

“A THOUSAND PECULIAR AND VARIED FORMS”:  
SPACE AND NARRATIVE IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH HISTORICAL  
NOVEL

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2009

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To Sandy

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I give thanks to Pam Gilbert and Bob Thomson for their many hours of help, advice and encouragement; you have both been utterly professional but with a pleasantly personal touch. Warm thanks also to Phil Wegner and Jessica Harland-Jacobs, for investing so much time and effort into reading my work and offering me creative and challenging feedback. I'd like to thank my parents, Tommy and Robbie, for encouraging my academic growth as a child and my siblings, Kathy and Mike, for respecting my different career path. To Connie, Paul, and Father John, many kind thanks for your patient and caring help in cultivating my other-than-intellectual well-being. Grateful thanks to Richard and Diana Brantley and to Fiona Barnes, for your unwavering support and for having (and expressing!) faith in my abilities. Thanks to Bob Steffek, for assuring me I could go back to school if I really wanted to (and for not tolerating excuses). Warmest thanks to Sam Kimball, for being "a Tom Bragg Fan"—your final comment on my first English paper was good for many a mental and emotional mile travelled. Finally, my deepest gratitude for my wife Sandy, to whom I dedicate this work; I could never have put it together without your help putting myself together.

Sincere thanks and respect must also go to a host of people without whom none of my work would be possible: Alex, Art C., Walt, Bill, Eddie, Jim F., George P., Vic, Clive, Gil, Francis and Thomas.

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of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2009

Chair: Pamela K. Gilbert

Major: English

This dissertation examines the poetics of spatial description in the nineteenth-century historical novel, demonstrating connections between its spaces and some characteristic narrative modes and techniques. Beginning with Scott and proceeding to two Victorian successors, Ainsworth and Bulwer-Lytton, the study identifies techniques common to the genre throughout the century, like the malleability of historical novel spaces and their tendency to reflect authorial assumptions about history, narrative, and knowledge. The dissertation’s specific narratological focus is to understand better how the spaces in historical novels function to achieve the genre’s typical (and the author’s particular) aims. Doing so will argue for a reassessment of the form at large: both to redefine its practices, purposes and types and to urge its inclusion in broader accounts of mainstream fictional narrative. The examination of common genre features necessitates more inclusive definitions and surveys of the historical novel to account for the romantic, religious and juvenile variations commonly excluded from studies, but which make up so much of the nineteenth century’s total output.

I argue that the nineteenth-century historical novel’s characteristic form is the ready-made palimpsest: a combination of generic material including fiction, history, pseudo-history, poetry,

drama, ballad, and both mock and authentic editorial remarks. The borders between these different, often oppositional categories are often blurred, as in an actual palimpsest. Similarly, the genre's characteristic spaces are shifting, unstable spaces which transform to suit the author's particular needs. The flexible, uncertain nature of historical novel space and the novelist's willingness to make use of such space with rhetorical and poetical license are not merely arbitrary features of the genre, but are by-products of the world-building that all historical novelists must achieve to convey a historical setting. In this way, scenery comes to represent or organize the different types of knowledge in play in historical novels. In the depiction of scenery the historical novelist can engage matters that do not fall within the purview of the historian or the realistic novelist, such as more romantic, fanciful or legendary interpretations of nature and metaphysics, object lessons in developing masculine and aristocratic virtues, or confirmation of a providentially-guided worldview.

## CHAPTER 1 HISTORY AND “THE LAND OF ROMANCE”

It was up the course of this last stream that Waverley, like a knight of romance, was conducted by the fair Highland damsel, his silent guide. A small path, which had been rendered easy in many places for Flora's accommodation, led him through scenery of a very different description from that which he had just quitted. Around the castle, all was cold, bare, and desolate, yet tame even in desolation; but this narrow glen, at so short a distance, seemed to open into the land of romance. The rocks assumed a thousand peculiar and varied forms. --Walter Scott, *Waverley*

This dissertation is a study of the poetic dynamics of spatial description in the British historical novel, focusing particularly on the work of three novelists working at the genre's inception in the early nineteenth century: Sir Walter Scott, William Harrison Ainsworth, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Assuming *topos* to be at least as important as *chronos* to the chronotope of the historical novel, my investigation is not intended to be an arbitrary evaluation of superficial features relating to setting, but an analysis of the links between spatial description, genre, and narrative. While the popularity of historical fiction throughout the nineteenth century is well documented and criticism is wont to speak of the enormous influence of figures like Walter Scott on successive generations of writers, neither idea is particularly well understood, and the narrow limits to which discussion of the genre has been confined only make it seem more of a peculiarity—a minor sub-category of the novel, instead of the generalist medium for expression and rhetoric that its widespread popularity seems to indicate. By examining various spaces and places as described by these three novelists and others, I hope to reassert the historical novel's poetics (as opposed to its more empirical features) and urge its inclusion in larger discussions of mainstream fictional narrative. At the least, the revaluation of historical novel spaces should move us towards a more accurate and meaningful typology for the genre.

The basic critical move this study makes may be thought of as a reorientation across overlapping sets of parameters. First, its specific, particular aim is to participate in the

reorientation of critical views about the British historical novel's essential features by demonstrating how its described spaces relate to history and narrative. Second, it urges the reorientation of critical thinking about the historical novel genre, away from a standard that has been both restrictive and diminishing, and towards a broader, more inclusive, and ultimately, more useful understanding. Third and indirectly, I hope it may contribute to general critical reorientations of the novel and its tradition. Since the mid-twentieth century, the historical novel has commonly been understood as a subset or tributary of the novel of social realism<sup>1</sup>—an understanding that serves to illuminate features of some historical novels, but that fails to address the majority of what may be termed historical fiction: the many popular varieties of the form published widely throughout the nineteenth century (for example, religious, juvenile, and historical romance). My reorientations overlap, then, in advancing an understanding of the form that appreciates its broader characteristics which, I argue, tend to express a more romantic ethos (if not Romantic) than is typically acknowledged.<sup>2</sup> Each of these aims proceeds from my postulation that the historical novel works as a generic palimpsest in form, freely incorporating elements from other genres and styles as part of its basic strategy of historical world-building.

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<sup>1</sup> By “social realism” I do not intend a twentieth century socialist association but simply “socially realistic,” a realistic mode of storytelling depicting social interaction, exemplified in the English novel by the great Henry Jamesian line of novel development (Richardson, Fielding, Austen, Eliot, etc.). This meaning appears to be Georg Lukacs' intention in *The Historical Novel* when he sees Scott's historical novel as a “continuation” of the eighteenth century socially realistic novel (31).

<sup>2</sup> The idea that the historical novel is an antithetical form to “romance” has caused much confusion and oversimplification in criticism. To avoid more of both, I should make clear that by “romantic” I usually intend “pertaining to the metaphoric, figurative and poetic style of the medieval romance,” a narrative genre whose free incorporation of poetic methods like allegory, emotive space, pathetic fallacy and other stylistic methods the historical novel imitated. I have usually used the lowercase “r” when referencing the term in this study, although I find it hard to ignore the typical nineteenth century historical novelist's (especially Scott's) enthusiastic participation in Romanticism's resistance to classical order—even if Scott's participation was of a different, more conservative sort than Byron's, making their imaginations “like two sides of the same coin” (Wilson 27). To the extent that Romanticism “refuses to recognize restraints in subject matter or form and so is free to represent the abnormal, grotesque, and monstrous and to mingle standpoints, genres, modes of expression . . . and even the separate arts in a single work” (Perkins 2), the historical novel's “palimpsest” technique as I describe it seems as much Romantic as romantic in spirit and technique.

Specifically, I argue for the reconsideration of depicted spaces in the historical novel as a means of understanding both the form's fundamental nature and its place within the broader continuum of the novel.

Due to the limited scope of this study, the first of these stated aims must be my primary focus: a demonstration of how the historical novel's described spaces relate to elements of narrative, including history and other genre features, characterization, and what I might call the narrative's epistemology or the way it figures the acquisition of knowledge. As such this remains a study in a genre of fiction, one that addresses and responds to typical concerns of historical novel criticism. I do not intend, however, to undertake a survey of the form in English; my sample is too narrow both in length and breadth to function as an adequate survey. Rather, I am describing and reasserting general, mainly figurative and poetic features of the British historical novel that have typically been trivialized, overlooked or disregarded in the dominant critical conversation. Since the genre's inception with Scott, I argue, such narrative features—one might call them techniques or habits—have been present in the form; my task in part is to challenge the idea that they are bad habits, or vestigial holdovers from Gothicism and Romanticism that do not correspond to the historical novel's best or most important functions. I aim to demonstrate some ways these features work within the historical novel and to imply more generally how understanding them changes, and should change, the shape and dimensions of the genre as we conceive and discuss it.

A serious drawback to criticism's most common ways of discussing the historical novel—i.e., in terms of social realism and political dialectic—is that such an understanding diminishes the heightened composition, poetic or melodramatic diction, figurative description and “epic” or “romantic” stylization that distinguished the form throughout the nineteenth century. The

potential for this emphasizing one set of concerns at the expense of the other is present in Scott's work, a virtual bird's nest of paradoxical styles and generic elements. With Scott's calm, at times gently satirical, utterly rational narrator controlling and containing the melodrama of his narratives, the critical tendency to trust the authority of this voice and to read the *Waverley Novels* as essentially "well-grounded" realistic works is understandable. However, to trust the realistic narrator (with his historical understanding, rational journalistic tone and eye for regional detail) is to mistrust the "unrealism" of many parts of the narratives themselves, or at any rate to downplay their importance. So we find in the criticism various Romantic or Gothic elements in the *Waverley Novels* often dismissed as "residual" components or as superficial sops to popular taste: not what Scott was truly concerned with, and not at all what is "remarkable" or new about the historical novel genre. My study seeks to reassert the importance of some of these supposedly residual components—in particular, the form's generally metaphoric handling of space—towards a broader and more useful set of guidelines for understanding the genre and its relation to the mainstream novel.

The components I discuss are not universal; some exceptions can always be provided for any generic criteria, and indeed there was in the historical novel genre much more variation of form and method practiced than is generally acknowledged. But I do argue that these narrative and descriptive methods are norms, and even essential norms for the genre: basic though not indispensable, and demonstrable across a wide range of sample texts. The study is, then, a focus on origins and on models, or prototypes, indicating basic features and functions which have been undervalued within conventional accounts of the genre. To this extent, while my study does not undertake a genre survey itself, it does recommend new surveys, based on more inclusive standards.

## What The Historical Novel Is (And What It Might Be)

Moving towards a more inclusive, and therefore more complete, understanding of the historical novel does not necessitate contradicting or excluding some now-classic interpretations in the genre study—only recognizing that these interpretations often point to very specific kinds of historical novels. Georg Lukacs' identification of Scott's "wavering" hero as a means of weighing oppositions and discovering the "middle way" between clashing cultures remains persuasive and useful, for example. Neither does there seem any reason to question the prevalent assumption that British historical novels (some, anyway) articulate very real social concerns about industrialization, nationalism, empire and class. My problem with such conventional wisdom about the genre is that, when it comes to defining the genre as a whole and understanding its significance, that wisdom has had restrictive and diminishing consequences. When we define the historical novel and its goals according to Lukacs' particular standards as subsequent critics have often done (when his study was never intended to function as a survey),<sup>3</sup> or decide that the genre's only relevant discussions are about the social or political realms, not only do we render many of its characteristic features irrelevant, but we also exclude most examples of the genre from serious consideration. Such delimitation has had numerous unfortunate effects upon the critical perception of the genre and, consequently, on our understanding of the novel itself.

The historical novel, in all of its many permutations, remained an extraordinarily popular, flexible and adaptable genre throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth (and, in fact, seems to be enjoying a renewed vogue in English today). During the Victorian era it lent

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<sup>3</sup> Neither was his treatise *The Historical Novel* (1937/62)—arguably the most influential twentieth-century critique of the genre and the keynote advocate for a realistic standard for historical fiction—intended to function even as a description of the genre's development, though it is often pressed into this sort of service.

itself to a broad spectrum of causes and concerns: from educating the youth in history and morals, to reinforcing certain religious narratives, to sometimes reassuring and sometimes alarming its multi-generational readership about the state of things to come, based on the things that have been. It is therefore a far more complex animal than the typical discussion of it would indicate, capable of preaching empire but also tolerance, exploring money and class but also religion and tradition, examining the “local” and the recent but also the far-flung and the ancient. Readers might counter that these concerns are yet contained within discussions of nationalism and accounted for in conceptualizations of the genre as a social realistic form. But many, perhaps most, nineteenth century historical novels understood these to be supra-national and extra-regional matters, transcending the immediately knowable and observable details of the novel of social realism. The historical novel in all its varieties did not understand itself as primarily realistic but epic; conceptually, it aimed higher than its domestic or sentimental counterpart.

That Scott himself understood the distinction in this light can be seen in his distinguishing Jane Austen’s novels of “ordinary common-place things” from his own “Big Bow Wow Strain” (*Journal* 132). Modern critical accounts of the historical novel seem less likely to appreciate the differences not only of tone and setting between the two but also of intent. If Jane Austen and Walter Scott were attempting anything like the same thing, we might say, then Walter Scott’s utter failure is evident. Indeed, whatever success he might lay claim to would be entirely confined to a very few of his novels: the Scottish ones, and only a few of those (*Waverley*, *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, *Rob Roy*, a few others). Most of the historical novel genre at large, in fact, is largely irrelevant to a discussion of the novel as a social realistic form, except for those very few examples that exhibit an understanding of history, culture, and civilization comparable to what we like to find in the great tradition of the social novel. Most historical fiction does not

exhibit such understanding; therefore, it tends to be disregarded, and our sample of what the historical novel is and should be is composed not of the work of historical novelists per se, but of the occasional sideline projects of social novelists: Dickens' two historical novels, Eliot's one, Thackeray's *Esmond*, and so on. Novelists who worked almost solely within the genre, like W. H. Ainsworth or G. P. R. James, are dismissed *en masse* as cheapeners of some higher ideal form. What many Victorian critics thought the best example of the genre, Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth*, is given slight treatment or ignored.

So, the genre as cited by most criticism tends to emphasize only very particular aspects of its reach, in effect severely reducing its relevance and representation in conversations about the novel. Separating the wheat from the chaff, or the serious historical novel from the supposedly frivolous romance varieties, has resulted in a skewed and non-representative canon of works, causing many implications of the genre's wider compass to be overlooked. These critiques have argued for a very particular what-should-be and disregarded what-is, in the main. Harry E. Shaw notes that the division and classification has largely been about historical vision, in *The Forms of Historical Fiction* (1983):

It is tempting to say that works which embody a historical vision we find uninteresting or unacceptable, or that seem to have no historical vision at all, are not "really" historical novels. But it is more useful to discriminate between great and mediocre historical novels than to exclude imperfect works from the group—a procedure that logically tends to produce a group containing one and only one true member. (28)

Shaw urges tolerance, flexibility, and diversity in our assessments of what the historical novel is and what it should be. The briefest way to summarize my incentive towards reorientation is that I hope to encourage a theoretical model of the historical novel that allows for miscellany, embraces a diversity of historical visions, and understands the different uses to which history may be put in the novel form.

## **The Palimpsests Of Narrative And Space**

Fortunately, a paradigm tolerating miscellany and diversity of representation, and capable of explaining the historical novel's apparent "rhetoric of stark contrasts" (Moretti 177), has been hiding in plain sight: that of the palimpsest, an idea often evoked by critics to explain the layered nature of Walter Scott's scenery. I'm extending the model of the palimpsest to explain the typical narrative techniques of the historical novel because it so well conveys many characteristic features of the genre that are not immediately evident if we adhere to conventional, restrictive definitions or to acknowledge only one "true" type of historical novel. In its typical sense of a document partly erased to allow for new writing, the palimpsest has been used as a model for writing generally by poststructuralist criticism (Kristeva, Barthes and Derrida all make particular use of the idea), since it emphasizes that writing always takes place within the presence of other writing. This effect is deliberately courted by the historical novel's narrative mode, which, in one way, is perhaps the clearest example of new writing (the fictional narrative) taking place in the presence of old writing (the historical narrative).

The palimpsest model works for historical fiction because of the way the genre gathers together other genres to create its blended historical-fictional world. In the majority of novels that might be considered historical, the connections between the obviously fictional narrative and its historical framework are more vague and intuitive than explicit, the old and new narratives blurring together at the boundaries; this is true both for canonical novels like *Waverley* and for more unfamiliar outliers, like religious or juvenile historical fiction. The "give" between the novelist's and the historian's built worlds allows for much instability, blurring, and shifting—from real to unreal, recorded to invented—creating a felt, impressionistic series of connections between them. The most successful historical novelists, both aesthetically and commercially, found ways to exploit this unstable ground.

To create these impressionistic links between fiction and history, British historical novelists of all varieties convey the past by gathering together scraps: of poetry, plays, and ballads, of legends and folk tales, of contemporary memoirs and modern histories. It is this quality of gathering and combining genres, this enfolding and overlapping of written categories that made the historical novel “all-purpose” to nineteenth century readers, and infinitely adaptable to all European markets (Moretti 159, 181). By its very name the historical novel implies a blending or amalgamation of two presumably unlike types of writing, with successful examples of the form often understood as striking an artful balance between seeming oppositions; witness the frequent use of “weaving” or intertwining metaphors to praise historical novels, where the warp and woof of history and fiction are seamlessly joined, or the idea that the novelist has somehow breathed life into the dead past.<sup>4</sup> The attribution of magical or godlike powers to the historical novelist—Scott’s familiar epithet, “the Wizard of the North,” comes to mind—emphasizes the mysteriousness of his or her achievement, pointing out the seeming impossibility of binding together what cannot be combined. Even less complimentary analogies early in the century nevertheless implied an uneven mixture of categories, as when an unsigned reviewer of *Ivanhoe* called it “that mongrel sort of production, an historical novel” (unsigned, qtd in Hayden 193).

Since the historical novel is often seemingly composed of fragments, erasures, and superimpositions—a text where various meanings, superficial, residual, or otherwise overlap and blend together—to gather meanings from the narrative’s palimpsest is in some measure to

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<sup>4</sup> As an example of the former, Ainsworth was praised by Macaulay for his “close adherence to established facts, woven together in such attractive form” (qtd in Ellis 1:432). Georg Lukacs furnishes us with an example of the latter trope: “Here is where the historical novel, as a powerful artistic weapon in defence of human progress, has a major task to perform, to restore these real driving forces of human history as they were in reality, *to recall them to life* on behalf of the present” (317, my emphasis). The idea of the historical novelist “breathing life” into or resurrecting the dead past remains a common metaphor, applied to historical novels and novelists today.

decode it. All of its explicit meanings cannot be gathered, of course. At best, the reader may receive only some faint outline, some impression of “past” messages and meanings. Such a document well describes the deliberately fragmented, teasingly digressive narrative technique of the nineteenth century historical novel. In these works, the novelist composes both the foregrounded narrative and the partially obscured, fragmented scraps around the edges, resulting in a ready-made or faux palimpsest. Their successful evocation of the past results, then, from illusion and sleight-of-hand, from dazzling the reader with a wide variety of incomplete, contrasting, yet somehow complementary styles of expression.

Tellingly however, “palimpsest” has also been employed to describe a place whose history is still written in its spaces, a landscape with visible but indistinct links to the past, or an architectural structure where the shadows of former uses and concerns are still to be seen. It is no coincidence that the nineteenth century historical novel explores such spaces with all of its antiquarian zest and zeal. Nor should it surprise that, given the deliberate palimpsest it makes of its narrative, the historical novel creates and manipulates its spaces to its own ends.

As I stated above, thinking of some historical novel scenes as palimpsests is an old idea, as Judith Wilt points out in *Secret Leaves*: “the most insisted on trait of [Scott’s] landscapes is that they are all palimpsests, ruin within ruin, structure upon structure, inscription under inscription” (158). An important idea related to this familiar trait has not been significantly explored, however: that the layered and blurred character of the palimpsest applies to Scott’s hodge-podge, digressive narrative structure extraordinarily well, suggesting that mirroring is taking place between narrative and space. Spaces relate to narratives in a number of ways but principally, I will argue, they are analogues to the overlapping of real and imagined categories of information. As such they “image” the novels’ interrogation of different modes and genres. Given Scott’s

influence throughout the nineteenth century among historical novelists, it's reasonable to assume that this kind of space certainly defined and modeled this kind of space-narrative interaction for subsequent historical novelists. For instance, W. H. Ainsworth's novels move the dynamic between space and narrative away from Scott's habitual rural scenes and into cityscapes and architectural structures, while retaining their fluidity and flexibility. Edward Bulwer-Lytton's novels may work from painfully reconstructed archaeological sites or wholly invented theoretical spaces, but he always "layers" his important spaces, sometimes peeling them away for the reader's edification. As Franco Moretti intones, recalling Barthes, "Without a certain kind of space, a certain kind of story is simply impossible" (100); the palimpsest in one variation or other is the historical novel's certain kind of space. Characterizing this space and its relationship to the genre's certain kind of story is the main objective of this study.

With the palimpsest mode in mind as a distinguishing characteristic of the genre, we can better assess both what the historical novel is attempting and how it relates to the received tradition of the nineteenth century novel. Though not at work in every historical novel, the paradigm works to some degree across many types and generations and is certainly a more broadly applicable characteristic of the genre than, say, the understanding of "history as a shaping force" on the individual. As I stated above, my study looks at some basic though not indispensable traits of the genre; the palimpsest technique in narrative and space is one such trait. It allows the historical novel to employ a "rhetoric of contrasts," to be historical and melodramatic at the same time, to contain variety ("diversity," "variety," and "contrast" are frequently in the mouths of contemporary reviewers of these novels, and usually intended as praise). Further and more importantly, the palimpsest mode allows the historical novel to evoke a "felt" past, to connect its fictional narratives with their historical frames by building a patchwork

of resonant generic fragments: it creates an illusion with allusion. As such it represents a deliberate technique of historical world-building through literary means, regardless of how poorly some individual novelists may have executed it. As a widespread technique affecting both narrative and spatial structures, the palimpsest model is one way to unify the broader spectrum of historical fiction varieties into a single, essential genre.

### **The Rhetoric Of Contrasts And The Shape Of A Genre**

Moving towards a broader understanding of the form that allows for a multiplicity of writing styles and elements—a palimpsest—fortunately does not mean reinventing it so much as returning to an older, more “romantic” ideal, one quite familiar to its nineteenth century audience: “romantic,” in that the form embraced sublime and intuitive in addition to empirical modes of knowing; broke with novel conventions as willingly as it revisited older folk forms and genre conventions; and generally behaved itself in a greater-than-realistic manner. In short, the historical novel in the Victorian era meant Scott’s “Big Bow Wow Strain,” a type of fiction that could be novel, romance, history, melodrama, and even a sort of learned or Scriblerian farce all at once.

In his study of European “narrative markets” at mid-century (in *The Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* [1998]), Franco Moretti understands the historical novel to be a “generalist” genre of the novel, “successful across Europe” (181); he lists Scott, Bulwer Lytton, Alexandre Dumas, and Victor Hugo among the era’s great successes and finds that European nations imported “tons of Dumas’, Hugo’s, [and] Bulwer-Lytton’s melodramas,” becoming saturated with the prolific historical romancers W. H. Ainsworth and G. P. R. James (177). This popular clamor was not for the social realist historical novel we tend to isolate in criticism, but for a genre of wild variety and contrast, of melodrama and romanticism, an “all-purpose” genre that suited many tastes and subjects. Moretti writes:

It is a regular, even monotonous pattern: all of Europe reading the same books, with the same enthusiasm, and roughly in the same years (when not months). All of Europe unified by a desire, not for “realism” (the mediocre fortune of Stendhal and Balzac leaves no doubts on this point)—not for realism, but for what Peter Brooks has called “the melodramatic imagination”: a rhetoric of stark contrasts that is present a bit everywhere. (176-177)

To judge from Moretti’s findings, the form best equipped to organize and contain these contrasts is the historical novel in all its splendid diversity, and their enthusiastic patronage reveals that the Victorians always recognized this capacity. It would seem understanding the genre and its place within nineteenth century literary output generally means understanding the alchemy of its “rhetoric of contrasts”—not a reduction of the genre to a few serious successes among a surfeit of silly failures, but an assessment that comprehends how the historical novel can be both historical and “melodramatic” (and many other qualities) at the same time. Such an assessment unifies rather excludes. It seeks connections rather than disqualifications: between the many variations of historical novel, and between the genre and the mainstream novel.

Definitions for the genre have been notoriously tricky in the past, perhaps because they tend to collide with our own intuitive sense of the form. As Avrom Fleishman puts it, “Everyone knows what a historical novel is; perhaps that is why few have volunteered to define it in print” (3). Rather than relying on negative or exclusive definitions, perhaps we need fuzzier, looser ones—especially when it comes to describing a genre whose boundaries seem themselves so flexible and permeable. Including any variety of historical fiction exponentially increases the size of the genre, of course, but also its shape and common characteristics, allowing for a much broader range of purposes, modalities, and subject matter. We would immediately find that the genre’s apparent socio-political bias—due to a canon favoring novels of region or revolution almost exclusively—would be counterbalanced by pastoral, biographical, and metaphysical visions of history: novels treating provincial manners, famous artists and poets, and religious

conversion.<sup>5</sup> Children's books and adventure stories with carefully realized period settings would be included—like *Treasure Island* (1883), and Marryat's *The Children of the New Forest* (1847). These are novels which “feel” historical anyway, but are typically excluded from consideration because of their juvenile audience or because, like *Treasure Island*, they neither include historical characters nor treat historical events. The greatest addition to the body of work under consideration, the weightiest tip of the scales, would undoubtedly be due to those novels typically styled historical romance, whose exclusion from definitions and surveys has made possible the reductive generalizations I've briefly characterized. Since most so-called historical romances habitually meet the more obvious qualifications of historical novels, they have typically been excluded from examination not according to aesthetic, but to ideological standards.

Adopting a more intuitive, loose and baggy understanding of historical fiction is not to reinvent the genre, but to return to an older paradigm. In *A Guide to the Choice of Books for Students and General Readers* (1891), Oxford fellow A. H. D. Acland describes the mission and characteristics of historical fiction to a Victorian readership:

The amount of actual history contained in a historical tale may range from a slight sketch of some notable character, or a narrative of obscure local incidents, to a careful study of events of world-wide importance; some are concerned with the facts of social or domestic life; others with the fate of kingdoms or nations. Their truthfulness to the facts dealt with must also be expected to vary indefinitely with the purpose and ability of the writer, and the exigencies of his tale. The one advantage common, in a greater or lesser degree, to all worthy books of the kind, is that of helping us to realise vividly the characters, surroundings, and events of other times than our own. (68)

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<sup>5</sup> W. H. Ainsworth's *The Flitch of Bacon* (1854) is a good example of a popular historical novel about provincial English manners and customs. Emma Marshall produced a variety of fictionalized historical biographies treating non-political figures like the composers Handel and Henry Purcell, poet and priest George Herbert and painter George Romney. Religious novels with devotional rather than political themes account for a large portion of the Victorian historical novel population; many were published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, an Anglican mission organization.

Acland's paradigm allows history to be "world-wide" but also "slight" or "obscure" in the historical novel. It acknowledges "domestic life" as well as "kingdoms and nations." Historical accuracy and historical vision are expected to vary; "the one advantage common" is a vivid realization of the past as past, of the difference between the historical novel's world and the reader's. As we might expect from such an inclusive set of guidelines, the list of recommended texts includes *Waverley* but also *Ivanhoe*, Thackeray's *Esmond* but also Ainsworth's *The Tower of London*, Eliot's *Romola* but also Charlotte Yonge's *The Dove in the Eagle's Nest*—in other words, it mixes the canonical with the marginalized, the serious with the melodramatic. It covers a variety of styles and subjects, with history "playing a number of distinctly different roles" (Shaw 22).

By characterizing the palimpsest of space and narrative at work in novels by Sir Walter Scott, William Harrison Ainsworth, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton, this dissertation demonstrates that these novelists' engagements with space exemplify practices common to the genre throughout the nineteenth century, as well as revealing their respective attitudes about history, narrative, knowledge, and the retrievable past.

I begin with Sir Walter Scott: as the only canonical author of the three, the popularizer and nominal founder of the historical novel, as well as a novelist commonly associated with wild landscape representation, his presence is demanded. The *Waverley Novels* set down the pattern for the palimpsests of space and narrative; accordingly, my first two chapters will examine this pattern and some of its implications in Scott. Chapter Two will establish specific characteristics of "Waverley space"—including its tendency to be more of a technical space of ideas than a realistically reported space, and its common function of setting generic information and styles into opposition. The second chapter closes with a brief look at how criticism has treated Scott's

spatial description. Since Chapter Two sets up Waverley space as a sort of text, Chapter Three will postulate the reader for that text, concentrating on both the young men, whose interpretations of space are typically tests of masculinity and character, as well as the eccentric “Elementals,” who seem at once readers and parts of the spatial palimpsest.

William Harrison Ainsworth and Edward Bulwer-Lytton, each of whom are represented in a chapter of this study, are another matter, since neither is widely read today and their historical novels are usually (over-simply) characterized as being poor imitations of Scott. Both novelists were tremendously popular during the era following Scott’s death, however, and may be considered (along with G. P. R. James) the first to take up the baton of historical novel writing; as such their work furnishes excellent examples of typical genre features at its inception. Their continued popularity into the mid-Victorian era was accompanied by changes and adaptations in their methods, especially Bulwer’s, enabling us to see how some narrative and descriptive techniques remain in use as the genre begins to define itself.

More importantly to my purposes, both novelists represent extreme reactions to Scott’s model, Ainsworth emphasizing the more romantic and sensational aspects of the genre, Bulwer the more scholarly, historiographic approach. If Bulwer sets out to amend Scott’s model by a greater faithfulness to historical detail, Ainsworth seems just as determined to emphasize those Scott elements that transcend the historical domain. In other words, one looks to the historical, the other to the Gothic and romantic, for their respective variations on the Waverley theme. They are useful subjects for this study because, despite their different approaches to history and narrative, Ainsworth and Bulwer freely manipulate space in their descriptions, whether fictional or historical, turning physical settings to their individual purposes. Each creates a spatial

palimpsest that, while adhering to no particular temporal or geographical norms, mirrors the fragmentary, multi-genre nature of historical novel narrative.

CHAPTER 2  
“A CERTAIN KIND OF SPACE”: WALTER SCOTT AND THE POETICS OF HISTORICAL  
NOVEL SPACE

This study will identify and describe some characteristics for the “genre space” of the British historical novel. As I stated in Chapter One, my paradigm for organizing the genre’s impossible space at work is the palimpsest, a textual model that I think ideally captures both the narrative and the spatial characteristics of the historical novel at large. In these first two chapters, I’ll look at the palimpsest space particularly as manifested in the novels of Sir Walter Scott. Scott’s Waverley Novels not only provide the prototype spaces for the genre, but also some of its most strikingly contradictory and fragmented examples of narratives. By examining a series of scenes from a wide variety of Waverley Novels, I’ll demonstrate the workings of the palimpsest spaces which became the pattern for the genre as it developed throughout the Victorian era.

Looking for the palimpsest of space and understanding it as a mirror to narrative aligns my study with one of the predominant ideas of spatial theorists. Although an increasing amount of critical space is devoted to studies of space and fictional narrative, what we might consider the tenets of the study have yet to be finalized—but the identification of place with genre, of physical locale with fictional styles and modes, a concept at least as old as Walter Bagehot’s “hedgerows” of representation, looks to be as likely a doctrine as anything else. Franco Moretti’s formulation of this idea in his *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* smacks of an axiom when he writes that “each space determines its own kind of actions, its plot—its genre” (84). Moretti’s formulation arises from his discussion of the European novel’s exploration of city spaces, how its different “landscapes” yield and indeed demand different narrative matrixes: London’s Regent Street, for instance, serves as the border between silver fork London and the confusing labyrinth of the East End crime stories, while the Latin Quarter of Balzac’s Paris similarly marks a division between different categories of *La Comedie Humaine*. “Without a

certain kind of space,” Moretti sums up at one point, “a certain kind of story is simply impossible” (100).

This point accords with the main thrust of the *Atlas*’ argument and with other narratological assessments of space (like Bakhtin’s). Moretti continues, “Each genre possesses its own space, then—and *each space its own genre*: defined by a spatial distribution—by a map—which is unique to it” (35, original emphasis). Moretti accordingly allocates to Jane Austen’s social comedies the center of England, “everything within a circle centering on London,” to colonial adventure novels a penetrating line from the coast of Africa to “an isolated site in the interior,” and so on (33, 58).

Bearing this basic argument about space and genre in mind, what should we make of Moretti’s observation that the mapped spaces of the British historical novel appear to be every spot “*away from the center*” of England, that the world of Scott’s *Waverley* stops “*exactly where Austen’s world begins*” (33, original emphasis)? Historical novel space is—geographically, according to Moretti—a space of uncertainty and unfamiliarity, a space away from the “heart,” a space that is decentered and peripheral. Although history is life that has been lived and recorded and is therefore “safe” from *kairos*, its “certain kind of space” is nevertheless unstable and (literally) edgy.

Moretti makes it clear that this allocation of the British historical novel to England’s expanding periphery is more an intuitive perception than literally true: the genre frequently crawls all over the “center of England” with some practitioners painstakingly exploring its very center, London (like Harrison Ainsworth in his best-known novels). For his map, Moretti has in mind a particular kind of historical novel: the “Scottish” *Waverley* Novel and its European imitators. He plots Scott’s *Waverley* along with novels by Balzac, Mor Jokai, Pushkin, Gogol,

Manzoni and others, and concludes from the locations that the significant and characteristic spaces of the historical novel are essentially unhistorical spaces: “in the proximity of major natural barriers” like forests, dangerous or remote coastlines, wide territorial expanses “and especially mountains” (34). This siting of the genre puts its characteristic actions within “*the proximity of borders . . . a great thing to do when borders are simultaneously hardening, and being challenged as ‘unnatural’ by the various nationalist waves.*” The explanation dovetails nicely with the dominant view of the historical novel as a genre about the making of nations and the rise of nationalism; external borders between countries provide sites for international adventure, invasion, and empire-building, while internal borders within countries provide more “anthropological” sites, showing “*how weak national identity still is*” in the nineteenth century (35-37, original emphasis).

For my purposes, what is most interesting about Moretti’s siting is that he maps the genre on historically uncertain geographic space—qualitatively the same space as Gothic fiction, in fact, a form which Moretti maps outside of the British Isles, on the Continent. From a British perspective, however, the spaces for Gothic would be exactly those foreign, peripheral and unfamiliar spaces outside of Austen’s center of England: spaces which begin where her closely and carefully observed world ends. For example, Moretti plots historical novels in such spaces as the Irish coast (Banim, *The Boyne Water*), Transylvania (Jokai, *The Golden Age of Transylvania*), and Northern Italy (Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi*)—all significant locations for landmark Gothic novels (*Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*). If particular genres inhabit particular spaces (as Moretti argues, following Bakhtin, Paul Zumthor and other theorists of fictional worlds), what are we to make of the apparent overlapping of historical and Gothic novel geography? We might draw an obvious cultural conclusion about the perceived other:

namely, that to the British novel reader, foreign equaled Gothic, as areas beyond the periphery of empire equaled barbarian to the Ancient Romans.

Yet if geography and genre are so palpably connected, the sharing of mapped space—between a novel form valued for authenticity and realistic commitment and a novel form associated with vagueness of time and place, a lack of specific historical detail, and the free use of various motifs from romances and supernatural tales—seems to dictate some correlative sharing of their ideological space as well. For that matter, the spaces Moretti names—mountains, forests, wide expanses and natural barriers—are the spaces of the modern fantasy novel as well: the same spaces Tolkien’s Bilbo Baggins must navigate, crawling painfully yet adventurously across that staple of fantasy fiction from Rider Haggard to Robert Howard, the map of a fictional land. The overlap between historical and “marvelous” spaces must have narratological significance, then, suggesting that modes, motifs and methods of characterization are also necessarily shared, that Gothic, romantic, and other unrealistic elements are to be expected within the form’s narrative matrix, and do not constitute (as criticism has sometimes suggested) a fault or a diminishment of some ideally realistic pure form.

Since its inception in the early nineteenth century, the British historical novel has shown a preoccupation with the depiction of scenic spaces, whether rugged and wild landscape scenes or picturesquely cluttered panoramas of a famous city’s olden days. Sometimes the mode of such moments has been primarily descriptive, the mood spectatorial, with onlookers viewing an awe-inspiring prospect from the summit of a hill. At other times, characters interact with their environment more directly. Space may serve the interest of the plot, as landscapes enclose, impede and threaten the progress of the hero; indeed, the measure of a hero is often taken by his or her ability to navigate a hostile or bewildering landscape. Historical novels are sometimes

written to “fill” a particular landscape or built environment, as Bulwer Lytton did in *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834). Other times, their narratives may inhabit wholly fictional locations—the brooding, primordial landscape of *Treasure Island* (1889) comes to mind.

That the historical novel’s penchant for depicting outdoor spaces and places need not have been the case becomes evident when we consider probable alternatives, routes it might have opted for instead. Following the historical drama, the form might well have focused entirely on interior spaces: the implied castle chambers, dungeons, chapels and audience chambers of Shakespeare’s chronicle plays. *Henry V*’s Prologue might long for “a muse of fire” to bring forth “the vasty fields of France,” but the predominant spaces of Elizabethan and Jacobean historical plays are nevertheless interiors: places where policy is made, intrigues unfold, and state secrets are disclosed. At the very least, the form might have fixated on urban space as being (presumably) the most tellingly historicized space, where a city’s historical changes may be read in what Hugo called “the great book of humanity,” its buildings, monuments, and architectural modes. In short, if the historical novel is or should be primarily interested in fact—in authenticity to the record, to regional or period detail, or to some understanding of historical “process”—then the form has little need to depict the untouched spaces “without history” that Moretti identifies: craggy wilderness or misty mountains, environments that have not been “acted upon” by human history. Likewise, we might assume that when depicting actual, verifiable places and spaces, the historical novel would record them with scrupulous accuracy and detail, since any consultation of a map, gazetteer or the historical site itself (all becoming increasingly more accessible in the Victorian Era) would disprove its account. And yet throughout the nineteenth century, British historical novels of every type and degree of quality routinely navigate ahistorical spaces, celebrating them with seeming romantic abandon, freely transforming, manipulating, and

conflating the spaces and places of history. Along with period costumes and appearances by historical persons, sweeping scenic panoramas have become one of the form's stock devices, so common as to be rarely questioned.

But the significance of these spaces to narrative and genre, both their inclusion and the styles and methods that go into describing them, has been routinely overlooked in the criticism. More colorful rural descriptions are often undervalued as concessions to the picturesque mode of description in vogue during Scott's heyday, while more prosaic spaces are read as realistic spaces, full of carefully selected, empirically significant objects, each with a socially realistic tale to tell. The Scottish Waverley Novel Moretti is apparently thinking of—practically the only Scott novels that might be described as canonical, such as *Waverley*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, *Rob Roy*, and *Old Mortality*, and routinely considered Scott's best work—has often been celebrated for the alleged authenticity of its spaces. “Whatever fictional gloss may be applied,” claims James Reed, “when he is writing of Scotland, and especially of his own Border region, Scott is recording, not inventing” (6)—as if invention is somehow uncharacteristic or relatively unimportant in Scott's “best work.”

True that the Scottish Waverley Novels provided perhaps the original impetus for purely literary pilgrimages, sending travelers combing the Scottish countryside to see the actual sites that, thinly veiled behind clever names, make up the picturesque backdrops for their heroic stories. The identification of Scott with actual locations is carefully preserved in a plethora of nineteenth and early twentieth century travelogues (for instance, James Hunnewell's *Lands of Scott* [1895] and W. S. Crockett's *Scott Country* [1911]). But there seems an evident contradiction between the seemingly authentic spaces celebrated in these more realistic, more historical Waverley Novels and the characteristic genre space Moretti assigns to them: shifting,

unstable, and indistinct limbo regions like mountains, “whose history consists in not having one, and [which] remain at the margins of the great currents of civilization” (Braudel, qtd in Moretti 34). On the other hand, many of Scott’s “novels of chivalry,” always held to be less authentic, less realistic, less historical than the Scottish—like *Ivanhoe*, *Woodstock* or especially *The Fortunes of Nigel*—are set squarely and exclusively within Moretti’s “center of England,” their geography relatively well mapped. Either Moretti’s map is incorrect and the historical novel’s characteristic space is not unhistorical, “unnatural,” or border space, or the spaces of the Scottish Waverley Novel are not so authentic as has sometimes been argued. To judge from the historical novel genre as an inclusive totality (rather than from one particular type), the latter seems to be the case, which suggests that space in the genre does not so much operate realistically as “marvelously,” remaining purposefully unstable and transmutable, to be manipulated by the novelist at will—whether geographically marginal or not.

What we should conclude from Moretti’s map of the historical novel—from the genre’s counter-intuitive claiming of marginal, nether spaces, from its shared space with Gothic, and presumably with other marvelous or “romantic” forms like adventure and fantasy as well—is that its characteristic space is complex, layered, and contradictory. The authentic, hard and fast historicized space, the space that can be reliably mapped out and verified, is the space of the tour book, not the historical novel. Unstable space, space that can shift physically, categorically, and generically, is the space required by the historical novel. More often a dramatic, theatrical space than a realistically detailed social space, historical novel space as originally set forth in Scott’s novels and continually developed by those who followed is by turns self-conscious, moody or threatening, rhetorical, temporally unstable: palimpsestic. If each genre possesses its own space, then the palimpsest of genre that is the historical novel requires this palimpsestic space. “Without

a certain kind of space, a certain kind of story is simply impossible” (Moretti 100). But if the certain kind of story told is itself “impossible” and “a contradiction in terms,” as Alessandro Manzoni declared the historical novel to be, then an impossible, contradictory space is required (qtd in Fleishman 17). The historical novel’s certain kind of story is a categorial hybrid, a patchwork, a wholeness of fragments, a “mongrel sort of production” (Hayden 193). Like the borders it discusses, like the nations it helps to define, it is a synthesis of contradictory layers and meanings—and so is its certain kind of space.

Because Scott so consistently located his novels, both the Scottish and the “Chivalry” novels, in wild tracts and remote territorial margins, this initial examination of typical historical novel space will be mainly a discussion of rural scenes, of landscapes rather than cities and built environments. In such scenes for which he is justly famous, Scott does a good deal more than record and report. Rather, he bends the shapes of landscapes real and imagined to the manifold purposes of his story, consistently creating spaces that both reveal and inhibit knowledge, point out cultural and historical details but also conceal potential threats, and enthusiastically participate in his narrative’s characteristic genre jumble. His sublime rural scenes, romantically invested with mysterious, even metaphysical qualities, both blend and contend with the historicity of built environments or architectural components, resulting in a landscape at once highly figurative, rhetorical and paradigmatic. Rural representations “bracket” the meticulously realized task of world-building undertaken by the characters, dialogue, and historical notes by demarcating the limits of what can be known; as such they both reflect and interrogate the imperfect processes of retrieving the past.

#### **“A Maximum of Elaboration”: *Waverley* and the Poetics of Space**

In his classic study *Sir Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination* (1979), David Brown develops his interpretation of Scott’s *Waverley* by drawing attention to a particularly striking

natural scene in the novel: that of two converging, unequal brooks. This motif, which appears several times, appears first in Chapter Twenty-Two immediately prior to the romantically charged forest meeting between Scott's eponymous hero and Flora MacIvor:

In a spot, about a quarter of a mile from the castle, two brooks, which formed the little river, had their junction. The larger of the two came down the long bare valley, which extended, apparently without any change or elevation of character, as far as the hills which formed its boundary permitted the eye to reach. But the other stream, which had its source among the mountains on the left hand of the strath, seemed to issue from a very narrow and dark opening betwixt two large rocks. These streams were different also in character. The larger was placid, and even sullen in its course, wheeling in deep eddies, or sleeping in dark blue pools; but the motions of the lesser brook were rapid and furious, issuing from between precipices, like a maniac from his confinement, all foam and uproar. (104-105)

For Brown the scene is "curiously analytic," consisting of more than Scott being "merely picturesque" in his description, and only partially attributable to Waverley's "romantic interest in the scenic" (25-26). Rather, Brown sees the image in its repeated manifestations providing a somewhat rare reading instruction, a metaphor for both the national and personal conflicts of the novel—or, a sort of narrative mirror. The lesser brook bursts from the mountains with speed and ferocity, "as the clans do in the rebellion itself," while the streams "can also be applied to the two currents in Waverley's life--his romantic impulses [and] the influence of common sense and reason" (Brown 26).

Brown's interpretation seems an apt one and there is little reason to question it—only the exception he appears to take to the passage. "Curiously analytic" registers Brown's surprise that the description performs some function other than the expected picturesque effects and implies that such a function is unusual in *Waverley* at least, if not in Scott's novels generally. Noting that the brook scene of Chapter Twenty-Two "is in fact unusual for a Highland location," Brown claims that "Scott intends the reader to make this identification" between the scene and the movement of the plot and characters (26). In fact, he notes similar instances of "mirroring" between landscape and plot, incident, or character elsewhere in his study: for example, when he

cites E.M.W. Tillyard's observation of the similarities between Highland/Lowland scenery and the Rob Roy/ Nicol Jarvie oppositions in his discussion of *Rob Roy* (92-93). The analytic nature of the brook scene is apparently not so curious in the sense of being rare or unusual.

For scholars of the historical novel, Scott's description might recall another passage by Alfred Doblin, prominently cited by Georg Lukacs in his seminal study, *The Historical Novel* (1937/62), a passage that presents the different *materiel* comprising the novel in terms of converging "currents":

The present-day novel, not only the historical, is subject to two currents—the one derives from the fairy-tale, the other from the report. Their source is not the ether of aesthetics, but the reality of our life. . . . The novel is caught up in a struggle between the two tendencies: fairy-tale constructions with a maximum of elaboration and a minimum of material and—novel constructions with a maximum of material and a minimum of elaboration. (273)

Between *Waverley*'s and Doblin's convergence of streams motifs fall all of the relevant questions in this matter of historical novel spaces: from the very analytical or rhetorical nature of the scene in the novel, to its relevance as an imaging of dialectic (noted by D. D. Devlin), to Doblin's noting of the factual and fairy tale (or "marvelous") influences that go into the novel's synthesis. For Doblin and for Lukacs—who sees the historical novel as a "tributary" of the social realism novel—the combining currents signify the combination of different kinds of writing (or genres), as well as a prioritization, a hierarchy of influences. For instance, Doblin finds that the "progressive" novelist is most influenced by the report, while only the "serene and satisfied" (in Lukacs' term, the "decadent") fall back on less real, less relevant fairy tale extravagances (273). For many years of criticism, the lovingly detailed, sublime or idyllic landscapes of Scott, and of the historical novel generally, have typically been accounted part of this fairy tale current and therefore less important—which is no doubt why David Brown finds the rhetorical nature of the two brooks curious or unusual.

