

Classical Reception  
in Sir Walter Scott's Scottish Novels.  
The Role of Greece and Rome  
in the Making of Historico-National Fiction



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## **Abstract**

This work explores Sir Walter Scott's engagement with the classical past as it emerges, in a selection of his so-called Scottish novels, in the form of creative responses to stories and figures from the realms of literature, myth and history of Greece and Rome.

It aims to offer a fresh look at an author that experiences a contradictory state of being nowadays. On the one hand, Scott is in fact recognised as one of the great masters of the art of fictional writing, as well as a touchstone for Scottish national identity; yet, on the other one, he seems to be widely forgotten by the general public. However, as this thesis contends, a series of circumstances in the last several years, not least the increasing public focus on, and concern for, the impact of initiatives and demands that have questioned, or renegotiated, the British Union as a political entity, makes the questions that he posits throughout his novels of significant relevance.

Building upon recent work that views the novelist against the background of the classical tradition, this study intends to uncover the destabilising role that Graeco-Roman elements play in eight of the Waverley novels, from the theoretical basis of reader response criticism.

The following five chapters discuss the relevance, and extent to which, Scott makes use of classical allusions and intertexts as a set of strategies for shaping the characters' background of thoughts and perceptions, as well as the readers' later response to their interpretation. While this approach clearly enables him to address the educated elite of his audience, and to do it in the name

of a shared intergenerational lore, it also draws, more crucially, an area of intersection between his Scottish and English readership. The resulting segment of his readers is thus invited, on both sides of the Anglo-Scottish border, to an act of self-criticism that endorses alternative interpretations, together with dissonant sentiments in, relation to the Act of Union and its outcomes.

The treatment of the topic proceeds in this thesis from extra-textual factors to the internal dimensions of plot and characterisation. After an introduction that situates the discussion within the current debate on Scott, the departure point lies, in Chapter One, within a broader engagement with the historical phenomena and cultural trends of Scott's age. Chapter Two foregrounds the incorporation of classical elements as it takes place within the idea of Scottishness the author deploys in the novels here under scrutiny. In fact, Graeco-Roman allusions and reappraisals result in the delineation of a negotiable sense of membership and national identity that unfolds in opposition to an invading power. Chapter Three covers a transitional dimension in its dealing with classical models that intervene, at paratextual level, in the self-fashioning of the anonymous narrative voice, by providing a spectrum of literary personae that stand as a surrogate for Scott himself. Finally, issues of gender and sexuality are discussed in the last two chapters, which foreground the role and impact of classical precedents in negotiating dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, self-censorship and sublimation. Significantly, examples from ancient Greece and Rome will pay a contribution in shedding light on the ways in which both the discourse and knowledge about sexual attitudes and practices were articulated in the early nineteenth-century.

Rather than confirming the long-standing notion of Scott as the mouthpiece of pan-British propaganda –a view that has relegated him, for too long, into the comfort-zone of political acquiescence– this work contends that the author’s commitment to the classical past becomes the site for subtly channelling, across his narratives, a counter-discourse of imperial rhetoric, well beyond the celebratory framework of a shared progress.

“Quand tu regarderas le ciel, la nuit, puisque j’habiterai dans l’une d’elles, puisque je rirai dans l’une d’elles, alors ce sera pour toi comme si riaient toutes les étoiles. Tu auras, toi, des étoiles qui savent rire! Et quand tu seras consolé (on se console toujours) tu seras content de m’avoir connu. Tu seras toujours mon ami. Tu auras envie de rire avec moi. Et tu ouvriras parfois ta fenêtre, comme ça, pour le plaisir... Et tes amis seront bien étonnés de te voir rire en regardant le ciel”.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry,  
*Le Petit Prince*

*To Carla, Vilfiderio and Teresina,  
who have become my laughing stars*

*A Carla, Vilfiderio e Teresina,  
per essere diventati le mie stelle che ridono*

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## **Note on editions and translations**

All references to Scott's novels throughout this work are based on the Edinburgh Edition, unless otherwise indicated in the footnotes. Quotations from Latin and Greek texts follow the most recent OCT editions, unless otherwise specified; translations are based on the most recent Loeb Classical Library, with some modifications.

## Introduction

### **Why read Scott differently today**

*This opening section provides an overview of the main objects of the thesis as a whole while raising its guiding questions, together with the related arguments and topics that shall emerge in the course of each chapter. It reviews the current state of criticism on Scott, with particular emphasis on recent contributions that deal with classical presences in his fictional output. The theoretical premises that underpin this study shall be explained, along with a discussion of the limits and risks that are implied by a work of this nature.*

The present study engages with classical reception in Sir Walter Scott, whereof lies a largely unrecognised potential to improve our understanding of a likewise widely disregarded author –at least in the preferences of the general public. By examining a number of tropes, motifs and allusions to the Graeco-Roman tradition, as they feature in a selection of eight of the Waverley novels, it aims to address the question why Scott receives virtually no attention today, with the exception of sporadic and isolated contributions at academic level.

Focusing on the role that classical presences play in a segment of his fiction, this work foregrounds Scott not only as one of the most –not to say *the* most– read novelists of the long nineteenth century, but also as the very author who introduced Scotland to the literary audience of Britain and Europe. These two circumstances are considered, throughout the thesis as a whole, as closely related to each other.

Thus, classical reception shall be used as both a lens, and a catalyst to further our knowledge of historical fiction in its treatment of ancient models and genres, in a work that is aimed to offer a fertile avenue for research, as well as a

new route of access, to an author whose continuing relevance in the agenda of mainstream literature, as we contend here, needs to be reaffirmed, in particular in the present day.

Inevitably, the point of entry into an exploration of this sort lies within the anomaly that Scott currently embodies in the literary landscape, and which we can perhaps put like this: he was as famous a writer in his own time, as he is incidentally neglected in the present day, or at least barely mentioned in passing amongst the fathers of the historical novel. The marginal place that Scott seems to occupy in twenty-first century culture is inextricably bound up with the well-known, and somewhat reassuring image of him as the literary bastion of the British Empire. This view stemmed from the dominant scholarly interpretation that, since the second half of the twentieth century, has metaphorically situated his fictional output among the long-term effects of the Act of Union.

By envisaging his prolific fiction as the result of an effort to engineer a peaceful settlement between England and Scotland on the literary page, criticism has conventionally viewed Scott's novels as playing a central role in supporting the imperialist ideology of the ruling Anglocentric elite: as Kelly describes it, "a major vehicle for imagining and promoting a coalition of gentry and professionals to dominate Britain and its Empire".<sup>1</sup> Thus, it was in the name of such a concertation of interests, which the author allegedly pursued throughout his prose writing, that his fiction was prominently viewed as pandering to an imperial audience for generations to come. The special, not to say canonical, place held by novels such as *Waverley* (1814) and *Ivanhoe* (1819) among the

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<sup>1</sup> KELLY (2010: 198)

classics of children's literature, as a result of their success and popularity among generations of young readers, has been another key factor in fuelling the idea of Scott as the standard bearer for the model British subject. Such a being would thus have found the perfect recipe for social order and stability, in novels purposely designed to educate the male ruling class towards the mission, or challenge, of managing a world empire.

