come to you
When the dusky hawk
Hovers high then dives,
Where the two tracks fork,
I come when cuckoos call,
Where tall pines sway and sigh,

5. Conclusion

And the shy roe deer
Holds a world in her eye.

I'll be with you, again and again.

I come to you
When the mist lies low,
And the glen is lost,
And the walking slow.
I come where ice like glass
Locks the voice of the burn;
I'll be back for the thaw,
Oh, I'll always return.

I'll be with you, again and again.



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