If *Waverley*'s significant brooks were indeed isolated or unusual, or if they were even isolated from other poetically significant landscapes in the novel, then there might be some reason to accept that Scott's landscapes do not normally operate in such a fashion. But in fact, the converging brooks only lead us to the famous "pass of peril" scene, a passage bubbling over with menace and uncertainty, a set piece whose scenery is both stagey and impossibly multi-form.

Around the castle, all was cold, bare, and desolate, yet tame even in desolation; but this narrow glen, at so short a distance, seemed to open into the land of romance. The rocks assumed a thousand peculiar and varied forms. In one place, a crag of huge size presented its gigantic bulk, as if to forbid the passenger's farther progress; and it was not until he approached its very base, that Waverley discerned the sudden and acute turn by which the pathway wheeled its course around this formidable obstacle. In another spot, the projecting rocks from the opposite sides of the chasm had approached so near to each other, that two pine-trees laid across, and covered with turf, formed a rustic bridge at the height of at least one hundred and fifty feet. It had no ledges, and was barely three feet in breadth. (105)

This landscape (which my citation only samples briefly) pulsates with various dangers both literal and imaginary: not only with actual perils to be found in nature (the high precipice, the absence of ledges), but also with the indomitable will of the place. In the best tradition of sublime, painterly landscape, this scenery resists us, both our physical presence and interpretive attempts. Not only does the Genius of the Place forbid farther passage with its "gigantic bulk," a phantom giant to menace Waverley's "knight of romance," but also seems ever ready to shift and transmute the scene into "a thousand peculiar and varied forms" (105).

At the same time, the location is so epic that it is almost operatic—its fabulous qualities emphasize that it cannot be real. On the one hand, Scott emphasizes the site's other-worldliness when he notes Waverley's "horror" as he views the appearance of Flora and Una on the bridge, "like inhabitants of another region, propped [. . . in mid air]" over the gorge (105). On the other hand, the pass leads immediately to the self-consciously performative, theatrical scenery where Flora MacIvor sings: a "natural amphitheatre" that invites Waverley to listen, to a song that

makes use of the brook imagery and blends with the scenery around the singer. Flora has brought Edward Waverley to this spot to listen to her song not only to interest him in the romantic scenery, but also because this scene is the fitting place for her poetry, which would suffer “were I to introduce it without its own wild and appropriate accompaniments. . . . the seat of the Celtic muse is in the mist of the secret and solitary hill, and her voice in the murmur of the mountain stream” (106). Flora’s preface, which blends both the speaker and the poem into the scenery, is offered right after Waverley has passed by two pools that seem to reflect the different characters of the Mac-Ivor siblings, Flora and Fergus: the one remarkable for its purity, the other corresponding in beauty but “of a stern and commanding cast” (106).

To label this space “picturesque” is not necessarily wrong, but it is to understate severely its complexity, composition, and shifting focus. The scene’s painterly sublimity is both obvious—it conveys both the terrible and the beautiful at once, producing astonishment in the spectator—and self-referential—the names of landscape painters like Poussin and Lorrain are forever on the narrator’s lips. In terms of the Bakhtinian chronotope, the space is difficult to pigeonhole, participating at once in both the definite and indefinite categories, as well as being both “cramped” (the projecting surfaces crowd the view) and “vast” (the immense size of the objects in view awe the viewer). One of the most dramatic representations of landscape in *Waverley*, the pass of peril shows Scott working in a highly figurative mode, employing a poetic, abstract, even legendary diction. And within the textual space of only a few pages, the novel’s space has mirrored both political conflict in the streams (the “placid” stream of Hanoverian complacency, the foam and uproar of “militant Jacobitism” [Devlin, qtd in Brown 26]) and main characters in the contrasting pools. Its description has both imitated and alluded to a variety of other genres and artistic categories, from romance to landscape painters to medieval epic poets.

Space has, in short, assumed “a thousand peculiar and varied forms” before the reader’s eyes. That the space is based on a real place, according to Scott’s note, becomes almost irrelevant; in this space, as in Scott’s narrative form itself, much has been made from little. In its spaces and its narrative, *Waverley* everywhere heightens composition with a “maximum of elaboration.”

The pass of peril scene is not a typical moment in the *Waverley* landscape, but is rather a distillation of all that can happen in the palimpsest of space in Scott. In its intensely concentrated, richly textured description, it encapsulates the kind of categorical sifting that occurs throughout the entire series of *Waverley* Novels both spatially and generically. Famously, Scott begins *Waverley* itself by shuffling through genres and sub-genres and declaring what it will not be: not a sentimental tale, nor a tale of modern manners, nor a romance of chivalry, and so on. But as an extended work about the “passions common to all men in all stages of society,” full of sly authorial comparisons to contemporary times, rich in romantic scenery and sublime effects, it partakes of all these types and more, without resolving to be one in particular (5). “The Author of *Waverley*” does close the novel with a nod to Maria Edgeworth and a hope that he has emulated her authentic regional portraiture of “habits, manners, and feelings” (341)—an acknowledgment leading many critics to define Scott as a regional novelist, and to see the historical novel as an outgrowth of this form. But this late acknowledgement doesn’t mean *Waverley* strives for some detached journalistic authenticity: only for a degree of specificity, even novelty, that will differentiate its Scottish subjects from the stereotype stage representations “who so long, with the most perfect family resemblance to each other, occupied the drama and the novel” (341). Scott wants his Scottish characters to be true to some degree, but also dramatically refreshing and striking, composed from a blend of different source materials and moods.

The Author of *Waverley* relies partly on what he has witnessed in younger days and partly from knowledge “gathered from tradition”—but of course, he also relies a good deal on eighteenth century novels. Apart from Edgeworth, he acknowledges two immediate literary models at the end, the one a realistic novel of rural Scottish habits (Hamilton’s *The Cottagers of Glenburnie*) and the other “the late Account of Highland Superstitions” by Mrs. Anne Grant (341).<sup>1</sup> In short, *Waverley*’s characters and manners have been formed from a mixture of authentic and theoretical, and even legendary, stuff—the report and the fairy tale, we might say, recalling Alfred Doblin, except that these two broad theoretical sources only scratch the surface of the many categories Scott borrows from. Accordingly, the novel’s characters and manners, to say nothing of the character and manner of its narrator, sample from a diverse mixture of mood and genre. It’s worth looking briefly at a few examples of this sampling to see how, even though *Waverley* in some ways is not a typical *Waverley* Novel, it nevertheless sets the precedent for the historical novel to be a generic palimpsest: an “all-purpose” fiction. For starters, despite its narrator’s alleged intentions of distancing his novel from romance, *Waverley* quickly resorts to Romantic poetic passages that claim to characterize its protagonist “better than narrative of any kind”: “Craving pardon for my heroics,” says the narrator when the first poem is done, “which I am unable in certain cases to resist giving way to” (22, 24). In Chapter Thirteen the novel follows an original Romantic song with a semi-legendary Gothic folk tale, prompting Rose Bradwardine to complain teasingly “Must I tell my story as well as sing my song?” (61). Indeed, each of the novel’s heroines offers songs, contributing to the atmosphere of balladry and minstrelsy already evoked by the narrator’s frequent allusions. Original songs and poems in the mouths of *Waverley*’s characters are, of course, perfectly to be expected of the author of *The Lay*

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<sup>1</sup> As previously noted, he also indirectly acknowledges Henry Mackenzie’s sentimental novel, *The Man of Feeling*, by dedicating *Waverley* to Mackenzie.

of *the Last Minstrel* (1805) and *Marmion* (1808), nor should the narrator's ballad allusions surprise readers of Scott's *Minstrelsy* (1802-3). Such obvious juxtapositions should go without saying and yet are rarely observed today, when only a few novels are read, and those primarily for Scott's insights as Scot and historian, "not as poet and philosopher."<sup>2</sup> The narrator's lovingly recounted, parenthetical anecdotes in explanatory notes or recounting of Scottish customs in "bald and disjointed chat . . . more perhaps to the amusement of Waverley than that of our readers" (88) show Scott the poet giving place not to the historian so much as the editor, recalling the talkative, informal tone in the *Minstrelsy*'s copious notes.<sup>3</sup> After *Waverley* the scraps of verse and snippets from old plays begin to be prominently featured as epigraphs to each chapter, a favorite practice of Gothic novelist Ann Radcliffe.

These are only a few examples of this playfully intertextual, deliberately fragmented and fragmenting narrative mode that Scott establishes in *Waverley* and continues to model throughout the remainder of his fiction. The often fragmented narration, the persistent quoting and paraphrasing from poems and plays, the imitation of stage dialogue, the textual and explanatory notes, the inclusion of folk and original verse, and the frame stories—one of the form's most self-referential techniques of manipulating the narrative, offering elaborate accounts of how the main body of the text has fallen into the hands of the "editor": all these devices contribute to the *Waverley* novel's ready-made palimpsest effect, a narrative mode that remained in service to the genre throughout the century, in all its variations. It is not that the typical British

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<sup>2</sup> Here I'm specifically paraphrasing James Reed, who claims that Scott sees landscape "not as poet or philosopher but as countryman, predator, historian, [and] soldier" (9).

<sup>3</sup> "It was not only the poetry that betrayed him. His biographer, J. G. Lockhart, records that John Wilson, 'Christopher North,' exclaimed of those who doubted [*Waverley*] to be Scott's, 'have they forgotten the *prose* of the *Minstrelsy*?' (Lamont vii, original emphasis).

historical novel fails to create unity in its style and narration, but that, in its palimpsest mode of borrowing and conflating, it succeeds in creating a delightful disunity.

Every bit as evident as the textual palimpsest is the spatial palimpsest—the categorical swirl in the *Waverley* landscape that investigates not only the national, religious, and political oppositions that have most occupied the past century of Scott criticism, but also poetic oppositions about the kind of literary production the historical novel is, and about the kinds of knowledge the Author of *Waverley* is imparting. Again, *Waverley* itself excels at interrogating binaries of novel/romance, history/fiction, and knowledge/speculation through its landscapes, resulting in a panorama that may well “read time into space” (as Bakhtin suggests), but also certainly reads genre and epistemology into space. Historically, the spaces of the *Waverley* Novels are sensitive to the event (as James Reed claims), but poetically they transcend the event, painting oppositions in the broader, more universal colors of genre and symbol. They are thus consistent with *Waverley*’s stated moral agenda of recognizing the “deep ruling impulses” running throughout history, the unchangeable passions of humanity that transcend historical particularities:

Upon these passions it is no doubt true that the state of manners and laws casts a necessary coloring; 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 . . . . It is from the great book of Nature, the same through a thousand editions, whether of black letter or wire-wove and hot-pressed, that I have venturously essayed to read a chapter to the public. Some favorable opportunities of contrast have been afforded me, by the state of society in the northern part of the island at the period of my history, and may serve to illustrate the moral lessons which I would willingly consider as the most important part of my plan . . . . (5)

Scott’s most important arguments and observations are to be found in the “great book of Nature,” a Fielding-esque phrase that also recalls Hugo’s proclamation that architecture and cityscapes compose the “great book of humanity.” All at once, Scott folds morality, history, and “nature” (human behavior as well as wild, natural scenes) into the text, then declares that the text exploits

“favorable opportunities of contrast.” He acknowledges the “current” of progress and historical peculiarity, figuring it in visual terms (“coloring”), but in true Enlightenment historian fashion, he also emphasizes the unchangeable “nature” that opposes and balances it. All the operative terms are here, then, in what has become the definitive historical novel: the contrasts that form the rhetoric of the genre, the way that nature forms a text, and different kinds of texts can be encoded into nature.

### **Genre and the Text of Space: *Waverley***

Encoding genre into a novel’s described space involves both description and characterization: the kind of information making up the description or the way in which characters seem to be interpreting a presumably objective environment. What we can expect from a novelist who opposes genres in space is ambiguity here, a haziness about whether it is author, narrator or character who sees certain qualities in the landscape. Is the scenery really Gothic, or does the protagonist whose shoulder we look over have Gothic on the brain? Does the change in scenery constitute a change in genre, i.e. a change in the modes and devices of storytelling, or a subjective change, reflecting the mood or state of mind of the narrator or character?

What we can expect from a novelist—or from a form of the novel—that opposes genres in space, both setting opposing genres within the same space and interrogating ideas about genre in spatial description, is for the changes and the ambiguity to feature consistently throughout the novel, becoming more than just an odd moment, anomaly, or the sort of momentary emotional shift that results from the novelist’s particular associations. Gillian Tindall notes, in a passage that especially resonates with Scott: “however apparently real and identifiable a locale, each novelist will bring to it a personal freight of preoccupations, moral prejudices, memories and dreams: one writer’s blasted heath will be another’s unspoilt country retreat” (vii). Scott

probably brings as much “personal freight” to scenes as any author, but his treatment of space is too deliberate to be solely accounted for this way. In *Victorian Renovations of the Novel* (1998), Suzanne Keen makes a strong case for the “narrative annex” in Victorian fiction, moments when space and genre change from a novel’s established norm to permit certain kinds of narration, characterization, problem and protest. But by definition Keen’s annexes are short and incongruous, temporary shifts, set apart in physical setting and mood from the rest of the novel. There is not a consistent shifting, not a consistent ambiguity in the works Keen looks at. But then she doesn’t work with Scott or the historical novel—she doesn’t look at the palimpsest of space, the palimpsest of genre that regularly occurs within the form.

We find in *Waverley* exactly this sort of ambiguity, consistently developed. Critics typically resolve it one way or another, however, by deciding either that Edward Waverley’s mind is playing tricks on him or that the Author of *Waverley* is playing tricks on us. In his reading in *Romantic Imperialism* (1998), for example, Saree Makdisi argues for the latter option. Definitely not in agreement with Bakhtin, Reed, and Moretti that Scott is transcribing historical process onto the landscape, Makdisi determines that modes of storytelling and degrees of objectivity really do change in *Waverley*, as Edward Waverley passes from England into Scotland. He argues that the English side of the border is “the firm ground of the knowable”; once Waverley has entered Scotland (or at any rate, the Highlands) he leaves the knowable behind and commences an unpredictable, because untruthful, “imaginary tour of the Highlands” (81, 84). The change in the quality of information is cued by the change in the scenery, from the timelessness and truthfulness of English spaces to the barbarianism and falseness of Scottish spaces, scenery which Waverley is always either “charmed by or afraid of” (Makdisi 83, 86).

Although he does not explicitly claim that the Border has signaled a change in genre, the political thrust of Makdisi's argument sustains that reading. The transformation of *Waverley*'s space at the Border means that Scott here begins writing in bad faith: neglecting the novelist's duty to report on the political relationships between England and Scotland, denying the representation of present Scotland, "pretending" that the destruction of its national heritage was set in the past when in fact it was still going on (76). In other words, Scott begins writing a romance, historical romance, historical novel, or at any rate some other genre than what is called for: a faithfully-described contemporary novel, describing the sociopolitical situation between the two nations. Makdisi looks to Scott expecting the fidelity of the social novelist, observing his own time, and finds him romancing and "pretending," writing the fairy tale rather than the report.

Because Edward Waverley has stuffed his head with romances prior to crossing the Border, indulging in a "desultory habit of reading" and "literary 'castle-building'" (13, 15), other readers have been well prepared to account for *Waverley*'s scenic transformations differently, deciding that not Scott but Waverley himself causes or sees the landscape's romantic transformations. After all, Waverley habitually indulges in the romantic nature of the scenery: "I am actually in the land of military and romantic adventures," he thinks in Chapter Fifteen, "and it only remains to be seen what will be my own share in them" (72). His enthusiasm for the landscape and its associations is foregrounded repeatedly, and is often expressed in self-consciously literary terms (as when St. Swithin's Chair reminds him of *King Lear*, Bean Lean's cave reminds him of Robin Hood, and so forth). There is certainly much to recommend the notion that *Waverley*'s scenery is filtered through its hero's erudite but immature sensibilities or perhaps functions as a sort of extension of his subjectivity. But its logical consequences actually undercut the commitment to naturalism and authenticity which David Brown and other critics

assume of Scott. What could be more like old romance than a scene that changes and transforms with the mood, emotions and well-being of the hero?

One of Georg Lukacs' most enduring contributions to the political discussion about Scott has been his emphasis on Scott's efforts always to find the "middle way": between warring classes, between nations, between conservative and radical systems and so on. Middle ways, negotiations, or synthesis seem like good concepts for the Scott landscape discussion as well, since no single explanation for Scott's landscape effects sufficiently accounts for their ambiguity. What happens in the Scott landscape generically might be thought of in dialectical terms, then, or as a step towards Moretti's concept of the "third," the mediating force of the novel that compromises binaries (70-73). But we should be quite sure that if Edward Waverley's own Quixote-like imagination and moral judgments carry over into and influence the scenery, so too do Scott's. It is as a blend, a palimpsest of layers, that the Scott landscape can best be understood: as a feature consistent with the medieval romances it imitates and draws from, which "allowed a casual interplay between history and miracle" and "could encompass the marvellous and the everyday without any change of key" (Beer 17). Indeed, the scene of *Waverley* is constantly invested in intertwining and conflating these categories.

Makdisi's claim that *Waverley*'s Highlands are "imaginary" may not be strictly accurate, but that the Author of *Waverley* plays generic tricks with space, especially with Highland space, is undeniable. As has often been remarked upon, the novelistic style employed when describing Tully-Veolan's "straggling hamlet" in the Lowlands changes to a more ominous, metaphoric style when Waverley enters the Highlands. And, though it is probably right that the poetic character of the description is strongest at the border (as Moretti argues), the generic character of

the scenery remains qualitatively different throughout the Scottish scenes of the novel.<sup>4</sup> The English locations at the beginning of *Waverley*, for instance, are not so much a contrast to the Scottish spaces as they are intangible, almost unremarked upon. In keeping with the eighteenth-century domestic novel that the early chapters most emulate, the English settings are taken for granted, summed up in a few strokes of exposition (as might be Squire Allworthy's estate). Scott does not even begin to describe, does not even pull out his paint box, until the text of space becomes "the kingdom of romance."

But Edward Waverley's role in the novel must also be taken into account, as well as his romantic subjectivity. To the extent that England is "the firm ground of the knowable" (by its very unremarkability, the author's lack of fuss over it), it is such not because Scott is interested in negating or appropriating Scotland, but because his protagonist is English. The Highlanders walk their own firm, knowable ground in the Highlands, making confident and swift progress through country that seems impassible to Edward, "by tracks which no one but a Highlander could have followed" (77). Scott labors this point—that what to Edward seems treacherous ground is perfectly familiar and ordinary to them—throughout Chapter Sixteen as Edward follows Evan Dhu through Highland country for the first time:

The path itself . . . was rough, broken, and in many places quaggy and unsound. Sometimes the ground was so completely unsafe, that it was necessary to spring from one hillock to another, the space being incapable of bearing human weight. This was an easy matter to the Highlanders, who wore thin-soled brogues fit for the purpose, and moved with a peculiar springing step . . . (77)

When the path seems to disappear, "altogether undiscernible in the murky darkness," Evan Dhu (or Evan "Black," a name merging the man with the murk) "seemed to trace it by instinct,

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<sup>4</sup> Even before leaving the Lowlands, Waverley has exulted in the "projecting turret," "Gothic balcony," "formal garden, with its high bounding walls," "massive but ruined tower" "frowning from a promontory over the river," and "solitary and seemingly enchanted mansion" at Tully-Veolan (37, 59).

without the hesitation of a moment, and Edward followed his footsteps as close as he could” (78). For Edward this country calls for his complete surrender to “the full romance of his situation,” and he basks on the banks of an “unknown lake” fantasizing about Robin Hood and Adam o’Gordon (78). But for the Highlanders it is routine.<sup>5</sup>

Such passages have led to the deduction that *Waverley*’s romantic scenic effects derive largely from Waverley’s imagination—that his “romantic interest in the scenic” busily converts the landscape into fuel for his overactive imagination. But surely this is dramatic scenery in earnest, whether or not it corresponds to actual Scottish landscape—“tremendous rocks,” “twisted roots,” “a foaming stream,” “a hundred falls,” “a thousand birds of prey” bolting from cover near a mountain pass between “two mountains, both very lofty and covered with heath” (76-77). There is no need to blame Edward’s imagination entirely for its effects (as we might Catherine Morland, actively misinterpreting the relatively mundane surroundings of *Northanger Abbey*). Romance-addled Edward Waverley may be especially impressionable to picturesque country, but that is not to say the text of space does not actually change character.

Rather, the dramatic landscape, rendered in more or less uniformly spectacular and superlative terms, elicits obviously different responses from the human figures in the landscape, and these differences have to do with genre: with modes of storytelling, characteristic settings, motifs and characters, and the different expectations they produce. For instance, as Edward sits by his unknown lake (a known lake to the Scots!) dreaming about Robin Hood and romantic adventure, Scott punctures his expectations with a mundane, decidedly novelistic, detail: “The only circumstance which assorted ill with the rest [of his situation] was the cause of his

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<sup>5</sup> Contrast Waverley’s anxieties over the uneven ground with Jeanie Deans’ comment about the “strange land” of England, in *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*: “I’m glad to hear there’s a hill, . . . for baith my sight and my very feet are weary o’ sic tracks o’ level ground” (292). A Scot traveling south into England, Jeanie has essentially reversed Waverley’s journey. Her weariness makes it clear that the same ground Waverley has found impassable is to her firm, knowable, and even comforting.

journey—the Baron’s milk cows!—this degrading incident he kept in the background” (78).

When Edward tries to forget the fact that his glorious road north through such exciting country has been occasioned by missing livestock, it’s a clear sign of the novel intruding upon the romance. In some ways, Edward Waverley is the novel protagonist, touring the romance’s landscape.<sup>6</sup>

To the Scots, however, this territory is “their” novel—something Scott makes clear in the scene following Waverley’s night in Donald Bean Lean’s cave, in Chapter Eighteen. Waverley walks out into the glorious Highland morning and gains “the wild and precipitous shores of a Highland loch,” “surrounded by heathy and savage mountains” (83). The wildness and savagery is subverted by his discovery of Alice Bean Lean, who is nonchalantly preparing a meal like any dutiful daughter of the sentimental novel. “In a sunny recess” (one of many fortuitous, niche-like indentations in the scene), Alice, “the damsel of the cavern,” sings Highland songs and prepares milk, eggs, bread, butter, and honey, all provisions gathered from the land or from nearby farms (83). Yet, the narrator emphasizes, she has still “secured time also to arrange her own person in the best trim” (84). She sets Edward’s place with “the courtesy of a hostess,” while Evan Dhu appears bearing fresh-caught fish for “the breakfast table” (84). The scene is as domestic a scene as may be found in any novel from Austen’s “Heart of England”; to Edward it clangs against the landscape discordantly, but not to his Highlander companions.

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<sup>6</sup> The idea is an inversion of the way *Waverley* is often read, where romance-obsessed Edward is disillusioned (though initially seduced) by the realities of Scott’s Scotland: romance is shocked and offended by reality, retreats to cozy English provincialism, and learns to keep romance in its proper place (framed on the wall). But Edward Waverley is manifestly a character from just such an English novel setting, as his eventual retirement to the provincial country house reveals. Alistair Duckworth draws on Flora MavIvor’s ironic criticism of Edward to demonstrate that he is out of place: “Yet Flora comes to see that ‘high and perilous enterprise’ is not Waverley’s forte, and she ironically measures his inadequacy by picturing him in his future country house setting” (*Landscape* 116). The contrast between “high and perilous enterprise” and the place “where he will be at home,” the country house, is a generic contrast: between romance or adventure on one hand and the sentimental British novel on the other (*Waverley* 250).

Like the detail of the cattle, the landscape here emphasizes that it is Edward who is the stranger, out of place in the scene. The landscape foregrounds and contextualizes Edward's struggles to understand his surroundings—his physical and cultural surroundings, certainly, but also his assumptions about genre, romance and reality, “the marvelous and the everyday.” Edward Waverley is constantly measuring the novel's events against the landscape, as we might measure a drama scene against a seemingly discordant stage backdrop. He consults the landscape to figure out what kind of story he is in (something which *Waverley*'s narrator never really decides) and struggles to keep up with the expectations the scenery arouses and the way his companions' behavior undermines those expectations. His “desultory reading” has led him to predict that dramatic scenery is the proper locale for “military and romantic adventure”—this is actually a correct prediction, one the novel bears out. What he has not understood so well is that his land of marvelous adventures is also the land of the Highlanders' everyday lives—that these two worlds, these two types of story, share the same space.

It might be objected that this landscape-as-contextualization-aid for which I am arguing is nothing more than James Reed's idea of “locality,” the landscape as a resonant cultural and historical continuum, the fitting background for rich and memorable Scottish characters to spring from. After all, the landscape which strikes Edward Waverley as so romantic and exotic seems to have a verifiable history, which Edward's Highland tour guides occasionally pause to relate to him.<sup>7</sup> If we are traveling not through invented space but recorded place, does it make sense to talk about *Waverley*'s scenic/generic ambiguity?

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<sup>7</sup> “‘This,’ said Evan, ‘is the pass of Bally-Brough, which was kept in former times by ten of the clan Donnochie against a hundred of the low country carls. The graves of the slain are still to be seen in that little corri, or bottom, on the opposite side of the burn’” (76). The Pass of Bally-Brough is either fictional or fictionalized, tentatively identified by nineteenth century tourists as “that immediately above Dunkeld, leading into the Highlands” (Anonymous, qtd in Lamont 425). It is not, in any case, a verifiable, guidebook factoid that Scott inserts into the mouth of his character.

There are two reasons why I argue that landscape contextualizes and emphasizes genre in Scott rather than merely, and occasionally, emphasizing Reed's idea of locality. First, Makdisi's main claim for *Waverley* space is quite true for most *Waverley* Novel space: it is fluid and unstable, more likely to be imaginative than verifiable, although not out of character entirely. Once you exclude the numerous unidentifiable, "generic" wild spaces, as well as the spaces that seem real but are confections and fictionalizations, the "real" places in Scott are relatively few. Further, even those wild scenes that might be claimed authentically Scottish are liable to shift and transmute, natural elements shifting to artificial, recalling not so much authentic scenery as stage scenery and props (a quality I discuss further below). Second, the scene "opposes genre" in the manner I have described throughout the *Waverley* Novels, not just in the Scottish novels. Reading "locality" in the scene, where the term means a personally observed regional authenticity, confines us to Scotland again, and needlessly.

I have characterized the landscape in *Waverley* as emphasizing and interrogating genre: the landscape as a "background that can foreground" questions about storytelling, style, motif, and types of knowledge. The protagonist looks to the landscape to learn what kind of story he is in, what kind of drama he is enacting, and as *Waverley* wonders, "what will be his own share" in the appropriate action. The landscape assists in determining the truth, style, category or character of the narrative, or of the character's place within it. As I have argued above, *Waverley* does not so much argue that Scotland isn't a "land of romance," but that *Waverley* himself is not a character from romance: like Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, he is hopelessly out of step with the environment he is exploring.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Henry Mackenzie's Harley moves from pastoral country to squalid city settings in *The Man of Feeling* (1771), prepared by reading literature, languages, philosophy, arithmetic, bookkeeping, and law, pressed and instructed by advisors to be confident and unapologetic in his bid for crown-lands in the city. Like *Waverley*, his education fits his destination in many ways, yet harsh London encounters and the selfishness of his fellow creatures fail to "remove

What we can expect from a novelist who opposes genres in space is for the environment to function similarly—symbolically, metaphorically, paradigmatically—regardless of the novel’s setting. In the non-Scottish as well as the Scottish Waverley Novels, we should find Scott’s characters making assumptions about genre based on the landscape, or looking to the landscape as an index to narrative and character. In fact, landscapes are referenced this way throughout the Waverley Novels, as may be seen from a few brief examples.

### **Genre and the Text of Space: *The Talisman* and *The Monastery***

Though it features a Scots protagonist, *The Talisman* (1825) is set entirely in Syria, a place Scott never visited, and so is exempt from sharing in the personal and historical resonance of James Reed’s Border country locality. The novel opens with a desert encounter between a Crusader, Sir Kenneth, and a Saracen Emir, Sheerkohf. When Sheerkohf observes that the knight’s heavily-loaded horse is inappropriate to the desert surroundings, Kenneth taunts him by seeming to pass off a fairy tale about his homeland: “Thou speakest . . . according to thy knowledge and observation. But my good horse hath ere now borne me, in mine own land, over as wide a lake as thou seest yonder spread out behind us, yet not wet one hair above his hoof.” He further claims to have ridden with five hundred mailed knights “for miles, upon water as solid as the crystal, and ten times less brittle.” “It is justly spoken,” Sheerkohf replies: “list to a Frank, and hear a fable.” That the Dead Sea by the curse of God “suffereth nothing to sink in its waves, but wafts them away, and casts them on its margin,” Sheerkohf accepts as a familiar fact—part of his own “knowledge and observation.” But Kenneth’s explanation of the frozen lake he

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the rust” from his sentimental nature, the naiveté or bashfulness that all men should have “rubbed off” by travel and experience (3-4). Harley’s training for the city has been training for a city story, but in the end he proves a man of feeling rather than practicality, and retreats to the country to die. Scott’s *Waverley* is dedicated to Mackenzie, and echoes many of his novel’s features, such as its narrative gimmickry, an interest in landscape “less common in the novel of sentiment than in other types,” and affinities with the Gothic novel (Slagle viii).

rejects as fable, looking to his own landscape to confirm that the knight (“like all Christians”) loves “telling what is impossible, and reporting what never chanced” (21-22).

As Kenneth and Sheerkohf travel on in Chapter Three, the scene begins to change, Scott’s diction evoking the Gothic, the Biblical, and Dante’s *Inferno*. The knight remains indifferent to the Muslim’s stories of wild animals and robbers, but the “dark caverns and chasms amongst the rocks, those grottoes so often alluded to in Scripture,” convince him “that he was now in the awful wilderness of the forty days’ fast, and the scene of the actual personal temptation, wherewith the Evil Principle was permitted to assail the Son of Man” (36-37). The change of scene changes the character of both narrative and companion to Sir Kenneth. Sheerkohf’s incongruous and carefree singing of drinking songs now strikes him as dangerously irreverent in the unholy surroundings:

As it was, the Crusader felt as if he had by his side some gay licentious fiend, who endeavored to ensnare his immortal soul, and endanger his immortal salvation, by inspiring loose thoughts of earthly pleasure, and thus polluting his devotion, at a time when his faith as a Christian, and his vow as a pilgrim, called on him for a serious and penitential state of mind. (37)

The alteration of landscape thus signals an alteration of genre and mood, of ways of knowing and predicting what will happen, and the knight who had been mocking Sheerkohf with alleged fables now tells him that “this place—these rocks—these caverns with their gloomy arches, leading as it were to the central abyss—are held an especial haunt of Satan and his angels” (38). In the very next chapter, the scene and style of narrative change again, becoming more obviously Gothic: Kenneth accompanies the hermit Theodorick to an elaborate chapel hidden within the rocks of this same “unholy ground,” a labyrinthine structure complete with secret passageways, trapdoors, and an altar to a fragment of the true cross. Throughout *The Talisman*’s opening chapters, then, the scene remains as fluid and imaginary as any scene of *Waverley*, and as capable of transmuting to suit the mood and purposes of the story. Repeatedly

the protagonist looks to the scene for clues about how he should behave: a tricky practice, since the scene, and the generic rules, keep shifting.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, *The Monastery* (1820) is set in a region very like Scotland's Melrose and definitely near the Scottish Border, yet it is never read as one of the Scottish Waverley Novels due in part to its remote temporal setting (Elizabeth's time), but mainly to the enthusiastic use of supernatural elements in the story. It therefore represents an interesting middle ground among the Waverley Novels: geographically located in the locale Scott knows best (his backyard, in fact, if the setting is taken to be Melrose) but most resembling the Chivalry novels in mood, tone and period. With the novel's enchanted ravine, Corrie-nan-shian, Scott's encoding of genre into landscape becomes especially evident, as characters traversing this "evil-reputed glen" encounter not only moody, threatening scenery but also an actual ghost, the White Lady, and one who speaks in verse, no less—so, brooding romantic scenery, Gothic device, and a shift from prose to poesy, yet only within this charmed region (46). Corrie-nan-shian could be one of Suzanne Keen's "narrative annexes," it seems, except that the novel spends a great deal of time there: it is no temporary incongruity of space. Most importantly, both the imaginative and susceptible characters (the novel's Edward Waverleys) and the defiantly skeptical characters experience these generic changes at Corrie-nan-shian—establishing that these changes are not merely "filtered" through heated, impressionable minds. Both timid Father Philip, cynical Father Eustace, and several other characters besides, encounter the White Lady and get an earful of romantic verse, nearly all of these encounters occurring within the mysterious precincts of this generic "border country."

It's long been acknowledged that *The Monastery* is the great exception to the other Waverley Novels: the first relative failure in the series, the only novel with a sequel, and the

novel Scott seems most determined both to apologize for and defend. James Reed finds in *The Monastery* evidence of Scott's compulsion to treat Scottish themes and settings, but finds that the novel "embeds" tradition, history, superstitions and scenery in too enthusiastic a manner to create a work of art: "in overdoing the ingredients Scott ruins the dish" (137). But these same ingredients are embedded just as heatedly, just as enthusiastically in *Waverley* (as its "pass of peril" scene makes clear). For Reed *The Monastery* draws on Scott's rich knowledge of Border landscape and character, but lacks involvement and animation; to paraphrase somewhat mischievously, the magic is missing. There seems no way to account for the novel's differences or its failure within the framework of Reed's "locality" except by faulting Scott with bookishness and over-enthusiasm here, but not elsewhere, among the Scottish novels.

It seems reasonable to suppose, in the light of what I have argued above, that *The Monastery* seems so different because in it Scott resolves the ambiguity between space and genre for the one and only time in the Waverley Novels. Genre changes within set precincts of land, but nowhere else, and within those precincts genre changes unequivocally. To alter Harry Shaw's observation about Waverley Novel complexity, here the complexity is obtrusive.<sup>9</sup> In *The Monastery* characters may leave the everyday and enter the realm of the marvelous; in other Waverley Novels, the marvelous and the everyday jostle for the same space.

Why *The Monastery* is so very different makes it the great puzzle of the Waverley series, and in some measure Scott's own great puzzle. In the lengthy introductory chapters of both *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822) and *Pevekil of the Peak* (1822), he spends considerable time trying to work out why *The Monastery* had so alienated his readership; he wrote *The Abbot* (1821), his only sequel, to make up for it. The question of why the generic mixture did not work so well for

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<sup>9</sup> Harry E. Shaw notes that the Waverley novels "lend themselves to univocal readings because their complexity is unobtrusive" (159).

the British reader in *The Monastery* is made more puzzling when we consider the much more overt juxtapositions of natural/supernatural or real/marvelous that characterized the very popular work of W. H. Ainsworth, appearing less than 15 years after *The Monastery*'s publication. It could well be argued, however, that by Ainsworth's day the British historical novel had a very different ethos and reputation. As I will discuss when I examine his novels in Chapter Four, what seemed a subtly compromised yet essentially realistic form in 1820 seemed much more of an open, experimental and variously contrasting form when Ainsworth's *Rookwood* appeared in 1834. In this way *The Monastery*, for all its awkwardness and flaws, actually proved to be more influential to the genre than many of the more canonical Scottish novels in the series: it suggested that the historical novelist could be more boldly experimental with styles of writing and ways of knowing than Scott had demonstrated before it.

### **The "Splendid Theatre": Stage Space in the Waverley Novel**

And what does separate the romance land of Corrie-nan-shian, where improbability and poetry reign supreme, from the more prosaic spaces of *The Monastery*'s Glendearg (which, if it isn't Melrose, at least looks a lot like it)? In Scott what separates one type of space and one type of storytelling from another may be nothing but the space of the page; a chapter division or authorial disclaimer may be the only boundary between particular generic modes and moods. But when he does actually describe a dividing line, a "border" in a representational sense, that line itself is likely to be ambiguous, compromised, and shifting. Not surprisingly, it may be a border that is also a Border, a representational line that coincides with a national or cultural line, as so many critics have remarked of the Highlands border in *Waverley*. Or it may be only the crumbling, half-collapsed stone wall that separates wild from architectural space, the timeless from the historical, as in the St. Ruth's Abbey scenes of *The Antiquary* (1816). Or the border may feature a sentinel or gatekeeper who points to the ambiguity between genres and effects, as

happens in *Kenilworth* (1821). When the disguised Amy Robsart flees to Kenilworth castle she finds the gate kept by a fake “giant” who has forgotten his scripted lines—an entirely appropriate boundary marker between Amy’s real drama and the self-conscious mummery and play-acting within the castle grounds.

Perhaps because space and genre are so starkly differentiated in *The Monastery*, the border between the poetic and the prosaic is especially distinctive, even “authorial.” Between the haunted and unpredictable space of Corrie-nan-shian and the grounds of the monastery runs a “classical stream,” traversed only by a bridge of “very peculiar form” (47):

Two strong abutments were built on either side of the river, at a part where the stream was peculiarly contracted. Upon a rock in the centre of the current was built a solid piece of masonry, constructed like the pier of a bridge, and presenting, like a pier, an angle to the current of the stream. The masonry continued solid until the pier rose to a level with the two abutments upon either side, and from thence the building rose in the form of a tower. The lower story of this tower consisted only of an archway or passage through the building, over either entrance to which hung a drawbridge with counterpoises, either of which, when dropped, connected the archway with the opposite abutment, where the farther end of the drawbridge rested. When both bridges were thus lowered, the passage over the river was complete. (47)

This peculiar structure is itself multi-purpose: both bridge and “insulated fortalice,” capable of connecting or separating the two regions at the will of its keeper (47). It can literally turn the traveler, and therefore the story, this way or that. In the event of disputes, “the bridge-ward had usually the better in these questions, since he could at pleasure detain the traveller on the opposite side” (47-48). After *The Monastery*’s lukewarm reception, Scott’s authorial personae were alternately defensive or aloof and apologetic: “he was impatient of attempts to limit the kinds of literary experimentation which were thought appropriate for him” (Robertson 54). It’s easy to imagine the Author of *Waverley* as the keeper of this bridge between genres and regions, especially when the novel’s bridge-ward proves rather arbitrary about letting the bridge down, and deaf to the angry foot traveler’s demands in Chapter Five.

As with so many locations in Scott, for all its evident metaphoric and narrative significance, this peculiar fortress-bridge also seems based on a real place: just such a strange structure “actually existed at a small hamlet about a mile and a half above Melrose, called from the circumstance Bridge-end” (476). To restate my earlier question: if we are traveling not through invented space but recorded place, does it make sense to talk about *The Monastery*’s authorial bridge and its symbolic significance? Do the actual bridge, the ruins of the abbey, and other similar topographical features confirm that the novel is indeed set in Melrose, and that Scott has again drawn on his “strongest powers” by including them in *The Monastery* (that is, his powers of observation and appreciation of region and locality)?

If so, neither James Reed nor most critics of Scott acknowledge this—but then, interpreting Scott is largely a matter of deciding when and when not to believe him; the same narrator who assures us in footnotes that these are real locations essentially denies the claim elsewhere within the same texts. Opposing perceptions of Scott the Poet and Scott the Historian/Journalist/Observer are often formed by criticism selecting which passages and assurances are authoritative and legitimate. Having developed a dynamic of valuing Scott’s historical specificity, local observation, regional authenticity, and international/cultural dialectic, we have gradually chosen to believe Scott when his statements confirm these associations: when *Waverley*’s narrator insists his tale is not a romance, for instance, or tips his hat to Maria Edgeworth’s authentic regional fiction. Arguments about space in Scott follow this dynamic, thus dismissing poetic liberties taken with real places as mere picturesqueness and effect. The idea that we can trust Scott about real places, that we can pay relatively little attention to his fictional spaces, is another way of embracing Lukacs’ “what is new” in Scott instead of what is old: the historical and realistic rather than the Gothic and romantic. Embracing the idea

emphasizes place rather than space, context rather than canvas—and also leads to misunderstandings about Scott, the historical novel genre, and the poetic functions of its spaces.

For instance, when James Reed concludes that *The Monastery* is set in Melrose, he accepts and cites Scott's introductory comment that he chose "for the scene . . . the celebrated ruins of Melrose, in the immediate neighborhood of his own residence," but leaves out his later statement that the scene is in some respects nonexistent and in any case conflated.<sup>10</sup> Reed finds Scott tapping into the familiar vein of folklore and local tradition in *The Monastery*, even though Scott insists that the Melrose ruins "have recollections and traditions of their own, but none of them bear the most distant resemblance to the descriptions in the Romance" (4) . The assumption that Scott must be drawing authentically, especially in the Scottish Border region, can only be borne out if his repeated assurances that he is doing nothing of the kind are ignored.<sup>11</sup>

Scott's strategy regarding space and place emphasizes the way that Waverley space is the flexible and fluid domain of genre: a space that is often deliberately artificial when at its most "real" or historical. When depicting actual sites or locations, Scott is usually careful to choose places whose authenticity cannot really be challenged—not because they are so familiar but because they are no longer extant or are inaccessible. He consistently invites readers to look at ruins or even empty sites where historic buildings used to be. In *The Monastery* it is the peculiar

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<sup>10</sup> All the cottages and "even the church which once existed there, have sunk into vestiges hardly to be traced" and "It was not the purpose of the author to present a landscape copied from nature, but a piece of composition, in which a real scene, with which he is familiar, had afforded him some leading outlines" (1, 3). "[It] would be a misapprehension to suppose that, because Melrose may in general pass for Kennaquhair, or because it agrees with scenes of *The Monastery* in the circumstances of the drawbridge, the milldam, and other points of resemblance, that therefore an accurate or perfect local similitude is to be found in all the particulars of the picture. (2)

<sup>11</sup> Philippa Tristram goes so far as to note "the difference between a Gothic novel like *Udolpho*, where ancient buildings are impressionistic, and an historical novel like *Ivanhoe*, rooted in fact and actual place" (19). The comparison seems to assume that *Ivanhoe*'s spaces support the most common critical position about Scott and Gothic, that "they may be separated with some confidence on the grounds of historical realism" (Robertson 49). But there are few historical facts in *Ivanhoe*, and almost no actual places. There are, however, a number of ancient and "impressionistic" buildings.

bridge and the ruins of Melrose Abbey itself. In *Kenilworth* a major portion of the novel is spent at Cumnor Place, an “ancient mansion [whose] ruins may be still extant,” or so says the narrator; in fact, its remains had been demolished only a decade before Scott was writing, suggesting that its absence rather than its presence inspires the fantastically wrought details of the setting.<sup>12</sup> He recommends views from spots that are off-limits to the reader, as when he points out his favorite place to admire the sunset over Edinburgh in *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, “now become totally impassable” (75). Of course the Tolbooth prison, the “heart” of *Heart*’s title, is itself a famously empty site.

Scott is evidently seeking “wiggle room” in his depiction of place: a spatial reflection of the epistemological flexibility between his fictional world and its historical frame. There should be muddiness and mystification between the known, or at any rate well-known, narrative of history and the fictional narrative of the Author of *Waverley*, and this idea plays out in Scott’s persistent manipulation of space. The deliberate obscuring and altering of his beloved Border country, the fluidity of landscape that disturbs Saree Makdisi, thus aligns the Scottish settings with the most far-flung settings of the Chivalry novels: both find room in obscurity to introduce fictional narratives, a very “romantic” use of landscape indeed.<sup>13</sup>

Rather than material for authentic reporting or recording, what Melrose and its crumbling abbey furnish for Scott are “associations of a fanciful nature” and, significantly, “a *splendid theatre* for any tragic incident” (*The Monastery* 1-2, my emphasis). The term is aptly chosen, and

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<sup>12</sup> “H. U. Tighe wrote in 1821, the year of *Kenilworth*’s first appearance: ‘A heap of stones, and the foundations, now scarcely discernible, are all that remain of that venerable structure.’ . . . The mansion had been demolished in 1810” (Alexander 413). The main extant structure of *Kenilworth*—Kenilworth Castle itself—I discuss further below.

<sup>13</sup> David Brown resists this idea when it comes to historical facts, emphasizing that Scott tries to illuminate the past, not to use the cover of darkness for romantic fiction “in the Keatsian fashion” (176). Scott’s own narrative personae suggest the opposite is true, as when Jonathan Oldbuck jokes about the author having “the wit, like some of ourselves, to lay the scene in such a remote or distant country that nobody should be able to back-speer [cross-examine] him” (*Betrothed* xxii).

should inform any discussion of scene in Scott—for Waverley space is nothing if not theatrical, and in its theatricality we can find some reconciliation between the authentic and the fictional, the recorded and the invented.

Henri Lefebvre's discussion of theatrical space (in *The Production of Space*), with its interplay between fictitious and real counterparts and its interaction between gazes and mirages in which actor, audience, 'characters', text and author all come together but never become one" (188), tallies well with some of the most forceful or crystalline Waverley novel scenes (like the "pass of peril"). Theatrical space is one of contradiction and overlap for Lefebvre, where his tripartite categories become compromised and illusory:

To the question of whether such a space is a representation of space or a representational space, the answer must be neither—and both. Theatrical space certainly implies a *representation of space*—scenic space—corresponding to a particular *conception* of space (that of the classical drama, say—or the Elizabethan, or the Italian). (188, original emphasis)

This space of "interaction" implies an overlap of "lived" space—the real space of life, corresponding to physical space—and "conceived" space—space that has been intellectually worked out, the space of ideas and plans (38-39). Characters in a drama pass from "a 'real', immediately experienced space (the pit, the stage) to a perceived space," "at once fictitious and real" (188).

Looking for the conceived space in Scott—the landscape which is "a representation of" rather than "representational"—means granting Scott the power to be rhetorical and deliberate in his depiction of space. It means allowing his glens and abbeys to be "scooped out and carefully ruined" (in E. M. Forster's famously deprecatory phrase) without faulting the alterations. But these spaces are nevertheless derived from history or from fact; they do correspond to "lived" space, either personally observed or mediated by the various bookish sources James Reed repudiates. The casual shifting or "interplay" between these types of space in the typical

Waverley scene implies a third space “at once fictitious and real,” i.e. a theatrical space. Within it, the authenticity of the “lived” space is mirage, a backdrop that may be manipulated. The scenery can be both accurate and a prop. Much the same idea is expressed by Lukacs, but with reference to historical dramas rather than novels.