In the light of all this, it is no coincidence that Scott's fortune and decline went hand-in-hand with the fortune and decline of the British Empire: his prestige and reputation among the pillars of British fiction faded, as Watson acutely observes, "sometime between the two world wars, when [he] ceased to be identified as important in either high or popular Anglophone culture".<sup>2</sup>

That does not mean, however, that Scott completely disappeared from the horizons of literary scholarship. In the last few decades, a number of articles and essays have focused, for example, on his relationship with the Classics, engaging scholars from a range of disciplinary backgrounds and approaches. Understandably, yet unfortunately, almost exclusive attention has been paid to *Waverley*, with the sole exception of sporadic raids into *Ivanhoe* and *The Betrothed*.<sup>3</sup> The preference granted anew to Scott's more (rare for him) famous novel, under the lens of classical allusion, has subsumed the crucial role that the epic genre allegedly plays in a narrative where heroism, warfare and the troubles of homecoming are the main themes on display.

It is my belief, that up until fairly recently, the appeal of such a perspective lay solely in its capacity to bring into relief the *Aeneid* as the subtext underlying a

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<sup>2</sup> WATSON (2012: 143)

<sup>3</sup> See, for *Ivanhoe*, RALEIGH, 1983 and JENKYNs, 2006. For *The Betrothed* see CARMONA-CENTENO, 2012.

narration that displayed, not without a certain urgency, traumatic key events such as civil war and imperial foundation.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Virgil has ended up acquiring a privileged position amongst the epic sources for Scott –a special status that was also conferred on the grounds that Latin was much more accessible to Scott, the use of which language Scott, as many before and after him, was reputed to have mastered far better than the Greek. On these assumptions, existing criticism on the role played by classical models in *Waverley* has set forth a perspective where the *Aeneid's* teleological orientation is envisaged within the theoretical framework of the so-called rise of the historical novel, which was notoriously made famous by Georg Lukács in his seminal work.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the Virgilian poem has been foregrounded as performing a genre-shaping function in the invention of a literary subgenre, where fictional plot unfolds against the background of well-known historical events –that is to say, the historical novel as the organically updated version of ancient *epos* for a modern and bourgeois audience.

The first scholar into the fray to undertake a study of the role played by the *Aeneid* as a paradigm for the textual dynamics embedded in *Waverley*, was – most courageously, not least because she followed Lukács' interpretation– Dorothy Magette. Her doctoral work, entitled *Virgilian Epic and the Novel: Scott, Balzac and Dickens* (1982), positions itself from the very beginning as a reaction against the imposition of Marxist methods and interpretive patterns in literary criticism, and especially in Scott. While raising in her introduction the issues of the limits and shortcomings of Lukács' approach –first and foremost,

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<sup>4</sup> The notion of subtext is borrowed, throughout this work as a whole, from RIFFATERRE, 1982.

<sup>5</sup> LUKÁCS (1937, English transl. 1962)

the rigid schematism that would reduce *Waverley* to a series of imitative textual enactments, the scholar presents her work as containing the first analysis of *Waverley* as “a significant creative adaptation of traditional epic”.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, such declarations of intent do not seem to be accompanied, throughout her treatment, by a real effort to go beyond the acknowledgement that “like Virgil, [Scott] celebrates the heroic potential of the individual capable of growth and of consequent restoration of his society”.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, an observation such as the following one, amongst the many others that Magette draws in her conclusions, namely that “like Homer and Virgil, Scott articulates a national consciousness” seems to suffer from the same determinism that the scholar wants to challenge.<sup>8</sup> The excerpts above act as the demonstration that, despite her reiterated rejection of any organic ideological framework, the scholar ends up, at least in my view, trapped in the very same Lukácsian net from which she intended to escape.

A few years later, Bruce Stovel addresses the topic in his article on “*Waverley* and the *Aeneid*: Scott’s Art of Allusion” (1985). Drawing on the notion of intertextuality as a reversal of Marxist dialectic, the scholar proposes here a reading of *Waverley* in its textual engagements with Virgil, by offering an interpretation that goes beyond the usual acknowledgement of the novel’s epic breadth –generally underscored in key themes such as exile, identity and restoration.

More than a decade later, Chris Ann Matteo engages with the subject anew in her doctoral work, entitled *Muses and Mentors. The Chronotope and the Classical Tradition in the British Epic Novel. Readings in Henry Fielding*,

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<sup>6</sup> MAGETTE (1982: 12)

<sup>7</sup> MAGETTE (1982: 73)

<sup>8</sup> MAGETTE (1982: 124)

*Walter Scott and George Eliot* (2000). This further contribution to the debate offers an innovative approach for the time, in which the Bakhtinian notion of chronotope is combined to, and implemented with, the more recent insights of reader-response criticism. Against such a methodological background, which the scholar proposes as a “better model for understanding his place *in* and perspective *on* literary history as well”, *Waverley* is examined in its responses to classical models not as “a mere reflex of literary convention”, but as providing instead “a primary palette for character[isation]”.<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding the variety of directions from which the aforementioned scholars approach the topic, with their consequent divergences of outcomes, there is at least one piece of pivotal, factual evidence on which they all seem to agree: Classics do not play a superficial role in Scott’s narrative, as mere decorative ingredients, but perform, on the contrary, an active and shaping function, whose outcomes are dense with supplementary meanings for his contemporary audience. The challenge is, simply, to do it, and, possibly, to do it by looking beyond epic and beyond *Waverley*.

Since the early 1990s, Scott has received significant –though desultory– attention under a gender-focussed lens. Contributions by scholars from gender and queer studies, such as Chris Ferns, Christopher Whyte, Mike Goode and Rick Incorvati have paved the way for an exploration of the modes that male characters assume in Scott so as to face or camouflage their latent homoerotic affiliations.

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<sup>9</sup> MATTEO (2000: 56, 65)

All of these readings share undoubtedly some merit since they resulted in paying attention, for the first time, to aspects of diminished or controversial virility, and not least in an author who has been conventionally perceived as the mainstay of masculine and muscular imperial power. Such an updated critical take on Scott certainly succeeded in bringing to the fore fluctuations and oscillations, especially with regard to the forms and practices of homosocial friendship –which are envisaged more or less as underpinning the relationships in many of Scott’s novels, especially as emblematised by the ‘b-romance’ that unfolds between Darsie Latimer and Alan Fairford in *Redgauntlet*. However, these assumptions do not seem to be always substantiated and contextualised within an epistemological framework appropriately informed by the existing body of knowledge on matters of gender and sexuality that was available and circulating in Scott’s age. Consequently, these new readings run at times the risk of lapsing into a naïve or indiscriminate application of present-day categories to early modern situations and modes of expressions.

What is most striking in this respect is the absence of any mention of classical elements, which indeed prove instrumental, on Scott’s page, in challenging the traditional male-female dualism –with the sole exception of a cursory observation by Incorvati, who vaguely acknowledges that “the backdrop of Greek and Roman culture may carry some hint of eroticism to a same-sex morbid attachment.<sup>10</sup> This lack of supporting evidence, which indeed jeopardises the reliability of this analysis in kind of a ‘heterogony of ends’ persuaded me, a fortiori, that the time is ripe for a critical reappraisal of Scott from the perspective

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<sup>10</sup> INCORVATI, 2004–5

of classical reception. Indeed, inasmuch as classical knowledge serves as the perfect screen for the channelling of issues of sexual identification that remain hidden, or even suppressed, on the surface of the text.

Thus, in the last two chapters of this work, classical reception is foregrounded as a further, crucial dimension in the discussion of gender-specific issues, and related taboos in Scott. This methodological assumption shall lead us to explore the Graeco-Roman models that intervene in the construction, and likewise, deconstruction, of the characters' sexual identity, and end by complicating the characters' gender and sexual membership, at least in the eyes of Scott's cultivated readers. This analysis shall provide further, or counter answers to the aforementioned contributions –at times corroborating them, at other times offering correctives or realignments that recalibrate their scope.

As mentioned above, in the second half of the last century a considerable, if not the major, portion of criticism has nolens volens fostered the vision of Scott as an apologist for the status quo of unionist Britain. Such a critical stance was articulated on account, and at the same time on behalf, of the optimistic attitude that the author allegedly betrays in his novels while supporting a progress that, despite the inevitable costs in terms of freedom and self-determination, was made possible for Scotland exclusively under the roof and flag of the Empire. While providing scholarship with a frame of reference that has backed, more or less rewardingly, subsequent critical assessments of Scott, this view has proved in the long run detrimental to the author's profile, confining him to a cultural embargo until relatively recently.

However, a significant moment of rupture in mainstream criticism was marked by Julian Meldon D’Arcy in his work entitled “Subversive Scott: the Waverley Novels and Scottish Nationalism” (2005). Responding to at least thirty years of pro-Union-Scott scholarship, his work breaks new ground by openly questioning the still unsorted intellectual puzzle that leaves Scott suspended, so to speak, between Scottish nostalgia and British pride. While debunking the tendency to streamline his novels in the name of a triumphal continuity that he never actually endorsed, D’Arcy stands among the advocates of a more nuanced reading of Scott’s position within the literature of the Empire. His study calls for a re-evaluation of the author, by discerning, amongst the driving forces acting behind his writing, a distinct line of demarcation between his Scottish and English readership.

Aiming to eliminate, when and where possible, parentheses and omissions that have limited our understanding of Scott over the past years, the present work critically addresses the question of how Classics were used –by him, yesterday– and (still) can be used –by us, today– to challenge, diversify or uproot dominant perceptions of his own fiction, and of Classics alike.

As aforementioned, this work takes into account eight novels by Scott, all of them belonging to the so-called Scottish cycle of the *Waverley* series. Beside the obvious reasons of manageability connected to the space-and-time limits of a doctoral dissertation, intrinsic factors alike led me to restrict the examination’s scope to this segment of Scott’s output. Most crucially, the unity of setting in Scotland that all of the chosen novels share, in the *longue durée* of the eighteenth-century civil conflict, offered a self-contained and consistent

background for an investigation into the ways in which Scott resorts to Graeco-Roman elements so as to lay out, before his readers, the difficulties and contradictions that marked that delicate phase of history.

As we shall see, to approach Scott from the angle of classical reception opens the doors anew to the collision between gender and genre that lies at the very heart of the author's self-positioning in the realm of fiction. Such a dichotomy, which Ferris thoroughly describes among the tenets of *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (1991) sees on the one hand classical education as the prerogative and preserve of a masculine elite, and prose fiction on the other one as a field associated with women, who increasingly engaged with it in the role of writers and readers, thus at either end of the spectrum of literary communication.

This work takes the publication of *Waverley* in 1814 as marking a watershed not only in the evolution of the historical novel, but also in the impact of fiction among the preferences of a proto-mass public –a new emerging social body that indeed kept germinating with Scott, although, as I am persuaded, rather beyond his own expectations.

Thus, the main argument of this study relates to the ways in which Scott conceived of his reading public in its composite structure and shifting standpoints. Following in the footsteps of D'Arcy's contribution, I intend to address the subject of Scott's audience in relation to the cementing role played by classical knowledge at its top level, as well as on both sides of the Anglo-Scottish border. As this thesis contends, the Classics prove capable of drawing an area of intersection between these reading groups, by establishing a channel of cross-

national communication beyond the boundaries and distinctions that separate and oppose them.

This is precisely where the main tenets of my approach lie. There can be little doubt that Scott turned to Classics in order to facilitate the bonding with the cultivated elite of his audience, whose intellectual ambitions and reading routines were traditionally grounded in, and built around, classical literature and history. However, rather than simply acknowledging that the author builds upon classical authors in order to render the genre of fiction appealing to an upper class, male audience –a point that can already be subsumed as commonplace in criticism on Scott– I aim to show the extent to which the Classics allow him to rely upon a top level of his readership that qualified as both English and Scottish –some would be tempted to say ‘authentically British’– by providing a meeting-ground between two commonly opposed groups.

Taken as a whole, this work builds upon, and is especially indebted to, the realignments offered by D’Arcy in his groundbreaking study, and intends to highlight the role that Classics play in Scott’s fiction, namely standing as a reminder, for the two layers of Scott readership –the English (one) and the Scottish (one), which the scholar so accurately discerns in his treatment– that they do have much in common: much more than has been acknowledged until now.

In addition to the present introduction and conclusion, the thesis follows in its main body an articulation in five chapters. The arrangement of each section is organised thematically, with the aim of providing the reader with a narrative thread capable of facilitating the progressive immersion into the fabric of Scott’s

texts. Following an ‘outside-to-inside approach’, the departure point of the discussion lies within a broader engagement with the historical phenomena and cultural trends of Scott’s age, which are scrutinised in the first chapter. The subsequent section takes on board the idea of Scottishness as deployed in the considered novels under the lens of Graeco-Roman allusions and reappraisal. As we shall see, the sense of national identity unfolds here in opposition to an invading power. Classical elements result not only in iconising cultural difference, but also in the delineation of a negotiable sense of membership that stems from the collision between notions such as centre-periphery, dominance-resistance—all material with which classically-grounded readers were already familiar. Chapter three covers a transitional dimension in its dealing with classical models who intervene, at paratextual level, in the self-fashioning of the anonymous narrative voice, by providing a spectrum of literary personae standing as a surrogate for Scott himself. Finally, as suggested above, issues of gender and sexuality are discussed in the last two chapters, which foreground the role and impact of classical precedents in negotiating dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, self-censorship and sublimation. As it is hoped, examples from ancient Greece and Rome will pay a contribution in shedding light on the ways in which both the discourse and knowledge about sexual attitudes and practices were articulated in the early nineteenth-century.