Lukacs stresses importance of the environment in epic literature, both the surrounding world and the built environment, pointing to the “enormous part played by the physical being of men, by the natural world surrounding them, by the things which form their environment etc” (132). In the drama the atmosphere is “much more spiritual,” meaning that the “social-moral features” of individuals are conveyed by dialogue while the environment becomes a background only, emphasizing the preconditions leading to social “collision” (conflict, usually social for Lukacs) (132). The novel is closer to life than the drama, but does not purport to reproduce life exactly. Like the drama it too must “concentrate” forces and ideas into individual, tangible characters and events (138-139). If the drama or the novel are to “evoke a totality . . . then some form of artistic concentration is again necessary” (139).

Lukacs certainly does not speak of dramatic or stage scenery particularly, but he is acknowledging a flexible space capable of being compressed or stretched, without being invalidated or inauthentic. He distinguishes between epic and dramatic time, claiming that the one may compress a long stretch within a few words, while the other must play out “as it would in reality” (132). But between these real-time acts or scenes the dramatist may “insert whatever intervening period he likes” (133), thus allowing for a drama to compress the action of many years into the space of a short stage piece (like Shakespeare’s history plays). We’ve come to expect a historical novel to play with time—that is, with history—to meaningfully compress or expand events, to rearrange events chronologically for effect, and so forth. But it is not generally

granted that space operates much the same way in the genre. Often the artful flexibility of the scene and its arrangements (Lukacs might say its “plasticity”) invokes the drama, with its deliberately selected, cunningly emphasized backdrops and stage props.

Even within the wildest scenery, far from any inorganic elements that might identify actual places, Scott’s diction cues our recognition of theatrical scenery: the “splendid theatre” of *The Monastery*, the “sylvan amphitheatre” of *Ivanhoe* and *Waverley* and numerous other novels. His attention to framing scenes, so often seen as a painterly effect, also participates in this staginess, as does his pocketing of the scenery with such a variety of entrances and exits: trapdoors or hollows contrived to conceal characters. Perhaps most of all, however, it is the sudden shifting of features from natural to artificial, from organic to “designed,” that makes us aware of theatrical space in Scott. During such moments we can see the stage, the backdrop, the curtain in Scott: we can see the steps shrouded in fake brush, the architectural framework from which the stage flora and fauna are suspended. This shifting takes place in *Waverley* as readily as in *Ivanhoe*, in authentic Scots scenery as quickly as in Robin Hood’s Sherwood, or Corrie-nan-shian.

Around Donald Bean Lean’s cave, Edward Waverley is constantly noting the overlap between scenic features that must be natural, yet which seem to have a fortuitous design. Entering the cave, amid the glaring red stage lighting of the burning beacon and accompanied by the operatic “recitative” of Gaelic song, Waverley notes the rising ledges of rock ascending from the water, “so easy and regular that they might be termed natural steps” (79). By daylight, the stage lighting extinguished, he cannot tell whether the path to the cave is “natural, or roughly hewn in the rock”; he descends more natural steps, “making use of them as a staircase” (82-83). He soon finds himself at “the breakfast table” with Alice and Evan: as stagy a scene as any to be

found in *Waverley*, except perhaps Flora's song in the "sylvan amphitheatre" of Chapter Twenty-Two (105).

*Ivanhoe*'s "sylvan amphitheatre" is centered on an "aged oak," one of many such in the Merry England of the novel, and is the location for revelations between two of the novel's legendary characters, Robin Hood and Richard Lionheart. Robin Hood boldly claims the surroundings as his own, and declares his own kingship to the King of England: "in these glades I am monarch—they are my kingdom" (272). Accordingly, Robin seats himself on an obliging bit of scenery, "a throne of turf erected under the twisted branches of the huge oak" (272).

In *The Monastery* Halbert Glendenning's encounter with the White Lady takes place in an underground cavern steeped in stagecraft. Here Halbert is entrusted with the bible that has caused so much trouble among Glendearg's residents, the occasion of many threats and warnings from the monastic brothers. Fittingly, the bible lies within a mystic flame on "an altar of alabaster," which "formed the central point of the grotto, which was of a round form, and very high in the roof, resembling in some respects the dome of a cathedral" (112). The "natural cavern" is even cross-shaped, with "four long galleries, or arcades" stretching out into the darkness "corresponding to the four points of the compass" (112).

Such moments in Scott are legion; their theatrical *tableau* quality may be that most imitated by his successors in the form.<sup>14</sup> The ambiguity between natural scenery and artificial or architectural structures creates many effects, reveals many influences. In many places it indeed serves a general picturesque or Romantic aesthetic, reminiscent of Dore's nature scenes where trees and fauna form arches over the human figures. In others the effect sought is more obviously

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, this performative and "framed" moment from G. P. R. James' *Forest Days* (1843): "Whether planted by accident or design I know not, . . . six old oaks came forward from the rest of the wood, three on either hand, at the distance of about forty feet apart, forming a sort of natural avenue. . . . under this natural canopy was spread out the long table" (1:171). Here nature and history, accident and design, complement each other, forming not so much a "painted backdrop" as a living one, like an ornamental garden.

a dramatic one, intentionally evoking stage trappings, like the two scenes from *Waverley* cited above. In still others where the attention is on ruins, the natural/architectural shifting participates in an investigation of historical knowledge: it becomes one of Scott's tools for picturing and criticizing the processes of history. I will further examine this particular use of ruin scenery in the next chapter, but the point I'd like to establish now is that the theatrical nature of *Waverley* space, its power of being "at once fictitious and real," grants Scott the ability to encode or embed different layers of meaning into the scene. As such it does more than just evoke another generic category for Scott: it implies a stage where many categories, the generic palimpsest itself, can be played out for the reader, thus engaging in Moretti's "rhetoric of contrasts."

The idea is expressed with extraordinary clarity, yet disarming playfulness in *St. Ronan's Well* (1823). Scott's only novel set in his own time has had the misfortune of being considered a disastrously ill-conceived imitation of Jane Austen, but it actually shows little attempt at reproducing the drama of "ordinary common-place things" Scott so admired in Austen, Edgeworth, and Susan Ferrier. If anything it's Dickensian, anticipating *Pickwick* in its gathering together a variety of loud "type" characters into social spaces. Although set in Scottish Border locations and set in his own day—thus affording a perfect opportunity for journalistic "recording"—it shows little interest in landscape or architecture. It does, however, contain an informative juxtaposition of palimpsest narrative and outdoor/theatrical space in Chapter Twenty, when its eccentric characters gather for "theatricals" in an ornamental garden. The "old-fashioned hedges and walks . . . must necessarily serve for stage and scenery," says Scott, who recalls warmly in a footnote the open air theatrics he has witnessed at Kilruddery: "It has a wild and romantic effect, reminding one of the scene in which Bottom rehearsed his pageant, with a green plot for a stage, and a hawthorn brake for a tiring-room" (263).

The patchwork performance that takes place is itself a literary palimpsest, hurriedly composed from scraps scrounged from the pages of various dramas (“it now only remained to rummage the circulating library”), the focus not so much on narrative as familiar *tableaux*, with performers “properly dressed for the occasion, as representing some well-known historical or dramatic characters, in a group, having reference to history, or to a scene of the drama” (264-265). Eventually *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is selected, but only because it affords “the greatest variety of characters, and most scope of course for the intended representation” (265-266). Costuming only muddles this ramshackle performance more, as muslin trousers and a turban are used to convey Oberon, and a uniformed Scots captain stands in for an Ancient Greek “on the authority of Childe Harold, who remarks the similarity between the Highland and Grecian costume” (266-267).

For this high-spirited, largely impromptu performance, Waverley space does what it always does: arrange itself to accommodate the drama. The bit of wilderness chosen “as the stage most proper for the exhibition of the intended dramatic picture” accords with most Waverley space in its fortuitous architectural qualities (as Scott puts it, “it afforded many facilities”) (274). A “rising bank exactly in front” lends itself to theatre-style seating, while the covered trellis and its private door “seemed as if it had been planted on purpose for the proposed exhibition, as it served to give the personages of the a drama a convenient and secret access” from dressing room to stage (274). Encouraged by the ground’s facilities, the performers lengthen and enliven the performance, staging several scenes “selected and arranged from different parts of the drama; thus giving some duration, as well as some variety . . . besides the advantage of separating and contrasting the tragic and comic scenes” (274).

The performance, a hodge-podge adapted from drama and other sources, thus blends with, complements, and is complemented by the scenery, the focus of both being on novelty, variety, and pleasing contrast:

there was also a singular and pleasing contrast between the fantastic figures who wandered through the gardens, and the quiet scene itself, to which the old clipt hedges, the formal distribution of the ground, and the antiquated appearance of one or two fountains and artificial cascades, . . . gave an appearance of unusual simplicity and seclusion, and which seemed rather to belong to the last than to the present generation. (284)

Scott reaches back to the eighteenth century in the spaces around the drama, although here characterized as “formal” and “simple,” whereas what is old in Scott’s narratives—what Raymond Williams might call its “residual” narrative strain—tends to be reckless and complicated, after the manner of Gothic or picaresque. But there are other signs that *St. Ronan’s Well*’s theatricals should be taken as the play-within-the-play, the textual mirror of the Waverley series itself. The narrator’s sly hint that the performance’s spontaneity and good will has been an advantage (which “rendered the masquerade more entertaining than others of the kind for which more ample and magnificent preparations have been made”) recalls Scott’s persistent conviction that his own best literary work was executed quickly and without a plan (284). The spectators’ spell-breaking comments on the drama as it unfolds, their misunderstanding of the representations and prosaic focus on the costumes, recall not only Scott’s earthy comic relief characters but also some of the series’ garrulous pseudo-editors. And in Gow the fiddler’s opening of the performance, it’s hard not to see Scott dropping a clever hint about his own authorship of the Waverley series:

And when he changed his strain to an adagio, and suffered his music to die away in the plaintive notes of Roslin Castle, the echoes of the old walls were, after a long slumber, awakened by that enthusiastic burst of applause, with which the Scots usually received and rewarded their country’s gifted minstrel. (275)

This, less than 20 years after Scott had achieved fame with *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

### **“Violent Divisions”: Scott Country and the Critics**

Scott is a novelist over whom we shall violently divide.

- E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*

Forster’s familiar anti-Scott harangue has maintained unfortunate currency with critics, especially considering its very particularly Modern and New Critical context and the facetiousness with which it was delivered; as A. N. Wilson notes, it was a speech full of “cheap jokes designed to get a laugh out of his Cambridge audience” (72). In one respect, however, Forster’s comments have proven oddly prophetic: Scott remains a novelist that divides critical approaches. When it comes to accounting for the significance of “Scott country”—usually meant as certain areas of Scotland, but for my purposes, Waverley space generally—the majority of critics have not been so much divided as curiously silent. Even the most influential critiques of the novels rarely explore the poetics of the famous landscapes or their narratological significance. Scott is understood to be participating in the Romantic era’s enthusiasm for sublime and moody landscapes and this participation is taken for what it’s worth to the individual critic. But when they have paid particular notice to the landscapes, critics and commentators have found themselves at odds. It is in many ways the typical critical procedure with Scott, and strangely confirms yet again Forster’s opening salvo. Before continuing my characterization of Waverley space in the next chapter, it’s worth considering briefly how a few thinkers have thought about Waverley space, since their disagreements indicate (at the very least) that questions of genre and epistemology are at stake here.

To some degree the very effectiveness of Scott’s landscape description must have led to its dismissal as mere picturesque effect or Romantic mood-setting decoration; often self-consciously pictorial, the descriptive sequences lend themselves well to constructions of Scott as superficial, phony, and over-concerned with appearances and effects, the Scott who “approached his

characters from the outside” (Allen 129) because he lacked psychological depth. These associations with fads and excesses may have served to discourage critical attention to the Waverley landscape as Scott criticism grew more attentive to realistic modes and the socio-political content of the novels. Georg Lukacs’ championing of Scott in *The Historical Novel* (1937) makes clear that he did not see Scott as a phony, nor his work as lacking depth, but regarding the landscapes Lukacs is conspicuously silent. Presuming them to be part of the “picturesque description” which he felt had been mistaken to be “the essence of [Scott’s] art” (41), Lukacs acknowledges Scott’s fondness for such description but does not elaborate.

It’s regrettable that he does not, since Scott’s novels have commonly been divided, classified, and assessed according to their locales—either Scotland or non-Scotland—and although Lukacs does not invent this distinction he certainly upholds it, drawing the majority of his examples from the Scottish novels. Further, Lukacs clearly conceives of history and historical acumen in terms of spectators and landscapes in several places in *The Historical Novel*, placing worthwhile practitioners of the form on “summits,” alleging they are “in a position to see” real popular history, characterizing their achievement as portraying “the *sunset*” of heroic-revolutionary ideals (333, 344, original emphasis). Lukacs figures historical dialectic or its absence topographically, as when he cites that history post-1848 “has no direction, no summits, and no depressions” (176). Clearly one of Lukacs’ own persistent metaphors for history is landscape, making his reluctance to examine the Waverley landscape especially unfortunate.

Many of Scott’s later critics have followed Lukacs either in underemphasizing Waverley spaces or, more rarely, incorporating them into an understanding of Scott that diminishes his association with Romanticism and its favorite modes. James Reed’s *Sir Walter Scott: Landscape and Locality* (1980) is one of the most significant attempts post-Lukacs to foreground the

Waverley landscapes, but takes it as given that Scott's best gifts are primarily realistic or even journalistic, claiming that Scott's "prime advantage lay in his dealing with living history" (20). Reed's study focuses on the landscapes that Lukacs had ignored, but in a way that dovetails with Lukacs' prioritization of Scott's gifts. Like the authentic dialogue and convincing world-maintaining peasantry, Reed posits the Scott landscape as a contextual aid for the events and characters, a continuum apart from which "his most convincing, most enduring characters are simply not conceivable" (50). Reed again means the Scottish characters, the Scottish landscapes; he emphasizes the superiority of the Scottish over the chivalry novels throughout his study, pointing to (among other things) the observed detail, the truthfulness, the genuineness of the landscape. In his opposition between Scott "recording" and "inventing," it's easy to see how Reed seeks to connect the Waverley landscape with other realistic or "antiromantic" components increasingly valued in the novels and to separate them from being part of superficial "fictional gloss."

Although Reed's reading of Scott appreciates his folkloristic and Romantic elements, it still has the effect of excluding from focus the majority of Scott's work—as I argued in the Chapter One, it is the sort of conventional wisdom that has had restrictive and diminishing consequences for both Scott's work and the genre. In some ways Reed's study is a welcome leap forward, a way to reconcile the famous Waverley landscapes with dominant critical opinions about Scott and include them in the conversation. But it comes at a double cost: first, of excluding the non-Scottish spaces once again, and second, of diminishing the metaphoric and symbolic roles played by the Waverley spaces generally. Reed's is a reading that links Waverley spaces with Scott the historian and neglects their connections with Scott the poet; it's the sort of

contradictory tension that has always characterized commentary about the historical novel, Manzoni's "impossible" genre, and Scott in particular.

So, for example, while Reed finds Scott celebrating Scottish "locality" through the authenticity of the landscapes, Saree Makdisi finds him appropriating Scottish territory in *Waverley*'s "fluid" and "imaginary" Scottish landscapes (76, 84, 88). Makdisi is not timid about recognizing Scott's manipulation of the Scottish landscape—he particularly refutes Reed's idea that Scott is recording and not inventing the scene, claiming that Edward Waverley's Scottish adventure is indeed "an imaginary tour of the highlands" (84-85). For Makdisi this creative alteration of the landscape in *Waverley* is pernicious, an act that makes the narrator complicit in the destructive forces of British imperialism. For David Brown, on the other hand, such complicity is almost a moot point, since he isolates the narrator from most imaginary landscape alteration by separating Edward Waverley's "romantic English" responses and "romantic interest in the scenic" from Scott's own "naturalistic depiction" (10, 25-26).<sup>15</sup>

The spatiality of these contradictory views is worth noting. For Brown realistic depiction is the norm for Scott—the symbolic or "analytic" descriptive moment is an anomaly. For Makdisi symbolic, unrealistic or 'fluid' landscape description is the norm, when Scott is describing Scotland. For Reed it is the norm when Scott is describing any place other than Scotland. Clearly, Scott is a novelist over whom we shall violently divide.

To see another critical clash that looks remarkably like this over Scott and landscape, one need look no further than the longstanding debate about Scott and genre—no coincidence, if space and genre in the *Waverley* Novels are inextricably bound. Many persistent Scott truisms

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<sup>15</sup> Alistair Duckworth confirms this idea less explicitly when he notes that Edward Waverley's memory selects certain attractively romantic elements within scenes and suppresses harsh realities, 'a sign of his immaturity' (*Landscape* 115).

are in effect negative statements, faulting his novels for not meeting certain guidelines or standards; that they seem to be confirmed by a diverse spectrum of commentators suggests they are true statements. But if critics fault Scott with many of the same defects, their assumptions about what Scott was attempting, how or whether he succeeded, his view of history, his relation to the novel and to genre are utterly contradictory. So Twain's charge that Scott fostered "sham chivalries" and silly romantic sentimentality collides hard with Lukacs' praise for his affinity with the laborers and criticism of the ruling classes and "renunciation [and] conquest of Romanticism" (33). Lukacs' appreciation of his concrete historicism does not tally well with Forster's arbitrary tale-twister profiting by narrative ragged ends. Walter Allen's declaration that Scott is an "antiromantic sturdy humorist" (134) reverses Twain's idea that Scott restored all the "medieval chivalry-silliness" that *Don Quixote* had done away with (*Life* 251), and so on. For Twain, Scott is a fairy tale romancer; for Forster, a folklorist; for Lukacs, a historian-artist; for Allen, a humorist. Each seems to agree with the other about ways Scott failed, but no two agree about what he should have been attempting. Rarely has an important novelist been so claimed, or disclaimed, by so many different sides.

Practically all of these claims can be verified by some feature or other of the twenty-odd Waverley Novels, and, what may be more important, may just as rapidly be turned to positive or negative ends according to the agenda of the particular critic. Because they seem to offer a bit of everything, a bit of everything can be said about them, and has been. Engaged in Moretti's rhetoric of contrasts, the Waverley Novels "lend themselves to univocal readings because their complexity is unobtrusive" (Shaw 159). Consequently, lines get drawn in the sand by critics, and oppositions are set up—about landscape, certainly, but also about genre, accuracy, authenticity, seriousness, historical knowledge, moral knowledge, metaphysical knowledge—which may

serve well to describe a particular novel, but work less effectively within the broader context of Waverley Novels, a group increasingly being understood as an “internally consistent system” (Robertson 132).

At the very least, the Waverley landscape is important enough to feature in a critical estimation of Scott and the historical novel that “captures as much of his diversity as possible” (Shaw 159); at most, the shifting, uncertain, multi-purposeful landscape is a direct index or reflection of this diversity. Its polyphonic effects and varying modes echo the many voices and points of view in the novels, recalling both the landscapes and the narratives of medieval romance where “nothing is subordinated” (Beer 20). Further, the inconstancy of the landscape remains one of the only constants in the Waverley Novels. The place may be Scotland, England, France, Turkey, Palestine, or India. The time may be sixty or six hundred years since. But the poetic qualities of the landscape scene, and its ability and propensity to symbolize, reflect and argue a variety of ideas, remain consistent.

### CHAPTER 3 (MIS)READING THE PALIMPSEST: READERS OF WAVERLEY SPACE

The historical novel has always been rooted in paradox. If as a genre it is given shape by real world events more self-consciously than other novels, it also tends to create its own world self-consciously, and sometimes even to withdraw into it with nostalgic indulgence. One of the genre's least intuitive paradoxes remains, then, that these narratives based on historical fact lend themselves readily to fantasy and escapism. As I stated in Chapter One, there is more "give," not less, in the boundaries and limits of their fictional worlds. The form's primary purpose of transporting the reader into a felt past depends on rendering that past in recognizable terms—hence the paradoxical presence of "necessary anachronism" as pointed out by Lukacs, the careful updating of certain elements within the historical picture so that the reader can comprehend the action. Lukacs contends, as did Scott himself, the inflexible use of authentic historical details, far from bolstering the authenticity of the story, is certain to destroy any illusion of reality whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> It is the fictional details which evoke Barthes' "reality effect" in historical narrative: the seemingly unimportant sensory perceptions and imagined conversations that nevertheless put the reader "there," in the historical moment.

Yet it has not been, simply, that fictional elements have been employed to lend a "reality effect" to historical fact, but that elements from many styles, genres, and fields of knowledge have been combined to create and amplify a variety of effects, including "unreality." The gathering of materials from all walks of knowledge and types of writing both restores and invents the past for the reader; it comprehends and "improves" the past, aesthetically and rationally. As Judith Wilt has noted, the Waverley mine of history is always a salted mine, where

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<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve chides Flaubert in this respect, falling back on the old resurrection metaphor: "One can reconstruct antiquity, but one cannot bring it back to life" (qtd in Lukacs 187).

historical (arti-)facts are artfully, sometimes artificially deposited (*Secret Leaves* 155-156). The sampling of genres is a sampling of knowledge ways and means, articulating the past both in its particulars and in its universal character. It's how the historical novel became the "all-purpose" variety show of a novel form Moretti describes, and also why Scott and the Victorian historical novelists who followed him built "splendid theatres" from the spaces in their novels: authentic yet unreal, spaces in which to enact the past. Not only anachronism but also a very deliberately planned artificiality is "necessary."

This chapter builds upon the generically and spatially diverse spaces of the historical novel I described in the first chapter by postulating both the readers of these spaces and the kinds of knowledge they may reliably gather from them. With a few remarkable exceptions, Scott's readers of space are divided between young men struggling to make sense of the spaces around them (and hence of life, or love, or their own characters) and marginalized, almost supernatural characters of both sexes who are mysteriously in tune with both space and knowledge. I will argue here that the readers of Waverley space, both the frustrated misreader and the unreal but ideal "elemental" reader, confirm that it is the space of paradox and palimpsest: a space whose epistemological valence exceeds and confounds all conventional methods of understanding it. In the readers of Waverley space we can see both the warp of reality and woof of unreality, together weaving a paradoxical world-text that defies any single method to comprehend it.

In the previous chapter I described some of the common practices Scott uses in his descriptions of space, focusing particularly on two general traits: the encoding of generic ideas into space, and the implications of unstable historical novel space for dynamics of authenticity and locality. Both are alike in emphasizing flexibility and the permeability of boundaries: neither types of narrative nor of space are fixed in Scott but may transmute, gradually or suddenly. As

genres and styles of narrative are cycled through, so are spaces that are generically conscious or ambient—sometimes appropriate, sometimes opposed to the narratives they foreground. If historical novel space is therefore a text itself or behaves like one, if it is how the genre figures or images narratives, the next logical question to consider is that of its reader. Who makes up the foregrounded “readership” of the text of space, and what informs the connection between them and the spaces they both read/interpret and inhabit?

Thinking about the reader leads us to think about the highly figurative, often stylized character of historical novel space: that it is a deliberate technical space, where ideas are worked out. The shifting between categories of story and scene that takes place in Scott should therefore draw our attention to categories of knowledge: historical novel space is uncertain space epistemologically. What is being sifted, challenged, opposed and interrogated in the historical novel’s narrative is knowledge and ways of knowing. Perhaps the specifics of a historical time and place are weighed against universal human nature; or, religious insight opposes secular humanism (or perhaps, one type of religious knowledge opposes another); or, formal education contests with folk wisdom; or, the instincts of one race, nation or culture are pitted against another—like the conflict between Saxon/English stubbornness and Norman/French delicacy that defines much of *Ivanhoe*. At the very least, “knowledge-then” opposes “knowledge-now,” with hindsight giving the author and reader a superior, at times ironic perspective. The epistemological grasp sought in the historical novel is so wide, the variety of truths so disparate, that shifting between categories is inevitable; the paradoxes of representation such shifting produces play out in the genre’s spaces.

Because it needs to construct an imagined historical space, the historical novel positively depends on this wide borrowing and incorporation of materials from other genres. Lukacs

particularly emphasized the need for historical novels to bring the past before us plastically, so that we should not regard its psychology and ethics as historical novelties but as phases of development which should concern us (42). Yet even allowing for other historical visions less process-oriented than Lukacs', the implication works: the past is best resurrected via inauthentic (non-historical) or artificial means. Frequently these means are dramatic, legendary, or even mythic. The historical novelist taps into alternative methods of representation and alternative means of knowing to create a cohesive, rhetorical and multifaceted (to say nothing of aesthetically pleasing) version of the past for the reader.

So, for instance, while the British historical novelist cannot reproduce the actual language of medieval England comprehensibly, he may imitate the language of drama, of Shakespeare's medieval characters, and evoke an older, heightened style of dialogue that feels like the Middle Ages, though obviously inauthentic. Scott does precisely this in *Ivanhoe*, thus causing twelfth century characters to speak sixteenth century dramatic dialogue, for the benefit of nineteenth century readers.<sup>2</sup> While in no way authentic, the dialogue sounds and feels antiquated and Othered to the reader—surely the reason medieval knights and ladies have been speaking in this anachronistic fashion in hundreds of historical novels and period films ever since. “Do not mistake me, sir,” says the mysterious Benedictine in *The Monastery*'s introduction, immediately salting the mine: “I did not mean to say the Memoirs were written in the sixteenth century, but only that they were compiled from authentic materials of that period, but written in the taste and language of the present day” (28). Lukacs allows this sort of adaptive power to historical drama, which he maintains possesses a greater possibility for necessary anachronism than does the novel

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<sup>2</sup> “But the same motive which prevents my writing the dialogue of the piece in Anglo-Saxon or Norman-French, . . . prevents my attempting to confine myself within the limits of the period in which my story is laid. It is necessary, for exciting interest of any kind, that the subject assumed should be, as it were, translated into the manners as well as the language of the age we live in” (“Dedicatory Epistle,” *Ivanhoe* 9).

(151), but Scott's novels and those of his successors are drenched in literary artifice of this kind: it is the stuff the palimpsest is made of. By citing old poetry, singing old ballads, and telling old ghost stories, they allowed the past (or a sense of the past) to resonate through their new fictional productions, imbuing them with an age that is more felt intuitively than known intellectually.

Ideally, the historical novelist's task is filling voids creatively, building fictions upon the foundations, frames and ramparts of recorded history. The restoration of such crumbling remnants are most often accomplished "in the spirit" of the past—like the self-conscious Gothicism of London's Houses of Parliament, which Kenneth Clarke called "a Waverley Novel in stone" (qtd in Wilson, 150). Avrom Fleishman's analogy of the historical novelist restoring a damaged tapestry, weaving "whole scenes or figures to fill the empty spaces which a more austere museum curator [i.e. the historian] might leave bare" (6-7), is an excellent paradigm to bear in mind. The tapestry weaver inserts "on the basis of sympathy, experience, and esthetic propriety, [lending] revived expressiveness and coherence to the tapestry" (7). If true for the tapestry of narrative, true also for the tapestry of space in the historical novel.

I have endeavored in my first chapter to show something of Walter Scott's own tapestry weaving, and to demonstrate how his creative filling of voids or blending of ideas is reflected by the spaces in his novels. Scott's historical fiction amuses itself (and the amused note is always palpable) by subtly filling in the narrative spaces between the seemingly distinct poles of historical and fictional genres—teasing fiction out of allegedly historical accounts, handing over characterization duties to fragments of verse, superimposing different frames of reference over the same actions and ideas until no distinct boundary lines are visible. Well aware of the aesthetic complexity of effect he was courting, Scott also understood the fittingness of using

conflated and confused narrative methods to relate historical accounts. This awareness is evinced by the numerous mangled histories he places in the mouths of his characters, like Maurice De Bracy's rumination on the Biblical tribe of Benjamin, in *Ivanhoe*:

[Prior Aymer] told how, long since in Palestine, a deadly feud arose between the clan of Benjamin and the rest of the Israelitish nation; and how they cut to pieces well nigh all the chivalry of that clan; and how they swore by our Blessed Lady that they would not permit those who remained to marry in their lineage; and how they became grieved for their vow, and sent to consult his holiness the Pope how they might be absolved from it; and how, by the advice of the Holy Father, the youth of the tribe of Benjamin carried off from a superb tournament all the ladies who were there present . . . . (135-136)

De Bracy, a twelfth century Christian knight, here conflates Hebrew scripture with Livy's account of the Sabine women and updates the entire story to a Medieval European context (Tulloch 444). This sort of absurd misremembering and the playful lack of confidence in the historical record it implies characterize knowledge in the Waverley Novels, informing their uninhibited employment of devices and styles from other genres.<sup>3</sup> No particular method of retrieving and interpreting knowledge (especially of the past) is ever completely trustworthy, nor is any specific means of knowledge-gathering ever granted preeminence in Scott—a point which *The Antiquary* (1816), Scott's own favorite of his novels, makes especially clear. Consequently, no single narrator, narrative form, metaphorical device, or category of representation can recreate the world of the past, can resurrect its splendors or its horrors meaningfully for the reader. The best that can be hoped for is fragments and scraps—disjointed pieces of verse, song, legend, tale, which the speculative historian may (or may not) be able to reassemble, but from which the uncertain past may be artfully arranged, intuited and felt.

Maurice De Bracy's patchwork conflation of history, scripture, legend and contemporary circumstance could be thought of as the narrative equivalent of the Waverley scene at its most

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<sup>3</sup> Scott tips his hand with Fitzurse's reply: "I have heard the story, . . . though either the Prior or thou hast made some singular alterations in date and circumstance" (136).

symbolically charged. Composed of various kinds of truth, it is nevertheless palpably false—even comically artificial. Scott’s characters, so often young men just setting out in life, encounter such complexes and clusters of ideas in the scene: encounters which call attention to and challenge their powers of discernment. One of the dramas most often enacted, then, in the Waverley scene is reading and misreading space. Everywhere in Scott we find characters drawing mistaken conclusions from the landscape, muddling knowledge as De Bracy muddles historical narrative; there are also characters who seem somehow mysteriously in touch with the landscape. Knowing the landscape—learning to read and navigate it, and the epistemological problem of those who seem to know it instinctively—thus becomes bound up with the Waverley Novel’s interrogation of different kinds of knowledge and modes of truth.

### **Reading Males, Leading Males: Waverley Space and the Hero**

With the text of space bearing so much significance in Scott, small wonder that he focuses so much on its readers: typically young men of a lesser noble or gentrified class, trying to make or mend their fortunes. In short, the reader of space is most often a qualified version of Lukacs’ “wavering hero,” the young man groping his way between causes, cultures, and points of view, thus enabling the reader to understand the different currents (or the thesis and antithesis) of historical conflicts. I maintain the caveat because, while Lukacs’ middle-of-the-road hero does not appear in the majority of Waverley Novels, the young aristocrat either reading or misreading space does.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Lukacs’ idea of the Scott hero works very well to characterize the protagonists of *Waverley*, *Rob Roy*, *Old Mortality* and a few other of the novels. But the model works less well for those stauncher protagonists who remain committed to a cause and point-of-view throughout: these are most often chivalric heroes (like Wilfred of Ivanhoe) but may also be from more recent periods, like *The Bride of Lammermoor*’s Edgar Ravenswood or *Guy Mannering*’s Harry Bertram. Scott’s alternative method for depicting different sides of a conflict is to follow two such committed, yet opposing protagonists, like the Catholic/Protestant Glendenning brothers in *The Monastery*.

The space being read may be the landscape in particular, but may also be the cityscape or the “horizon” generally: the weather and seasons, the stars. Occasionally readers of space are actually astrologers, looking to the heavens for keys to future actions. Invariably scoffed at by the narrator, such readings may be validated by the novel’s unfolding events (as in *Guy Mannering*) or shown to be exceedingly clever frauds (as in *Quentin Durward* and *Kenilworth*). Scott’s readers echo his broader conviction about reading space: that it always involves interpreting, but also implies the ability to negotiate or navigate space—to make use of knowledge gained to travel through the landscape (or, in the case of astrological predictions, the future).

Accordingly, readers and misreaders of Waverley space are often military men: commanders scoping out good ground for battle or reconnoitering for the enemy. This is always a perilous exercise, as the very pocketed, dramatic nature of the landscape also serves to conceal armies and ambushes.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the best remembered of such scenes is Captain Thornton’s poor reconnaissance in Chapter 30 of *Rob Roy*. As Thornton’s ill-fated group of soldiers approach Helen Macgregor’s hidden Highland soldiers later in the chapter, the landscape itself functions as a sort of harbinger of real and imagined dangers; it is a place where “Man alone seemed to be placed in a state of inferiority, in a scene where all the ordinary features of nature were raised and exalted” (278). The consequence of Thornton’s inability to find meaning in this strangely complicit landscape is death for himself and his squad.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Uvedale Price characterizes a picturesque landscape as arousing curiosity in the viewer both about “what might have happened there” (the scene’s historical background) and also “what might be contained there” (the hidden pockets, passageways, and enclosures concealed by the landscape) (356). The Scott landscape therefore takes part in traditional notions of the picturesque, but also serves dramatic and narrative purposes.

<sup>6</sup> Since many of the historical events Scott references feature disastrous misreadings of landscape—like the Battle of Culloden—we can assume he understood the immense consequences of interpreting and adapting correctly.

Thornton's misreading underlines the gender significance of landscape reading for the Waverley Novels, a gendering pattern that gets incorporated into the historical novel matrix generally—namely, that successful landscape reading is a masculine rite and responsibility, particularly when the reading male is also a leading male. Navigating a treacherous forest, surviving the wild landscape, finding meaning in the crumbling ruin, foreseeing the conclusion of a battle in the layout of ground—all become moments of reading associated with the male heroes of historical novels, whether the knights of Scott's chivalry tales or the boy adventurers of G. A. Henty and Stevenson. That the British historical novel narrative is in general a proving ground for males, a generic space where masculine values are inscribed, rehearsed, and measured, is of course a familiar notion to readers and critics. The confidence with which Scott's novels were recommended as novels not merely inoffensive but proactively healthy and wholesome, especially for boys, bears out their preoccupations with gender roles and responsibilities.<sup>7</sup> But Scott himself volunteers this concern in various places as well, as in the Abbotsford Introduction to *The Fortunes of Nigel*, a novel he claims is about contrasting types of male character.<sup>8</sup> What has been less observed is the extent to which masculine virtues or their lack are revealed and tested by interaction with the landscapes in Scott.

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<sup>7</sup> "There are no such books as [Scott's] for the sick-room, or freshening the painful intervals of a morbid mind" (Bagehot, "The Waverley Novels" 66). Bagehot also notes the "peculiar healthiness which distinguishes [Scott]: "over all [his subjects] he has spread the glow of sentiment natural to a manly mind, and an atmosphere of generosity congenial to a cheerful one" (46, 66). The genre's perceived healthiness and its predilection for weighing and sorting masculinities are a major reason for its enthusiastic adoption by juvenile fiction, by the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. No accident that collectors of vintage historical novels so often school prize labels in the flyleaf.

<sup>8</sup> The instruction of two noblemen will allow Scott to examine "the aristocratic haughtiness" of the time of James I, and "the prevailing tone of selfish luxury which seems more peculiar to ours, as well as the seductions of pleasure which are predominant to all" (xx). Scott cites his source material, Terence's *Adelphi*, to illustrate further: "In this old play, two men of fortune, brothers, educate two young men, sons to the one and nephews to the other, each under his own system of rigour and indulgence" (xxiv).

The ability to read meaning in the landscape rapidly becomes a test of mature male discernment in the historical novel, distinguishing Cooper's American woodsman Natty Bumppo from the women (and British soldiers!) who depend on him, and informing a host of heroic characters whose superior ability to read the land allows them to conceal themselves from enemies (e.g. *Ivanhoe*'s Robin Hood, *Kenilworth*'s Wayland Smith, G. P. R. James' *The Woodman*). It is one set of skills that Jim Hawkins sets about learning on Treasure Island, whose acquisition is intrinsically bound up with his own developing masculinity. Reading the rural landscape, interpreting the built landscape, is the mark of a capable man, and a training ritual for boys. The kind of text being read in space may change from novel to novel or even scene to scene, but the positing of a young male as a reader of the text remains a distinguishing feature of the historical novel narrative, one for which Scott's novels provided the model.

There are of course striking exceptions to this pattern. Part of the wonder implicit in Jeanie Deans' 370 mile trip to London—essentially a reversal of Waverley's journey north—is that an unprotected woman has been able to negotiate such a perilous landscape. *Rob Roy*'s Helen Macgregor and Die Vernon also evince great abilities to read the land and profit by their knowledge, abilities far in excess of the novel's protagonist, Frank Osbaldistone. But Scott's women are most often led through threatening landscapes by men, providing various heroes with the performative opportunity to read and navigate the troubled palimpsest of space. *Ivanhoe*, *Kenilworth*, and *Quentin Durward* all devote significant portions of their narratives to males escorting females through forests and by-ways, a pattern that Fenimore Cooper was quick to imitate in his *Leatherstocking Tales*.

The idea that the land tests and determines the male hero in the historical novel is to some degree intuitive, harking back to the genre's sources in medieval romance. Scott himself self-

consciously sets up a gender division between types of novels—generally between novels and romances, specifically between Austen’s “new class of fictions” with their meticulous knowledge of the domestic sphere and the grandiose, overtly exotic and romantic style of his own works. Scott makes this contrast the thematic center of his review of *Emma*, and significantly, the metaphor he builds toward is spatial.

Upon the whole, the turn of this author’s novels bears the same relation to that of the sentimental and romantic cast, that cornfields and cottages and meadows bear to the highly adorned grounds of a show mansion, or the rugged sublimities of a mountain landscape. (421-422)

Scott’s spatial idealization of the romance shows that he is, somewhat mischievously, referencing his own works as well, the “big bow wow strain” of the historical novel. It invokes both the upper classes (the “show mansion”) and romantic rural scenery (the “rugged sublimities of a mountain landscape”)—familiar representative subjects in all of his novels, and certainly prominent in the only two published at the time of the review, *Waverley* and *Guy Mannering*. He also makes clear in these passages his assumption that men and women write different types of novels and that their separate investigations of life and experience may be likened to landscape: the familiar, domesticated, agricultural landscape of Austen’s England (“cornfields and cottages”) and the sublime, eerie and epic ground of the “romantic” historical novel.<sup>9</sup>

There are places within the *Waverley* landscape where masculine value itself, or at least some ideals of heroic or chivalric virtue, have been encoded into the text of space. As *Waverley*’s

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Bagehot echoes this idea in his examination of “The *Waverley* Novels” in 1858, where he separates Scott’s novels from the new “ubiquitous” novel that “aims at describing the whole of human life in all its spheres, in all its aspects, with all its varied interests, aims, and objects” (46-47). Bagehot finds that female novelists represent the ideal of “ubiquitous” fiction—an irony, since Bagehot assumes that many aspects of life should be prohibited from any representation, and that women’s limited encounter with the world would limit their experience even further. In part, the ubiquitous novelist can succeed in a domestic setting, Bagehot reasons, because domestic fiction can conceivably build a world small enough to be conceived in its totality. It can therefore successfully hold the reader’s attention to the relatively mundane events of its plot, the everyday “love-story” foregrounded in the novel. The *Waverley* Novels, on the other hand, he separates according to their “romantic sense”—their roving eye, large canvas, and equal but fragmentary interest in everything. “The hero and heroine walk among the trees of the forest according to rule, but we are expected to take an interest in the forest as well as them” (48).

“pass of peril” scene brings to mind the mythological monsters of Mallory or Spenser, so these scenes evoke the legendary knight and the fabled courts of chivalry. More notably, the description of *Kenilworth*’s Lidcote Hall and its grounds, the ancient and rapidly declining estate of the Robsart family, features a landscape where not only history but chivalric manhood are decaying before the reader’s eyes.

Though the novel is set within Elizabethan times, the old house bears the marks of medieval concerns: surrounded by a moat, crossed by a drawbridge and “defended by an octagonal tower, of ancient brick-work, but so clothed with ivy and other creepers that it was difficult to discover of what materials it was constructed” (112). One of the house’s towers has been fitted with a clock, “but the clock was now standing still,” as indeed time seems to have stopped within the house as well (112). The medievalism of Sir Hugh Robsart, usually called “the old knight,” is overdetermined by his habits and attendants; he is accompanied only by a “squire of the body” and an expert in heraldry, with whom he clucks sadly over changing times, new words and forgotten battles. Reflecting the decrepitude of Sir Hugh’s chivalric ideals is the interior space of the hall: “a long low parlour, amply furnished with implements of the chase, and with sylvan trophies, by a massive stone chimney, over which hung a sword and suit of armour, somewhat obscured by neglect” (114).

Sir Hugh's declining health and spirits have been brought on by a moral crisis: he believes his daughter Amy has taken up with a petty courtier, Varney. Yet adding to his distress is his inability to “name” Amy according to the old moral code—“I were wrong to name broadly the base thing she has become—there is some new court name for it, I warrant me” (115). His disillusionment at Amy’s loss and at his inability to make sense of its significance in the new

court atmosphere lead him to project his longing, a wish for death and peace, onto the estate grounds:

This grief is to my bewildered mind what the Church of Lidcote is to our south wood; we may lose ourselves among the briars and thickets, but from the end of each avenue we see the old grey steeple and the grave of my forefathers. I would I were to travel that road tomorrow. (116)

Spaces like Lidcote Hall encode more than just history, though the problem of changing times is as evident in this scene as the stopped clock. They also reflect character—in this case, a type of masculine character seemingly on the wane. Not merely the crumbling castle but also the rusted knight appears in this scene, in which an old knight wishes he could rescue a damsel who doesn't wish to be rescued.

Such rhetorical spaces are in keeping with Scott's broader preoccupation with the fate of the aristocracy, particularly the aristocratic male, over eight centuries of European history—the central theme that Avrom Fleishman points out as one of the few unifying features of the entire Waverley series. Scott's careful analysis of the idea of a gentleman over diverse historical periods, what Fleishman argues is "his ulterior social motive in his choice of historical subjects," demands that he measure ideals of aristocratic and chivalric behavior against changing circumstances and environments, whether these be the behavior of the historical aristocracy or of the natural aristocracy "only partly overlapping it and marked by its innate 'intellectual and moral qualities'" (52). It makes sense, then, that Scott repeatedly loses his young male protagonists, gentlemen by birth or by behavior, within a diverse set of landscapes, and focuses on their ability or inability to adapt. It is in this type of scenario, more so than with overtly rhetorical scenes like Lidcote Hall, that Scott measures masculinities.

I've described Edward Waverley's attempts to determine his "role" in the narrative by referencing the landscape. I've also suggested that his romance-addled reading turns out to be

more accurate than is commonly supposed. Waverley's first trek through the Highlands does rouse something of a masculine competitive spirit in the young Englishman, as his plunge into a brook "shewing he did not fear wetting his feet" is done deliberately, with an eye to "remov[ing] the opinion which Evan seemed to entertain of the effeminacy of the Lowlanders" (77). But in general he is led about, even carried about by others too often for his abilities to be tested; in this, as in other respects, there are few Scott heroes so "wavering" or weak as Waverley himself, who figures as more of a tourist or captive in the novel's spaces than an explorer.

Scott's second novel *Guy Mannering*, on the other hand, opens with its title character lost in the wilds of southwest Scotland and groping his way "alone and in the dark, through an unknown country," as "the light grew faint and more faint, and the morass appeared blacker and blacker" (4). Similarities to Dante's and Bunyan's pilgrims suggest themselves, and to the spiritual and emotional quagmires navigated by the questing knights of legend; as we have seen, *The Talisman* begins with much the same tone, though within an entirely different landscape topographically. Class as well as gender is interrogated in these scenes of lost nobles and gentlemen: Guy Mannering must ask directions from an old woman in a "miserable hut" and is led to safety by a twelve-year-old boy. Almost exactly the same scenario plays out in Chapter Nine of *Kenilworth*, in which the gentrified Tressilian is led through the forest by the "grotesque" village boy, Dickie Sludge. *Ivanhoe* begins with the Templar Knight Bois-Guilbert and his retinue lost in the forest, reduced to asking directions from Gurth the swineherd and Wamba the jester; the latter plays on their unfamiliarity with the country and steers them wrong.

Clearly, the peasantry know where they are; it is the gentle folk who seem repeatedly to have lost their bearings.<sup>10</sup> Judith Wilt writes of this episode:

[Bois-Guilbert and company] ride the forest arrogantly as owners, but they are easily misled and might die of the forest's traps except that the disturbed thinker, whose Pilgrim's hat hides his identity like his posture at the crossroads masked his character, knows how to guide them. (*Secret Leaves* 38)

The Pilgrim is, of course, Ivanhoe in disguise, both an authentic and a landed aristocrat, but a "disinherited" one.<sup>11</sup> Along with the novel's Robin Hood, Wilt notes, "both hooded men [are] familiar with the mystery of the forest" (39). In this context, the fate of Edgar Ravenswood, the bitter and dispossessed lord of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, seems especially significant: misreading the landscape leads to his drowning in quicksand at the novel's end.<sup>12</sup>

As much as any feat of riding or swordsmanship, Scott's male characters' reading of and reckoning with the landscape distinguishes them as aristocrats, whether by blood or by virtue. That chivalric, manly values are historically tied up with the aristocracy yet are not confined to that class—two of six claims Scott makes about the aristocracy, according to Avrom Fleishman—becomes a major claim of the Victorians, of course, present in various texts on gentlemanly behavior from Samuel Smiles to Matthew Arnold.<sup>13</sup> "When I speak of chivalry I

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<sup>10</sup> Compare with the familiar openings of Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales, such as *Last of the Mohicans* and *The Pathfinder*, where British subjects are misled by treacherous French-allied Indians, and guided back onto the right trail by the apparently nationless, classless Natty Bumppo, the "man without a cross."

<sup>11</sup> Borne out by the motto on his shield, "Desdichado," and its coat of arms, which shows an oak tree torn out by its roots.