A view from the lens of classical reception will illustrate how the depiction of a controversial masculinity finds in Scott an analogous counterpart in the deployment of an alternate, and to some extent irregular, femininity. The gallery of singular heroines and marginal creatures which populate the novels under

scrutiny, offer Scott's readers what has often been defined as a synthesis of wildness, exoticism and androgyny. All of these characters find common ground in the fortitude and energy they display, to different degrees, in front of a society that remains overtly patriarchal and male dominated. The refusal to submit to male control, along with the questioning of patriarchal authority that their actions and initiatives endorse, has been predominantly interpreted as the crucial reason for the lack of any social integration in them. Conversely, an examination of the classical precedents on which these characters are modelled, will unveil the latent aspects of their self-positioning in society, by shedding light on the responsibilities that the male element does have in their destiny.

## Chapter One

### **Classics in context: an Edinburgh education**

*This preliminary section is intended to frame the content and scope of the thesis as a whole and to underpin the textual approach to the body of the selected novels. The aim is to situate Sir Walter Scott, and his engagement with the Classics, within the socio-political milieu of Scotland at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Before entering the discussion proper, the chapter begins with a brief overview of the historical context, by highlighting the main events and key political measures that defined the economic and social background of the period. The focus then moves to Edinburgh and its cultural efflorescence in the long eighteenth century. Starting from the tenets of Antiquarianism, particular attention is paid to the contribution that a renewed interest in the classical past made to the theories of thought, and matters for debate that animated its intellectual life in the transition to the Scottish Enlightenment. The second part closely examines Scott's upbringing in its various stages: firstly as a schoolboy, and later as a university student. Biography intersects with educational theory and practice, while foregrounding a formative experience that took place in the didactic institutions made available to Scott and his generation in post-Enlightenment Edinburgh. As will become clear, to look at Scott's beginnings with Classics means touching upon the management of what was promoted as an eminently national education, in an age when didactic reforms reflected the increasing optimism within the body of society.*

#### **Timeline**

From the very early stages of its foundation, Scotland has represented both a resource for, and a thorn in the side of, the British Empire. If we take 1688 as our starting date, the year brings us back to *Old Mortality*, the novel with the earliest time-setting in the corpus under scrutiny. Our survey begins therefore with the Glorious Revolution and its immediate consequence: the banishment of

the Roman Catholic Stuart bloodline from succession to the throne. The expulsion of the Stuarts resulted in decades of unrest and persecution, in both religious and political terms. Amongst the constitutional measures that Parliament in London ratified in order to nullify, once and for all, the dynastic claims of the Stuarts, the Act of Settlement (1701) officially excluded Roman Catholics from royal succession. This exclusionary provision was subsequently confirmed by the Act of Union (1707), which joined together the kingdoms of England and Scotland under a sole common crown and shared Parliament.

The Union resulting from this political amalgamation had soon to confront resentments and hostilities that were springing from an assortment of reasons and concerns, ranging from Jacobite sympathies to more general fears over Scottish independence. Another war-torn age of strife and dissension was about to begin. From 1708 onwards, the return of the exiled Stuarts to Scottish shores to reclaim their crown constantly represented a mirage that nostalgic Jacobites attempted to translate into an operative project at different times in the decades to follow. The new round of dissent famously culminated in the Jacobite uprisings (1708, 1715, 1719), which repeatedly brought the kingdom to civil war. Last in the chain of the rebellions, the insurrection of 1745 terminated with the final Jacobite defeat at the Battle of Culloden (1746), which put an end to the hopes of those who had aspired for a future for Scotland under a different constitutional path, or indeed a different king.

While the British Union was frequently put to the test from the beginnings of its existence, the second half of the century was no less troubled. On the opposite shore of the Atlantic, the outbreak of the American Revolution created a

new war scenario for the British Empire. As a result of the rapid escalation of this conflict, partial successes, such as the annexation of Canada (1763) or the defence of Florida (which later became a Spanish possession), could not but represent, with hindsight, a meagre consolation for the drastic loss of the American colonies that eventually obtained independence (1783).

On the Old Continent the geo-political situation was far from stable, as the French Revolution was just about to break out. The overturning of the Bourbon monarchy, followed by the thorough demolition of the *ancien régime* in its traditional structures and power hierarchies, provoked a large-scale mobilisation of the other European powers, which engaged over the following decades in a round of coalitions and military campaigns in order to face the menace of radicalism from the other side of the Channel. The rise of Napoleon notoriously placed Britain at the forefront of a strategy of alliances and tactical manoeuvres in an effort to restrain the expansionist ambitions of France and the thirst for dominion of her emperor. For two consecutive decades, the Napoleonic conquests marked a state of protracted belligerence on an unprecedented scale across Europe and beyond. The conflict, which was fought not only on the battlefield, but also in the retaliatory series of commercial blockades and trade restrictions between France and Britain, resulted for the latter in the opening of another front against the United States (1812). Britain's overexposure to what has been suitably described as a 'total war scenario' came to a conclusion only at the battle of Waterloo (1815).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The concept of 'total war' intentionally echoes here the title of David Bell's study "The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Modern Warfare" (2007).

While Britain emerged from the Napoleonic wars claiming world-wide leadership and confidently looking at her growing Empire in the East, backed up by supreme naval power across the globe, circumstances at home were yet far from consolidated. With Napoleon's downfall, the necessity to face an external, common enemy disappeared as well, and economic depression and class struggles emerged in their full scope.<sup>12</sup> The key factors in the proliferation of social tensions during post-Waterloo years were the drastic trading limitations imposed by the Corn Laws, along with the delay that war had caused in adopting indispensable reforms for an economy that was increasingly relying on commercial expansion and advanced industrialism. The endemic frictions between landowners and the working classes, which had to deal with famine and unemployment, became entwined with a political debate over the extension of the franchise, an issue that also saw an embryonic, though significant, mobilisation of women claiming their right to participate in public life. Generalised discontent and radicalism frequently escalated, leading to riots and agitations: the most infamous being the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester (1819), when the cavalry shot into the crowd, killing eleven protestors and leaving hundreds wounded.