<sup>12</sup> Ravenswood spends much of the novel at Wolf's Crag, a rhetorically significant locale which encodes his own desperation and emasculation. A "solitary and naked tower, situated on a projecting cliff . . . . On three sides the rock was precipitous; on the fourth, which was towards the land, it had been originally fenced by an artificial ditch and drawbridge, but the latter was broken down and ruinous" (83). Fiona Robertson has noted the correspondence between the precariousness of the tower and the financial desperation of the Ravenswood family (Introduction xxi), but at this point in the novel Edgar *is* the Ravenswood family, and the phallicism of the naked, ruined, defenseless tower seems unmistakable.

<sup>13</sup> The other four propositions are worth noting: "the aristocracy as a class suffered a change in fortune in the course of history"; "the decline of the aristocracy was an 'evil' but produced 'good' results"; "chivalry had a civilizing social effect, but . . . the loss of chivalric values in the modern world is compensated by greater political liberty";

mean a military institution, prompted by enthusiastic benevolence, sanctioned by religion,” says G. P. R. James in his *History of Chivalry* (1830), beginning his definition with a historical conceptualization; but James is quick to add that “it [chivalry] was more a spirit than an institution” and that the outward forms of chivalry were only “the signs by which it was conventionally agreed that those persons who . . . possessed the spirit, should be distinguished from the other classes of society” (18-19). Historical detail aside, says James, himself a prolific historical novelist, “the spirit was the Chivalry” (19).

The problem that emerges in Scott’s reckoning of the fortunes of the aristocracy—his reading, leading males—is that much of this spirit has departed from the actual landed and ruling aristocracy. The clash between the actual and the natural aristocrat informs much of the tragedy implicit in the political conflicts of the *Waverley* Novels, with the lower classes or the “disinherited” perceiving the honorable and heroic paths that the titled gentlemen have lost. Often these gentlemen are literally lost, then, whether in the rugged wilds or the city labyrinth, and since the misreader of space is a member of the landed, ruling class, dire consequences for the nation may threaten. This idea is played out topographically in Scott, from *Waverley* to *Castle Dangerous*.

When Sir Arthur Wardour ventures to take the dangerous coast road in *The Antiquary*, Scott notes that he “did not see, or would not acknowledge, any signs of immediate storm,” even though the darkening weather has produced a number of noticeable changes in the surrounding landscape and gathered clouds around him “on all sides like misfortunes and disasters around a sinking empire and falling monarch” (54-55). Such catastrophes do not directly threaten the 1794

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and “the modern world is not truly enlightened and may stand to gain by the revival of morals” (Fleishman 53-54). These tenets Fleishman attributes to Scott across the spectrum of the *Waverley* novels are, of course, also variously preached by Scott imitators like James and non-admirers of Scott like Carlyle.

Britain of *The Antiquary*, but they are raging across the Channel; Wardour's misreading of the landscape thus evokes the crisis Britain watches anxiously. Lovel, the novel's young hero and a gentleman in disguise, has correctly read the horizon, as has the old beggar Edie Ochiltree, and both appear on the beach to help Wardour and his daughter to safety.<sup>14</sup> It's one of several occasions in which the decrepit aristocrat misreads the spaces around him and must rely on old wisdom (Edie) and "natural aristocracy" (Lovel) to escape. Without Edie's discernment "it would have been utterly impossible for Sir Arthur Wardour or his daughter to have found their way" [to safety] (57). Edie is no gentleman, of course, but the beach during the threatening storm has become a social leveler: "a neutral field, where even a justice of peace and a strolling mendicant might meet upon terms of mutual forbearance" (56). All things being equal, the old aristocracy is not up to the challenge of discernment and action.

*The Antiquary* also makes clear that reading meanings into space too eagerly and impetuously may be as dangerous as disregarding them entirely. This point is carried by Scott's employing one of his most familiar devices, the misread or misleading beacon light, not once but twice in the novel. In the folk tale Isabella Wardour relates in Chapter 18, "The Fortunes of Martin Waldeck," a group of brothers are lured by mysterious beacon lights into making a demonic pact. This tale of necromancy and alchemy serves as a fitting introduction to Volume Two's preoccupation with buried monkish treasure, yet it also foreshadows the novel's half-comic ending, in which a misinterpreted signal beacon throws the whole countryside into an uproar over invading French armies. Scott's allusions to Shakespeare and Milton in this scene reference other attempts to read signs in space, both the landscape and the stars—to *Macbeth's*

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<sup>14</sup> Correctly reading the horizon is no mean feat in this instance, since it features a setting sun over water which, if the novel's setting is Scotland's eastern coast as is commonly supposed, should not be there. This east-setting sun is one of Scott's most famous gaffes, but makes sense if considered a dramatic and rhetorical background.

moving forest of Dunsinane, and to astrology in *Paradise Lost*: “And behold, the light increased, like a comet to the eye of the astronomer, ‘with fear of change perplexing nations’” (348). Not only circumspection but also restraint are called upon to read the signs in space; not only care but also control mark the truly chivalrous man.

Such a man is *Kenilworth*’s Wayland Smith, one of Scott’s most capable interpreters of space. An adept straddler of social and class boundaries who, while not the novel’s most overtly chivalrous character, is nevertheless its effectual hero, Wayland Smith understands the land around the Vale of the White Horse well enough to conceal his smithy/chemist’s laboratory beneath the earth, near an ancient stone circle feared by the local villagers.<sup>15</sup> He is fit to guide both Tressilian and Amy Robsart through the English countryside: when the former asks if he is “perfectly acquainted with the roads in this country,” Smith replies, “I could ride them every inch by midnight” (Ch11). Yet he also proves himself capable of understanding Elizabethan London in Chapter 13. Tressilian can only follow, amazed, as this apparent village rustic “walked on with great speed, and apparently perfect knowledge of the town, through a labyrinth of bye-streets, courts, and blind alleys” (128), a display of facility and confidence that matches the Highlanders’ navigation of the wild landscape in *Waverley*.

In a novel focused on self-fashioning and competing males, “perceptive in its understanding of the way in which the whole of Elizabethan society, not just individuals, fashions itself through performance” (Alexander xiv), Wayland emerges as the most successful, because the most adaptable, male. In a text obsessed with ambition and self-promotion, he is the only character to marry well and climb the social ladder, and he does so not by being ambitious

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<sup>15</sup> In fact, “Wayland Smith” is a place in the Berkshire Downs, as well as the name of a legendary character associated with the place: an invisible smith who shoes horses for stranded travelers (Alexander 423). Scott thus builds a character who is adept at understanding space/place from a place name.

but by behaving virtuously and chivalrously. This ascent and these rewards are related to his reading of the spaces around him, which reveals Wayland's grasp of various kinds of knowledge: not only his geographical knowledge and sense of direction, but also his chemical, medical and linguistic knowledge, as well as his commercial savviness and understanding of human nature. In London he knows how to find the chemistry shops to purchase ingredients for an important antidote. In the Vale of the White Horse, his choice of dwelling shows that he knows the community well enough to play doubly upon its superstitions: he can make a living by imitating the invisible smith of local legend, yet—in a Radcliffean echo—he also makes use of the stone circle's evil reputation to carry out chemical experiments undisturbed. When Wayland and Amy Robsart reach Kenilworth Castle, he can easily adapt to its current state of mummery because he “had once been a stage-player” (126).

Wayland's exceptional abilities—his adaptability to different spaces and places, and the wide range of knowledge demonstrated by this adaptability—contrasts with the relative fog in which the “wavering” hero proceeds. There is always some mystification about the person who can read space well: the reader of Scott's novels is usually denied access to their knowledge and thoughts, and remains privy only to the thoughts and perceptions of the poor interpreters of space and place. As the reader sees over Waverley's shoulder in the Highlands, witnessing the young man's incredulity at Evan Dhu's quick pace and sure step, so the reader of *Kenilworth* remains at Tressilian's elbow in London, all but losing the nimble Wayland in the winding streets. The bafflement of the protagonist is again played out spatially: unlike Ainsworth, Scott gives us no panoramas in his London scenes, no familiar landmarks with which to orient ourselves. We remain at street level, in the labyrinth.

Scott seems never quite sure himself, and he is certainly never forthcoming, about what the ultimate means to knowledge may be. Characters as knowledgeable as Wayland therefore seem never quite real, even though they may be memorable and startlingly full of life. The distance Scott maintains from Wayland may help explain A. N. Wilson's reckoning of *Kenilworth* as something not quite novelistic, as rather "a poem set to prose," showing Scott reverting to narrative poem techniques (142). Nevertheless, Wayland Smith remains one of the most capable readers of space in Scott to remain recognizably human: his encompassing knowledge is at least explainable, and he becomes heroic and even noble because of the chivalric (or "naturally aristocratic") uses to which he applies that knowledge. Lacking the birth of a Tressilian or even an Edward Waverley, he does good service and ascends the social ladder. He is neither the titled leader nor the dimwitted but loyal follower: he is rather the man that the nobles should be, if they dared.

Seeking elements of continuity between the Scottish and Chivalry novels, Judith Wilt notes their separate but similar attempts to construct myth-fictions from historical artifacts, the Scottish novels piecing together a national myth from the "Stuart matter" of the Jacobite uprisings, but the Chivalry novels attempting to assemble an international myth of Christendom, a myth "upon shaky ground" (155). It's tempting and serviceable to merge Wilt's attempt at continuity with Fleishman's, and thus to see both sets of Waverley Novels examining the mythical patterns of male heroism across both of these fictional territories. Masculine engagement with the landscape, both reading it and navigating it, is one way both sets of novels conduct this examination; therefore, it's one way both sets can be thought about as one set. The disinherited knight of *Ivanhoe*, fighting for his name and his lands, gradually becomes *Kenilworth's* Wayland navigating the lands of others, ever wary of and regretting his dealings with the "landed"

aristocracy. Edward Waverley becomes baffled in his choice between not only north and south, Britain and Scotland, progress and romance, but also between natural and nominal chivalry: between Prince Charlie and King George. At the end of this long road, a sad one for Britain's old aristocratic families, we find *The Antiquary's* Sir Arthur, unable to understand either the past or the present, unable to read history's ruins or the stormy horizon.

### **Reading Ruins: The Historians and Edie Ochiltree**

In my last section I observed again that the nature of the text being read or misread in space changes; Chapter Three's discussion of the encoding of genre into space should make clear some of the reasons why this is so, in that the changing space reflects the historical novel's palimpsest narrative itself. Since the reading of space equates with the acquisition of different kinds of knowledge, it should not surprise that the text of space frequently takes on a historical character. Nor is it due only to Scott's picturesque or Romantic affinities that the space of the Waverley novel is so frequently either the ahistorical, purely sublime space of forest wilds or the encoded, palimpsest space of British ruins: spaces which either "lack" history (as Moretti claimed for mountains and margins) or where history is obscurely written onto the space. Washington Irving sums up the perceived difference between these two types of space in the opening essay of *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*:

I visited various parts of my own country; and had I been merely a lover of fine scenery, I should have felt little desire to seek elsewhere its gratification, for on no country had the charms of nature been more prodigally lavished. . . . no, never need an American look beyond his own country for the sublime and beautiful of natural scenery.

But Europe held forth all the charms of storied and poetical association. There were to be seen the masterpieces of art, the refinements of highly cultivated society, the quaint peculiarities of ancient and local custom. My native country was full of youthful promise; Europe was rich in the accumulated treasures of age. Her very ruins told the history of the times gone by, and every mouldering stone was a chronicle. I longed to wander over the scenes of renowned achievement—to tread, as it were, in the footsteps of antiquity—to loiter about the ruined castle—to meditate on the falling tower—to escape, in short, from

the commonplace realities of the present, and lose myself among the shadowy grandeurs of the past. (4)

Irving had, according to the 1848 Preface to the *Sketch Book*, begun his literary career in Europe “under the kind and cordial auspices of Sir Walter Scott” (xxii), whom he corresponded with and visited prior to the book’s publication. Composing these lines in 1819, he would have looking back on the first wave of Waverley Novels, from *Waverley* to *The Bride of Lammermoor*—and also on ruinous Ellangowan in *Guy Mannering*, St. Ruth’s Priory in *The Antiquary*, *Lammermoor*’s Wolf’s Crag and “locked fountain,” and other sites, to say nothing of a half-century of Romantic ruin poetry and Gothic novels.

Europe did not have a monopoly on ruins, of course, and neither did Scott have a monopoly on the description of ruins. But Irving’s comment does indicate the some of the assumptions that Enlightenment and Romantic discussions of ruins had made current, and which Scott’s novels had proliferated. It does so in a way that seems to distinguish between categories of knowledge or feeling: the wilds of North America can evoke a “sublime” impression, but the palimpsest spaces of Europe’s ruins add new dimensions, layers, and connotations. While indicating “the history of times gone by” and thus serving as something so prosaic as a narrative or “chronicle” in stone, the grandeurs of the past are also “shadowy” and poetic: blurred around the edges, glimmering, disappearing into the organic. Like the vernacular ruin poetry of the late eighteenth century, including the scraps of ballads gathered by Scott’s favorite editor Bishop Percy, the ruinous landscape Irving has in mind

suggests the close connection between land and history, and marks how deeply the natural world is imbued with cultural values. But insofar as the [ruin] is in decay, it also suggests an opposing movement, the “naturalizing” of culture by time. (Janowitz 56)

If, as Thomas Gray had argued, “Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff but is pregnant with religion and poetry,” if natural scenes could self-evidently “awe an atheist into belief, without the

help of other argument” (45), the ruin presents a much more complicated sign: a vision of forward movement and slippage, growth and decay bound together almost symbiotically. In its way, it is the ultimate spatial analogue to Scott’s guardedly progressive view of history.

The manmade structure in Scott (fictitious, historical, typically somewhere in between) is rendered in a state of flux with the natural landscape. The celebrated picturesqueness or painterly quality of his ruin scenes turns upon this idea, that a historical element of the landscape is in the very act of sinking back into the organic, the history-less, the mysterious—and that the blurring of these lines evokes mysterious emotions in the sympathetic viewer.<sup>16</sup> But these sympathies, Scott suggests, are always differently informed. He excels, then, at portraying the sublimity of ruin views but also at emphasizing the inability of would-be interpreters to explain their effects or account their significance adequately. Various critics have been concerned to show Scott constructing “fictions of authenticity” about the nationhood of Britain or, as Wilt notes, upon the shakier ground of Christendom, but what has been less acknowledged is Scott’s own cognizance that authenticity can prove a fiction— an *objet d’art*, dependant for its apparent meanings on the perspective and prejudices of the viewer. It’s this cognizance that his ruin scenes tend to emphasize. Just as Maurice de Bracy “misremembers” the story of Benjamin, so readers of ruins impose their own contextual structures on the remaining fragments, making for gross misinterpretations. Scott not only acknowledges this epistemological collision; he laughs at it.

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<sup>16</sup> The site described need not be an actual ruin for Scott to play upon these ideas. The mansion described in Chapter Ten of *The Abbot* (1821) is still occupied and functioning, yet its shift back into nature is imminent in Scott’s description: “The court before the door, which had once been defended with a species of low outer-wall, now ruinous, was paved, but the stones were completely covered with long gray nettles, thistles, and other weeds, which, shooting up betwixt the flags, had displaced many of them from their level. Even matters demanding more peremptory attention had been left neglected, in a manner which argued sloth or poverty in the extreme. The stream, undermining a part of the bank near an angle of the ruinous wall, had brought it down, with a corner turret, the ruins of which lay in the bed of the river. The current, interrupted by the ruins which it had overthrown, and turned yet nearer to the site of the tower, had greatly enlarged the breach it had made, and was in the process of undermining the ground on which the house itself stood” (104-105).

Again, *The Antiquary* is a useful novel to turn to. A novel preoccupied with recovering narratives and knowledge, with the different means of acquiring and validating information, it is also a novel preoccupied with landscape, featuring several scenes in which characters attempt to derive meaning from viewing ruins, often unsuccessfully. If the “Kaim of Kinprunes” scene in *The Antiquary* is not the most striking scene in a Scott novel about the reading and misreading of a landscape, it is probably the most written about. In this episode, a misread landscape becomes the novel’s first indication that meaning and narratives will not be easy for characters to reconstruct.

Jonathan Oldbuck, the antiquary of the title and the representative of scholarly, bookish reconstructions of the past, proudly displays his estate to the novel’s romantic hero, Lovel. Their tour concludes with a climb to a “truly remarkable spot,” a dearly-bought hillside which Lovel gamely admits “commands a fine view,” but which for Oldbuck possesses far more significant qualities (33):

“it is not for the prospect I brought you hither; do you see nothing else remarkable?—nothing on the surface of the ground?”

“Why, yes; I do see something like a ditch, indistinctly marked.”

“Indistinctly!—pardon me, sir, but the indistinctness must be in your powers of vision. Nothing can be more plainly traced—a proper *agger* or *vallum*, with its corresponding ditch or *fossa*. Indistinctly! why, Heaven help you, the lassie, my niece, as light-headed a goose as womankind affords, saw the traces of the ditch at once. . . . you know a ditch from level ground, I presume, when you see them? Indistinct! why, the very common people, the very least boy that can herd a cow, calls it the Kaim of Kinprunes; and if that does not imply an ancient camp, I am ignorant what does.” (27-28, emphasis Scott’s)

For Oldbuck, what seem to be the extant historical elements in the scene (in this case the remains of a Roman fort) can be distinctly detected by the discerning eye. Oldbuck’s learned discussion, composed of the same jargon and allusion as his earlier talk on books and broadsheets, touches on the historical apparatus he uses to confirm the site of “the final conflict between Agricola and

the Caledonians.” In effect, he has located this site by his reading of history, and has confirmed it visually since the land “correspond[s] with all the marks of that celebrated place of action” (28). He justifies his overpayment for the barren land by citing its importance to Scottish history: “But then it was a national concern; . . . Whose patriotism would not grow warmer, as old Johnson says, on the plains of Marathon?”(29). As Oldbuck recounts his discovery of an ancient stone bearing the carved letters A. D. L. L., which he takes to mean “*Agricola Dicavit Libens Lubens*” or “Agricola willingly and happily dedicated [this],” the scene builds to a comic pitch (29; Hewitt 375).

The misinterpreted-initials-on-stone motif signals a folk scenario in which the prideful and pedantic scholar takes a fall at the hands of the unschooled, but more level-headed, local. Scott is well aware of it, as Lovel’s unspoken thoughts indicate,<sup>17</sup> and so chooses this moment to introduce Edie Ochiltree, the novel’s repository of folk wisdom and local history and also the character most conversant with the landscape (as I will discuss below). Edie explodes Oldbuck’s erudite lecture by asserting that what he fancies a Roman ruin is nothing more than the remnants of a fairly recent wedding barbecue. He mocks Oldbuck’s assertion that a certain eminence of the hill marks the *praetorium* or headquarters of the ancient camp by interrupting, “Praetorian here, Praetorian there, I mind the bigging o’t” (remember when it was built) (30). Without being told of the alleged artifact, Edie recounts the carving of A. D. L. L. on the stone and avers that the letters stand for “Aiken Drum’s Lang Ladle,” a playful reference to a Scots nursery rhyme (31).

The Kaim of Kinprunes episode reveals much about Scott’s perception that the “historical structure,” whether a physical artifact or a structure of knowledge, is sometimes

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<sup>17</sup> “This, thought Lovel to himself, is a famous counterpart to the story of *Keip on this syde*” (39). The reference is to “what would now be called an urban folk-tale” (Hewitt 377), well known in Scott’s day, of antiquarians puzzling over a seemingly mysterious stone carving (as in KEI PONT HI SSYDE), and later ridiculed when the marker’s mundane significance is revealed. Dickens’ Mr. Pickwick, another over-enthusiastic antiquary, makes a similar mistake early in his travels (see *Pickwick*, Chapter 11).

indistinguishable from the natural or mundane, and that different knowledge-gathering systems must be employed to understand and verify supposed evidence (when that's even possible). It's therefore an episode that simultaneously imagines the historian and the reader of historical novels: both are trying to separate and distinguish data that are blending into each other.

By placing different opinions about a hillside ruin into comic opposition, Scott examines differing modes of recovering and codifying history's significance, but he also hints at the shifting, uncertain nature of historical novel space. Judith Wilt writes of this scene:

There is explicit comic deflation of the aristocratic romanticizing of history-property here, of course . . . . There is, more subtly, the suggestion that the populist history revolving around the celebrations and artifacts of ordinary folk is as usefully historical as the aristocratic idea implicit in the antiquary's ecstasy over world-historical clashes. (*Secret Leaves* 158)

In *Sir Walter Scott: Landscape and Locality*, James Reed cites this scene as the first instance in the novel where Oldbuck "is the focus of a series of lessons by Scott on how *not* to look at a landscape" (91, original emphasis). For Reed, Oldbuck's inappropriate scrutiny arises from his being "a maverick antiquarian, [and] an indiscriminate collector of old things with which he clutters his old house," a description that must remind us of Scott himself (90). But Scott makes abundantly clear in *The Antiquary* that the best "view" of space, and therefore of history, is an amalgamated view, one that allows differing epistemological tools including imagination. In this particular instance, observed custom and "living history" have been validated: Edie's remembered truth is more historical than Oldbuck's bookish mistake. Elsewhere, personal experience is not a guarantor of truth, and a historian's wider perspective is necessary. If *The Antiquary* "does not really suggest that we learn from age" on the personal level, as A. N. Wilson

writes, it suggests in the broader view that we cannot learn from past ages at all without allowing for differing viewpoints (73).<sup>18</sup>

In the Kaim of Kinprunes episode there is present only a ditch and an obscurely marked stone. In Chapter Seventeen of *The Antiquary*, however, a large touring party visits the ruins of a local priory, providing Scott with an occasion for depicting misreadings of a more fully-realized ruin scene. Like Fleishman's view of the historical novelist as tapestry restorer, weaving "whole scenes or figures to fill the empty spaces" (6), *The Antiquary's* characters and its narrator take turns piecing histories together from the extant stone structures: histories that conflict and, perhaps just as importantly, cannot be reconciled by the narrator because the site itself is largely unreal.

Led by Oldbuck's running commentary, the touring party approach the ruins through one of Scott's pocketed landscapes, an increasingly dense rural scene full of dells and dens, of tree trunks and roots "hollowed out into recesses, in which the sheep love to repose themselves," of gushing and pure water glimpsed "between the intervals afforded by openings in the natural wood," the whole scene shrouded by a "sylvan canopy" (129). The familiar Scott landscape-that-conceals helps to create a mood of rare inaccessibility, of secreted and unknown splendor tucked away in mysterious niches of the wild landscape, a note Scott sounds throughout his novels.

This almost mystical scenery and mood do not simply drop away to reveal the architectural marvel the party has come to see. Rather, the structure and the landscape are blended and

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<sup>18</sup> Although the Kinprunes episode is not the test of chivalric masculine values I described above, implications about gender and class are worth noting here. To Oldbuck, the ancient remains are so self-evident that even light-headed young women, common folk, and children can see them. These curmudgeonly asides nevertheless imply that commonplace assumption of the *Waverley* novels and the nineteenth-century historical novel generally: that reading the landscape successfully is a desirable masculine skill, one that young men of quality and intelligence should acquire. After Edie's revelation has exploded Oldbuck's reading, the narrator compares him to "a damsel of sixteen, whose romance of true love has been blown up by an untimely discovery, or . . . a child of ten years, whose castle of cards has been blown down by a malicious companion" (31)—comparisons that again suggest that the correct interpretation of landscape is both masculine and mature.

complementary. The scene reveals just how intentional is the spatial palimpsest in Scott—that is, how elements historical, aesthetic, dramatic and otherwise blend into each other in deliberately stylized ways. When the party follows Oldbuck “through a breach in a low, ancient, and ruinous wall” they suddenly come upon “a scene equally unexpected and interesting”—the priory, in all its glory (130). So the first sign of an historic element in the landscape is a broken wall—a failed or compromised boundary, but one that has taken on the new aesthetic function of making the view more dramatic and delightful. The scene continues:

They stood pretty high upon the side of the glen, which had suddenly opened into a sort of amphitheatre to give room for a pure and profound lake of a few acres extent, and a space of level ground around it. The banks then arose everywhere steeply, and in some places were varied by rocks--in others covered with the copse, which run up, feathering their sides lightly and irregularly, and breaking the uniformity of the green pasture-ground--Beneath, the lake discharged itself into the huddling and tumultuous brook, which had been their companion since they had entered the glen. At the point at which it issued from “its parent lake,” stood the ruins which they had come to visit. (130)

As noted in Chapter Two, the transformation of foliage into “a sort of amphitheatre” is one of Scott’s most common nature-to-architecture shifts and signals the dramatic elements at work in the scene.<sup>19</sup> As the crumbled wall works to frame the natural scene and surprise the viewer, so the forest has carved itself out into a fitting hollow space for the presentation of the ruins.

What the viewer sees, on a grand scale and apparently naturally created, is essentially an ornamental garden scene (not unlike the garden theater of *St. Ronan’s Well*). The surrounding forest acts as a niche in which to display the bas-relief sculpture of the priory; the steep risings and irregular “feathering” effects of the bank suggest a rough pedestal for the ruins, the rushing and pooling water a fountain. This is landscape transformed and transforming, landscape put to figurative and imaginative uses, less a historical scene than a historically-themed garden folly.

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<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, the “sylvan amphitheatre” of *Waverley*, Chapter 22 and of *Ivanhoe*, Chapter 32, the “amphitheatre of level turf” of *The Monastery*, Chapter 21 (246); and the “amphitheatre filled with large trees” of *Anne of Geierstein*, Chapter 21 (334).

No antiquary, nor even an entire party of antiquaries, are equipped to interpret this scene adequately, since the scene itself is so patently artificial.

In the continuing description of the ruins, the narrator plays speculative historian, reconstructing not only shapes and structures but also historic functions, reconstructing a “pattern of history” from what little is left. Although the author of *Waverley*’s seems a more trustworthy voice, the diction and spatial movement of the scene uncannily recall Oldbuck’s earlier speculations from the Kinprunes scene. As the antiquary has misread his Roman camp, linking his property to ancient warfare by reading the topography, so the narrator here links Saint Ruth’s, essentially a fictitious location, with the wars of Montrose.<sup>20</sup>

Immediately following the narrator’s own speculative description, Scott focuses on humorously clashing speculative opinions about the priory, its historical role and its current significance, formed by members of the tour party. Its overgrown remains signify something different to each member of the dispute: a seat of learning in the Dark Ages for the Whiggish Oldbuck, “pomp and ceremonial” for the Tory Sir Arthur Wardour, inconceivable clerical duties for the Reverend Blattergowl, alchemy and buried treasure for the occultist and charlatan Dousterswivel, and a place where women have been excluded for Isabella (132). John

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<sup>20</sup> Following the common assumption that Saint Ruth’s Priory represents Arbroath Abbey, James Reed writes: “The reference is not directly historic, though Montrose did campaign in the Arbroath area in 1645; it is, however, an example of Scott’s technique of making probable history sustain the framework of his fiction” (93). But we should note, as Oldbuck has learned earlier, that probable history may be formulated only if the site has been correctly identified. The relationship between the ascertainable historical facts (Saint Ruth resembles Arbroath Abbey, Montrose campaigned near Arbroath) and the fictional setting and situations of *The Antiquary* are paradigmatic of Scott’s understanding of the historical novel: history, imaginatively applied, supports a fictional framework. Speculations about the ruin, historical constructions put upon its fragments, must be ultimately abstract and hypothetical since Scott has faked the site.

A mid-Victorian history of Arbroath Abbey acknowledges Scott’s inclusion of local details, but also his license in creating and conflating other features: “An attentive reader . . . acquainted with the vicinity of Arbroath, will have little doubt that it contains the scenery of that story”; but “a poet’s license is taken . . . in removing the ruins of St. Ruth (described as Arbroath and Melrose abbeys intermixed) from the bustling district of a large town into one of the dells of the district” (Miller vi-vii). Scott has then moved a conflation of two abbeys from an identifiable location and “hidden [it] in some sequestered dell” where only accident will find it.

MacQueen's remarks on the wigs belonging to Oldbuck, Wardour and Blattergowl help demonstrate demonstrates the unyielding single-mindedness of each class' perspective of knowledge:

By the 1790's, . . . the Three Estates were long superannuated, and in *The Antiquary* they are represented by the three wigs, which survive all changes of fashion to adorn the parish in lonely glory. Sir Arthur Wardour represents Temporality—he is a baronet. The minister, the Rev. Mr Blattergowl, is Spirituality, and the Antiquary himself . . . is Merchants and Burgesses. . . . The first interest of each wig—some aspect of the past—is pursued with a self-centred concentration which, for the speaker at least, excludes everything else. (MacQueen 45-46)

MacQueen's reading lends credence to the idea of clashing methodologies of knowledge-gathering at work in Scott's ruin scenes: clashes which the narrator, while more confident and seemingly well-informed, cannot ultimately resolve.

While Oldbuck's lecturing of Lovel continues to demonstrate his commitment to a bookish reconstruction of the past which takes cues from extant architectural features, differing priorities intrude fast upon each other, until no clear consensus about the priory is reached:

"There they lived," continued the Antiquary, "with nought to do but to spend their time in investigating points of remote antiquity, transcribing manuscripts, and composing new works for the information of posterity."

"And," added the Baronet, "in exercising the rites of devotion with a pomp and ceremonial worthy of the office of the priesthood."

"And if Sir Arthur's excellence will permit," said the German, with a low bow, "the monksh might also make de vary curious experiment in deir laboraties, both in chemistry and *magia naturalis*."

"I think," said the clergyman, "they would have enough to do in collecting the teinds of the parsonage and vicarage of three good parishes."

"And all," added Miss Wardour, nodding to the Antiquary, "without interruption from womankind." (132)

Only Isabella Wardour's slightly bantering remark seems entirely supportable, though none of the opinions is necessarily incorrect. Scott's focus in such scenes rests more on the questions

than the answers of history, on the nature of the weaves suggested by the tapestry rather than on the tattered remains of the tapestry itself:

What really concerns Scott and his character-historians is the destruction, the disappearances, the racial and personal losses which make up the fabric of history, the wiped-out voids which the persistence of ruins, or even the sudden discovery of hidden fragments, only emphasizes. (Wilt, *Secret Leaves* 166)

It is Edie Ochiltree who turns out to understand Saint Ruth's landscape best, as the site becomes the focal point of *The Antiquary*'s second volume, and various plot strands revolve around attempts to read the topography of the priory and unlock its secrets. But then Edie is one of those problem characters of the Waverley Novels whom I have labeled Elementals, whose facility with landscape, knowledge and history is mysterious and seemingly supernatural; I'll describe these characters further in the next section.

As I indicated in Chapter One, Scott's ruin scenes have long been considered palimpsests by critics, spaces where information has been encoded in layers which the seemingly all-knowing narrator may peel back and reveal at will. My intention here is to point out the lack of consensus among Scott's narrators and characters who share the act of decoding the palimpsest, and to emphasize that here also Scott's playful undermining of historical discovery is evident. While his typical readers of space are baffled and practically helpless when decoding the wild, rural scene (and Scott's narrator may be unhelpfully cagey), the gifted historians and erudite narrators are confident when digging up the ruins scenes for our edification: confident, but not necessarily correct.

Scott's framing narrator of *The Monastery*, local historian Captain Clutterbuck, suggests as much in the novel's introductory epistle. Summoned to provide a guided tour of the title monastery to a mysterious monk, Clutterbuck discovers that "The stranger not only knew all that I could tell him, but a great deal more" and could even "correct many of the vague tales which I

had adopted on loose and vulgar tradition” (18). Again mocking the presumptions and ethos of the historian, as well as Scott’s own craft of antiquarian novelist, Clutterbuck declares that such careful research is “like to destroy my trade, and that of all local antiquaries, by substituting truth instead of legend and romance”—“But let it pass. *Humana perpessi sumus*—All changes around us, past, present, and to come; that which was history yesterday becomes the fable of today, and the truth of today is hatched into a lie by tomorrow” (18-19).

*The Monastery*’s Benedictine, like *The Antiquary*’s Sir Arthur Wardour, has come to search the ruins for buried treasure, but in this case the treasure is historical and spiritual, “simply the heart of an upright man” (24). For Clutterbuck, however, the monk brings new treasure: the much edited story of the “upright man,” passed on to the Author of *Waverley* to further revise, correct and prepare for the press (29). The narrative itself, then, comes to us as a product of discovery, assembly and amalgamation. Narratives compete and synthesize, eventually bringing us a cohesive but by no means a “truthful” fusion. Fiona Robertson writes:

The mouldered and forgotten heart of the Abbot Ambrosius . . . is exchanged for narrative. The heart is rescued, taken to a more sympathetic spiritual refuge by the Benedictine, and the legend is modernized and Protestantized to suit contemporary taste. The grave-robbing of *The Monastery* produces a heart, not a narrative, but the words used by the Benedictine to describe the heart make it clear that on a symbolic level the two can be equated. The heart is “an inestimable treasure, for those who know how to use it rightly.” (*Legitimate Histories* 134)

So too is the narrative of history, though Scott is never prepared to declare unequivocally just what are its right uses, or who in the disharmony of conflicting voices is fit to judge.

### **“The Elementals”:** Irrational Readers in *The Talisman* and *Kenilworth*

I’ve characterized the *Waverley* novel’s certain kind of space as both functional and textual, participating in the narratives of both the historian and the tale-teller. Its shifting, uncertain qualities allow its adaptation to different generic categories, all the better to (re)create the world of the past in an experiential totality. I’ve also looked at some of the readers of this

transmutable text of space, from the young males who are called upon to navigate spaces to the learned misreaders of ruin scenes. In this final section, I'll discuss the junction of the two categories of text and readers in the ideal readers of Waverley space, and at the problems these characters pose for the historical novel's investigation of knowledge and understanding.

In *The English Novel*, Walter Allen describes briefly "the bizarre nonrational, sometimes lunatic figures that haunt [Scott's] novels and are so important to the working out of his plots, characters like Meg Merrilies, Madge Wildfire and her mother, even Edie Ochiltree. They are, or are often on the verge of being, elementals" (133). Criticism has long found in the characters Allen names a meaningful link between the genteel young protagonists and the peoples, customs and folk cultures they encounter in their journeys. Typically, they serve as a means of introducing the staid English observer to the seemingly strange, typically backwards Scots subjects whose culture, history and landscapes Scott is either celebrating or appropriating, depending on whom one asks. Like the sturdy peasants, the Mucklebackits and Fairservices of Scott, these "elementals" are steeped in Scottishness. Unlike them, their excessive strangeness and borderline lunacy prompt their edgy and unpredictable behavior, which in turn immerses the protagonist and reader in traditional Scottish folk culture and dialect, even if Scott himself has largely adapted the originals and invented most of the tradition.

Allen understood this unusual character type as being indigenous to the Scottish novels, for him the source of Scott's power, "for they are, as it were, organic growths of the Scottish earth" (133). Their wildness is nevertheless authentic; they are particularly vivid samplings of local color. This linking of the Elementals with local agrarian culture and custom coincides with Georg Lukacs' appreciation of Scott's delineation of historical processes "from the bottom," and anticipates James Reed's claims for "locality" and character. But here again is a restrictive

truism: for to accept the limitation of the Elementals to the Scottish novels is to understand only one level of their significance, and in so doing to miss a defining moment for the nineteenth-century historical novel: the appearance of an archetypal character for the genre. For the Elementals appear on non-Scottish soil as well—one could even argue they appear in a purer form.

The term is perhaps more instructive than it seems at first: as Elementals these characters are linked with the earth, weather and sky, but as Elementals in the arcane sense of mythical beings, they transcend them. However authentic and “local” they might seem, the Elementals also seem impossible. Allen’s diction further suggests that these characters signal a mixing of genres, a mingling of elements which should be presumably disparate:

it is worth observing that their existence causes no surprise even to his most hard-headed characters, Jonathan Oldbuck, for instance. . . . They are surprisingly at home in his world of mundane common sense and condition the events that take place in it; they are, as it were, dramatizations of those aspects of life that are outside reason and are inexplicable in terms of reason. (133)

The observation that these characters “dramatize” the irrational builds from Allen’s discussion of the Gothic characters in Scott, to which the Elementals are “somewhat akin.” Though little more than a hint, the observation is useful, since it marks a well-known Scott feature as being generically and “rationally” unstable, unpredictable but habitual in Scott’s created worlds.

If Allen’s “elementals” are understood as representing a sort of regional cultural ethos, “a genuine part of living natural experience” woven into the fiction like Scott’s Gothic borrowings (132-133), then they indeed live in the Scottish novels only—in the Scottish “locality” that Scott knew and understood first-hand. But if understood as sites, as living linkages or perhaps vanishing points between categories of information, representation, genres and types of knowledge, then they abound in both the Scottish novels, the Chivalry novels, and the historical novel generally. Sites where the verifiable fact and the unequivocal fiction blur, where history

meets legend, realism meets “romance,” and quite often, prose meets poetry and song, they are also not coincidentally links between characters and spaces. In the Elementals’ mix of genre elements and dramatization of the “life outside reason,” I argue they are simply taking on attributes of historical novel space itself—the forests, glens, and ruins with which they are always linked.

The Elementals are the means by which Scott gives voice and agency to the uncertain, layered and shifting spaces of the historical novel. If *Waverley* space is the “splendid theatre” of the sublime, the Elementals are its actors. Characters insane but frequently precognitive, blighted yet gifted, like blind Tiresias—they hold mysterious congress with knowledge yet also with the *topos*. And like the shifting, symbol-laden *Waverley* landscape itself, they find their way in various manifestations into the genre at large; it is but a short step from Edie Ochiltree to Hugo’s Quasimodo or even Stevenson’s Ben Gunn. Their overlapping of categories, the quality that makes them grotesques, paradoxically places them on secure footing on the shifting, overlapping *Waverley* spaces I’ve described. Not just readers of the palimpsest, they become part of the palimpsest itself, like illuminations in a manuscript.

What they are not are merely figures in a landscape such as we find in various painterly moments in Scott. One finds numerous moments in the *Waverley* Novels where human figures merge with space almost as rhetorical devices: one thinks of the creeping, bestial villagers in the village of *Waverley*’s Tully-Veolan or perhaps Helen Macgregor’s attacking Highlanders in *Rob Roy*. In that scene there are no Highlanders present in Captain Thornton’s party to mediate their appearance to the narrator, only Englishmen and Lowlanders. As a result, Helen and her followers appear otherworldly and Gothic; “in a scene where all the ordinary features of nature

were raised and exalted,” the land is all powerful and the figures in the landscape low, primitive, almost simian:

As these sibyls thrust forth their grey heads, imperfectly covered with close caps of flannel, and showed their shrivelled brows, and long skinny arms, with various gestures, shrugs, and muttered expressions in Gaelic addressed to each other, my imagination recurred to the witches of Macbeth . . . . The little children also, who began to crawl forth, some quite naked, and others very imperfectly covered with tatters of tartan stuff, clapped their tiny hands, and grinned at the English soldiers, with an expression of national hate and malignity . . . . (278)

All is threat, even supernatural threat, in this vaunting landscape, and these subhuman creeping things are one with it: actually dwelling in holes burrowed into the hillside, like the inhabitants of the dead pit in Kipling’s “Morrowbie Jukes.” The space and the people merge, together constituting a single, forceful meaning (“national hate”) felt palpably by the narrator.

But the Elementals are not subjugated to the “composition” of space in the same way; their role is uncertain, but considerable, significant. They are not elements of a single scene, living props in the stage scenery, but full-fledged characters whose facility with the environment mirrors a facility with certain kinds of knowledge. Although I discussed Edie Ochiltree’s role in *The Antiquary* earlier, he is worth reconsidering briefly, as he is specifically named by Allen. From this “organic growth” we can look at other Elementals in the Chivalry novels, thus demonstrating the greater complexity of this character type for the genre.

If *The Antiquary* argues that the best view of space and history is an amalgamated view that appreciates different epistemological layers, Edie is consistently successful at finding such a view, either of space or history. He understands both the spaces and the narratives of the novel, adept at uncovering their layers. His close connection and mysterious facility with space combines with his at times unaccountable knowledge to make him perhaps the earliest Scott Elemental in my sense of the term. His knowledge of the novel’s spaces and mysterious ability to navigate them quickly is especially worth noting, as a trait that reappears in other Elementals, in

and out of Scott. The ground which Edie Ochiltree so knowingly describes he also seems to emerge from, stealing upon Lovel and Oldbuck in Kinprunes scene “unseen and unheard,” though they are at the top of a hill (30). He appears again on the shore to save Sir Arthur Wardour from the storm, striding prophet-like from the haze and drizzle, shouting “Turn back! Turn back!” (56). He appears again, emerging in Dante-esque contortions with the landscape, to try to prevent Lovel’s duel with Captain MacIntyre in Chapter 20, “[sitting] upon the roots of the old thorn” that had been the rendezvous point, “as vigorous in his decay as the moss-grown but contorted boughs which served him for a canopy”; his name even means “old tree” (160).<sup>21</sup> As a character who seems himself to blend into the palimpsest of space, Edie is best suited to move around it, explain it, and at times manipulate it.

Edie’s interaction with the layered location of St. Ruth’s makes this relationship with space clearer, especially after the antiquarian party’s failure to read the space-history palimpsest. It is Edie who knows of the hidden tunnel that shelters Lovel after the duel, leading from a tree-enshrouded hillside to within the priory’s walls. He also knows its original clandestine use in England’s remote Catholic past—built so that the Abbot could spy on his monks. From this medieval hiding place, Edie foils the plots of the charlatan Dousterswivel by impersonating an offended spirit of the ruins. Edie knows the occultist is pretending to divine the location of hidden treasure in the ruins; he acts as his guide, tricking the trickster by “salting the mine of history.” This farcical episode, often written off as superficial Gothic parody by critics, not only

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<sup>21</sup> Like Wordsworth’s “erect but aged thorn,” “a mass of knotted joints, / A wretched thing forlorn” (“The Thorn” 6, 8-9), Edie presides over *The Antiquary*’s own birth mystery. Most of the situations in “The Thorn” have thematic parallels in Scott’s novel, from its birth mystery scandal to the mysterious unreasoning force of its landscape—as its speaker directs, “I cannot tell; I wish I could; / For the true reason no one knows, / But if you’d gladly view the spot” (89-91). James Reed distinguishes between Wordsworth’s view of nature and man as “different but related components of one larger whole; components which interact physically, morally, and spiritually,” from Scott’s view of “man, and the works of man, in a total landscape,” every natural view “a History Trail imbued, . . . with the anecdotal, reminiscent richness of the experienced and informed observer” (9). In *The Antiquary*, however, “the informed observer” is Oldbuck, who has been shown up and gently mocked by Edie, the “Old Tree.”

reveals Edie's role as the trickster historian, but also emphasizes his preternatural knowledge of the past and of space. He literally knows how the organic morphs into the architectural or historical. Against the suppositions of the touring party, and transcending the cautious, speculative historian turns of the narrator, Edie understands the grounds of St. Ruth's spatially, historically and one might even say ideologically. And he moves over these grounds—at times described realistically, at other times taking on the qualities of a comedy set, with spaces for eavesdropping and off-stage voices—as adeptly as over the Gothic spaces of Glenallan House or the common-sensical surroundings of Fairport. As Scott's first full-blown Elemental character, he alone bridges the dimensions of space, narrative and genre. He alone understands the palimpsest on all levels.<sup>22</sup>

In some ways ruin scenes in Scott, like his examination of St. Ruth's, prepare us for the Elementals by their association with Catholicism: crumbling remains of abbeys, monasteries and cathedrals, they are links to an English past that was still palpable, and seem also to be links to other-worldly knowledge and power. So the Catholic space may be haunted, even when all other spaces may be relatively realistic; to identify this as a Gothic motif is only to acknowledge the Gothic's intuitive acknowledgement of this past. The sacramentality associated with Catholic spaces implies multiple natures overlapping: the cities of man and God overlaying each other in Augustine, the natural world whose acts may yet resonate on the spiritual plane. Additionally, the British Catholic ruin is not only a residue of historical struggle but also a link to a coherent spatial/political whole according to Lefebvre, who offers medieval church-dominated cities as a successful blending of his triad of spatial categories (40-41). Monkish spaces were apparently

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<sup>22</sup> David Gellatley and Donald Bean Lean from *Waverley* and Meg Merrilies from *Guy Mannering* are the only characters before Edie who come close to playing the same complicated role. Meg Merrilies especially succeeds at linking narrative, space and genre, although her knowledge of all three are far less mysterious and unaccountable than Edie's.

successful and harmonious spaces of social practice and yet were destroyed—as such they become idealized riddles, spaces of lost knowledge, coherency and perspective (as when Egremont regrets the loss of the “Monastics” in Disraeli’s *Sybil*).

Starting with Edie Ochiltree at least, Scott’s Elementals mirror many of the same qualities as these ontologically mixed ruin spaces. They are often physically compromised (old, blind, stunted in growth). They seem historically backwards, like throwbacks to another era, or may perhaps seem universal or timeless. Their frequent lack of rationality also participates in but also subverts the dynamic between Catholicism and superstition assumed during Scott’s time, summed up by P. G. Maxwell-Stuart as “Middle Ages = Catholic = ignorant and superstitious, as opposed to ‘modern times’ = non-Catholic/deist/agnostic = enlightened and scientific” (5). Most Elementals seem to have access to mysterious metaphysical, “irrational” knowledge and power, but in many cases (including Edie’s) they exhibit specific links to Catholicism.<sup>23</sup> The compromised yet sacramental ruin scene seems the best mirroring space, then, for these equally complex characters.

Another Elemental character from a more remote historical setting recalls many of Edie’s qualities. Theodorick of Engaddi appears late in Chapter Three of *The Talisman*, the goal of the journey Sir Kenneth undertakes through the Syrian desert (which I described in my first chapter). Just before he appears, the long series of argumentative jabs and counter-jabs exchanged between the Christian Kenneth and the Muslim Sheerkohf boils to a climax when Sheerkohf chants the verses to “Ahriman,” a mythological tale supposedly describing his family’s occult origins, but which Kenneth takes to be a prayer to Satan. Sheerkohf’s poem touches upon the

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<sup>23</sup> Edie’s social status as a “King’s Bedesman” is a historical link to a Catholic past no one in *The Antiquary* knows directly, an order of paupers partly maintained by the Kings of Scotland “in conformity with the ordinances of the Catholic Church, and who were expected in return to pray for the royal welfare and that of the state” (Scott, qtd in Hewitt 376).

very questions of holy and unholy ground, of righteous and maleficent spirits, that the two have been debating in Bunyanesque fashion: for instance, the oasis which knight and Saracen have visited in Chapter Two is recalled by the “fountain in the desert field,” granted by a “Benigner Power” who contrasts with “Ahriman,” the evil spirit who controls the lashing wave and tornado (42, lines 7-8). The speaker wonders if Ahriman has form or if he is intermingled into the very fabric and elements of earth:

Or art thou mix'd in Nature's source,  
An ever-operating force,  
Converting good to ill;  
An evil principle innate,  
Contending with our better fate  
(42, lines 31-35)

Sheerkohf claims to have been descended from subterranean demigods who are themselves “elementals”—“created out of the pure elementary fire”—and though he is content to leave the finer questions of religion to the theologians, he grants the simple power of such beings:

though the Prophet (blessed be his name!) hath sown amongst us the seed of a better faith than our ancestors learned in the ghostly halls of Tugrut, yet we are not willing, like other Moslemah, to pass hasty doom on the lofty and powerful elementary spirits from whom we claim our origin. These Genii, according to our belief and hope, are not altogether reprobate, but are still in the way of probation, and may hereafter be punished or rewarded. Leave we this to the mollahs and the imaums. Enough that with us the reverence for these spirits is not altogether effaced by what we have learned from the Koran . . . (40-41)

“Not altogether effaced,” he says—a palimpsest-like feature spoken of on “unholy ground,” in the context of a dialogue that has ranged from figure to figure, symbol to symbol, in an attempt to see which soldier, religion, culture, or nation possesses the truer knowledge.<sup>24</sup> But Sheerkohf, though an admirable reader of the landscape around him, is not the Elemental here, despite his

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<sup>24</sup> Scott's anonymous footnote to the poem playfully reassures his Christian readers by referring to the “worthy and learned clergyman” who has translated the supposedly ancient poem: “for fear of misconception, we should warn the reader to recollect, that it is composed by a heathen, to whom the real causes of moral and physical evil are unknown, and who views their predominance in the system of the universe, as all must view that appalling fact, who have not the benefit of the Christian Revelation” (43). In the context of a religious and cultural debate in which Sir Kenneth has been hard pressed to hold his own, the disclaimer rings comically hollow.

claims; rather the seemingly “infernial spirit” that Sir Kenneth “hesitated not to believe that the blasphemous hymn of the Saracen had raised up” is the object of Sir Kenneth’s quest, a Christian hermit, Theodorick (43).

Theodorick’s appearance finds him utterly familiar with the territory around the two horsemen, and very capable of using it to his advantage. He is tall like the demigods of Sheerkohf’s tale, “a figure of great height and very thin, which skipped over rocks and bushes with so much agility as, added to the wild and hirsute appearance of the individual, reminded [Kenneth] of the fauns and silvans” (43).<sup>25</sup> This “apparition,” who “at first appeared to dog their path by concealing itself behind rocks and shrubs, using those advantages of the ground with great address, and surmounting its irregularities with surprising agility,” dramatically and frenziedly announces himself as “Theodorick of Engaddi,” “walker of the desert,” “friend of the Cross, and flail of all infidels” (46). He pounces on Sheerkohf’s throat in his animal skins, here in this treacherous waste of grottoes and caves which “were often the refuge of beasts of prey, or of men still more ferocious” (36). Sir Kenneth’s conviction that this wild and unkempt recluse cannot be Theodorick since he is a “madman” is answered by an assurance from the Muslim that well sums up the mysterious power possessed by all of Scott’s Elementals:

“Not the worse saint [for being mad],” returned the Moslem, speaking according to the well-known Eastern belief, that madmen are under the influence of immediate inspiration. “Know, Christian, that when one eye is extinguished, the other becomes more keen; when one hand is cut off, the other becomes more powerful; so, when our reason in human things is disturbed or destroyed, our view heavenward becomes more acute and perfect.” (47)

This same unholy ground “in which the Evil One hath more than ordinary power” is

Theodorick’s own domain: when he leads the two riders deeper into the waste, he does so with

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<sup>25</sup> Compare Theodorick’s first appearance with Ben Gunn’s, the peculiar Genius of the Place in *Treasure Island*: “From trunk to trunk the creature flitted like a deer, running manlike on two legs, but unlike any man that I had ever seen, stooping almost double as it ran. Yet a man it was, I could no longer be in doubt about that” (79).

uncanny proficiency, “well acquainted with all the winding dells and passes of the desert, and gifted with uncommon activity, which, perhaps, an unsettled state of mind kept in constant exercise” (38, 47). “Athletic yet wasted,” like Edie the Old Tree, he leads them to the opening of his cave dwelling, standing at the entrance with a “sulphurous” torch, yet the interior is less like hell than a monastery or church, with a cool temperature, waxen torches, and “a niche for a rude statue of the Virgin” (46, 48).

But while the Muslim sleeps, Theodorick leads Kenneth further into the cave, and thus into mysteries of the landscape—as the space of the novel, which had recently turned from Dante-esque Hell to quiet monk’s cell, now transforms into a full-blown Gothic chapel:

whereas, in every other place which Sir Kenneth had seen, the labour employed upon the rock had been of the simplest and coarsest description, it had in this chapel employed the invention and the chisels of the most able architects. The groined roofs rose from six columns on each side, carved with the rarest skill; and the manner in which the crossings of the concave arches were bound together, as it were, with appropriate ornaments, were all in the finest tone of the architecture of the age. (56)

Enshrined in this hallowed space, which comes complete with “Gothic door,” ornate carvings and a choir of female voices—strange accompaniment for a hermit monk!—is a fragment of the true cross of Christ.

This first featured landscape in *The Talisman* is one whose rapid alteration signals changes in genre and mood, shifts which Sir Kenneth is ill-equipped to keep up with or, in essence, to “read.” It is not merely that the reader has been taken from the harshest exterior space to a cool, decorous and even luxurious interior space, but that space and narrative have moved in a chapter from the “scene of the temptation” to the Actual Presence, from Inferno to Paradiso. What is important to note here is that Theodorick, the Elemental, has made this possible. He knows the secret of the desert and of the caves, and he has the power in the narrative of proclaiming the unholy ground holy. He is no more an “organic” growth of the Syrian setting—which, of course,

Scott never visited—than Sir Kenneth, and is in fact more mythic and archetypal than anything else. But he has been summoned or conjured, as it were, by an invocation to elemental forces, in a scene pregnant with theological and cultural symbolism, and he has the power to transform this scene, his own domain, into its metonymic inverse.<sup>26</sup>

It's worth noting again the similarities between Theodorick and Edie Ochiltree: both are aged but robust figures, unnaturally strong and spry. Both are beggars with strong links to Catholicism. Both lead the less discriminating heroes to caves which connect, by various mysterious windings, with Gothic structures. Both characters connect with the scenery and with ideas and constructs invested in the scenery, even though one draws from a Scottish landscape and period that Scott remembered, and the other from a stylized representation of an ancient Middle East Scott never saw.

Theodorick's role in *The Talisman* is important but brief; the role of Dickie Sludge in *Kenilworth* is much more substantial. A bizarre "hobgoblin" boy better known throughout the novel as Flibbertigibbet, Sludge might be considered the first in a long line of dwarf characters in historical novels whose physical "grotesquerie" is compensated by unnatural knowledge, often mischievously employed.<sup>27</sup> Although not mysterious enough to be an Elemental, Wayland Smith nevertheless rivals the Elemental's genius for overlapping categories, as I indicated earlier. But

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<sup>26</sup> The explicit link between the Elemental and the elements occurs elsewhere in Scott, as in Charles II's comment about the Elemental character Fenella in *Peveril of the Peak*: "she is like a fairy who trips it in moonlight. There must be more of air and fire than of earth in her composition" (390).

<sup>27</sup> Although Scott's first version of this character is really the "goblin page" of his poem, *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, "scarce an earthly man" but "an earthly spirit," who demonstrates his unnatural quickness covering the same forest ground as Lord Cranstoun (3:31, 5:13). Of course, Flibbertigibbet also builds upon earlier Scott characters like *The Black Dwarf's* Canny Elshie and the historical "Old Mortality."

Victorian authors especially delighted in this manifestation of the Elemental character. *The Tower of London's* dwarf Xit serves many bizarre and ridiculous turns as the novel's comic relief, yet is also peculiarly familiar with all of the Tower's twists and turns. In James' *Forest Days*, the monkey-like Tangel shows uncanny knowledge both of Sherwood Forest and Nottingham Castle, and functions as the godlike Robin Hood's own dark (T)angel in many scenes.

Wayland cannot complete all the tasks required by the novel's complicated plot without help—enter the Elemental.

Sludge first appears as Tressilian's guide to Smith's hidden forest forge and laboratory, and is described as "a queer, shambling, ill-made urchin" of "stunted growth" and "grotesque sneer" (92-93). Along the way he jokes and jabs Tressilian repeatedly about leading him to the devil, since Sludge is Wayland Smith's confederate in maintaining the usefully evil reputation of an invisible and occult smith. Unlike Wayland, who soon drops his Gothic-flavored disguise, Sludge's goblin and devil associations remain with him throughout the novel, emphasizing both his otherworldliness and puckish sense of mischief.

Sludge brings Tressilian to Smith's stone circle (always an emblem in Scott for a complex and layered landscape space) and teases him by calling the space's exterior features by interior names: the stone circle is "Wayland Smith's forge-door," the flat stone is "Wayland Smith's counter," and so on (96). When Tressilian tries to punish him for what he takes to be a practical joke or worse, he displays an elemental facility with the forest space and a demon's propensity to torment:

[He] presently took to his heels across the heath, with a velocity which baffled every attempt of Tressilian to overtake him, . . . . Nor was it the least provoking part of the urchin's conduct, that he did not exert his utmost speed, like one who finds himself in danger, or who is frightened, but preserved just such a rate as to encourage Tressilian to continue the chase, and then darted away from him with the swiftness of the wind, when his pursuer supposed he had nearly run him down . . . .

This lasted until Tressilian, from very weariness, stood still, and was about to abandon the pursuit with a hearty curse on the ill-favoured urchin, who had engaged him in an exercise so ridiculous. But the boy, who had, as formerly, planted himself on the top of a hillock close in front, began to clap his long, thin hands, point with his skinny fingers, and twist his wild and ugly features into such an extravagant expression of laughter and derision, that Tressilian began half to doubt whether he had not in view an actual hobgoblin. (96-97)

Sludge further taunts Tressilian that he alone knows the whereabouts of a nearby tarn, and that if Tressilian takes to his horse to try to catch him, “there is a marsh hard by would swallow all the horses of the Queen's guard. I will into it, and see where you will go then” (97).

Most of Sludge’s chiding of Tressilian is explained by his and Smith’s being in on the same joke—the stone circle really is the “door” to the underground laboratory and forge, the flat stone is really where customers leave their money—but Sludge particularly delights in taunting customers with occult warnings and Gothic hints (“you will soon hear the tack of a hammer that was never forged of earthly iron”; “no man lives that looks on him [Smith]” (98-99).

Despite their partnership as faux conjurers in Chapter Ten, Wayland Smith and Flibbertigibbet differ qualitatively, as the subsequent action bears out. I’ve argued that there is always some mystification about the capable reader of space, and indeed Smith’s easy familiarity with disguise, language, forest and city space baffles Tressilian and surprises the reader. But Flibbertigibbet’s proficiency baffles even Wayland Smith. When he and Amy Robsart join a group of players on the road to Kenilworth Castle, Dickie Sludge is already among them, dressed as a devil (what else?). When the couple is initially turned away at the castle gate by a mock giant—part of *Kenilworth*’s extended focus on performance and spectacle—Sludge gains them entrance by joining in the drama and prompting the gigantic porter with his forgotten lines. It’s a scene that points out both his unnatural knowledge and his easy trans-navigation of genre:

He dropped down from the horse, and skipping up to the porter, plucked him by the tail of the bearskin, so as to induce him to decline his huge head, and whispered something in his ear. Not at the command of the lord of some Eastern talisman did ever Afrite change his horrid frown into a look of smooth submission more suddenly than the gigantic porter of Kenilworth relaxed the terrors of his looks at the instant Flibbertigibbet's whisper reached his ears. . . . “It is even so,” he said, with a thundering sound of exultation—“it is even so, my little dandieprat. But who the devil could teach it thee?” (260-261)

Set in Elizabeth’s England, with Catholicism and hence superstition presumably in retreat, the problem of Dickie Sludge’s knowledge is dealt with less directly and more playfully than

Theodorick's in the epic surroundings of *The Talisman*. But both his half-sinister impishness and his unaccountable understanding align this character with other Elementals, as does his link with the novel's various spaces: he flits freely and easily throughout the unreal mummery of Kenilworth, warning Wayland that he is determined by mysterious means to be "at the bottom of all your secrets, were they as deep and dark as the Castle dungeon" (261). Through his intervention Wayland enters the castle, but through his interference Wayland loses Amy Robsart's letter to Leicester, thus bringing on the climax of the novel.

Both Theodorick and Flibbertigibbet are thus well in keeping with Allen's initial characterization of the "elemental," a half-mad or at least provokingly eccentric, elusive, haunting character, "on the verge" in many senses including the elemental, whose actions significantly affect the resolution of the story. Yet they are also characters whose interaction with historical novel spaces hints at the limitations of rational or conventional knowledge. Like Edie's knowledge of a remote Catholic past; like Madge Wildfire's "doubtful, uncertain, and twilight sort of rationality" (295) which yet kens both space and genre, the roads and forests as well as the ballad and folk tale; like *Guy Mannering*'s Meg Merrilies, whose curses and prophecies are as accurate as her uncanny knowledge of all the secret places on the Ellangowan estate; and like also, in differing degrees, Norna from *The Pirate*, Lady Hermione from *The Fortunes of Nigel*, the White Lady from *The Monastery*, and others—all have ways of merging with the text of space in Scott's novels, becoming contact points between space/time and human beings, the inevitable and the perishable, the universal and the mortal.

A word needs to be said regarding the precognitive powers often possessed by various Elemental characters, since soothsayers and prophets who predict accurately found their way into the Victorian historical novel and beyond in abundance. The ethos of the historical novel

demands a constant backward-looking and speculative groping into the murky and distant past. The author, part historian and part “tapestry restorer,” must find an authoritative grasp of his subjects and timeline (or at least appear to have one) and be able to distinguish the sharper outlines and bolder colors in the mist. The looking back into obscurity—for even a well documented era is obscure—and the bringing forward into narrative cohesion and clarity make up the magical powers so often granted to the successful historical novelist: to Scott, the Wizard of the North, and to those who followed. The author’s through-a-glass-darkly exercise of scrutiny and speculation is thus mirrored by some Elemental characters whose knowledge extends mysteriously forward, who peer into the obscure future back at the novelist and reader. Often the soothsayers and prophets, insane or believed to be insane by other characters, are another means of demonstrating the links between past and present: when a soothsayer looks “forward,” the event predicted is only another fact looked “back” to by the author, revealing a historical link between author and setting. In one way, therefore, the Elemental as prophet or supernatural foreseer of events emphasizes historical continuity, thus arguing for order and rationality.<sup>28</sup> In another way their divinations hint at sublime powers unaccountable in the world of pure rationalization, yet just as real and just as powerful. Scott never explains them, says Walter Allen of Edie, Madge and Meg, “and they are the more powerful for that” (133).

What Allen has noted in the Elementals, I suggest, is not so much an innate channeling or representation of locality in this kind of character, but Scott’s signaling that the palimpsest of historical novel space is also “outside reason and inexplicable in terms of reason” (Allen 133), where reason equals verifiable or empirical knowledge. Neither the spaces nor the Elementals

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<sup>28</sup> For some Victorian instances, an unnamed witch predicts Vesuvius’ eruption in Bulwer Lytton’s *Last Days of Pompeii* (1834). In Ainsworth’s *The Tower of London*, soothsayer Gunnora Braose predicts Lady Jane Grey’s downfall, the climax of the novel. In his *Old Saint Paul’s* (1843), Solomon Eagle prophesies the London fire that will destroy the old cathedral, his “elemental” base, which he haunts like Quasimodo does Notre Dame de Paris. Lady Tiphaine predicts the British Empire’s wide expanse in Conan Doyle’s *The White Company* (1891).

can be understood in terms of *ratio*—grasped by logical steps—though there are hints that they are both *intellectus*—grasped by a higher, intuitive understanding. And if, as I argue, the successful reading of space implies a correct interpretation or acquisition of knowledge for most characters, the Elementals’ seemingly instinctive or preternatural links with space introduce an epistemological problem into the Waverley Novels’ scheme of “knowing.” Like the prophecies and predictions which they often proclaim and the events of the novels bear out, the Elementals and their spatial connection suggests that knowledge can be gained by other and more mysterious means than by observation and deduction. As such they are a challenge to order, realism and level-headedness, and thus to the compensatory coolness and confidence of the voice of the typical historical novel’s narrator.

CHAPTER 4  
“ARCHITECTURAL INCONGRUITIES”: HISTORY AND THE SPACE OF CONTRAST IN  
THE NOVELS OF W. H. AINSWORTH

Despite success and celebrity in the nineteenth century and continued readership into the twentieth, William Harrison Ainsworth (1805-1882) has become little more than a footnote to other literary careers: Dickens, Thackeray, Cruikshank, Forster, Disraeli, Mrs. Henry Wood. But there was a moment in the eighteen-thirties when he looked like the next new thing. In George J. Worth’s account, an “accident of chronology” placed him between Scott’s death and Dickens’ popular ascent (26). Beginning with a Gothic-flavored rogue novel in 1834 and proceeding through a string of very successful historical novels in the eighteen-forties, Ainsworth cashed in on the vacuum Scott left behind by enthusiastically intermixing genres in his novels. As I have suggested, however, critics who have seen in him merely a poor Scott imitator have not paid enough attention to the transitory state of novel sub-genres in his day and the palimpsestic narrative of the historical novel in particular: the same readers who bit Scott’s hand for including a ghost in *The Monastery* in 1820 were lapping up Ainsworth’s strange Gothic-Newgate-historical concoctions in the late eighteen-thirties.

As I indicated earlier, “Waverley space” is more technical than geographical, a space that lends itself to manipulation, where ideas are worked out and arguments are made. Franco Moretti’s identification of spaces with border regions and shifting meanings is intrinsically right, then, even though the same compromised borders and “hybrid” associations may inform the depiction of London, such as occurs in *The Fortunes of Nigel* or *Peveril of the Peak*. The space of the historical novel may well be within Austen’s heart of England, therefore, so long as the spatial palimpsest remains effective. The idea of layering the palimpsest within urban settings, so rarely practiced by Scott, became the central *idée fixe* for one of his immediate successors, William Harrison Ainsworth, who brought to the form not only a long-abiding interest in the

built spaces of cities and monuments, but also a remarkably different vision of history to inform those spaces.

In this chapter I argue that Ainsworth's peculiar, often unsettling combination of marvelous elements and painstaking historical detail proceeds from his own understanding of the palimpsest narrative, as well as from a vision of history that celebrates its touristic and spectacular elements rather than its cause-and-effect relationships. While criticism has accounted for much that is puzzling in Ainsworth's novels merely by citing poor craftsmanship, I suggest that his novels are as suited as Scott's to demonstrate the generic amalgam always at the center of the historical novel because of their obsessive focus on and around architectural space. In Ainsworth's novels, the relationships between fictional and actual buildings, between imagined tunnels and crypts and historical public places signal interactions between different types of information—much as they do in Scott, only they are most frequently urban and built spaces. The geography has changed as has the historical ethos, but the spaces function in much the same way.

It's worth pausing to remember Scott's historical vision and to comment on his own sparse depiction of built environments. Those attributes of Waverley space I have discussed so far, the instability, fluidity and uncertainty that reflect the narrative mixture at work in the novels, do not imply that Scott's vision of history is cataclysmic or shot through with metaphysics or chance. Rather, the sublime or supernatural forces that seem at work in Scott's spaces, as well as the Elemental characters who remain conversant with such forces, only introduce troublesome caveats into Scott's view of history: his is still a progressive and forward-looking historical process, but one pocketed with doubt and disclaimers. Even a narrative so concerned with progress as *The Heart of Midlothian* expresses a guarded optimism, "Scott's particular kind of

progressivism” that is everywhere “qualified” though not explicitly denied (Duckworth 113, 117). That critics so often focus on the progress narrative in Scott points out, I suggest, their taking his rational narrator at face value. The Author of *Waverley* has chuckled over past superstition and lectured on the functions of historical spaces, but all the while the secret tunnels and the Edie Ochiltrees who know them have undermined his version of knowledge—the version that seems the most trustworthy and makes the most sense to criticism.

So when George A. Drake seeks to draw long-due attention to a novel like *The Fortunes of Nigel* and the urban spaces it depicts, his analytical plea takes for granted the historicity of Scott’s rural scene: “At times, Scott historicizes space more fully in the collapsed, hybrid spaces of his urban scenes than even in his more highly varnished Scottish landscapes” (416). But Scott’s “varnished” Scottish rural scenes are not so historical, as I’ve argued, and—granting their focus on man-made structures and the residue of “spatial practice”—the admittedly greater historical quotient of Scott’s urban spaces should make us ask why he chose to depict them so rarely. In other words, if Scott’s spatial imagination was as preoccupied with layering history into space as is often assumed, why does he spend so little time recording the cityscape, the obvious place to look? Why is his urban site so often either missing (like the “Heart of Midlothian” prison) or rendered inauthentically or even cartoonishly (Kenilworth Castle, Whitefriars)? On the contrary, his choice to focus most often on the marginal space, the rural space without a history, indicates his preoccupation with layering extra-historical narratives into the scene: folk narratives, metaphysical narratives, narratives of masculine heroism and chivalric decline. None of these equate with the “historical” as we understand it, but their layers blend with Scott’s historical understanding and carefully juxtaposed facts to build a convincingly “felt” historical world.

The extant and remarkable urban sites Scott avoided drew the constant, admiring gaze of his successor, W. H. Ainsworth, however, and the result (counter to our intuitive expectations, perhaps) was not more but less historically “faithful.” Ainsworth’s contributions to the Victorian historical novel have been variously characterized as being pale imitations of Scott’s work, costume romances with no real historical conceptualization, or Gothic novels featuring only the trappings of historical epochs. He ranks high on critics’ lists of debasers and tainters, bringing “not only inferior art, but impure motives” to the presumably pure form created by Scott (Tillotson 140). Critics reduce his preoccupation with England’s monuments in novels like *The Tower of London* (1839), *Old Saint Paul’s* (1841), and *Windsor Castle* (1843) to a reliance upon castles, subterranean tunnels, and other creaking machinery of the Gothic novel, leading to his exclusion from serious consideration of historical novelists. While Ainsworth’s affinity for the Gothic is indisputable, the assumption that it relegates his work to the fringes of the discussion is incorrect, not only because the Gothic novel is itself “a mode of history, a way of perceiving an obscure past and interpreting it” (Punter, qtd in Mitchell 85), but mainly because the historical novel is understood to be an “all-purpose” fiction by its first generations of readers, capable of channeling Gothic components and many others within its “rhetoric of contrasts” (Moretti 177).

More importantly, Ainsworth’s historic structures and Gothicized cityscapes are not merely his favorite settings: they show how the landscapes and built environments of the historical novel mirror the author’s attitudes about genre and narrative, approaches to history and epistemological assumptions. Where Scott had built from an organic, guardedly optimistic understanding of history (and produced a compromised rural space to match it), Ainsworth’s touristic vision of history as a spectacle, of the past as a dramatic and vivid “place” to take his readers, led him to focus on the jarring, irregular, categorically bewildering space of the city and,

in particular, on the recognizable history books within their midst: the monument, the landmark, the royal residence, the national treasure. One might say Ainsworth was not looking for causes but he was constantly on the watch for effects; history in his novels thus becomes less cerebral and more tangible, sensual, and experiential. This touristic view of history, as well as this greater confidence in the experimental qualities of the genre, play out in Ainsworth's urban spaces: historical novel space continues to function as a space of ideas, but the ideas have changed.

By Ainsworth's heyday—the 1830s and 40s—the popularity of Scott's novels had helped re-establish the novel as the dominant literary form, and the historical novel as a particularly epic, manly and healthful variation of it. Scott's currency also inspired the emergence of a printed criticism that took the novel seriously, that earnestly attempted to set down for it solid aesthetic principles. Small wonder that the eighteen twenties and thirties saw critics drawing sharp distinctions between the many sub-genre pigeonholes of the novel—Gothic revivals, silver fork novels, Newgate novels, condition-of-England novels—and intensely discussing what domains the different types should and should not inhabit. When it came to the historical novel, the palimpsest-like mode of the Waverley Novels with their mixture of generic forms might well complicate this classification process; instead (at least, initially) the boundary lines of representation seemed to expand rather than contract around the genre. Scott's last decade of novels had allowed more and freer generic mixture to take place, teaching his first generation of successors that the form was, if not rhapsodically Romantic in spirit, at least a phantasmagoria of style, genre and character. For all the taxonomic zeal of Victorian critics and commentators, flexibility and variety remained the hallmarks of the historical novel, which may account for their extremely mixed results when it came to defining the genre's essence. Many primarily identified the historical novel with romance, thus emphasizing its more residual, familiar

elements like stylized dialogue, type characterization, rural settings, and the focus on chivalric virtue and courtly love. Others soon sought to distinguish (from about the mid-century onwards) between recklessly nostalgic “historical romances” and serious (because accurately researched) historical novels. Although always a symbiosis of interdependent generic features, the historical novel tended to consist of mainly one thing or the other to its first generations of critics: it was either mostly marvelous, remote, heroic and unreal, or mostly serious, factual, well-documented and quite real.

That the historical novel could and should try to incorporate a bit of everything is an evident assumption for the first decades of readers after Scott’s death, obvious in both the reviews of historical fictions that praise their colorful variety and in the greater willingness of readers to accept such a mixture of generic material than had been afforded Scott himself. Scott’s experiments had often met with negativity initially, not only failures like *The Monastery* but even phenomenal successes like *Ivanhoe*. But early Victorian historical novelists mixed their materials with comparatively reckless abandon and met little disapprobation; on the contrary, they often garnered favorable comparisons with the Wizard of the North. In her often insightful argument for “narrative annexes” in Victorian novels, Suzanne Keen notes the general willingness of Victorian mainstream novelists to experiment with both genre and space, writing of the “growing confidence . . . that encourages the employment of a blend of old and new techniques, and inspires more ambitious and more diverse representation” (181). Keen finds evidence of the Victorians’ creative breaching of borders in space “temporarily in annexes, within a wide range of novelistic kinds, [suggestive of their] flexible worldmaking and world-altering powers” (181). But the historical novel that had always taken part in this blending of genre—and not necessarily within temporary, incongruous annexes but within the main space of

the text, both literal and representational—are not part of Keen’s convincing account of the bizarre shifts in tone and modality found in many mainstream novels. Her sidestepping of the historical novel (essentially reaffirming the late Victorian characterization of the genre as digressive, disorganized, and chiefly preoccupied with the unrealities of romance<sup>1</sup>) allows her to maintain focus on annexes as tiny and temporary “workshops,” but only at the expense of the most aggressive experimental sites of genre and sub-genre: the early Victorian historical novel. Within their fictional worlds, Scott’s immediate successors were kept busy hammering together the materials he left behind, resulting in elaborate, often bizarre, yet nevertheless influential constructions. And—as in Scott, as in Keen’s annexes—the generic and epistemological symbiosis informing these efforts is reflected in their spaces, places, and landscapes. In the novels of W. H. Ainsworth, this means predominantly an urban space, a cityscape dotted with magnificent relics of past glory.

### **Vivid Contrasts: Ainsworth’s Popular History**

In *William Harrison Ainsworth*, George J. Worth accounts for Ainsworth’s early popularity in part by citing his multi-generic approach: “he was in a unique position to avail himself of three important literary traditions which were either at or just past their peak: those of the historical novel, the Gothic novel, and the rogue novel” (26). He also “incorporated elements” of the fashionable novel and “no doubt unconsciously . . . went outside the novel altogether in borrowing for use in his fiction many melodramatic devices of the theater of his day” (26-27). Worth’s description almost suggests that Ainsworth participates in these literary

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<sup>1</sup> In an interesting reversal of their own rhetoric about Scott, Keen’s discussion of the historical novel is mostly confined to disparagements of Scott’s seemingly unhealthy influence on the Victorians. In many cases “a bizarre episode or startling turn in a plot” does not indicate a narrative annex, but simply “the ineradicable trace of the writer’s love for Walter Scott” (15). She congratulates Victorian novelists for blending old writers and styles, even though they “may have unwittingly imbibed their Spenser in deep draughts of Walter Scott” (181). In short, Keen’s thesis seems to keep bumping into Scott and the historical novel but does not include them in the genre-transforming effects of the “renovations of the novel” she is describing.

traditions discretely, and certainly some of his novels are more one thing than another: *Jack Sheppard* (1839) is mostly a rogue novel, *Auriol* (1865) mostly a Gothic. But nearly all of his forty-plus novels feature historical settings or contain some attempt at historical periodization, whether they feature historical characters prominently, examine the effects of historical events on fictional characters, or employ history as period setting for wholly fictional narratives. More importantly, the blueprint for the historical novel—Scott’s popular *Waverley* series—had also incorporated elements from different kinds of novel and “went outside the novel altogether” for other elements, as I’ve demonstrated. Ainsworth does seem to show a rather more reckless tendency towards generic and tonal instability than Scott or most other historical novelists. He shifts suddenly from scenes of Gothic horror to scenes of farce or even slapstick, from dramatic love scenes to flat historical reporting; ghosts intrude upon historical monarchs in the manner of a ballad, while heroic characters meant to engage reader sympathy are made the butts of crude comedy. But he and his early readers obviously understood the historical novel to be a catch-all genre, flexible and polymorphous, and the enthusiasm with which he stirred the pot of style and modality is well in keeping with his own carnival-esque, waxworks vision of history and its uses.

Ainsworth won widespread acclaim for *Rookwood* in 1834, a romantic account of legendary highwayman Dick Turpin. Although Ainsworth claimed it was a conscious imitation of Radcliffe-style Gothic, *Rookwood* was nevertheless a hybrid: Gothic houses and crypts, Newgate characters and thieves’ cant, historical details, places accurately described or wholly invented, fictitious incidents which became “invented traditions” (such as the famous “Ride to York”), and a parcel of soon-to-be popular songs. Far from being troubled by this generic swirl, Ainsworth’s readers and reviewers delighted in it: one reviewer at *The Spectator* praised its “great vigour and wonderful variety,” while another saw in Dick Turpin’s thrilling ride “an

image of the reader's course as he leaps the abrupt gaps and turns the picturesque corners of this singular tale" (qtd in Ellis 1: 256). Ainsworth's 1911 biographer, S. M. Ellis, beams over the success of *Rookwood* in terms which make its appealing "vivid contrasts" of genre and mood clear:

The book was an instantaneous success and took the town by storm, primarily by its quaint originality and extreme unconventionality—the blending of the natural with the supernatural, the sober realities of everyday life combined with the fantastic imaginings of weird romance . . . . Here was a vivid contrast of sensations which proved irresistible to the reading public, long since heartily sick of the dreary stream, which had deluged the country for the past ten years, of "Tales of Fashionable Life," . . . . (Ellis 1: 255)

However much late Victorian critics equated the historical novel with marvelous romance, however much twentieth-century critics focused on its realistic components, readers of the eighteen-thirties understood and reveled in the fluid representations possible within its pages. *Rookwood* was a true popular success, a novel that cut across the classes as *The Pickwick Papers* would do a few years later, and Ainsworth was both thrilled and mystified by an approval manifested not only in glowing reviews and impressive sales but also in numerous stage adaptations, his portrait pasted on omnibuses, and the sudden emergence of a tourist trade along Turpin's York road route—a route, and a ride, which Ainsworth invented (Ellis 1: 237-238, 258). Ainsworth followed *Rookwood* with the meticulously researched *Crichton* (1837), but a scholarly approach to reconstructing the past—especially the French past!—did not win him the same wide popular readership as his novelization of ballad and chapbook outlawry (Ellis 1: 327-328). His next novel *Jack Sheppard* (1839) returned to legendary criminals, becoming the most controversial of the Newgate school and winning the same broad success as *Rookwood*. Like its predecessor, *Jack Sheppard* played fast and loose with genre and mood, and generated tourist interest in its alleged locations (Ellis 1: 355-358).

By 1839 Ainsworth was already bowing to Dickens' popularity, writing to a relation that "by common consent [Dickens] has been installed in the throne of letters vacated by Scott" (qtd in Ellis 1: 346). But he felt sure he had learned the right formula for continued success in the new decade: popular historical subjects ostentatiously displayed, with enough veracity to satisfy the educated reader but enough pageantry and broad humor to please the groundlings. Although he certainly shared Scott's antiquarian impulses and interest in obscure historical details, Ainsworth would never attempt to introduce unfamiliar situations and subjects into his novels as Scott had to his English readers with his Scottish stories; he would never rummage obscure history for the cover of darkness, as Scott's various personas admit doing. Rather, he would detail, even explode moments from a past already familiar to his readers; he would drum upon tonic chords in the national anthem.

Such a set of guiding principles was perfectly in step with the historical novel's focus on the making of nation—and in particular, with the making of a picturesque history of England, described by Rosemary Mitchell as an attempt to incorporate the "everyday lives, customs, and habits of the British people, and the physical remains of the national past . . . into the dominant national narrative" (111). In her study of illustrated representations of British history, *Picturing the Past*, Mitchell goes a long way toward accounting for Ainsworth's early popularity by situating his novels within this popular, and distinctly unscholarly, historiographic movement. Her appraisal recognizes more than just Romanticism in Ainsworth's novels, linking their interest in costume, pageantry, and spectacle with the budding tourism and heritage movements in the first half of the nineteenth century, and with a new historical awareness that proved "a democratizing force not only in its choice of subject matter but also in its large audience and wide impact: it was not the preserve of a social or scholarly elite" (2).

Mitchell does not, however, address the continuity of location and structure evident throughout Ainsworth's work, nor does she comment extensively upon the generic mixture that such represented spaces reflect. Ainsworth would have learned the value of tangible, tourable historical settings from the local tourism generated by his versions of Turpin and Jack Sheppard. From his own wide readership (and from Dickens' example) he learned the value of finding common denominators in style and in subject, and of offering as wide a variety of mood and subject as possible. In his plan for the unrealized 1836 series *The Lions of London*, Ainsworth expresses an abiding concern that his fiction feature something for everyone, his narratives framing and containing a "vivid contrast" (in Ellis' pet phrase) such as had contributed to *Rookwood's* success. He intended to meld past and present, drama and humor, historical learning and Gothic effect, into one affordable, serial publication: "to present a vivid contrast of subjects—a tragic, historical novel combined with humour of the Pickwickian style" (Ellis 1: 310). Mitchell points out how this proposed series, "a sort of story-tale guide book to old and new London" (95), demonstrates the past/present duality of vision already noted in Ainsworth's novels by Worth: "Ainsworth views his historical backgrounds with a kind of double vision: seeing them as they were at some period in the past and contrasting them with their present, usually debased, appearance" (Worth 72). This characteristic technique of both Gothic and picturesque modes of description also informs the illustrations for Ainsworth's *Tower of London* and *Old Saint Paul's*, both of which derive from this abortive project (Mitchell 95).

But in adapting his own versions of palimpsest narrative and spaces, Ainsworth's would necessarily have been a multiplicity or fragmenting of vision rather than a duality. His confidence that the historical novel could contain a diversity of generic elements is more evident than Scott's, and gets mirrored in his spatial representations; so also does his sense of history as a

collection of famous, novel or picturesque fragments, whose gathering together in the novel foregrounds differences between past and present rather than revealing similarities. Like Victor Hugo, Ainsworth held that famous historical structures and monuments are history: tangible, visible, and visitable. Suitably, his novels most often encounter that history in touristic fashion, neglecting the search for causality we find in Scott, focusing instead on history's sensational marginalia—the dramatic moment, the dazzling tableau, the grisly execution. The “readers” of his novels—of history and of space—are tourists, often quite literally. They are introduced to celebrated extant locations where sensational events have played out and will play out, locations that Ainsworth's audience could visit and verify for themselves. Where Scott had been vague, where he conflates different places or imaginatively rebuilds famous sites from the ground up, Ainsworth remains literal, specific, even exactly measured—whether reenacting key historical scenes in “fully visualized tableaux” or creating new scenes inspired by actual spaces (Mitchell 109). But he also riddles historical locations with secret and subterranean spaces to contain Gothic subplots, literally walling off one genre from another. With a version of the historical novel that owes as much to Hugo as to Scott, Ainsworth equates narrative with architectural structure and builds within, around, and beneath history, bringing his readership a touristic and popular experience of history “in the round.”

### **Basic Strategies: Structure Organizing Narrative**

In Ainsworth's historical novel the standard equipment is the physical, architectural structure; it is the building block of his version of historical novel space, both the occasion and paradigm for narratives. Whether spatially complicated structures like the Tower of London or ordinary houses and taverns, at the most basic level of storytelling and plot construction Ainsworth uses the exterior situation of buildings, the interior layout of rooms, the character of the built environment and the relationships between different structures to direct narrative. In his

most famous declaration of such methods, Ainsworth uses the original Preface to *The Tower of London* to describe his favorite project of

exhibiting the Tower in its triple light of a palace, a prison, and a fortress . . . [and endeavoring] to contrive such a series of incidents as should naturally introduce every relic of the old pile,—its towers, chapels, halls, chambers, gateways, arches, and drawbridges—so that no part of it should remain un-illustrated. (George Barrie and Sons Edition vii)

Chapter titles from *The Tower* demonstrate Ainsworth's painstaking specificity when it comes to the monument and his determination to visit every possible location within its walls: "Of the Mysterious Occurrence that happened to Queen Jane in Saint John's Chapel in the White Tower," "How Gilbert escaped from the By-ward Tower" "How Jane was Imprisoned in the Brick Tower," "What Befell Cicely in the Salt Tower" and so on. Ainsworth's obvious agenda here, the way he "contrives" to lead his narrative through the separate spaces of the Tower seemingly with the sole purpose of illustrating them, have led to his novels being dismissed as "archaeological handbooks" or obsessive architectural researches (Sanders 33).

As noted above, both *The Tower* and the equally popular *Old Saint Paul's* owe much of their architectural/spatial overdetermination to the abortive *Lions of London* project, and are best evaluated with their accompanying illustrations. But whatever extra emphasis these collaborative projects award to certain structures, using built spaces to organize narratives both historical and fictional is common practice throughout Ainsworth's work, as indeed are the tropes of designing and constructing buildings to represent the craft of fiction writing. His reliance upon buildings for narratives and their multiplicity of functions in his work must owe in part to his original fondness for Gothic fiction, but he is engaged in more than simply converting real historical spaces into flexible or "liquid" Gothic spaces, more than "turning national landmarks into Gothic castles" as Stephen Carver has it ("Tower" paragraph 4). While he regards his fiction as contributing to the renovation of a Gothic "structure of romance" in an oft-cited passage (which I

examine below), it's worth looking briefly at the way the most basic buildings and structures in Ainsworth organize plots and events or assist in developing characters and emphasizing themes.<sup>2</sup>

One of Ainsworth's last significantly popular novels, *The Flitch of Bacon, or The Custom of Dunmow* (1854) is a good place to see a fictional building organizing the plot of an otherwise hectic, untidy narrative. Inspired by an Essex country custom (mentioned in Chaucer) that awards a "flitch" or gammon of bacon to any married couple in the village of Dunmow who can live without a cross word for the space of a year, this strange but oddly charming period piece has been considered one of Ainsworth's most disorganized novels. Noting its lack of focus and generic inconsistencies, George J. Worth writes:

we cannot be certain whether we are concerned primarily with a pastoral novel in which two rustic couples vie for a legendary token of marital fidelity and happiness, or with the Gothic story of Sir Walter Fitzwalter and his grim life at the gloomy, haunted house which becomes the inn of the Dunmow Flitch. (46-47)

But Worth cites the cure even as he complains of the disease—the pastoral/Gothic novel is organized and unified by the inn/haunted house, the mostly fictitious, titular public house called the Dunmow Flitch.<sup>3</sup> The reader learns right away that the two main narratives of the novel are linked in this building.

The house had once been the most important home in Dunmow but was abandoned and sold by "Sir Walter Fitzwalter" following the alleged suicide of a wife he erroneously believed unfaithful. A ghostly female figure resembling Lady Fitzwalter is sometimes seen "in one particular room, in a deserted wing of the house" (7). Supposed to be haunted by the locals, then,

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<sup>2</sup> My purpose in pointing out these narrative tendencies in more mundane settings is to demonstrate that structures are standard story-telling equipment for Ainsworth, that he employs them deliberately to organize contrasting genres, tones, and types of information. Although not marginal nor rural spaces, they are Ainsworth's version of flexible and fluid Waverley space.

<sup>3</sup> Ellis confirms the existence of a Flitch Inn in Dunmow though it is "not the picturesque, rambling building imagined by Ainsworth" (2: 200). The inn apparently changed its character somewhat to take advantage of the renewed interest in the custom generated by Ainsworth's novel.

“for some time no one would inhabit it; it was, at last, converted into an inn, and was taken by Jonas Nettlebed immediately after his first marriage” (6). Nettlebed and his wife Nelly form the comic half of the pastoral story in the novel, a Beatrice-Benedick couple to oppose the sentimental Frank and Rose Woodbine. Accordingly, while the public spaces of the inn become the idealized rural setting for their strained attempts to contend for the Flich, the “deserted wing” helps develop the Gothic side of the story—in fact, its layout makes the Gothic story possible. When the inn’s former owner Sir Walter returns in disguise (this authorial character, a sort of bastardized Sir Walter Scott in name, turns up with the amusingly appropriate alias, “Doctor Plot”) to “moralise upon the vanities of the world,” he takes a morose interest in both the awarding of the Flich and the stories of the inn’s ghostly inhabitant (30). Fitzwalter chooses the inn’s haunted room for his abode, allegedly to debunk the rumors, actually in hopes of meeting the ghost. The middle section of the novel explores “The Haunted Chamber” and its environs and reveals the Radcliffian hinges upon which the Gothic plot turns. Lady Fitzwalter lives; her ghost-like facility within the house is due to the existence of a secret set of rooms, unknown to either Sir Walter or Jonas.

Lady Fitzwalter’s “haunting” of the chambers has been a melancholy vigil for her disgraced name to be cleared, a Shakespearian motif in keeping with others in the novel, but particularly reminiscent of the Lady Hermione subplot in Scott’s *The Fortunes of Nigel*. Like Lady Fitzwalter, Hermione’s life in a secret wing of a great house generates ghostly rumors among the servants. But Hermione’s hidden existence plays a comparatively minor part in Scott’s novel, at first occasioning some light comic and Gothic effects and later providing the milieu for some cautionary exposition; although Hermione herself is an important character, her hidden residence is not. In *The Flich of Bacon*, however, the secret wing of the self-referential

inn creates the Gothic plot of the novel. Its revelation is the story, right down to its being discovered by Doctor Plot. While the separate spaces within the inn constitute generic and tonal changes, then, this space is not a narrative annex in Suzanne Keen's sense—not a temporary, incongruous generic space where impermissible subjects or characters are introduced. Rather, the rustic inn with Gothic rooms reflects the coexistence of two kinds of story within the novel, a generic harmony that somehow feels inharmonious now, since critical understanding of what historical novels should do has changed.

Worth also notes (and it's worth noting) the many melodramatic features in Ainsworth, the asides and soliloquies, the stage-like entrances and exits from scenes: "Whole chapters in any number of Ainsworth's novels might, with very little change, have made effective scenes in Victorian melodramas" (112). In keeping with these features, Ainsworth often employs structures to imitate the drama. Scott had woven in pockets and recesses into his rural scenes, or concealed natural steps with green sward, in the manner of fantastic opera scenery. Ainsworth's stage settings are more deliberately artificial: the layout of rooms or arrangement of buildings create a stage-like ambience reflected in the characters' speeches and actions, which often seem more self-conscious amid such props and backdrops. The great success of stage adaptations of Ainsworth novels makes it entirely possible that he had stage decorations in mind when composing these scenes; writing melodrama had been his first literary love (Ellis 1:51).

In *Auriol*, for example, Ainsworth leaves behind specific London streets and locations to bring the eponymous hero and heroine Ebba Thorneycroft to "an old and partially demolished building" (101), an imaginary ruined structure which, in addition to its echo of Gothic spaces,

functions as a stage, providing levels and layers for stage-like effect.<sup>4</sup> Noticing a light in the building's upper storey, Ebba

expressed a wish to enter it. Auriol offered no opposition, and passing through an arched doorway, and ascending a short, spiral, stone staircase, they presently arrived at a roofless chamber, which it was evident, from the implements and rubbish lying about, was about to be razed to the ground. On one side there was a large arch, partly bricked up, through which opened a narrow doorway, though at some height from the ground; With this a plank communicated, while beneath it lay a great heap of stones, amongst which were some grotesque carved heads. In the centre of the chamber was a large square opening, like the mouth of a trapdoor, from which the top of a ladder projected, and near it stood a flaming brazier, which had cast forth the glare seen from below. Over the ruinous walls on the right hung the crescent moon, now emerged from the cloud, and shedding a ghostly glimmer on the scene. (101-102)

Ebba notes the strangeness of the scene text-referentially, "like a spot one reads of in a romance," (102) but the physical setting suggests the stage instead: the roofless structure like an upper gallery, set off from the backdrop by its arches and jagged walls, lit from below and by the theatrical crescent moon. A Hamlet's Ghost voice intrudes from the pit moments later ("Beware!" cried a deep voice, issuing apparently from the depths of the vault"), while before the scene is finished one character is snatched away by "an arm . . . thrust from the trap-door" (102-103), making it clear that the entire scene is a set-piece, its dialogue and events cued by the structural setting.