Meanwhile, in the peripheries of the kingdom a resurgence of anti-English sentiment was intensified by what was perceived as the constant interference by Westminster in matters of internal regulation. In Scotland, the disaffection in public opinion dated back to at least 1807, when the introduction of a series of judicial reforms raised concerns about the Scottish legal system, which had been

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<sup>12</sup> EVANS, 1983, 2001<sup>3</sup>.

accustomed to self-determination and independence for centuries. Suspicion about, and distrust of, London was heightened in 1826, when the proposal for the abolition of the Scottish banknote was perceived as another unwarranted blow in the long-lasting game of attrition with England. The widespread tensions that were jeopardising the established coexistence within the kingdom were in some cases corroborated by the news from the Continent, where a wave of insurrections against foreign rule was spreading over the Mediterranean Basin.<sup>13</sup>

The situation overseas did not look promising either. In India the colonial administration had long been at the centre of a sequence of scandals and mutual accusations that revealed episodes of corruption and misconduct within the ruling bureaucracy, as epitomised by the controversial impeachment of Warren Hastings (1788–1795). Furthermore, despite the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade (1807), news of abuse of power and acts of cruelty perpetrated in the British colonies undermined (at least in the public eye) the allegedly civilising mission of the Empire. In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that a feeling of disillusionment with the imperial establishment and its credibility swept invasively across the country.

It was in this sequence of events and socio-political climate that Scott decided, in the aftermath of Waterloo, to leave poetry aside and devote himself entirely to fiction, a domain that was addressing a fast-growing inter-class readership. In the first outpourings of his prolific prose, the author was going to reflect on the past era of the Jacobite risings and their aftermath, but above all to

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<sup>13</sup> Suffice it to remind the reader here of the so-called Greek War of Independence, whose outbreak in 1821, along with the nationalist ambitions it raised across Europe, exerted a powerful suggestion over poets such as Lord Byron, who fought and died for that cause.

interrogate himself and his readership about the future of Scotland within the United Kingdom.

### **1.1 The past is alive, long live the past**

The long eighteenth century witnessed a revival of the Graeco-Roman past that resulted in an efflorescence of research and enquiries all across Europe. The progressive discovery of the remains of classical antiquity, in the form of objects and vestiges of ancient buildings, triggered a new wave within the broader cultural phenomenon still today known as Antiquarianism. Dating back to the sixteenth century, Antiquarianism saw the proliferation of recovery expeditions and excavations in search of relics and findings ranging from the Iron Age to Late Antiquity. Artefacts such as coins, mosaics, vases, sculptures, inscriptions and altars were subsumed under the umbrella term of ‘antiquities’, as the result of eminently object-oriented investigations.

Empirically conducted along the line of what has been recently defined as an ‘interactionist methodology’, the debate about the techniques and degree of expertise that such a broad-based approach required is still open.<sup>14</sup> Even today, the term Antiquarianism evokes in its common usage little more than a disorderly omnivorous and in some cases quasi-compulsive dilettantism that laid itself open to caricature or, in the worst cases, to massive frauds. Accordingly, figures of amateurs and aficionados randomly amassing miscellaneous material

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<sup>14</sup> MURRAY (2011: 14–16). On the role of Antiquarianism as a foundation stone for modern archaeology as well as for disciplines such as palaeography and epigraphy, the thorough conceptualisation offered at various times by MOMIGLIANO (1950) still remains invaluable. For a readjustment of perspectives as regards the prescientific naïveté of Antiquarianism see more recently SWEET, 2004.

soon became the targets of widespread satirical barbs that still affect our collective imagery nowadays.

However, beyond the controversy that still currently divides scholarship, the impact that this movement exerted on our aesthetic practices was irreversible. For the first time, a concrete horizon of relics, of whatsoever shape and material, was unravelling in front of its onlookers and recipients, favouring a direct contact with the past that enlisted the sensory faculties. After centuries of exclusively textual life, confined to the mediating role of written sources and to the exclusive application of imaginative faculties, classical heritage was taking shape in the form of physical objects to be seen, touched and ultimately collected.

In the British Isles Antiquarianism initially gained momentum amongst specialists and recorders of Celtic culture, who found physical places for membership and interaction in institutions such as the Society of Antiquaries (1707) and the Society of Dilettanti (1734).<sup>15</sup> By extension, periodical print offered them a vehicle for the diffusion and circulation of discoveries and debates in titles such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* and *Philosophical Transactions*. Amongst the most prominent figures of British Antiquarianism, William Stukeley (1687–1765), whose name is still today linked with the sites of Stonehenge and Avebury, published miscellaneous works accurately supplemented by lists, sketches and glossaries.

Around the middle of the century Antiquarianism took a turn towards the Graeco-Roman past. This new direction was to reach its climax in Southern Italy,

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readjustment of perspectives as regards the prescientific naïveté of Antiquarianism see more recently SWEET, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> McCARTHY, NURSE and GAIMSTER (edd. 2007); PEARCE, 2007.

where the discovery of Herculaneum (1738) was the prelude to the coming to light of other submerged cities such as Pompeii (1746) and Paestum (1748). These sites were soon to become tourist attractions: an increasing number of visitors from the Continent and beyond landed in Italy to immerse themselves in tours and excursions around the relics and monuments of the classical past, thanks also to the mediating role played by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768) in pointing to classical (and especially Greek) culture as a shared heritage for what we may define as an embryonic European public.<sup>16</sup> Beyond the English Channel, this new trend promoted a renewal of interest in factual evidence of the Roman presence. Revolving around the still tangible Roman traces in the geographical landscape, this interest translated into multiple efforts in locating and mapping places and events related to the Roman conquest and domination in Britain. As Hingley underscores: “[t]he discoveries of impressive classical remains at Pompeii [...] resulted in a more critical reflection on the Roman antiquities of Britain”.<sup>17</sup> However, it was especially in Scotland that Antiquarianism was destined to have massive impact well into the nineteenth century and to produce “the most significant advances in knowledge of Roman Britain”.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, the nearby presence of the Hadrian’s Wall and the Antonine Wall, in their iconic power as military frontiers, was still there to enhance the unique flavour of ancient Britannia insofar as the province represented a ‘mutilated conquest’ in the geopolitical chessboard of the Roman Empire. In fact, despite

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<sup>16</sup> This prolonged season of antiquarian voyages was the germinating ground for the Grand Tour, which became, with its prescribed stops and itineraries, a canonised custom for elite youngsters for at least two centuries to come. Scott himself undertook his (rather delayed) Grand Tour – the journey to Italy he made in 1831, at the end of his life. On the reception of Pompeii in this period see, among the others, ROWLAND, 2014. For a latter-day discussion on Winckelmann in his role as cultural promoter see HARLOE, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> HINGLEY (2012: 135). See also MENDYK, 1989 and PIGGOTT, 1989.

<sup>18</sup> TODD, 2003.

repeated attempts and military campaigns over the centuries, what was to become Scotland remained substantively beyond the Roman rule, representing the only element of freedom and resistance against a four-century-long imperial subjugation.<sup>19</sup>

Curiously enough, the first to raise concerns about the quasi-moribund state of Roman antiquities in Scotland was Stukeley himself, an Englishman by birth. His wake-up call was welcomed by Alexander Gordon (c. 1692–1754), an Aberdeen-graduated antiquarian who undertook the task of recovering and cataloguing a submerged landscape of military stations and fortresses, with their palisades, fences, watchtowers and ramparts.<sup>20</sup> Amongst the most famous products of the age, Gordon's *Itinerarium Septentrionale, or a Journey thro' most of the Counties of Scotland, and those in the North of England* (1726) contains minute descriptions of camps, ditches and defences that had lain hidden for centuries, and set a milestone for subsequent generations of antiquarians. Gordon's contagious enthusiasm prompted many to undertake projects and initiatives, such as the foundation of the Society of Antiquarians of Scotland (1780), fervently supported by the Earl of Buchan – who also published, in 1786, his *Remarks on the Progress of the Roman Army in Scotland during the Sixth Campaign of Agricola*, a work that acknowledges its debt to Gordon from the very title.