Similarly, the arrangement of buildings in Chapter Fourteen of *The Star-Chamber* (1854) seems to determine the tone and events of the scene. Hero Jocelyn Mouchensey and servant Dick Taverner arrive at Tottenham to find the town in mid-celebration, a joyous scene of May games and Morris dances that typifies Ainsworth's idealized "Merry England" depiction of the British countryside. In a scene filled with theatrical masque figures like Robin Hood and the May Queen, Ainsworth carefully sets the scene in a recognizably theatrical space: "a piece of

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<sup>4</sup> Anne Humphreys notes the replacement of conventional Gothic settings by ruinous urban spaces in Victorian mysteries novels (qtd in Mitchell 267-268). Ainsworth participates enthusiastically in this replacement or "renovation."

greensward in the centre of the village, surrounded by picturesque habitations, and having, on one side of it, the ancient cross” (95). The cross is a historical landmark and Ainsworth does not neglect to touch upon it in true antiquarian style. But the houses, nondescript for all their picturesqueness, mainly serve to surround the scene playing out on the green, much like the circular Elizabethan theater (and much like Scott’s “natural” amphitheatres). One house plays an active part of the scene, however, its “open oriel window” suggesting the upper gallery of the stage (96). At this window appears Aveline Calveley, a Puritan’s daughter who becomes Mouchensey’s love interest in the novel. Ainsworth fusses over perspective in the scene, taking pains to give Aveline a view of the games, Mouchensey a view of Aveline and the “audience” a view of all:

Shrinking from the public gaze, and, perhaps, from some motive connected with religious scruples, scarcely deeming it right to be a spectator of the passing scene, this fair maiden was so placed as to be almost screened from general view. Yet it chanced that Jocelyn, from the circumstance of being on horseback, and from his position, was able to command a portion of the room in which she stood; and he watched her for some minutes before she became aware she was the object of his regards. (96-97)

The theatricality of the scene becomes more pronounced when Hugh Calveley, Aveline’s bigoted father, appears at the window with her. Their confrontational exchange plays out before the entire *dramatis personae* upon the green, Hugh addressing his daughter “in a voice of thunder, calculated to reach those at a distance,” while the masquers, chorus-like, stop to listen and murmur displeasurably: “So sonorous was the voice of the Puritan, so impressive were his looks and gestures, that his address commanded general attention. While he continued to speak, the sports were wholly stopped” (102-103). The dramatic qualities in the scene, while consistent with other theatrical elements in Ainsworth, seem to be ordered or determined by his careful, minute manipulation of structure and space. The open stage area in the foreground, complete with chorus, the decorative background of period habitations, the upper gallery with ornamental

window where a private scene is enacted in public voices, the historical landmark in the frame, the reader as audience, watching the hero watch the heroine—all are spatial elements signaling the deliberately evoked dramatic tone of the scene.

Finally, from the same novel comes a superb example of Ainsworth's use of a fictional structure to assist in characterization; the passage also affords us a glance at the relationship between architecture/landscape and masculine sexuality in the historical novel. Ainsworth develops a shadowy historical personage—racketeer Sir Giles Mompesson, a corrupt licenser of public houses exiled in 1620—into the villain of *The Star-Chamber*, the character above all others associated with the titular judgment chamber,<sup>5</sup> and one who takes a sadistic interest in the punishments of the prisoners he helps to send there. Seeming to lack typical human passions, particularly sexual ones, Mompesson contrasts himself with his partner in crime, the ridiculous coxcomb Sir Francis Mitchell: "I have passions as well as yourself, Sir Francis; but I keep them under subjection. I drink not—I riot not—I shun all idle company . . . I have only one passion which I indulge,—Revenge. You are a slave to sensuality, and pamper your lusts at any cost" (269-270). The novel's dark avenger, Clement Lanyere, twice refers to Mompesson's vengeance schemes in architectural terms, as a "fabric" he has been at pains to erect (301, 366). Lanyere vows to destroy "the superstructure on which he has built his fortunes" (301), an equation of the structure and the man that should make us doubly aware of Mompesson's rather extraordinary house, described in Chapter 34. The potentially respectable masculine self-denial and restraint that Mompesson exhibits overtly is here, spatially, undermined.

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<sup>5</sup> The Star Chamber is the royal council chamber of Westminster Palace, so called because of the stars decorating its ceiling. Formed during the Tudor monarchy and abolished in 1641, the court of justice presiding in the Star Chamber had power to "create and define the offenses it punished," a power heavily abused during the reigns of James I and Charles I (Wheeler 116). The chamber itself became a shorthand term for corrupt retribution and the court's harsh sentencing, often resulting in mutilation and torture. Scott mentions it in *The Fortunes of Nigel* (Chapter Sixteen). Ainsworth uses Justice Shallow's line from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, "I will make a Star-Chamber matter of it" (I.i.1-2) as an epigraph for his novel.

“A large, gloomy habitation near Fleet Bridge,” Mompesson’s house, “with its stone walls, corner turrets, ponderous door, and barred windows, might be taken as part and parcel of the ancient prison existing in this locality” (223). In fact, this “grim and frowning mansion” faces the gateway of the prison, the “muddy current” of the Fleet River—subterranean in Ainsworth’s day, and long associated with stench, disease and death—“at that time open to view” and flowing between the two structures (223). The house’s spare interior, which “corresponded with its forbidding exterior,” accords with Mompesson’s account of himself as a man who seems to keep his passions and appetites in check, its apartments

large, but cold and comfortless and, with two or three exceptions, scantily furnished . . . There was a large hall of entrance, where Sir Giles’ myrmidons were wont to assemble, with a great table in the midst of it, on which no victuals were ever placed . . . and a great fire-place where no fire ever burnt. (224-225)

But Ainsworth’s further description shows the house to be designed to gratify its owner’s one passion for sadistic revenge, and does so in terms that conflates his revenge with a troublesome fetishism. A series of corkscrew (twisted) stairs “to which Sir Giles used to resort to reconnoitre the Fleet Prison” reveals the house to be an extended series of shameful peepholes, as its proximity to supervising St. Paul’s makes clear: “When stationed at the loophole, little reeked Sir Giles of the mighty cathedral that frowned upon him like the offended eye of Heaven” (225).

Ainsworth draws house, prison and man together in a passage about the house’s reputation:

Now, as no one had a stronger interest in the Fleet Prison than the owner of that gloomy house, inasmuch as he had lodged more persons within it than any one ever did before him, it would almost seem that he had selected his abode for the purpose of watching over the safe custody of the numerous victims of his rapacity and tyranny. This was the general surmise; and, it must be owned, there was ample warranty for it in his conduct. (223)

As Mompesson is intimately connected with the prison—“he entered the prison when he pleased . . . . He always appeared when least expected, and seemed to take a malicious pleasure in troubling those most anxious to avoid him”—so also is Mompesson’s house rumored to be

literally connected with the prison in which he exercises his “strange and unwarrantable influence”: “It was even supposed by some of the prisoners that a secret means of communication must exist between Sir Giles’ habitation and the jail” (223-224). The blurring of lines, the fluidity of space and boundary in this description of house-prison-man indicates Ainsworth’s conscious use of space/place to imply information he cannot detail more explicitly—a function which, again, accords well with Keen’s annexes, except that such spaces are main locations in Ainsworth. The unwholesome river flowing openly, almost unashamedly between the structures, the cold emptiness of the house and its secret peepholes, the rumors of secret underground passages to the prison, and Saint Paul’s “offended eye,” together with Mompesson’s secret “passion” for revenge and uncanny facility within the prison—all combine to encode his sadistic and perverse nature, a degenerate villainy perfectly in step with the novel’s larger preoccupation with the effeminacy and transgressive sexuality of James I’s reign. The Fleet prison’s historical association with clandestine and illegal weddings, the so-called “Fleet marriages” for which it was most notorious,<sup>6</sup> further identifies Sir Giles’ house as the site of criminally, spiritually and perhaps sexually deviant behavior. Actual and fictional structures are mysteriously linked (like history and fiction) to explore questions of moral character and sexuality.

That Ainsworth incorporated elements from melodrama into his narratives is undeniable; that he did so unwittingly as the result of poor craftsmanship or, as George Worth ascribes, “no doubt unconsciously,” is less credible given the manipulation of space in his fiction. Here is urban space, not the national, cultural or historical marginalia that Moretti maps, but space at the

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<sup>6</sup> The Fleet marriage was an early form of false, illegal or clandestine marriage, carried out at the prison itself for a fee. “The prison was . . . most notorious for its ‘secret’ and unlawful marriages performed by “degraded clergymen” for less than a guinea. . . . Women, drugged or intoxicated, could be taken there and married for their money; innocent girls could be duped into believing they were lawfully joined” (Ackroyd 252).

heart of England transformed, stretched, hollowed out and artfully arranged to produce a conscious generic effect. These are spaces every bit as “conceited” as Flora MacIvor’s Highland backdrop, but made of different stuff: the *materiel* of social history made liquid and metaphorically pliable. Ainsworth’s popular historical ethos directed him to set his fiction within cities, but his city spaces remain as adaptable to the needs of his narrative as did Scott’s wild, sublime rural locations and conflated ruins.

Gothic elements are just as spatially obvious as the dramatic in Ainsworth’s novels, but seem to be employed a bit more deliberately. It serves his aim of providing all-purpose, multi-genre fiction excellently that the real London spaces of his novels—the Tower of London, Windsor Castle, St. Paul’s Cathedral, St. James’, the Guildhall—are also massive, complexly structured places honeycombed with different rooms, levels, dungeons, and (for aught his reader knows) trapdoors and secret passageways. As the two different wings of the fictional Dunmow Flitch Inn separated two different kinds of story (each genre possesses its own space), Ainsworth easily separates historical tableaux from more romantic and Gothic subplots by exploring little known spaces within monuments or creating fictional ones. Again, layering narratives historical and otherwise into space is the typical *modus operandi* of the historical novel; in this, Ainsworth resembles Scott (though criticism often insists that he does not). But Ainsworth’s predilection for Gothic spaces proceeds from more than just a wish for variety. Rather, the “Gothic space” serves for him as paradigm for both fictional narrative and historical knowledge-gathering.

### **“The Skillful Architect” and the Gothic Structure of Romance**

Ainsworth’s employment of space to manipulate genre is not unprecedented among Victorian novelists (as Keen’s annexes attest), though he perhaps does so more rambunctiously than most, confident in the power of setting to bind together unlike genres and information. Such confidence in the extreme flexibility of space/place undoubtedly arises from his Gothic

predilections, the same impulse that led him to pocket the semi-historical landscape of *Rookwood* with “sepulchral vaults” and chambers of death. When Stephen Carver refers to Ainsworth’s “turning national landmarks into Gothic castles,” it’s a way of saying that Ainsworth’s historical fiction draws from these structures the same way that Gothic fiction draws from and depends on its typically fictional structures and locales. Such a paradigm, deceptively simple in Carver’s formation, is actually a precarious balancing act: historiography demands accuracy and continuity, but Gothic effects depend on vagueness, uncertainty, and fragmentation. If the historical mode brings light to the past, the Gothic seeks out the shadows.

While Ainsworth could not simply convert the Tower of London or Windsor Castle into Gothic spaces without sacrificing any attempt at historicism, the previous examples suggest some of his favorite strategies for solving such problems. Space/place could be manipulated to bind together essentially unlike categories of information, walling off Gothic from comic in *The Flich of Bacon*, or tunneling from fictional to historical in *The Star-Chamber*. Similarly, while the plot of *The Tower of London* may “contrive” to visit all the actual rooms of the fortress, it also delves underground into tunnels and dungeons that may or may not actually exist and which, in any case, were not open to the public. Working from memoirs and engravings, Ainsworth attempts in *Old Saint Paul’s* to reconstruct the historical space of the old cathedral, but spends just as many pages in the vaults beneath it or in secret rooms within its walls. Within such unvisitable, unverifiable, and often imaginary spaces, more extravagant stories could play out—fictional narratives that might parallel or intersect the main historical narratives at will, without depending upon the historical facts. So while Jane Grey enters the Tower of London in great ceremony at Tower Gate and Elizabeth I famously enters at Traitor’s Gate, Gothic soothsayer Gunnora Braose sneaks in via a secret tunnel beneath the moat. While the historical Doctor

Hodges cares for plague victims on actual London streets in *Old Saint Paul's*, the sinister, fictional coffin-maker Anselm Chowles searches for treasure in the cathedral crypts. Ainsworth's blending of history and fiction is often as simple as sending historical characters down fictional passageways.

Given the way Ainsworth's novels depend upon this careful delineation of physical spaces and boundaries, it's not surprising that his most notable metaphor for the novelist is "the skillful architect." Some fifteen years after its initial success, Ainsworth concludes the Preface to the 1849 edition of *Rookwood* with his own ruminations about the changes he sensed were taking place in "romance":

Romance, if I am not mistaken, is destined shortly to undergo an important change. Modified by the German and French writers—by Hoffman, Tieck, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Balzac, and Paul Lacroix—the structure commenced in our own land by Horace Walpole, Monk Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Maturin, but left imperfect and inharmonious, requires, now that the rubbish which choked up its approach is removed, only the hand of the skilful architect to its entire renovation and perfection. (7-8)

Much has been made of this list as evidence of Ainsworth's disinterest in the serious historical novel; mysteriously, given Ainsworth's obvious interest in old buildings and monuments, not enough has been said about the architectural paradigm that informs it. For instance, Andrew Sanders offers Scott's absence from the list as proof that Ainsworth "was attempting a true [Gothic] revival," his novels bypassing Scott's achievement and returning "to the less investigatory, less fluid modes of his predecessors" (34-35). Like many critics, Sanders aims to show how Ainsworth's Gothicism forfeits his claim to being a true historical novelist, to show how his "determined preference for the 'Mrs. Radcliffe School' perhaps explains the somewhat cavalier approach to historical fact and interpretation" (35).

Scott's own debt to the Gothics aside, we've no reason to infer that his absence from this list—from *Rookwood*, one of Ainsworth's most overtly Gothic productions—somehow

compromises Ainsworth's participation in the historical novel. Again, such an inference depends on an idea of retaining the pureness of the form, free from taint of less realistic genre elements, which it never really had in practice. On the other hand, the architectural metaphor not explored in Sanders' interpretation of the passage (though he cursorily links the novelist with the Gothic Revival movement and its proponents, A. W. N. Pugin and John Ruskin [33]) crystallizes the paradigm of structure-equals-narrative seen throughout Ainsworth's work. Novel writing means designing, building and landscaping—perfection is arrived at when “imperfect and inharmonious” elements are not removed, but synthesized. Here is an apt model both for an author preoccupied with famous structures and especially concerned with blending styles and genres cohesively. The passage also reveals Ainsworth's own cognizance that novels were changing, that greater pains were required than in the carefree days of *Rookwood*, a novel “written in most haphazard manner, without any fixed scheme or plot, and the fate of its characters and the solution of its mysteries . . . only decided upon as the work progressed” (Ellis 1: 254). “Romance-writing was pleasant occupation then,” Ainsworth writes in the same Preface (3). But in 1849, with the daunting new fictions of *Jane Eyre* and *Vanity Fair* before him and his most popular novels behind him, Ainsworth might well hope for new blueprints.

Ainsworth's choice of English “designers” seem to indicate that the structure he is helping to renovate is Gothic in character—Walpole, Lewis, Radcliffe, Maturin—but he also includes a group of continental writers who have “modified” the structure, most of whom are historical novelists—Hugo, Dumas, Tieck, and Lacroix. He sees continuity between Gothic and historical genres and feels that historical novelists like himself are perfecting a multi-generic structure in fiction. What the recently cleared, offensive “rubbish” means he unfortunately does not explain, but it's reasonable to suppose he envisions a cleaner synthesis of genres, a more “harmonious”

intertwining of modes than the haphazardly constructed *Rookwood* had been. Historical novels, like all other novels, now required more planning, better designs; the problem for the skillful architect was how to incorporate other genres and styles cleanly.

Writing of *The Tower of London*, S. M. Ellis points out how the structure both inspires Ainsworth and enables him to contain and harmonize another “vivid contrast” of styles and moods:

a vivid contrast of subjects and situations was secured—from the banquet-hall to the dungeon—from the masque to the rack—from the throne to the block; while the restriction of the action to the circumscribed area of the Tower preserved an uninterrupted sequence of events—picturesque, dramatic, humorous, ghastly, in turn, yet forming a cohesive whole. (1: 407)

For Ellis, the Tower’s setting makes possible Ainsworth’s harmonizing of diverse, seemingly oppositional elements into one “cohesive whole,” an effect long identified with and looked for in Gothic architecture.<sup>7</sup> The famous account of Goethe’s reaction to Strassberg Minster, for instance, emphasizes just such an experience. Though accustomed to associate with Gothic “the indefinite, the unregulated, the unnatural, the patched up, the strung-together, the superfluous,” Goethe claims the cathedral “made countless details melt together into a complete whole and mass, and now, simple and grand, it stood before my eyes” (qtd in Bradbury 68-69). The simultaneous attraction-repulsion of Gothic architecture accords well with Ainsworth’s morbid fascination with the violent past (noted by Worth and others), while the cohesion that seems to emerge from the proliferation of elaborate ornamentation and detail is both a keynote effect of the Gothic style of building and an apt description of the effect Ainsworth hoped to achieve in his fiction. A telling passage in *Old Saint Paul’s* may serve paradigmatically:

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<sup>7</sup> Modern readers of *The Tower of London* still make use of the Tower’s physical space to organize the wild content of the novel; Rosemary Mitchell notes the novel “achieve[s] unity by its concentration of all its action around the Tower” (77) while George J. Worth finds that “the ‘protagonist’ is the Tower: unlike a story which deals with a stage in the life of a human being, *The Tower of London* concerns itself with a phase in the history of a complex of buildings” (60). Clearly this centrality of the structure in Ainsworth’s work has been noted by critics old and new, but the implications for the historical novel of this architectural paradigm have not been explored.

It was a bright moonlight night, and the reverend pile looked so beautiful . . . The ravages of time could not now be discerned, and the architectural incongruities which, seen in the broad glare of day, would have offended the eye of taste, were lost in the general grand effect. (121)

Similarly, the “architectural incongruities” of historical novels, or of history itself for Ainsworth, may be overlooked in the moonlight of romance. They may even contribute to the picturesque character of the “general grand effect.” Architecturally, spatially, their jagged multiplicity mirrors the seemingly haphazard arrangement of textual styles and generic effects found in the historical novel’s narrative palimpsest.

Together with all his other architectural preoccupations, Ainsworth’s rumination about the structure of romance confirms a paradigm where physical structures suggest and inspire narratives, and where successful narratives look to imitate the effects of physical structures. Buildings tell stories to romancers: their histories tell one kind of story, their ambience suggests others, their very layout, still others. The skillful architect devises a plan whereby all these stories can be narrated, and where all features can be synthesized into perfect structure. The British historical landmark was, then, much more than simply Ainsworth’s favorite setting. When any structure might organize his fictional narratives, when novel writing itself was for him the renovation and perfection of a structure, the historical landmark served as the perfect model for historical fiction.

### **“In the Midst of All”: The Panorama in Ainsworth**

Not surprisingly, a recurring moment in Ainsworth is the prospect scene, the onlooker from a height surveying the landscape stretched out below. Certainly no unusual scene in an era preoccupied with sublime views and Romantic “coigns of vantage,” Ainsworth differs from most of his contemporaries by preferring the cityscape to the rural scene so often celebrated by the Gothic novelists and Scott. Recalling the Medieval romance, the Gothic novel had converted fine

rural views into emotional epiphanies, the landscape reflecting the sensations of the sublime and the terrible aroused by the plot: “In the Gothic romance, pastoralism changes into gloomy forests and awe-inspiring mountains. The natural scene now represents no sunny idea of social harmony but the underside of consciousness” (Beer 57). As I have shown in previous chapters, Scott embraced some of this function of landscape but added new levels of complexity. Ainsworth’s prospects, however, typically feature those specific, identifiable and often extant structures of the city usually missing from the Gothic novelists or Scott. A Londoner from the eighteen-twenties onward, a Mancunian before that, Ainsworth clearly understood the city as the most obviously historicized landscape, the place where visible historical change had occurred and was occurring, in palpable yet anxious leaps and bounds. Most of his novels view some cityscape in panorama—most often London, but also his native Manchester, and Bath in the late novel *Beau Nash* (1879). The panorama allows Ainsworth to note particular features in the view that have changed, to compare and contrast the aesthetic effect of the imagined past to the extant present, to wax nostalgic about departed glories and urge the preservation of what remains. In his most popular novels, the panorama allows him to establish the centrality of the landmark structure in the narrative: a way of unifying the events of the novel around or within the tower, the cathedral, the castle. Finally, because of the importance of such structures in Ainsworth, the panorama can also become an oddly intertextual moment, an occasion in which one text can be seen, its presence felt, from another.

A particular passage of description in *Old Saint Paul’s*, one of Ainsworth’s best-plotted novels, illustrates the novel’s undeniable unity—a unity not immediately evident to the reader bewildered by the tonal instability of individual scenes. In Book the Second, Chapter Six, apprentice Leonard Holt finds himself temporarily imprisoned in the cathedral’s belfry; the

chapter is thus largely given over to a panoramic descriptive account from Holt's bird's-eye perspective. The view of the church itself is a "sublime spectacle," the broad roof of its transept "stretching out to a distance of nearly two hundred feet" (132). Holt gazes upon the Thames with its "innumerable vessels of all shapes and sizes" and "the tall houses covering London Bridge"; beyond the river in Southwark he notes "Saint Saviour's old and beautiful church"; looking down into the City he notes the many church spires which "shot up into the clear morning air" and the "fortifications and keep of the Tower" that terminate the view; to the North are Finsbury fields, Smithfield, and Clerkenwell, "smiling and beautiful districts" which are nonetheless "the chief haunts" of the plague, where "plague-pits had been dugged, and pest-houses erected," until "his eye finally rested upon Whitehall" (133).

In Holt's view we find both a specific recreation of the old cathedral and a neatly compacted outline of *Old Saint Paul's* itself, not so much a summary of the plot as a survey of the topographical and architectural domains the novel will explore in the coming pages. Each of the buildings and locales noted become settings for episodes in the novel, from the plague pits and pest houses visited in book three, to Saint Saviour's Church where Leonard's beloved marries the Duke of Rochester in book four, and so on to Whitehall, not depicted until the novel's climactic final book: the prospect is as much a table of contents as anything else. The City churches so carefully noted in this panorama are specially emphasized during the Great Fire scenes. The Tower of London, so celebrated by Ainsworth two years before *Old Saint Paul's* appeared, assumes a new prominence, a new significance as Charles II fights to defend it from the flames. Even the roof of the cathedral's transept becomes an important locale after book two as the spot where the novel's Elemental, Solomon Eagle, regularly makes his appearance. As Leonard Holt's gaze executes a circle, so the novel's episodes may be said to revolve around St.

Paul's, which alternately serves various characters as rendezvous, sanctuary, prison, and treasure trove, and whose destruction by fire forms the novel's final historical scene. Thus, a scenic passage that might be easily dismissed as an indulgent lapse into nostalgia, a self-conscious display of historical research, or mere padding effectively describes the essential movement of the plot as well as the literal movements of the characters throughout the environs of seventeenth century London. The novel's historical structure becomes its narrative and thematic hub of the wheel.

True, the old St. Paul's Cathedral at the center of this novel is an absent structure, a historical landmark that the tourist may not visit, tour and experience—but then it is a structure peculiarly suited to organize a narrative of a lost London, a cityscape about to disappear in the Great Fire. Rosemary Mitchell notes that “in *Old Saint Paul's* the consciousness of the destructiveness of the passage of time is most emphatic as this novel is focused on a building which had totally vanished” (93). Ainsworth emphasizes this relationship in the panorama scene:

Little did the apprentice think, when he looked at the magnificent scene before him, and marvelled at the countless buildings he beheld, that, ere fifteen months had elapsed, the whole mass, together with the mighty fabric on which he stood, would be swept away by a tremendous conflagration. (132)

In a move learned from Scott and which becomes common to Victorian historical novelists, Ainsworth pivots between past and present features of the view, inviting the reader to visit the extant site and compare. In a move particularly Ainsworthian, however, the narrator confidently prefers the past vista, proclaiming it more picturesque.

At the time that Leonard Holt gazed upon the capital, its picturesque beauties were nearly at their close. In a little more than a year and a quarter afterwards, the greater part of the old city was consumed by fire; and though it was rebuilt, and in many respects improved, its original and picturesque character was entirely destroyed. . . . It seems scarcely possible to conceive a finer view than can be gained from the dome of the modern cathedral at sunrise on a May morning . . . It seems scarcely possible, we say, to suppose at any previous time it could be more striking; and yet, at the period under consideration, it was

incomparably more so. Then, every house was picturesque, and every street a collection of picturesque objects. (133)

Although this former picturesque view is lost, the tourist visiting the extant spot can still imagine it, thanks to the authoritative depiction of the novelist, and to the still extant landmarks anchoring the scene. The confident intrusiveness of the narrator, pausing to point out the features of the view, must explain much of the appeal of the Ainsworth novel to his first readers. The reader is invited to partake of the extant scene and gather what aesthetic rosebuds he may, but for the ancient and superior vista he must rely on the narrator who seems to have “been there,” whose unique combination of historical knowledge and imaginative skill alone can reconstruct it.<sup>8</sup> In *Auriol*, Ainsworth actually includes in a contemporary setting such an authoritative describer of the old London scene as a character: Old Parr, a dwarf who has lived from the Elizabethan to the Victorian Era through the aid of a magic elixir, comments freely on the city’s departed charm.

Several such comparative scenes demonstrate Ainsworth’s nostalgic tendencies, including the barge procession scene from *The Tower of London* that allows an extended look at sixteenth-century London scenery.

Viewed from the Thames, London, even in our own time, presents many picturesque and beautiful points; but at the period to which this chronicle refers, it must have presented a thousand more. Then, gardens and stately palaces adorned its banks; then, the spires and towers of the churches shot into an atmosphere unpolluted by smoke . . . the ancient tavern of the Three Cranes, the Still-yard; and above all, the Bridge . . . All this has passed away. But if he have no old St. Paul’s, no London Bridge, no quaint and picturesque old fabrics, no old and frowning castles, no old taverns, no old wharfs—if we have none of these, we still have THE TOWER; and to that grand relic of antiquity, well worth all the rest, we shall, without further delay, proceed. (17-18)

Mitchell points to the scene as early evidence of Ainsworth’s “urgent sense of the dangers threatening the physical structures which were the country’s heritage,” a concern he expressed in

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<sup>8</sup> The approach is markedly similar to that taken by A. W. N. Pugin in his seminal architectural study *Contrasts* (1836), which overlaid past reconstructions of London vistas with their contemporary, less picturesque equivalents.

various works throughout his career (92). What she does not remark upon is the way that this panorama both establishes the centrality of the monument to the novel and also becomes an intertextual moment, one of many instances where these “marvelous books” are seen in perspective to each other. Besides old St. Paul’s, called here “one of the finest structures in the world, and destroyed,” Ainsworth would eventually prominently feature other structures in this panorama—old London Bridge in *Old Saint Paul’s* and *Auriol*, the Three Cranes tavern in *The Star-Chamber*.

In *The Tower of London*, the first of Ainsworth’s novels to be organized by a historic structure, this view can only be a prospective itinerary of places, of texts, that Ainsworth intends to visit with his readers. In later novels like *The Star-Chamber*, the panoramas would reflect the cumulative significance acquired from Ainsworth’s many literary “tours.” Accounting it one of Ainsworth’s less well organized novels, Worth blames *The Star-Chamber*’s disorganization on its lack of “division into parts”—that is, books, parts, epochs and the like—“as if the absence of an overt pattern makes it difficult for the author to keep lines of action in order” (59). Ainsworth was fond of so dividing his novels, although as a method of ordering his narratives this seems to be an arbitrary practice at best—the divisions serve different purposes from novel to novel, their titles often relating to their content only tenuously. A strong attachment to a historical structure is the only thing lacking from Ainsworth’s design in *The Star-Chamber*, but this absence merely indicates his changing organizational strategies at the time, a change reflected in the novel’s most prominent panorama scene.

Written during a period which found Ainsworth trying to adapt to changing standards of the genre and more scientific ideas about history, the novel borrows much of its form and feature from *The Fortunes of Nigel*, making it one of his most Scott-like efforts. The title refers to the

judgment chamber within Westminster Hall, grown notorious during James I's time, so *The Star-Chamber* might have been Ainsworth's novelistic tribute to that Medieval structure, nearly as old as the celebrated Tower itself. However, Ainsworth does not focus on Westminster Hall for any significant portion of the novel, confining his description of the chamber to one short chapter near the conclusion. So far from Westminster Hall serving as the hub of the novel's narrative wheel, *The Star-Chamber* seems to wander all over London, and well out of it, indiscriminately. This decentralization seems to bewilder the few critics who examine it, and who are looking for a single place/space to order the narrative as in Ainsworth's earlier successes.<sup>9</sup> In fact, *The Star-Chamber* is one of Ainsworth's most impressively ordered novels; it simply does not encounter its historical monuments in the familiar Ainsworthian way.

Set mainly in London, the novel follows hero Jocelyn Mouchensey on a lengthy trip to Hertfordshire, an occasion for Ainsworth to describe idyllic countryside scenes and pay tribute to Theobald's Palace. While departing the city, Jocelyn pauses on Stamford Hill to survey the city "spread out before him in all its splendours and beauty" (84). Many familiar notes sound in this description: the narrator again attuned to the picturesque irregularity of the crowded scene, the layers of towers, belfries, spires and dwellings appearing "irregular, yet homogeneous; dear to the painter's and the poet's eye; elaborate in ornament; grotesque in design" (85). In an aside that reminds us of the nationalism often informing scenery description in the historical novel, the narrator takes time to celebrate the untainted English-ness of Old London architecture "as yet undisturbed by the innovations of the Italian and Dutch schools, and brought to full perfection in the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth" (84-85). After once again noting the absence of the

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<sup>9</sup> Contrasting the unity of *The Tower of London* with another late novel, *The Constable of the Tower* (1861), Rosemary Mitchell directly attributes the novel's disorder to its wandering geographical setting: "[*The Tower*] does achieve unity by its concentration of all its action around the Tower. *The Constable*, meanwhile, shifts between London, Sudeley, Whitehall, and Windsor" (277).

Victorian “canopy of smoke” in this golden age, Ainsworth points out—and thus, points back to—the glories of his previous novels before discovering Westminster Hall:

while in the midst of all, and pre-eminent above all, towered one gigantic pile—the glorious Gothic cathedral. Far on the east, and beyond the city walls, though surrounded by its own mural defences, was seen the frowning Tower of London—part fortress and part prison—a structure never viewed in those days without terror, being the scene of so many passing tragedies. . . . the young man's gaze . . . became fixed upon Westminster Hall; for there, in one of its chambers, the ceiling of which was adorned with gilded stars, were held the councils of that terrible tribunal which had robbed him of his inheritance, and now threatened him with deprivation of liberty, and mutilation of person. (85-86)

Later in the novel Ainsworth provides the reader with a bird’s eye view of Westminster Hall as part of a general Whitehall survey, but this panoramic view over a principal character’s shoulder, so similar in composition to scenes from his earlier novels, makes it clear that Ainsworth’s focus has changed in *The Star-Chamber*. Unlike the London panoramas in *Tower* and *Old Saint Paul’s*, the view is taken, not from the pertinent structure of the novel, but from a point of departure from the city, the novel’s landmark helping to recap the early action of the plot. Jocelyn’s gaze finds Westminster Hall and the sight elicits an emotional response, recalling him to his own troubles and the reader to the central conflict of the novel’s first twelve chapters. The view serves a thematic purpose, then, reminding us of the novel’s London concerns and even providing a bit of dramatic foreshadowing before Jocelyn is allowed to wander off to Hertfordshire and a pastoral love affair.

The other historical monuments in the view, places explored in earlier Ainsworth’s novels, serve as reference points; they help orient the reader spatially, historically, textually. The cumulative weight of later panoramas like this one should be noted: those readers of *The Star-Chamber* who had been readers of *The Tower of London* would feel they understood why it was “a structure never viewed in those days without terror,” would have known that it was “the scene of so many passing tragedies” because they had witnessed one in Ainsworth’s account of Jane

Grey. Readers of *Old Saint Paul's* would know what became of the “pre-eminent” structure in Jocelyn’s gaze. In short, the more landmarks and monuments Ainsworth tours with the reader, the more historical spaces he visits and describes (or even reconstructs, like Old St. Paul’s), the closer together he draws the corners of a historicized England in panoramic descriptions like this. Readers of Ainsworth would be reminded in such scenes of their own ever-extending grasp on an extant and tangible historical landscape, their own increasing ownership of a shared history. Especially in novels after the early 1840s, the panoramas become not merely a descriptive or a narrative moment but also a companionable moment, a pause with their tour group leader to remember the places, both spatial and narrative, they have visited together.

#### **“The English Victor Hugo”: the Reader as Tourist**

Scott established the precedent of establishing landmarks as the center of the historical novel in *Kenilworth* (although Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* might as easily be offered as the Gothic precedent). Closer to Ainsworth’s vision of building from and around a central historical landmark, however, is Victor Hugo’s *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1829). Before Ainsworth even began setting historical landmarks at the center of his novels, he was being favorably compared to Hugo, suggesting similarities in their conceptions of genre as well as space and structure. The generically diverse *Rookwood* won Ainsworth the epithet “the English Victor Hugo” in the press (qtd in Ellis 1: 257), indicating that his first readers noted similarities that must have had to do with his particular version of the palimpsest narrative. While it is probably too much to suppose that Ainsworth taken his architectural paradigms directly from architects, he might well have adapted them from Hugo. Certainly many features of the French novelist’s concentration on an urban palimpsest of space and narrative influenced him more than Scott’s model, even when Scott focused on similar scenes.

Where Kenilworth Castle serves as a place of resolution for Scott's novel, its delayed appearance taking on a significance analogous to the late appearance of historical characters in Scott ("at just such a time, just such a hero" as Lukacs puts it [38]), Hugo's *Notre-Dame* literally crawls all over its landmark in the person of Quasimodo. While Scott had featured irrational Elemental characters with strong ties to the rural landscape, both Hugo and Ainsworth feature eccentric, insane, and malformed characters with strong connections to buildings and architecture, like Quasimodo in *Notre-Dame*, the grotesque dwarf Xit in *Tower of London*, or the mad prophet Solomon Eagle in *Old Saint Paul's*. Linking Notre Dame's Gothic architecture with Gothic narrative, Hugo fills its secret, often fictional spaces with occult characters and incidents, as Ainsworth does the Tower and Windsor Castle.<sup>10</sup> Drawing upon Scott for its temporal setting, class tension, and some historical portraiture, Hugo's novel also draws heavily from the Gothic tradition—perhaps from Matthew Lewis especially, given the mad monk villain, Claude Frollo, and the novel's frantic sexual energy. Hugo plunges into the darkest places of his Medieval Paris with gusto, as Ainsworth fixates on the sensational, criminal and violent side of old London. The Gothic cathedral of Notre-Dame lies at the center of Hugo's vision—it is Claude Frollo's base of operations, riddled with secret rooms and passages; it is Quasimodo the hunchback's home, the place where he takes the gypsy Esmerelda for sanctuary, the bastion he defends against the attacking Paris mob; it is the meeting ground for all plot points, the throughway for both fictional and historical narratives. Not only for the centrality of the landmark—Stephen Carver notes that Hugo's Notre-Dame and Ainsworth's Tower each serve as "the focal point of the narrative, a controlling metaphor for the nation's history" ("Tower," paragraph 1)—but also for the various

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<sup>10</sup> Another of Ainsworth's fellow architects, Dumas *pere*, also finds fictional spaces within historical scenes in order to develop romantic or Gothic subplots. For instance, in *Twenty Years After* he creates an empty space beneath Charles I's scaffold so that his protagonists can hear the king's last whispered words, which allude to a hidden fund of royalist treasure.

ways the physical structure organizes the action and even comes to represent narrative itself, *Notre-Dame* is the obvious inspiration for Ainsworth's monument novels of the eighteen-forties.

In Book Five, Chapter Two of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Hugo digresses at length on how "the book will kill the building" postulating a version of architectural theory where architecture is itself a primal, basic language understood across classes, in danger of being forgotten in the advent of literacy (188). When Hugo reads architecture as language and *Notre-Dame* as text, when he contends that upright stones are the letters of an alphabet, that "*L'immense entassement de Karnac est déjà une formule tout entière*" and that architecture has been "*la grande écriture du genre humain*," he is both expressing one of the headiest manifestations of Romantic architectural theory and also modeling a version of text that can be, that must be composed of diverse, fragmented components (Gauthier edition, 201). In Hugo's view human history and tradition produced "symbols" which became ever more complicated, until architecture formed

a giant with a thousand heads and a thousand arms, and fixed all this vacillating symbolism in a form at once palpable, visible, and eternal. While Daedalus, who is force, measured; and Orpheus, who is intelligence, sang, the pillar, which is a letter, the arcade, which is a syllable, the pyramid, which is a word, simultaneously set in motion both by a law of geometry and by a law of poetry, they combined and amalgamated, they rose and fell, they were juxtaposed on the ground, and superimposed in the sky, until, at the dictate of the general idea of an epoch, those marvelous books which were also marvelous buildings: the Pagoda of Eklinga, the Ramesseum of Egypt, the Temple of Solomon. (190)

Hugo's almost perverse fascination with the violent and desperate past generations he imagines, pre-literate and pre-revolutionary mobs enslaved by superstition and the church, virtually demands a many-formed (a "quasi-modo"), genre-inclusive version of the historical novel to support it. By centering on the "marvelous book" of *Notre-Dame Cathedral*, he finds a thousand-headed giant to help "fix" his ideas: "a symphony in stone . . . combining unity with complexity" (190). The image is most distinct from *Waverley's* giant of "a thousand peculiar and varied

forms” by its being rooted in architectural, urban space, by its being composed of or shaped by spatial practice.

While it is hardly true that Ainsworth “learnt very little indeed from Walter Scott” (Sanders 33), it is much easier to see traits he has in common with Hugo—a willingness to mix history and Gothicism more freely than Scott had, a fascination with violent and criminal behavior, an interest in cityscapes and historic monuments, and above all, a tendency to think of narratives in architectural terms (and vice versa). Ellis provides plenty of evidence that Ainsworth was sensitive to places and buildings, that he liked to imagine the stories historic spaces could tell, well before his career as a novelist began. But following Hugo’s lead he seems to have adapted this sensibility into a *raison d’être* for historical fiction, resulting in the deliberate equation of architecture and history found in his most popular work, and in his penchant for presenting history to his readers like a tour guide. The architectural “symphonies of stone” of famous buildings inspired narratives to him, both theme and variation, basic history and improvised probability. At the same time, history was itself like architecture: a tangle of interwoven structures and initiatives, somehow supporting itself, improbably remaining upright. The common reaction to the idea by his foregrounded reader is wonder and awe—but also, in self-consciously prompted responses, to acknowledge that buildings are history, that history equals famous buildings.

In one scene in *The Tower of London*, villain Simon Renard tours the White Tower led by (appropriately enough) a yeoman warder or “Beefeater,” Gervase Winwike. In his greeting to Renard we can recognize the voice of the tour guide: “I shall feel honoured by your presence. We shall reach the roof just at sunrise, and the view from thence, on a fine clear morning like the present, is magnificent beyond compare” (141). On the roof Winwike directs Renard’s attention

both to the panorama of London and to the Tower's place in it. There follows a sort of catechism equation between the tour guide and the tourist/reader: "'There you behold the Tower of London,' said Winwike, pointing downwards. 'And there I read the history of England,' replied Renard" (141-142). Winwike confirms: "The building on which we stand, and those around us, are the best chronicles of our country" (142). Winwike proposes to recount the history of the Tower for Renard, but the narrator takes this lecture upon himself in the next chapter, for our edification:

instead of following the warder's narrative to Simon Renard, it appears advisable in this place to offer a slight sketch of the renowned fortress under consideration, especially as such a course will allow of its history being brought down to a later period than could otherwise be accomplished. (142)

What follows could hardly be described as "a slight sketch," as Ainsworth plunges into the eleventh century (five centuries before the novel's setting) and recounts various episodes from the fortress' history through 1820 (nearly three centuries after), in a long passage that Ernest Rhys calls Ainsworth's "heavy wedge of history" (vii).

Further, the account could only be regarded as England's "best chronicle" by a reader seeking novelty and sensation: a hurried Baedeker's itinerary of atrocities and curiosities, legendary or Shakespearian incidents, supernatural warnings and royal caprice. The full chapter title makes clear that the account doesn't emphasize common relationships between past and present—the extant structure is itself the link between them—but famous moments, technical curiosities, impressive measurements, the shocking and the strange.

Of the Tower of London; Its Antiquity and Foundation; Its Magnitude and Extent; Its Keep, Palace, Garden, Fortifications, Dungeons, and Chapels; Its Walls, Bulwarks, and Moat; Its Royal Inmates; Its Constables, Jailers, Warders, and Other Officers; Its Prisoners, Executions, and Secret Murders

The chapter overflows with sensational and *outré* details: the mortar that has been "tempered with the blood of beasts," the "supernatural warnings" against its fortification, the menagerie

established by Edward IV, the Frenchman who “accidentally set fire to a barrel of gunpowder, which blew up the structure” of the Middle Tower, the poignant and mysterious carvings on the walls on the dungeons (142, 143, 145, 149-50). While Scott felt perfectly justified in including such historical trivia in the *Waverley Novels*, they were isolated from the main narrative threads within the many prefaces, introductions, appendices and explanatory notes.

Here is no exhibition of the past in a causal sense—no attempt to show the commonalities between Then and Now, but the same shocking, titillating celebration of differences found in Hugo. Ainsworth laments the wicked past as Hugo laments the lost language of architecture, nostalgic about its quaint beauty even as he details its horrors and prejudices. Lukacs’ injunction that the historical novel should not cause the reader to regard remote historical conditions and peoples as “an historical curiosity” but as “a phase of mankind’s development which concerns and moves us” (42) makes the difference clear: Ainsworth’s novels abound with historical curiosities, not to be found (as in Scott) relegated outside the domain of the text by footnotes or introductory chapters, but at the center of the narrative. By Lukacsian standards, the history of the Tower of London in Ainsworth’s novel is an exercise in marginalia. But as a sensational historical tour through Gothic horror chambers, a self-conscious holiday history offering something for everyone, or an imaginative spectacle akin to the waxwork, Ainsworth’s history is ideal.<sup>11</sup> For his readers, who took a new interest in the “marvelous books” dotting London’s skyline, Ainsworth’s message was clear, exciting, and refreshingly universal: history is a place to go, a thing to see.

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<sup>11</sup> Victorian critic R. H. Horne “condemned Ainsworth as ‘a reviver of old clothes’ and a manufacturer of ‘good-tempered portraits’; his prefatory quotations from the *Memoirs of Mme Tussaud* suggest a perception of Ainsworth’s novels as close relatives of the waxwork spectacle” (Mitchell 110).

### Conclusion: Structures Full of “Good Things”

When defending haphazard ingredients in his novels, Scott was fond of quoting Buckingham’s *The Rehearsal*: “What the devil does the plot signify, except to bring in good things?” His hypothetical response to the question (from *The Fortunes of Nigel*) sums up his offhand but pragmatic approach to fiction:

Grant that I were so, and that I should write with sense and spirit a few scenes unlaboured and loosely put together, but which had sufficient interest in them to amuse in one corner the pain of body; in another, to relieve anxiety of mind; in a third place, to un wrinkle a brow bent with the furrows of daily toil; in another, to fill the place of bad thoughts, or to suggest better; in yet another, to induce an idler to study the history of his country . . . .  
(xxx)

Scott’s half-satirical idea of a novel’s plot as an assemblage of “good things,” affording amusement and relaxation, perhaps even a little painless historical instruction, seems not unlike Ainsworth’s own understanding of the historical novel as a place where “vivid contrasts” can be contained and displayed. Both novelists, whatever their different historical visions, embraced an idea of their genre as a gathering together, a motley collection—of narrative styles, of character types, of constituent and supplementary events. For Scott the idea plays out restlessly and constantly, not only in space but in shifting patterns of dialogue, overlapping narrators, and competing accounts of historical events. Ever since the genre-sifting introduction of *Waverley*, or even since the heady days of his first artistic composition *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, whose speaker weaves his own thoughts into the supposedly aged lay he sings, Scott either wouldn’t or couldn’t leave any genre “pure.” Every category is mixed: the better to bring in good things.

For Ainsworth, however, the idea gets reflected in a particular, recurring setting: a space overflowing with an assorted, often grotesque jumble of curious objects. In *Old Saint Paul’s*, for example, apprentice Leonard Holt discovers a mysterious house “literally crammed” with assorted items, the spoils of opportunistic undertaker Anselm Chowles (337). Here is no junk

pile—not a gathering of rubbish, but of good things: books, looking-glasses, pictures, wine and spirits, and—what we might expect to find in a costume romance—“male and female habiliments, spread out like the dresses in a theatrical wardrobe” (337). In *Auriol* the image is more persistent, with several locations featuring such jumbled and improbable collections, from a Gothic chamber of alchemical instruments in the opening chapters, to an “extraordinary and incongruous assemblage of objects . . . huddled and heaped together in the most fantastic disorder” at the ruined house in the Vauxhall-road (27). Within the architectural massive piles, it seems Ainsworth’s protagonists are always stumbling on other massive piles of a different sort; the effect is almost abyssal.

The reappearance of such settings, especially in the probably unfinished *Auriol*, “certainly the most disjointed of Ainsworth’s novels” (Worth 120), should not surprise us if we think of the Ainsworth structure paradigmatically: the novels are full of the odd and incongruous crammed with generic, modal and tonal juxtapositions, drama suddenly turning comic, fictional narrative supplanted by historical reporting without pause. A skillful architect clearing away rubbish on the one hand, a gatherer of good things in “most fantastic disorder” on the other, Ainsworth seems committed to an idea of narrative as a kind of contained rummage sale, following generalized, recognizable and broad directions in plot but remaining flexible in episode and incident, keeping narrative options open.<sup>12</sup>

In his disparagement of Ainsworth, Andrew Sanders practically stumbles across this tendency when he notes that “[Ainsworth] Plots are molded around historical crises which oblige the novelist to follow a line of development faithful to his sources but his subplots, which are

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<sup>12</sup> Rosemary Mitchell persuasively reads the numerous jumbled spaces of *Auriol* as evidence of Ainsworth’s doubt in the ability of fiction to explore history, identifying the novel as the beginning of his decline. Her equation of space with history is attractive, but as I have indicated above such spaces are recurrent in Ainsworth novels, appearing also in his most popular (and in Mitchell’s estimation his most successful) novels, like *Old Saint Paul’s*.

often more involved, show more of a desire for variety than for a complement to the main story” (35). Ainsworth subplots do indeed exhibit a “desire for variety”—a wide embrace of genres and styles, a set of vivid contrasts, the gathering together of good things that characterized the historical novel in his day. Sanders’ restrictive notion that historical events “oblige” the novelist’s treatment of them—or, in other words, that the historical record determines the novel’s plot—not only downplays Ainsworth’s abilities but must also condemn some of the best historical novels of the nineteenth century. But Sanders is quite correct in noting that Ainsworth looks to history to provide narrative stability and broad plot directions. With whatever good things he might enliven particular chapters or numbers, whether sentimental love passages, rude comic relief or torture chamber gore, Ainsworth consults the historical for reference points. He guides his fiction with historical fact, a practice made strikingly evident in his panoramas.