This engagement with relics and traces of the ancient past brought to the fore the idea of a shared ethnic identity that fed into the pressing urgency to shape a common background, on both the political and the historical levels. As

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<sup>19</sup> PIGGOTT, 1976.

<sup>20</sup> For a profile of this scholar, “proficient at [C]lassics and modern languages” and “with a deep knowledge of classical monuments”, see HINGLEY (2008: 126).

we shall see more fully in the next chapter, classical imagery served the purpose of forging a local, regional, and ultimately national profile for Scotland against the backdrop of the multi-dimensional identity of the United Kingdom.<sup>21</sup> A fortiori since the seeds and roots of Scottish nationhood were taking shape as a counter-answer to the English model, Antiquarianism had a corroborating effect on her political discourse by revealing that “Roman archaeological remains could be used to assert the resistance to the expanding British state”.<sup>22</sup> More specifically, antiquarian research acquired relevance against the backdrop of current affairs and present-day issues of sovereignty and governance, as Hingley explains: “the role of the ruination of Roman monuments enable[d] reflection on Britain’s contemporary imperial [vocation]”.<sup>23</sup>

This emerging awareness went hand in hand with the awakening of a new self-perception *in* and *of* Scotland, which emphasised her historical isolation and alleged backwardness: it was precisely due to these distinctive features that Scotland was gaining prominence as a special case on the European map. A rapid glance at the cover page of Gordon’s *Itinerarium* can give a good idea of this tenet: “If Scotland boasts of being numbered among the Nations which never bowed their Necks to the Yoak of Roman Boundage [...] their pretence is not built upon a wrong foundation: For [...] it cannot be shewn, that the Scots and the Picts ever suffered the least Part of their Country to lie under Subjection [...] without re-possessing themselves thereof, and taking a just Revenge upon their Enemies and Invaders”.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> BROWN, 1980.

<sup>22</sup> HINGLEY (2008: 127)

<sup>23</sup> HINGLEY (2008: 11)

<sup>24</sup> GORDON (1727: 135)

These were the premises on which “a game of cultural nationalism, or political antiquarianism” inaugurated a new debate on the vexed question of rulership, which was soon to divide the supporters and detractors of the Roman mission overseas.<sup>25</sup>

In the following passage, Gordon’s own translation of *Agricola* 21 discloses the price of civilisation in terms of degeneration and slippage into slavery. Thus, conquered Britons “gradually [...] slipt into the Blandishments of Vice and Effeminacy, building sumptuous Galleries, Bagnios and making delicate Entertainments; which Things passed among the Ignorant of them, for Politeness, but at the Bottom were nothing but Baits of Slavery”.<sup>26</sup> In stark contrast, the extreme North, which remained immune from imperial subjugation, was destined to preserve its native, aboriginal element, up to Gordon’s here and now. As Sir John Clerk writes to his friend Roger Gale in a private letter: “the Highlanders are just the same people which Agricola left them, so that on my return [...], I was tempted to read the speech which Tacitus puts in his mouth, and found it a very just picture of the Caledonians”.<sup>27</sup>

This presentation of the Highlands in terms of freedom pointedly worked as “a counter-opinion to the dominant Romano-centric views of many Englishman and Lowland Scotsmen”, a vision that stressed the allegedly cultural gains of the imperial assimilation.<sup>28</sup> Along this line of thought, Burke asserted for example that: “[Agricola] subdued the Britons by civilising them; and made them exchange a savage liberty for a polite and easy subjection. His conduct is the most

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<sup>25</sup> BROWN, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> GORDON (1727: 32)

<sup>27</sup> CLERK, letter to Roger Gale (17 June 1742), cited from HINGLEY (2008: 150–51).

<sup>28</sup> HINGLEY (2008: 132)

perfect model for those employed in the unhappy, but [...] necessary task of subduing a rude and free people”.<sup>29</sup>

Gordon’s antiquarianism exemplarily testifies to a complex intermingling of life and literature within an intellectual pursuit that reaches the point of self-identification. Under the pseudonym of ‘Galgacus’ (Calgacus), the leader of the anti-Roman resistance that Tacitus describes among his fellow-tribesmen on the eve of the battle of Mons Graupius (AD 85), the antiquarian set out to search for the location of the very site of the decisive struggle.<sup>30</sup> This mission, in which Gordon did not succeed, would become a fieldwork challenge for generations of antiquarians to follow, both in reality and in fiction. For now it is suffice to mention Jonathan Oldbuck, who embodies the Ur-specimen of antiquarian vocation and whose first appearance is singularly marked by a mysterious book he carries in his hands. The volume in question, “on which he gazed [...] with the knowing look of an amateur [...] from title page to colophon” is, unsurprisingly, the *Itinerarium Septentrionale*.<sup>31</sup> The work will become his guidebook across the ruins of his own estate –where, as he stubbornly maintains, Calgacus and his tribes faced the Roman legions many centuries before.

The season of excavations and archaeological findings inaugurated by the discovery of the site of Pompeii, described earlier, brought back to light aspects and details of the past that had been buried for centuries. As a result, classical reception entered prominently into play in the embryonic stages of the figuration process of same-sex love in the nineteenth century, an age that indeed witnessed the emergence of homoeroticism from the Graeco-Roman world, with its

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<sup>29</sup> BURKE (1760: 33–4)

<sup>30</sup> On the spelling of the name see BROWN (1987: 124, note 27); TAC. *Agr.* 29–32.

<sup>31</sup> *Antiquary* (1: 9)

diversified range of declensions, from sapphic lesbianism to pederasty. For the first time, vases, amphoras and kylixes showed how the ancients had experienced their desires, from courtship to physical consummation, putting their poses and gestures of physical engagement under the eyes of an audience whose knowledge had been, up to that time, exclusively mediated by written culture.<sup>32</sup> As a result, the homoerotic side of Graeco-Roman civilisation became a matter of shared knowledge and public debate.

The cult of Graeco-Roman antiquity that was spreading as a true pan-European phenomenon carried with it densely aesthetic implications and homoerotic undertones. Most notably, the spirit of the age found a key and – likewise controversial– figure in Winckelmann, who embodied, with both his life and aesthetic theorisation, the model *par excellence* of what it meant to literally appropriate classical antiquity.<sup>33</sup>

For ages covered and sublimated as the philosophical emanation of what he advertised as the cult of adolescent beauty, Winckelmann’s homosexual (in some cases pederastic) inclinations were not a mystery in the intellectual circles of Europe, notwithstanding the due censorship and public reservations that circulated about the matter.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The role of vase painting was significant in promoting access ‘into the very households’ of the Ancients, by revealing scenes of everyday life as they took place in the gymnasium or on sympotic occasions. For a thorough discussion see DOVER, 1978.