The ending of *Auriol* provides us with a striking example, when a glimpse of historicized cityscape provides resolution for the main character and the climax for the novel. In this strange novel, Auriol Darcy is a young man living in Elizabethan times who murders Doctor Lamb, his alchemist great-grandfather, and steals a life-restoring elixir. From its magical effects he lives into the nineteenth century but gradually learns he must also contend with Satan himself, who appears as a mystical stranger called Rougemont. Repeatedly tricked and disoriented by Rougemont, Auriol cannot believe his senses when he awakens in Doctor Lamb’s laboratory again, having apparently dreamed most of the novel’s incidents. The laboratory—a jumble of Gothic good things like “alchemical implements,” “mystic parchments,” crucibles and grinning skeletons—fails to convince Auriol that he is indeed back in the fifteenth century, nor indeed does Doctor Lamb himself (198). “I should feel perfectly convinced,” he tells his great-grandfather, “if I might look forth from that window”:

Auriol then walked to the window and gazed through the tinted panes. . . . he fancied he could detect the gleam of the river beneath him, and what seemed a long line of houses on the bridge. He also fancied he discerned other buildings, with the high roofs, the gables, and the other architectural peculiarities of the structures of Elizabeth's time. He persuaded himself, also, that he could distinguish through the gloom the venerable Gothic pile of Saint Paul's Cathedral on the other side of the water, and, as if to satisfy him that he was right, a deep solemn bell tolled forth the hour of two. After a while he returned from the window, and said to his supposed grandsire, "I am satisfied. I have lived centuries in a few nights." (200-201)

Auriol's look out of the window assures him of his place in the historical timeline; I must look out, he says, to know "that I am what I seem" (200). His first clue that he is back in the Elizabethan Era is another peculiarity of the cityscape: Doctor Lamb's lab assistant tells him he is within a house situated on London Bridge, to which Auriol replies, "*On* the bridge—did you say *on* the bridge, friend?" (196, original emphasis).

By looking out from the jumbled, ahistorical confusion of Doctor Lamb's laboratory to the "architectural peculiarities" of Elizabeth's time, the scene echoes Ainsworth's own fictional practice of orienting his narratives within historical reference points—of finding narrative order by looking at the structure and the cityscape. Further, it unequivocally demonstrates that the cityscape and the structures that compose it constitute valid and trustworthy historical information for Ainsworth. As visible and visitable, tangible and tour-able links to the past, historical structures become a means for Ainsworth both to organize and validate his historical fiction. The historicized city and the extant structures that make up its most remarkable features serve as interactive endorsements to his historical novels, places where his English readers could witness the truth of his fiction in far more palpable ways than Scott's. In such historical structures, says Renard in *The Tower of London*, we might "read the history of England"; through their representation we might read the historical novels of Ainsworth.

## CHAPTER 5

### “THE HUMBLER TASK”: BULWER-LYTTON AND THE SPACE OF ARCHAEOLOGY

In my first two full chapters I looked at the way historical novel space was established in the novels of Sir Walter Scott and described some of its characteristics, also describing some of the typical readers of its “text.” In the fourth chapter I examined Ainsworth’s variation on Scott’s “Waverley space” a variation that depended on architecture and physical structures rather than on the rural or ruin spaces so emphasized by Scott. In this chapter I’ll examine the work of a third early historical novelist, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, whose technical, theoretical, and characteristic “archaeological” spaces form yet another version of the spatial palimpsest—in this case, a particularly influential version. Because Bulwer’s<sup>1</sup> handful of historical novels from the thirties and forties correspond with the late Victorian and Edwardian juvenile and religious approach to historical fiction better than Scott’s or Ainsworth’s, I have chosen to draw some brief comparisons to selected works of these types from the late century, the better to show continuity between Bulwer’s actively didactic and morally weighted spaces and the genre as it developed. Though all three novelists continued to be marketed towards boys during the *fin de siècle*, for example, and constructed as healthful and manly reading, in many important ways Bulwer most clearly leads to the adventure novels of G. A. Henty and Conan Doyle, and so to the numerous historical novels given to children as school prizes and commencement gifts. My discussion of how Bulwer’s work leads to these variations—in essence, a characterization of a broad genre trajectory—will thus continue to follow the development of historical novel space from the time of Scott’s death to the end of the Victorian Era and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> I follow long-established convention in referring to this author as Bulwer rather than Lytton, since Bulwer was in fact his surname proper, and Lytton his titled name.

Of his total output of some thirty novels, collections of poems and essays, several histories and dramas, Bulwer's historical novels make up only a small percentage. Several of the earliest—notably *Deveraux* (1829), *Leila* (1838), and *Calderon the Courtier* (1838)—are short, fashionable, and one might even say halfhearted. Bulwer as full-fledged “historical romancer” is probably best represented by his most durable genre piece, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), and its follow-up, *Rienzi* (1835). Only in the forties did Bulwer self-consciously begin writing scholarly and “serious” historical novels with *The Last of the Barons* (1843) and *Harold* (1848). Before considering his treatment of space, it may be helpful to situate Bulwer's genre productions against Scott's and Ainsworth's, particularly the latter, with whom he is often linked indiscriminately.

Like Ainsworth, Bulwer's literary career saw him embracing a number of fashionable subgenres including silver fork, Newgate, and sensation novels. Although he exhibited a melodramatic tone and ethos not unlike Ainsworth's, he did not seem to borrow so much from the Gothic; rather, his historical novels retain an oddly Anglicized classicism imitative of Shakespeare's Roman plays. Bulwer also preferred to reach further away and further back from Victorian Britain for his historical subjects than did Scott or Ainsworth. Scott's earliest setting was eleventh century Constantinople in *Count Robert of Paris* (1831), while Ainsworth never set a novel before the fourteenth century. Bulwer, on the other hand, treated medieval Spain in *Leila* and *Calderon*, medieval Rome in *Rienzi*, and ancient Roman civilization in *The Last Days of Pompeii*. His two most serious historical novels both depict England, but in the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. The early and experimental *Deveraux* does examine eighteenth-century Britain, and thus falls within some critics' sanctioned purview of serious historical fiction: the regional and the recent.

However, though Bulwer's preferred chronotopes were habitually more remote than those chosen by Scott, Ainsworth or G. P. R. James, and though each wrote far more historical novels than he did, his work remained extremely influential to the genre throughout the century. It's hard to imagine Victorian bestsellers like Kingsley's *Hypatia*, the didactic classical fictions of Alfred Church, and other works that imagined the beginning centuries of Christianity against a classical setting, without the great success of Bulwer's *Last Days*. Similarly, the Carlylean heroes of *Harold* and Earl Warwick (*Last of the Barons*) are the clear progenitors of Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake*, a string of popular novels about Alfred the Great, and a long line of similar G. A. Henty portraits: from Hannibal (*The Young Carthaginian*) straight through the centuries to *Under Wellington's Command* and *With Clive in India*.

Bulwer's melodramatic style and remote historical reach might tempt us to conclude that his historical novels are more consciously romantic than Scott's and Ainsworth's, i.e. given to a freer license, painted with a broader brush. In fact, Bulwer believed and his champions have argued that the opposite is the case. Especially in the later novels, Bulwer sought to separate his efforts from predecessors, including Scott, on the grounds of his own greater historical accuracy, thus bringing what Andrew Sanders calls "the new seriousness" to the genre. As the posturing develops in Bulwer's lengthy introductions and notes, it might well be labeled "the new confidence," or even "the new smugness" as well. Significantly, Bulwer's expresses the distinction (in the Preface to the Third Edition of *Harold*) in spatial and agricultural terms:

But he who wishes to avoid the ground pre-occupied by others, and claim in the world of literature some spot, however humble, which he may "plough with his own heifer," will seek to establish himself not where the land is the most fertile, but where it is the least enclosed. So, when I first turned my attention to Historical Romance, my main aim was to avoid as much as possible those fairer portions of the soil that had been appropriated by the first discoverers. (1:xiv)

Bulwer's "humbler task" was to "extract from authentic but neglected chronicles, and the unfrequented storehouse of Archaeology, the incidents and details that enliven the dry narrative of facts to which the general historian is confined" (1:xiv). Books and places, records and sites, then, are what provide Bulwer with this more accurate and conscientious version of historical fiction. The Dedicatory Epistle of *Harold* emphasizes both scholarly texts and textual spaces, depicting the author at work in his "unsocial study, heralding the advent of majestic folios and heaping libraries around," then looking out the window "over the broad landscapes which, if I err not, took their name from the proud father of the Conquerer himself" (1:xi). Bulwer's archaeology metaphor and his scholarly persona inform his methodology strongly even in earlier works—before the "new seriousness" sets in—and especially in *The Last Days of Pompeii*. For all its success during the thirties, that decade of fashionable and "easily accessible" historical romance, *Last Days* is a novel generated from its archaeological spaces. Like Ainsworth's *The Tower of London*, its physical locations not only verify the history but also inform, inspire, and organize the fiction.

Bulwer thought that research and attention to detail made for more accurate, more responsible historical fiction. Yet by implication, it led to moral, orderly and manly fiction as well, which sanctioned a less purely "scientific" approach; careful pruning could insure a product that might safely instruct children and "be entrusted fearlessly to the young" (*Harold* 1:vii). The best means of achieving these two essentially opposite goals, of recovering history in its minute details yet also shaping and censoring the narrative, was to keep the fiction and history relatively separate: to limit the blending and intertwining that historical fiction is prone to, find the "romance" implied by the history, and insert or perhaps "superimpose" dramatic scenes and situations to spice things up. Various critics of the historical novel have instead pointed out that

the result of his bookish approach is pedantry and, worse, “demythologization,” but there can be no doubt that Bulwer’s didactic and morally responsible version of the historical novel worked for the Victorians. It united “the learning of the historian with the fancy of the poet,” taught “morality by example” and imparted “information by giving pleasure” (Allison, qtd in Campbell 70). To tell an exciting and romantic story that readers will learn from, “in spite of themselves,” soon became the popular *modus operandi* for the churchmen and headmasters whose novels swell the ranks of the genre in the late century.

The delineation between “domains” plays out both narratively and spatially in Bulwer. Narratively, his method meant a strong historical framework and various (usually expendable) fictional subplots. Vesuvius will erupt and bury Pompeii, William the Conqueror will win the Battle of Hastings, but who falls in love with whom, and what rivals they encounter in their loves, may be safely invented. In novels like *Leila*, *The Last of the Barons*, and *Harold*, all of which feature historical characters as principals, he seeks to separate public (historic) from private (fictional) strands of the narrative, and outward actions from inward soliloquies:

The fictitious part of my narrative is . . . confined chiefly to private life, with its domain and incident and passion, which is the legitimate appanage of novelist or poet.

Solely in that inward life which, not only as apart from the more public and historical, but which, as almost wholly unknown, becomes *the fair domain* of the poet, did I claim the legitimate privileges of fiction . . . . (*Harold* 1:vii, xiv, my emphasis)

This sorting out and fussing over “domains” and “legitimate” grounds, perhaps more consciously attempted by Bulwer than any other historical novelist of the period, reveals an utterly confident historian-narrator. For the trick to work—that is, for Bulwer to claim the thoughts and private lives of world-historical characters as fair domain, without surrendering his pretensions to accuracy and veracity—requires a scholarly and God-like persona, who can describe boldly and unambiguously the actions, thoughts, and meanings he deems implicit in the historical record.

Accordingly, Bulwer's narrator is the most conscious, demonstrative historian of the three novelists I've studied.

Spatially, the confidence and didacticism play out in Bulwer's investigation of "loaded" hypothetical spaces—history lessons in miniature, often assembled by the novelist himself to dissect for the reader. In an earlier chapter I wrote that there is always some "mystification" about the reader of landscape, as well as some corresponding mystification about the narrating voice in most historical novels (like the seemingly rational, nevertheless disingenuous and multiple personality Author of *Waverley*). In Bulwer's narration, little of this mystification is evident. The narrator interprets the scene matter-of-factly, a scene which he has avowedly created himself in many cases, describing and decoding the layers of meaning in the landscape or architecture. It's as if Bulwer's narrator is Scott's Jonathan Oldbuck lecturing the reader, without the troublesome Edie Ochiltree to undermine his conclusions.

Bulwer's earnestness and lecturing posture, along with his tendency to keep historical and fictional elements discrete (thereby marking the latter as irrelevant), are some reasons why he remains a less readable historical novelist of the period. But his willingness to use space as an authorial extension and teaching tool—a sort of chalkboard for his lecturer's persona—reveals his continuity with Scott and Ainsworth, and with several generations of historical novelists who followed. Despite his candidly partisan, non-objective commitment to a heroic and (particularly Protestant) providential historical process—despite a vision, therefore, quite unlike Scott's or Ainsworth's—Bulwer's novels show historical novel space to be the flexible space of concept and metaphor, a space where ideas are worked out.

### **Space and Order: Teleology in Bulwer's *Pompeii***

Besides being the most demonstrative and "present" historian, Bulwer also espouses the most progressive vision of history of the three novelists studied in this project—though his

progressivism is peculiarly Victorian in its Protestantism and English-ness, not unlike his contemporary, Charles Kingsley. Bulwer's confident tone and trust in the written record emphasize this point abundantly. While Scott had all but apologized for reaching back to twelfth-century England for *Ivanhoe* and joked about setting stories in obscure lands so that readers could not catch his mistakes, Bulwer stresses the factual nature of his history although reaching much further back and afield than Scott ever did. Bulwer's faith, both in the record itself and in the all-shaping Deity that has preserved the record for Victorian Britain to ponder and explicate, extends to his landscapes and cityscapes; he sees continuity where other novelists had seen only novelty and difference. In both his narrating persona and his spatial description, then, Bulwer projects a conservatism that often crosses the line into complacency; he sees Design and Purpose more readily in historical events, even when those events seem inexplicably catastrophic.

Bulwer's teleological bias shows up most obviously in the setting for his most famous novel, *The Last Days of Pompeii*. Bulwer's first task is to demonstrate that Ancient Pompeii was not very dissimilar to nineteenth-century cities like Naples, Paris, or London; city life is city life, and though the costumes may change, the infinite variety and moral relativism of city experience is seemingly eternal: "nothing could exceed the bustle, the gaiety, the animation—where pleasure and commerce, idleness and labor, avarice and ambition, mingled in one gulf their motley rushing, yet harmonious, streams" (199). The moral crises of these times resemble those of Bulwer's own, and so great a continuity, so powerful a design does Bulwer see that the terrible destructive force of the volcano itself becomes punitive, suborned to providence. But Vesuvius has not only destroyed the sinful community; it has also had the effect of freezing time for the benefit of posterity, that later generations—specifically, Bulwer's own—may draw

lessons from what the landscape has literally imprisoned. Even this particular city, Bulwer seems to say with Panglossian conviction, was a divine choice:

Pompeii was the miniature of the civilization of that age. Within the narrow compass of its walls was contained, as it were, a specimen of every gift which luxury offered to power. In its minute but glittering shops, its tiny palaces, its baths, its forum, its theatre, its circus—in the energy yet corruption, in the refinement yet the vice, of its people, you beheld a model of the whole empire. It was a toy, a plaything, a showbox, in which the gods seemed pleased to keep the representation of the great monarchy of earth, and which they afterwards hid from time, to give to the wonder of posterity—the moral of the maxim, that under the sun there is nothing new. (12)

Bulwer does not specifically say that this city was “the best of all possible cities” to be preserved by the volcano, but its microcosmic nature does make its preservation more than fortuitous.

Perhaps to avoid too preachy a tone, Bulwer’s attention to archaeological detail allows him to press this moral agenda home with what seems like scientific precision, even though the conclusions he draws may be fanciful and heavily symbolic. Pivoting to the recent past, Bulwer notes that the diggers in Pompeii recovered the shell of a tortoise in an ancient garden. He speculates on its life in proximity with the nearby house, how this “strange link in the creation” survived earthquakes and successive owners with equal indifference (149). Eventually Bulwer decides the tortoise is not only a link but a divine symbol:

it was an emblem of time itself: slow, regular, perpetual; unwitting of the passions that fret themselves around—of the wear and tear of mortality. The poor tortoise! nothing less than the bursting of volcanoes, the convulsions of the riven world, could have quenched its sluggish spark! (150)

Time’s march is impersonal and unchangeable, but the volcano has halted it in this divine time-capsule that posterity may draw these moral lessons. In this moment, what seems a naturalist’s discovery “confirms” this providential guidance. Though perhaps an awful and a cataclysmic universe, it is nonetheless orderly, and the scholar, poet, and historian can decipher its lessons. In Scott’s world, they only bicker about them.

Although Bulwer's landscape is obviously not stable (given Pompeii's explosiveness) and a shifting and uncertain space still features in his novels, the ultimate design and meaning in such instability may be more recoverable. Because Bulwer's faith in a grand design seems greater than Scott's or Ainsworth's, he also judges past peoples more readily, placing them securely into an overarching worldview that he may have gathered, like his interest in hero figures and *Zeitgeist*, from Carlyle. From the informed perspective of his narrator, the landscape can be threatening and chaotic to the characters simply because they (unlike Bulwer or the reader) are unable to see the broader view. The peoples of ancient Roman times, "when Reason herself was but the creature of the imagination" (*Last Days* 141), are superstitious and irrational. The people of *Harold's* time were as credulous as children, leading Bulwer to cite an (unidentified) "Italian writer," "that he who would depict philosophically an unphilosophical age, should remember that, to be familiar with children, one must sometimes think and feel as a child" (1:vii). The age-level metaphor for philosophies recalls Hegel, and makes clear that Bulwer's historical view, like Carlyle's, is one of history-as-process: Bulwer is fitting past peoples into a recognizable classification scheme, checking, grading, and pigeon-holing like the best taxonomic Victorian naturalist.

To the greater or more gifted visionary, then, is given the ability to see significance in the chaotic landscape, an idea that Bulwer essentially shares with Scott, though he demystifies the concept. Reading spaces remains a test of acumen and character, yet may also become a test of faith. The earthquake that rocks Pompeii weeks prior to the fatal eruption is thus complementary to the religious message of Olinthus, the novel's proselytizing Christian. Like the classical Christians of so many Victorian novels, Olinthus quotes New Testament verses he could not have had access to and generally behaves more like a dissenting evangelical than a man of his

age. But his understanding of the earthquake is similar to Bulwer's own ideas about the land and the "last days" of the city: "Deluded idolators!" he tells the Pompeians, "did not last night's convulsion warn ye? Alas! How will ye meet the last day?" (202). By contrast, the reactions of the pagan protagonists to the quake are fearfully uncertain and mythic: "the land we live in yet nurses mysterious terror" says Glaucus to his servant Nydia, who answers "I felt the soil creep and heave beneath me, like some monstrous serpent" (207). Like Bulwer—the scrupulous historian who announced that (unlike Scott) he must "do more than present an amusing picture of national manners" (*Harold* 1:xv)—Olinthus is able to understand cause and effect, both literally and universally (or morally). The truth is not only self-evident; it is self-evidently displayed in space. In fact, Bulwer characterizes the entire destruction of Pompeii as a failure to read physical space and its "signs" accurately.

Above all, rode the cloud-capped summit of the Dread Mountain, with the shadows, now dark, now light, betraying the mossy caverns and ashy rocks, which testified the past conflagrations, and might have prophesied—but man is blind—that which was to come!  
(174)

This land does not merely hint or suggest but "prophesies" boldly, and as *Last Days* makes clear with its protracted debates about religion and knowledge, it is the spiritual blindness of humanity above all that has brought on this divine destruction.<sup>2</sup> Bulwer sees this and Olinthus grasps it partially, but *Last Days'* other characters can only find out the horrible truth by experience.

Those spared the final destruction convert to Christianity.

In each of these examples, evidence from the Pompeii site—in the one case a tortoise shell, in the other the existence of the site itself—is used to "prove" a divine plan; it confirms not only the purpose in historical events but also, crucially, the narrator's authority to interpret that

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<sup>2</sup> Ainsworth develops a similar situation in *Old Saint Paul's*, whose crazed prophet Solomon Eagle foretells the coming destruction of London by fire as a punishment for the city's sinful ways. But space does not mirror Solomon Eagle's message in Ainsworth's novel, as it does Olinthus' in *Last Days*.

purpose in the historical record and in space. To use Alistair Duckworth's favored term for describing Scott's depicted spaces, Bulwer's spaces are obviously much more "rhetorical" than previously accounted. He takes the leap from premise to conclusion, from the seemingly ambiguous evidence of history to a confident interpretation of the past that Scott had avoided taking, that Ainsworth had sidestepped (or tunneled beneath!). Where Scott's rhetorical spaces frequently argue only that there will be no end to the argument about a space's significance, Bulwer's spaces are so constructed that they seem to yield only one interpretation. Bulwer's narrator thus becomes the most capable and unequivocal reader of spaces in his novels.

Critics and Bulwer himself usually emphasize his self-imposed restraints and bookish obligation, but by pointing out this spatial construction, I am asserting a freeing, nonrestrictive and imaginative element in Bulwer's approach to history. For instance, Andrew Sanders notes Bulwer's debt to Carlyle's idea "that history is biography" and argues that Bulwer's role was, as he saw it, "a poetic imaginer and an accurate recorder," a view that emphasizes his over-reliance on historical sources, where the artist needs only "to balance invention against recorded fact" and "impartiality and knowledge of the world serve to adjust the techniques of psychological examination" (50). For Sanders, Bulwer's technique is unhelpfully restrictive; "Both plot and character are dependent upon external sources and reference books, and *the novelist's role is reduced* to offering a redefinition or a reinterpretation of what happened in history" (51, my emphasis). Perceptive as is Sanders' reading of Bulwer's ethos, I would argue he is underestimating Bulwer's cognizance of the powers he felt were gained by his superior scholarship. If the novelist's role has been "reduced" in his fiction, it is only because the historian's role has increased exponentially. Bulwer clearly takes pride in his strengthening and ennobling of mere fiction or romance with studied fact, and that pride and confidence lead him to

handle history with a deliberateness very far removed from passive “impartiality.” As Sanders himself notes, Bulwer “rarely seems to distrust history” (51). His confidence in the recoverability of fact and his own powers of interpretation led him to speculate and “append” to history with greater purpose—or effrontery, depending on whether the reader shares his vision.

Bulwer’s historian persona and use of space therefore challenge some of criticism’s long-held assumptions about what defines good or serious historical fiction: his is a process-oriented view of history, exhibited in novels with a consistent vision, which advance their theses throughout by offering confidently interpreted “evidence” and emphasize continuity between past and present peoples. Functionally, his novels do everything they “should” do according to many critical assessments—yet few critics would be prepared to declare them successful either aesthetically or historically.

Bulwer’s awareness that he is mixing different categories, and his sense of responsibility for the separate roles of artist/imaginer and researcher/historian, are both acute. He feels certain of his ground and much better prepared to “enclose” it than his predecessor; he knows where the history ends (what is its direction or design) and where the fiction must begin, and feels qualified to conjecture what any links between the two must be like. As Allen Conrad Christensen puts it, “having saturated himself in all the available evidence,” Bulwer calls into play “the element of ‘Romance’ or ‘Fiction.’ This has enabled him to discern the truths among contradictions and to discover the truths about which the documents do not speak” (120). The relationship begins to emerge: “real” historical understanding produces better qualified, more probable guesswork, wherever guesswork is necessary. Rounded appreciation of fact leads to better estimated historical fiction. Spatially, such an understanding leads to a meticulously ordered—some would

say sterile—historical novel space where fact and fiction are kept separate, and where the “factual” spaces argue for very definite historical interpretations.

### **Historical Space: The Real and the Typical in *Last Days* and *Harold***

It is not only in his willingness to proclaim the grand significance of events that we see Bulwer’s confidence in his own historical scrutiny—he trusts his scholarship and instincts enough to engage space theoretically, both building narrative from historical spaces and composing hypothetical spaces to encapsulate history. His historical spaces thus oscillate between the real and the typical, the actual, identifiable location and the hypothetical (but presumably no less real) space.

Pompeii was a perfect site from which to glean both of these kinds of spaces. Of course, Bulwer’s Pompeii also reflects his long-abiding interest in historical and experiential “lasts,” anticipating not only *The Last of the Barons* but also *Harold*, “Last of the Saxon Kings,” *Rienzi*, “Last of the Roman Tribunes,” and even *Leila*’s setting of Granada, last Moorish city to fall to the Christians in Spain. Yet Pompeii is also Bulwer’s most historically charged landscape because of its imminent destruction at the time of the novel’s setting, probably the only historical fact Bulwer would have expected his average reader to know. Dramatic tension is immediately established by his choosing this time and place, the spaces surrounding the characters forever buzzing with the potentiality of being destroyed at any moment (Ainsworth achieves much the same effect with pre-Great Fire London in *Old Saint Paul’s*). Bulwer’s Pompeii is thus a making literal of the reader’s narrative expectations. It forms our knowledge of history, not our “un-knowledge,” the obscure and uncertain regions found in Scott.

But Pompeii was also frozen in time, leaving a palpable—and very tantalizing from a narrative point-of-view—collection of fragments, ruins and artifacts behind: an idea set of real locations from which to extract characters, situations and narratives. Bulwer’s first-hand

knowledge of the archaeological site—he conspicuously reminds his reader that he has written the novel in Italy<sup>3</sup>—combines with his research to “tease” certain characters and events from these remains. So the novel’s protagonist, cultured man-about-town Glaucus, is derived from “his” house—the ruin named The House of the Dramatic (or “Tragic”) Poet, recently excavated when Bulwer wrote his novel (Nappo 142). Other characters from the novel—the epicurean Sallust, the philistine Diomed, his spoiled daughter Julia—are similarly based on evidence from extant ruins and artifacts. Bulwer dramatically tips his hand in the final pages of the novel, legitimizing his characters and situations—and proving his own research and inventiveness!—by “site-ing” the events of the climactic chapters:

the traveler may yet see the impression of a female neck and bosom of young and round proportions—the trace of the fated Julia! . . . In the garden was found a skeleton with a key by its bony hand, and near it a bag of coins. This is believed to have been the master of the house—the unfortunate Diomed, who had probably sought to escape by the garden, and been destroyed either by the vapors or some fragment of stone. (551)

Bulwer’s method is bolder than Ainsworth’s of taking inspiration from the ambience or mood of a scene. Julia is a vain and scheming female partly because she is based on ruins and artifacts: the dressing room, cosmetics, perfumes, jewels and combs Bulwer so carefully describes in Chapter 3:7. In other, more dramatic scenes, the site has furnished Bulwer with a climax, which he can race towards fictionally in whatever way he sees fit: so the 20 bodies of women and children discovered in the crypt of the Villa of Diomedes furnish the ending of the Julia-Diomed storyline in the novel, in Chapter 5:6 (Nappo 151). This idea plays out in many scenes throughout *Last Days*—the site has given Bulwer real moments in time with which to connect his narrative.

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<sup>3</sup> For example: “Italy, Italy, while I write, your skies are over me—your seas flow beneath my feet” (137). “Viewing the various witnesses of a social system which has passed from the world for ever—a stranger, from that remote and barbarian Isle which the Imperial Roman shivered when he named, paused amidst the delights of the soft Campania and composed this history!” (552).

We should note that Bulwer is not compelled to make most of these narrative choices based on hard evidence. He allows his unequivocal interpretations of the site's features to direct the story, affecting his choices of plot, conflicts and characters. For instance, a recess behind a statue in Pompeii's Temple of Isis practically determines the characters of the novel's villain Arbaces and his chief henchman, Calenus the priest. In a novel whose spiritual resolution is the conversion of its lead characters to Christianity, we might expect the Egyptian priesthood to be painted false, but their character of insincere charlatans, preying on the Pompeians' gullibility, is largely determined by the Temple's layout. Yet again, Bulwer points to the extant ruins as proof for his depiction: "the Temple of Isis, with the juggling concealments behind the statues—the lurking-place of its holy oracles—are now bared to the gaze of the curious" (551).<sup>4</sup>

Three points should be noted about Bulwer's handling of this real site, the most purely archaeological setting of all his historical novels. First, as noted, archaeological space reinforces a generally ordered and meaningful, specifically Christian and moral, account of world history. Second, Bulwer does not pretend to rely on compelling or incontrovertible evidence, but trusts his own invention and "knowledge of the world" (Sanders 50) to contextualize the hints and fragments the site offers up. Nevertheless, it is a context confidently asserted by the author/narrator. Third, the broader mission of drawing attention to human sameness—the constants and universals of humanity rather than the specific historical and cultural differences,

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<sup>4</sup> In fact, various contemporary tourist accounts of the site come to similar conclusions, such as this one from the Religious Tract Society periodical, *The Visitor*, in 1851:

At the further extremity of the interior stood the altar, from which a statue of Isis had been removed when the building was uncovered. We were conducted into some apartments behind, and were here shown a recess, where the priests of the temple were concealed when they uttered the oracular responses supposed to be pronounced by the goddess. (162)

*The Visitor* also lists, in virtually the same order as Bulwer's novel, the bodies of "Julia," "Diomed," and other character remains discovered at Pompeii—a testament, perhaps, to Bulwer's influence on British tourists' impressions of the site. The account also includes a cautionary sermon in miniature, in accordance with Bulwer's moral message.

the same epic moral continuity emphasized in the first chapter of *Waverley*—this mission remains intact in Bulwer’s fiction, however niggling and pedantic his historical asides may become.

In different ways, of course, ideas of continuity always inform the historical novel and its theorization, from Scott’s “great book of Nature, the same through a thousand editions” (*Waverley* 5) to Lukacs’ insistence that the historical novel emphasize not what is alien about past peoples but what is common, what reveals “a phase of mankind’s development” (42). What constitutes fact and what ignorance or superstition are the most changeable issues from one novelist or theorist to another. In Bulwer’s version—I would argue, a more influential version than has been commonly supposed—the broad schema is visible, knowable, reliable. God’s plan is manifest, both for the Romans and their spiritual progeny, the British, in the historical process; this can be attested to by fact and by space, and assumed when the available facts or extant sites are more ambiguous.

### **Comparison: Emma Marshall’s Real Space**

Before looking at Bulwer’s other variety of historical space, the typical or theoretical location, it’s worth comparing Bulwer’s “real space” strategy with a similar site and strategy from one of the neglected juvenile and religious historical novels of the late century: *No. XIII* by Emma Marshall (1885). The author of religious tracts and stories, a number of them historical, Marshall’s only ancient setting was this novel which follows a British-born Roman girl named Hyacintha, from England to Rome in the fourth century A. D., there to ascend to the supreme position in the Temple of Vesta. On her way up, however, Hyacintha secretly becomes a Christian—a revelation withheld until her death, and which causes her jealous successor to obliterate her name from the pedestal of her commemorative statue in the temple.

Marshall announces in her Introduction that she constructs her story due to “recent discoveries in the Roman Forum,” among which are the statues of temple vestals, whose inscriptions provide specific names and virtues (iii). One only of the vestal’s descriptions has been “carefully erased—and we can know her of whom so much is said in praise, only as Number Thirteen”:

An attempt has been made to clothe the memory of this Vestal with some probable, though of course wholly fictitious, incidents; and to assume as a certainty the idea, which has been thrown out as a possibility, that her conversion to Christianity was discovered, and that one in authority desired to leave no trace of her family or her name to future generations.  
(iii-iv)

Hints derived from Bulwer’s forgotten “storehouse of archaeology” lead Marshall to “clothe the memory” of a past person with a “wholly fictitious” history; and although Marshall is perhaps more frank about her own fictional input, Bulwer’s method of fitting historical fragments confidently into a moral and didactic historical scheme is everywhere evident. For Marshall, who has young readers in mind “A glance like this into the past may be made useful . . . if it should quicken a desire for the intelligent study of history,” which means feeling sympathy and perceiving unchanging truth “through the mists of superstition and ignorance” (iv). From the “dark places” of history, the lights that illuminate are sameness, sympathy and relevance, but revelation and the “universal truths” are also included (iv). As in Bulwer’s fictions, the extant site emphasizes a moral and spiritual continuity between present and past believers, leading young readers “to think of those of whom we read in these distant ages . . . as the brothers and sisters of the one great family of God” (iv).

### **Bulwer’s Theoretical Space**

If the extant historical site, the real space, best exemplifies Bulwer’s teleological vision, the typical or theoretical site demonstrates his confidence in his historical acumen and commitment to interpreting historical spaces for his reader. In his vision of Pompeii, Bulwer can

easily play the archaeologist, brushing away the encrustations of ages to reveal the solid, tangible, reliable truths of the past. That these persisting truths resemble the truths of the Victorian male aristocrat of course reveals the selective process at work in Bulwer's recovery and recreation: as he has valued and eschewed fact according to his own place in history, he has likewise created and improvised fiction to suit his valuations.

Bulwer therefore does not depend on the extant historical site; both in Pompeii and in other less "recoverable" settings, he feels comfortable both constructing and uncovering the site under his gaze. If the historical novel is a "faux palimpsest" where the author invents both the main text and the scraps and pieces at the edge, Bulwer creates spaces like this in his novels as well, though they seem more diagrammatic than his predecessors': deliberately arranged, to be exploded for the reader's edification (or, to keep the archaeology metaphor in mind, deliberately piled up to be uncovered).

Woven into his description of *Last Days'* House of the Dramatic Poet, Bulwer imagines the "typical" Roman house for the reader, stripping away the historical particularity of the house, the pedantic details "of caprice and taste, which being natural to mankind, have always puzzled antiquaries," and so to "convey to the reader a general notion of the houses of Pompeii" (21). Bulwer's general notion becomes a virtual tour, as his narrator shifts to second person and walks us through the house: "You enter then, usually, by a small entrance-passage (called cestibulum)," around three sides of this hall are doors communicating with several bedchambers (among which is the porter's)," if the house is large, there are two small recesses, rather than chambers, generally devoted to the ladies of the mansion; and in the centre of the tessellated pavement of the hall is invariably a square, shallow reservoir for rain water (classically termed impluvium)" (21-23). The dwelling can be reduced to its theoretical essentials, to a basic anatomy complete

with classical terminology (“atrium, to speak classically,” “technically termed peristyle”), and thus the reader obtains a “tolerable notion” which can serve for all the domestic spaces in the novel (22, 23). One might imagine Bulwer indulging his power of invention solely in creating the décor for each house.

This private space is, as Bulwer styled it, the “fair domain” of the poet, but that isn’t to say Bulwer’s creation of the space is unhistorical or comments only on the “inward” dimension of life. On the contrary, his diagram features asides on class (“In this hall . . . the clients and visitors of inferior rank were usually received. In the houses of the more 'respectable', an atriensis, or slave peculiarly devoted to the service of the hall, was invariably retained, and his rank among his fellow-slaves was high and important”), public and private spaces (“under the colonnade, to the right and left, were doors admitting to bedrooms, to a second triclinium, or eating-room”), and suitable comparisons to the habits of Bulwer’s own time and place:

even their banquet-rooms, however elaborately adorned and carefully selected in point of aspect, were of diminutive proportions; for the intellectual ancients, being fond of society, not of crowds, rarely feasted more than nine at a time, so that large dinner-rooms were not so necessary with them as with us. (22, 23)

The house is in fact a history lesson—an annotated spatial comment on the logistics, habits, and social practices of the past age, pivoting forward at select moments to compare with the author’s own world (and thus to emphasize continuity).

In a descriptive passage like this one, Bulwer is both layering and uncovering, encoding and deciphering the palimpsest, creating a significance-laden text in space and reading it aloud to his audience. In terms of its detail, such passages are not wholly unlike Ainsworth’s detailed descriptions, except that Bulwer is creating these spaces from his research—they are the domain of the historian and the poet simultaneously.

So confident and demystified a historical vision has no trouble producing its own theorized spaces, as demonstrated abundantly in *Harold*, Bulwer's last and most serious historical novel. In presenting the saga of Harold Godwinson, "Last of the Saxon Kings," Bulwer again anticipates the juvenile historical novel and its wave of tributes to raw, manly Anglo-Saxon paragons like Harold and Alfred the Great.<sup>5</sup> But he also ventures away from the historical record spatially, since most of Britain's remains, whether ruins or landmarks, date from the Norman period or after. By depicting the Saxon monarchy, Bulwer cannot rely on his favorite authoritative paradigm, the archaeological site, as he could for *Last Days*, but must create his own theoretical spaces with "built-in" age. Some few verifiable spaces in the story of the Norman Conquest—Westminster Abbey, or the field of Hastings where the climactic battle plays out—are depicted only scantily in the novel. Instead, Bulwer constructs layered and "diagrammatic" theoretical spaces in *Harold*, of the same sort as Pompeii's typical house.

In fact, Bulwer opens *Harold* by uncovering many of the same features of a dwelling, the same technical terms and defined spaces, that he had painstakingly laid out for *The Last Days of Pompeii*. The first setting of the novel is fictional, and returned to frequently: the "House of Hilda," decrepit but still functional, a fitting abode for the soothsayer Hilda "of famous and dark repute," "who, despite all law and canon, was still believed to practice the dismal arts of the Wicca" (1:2-3). A domestic space originally Roman, now layered over with the history and experience of different cultures, Hilda's palimpsest dwelling emerges complete with the narrator's discerning reader, who separates it from the fairy tale- or legend-styled landscape of the first paragraph:

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Gilliat's *God Save King Alfred* (1901), Henty's *The Dragon and the Raven* (1886), and C. W. Whistler's *King Alfred's Viking* (1899), all of which depict with Alfred's reign gloriously. Harold also became the subject of Tennyson's eponymous play (1876).

a large building that once had belonged to some voluptuous Roman, now all defaced and despoiled; . . . the ruined walls, and timbered outbuildings, grey Druid stones (that spoke of an age before either Saxon or Roman invader) gleaming through the dawn . . . (1:2)

The house has withstood the waves of invasion and wars between the Roman times and the year 1052, so that “even through all the barbarous mutilation it had undergone from barbarian hands, enough was left strikingly to contrast the ordinary abodes of the Saxon” (1:3). Not the “typical” home is this building, but a calculated exception: a created space specifically arranged to stand in for the collective history and memory of Britain. Bulwer admits its uniqueness with a conceit about the house’s mysterious and unlikely history: “it happened rarely that the Saxon had chosen his home amidst the villas of [the Romans]. Our first forefathers were more inclined to destroy than to adapt. By what chance this building became an exception to the ordinary rule, it is now impossible to conjecture” (1:3). The moment in which the author “knows not” or “cannot conjecture” how space came to be arranged in a particular fashion—such is a familiar moment in the genre, usually signaling a deliberate manipulation of space for effect.<sup>6</sup>

Hilda’s house also makes a neat argument about the Saxons’ lack of sophistication, thus foreshadowing the novel’s depiction of the Saxon race as a powerful but crude raw material from which the modern Briton comes to be refined. Bulwer’s diction throughout the description trades technical terms with the language of despoliation and regret; he makes it clear—as only he, the historian-reader of space, can—that the “mists of ignorance” have not allowed the Saxons to appreciate or profit by the historical heritage of their land. Hilda’s house is the ruin of that typical house of Pompeii’s “intellectual ancients.” It is an argument in miniature, demonstrating the comparative ignorance of Saxon to Roman:

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the passage cited in Chapter from James’ *Forest Days*: “Whether planted by accident or design I know not, . . . six old oaks came forward from the rest of the wood” (1:171).

The changes wrought in the edifice were mournful and grotesque. What was now the Hall, had evidently been the atrium; . . . the spear, sword, and small curved saex of the early Teuton, were suspended from the columns on which once had been wreathed the flowers; . . . what now was the fire-place had been the impluvium, and the smoke went sullenly through the aperture in the roof, made of old to receive the rains of heaven. (1:4)

Effacing the older, more sophisticated civilization (text) is an almost sacrilegious new and barbaric “layer”; the once fine house has been put to the rudest uses, as nature slowly reclaims what remains. One side of the Roman peristyle, “now converted into stabling, sties for swine, and stalls for oxen,” confirms this historical argument (1:4). The other side, however, plays out a different, contrasting or balancing argument: that the religious heritage of the landscape reveals one of the few ways the Saxon will prove (eventually) superior to the sophisticated ancients.

On the other side was constructed a Christian chapel, made of rough oak planks, fastened by plates at the top, and with a roof of thatched reeds. The columns and wall at the extreme end of the peristyle were a mass of ruins, through the gigantic rents of which loomed a grassy hillock, its sides partially covered with clumps of furze. On this hillock were the mutilated remains of an ancient Druidical crommel, in the centre of which (near a funeral mound, or barrow, with the bautastean, or gravestone, of some early Saxon chief at one end) had been sacrilegiously placed an altar to Thor, as was apparent both from the shape, from a rude, half-obliterated, sculptured relief of the god, with his lifted hammer, and a few Runic letters. Amidst the temple of the Briton the Saxon had reared the shrine of his triumphant war-god. (1:5)

Bulwer pauses to note the historical and cultural palimpsest in view: “thus the eye, at one survey, beheld the shrines of four creeds” (1:5).<sup>7</sup> But the “eye” is the reader’s—no one in the novel has this learned perspective; no one in the novel is so capable a reader of landscape as the narrator and (by extension) the reader. Bulwer has built this layered space and then exploded it, for the reader’s edification and, perhaps, gratification. It is flattering and powerful to be included, to share in Bulwer’s “vision.”

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<sup>7</sup> Bulwer continues the survey with a relative evaluation of the creeds: “the Druid, mystical and symbolical; the Roman, sensual, but humane; the Teutonic, ruthless and destroying; and, latest riser and surviving all, though as yet with but little of its gentler influence over the deeds of men, the edifice of the Faith of Peace” (1:5).

A few times, Bulwer toys with the idea that some inkling of historical processes makes it through to the dim discernment of the Norman nobles. When *Harold* passes into a London setting, mostly in its first third, Bulwer follows other historical romancers in wondering over the greenery and sunshine, the pastoral atmosphere of the pre-Industrialized capital. He clucks over the low entertainment of bear-baiting, as Scott had in *Kenilworth*, yet still finds in the bustling and socially diverse commerce of The City a prediction of empire, where “all bespoke that activity, . . . which was destined to render that city the mart of the world” (1:37). Viewing the remains of a Roman keep when crossing the Thames, the Norman Prince William shares some of this authorial sight, acknowledging both the ingenuity of the ancients and imagining the future greatness of the British when he “predicts” the Tower of London: “Those Romans were our masters in all things gallant and wise . . . and I predict that, some day or other, on that site, a King of England will re-erect palace and tower” (1:39). It is perhaps no great prediction, since William himself will be that king. Yet through his statement Bulwer clearly argues that the Normans will be the builders of extant structures, both physical and “national,” because they can discern history.

*Harold's* London space perhaps make the case for Bulwer's theoretical spaces better than any other: the city's layers of past encrustations are explicitly arranged for the historian to distinguish, point out and explain. It is a “rude dark city,” its streets “narrow and winding,” but we are not left in the labyrinth here as in Scott's *Kenilworth* (29). Rather, the narrator points out the original topographical features “to which we owe the names of existing thoroughfares” and notes the hodgepodge of Roman and Saxon influences in “many a church, and many a convent,” none of which exist in Bulwer's own London (1:40). The narrator notes the subtle signs and visual cues which reveal the Roman past, arguing that “a scholar's, if not an ordinary, eye could

behold the relics of Roman splendour,” thus emphasizing the need for the learned expert to be able to make sense of the city’s past layers, to see the “traces of that elder city which now lies buried under our thoroughfares, and of which, year by year, are dug up the stately skeletons” (1:39).

This view has nothing to do with the characters, though we look over their shoulders as we take it in: “Not on such evidences of the past civilization looked the practical eye of the Norman count” (1:40), William I. Rather, he looks but does not see, though the reader can. Bulwer and the Victorian reader of historical fiction have a perspective—or a perception, or a perspicacity—that past generations lack.

### **Comparison: Baring-Gould’s Theoretical Space**

To compare Bulwer’s theoretical layered space with a late historical novel equivalent, we turn to the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould, most famous for writing hymns and a multi-volume *Lives of the Saints*, and one of a number of Anglican churchmen who busily produced historical romances in the *fin de siècle*.<sup>8</sup>

Baring-Gould wrote nearly a dozen historical novels, his *Domitia* (1897) and *Perpetua* (1898) continuing the historical novelist’s fascination with ancient Roman civilization that Bulwer and Charles Kingsley had spearheaded in the mid-century, and George Ebers’ translated novels about Egypt had begun to revive. *Perpetua*, a “story of Nimes in A. D. 213,” does not depict any significant historical event but rather follows the second wave of Christian persecution into the Roman provinces. Baring-Gould imagines how the “Barbarian” European and Roman cultures have developed symbiotically much more capably than either Bulwer or Kingsley had done—for instance, proposing how the anger generated against Christians in Gaul

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<sup>8</sup> Others include Alfred J. Church, C. W. Whistler, A. D. Crake, E. Gilliat and Frederic W. Farrar.

has more to do with their refusal to worship the local fertility gods than with any Roman edict. He is also bold enough to depict the confused cultural intermixture (or palimpsest) of the different varieties of Christian worshippers, showing the community's difficulty in overcoming old pagan habits and prejudices.

Accordingly, Baring-Gould describes the layout of typical Roman-style houses and imagines how typical living spaces have been adapted to Christian uses—very much as Bulwer had done in *Last Days* and *Harold*. The *triclinium* and *atrium* adapt to new uses during worship services; the kind of house Bulwer had diagrammed so carefully is turned into a makeshift chapel, yet with the same technical terms hovering, caption-like, over the characters' heads. As Bulwer was wont to remind us, so Baring-Gould notes a picturesque ancient street sign the local museum now displays (we may see it, and verify the history, for ourselves).

Like Bulwer also, Baring-Gould has based some characters on extant structures, taking cues from the scene to help people his tale. But the links between the space and the history are often tenuous and hypothetical. As Battle Abbey “consecrates” the ground of England in *Harold* (discussed below), so Baring-Gould claims (slyly) to consecrate his French setting with two aged churches, respectively validating his characters Perpetua and Baudillas. Not only consecration but validation is implied by Baring-Gould's invitation to the tourist:

If the visitor at the present day to Nimes will look about him, he will find two churches, both recently built, in place of, and on the site of, very ancient places of worship, and the one bears the name of St. Baudille. If he inquire of the sacristan . . . the answer given him will be: “Baudillas was a native Nimes, a deacon, and a martyr.”