<sup>33</sup> The German scholar stood at the centre of this story especially after 1756, when he moved to Italy in the role of official antiquary of the Pope and chief archivist of the Vatican archaeological records. This appointment opened for him the doors and corridors of the Graeco-Roman collections that were increasing on a daily basis thanks to the constant flux of findings from the region of Pompeii and Paestum. Furthermore, this year-long experience served as the incubating milieu for the *History of Classical Art*, published in 1764: a text that, as is well known, was soon to become a reference point for generations of artists and students alike.

<sup>34</sup> As KAYLOR portrays it, this attitude made of Winckelmann a pioneering figure of sexual tourism in the south of the Continent (in HUBBARD ed. 2013, 583–598). This aspect of Winckelmann’s personality does not seem to be any more a taboo in scholarship: the 1990s witnessed an efflorescence of research and disputes on his sexual orientations, the most extensive treatment

What indeed matters to us, however, is the way in which Winckelmann experienced his sexuality as integral part of a wider fusion of art, life and culture, by inaugurating “a generation of like-minded men who [...] participated in the European institutionalisation of homosocial friendship as aesthetic education”.<sup>35</sup> Integrated and justified, as it is, within the framework of his reflections on aesthetic canons, “Winckelmann’s approach to art and history [...] is informed by a certain very stylised homoerotics”, and thus qualifies as an affirmative reading of male homosexuality pursued in the name of an authentic identification with the classical past.<sup>36</sup>

On the Continent and in Britain alike, these reflections on the sexual customs of the ancients were mirrored in common language, with same-sex relationships being accompanied by adjectives such as ‘Greek’, ‘Socratic’ (in certain cases ‘Platonic’), or even marking new entries in vocabulary, such as ‘pederasty’ or *Knabenliebe*.<sup>37</sup> No wonder, then, that the topic of sexuality in the Graeco-Roman world represented in those decades a matter of vehement dispute, with adjectives such as ‘philiac’ or ‘agapic’ attempting to establish different degrees of an emotional attachment, which, according to mainstream prescriptions, had to remain apart from any physical implication.

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being offered by DERKS, 1990. RICHTER and MCGRATH take a constructivist approach to the topic, not before warning about the risk of pushing for “an unhampered identification with Winckelmann as a significant predecessor in gay history”. Their study relies on the restrictive proviso that “his sexuality was constructed within a specific historical pattern which may only indirectly have anything to do with present-day homosexuality” (1994: 45).

<sup>35</sup> RICHTER and MCGRATH (1994: 46)

<sup>36</sup> PARKER (1992: 532). As ALDRICH explains: “the type of homosexual he represents [...] could find the means and the place to pursue his urges and [...] could find aesthetic arguments through which to justify or to sublimate them” (1993: 48).

<sup>37</sup> For German Vocabulary cf. DERKS (1988, repr. 1990).

These issues vividly emerge in Gibbon's fourth volume of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1788), for example in passages like the following one: "at Rome, as in Athens, the voluntary and effeminate deserter of his sex was degraded from the honours and the rights of a citizen. But the practice of vice was not discouraged by the severity of opinion: the indelible stain of manhood was confounded with the more venial transgressions of fornication and adultery".<sup>38</sup> To mitigate the scope of homoerotic propensities, the physical dimension was often obfuscated or even denied. A solution of compromise to put things on safer ground, which, as the prevailing official version, gained currency as a vehicle for a reassuring image of ancient civilisations, was to look at Hellenic homoeroticism, in particular Athenian pederasty, as nothing more than a social convention of temporary duration and exclusively oriented to pedagogic goals. This interpretation was based on the argument of a transient practice that was deeply rooted in didactics and propaedeutic to the formation of the citizen, with a view to instilling a sense of hierarchy and discipline in the youngsters.

Against this whitewashed version of same-sex love as merely reduced to an allegedly eroto-didactic function, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) wrote his *Discourse on the Manners of the Ancient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love* (1818) against the bowdlerised, 'classroom safe' version of Greek sexuality and the palliative effects that it was surreptitiously aimed at exerting.<sup>39</sup> The innovative reading that Shelley offered, as Crompton explicates, was designed "to protest [...] that his contemporaries seemed to be engaged in a conspiracy to keep

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<sup>38</sup> GIBBON [1788], 1896: 4, 504

<sup>39</sup> In his late essay *Offences against One's Self: Paederasty*, Bentham expresses a diametrically opposed interpretation, by deliberately appealing to Greek homoerotic tendencies and practices with a view to confuting condemnations of homosexual and sodomitic acts.

an important side of Greek life a secret from modern readers who could not read the original documents”.<sup>40</sup> In Shelley’s own words: “There is no book which shows the Greeks precisely as they were; they seem all written for children, with the caution that no practice or sentiment, highly inconsistent with our present manners, should be mentioned, lest those manners should receive outrage and violation”.<sup>41</sup>

Central to Shelley’s reformulation is the gap between ‘then’ and ‘now’. In his view, taking a step back from current sensibility is the necessary move to set the right perspective in order to avoid the risk of comparing “the Greeks of the age to which I refer, with our own feeble conceptions of the intensity of disinterested love”.<sup>42</sup> This conceptualisation will find further expression in the series of lectures that Walter Pater (1839–1894), an intellectual who was certainly under the long-lasting sway of Winckelmann, delivered in the late nineteenth-century at Oxford under the title *Plato and Platonism*.<sup>43</sup> In Pater’s view, in fact, “the clean, youthful friendship, ‘passing even the love of woman’, which [...] elaborated into a kind of art, became an elementary part of education [...]. The beloved and the lover, side by side through their long days of eager labour, and above all on the battlefield, became respectively, *aites*, the hearer, and *eispnelas*, the inspirer, the elder inspiring the younger with his own strength and noble taste in things”.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> CROMPTON (1985: 87)

<sup>41</sup> This passage of 1818 was not known to the general public until 1845, when it was first published under the title *Essay on the Literature, the Arts, and the Manners of the Athenians: a Fragment*. This work found place in the posthumous volume *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*. My quotation is from SHELLEY (1845: 16–17).

<sup>42</sup> SHELLEY, 1845 in NOTOPOULOS (1949: 411).

<sup>43</sup> *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873, plus later editions); *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensation and Ideas* (1885); *Greek Studies* (1894–95).

<sup>44</sup> PATER, 1893 (ed. 2002: 149–150). Italics in the original passage.