If he ask further, “But when?” Then the sacristan will probably reply with a shrug: “Mais, monsieur, qui sait?”

In another part of the town is a second church, . . . and this bears the name of Ste. Perpetue. (314-315)

Baring-Gould's finger points to a "truth" or proof outside of the historical or archaeological: not to an ancient structure but to a namesake. The sacristan knows the story but not the date or particulars. The ground is hallowed, but what remains only bears out Baring-Gould's tale in spirit and theory, not in fact or artifact.

### **"I Can Well Judge From What I Have Seen": Space and Masculine Discernment**

If Bulwer's narrator is unequivocally the best reader of space in his novels, that does not mean he shows no interest in depicting readers or in measuring their respective abilities. Quite the contrary: in Bulwer's biographical historical novels with their emphasis on Carlylean "Men of the Age," who sees and who does not see the qualities of the landscape becomes an enormously important question. Bulwer's measuring of the man by his ability to intuit the significance of space links him to Scott, of course, who also emphasizes the abilities and fitness to lead of the traditional and the "natural" aristocratic male by placing him in unusual spatial circumstances. For Bulwer, the natural, i.e. untitled gentleman can gain enough perspective to understand the past, and therefore to predict the probable future, by experience; or, as Earl Godwinson expresses his "summit view" of history in *Harold*, "The old see afar; they stand on the height of experience, as a warder on the crown of a tower" (1:169). But as his acknowledgement of William I's spatial acumen reveals, Bulwer is more likely than Scott to celebrate the interpretive gifts of the traditional aristocrat, a feature that confirms Scott's abiding interest in chivalrous noblemen but also links Bulwer with the heroic and conservative boy's books that followed him—those late century devotionals to kingly qualities whose heroes "possessed that ready adaptability to circumstances which is often an attribute of the highest birth" (Everett-Green 118).

Like the fin de siècle boy's book as well, Bulwer's historical fiction tends to make surveys of masculine and manly styles—a strategy employed by so quintessential a boy's book as

*Treasure Island*—and, as is so often the case in the historical novel, the survey of man involves the surveying of land. *Last Days*, *Harold* and *The Last of the Barons* are all studies of different kinds of men and masculinities—from the effeminate hedonism of *Last Days*' Sallust, to the heroic dandyism of *Last of the Barons*' Edward IV, and the frank, uncomplicated masculinity of Harold Godwinson and Earl Warwick. Bulwer's historical novels show a ubiquitous concern with identifying the true strains of maleness and masculine vigor throughout past ages, even if they find the most admirable qualities mixed and muddled in peoples like the Saxon race, "with its large qualities undeveloped, but marked already [in the eleventh century] by patient endurance, love of justice, and freedom—the manly sense of duty . . . and that indestructible element of practical purpose and courageous will" (*Harold* 1:ix). It fits with Bulwer's celebratory tribute to such manly strains—a preoccupation of later historical novelists with worldviews similar to Bulwer's, notably Kingsley—that some types of men can intuit the qualities, uses, and nuances of landscapes and spaces, while others cannot.

In *Harold*, Bulwer's survey of masculinities blends explicitly with a survey of the land in Books Six and Seven, when the ambivalent Norman observer/spy Mallet de Graville accompanies a Saxon army on its march into Wales, hoping to assess William I's chances of defeating Harold in battle. Graville first contrasts Norman daintiness with Saxon bluntness, a common theme of historical novels dealing with the so-called "Norman yoke" as far back as *Ivanhoe*. But in conversation with an English abbot, Graville rapidly characterizes the decline of the Saxon race as a decline in vigor and purity, a degeneration that touches on race, religion, class and landscape in one sweeping description.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bulwer's narrator echoes some of these ideas, stating that inactivity and "enervate superstition had relaxed the sinews of the old Saxon manhood" (1:277).

if fighting must be, I see that it will be the fight of a single battle, for there is neither fortress nor mountain to admit of long warfare. And look you, my friend, everything here is worn out! . . . the old nobility are gone, there is no reverence for old names; the Church is as decrepit in the spirit as thy lath monastery is decayed in its timbers . . . (1:277)

Graville's inspection of Saxon "vigour" rapidly becomes an assessment of both the natural features of landscape and the Saxons' ability to adapt that land to warlike purposes. If William were to invade, Graville declares, his first move must be to change the land: "He would bristle all the land with castles and forts, and hold it as a camp" (1:278). But in the chapter following this statement, Graville rides ahead of the Saxon army and literally surveys the Welsh countryside on the march, noting the very indefensibility he had found lacking earlier. Graville (consistent with the generally less intuitive Normans) misses the essential Saxon man/Saxon land connection of adaptability: he fails to recognize the natural hardihood and fortress-like nature of the wild country, as well as the defensible remnants of ruinous Roman fortresses and citadels. Like Scott's Sir Kenneth at the opening of *The Talisman*, Graville is out of step with the landscape. Harold Godwinson, however, is not. During his army's march through this west England space, everything useful and spatially "stubborn" and rugged has caught his knowing eye:

Some houses they passed--if buildings of rough stones, containing but a single room, can be called houses--but they were deserted. There were still (not as we now scarcely discern them, after centuries of havoc,) the mighty ruins of the Romans,—vast shattered walls, a tower half demolished, . . . the fortress, almost unmutilated, of Castell-y-Bryn. On the castle waved the pennon of Harold. (1:285)

Graville's assumptions about the land and the people are shown to be inadequate in the reconnaissance of the surrounding countryside that follows, when Harold's skillful use of Roman ruins is complemented by the Welsh King's adaptation of a rocky summit into an impregnable fortress. Graville soon comes to admit that "though I have seen but little of this rough land as yet, I can well judge from what I have seen, that no captain . . . could conquer a bold enemy in a

country where every rock is a fort” (1:287). In fact, one character answers (echoing *The Talisman*), this inability to adapt to the landscape has cost the Normans past victories.<sup>10</sup>

In passages like these, the shifting and uncertain spaces of the historical novel stand in for Marshall’s “mists of ignorance,” the forces that impeded and sometimes perverted past peoples from true knowledge—but the perception and interpretation of knowledge is also tied to discussions about different kinds of men. In keeping with his theoretical spatial description, Bulwer meticulously accounts for the significance of places and spaces, but only after depicting their hopelessly puzzling effect on his child-like characters, who do not have the benefit of his historical perspective. Yet by pitting the spatial features against Norman, Saxon and Welsh versions of maleness, he can contrast the open, frank manliness and honesty of the simple man and the crafty connivance of the more sophisticated, civilized reasoner—an opposition of masculine styles as old as Achilles and Odysseus.

For instance, when the mysterious mountain height called “Pen-y-Dinas (or ‘Head of the City’)” comes under Bulwer’s scrutiny in Book 7, Chapter 5 of *Harold*, he does his lecturer’s best to sort out the discrepancies “among antiquaries the most learned” and simply describe and measure the land in impartial fashion. This passage does not provide the occasion for legend or anecdote that it might for Scott, nor does its ambience summon up sensational narratives real or imagined as it might have for Ainsworth (though Bulwer does enlarge in an endnote on the Celtic worship practices he believes must have taken place there). But this cool, objective account of the place after the manner of an archaeologist or anthropologist comes only after he treats us to the Saxons’ reckoning of the place’s mysterious and unknowable qualities. The Norman Graville, whose eyes are insensitive to moody nuances in landscape, states only the

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<sup>10</sup> “[The Norman commander Rolf] insisted on using horses where no horses could climb, and attiring men in full armour to fight men light and nimble as swallows, that skim the earth, then are lost in the clouds” (1:287).

seemingly obvious to the Saxon commanders: “Cannot our eyes perceive the towers?” (1:303).

But the Saxons know better.

The old thegn shook his head. “At a distance, and through mists, stones loom large, and crags themselves take strange shapes. It may be castle, may be rock, may be old roofless temples of heathenness that we see. . . . none of us know what, there, exists of defence, man-made or Nature-built. . . .” (1:303)

Here the landscape shifts before our eyes—or at least, before the eyes of the Saxons, oddly privileged despite their lack of scientific understanding—from natural to architectural and back again, recalling Scott’s old practice of sifting rural locations and pondering over designs. The Saxons’ cautious, even superstitious assessment of the land is in fact a raw quality, one of those “undeveloped” racial, national and masculine traits that work to their race’s advantage in Bulwer’s depiction. Their respectful navigation of these treacherous spaces is a natural and unrefined gift, which the finer (and more effeminate) skills of the educated Norman only obscures.<sup>11</sup>

Bulwer expands upon this idea in his novel about Earl Warwick and the Wars of the Roses, *The Last of the Barons*, when he decides that the more sophisticated “powers of reflection” are seldom found in combination with “the Organ of Locality”—the gifted forester is not a deep thinker, in other words, and the person lost in thought loses his way easily (56). The Plantagenet monarchy (especially Richard III) possess the former quality, the staunch, conservative barons the latter, so that as “the last of the barons” Earl Warwick seems also the last of a certain kind of guileless but refined masculinity. The brilliant but naïve Harold Godwinson, too, seems outfoxed by the wily, dishonest William I in *Harold*, and good old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon strength thus

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<sup>11</sup> Graville seems to have the deceptively powerful Pen-y-Dinas in mind when he describes Harold’s character later: “all his faculties are so evenly balanced, and all accompanied by so composed a calm, that methinks, when I look at and hear him, I contemplate some artful castle,—the strength of which can never be known at the first glance, nor except by those who assail it” (2:43).

gives way to “foreign” treachery. By taking this tack in his hero stories, Bulwer is again choosing a very definite and unambiguous interpretation.<sup>12</sup>

When Harold’s end comes on the field of Hastings—an end that must engage “the sympathies of every true son of the land”<sup>13</sup> (1:ix)—his frank and manly good sense returns, though too late, and helps him to—what else?—choose good ground from which to repel the invading Normans. His uncomplicated masculinity has by this time become long undermined by vaunting ambition and the cryptic encouragements of the witch Hilda (the same pitfalls and failings that ruined Macbeth whose history, occurring within the novel’s eleventh century time span, is referenced often). But he has recognized his hubris and seen the limits of his knowledge, and proclaims his rejuvenated Christian and moral vigor by berating the advice (and the spaces!) of Hilda:

Lo, as we gaze around—the ruins of all the creeds that have made the hearts of men quake with unsubstantial awe—lo, the temple of the Briton!—lo, the fane of the Roman!—lo, the mouldering altar of our ancestral Thor! Ages past lie wrecked around us in these shattered symbols. A new age hath risen, and a new creed. Keep we to the broad truths before us; duty here; knowledge comes alone in the Hereafter. (2:263)

Though tragically too late, Harold has finally acquired Bulwer’s own informed vision of Hilda’s house, has unraveled the riddle of its palimpsest that Bulwer and the reader studied together in the novel’s first chapter. He has at last become the man of his age that Bulwer’s Carlylean historical schema depends on, and despite Harold’s belatedness, Bulwer still “stands” in awe of

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<sup>12</sup> His sources for *Harold*—like the popular *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1841) by Sharon Turner—were much less forthcoming about so clear-cut an opposition between styles of masculinity or kingly authority, and if anything, were apt to shrug shoulders over the abilities and characteristics of both men, Harold and William. The popular story of William’s deception of Harold, that he is tricked into swearing allegiance over a hidden reliquary of sainted bones, Turner more or less dismisses, deciding that “if this be true, these two great warriors were, at least in their religion, men of petty minds” (58). Turner is also very dubious about Harold’s virtuousness and popularity, traits which Bulwer never seems to doubt throughout his novel.

<sup>13</sup> G. A. Henty elevates the struggle to a level far above mere nations and patriotism in his *Wulf the Saxon* (1895): “Although the immediate results of the Battle of Hastings may have been of less importance to the world than were those of some other great battles, the struggle has, in the long run, had a greater influence upon the destiny of mankind than any other similar event that has ever taken place” (5).

Harold's chosen ground, acknowledging his fitness to command in what is perhaps the most basic pairing of landscape with masculinity: "It is impossible to stand on that spot, without recognizing the military skill with which the Saxon had taken his post, and formed his precautions" (2:269). Harold's post has been chosen with an eye towards neutralizing William's strengths and "compelling the foe to march, and to charge, up hill" (2:270).

The final chapters of *Harold* show Harold and his brothers scoping both the land and the situation of the two armies upon them. On the day of battle, however, neither the ground nor the formation of the army can be retained, and the Saxons fall because (against the will of the king-reader Harold) they impetuously abandon their good ground. Bulwer understands this defeat, elegiacally, as the necessary death of an original, true strain of Englishness and maleness. The defeat thus becomes a moral, spiritual and spatial consecration: the dying army fades into the space of the hill, sanctifying it. In one last pivot to Bulwer's own time and place, he notes the presence of Battle Abbey's altar-stone on the spot where Harold fell, the novel's final consecration of the ground of Saxon heroism and valor.

Bulwer anticipates this mammoth battle, this death of perfect and virtuous British manhood in *The Last of the Barons*, written five years before *Harold*. The youthful protagonist's first tour of Warwick House, grim and stately residence of the novel's historical hero, includes a sort of scenic interior space that pays tribute to this final death knell of Saxon glory: a chamber "painted in the style of Henry III, with huge figures representing the battle of Hastings, or rather, for there were many separate pieces, the conquest of Saxon England" (112). Like nearly all of Bulwer's own huge figured scenes from history, this heroic tableau comes with captions: "Over each head, to enlighten the ignorant, the artist had taken the precaution to insert a label, which told the name and the subject" (112). Bulwer arranges, and captions, his spaces similarly in his novels, the

better to fit each scene and space into his confident, Providentially-guided historical scheme. As his manly heroes try to decipher the significance of these spaces, as his villains try to manipulate or distort them—like *Last Day*'s evil Egyptian Arbaces, a great trickster with space who ends up misreading the activities of Vesuvius—Bulwer spells out space and history hand-in-hand, for and with the reader. The space for ambiguity is an ever-shrinking space—the region of superstition and ignorance, all but diminished by Bulwer's own historical period like the “untravell'd world whose margin fades / For ever and ever when I move” of Tennyson's “Ulysses” (19-20).

Archaeology, scholarship, and the Victorian perspective have reduced this space to a shadow margin, “on the outskirts of the forest, dusk and shapeless,” and what had been a major space for Scott becomes in Bulwer a “Border-land between the Visible and the Unseen, which will find its priest and its votaries, till the full and crowning splendour of Heaven shall melt every shadow from the world!” (*Harold* 2:264).

### **Comparison and Legacy: Masculine Space and Readers in Stevenson and Whistler**

British and American historical novelists enthusiastically explore the connections between space and masculinities throughout the century, though their manifestations in the text are most frequently of the reader-text sort found in Scott, where reading the text of space becomes a performative test for males. The man who can be relied upon to read and navigate space correctly—forest, ocean, or city space—can also be relied upon to make sound moral, logistical and political judgments. So Natty Bumppo becomes a leader and hero, not just a scout in the *Leatherstocking Tales*. Or, to use a British example, once it has been established that Robert the boatman in G. P. R. James' *Ticonderoga* (1854) is an uncanny reader of the Indian trails, he's considered fit to advise on other matters of the plot, and sits in the middle of the forest “for a moment in silence, with the air of a Judge pondering over the merits of the case just pleaded before him,” declaring his decision with utter authority (“I'll tell you how it is, my Lord”) (58).

The example is obscure, but examples are legion, and indeed it's hard to find historical novels of this period that do not feature some male character demonstrating his natural talents, finely tuned skills, powers of decision, quick judgment, or moral purity through engagements with uncertain space.

Bulwer's occasional methods of using space to image maleness and masculine styles or conflicts, and of showing the noble male character to be instinctively in touch with spaces, are both taken up in different degrees by later Victorian historical novelists. For a remarkable example of the former, we need look no further than *Treasure Island*, that great paragon of the historically-themed boy's book genre and blueprint for numerous Newbery Prize winners.

As I mentioned above, Stevenson's famous novel is akin to Bulwer's historical fiction immediately by the far-casting survey it makes of different masculine styles. After Jim Hawkins loses his own shadowy and insubstantial father at the novel's beginning, a number of loud, insistent male types come beneath his gaze, from the blustery, blue-blooded Squire Trelawney, to the Whiggish, common-sensical professional man Doctor Livesey, to the grim, puritanical man-of-duty Captain Smollett. The problem is (as any juvenile reader of the novel will tell you) that John Silver the pirate combines all of the best qualities of these potential father figures in a much more agreeable, exciting package. Having learned of his treachery just before reaching *Treasure Island*, Jim seems to see John Silver's disturbing preeminence among men reflected in the nightmarish landscape of the island:

The hills ran up clear above the vegetation in spires of naked rock. All were strangely shaped, and the Spy-glass, which was by three or four hundred feet the tallest on the island, was likewise the strangest in configuration, running up sheer from almost every side, and then suddenly cut off at the top like a pedestal to put a statue on. (69)

Jim grasps viscerally that Spy-glass Hill—already nominally connected with John Silver, whose inn had been called the Spy-glass—is much taller than the “competing” hills but is also the

“strangest in configuration”; its space bizarrely echoes John Silver’s physical handicap (“suddenly cut off”) and the heroic place Jim had awarded him in his thoughts (the empty pedestal). This disturbingly reflective space—in a novel literally written to fill a space, to accompany a map—immediately changes Jim’s mind about his adventure: “from that first look onward, I hated the very thought of Treasure Island” (69). But it is only by grappling with the island’s churning, primordial space that Jim will become a man.

Bulwer’s joining of the noble male leader and instinctual spatial knowledge gets adapted more rarely by later novelists than some of his other ideas, but we can still find it in novelistic adaptations of legends like *Havelok the Dane* (1900) by C. W. Whistler. The titular protagonist, a larger-than-life rural hero who does not know he is the rightful king of a minor Danish kingdom, predicts his future kingship of Lincoln by dreaming about land: about owning it, gathering it to himself, and even eating it. Havelok’s dreams might be nothing but a safe acknowledgment of his ambition if they did not accurately predict the layout of Lincoln township:

And ever as we drew nearer Havelok became more silent, as I thought because he had never seen so great a town before, until we passed the gates of the stockade that keeps the town that lies without the old walls, and then he said, looking round him strangely, "Brother, you will laugh at me, no doubt, for an arrant dreamer, but this is the place whereto in dreams I have been many a time. Now we shall come to yon turn of the road among the houses, and beyond that we shall surely see a stone-arched gate in a great wall, and spearmen on guard thereat."

It was so, and the gate and guard were before us in a few more steps. (68)

Whistler’s Havelok thus dreams his way into owning and ruling a space, one of many naturally aristocratic qualities that proclaim him fit to rule to his followers and enemies alike. That Whistler adapts the characteristic from his verse romance source material suggests that Bulwer, who modeled such spatial “gifts” with his noble characters, employed more romantic methods than critics commonly acknowledge.

### **“New Regions”: Bulwer’s Dream Lands and the Space of Fantasy**

For all Bulwer’s commitment to a new certainty to go along with his new seriousness, for all his pretensions to founding his novels on the secure, if “less enclosed” ground of historical fact, the fact remains that the shadow margin does still exist in his novels; he still validates the spaces of un-knowledge and their “priests and votaries.” If, as I have argued, historical novel space often equates with types of knowledge, it’s easy to see in Bulwer’s “captioned” or diagramed historical sites a correlation between the actual place and the accepted fact, and between the probable or typical space and the theoretical fact (or speculation). But Bulwer’s locating historical fact or probability does not eradicate the purely fictional space from his novels; it only makes them more obviously, prominently fictional. Therefore, the most purely imaginative space in Bulwer becomes the dream region, a space Bulwer characterizes as hellish or inferno-esque, an underground and almost capriciously transformable nether-space. We can also see, in the peculiarly calculated House of Hilda I’ve already described, a theoretical space that is also the domain of non-Christian religious creeds and practices, and thus a space where fantastic dreams and fantastic realities can safely take place. Since the dream sequences of *Last Days* and *Harold* end up being prophetic, and Hilda’s own prophecies are borne out more than a dozen times, these shadowy spaces are not just spaces of superstition but of knowledge: a supernatural and future knowledge, oddly validated by an author usually cautious or contemptuous about such pretensions to truth. In the prolonged dream sequences that take place in *Last Days* and in *Harold*, which seem to occur in foul, subterranean regions, and in the metaphysically contested space of Hilda’s House, we see space equating with a particularly sinister kind of supernatural cosmology—a diabolical schema to counter the novel’s central thrust towards recognizing a providentially-guided progress. As one critic notes, Bulwer’s “acceptance of the teleological view of history] includes a recognition of the horrifying extent

and reality of evil in the world” (Christensen 113). Thus comes his late pronouncement in *Harold* that only Christ’s return will “melt every shadow from the world”: the shadowy spaces that remain are real and significant, though they are metaphysical, not geographical.

Bulwer is not so ready to flirt with the unknown as Scott was; he accordingly labels these spaces “known” but dangerous, immoral, or (sometimes overtly) satanic. Dream spaces seem designed to complement the novels’ precognitive visionaries, the soothsayers who still have their place in Bulwer’s version of the past but who, unlike their counterparts in Scott, are shown actively to be working against the true moral and godly course of events. Like First Samuel’s Witch of Endor or *Macbeth*’s Witches, Bulwer’s clairvoyants are likely to be tempters and deceivers, dealing in half-truths, winning characters over with honest trifles to betray them in matters of deepest consequence. Such matters are often historically important, meaning that Bulwer seemingly contradicts his historical commitment by locating historical events within wholly fictional and unrealistic spaces.

Bulwer’s creation of this recognizably fantastic space in his otherwise scholarly historical reconstructions show the genre’s first major step “off the map” of history. The novels’ dreamscapes are also truth-spaces, for all their mythological qualities: they are regions accorded great power by Bulwer, where accurate prophecies are pronounced and fantastic actions have historical consequences. His historical novels prepare us, therefore, for certain kinds of twentieth-century romantic fantasy novel rather than the modern social novel, the trajectory most often traced by criticism.

Bulwer’s first visitor to an extensive dream region is Arbaces, Egyptian priest and villain of *The Last Days of Pompeii*, who imagines himself called to account before a giantess representing nature on Pompeii’s last night (in Book Five, Chapter One). As though to take a

curse off his dream space, Bulwer announces that Arbaces' strange dreams "were colored by the peculiar philosophy he embraced," thus signaling that in this region alone Christian providence and purpose might not hold sway (473). There follows a description of an underground space that has no precedent in Scott or Ainsworth unless it be to the cavernous space of the White Lady in *The Monastery*: "a mighty cavern supported by enormous columns of rough and primeval rock," with shadow spaces that "stretched away into galleries" and are dimly lit by "erratic fires" (473). The White Lady's cave had been located within *The Monastery*'s unholy ground, its fantastic precinct, Corrie-nan-shian; Bulwer's similar space has been located even more distinctly and emphatically away from the "real."

The visible interior space of the cave is taken up by what appear to be flowing spirits or souls and the machinery of a massive loom, with "huge wheels, that whirled round and round unceasingly"; from this infernal machine the giantess, Fate-like, apparently weaves life and reality (473-474). From the material of unborn and dead souls she works with, Arbaces distinguishes the erratic lights, which the giantess identifies as "the glimmerings of such knowledge as is vouchsafed to Nature to work her way, to trace enough of the past and future to give providence to her designs" (475). Here in this dream region, Arbaces is compelled ("his feet, by some secret agency, were impelled towards the female") to consider truths and realities that his own scientific methods of acquiring knowledge cannot gain (the giantess calls him a "dark fool of the sciences!") (474, 475). This prophetic being, who rouses allegorical spirits to foretell Arbaces' doom, is not a vision of the divine but rather "the Incarnation of the sublime" (474). The sublime, that undecidable, indeterminate category that Scott's scenery slipped into unexpectedly, here possesses "her" own distinct region, a hellish and mythological space that transforms ("the scene suddenly changed" ) into a death space, "a place of human bones" (476).

Arbaces' dream is confirmed by the unfolding of the plot; it is prophetic in this way, then, but also in its implication that Vesuvius will erupt, a prophecy that the landscape has already proclaimed. Harold Godwinson's dream in *Harold*, however, is also bound up in the clairvoyant Hilda's interpretations of it, and as such takes part in Bulwer's positioning of alternate supernatural knowledge against Christian providence. Harold begins the recital—and spatial description—of his dream only after Hilda has declared his visions to be “oracles, more true than living” (1:148).

Harold's dream is of falling into a “fathom-deep” pit, into gatherings of bones, like the climax of Arbaces' dream. In this underground region, Harold does battle with sentient bones and skeletons while one skull grows into a colossal armed figure, “like War, made incarnate,” and the scenery around their battleground goes through plague-like transformations, the earth changing to an ocean of blood (1:149). Harold relates how his dream space shifts once more to a vision like the Norse Valhalla before he stops his recital, and Hilda proclaims the dream indecipherable at first, although she confidently tells him, “In thy dream lies thy future” (1:151). Later in Book Six, Hilda's fuller interpretation of the dream stokes Harold's kingly ambitions: the battle with the bones means Harold will overcome past lines of kings and found a new royal line, while the visit to heroic Valhalla represents his own coronation.

In this subterranean region with its mixture of Hebrew and Norse mythological features, Harold Godwinson is tempted, Macbeth-like, to make the most of his ability and opportunity and vie for the crown, a decision he expresses in spatial terms: “I look round in England for the coming king, and all England reflects but my own image” (1:255-256). Although Bulwer is fully prepared elsewhere in the novel to declare the fitness of Harold's kingship, calling him at one point “the Man of the Land and the Time,” his initial ambition and the uncharacteristic

evasiveness and calculation that follow from it are both attributed to this dream and to Hilda's interpretation. Harold's kingship may be historically determined, but his decline and tragedy are both supernaturally determined, according to Bulwer.

This idea becomes plainer when we consider that Harold's dream has followed a waking vision, glimpsed in the uncertain light and landscape near Hilda's palimpsestic house. Harold sees a huge, sorrowful warrior indistinctly near "the bloody altar of the Warrior god," a figure who appears suddenly and then fades into the "grey columns and dim fane" (1:134). The figure's proximity to the tomb of an old pagan soldier persuades Hilda to conjure a demon (successfully!) to answer Harold's most pressing questions about William of Normandy—questions which are, after the manner of Scott's *White Lady* and Shakespeare's witches, answered cagily and in rhyme. The demon seems to augur favorable results to Harold's cause if he travels to Normandy, but in fact, it is during this trip that Harold is tricked into swearing allegiance to William, providing the latter with the pretense to invade England.

Bulwer has written—almost wearily—of the "the dark superstition that still consulted the deities of the North by runes on the elm bark and adjurations of the dead" (1:xvi), yet the character that embodies such superstitions in *Harold* has her powers validated, and in such a way that it leads to the novel's historical crux. Harold's final denouncement of Hilda's magic for the "new creed" of Christianity does not make her magic any less effective: like the Witch of Endor who conjures up the spirit of Samuel prior to Saul's destruction, Hilda's conjuring of demons and precognition are permitted by sovereign acts of God, as tools to lead Harold and England to their destiny. Bulwer assures the reader at the beginning of *Harold* that only in matters of private life has he engaged his poetic license, yet the single most important decision Harold Godwinson makes in the novel takes place in this historically theoretical space, which is also a supernaturally

charged space of superstition and a link to the dream space of metaphysical truth. By granting such power to Hilda—and to the magical space of her strange abode<sup>14</sup>—Bulwer makes clear that his novels are interested in moral truth as much as historical fact, and that even conjured demons can find their way into serious historical fiction, provided their doings fit correctly into the hierarchy of knowledge—both moral/religious and historical knowledge, the natural fact and the supernatural revelation.

The truthful or serious does not mean the journalistic nor the realistic historical novel in Bulwer's view; history need not be composed of such prosaic stuff. His use of supernatural materials alongside strictly factual, even didactic narratives carries over into juvenile and religious historical fiction. More broadly, it contributes to the general notion that historical truths can be conveyed to the young without be strictly accurate or even historical.

When the format, formulae and techniques of the historical novel are detached from actual history and from actual spaces and places, the result is a certain prevalent type of fantasy novel: those chronicles of other worlds and Medieval-styled kingdoms which begin with Haggard and George Macdonald and continue into the twentieth century with C. S. Lewis and Tolkien. Such a trajectory is not, of course, that which is described by typical historical novel surveys and criticism, but it is that which sustained the most popular momentum throughout the Victorian century.

When authors like Bulwer decided that the history meted out within a historical novel should not be desultory, but decidedly moral and didactic; when they decided that their productions should be (in Bulwer's phrase) "entrusted fearlessly to the young" (*Harold* 1:vii);

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<sup>14</sup> Bulwer makes it clear in many ways that the House of Hilda is in fact a privileged place, a spot where uncertain magical powers are allowed full sway. Both Harold and Edith the Fair see mystical visions arising from the Druid stones in this setting, and Hilda herself meets a mysterious and nameless witch in this same spot who forecasts Hilda's own doom.

when the truths conveyed by such novels need not depend on the realism of the depiction, so that magical and marvelous characters could hold their heads up boldly—then the stage was set for the historical novel to cater more and more to children, to depict religious conflicts and metaphysical subjects, and finally to intermix with pure fantasy. As with the uncertain, shifting and transmutable spaces of the historical novel I’ve characterized in this study, such a direction should not seem counter-intuitive. Indeed, the same spaces Franco Moretti decides are indigenous to the historical novel—forests, mountains, natural borders—are exactly the domains of J. R. R. Tolkien’s Ring trilogy: *Waverley* Novels in their pacing, their journey motifs, their smatterings of dialect speech and snatches of balladry, their dependence on lore and legend—in all except their attachment to real peoples and places.

Bulwer anticipates this tide, both in his inclusion of major characters like Hilda in *Harold* and the sorcerer Almamen in *Leila*, and in the fantastic elements of his metaphysical and occult novels (like *Pilgrims of the Rhine* [1834] and *Zanoni* [1842]). In Edward Eigner’s account of the “impurities” that, by Bulwer’s time, most fiction “was struggling to refine away,” but which lived on in the metaphysical genre, it’s easy to see features of the historical novel palimpsest: “dramatically gratuitous characters, authorial intrusions, episodes, inset stories, digressions, multiple narrators,” “mixed genres” and “generic contrast” (3-4). Realist fiction gradually rooted out these bits of extraneous matter, Eigner argues, “on a course leading to the pristine unity of *The Ambassadors*” (3). Bulwer’s metaphysically-themed historical novels, with their shadow realms and focus on “invisible conflicts” (Christensen xiii), work harder than most mid-nineteenth century historical novels to keep this generic mixture in use, and so to preserve the paradigm for the fantasy novel.

Perhaps the most approachable way to see the continuity between the historical novel and fantasy novels for children or adults—which is, after all, another great paradox of the genre, since fact-fiction seemingly leads to fictional worlds entirely “made up”—is to look at the land. The move of historical novel techniques “off the map” of history and the world usually involves a new mapping: the setting down of a new physical space with which to plot the story’s journey, whether that space is the chessboard that appears at the beginning of *Through the Looking-Glass* or the detailed rendering of Middle Earth that appears at the beginning of *The Hobbit*. The implication is clear: however much the subjects of some celebrated historical novels point us to modern reality, the methods of the historical novels, particularly their methods of handling space, point us to romance and fantasy, to the marvelous, unrealistic and unknowable.

The dramatic shift from real space to “new space,” like the change from documented fact to fantastic absurdity, occurs within the narrow confines of Bulwer’s relatively short essay into historical fiction; what makes it particularly dramatic in Bulwer (if not obnoxious) is his need to assign the fantastic elements their own permitted spaces. Like Scott’s so problematic spatial allotment in *The Monastery*, history joins fiction, historical space adjoins fantasy space visibly in Bulwer—you can see the seams, can appreciate how the new in-the-style-of matches the old original (or at least, you are meant to appreciate it) in his theoretical reconstructions, and can admire the rhapsodic departures from history that take place in his dream visions. But as I’ve noted above, Bulwer’s foregrounding of the joining of fiction and non-fictional narratives and his fussing over “legitimate domain”—basically the area where the novelist may safely invent—have the effect of diminishing his historical fictions as fictions. Historical fiction, as I have argued, depends upon sleight-of-hand. Conscientiously pointing out the “real” parts of the historical novel cannot fail to make the improvised parts, and the novel as a whole, seem

noticeably unreal and less important. Bulwer's pedantry and slavishness to sources is usually the cited reason for his work's stiltedness, but (I would argue) the effect has more to do with the way he self-consciously pits one "domain" against the other. Spatially, this means his spaces do not shift and overlap, do not make use of ambiguity nearly as much as Scott and most of his contemporaries.

Bulwer's criticism of Scott, not for lack of accuracy so much as lack of "invention," may mean nothing more than his noting Scott's reluctance to reconstruct fictions in "strict" accordance with the record and to parse out the fictional and the historical into identifiable spaces. Even in a body of work so dominated by intrusive narrators as the early historical novel, this narratorial posturing offends, contributing to those "self-conscious mannerisms" that Christensen reckons "have probably been chiefly responsible for Bulwer's declining reputation" (x-xi). Where Scott had always been cagey about sources and even narrators, where his real sites and events had been diluted by conflation, conjecture, and fabrication, the history blending unevenly and unexpectedly with the fiction, Bulwer (frankly, openly) distinguishes the real from the fake, making the real seem bookish and pedantic, the fake ever more fake. No mystification remains; if Scott was the Wizard of the North, Bulwer seems the much less awesome Pedagogue, perhaps Custodian, of the South.

But Bulwer's failings only make the genre's collective strengths more evident. Readers who balk at Bulwer's inclusion of conjured demons in the space of historical fiction have forgotten Scott's ghostly apparition of Old Alice in *The Bride of Lammermoor* or his haunted Chamber of the Red Finger in *The Betrothed*. Not Bulwer's method but his manner intrudes here, veering his historical novels away from the genre's nineteenth-century ethos of making history seem not verifiable, classifiable, distinct, but uncertain, ambiguous, indistinct. His use of space

thus complements the new self-conscious “seriousness” he brings to the genre: he is serious enough about his “histories” to keep the utterly fantastic narratives in subterranean or even cerebral spaces all their own.

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

The novel is a vast field of experiment, open to all the forms of genius. It is the future epic, the only one, probably, that modern manners will hereafter justify. Let us not bind it too tightly; let us not lay down its theory too rigidly; let us not organize it.  
--Sainte-Beuve

This study's move towards the different "reorientations" I indicated in my introduction has been to a large degree an attempt to rehabilitate the historical novel, both by opening up the genre's definitions, boundaries and practices, and by repositioning its *oeuvres* against assumptions and techniques governing the mainstream novel. Instead of recognizing as historical fiction only novels that focus on particular (recent or regional, "authentic") chronotopes, employ a specific understanding of history, or operate only in realistic modes of writing, I broadly recommend that criticism adapt criterion to the body of work by finding features and traits that connect the genre's many variations, rather than relegate most of its representatives to obscurity. One specific, significant and revelatory connection, I have argued, is in the fluid, metaphorical, and rhetorical representations of space found across the genre during the nineteenth century.

Studying space is a way (or at least a "way in") towards correcting long-standing critical under-estimations of the historical novel's representational complexity. Drawing not on its new influences but upon the old, the historical novel's poetic space allows the novelist's convictions about history, narrative and the meaning of reality to gush over into the landscape, providing a conduit for cosmological assessments outside of the "historical." Space might therefore be mysteriously sublime and threatening in Scott, vacillating between chaos and artificiality in Ainsworth, or teleologically ordered and determined in Bulwer. Its fluidity and flexibility thus enables extra-historical narratives to function within the form, whether supporting or resisting the narrator's "official" interpretation.

If the genre's uncertain space did nothing else, it would show the form to be more complicated and rich than has been supposed. But as I have argued, historical novel space is multi-function as well as multi-form. Space's tendency to shift from realistic to artificial or dramatic allows the novelist to "heighten the composition" of scenes, making them more rhetorical or moody as needs must, but it also emphasizes the larger cultural or spiritual questions under scrutiny by reducing the physical environment to prop scenery—like backdrops in a morality play. Of particular importance, space's imaging and measuring of its masculine protagonists, common in the genre from Scott onwards, allows another dimension of characterization to play out in a form commonly criticized for its deficient psychology and characterization "from the outside" only; further, it extends characterization in a particularly resonant and romantic way, tapping into a hero-landscape connection at least as old as Arthurian legend. This focus on making and measuring manliness gives the genre another level of didacticism apart from its ability to revivify schoolbook history, thus making it ideal for juvenile consumption. These various functions of space link the genre's ethos and methodology across its spectrum, relating canonical, romantic, religious and juvenile historical novels in ways that other classifiers (like historical vision or the level of historical research) have failed to do.

The main reason space is such an important means for understanding the whole genre lies in its use as an epistemological index. As I have argued throughout this study, historical novel space reflects, images, opposes, and interrogates knowledge, methods of knowing and (by mixing genres) representations of knowing. The assumptions about knowing that its poetic uses challenge or sometimes undermine are the same assumptions that have caused the historical novel to be parsed into worthy/unworthy piles, and diminished and marginalized in the critical history of the novel. Simply put, traditional surveys of the historical novel have tended either to

follow a trend of lost confidence in historical knowledge throughout the nineteenth century or to describe the development of particular understandings of the historical process. It is not so much that the neglected “historical romance,” religious, or juvenile historical novels of the era did not understand the past as past, but that they continued to embrace boldly and confidently progressive and providential visions of the past (like Bulwer’s) that have been misunderstood by critics, thus contributing to the genre’s ever-shrinking canonical representation and reputation.

For instance, Avrom Fleishman’s *The English Historical Novel* describes an increased muddying of what constitutes historical knowledge in the genre, moving from Scott through Dickens’ two versions of revolution (*Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*) to what Fleishman calls “anti-historical novels” like Thackeray’s *Henry Esmond*, and so on to experimental historical fiction which “avoid history” while still resonating with historical themes: Hardy’s *The Trumpet-Major*, Conrad’s *Nostramo*, and Woolf’s *Orlando* among others. For all its valuable insights, Fleishman’s survey has little to do with the historical novel genre proper and instead traces a decline in Victorian confidence, or a passage from Enlightenment-Romantic to Modern conceptions of what history is and “does.” It helps explain how the genre contributed (negatively) to modernist literature’s developing themes of nihilism, relativism and fragmented human identity; it does not characterize what the historical novel did “under its own steam.” On the other hand, Georg Lukacs’ seemingly erratic path through the genre (Scott, Manzoni, Pushkin, Balzac, Tolstoy, Thackeray, Erckmann-Chatrion, Rolland, Ferdinand Meyer, and Feuchtwanger) does not trace a loss of confidence, but the development of a particular understanding of historical process. As such his path is not so erratic, but it is extremely selective. Contrary to Fleishman, Lukacs overtly resists those historical fictions that suggest history is “unknowable,” which do not so much get the historical process wrong as fail to

acknowledge history altogether (223-225). It is less aesthetic variation but differences in historical vision that determine Lukacs' selection and focus. Even his claim to examine "overall and typical forms of the historical novel" evinces a particular epistemological and cosmological set of assumptions; he therefore avoids "representatives of extreme decadence"—that is, novels in which the "disintegration of realism" is most evident (251).

These two traditional takes on the genre have one broad characteristic in common: each selects representative novels for scrutiny based on their conformity to contemporary standards of "realism." Such selectivity has a prohibitive and distorting effect, implying that the historical novel is largely a failed or compromised attempt at realistic social fiction, since most of the genre's constituent authors have been omitted from the surveys and many of its essential characteristics are discounted. My reassertion of figurative and paradigmatic genre spaces (along with Judith Wilt's unifying comparison of Scottish and Chivalry Waverley Novels and Fiona Robertson's study of Gothic elements in Scott) thus participates in a growing effort to correct this trend, reclaiming the historical novel's stylized form and "epic" ethos.<sup>1</sup> This ethos should stand as a counterpoint to the received tradition of realistic social fiction in literary criticism. A recognition by criticism that the historical novel did not merely provide a lessened or "decadent" version of the realist novel's world, but that it in fact sought to describe a "higher" degree of experience, would significantly alter the history of the novel. This higher or perhaps heightened ethos embraces a number of dimensions typically under-emphasized by novel critics, dimensions that are certainly poetic even when they are not overtly Romantic or "romanticist"; with or

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<sup>1</sup> Lukacs confirms the genre's "epic" ethos, of course, though in a particularly qualified way. For instance, Scott's realistic depiction of society "from the bottom" implies other social and representational levels, according to Lukacs; accurately conveying the world-maintaining thus implies and evokes the world-historical and epic. However, this qualified attestation only applies (again) to a social "bottom" that Scott could realistically describe, i.e. the regional and the recent chronotope of Britain's historical recent memory. Only part, and a relatively small part, of Scott's novels are epic, according to this criteria.

without the dreaded disqualifier, then, the historical novel sought to construct a broader kind of reality, a fuzzier kind of truth (yet from a nineteenth century perspective, a more profound one) than the epistemologically surefooted, because more modestly aimed, realistic social novel.

Reconciling the nineteenth century's high regard for the historical novel in all its varieties and literary criticism's struggle to "refine away" some its most common, unrealistic attributes means, crucially, recognizing the genre's greater capacity and inclination for metaphor, metonymy, symbol, conceit, and other poetic devices. "Why do the finest historical novels," Harry. E. Shaw wonders, "seem flawed when compared with the best standard fiction?" (30). Shaw decides that the answer lies in the relationship between the particular and the universal in fiction, arguing that the historical novelist is burdened with creating characters "who represent social groups and historical trends"; this ascent "up the scale from particularity to generality" necessarily means the historical novel must have "only partial esthetic success" in mirroring reality (30-31). The judgment is brilliant, provided we assume the historical novel is invested in solely mirroring a particular kind of empirical reality, of the same sort celebrated in realist fiction. But as the genre's representative characters—and indeed, its representative spaces—attest, its nineteenth century understanding of reality was much broader and inclusive, much more comfortable with uncertainty.

As I've argued, the exclusion of prolific and popular historical novelists like Ainsworth, Bulwer, G. P. R. James and G. A. Henty from criticism has had restrictive and distorting effects for the genre study, but it also reflects the change in attitude about the historical novel's relationship to the mainstream novel that began to take place in the mid- to late-Victorian Era. Harold Orel characterizes this shift in part in his survey of the genre, *The Historical Novel From Scott to Sabatini* (1995), especially contrasting the prevalent enthusiasm for the historical novel

during the Great War years with the apathy and even hostility that emerged in the years following. As Orel argues, the sensationalism and glamour that made the “swashbuckling historical romance” popular during World War One hardships were the very components post-war readers found objectionable, so that historical fiction in general came to be considered “escapist” and “frivolous” in the 1920s (159, 161):

Whether or not one thinks of this shift in critical taste regrettable, or the decline in sales of such fictions a poignant commentary on the loss of faith in old-fashioned literary values, the direct consequence was that for some fifteen years after the end of the Great War, not a single one of the important novelists born after 1880—those who came to dominate the market in the 1920s—thought it worthwhile to write historical romances. (162-163)

Even prior to the decline in popularity that Orel attributes to Great War disillusionment, however, the historical novel had ceased to be a form favored by serious or high-brow authors, but—like other forms of genre fiction—had become mainly a popular form. At the same time that Chesterton was slyly apologizing for popular fiction in *The Defendant* and Brander Matthews was claiming that the best historical novels are those “in which [self-conscious] history is of the least importance” (21), new editions of Scott, Bulwer, and Dumas sold in record numbers, and numerous popular novelists (Conan Doyle, John Buchan, Anthony Hope and Rafael Sabatini, to name a few) swelled the ranks with new historical novels. Just as the old novelists had provided inspiration for operatic and dramatic stages in the early nineteenth century, the new novelists’ works were enthusiastically adapted to the new popular medium of film. The “swashbuckler” was born.

I would argue that the trend Orel notes, of popular adaptation and simultaneous critical disregard, therefore connects the historical novel’s marginalization with Modern and New Critical aesthetic assumptions about high- and middle-brow categories of fiction. After all, it did not require the Great War to make readers complain of the historical novel’s “frivolous” or

“escapist” tendencies; critics had been doing so at least since G. H. Lewes offered his satirical “recipe” in 1846:

Sprinkle largely with love and heroism, keep up the mystery overhanging the hero’s birth till the last chapter; and have a good stage villain, scheming and scowling through two volumes and a half, to be utterly exposed and defeated at last—and the historical novel is complete. (qtd in Campbell 70)

Lewes’ aside takes curmudgeonly note of the “old” elements at work in the genre as opposed to the “new”—really, an argument in the same spirit as that Lukacs would make a century later. Orel’s historical situating of disenchantment with the genre makes sense as an indicator of a public mood flux following World War One, but it does not describe a decline in historical novels, written or read, so much as a solidifying of critical disregard: “not a single one of the important novelists” wrote historical novels, he claims, seemingly forgetting that the critics, not the novels’ original readers, have decided which novelists were important. Whereas Victorian critics had tried to separate the worthy and healthy historical novels from the trash, never doubting that the form was capable of great things, not a single Modern critic (Orel might have said) thought historical novelists important. This judgment, rooted in part in modernity’s loss of historical confidence and distrust of literary traditions, has unfortunately stuck.

The solution to this problem—not only of rehabilitating the genre from its trashy reputation, but also, more importantly, of reincorporating it into the history of the novel—is to resist the categorial tug-of-war implicit in the genre’s “impossible” nature, the struggle between fact and fiction, and to recognize the form as a highly-figurative amalgamation aiming at broader, more poetic and philosophical truths about reality. The Victorian’s typical solution of dividing the genre between serious novels and fluffy romances has only created confusion. The curiously persistent Modern solution of considering the form an imperfect sub-genre of realist fiction has gradually led to its exclusion from criticism and the canon. While various twentieth-

century critics have sometimes convincingly described the genre's negative influence—demonstrating, say, how George Eliot resists making Scott-like digressions to bring structural unity to *Middlemarch*—such accounts bring us not one jot nearer to understanding its positive contribution to Victorian novels or (for that matter) to explaining why George Eliot loved Scott. The sheer popularity of the form and its practitioners extends the net much farther than Britain. Not enough that we read tragic causation in Emma Bovary's taste for Scott; we must reconcile that with Flaubert's own meticulous historical romance-writing. Not enough that we take Twain at his sarcastic word *contra* Scott and Cooper; we must explain his preferring *Joan of Arc* over all his other novels. Only when we account adequately for the historical novel's formidable presence in standard nineteenth-century novels can we appreciate the nuances of realist fiction's resistance to its most familiar unrealistic or “romantic” features.

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