## 1.2 Enlightened Edinburgh, or the Athens of the North

In the years when Scott began his education, the spirit of the Enlightenment had long since permeated Scottish culture and society. The philosophical and cultural movement that became a truly Pan-European phenomenon throughout the eighteenth century experienced its cultural incubation (and its height alike) in France and Scotland.<sup>45</sup> The latter in particular was the hotbed of some of the most advanced conquests of Western thought, e.g. the concepts of ‘tolerance’ and ‘sympathy’, which still today shape our moral and emotional answers to the issues of life in society. Scotland was indeed in the vanguard of an intellectual revolution that emphasised the transformative power of reason and freethinking, and saw the ideas of the common good and the promotion of utility amongst its essential concerns.<sup>46</sup>

At the forefront of this movement were the mercantile and professional classes that were gathering in the evolving urban realities of Scotland. In accordance with their pragmatic spirit, the new agenda was set around the priorities of progress and improvement. Eminently oriented towards science and technology, the Scottish Enlightenment paved the way for what was soon to become the cradle-laboratory of the engineers of the British Empire.<sup>47</sup>

These momentous changes unleashed a burst of unprecedented intellectual activity under the aegis of charismatic sponsors, who were often members of the aristocracy. Especially in Edinburgh, this cultural efflorescence, whose effects were tangibly visible in the urban landscape alike, was taking shape

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<sup>45</sup> On periodisation and slippery usage of dates see EMERSON (2010–2011).

<sup>46</sup> BROADIE (ed. 2003)

<sup>47</sup> MACKENZIE and DEVINE (2011). See also MITCHINSON (1982) and FERGUSON (1968).

for some as a new opportunity for cultural promotion on equal grounds, whereas for others it still remained little more than artistic patronage.<sup>48</sup> The city was rapidly transforming and bringing together scholars and literati with a wide array of interests and pursuits within the context of a shared ‘clubbability’.<sup>49</sup> The cream of the Edinburgh intelligentsia was gathering around the newly built George Square, among the elegant buildings and neo-classical façades carrying the signature of Robert Adam. The greatest philosophers of the age, such as David Hume (1711–76), Adam Smith (1723–90) and William Robertson (1721–93) gravitated towards the Philosophical Society and found matter for ink and debate among the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*.<sup>50</sup> That is not to mention the raising number of subsidiary activities revolving around the academic headquarters: “[i]n every college students found literary, scientific, or other clubs which provided an extra-curricular stimulus to learning and conviviality [...]”.<sup>51</sup>

While progress was the driver for the future, it also proved to be the guiding principle for a new approach towards the past. The application of the so-called scientific method, long since tested in the field of natural science, to the domain of history found its first systematic treatment in Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–1740). To engage in historical enquiry now means plumbing the depth of cycles and developments of epochs and events, along with their causes and effects. This new approach had corrosive effects on what remained of the biographical criteria articulating the study of individual,

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<sup>48</sup> On Edinburgh at the height of her Neoclassical revival see COSH, 2003.

<sup>49</sup> MURDOCH and SHER (1988: 131)

<sup>50</sup> Founded in 1737, the Philosophical Society was absorbed in 1783 by the Royal Society of Edinburgh. A thorough examination of the institution is to be found in a series of articles by EMERSON (1979; 1981; 1985 and 1988).

<sup>51</sup> EMERSON (1977: 474)

extraordinary characters who reputedly had the course of history in their own hands and at their own will. In the domain of ancient history, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* was undoubtedly the product of that critique and that theorisation. Following the same path of philosophical history, his Scottish contemporary Adam Ferguson (1723–1816) became the official historian of the Roman Republic with the publication of his *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* in 1783. Both works were fundamental in proposing the notion of a past that was not only available, but also ready to be used in the present.<sup>52</sup>

Like Antiquarianism before, the Enlightenment proved pivotal in giving Scotland a new cultural identity, which placed the ideas of progress and cosmopolitanism at the core of her national vocation. However, all of this came to a standstill, or, as others prefer to put it, turned backwards, with the outburst of revolution overseas. The chain of subversive events –first in North America, then in France– reverberated shockingly in Britain threatening the internal stability and cohesion of the kingdom as a whole. In Scotland, the season of the Enlightenment, previously steeped in tolerance and equality, registered a withdrawal into cautious moderation verging on conformism. In a significantly changed climate, the imperatives on the agenda were to strengthen inter-class cooperation against extremism and to limit social tensions as much as possible.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See on this SACHS, 2010 and LIPKING (1970: 10–12).

<sup>53</sup> KOSELLEK, 1988.

### 1.3 A new Lyceum and a cutting-edge university

Education was another ground where Scotland was still regarded as subsidiary to England, and as such became a matter of national identity in the years of the Enlightenment. The priority on the agenda was to bridge the divide and eradicate the prejudicial view of Scotland as an inherently barbaric country that was lacking polish and refinement due to a supposed century-long backwardness. Even on the education front, Scotland was still regarded by many an unsettling place where “[y]oung men could not get [...] an education to fit them for careers [...] or even acquire [...] the polite skills which were becoming the marks of an educated gentleman”.<sup>54</sup>

Classical teaching in Scotland was perceived therefore as inadequate and defective, as limited to Latin with Greek considerably neglected, if not totally deserted. As Clarke highlights in his foundational study: “in the early nineteenth century there was a feeling abroad that classical studies in Scotland were in an unsatisfactory state”.<sup>55</sup> But it was especially in comparison with England that the above picture seemed even worse: Latin itself held “an insecure place in the Scottish schools”, where the extent covered was remarkably limited, and based on “a humanistic approach which was alien to the philological emphasis of English classical education and [...] did not produce a level of linguistic competence sufficient for admission to Oxbridge”.<sup>56</sup>

Within the context of a deliberately agonistic relationship with England, education therefore played an integral part in shaping what it meant to be

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<sup>54</sup> EMERSON (1977: 465)

<sup>55</sup> CLARKE (1959: 146)

<sup>56</sup> CLARKE (1959, 136); LARSON (1999, 191, note 21).

Scottish. Also in this case, however, state initiative offered a point of departure, as Anderson underscores: “educational traditions of Scotland have always been distinguished from those of England, and reputedly more democratic”.<sup>57</sup> This point is explained in detail by Clarke, who describes two diametrically opposed educational systems: “[w]hereas in England [...] the development of education was a haphazard affair determined largely by the endowments of private individuals and subject to little public direction or control, in Scotland there was what may justly be called a national system of education”.<sup>58</sup> To show that Scotland, in contrast to the common prejudice, had lost no ground in the sphere of education, an improvement in both the breadth of the curriculum and teaching methods was registered decade after decade.

The Scottish Enlightenment was the propulsive engine for reforming interventions rooted in “the belief by influential elites that the nation’s educational history was strong, coherent, and progressive, a source of economic flexibility, of modernising ideas, and of liberal opportunity”.<sup>59</sup> Along with the accelerated growth and development of civil society, new didactic approaches, based on utilitarianism with an eminently egalitarian vocation, were designed to meet the needs of the bourgeoisie, in line with its entrepreneurship.<sup>60</sup> Paradoxical as it may sound, a scientific-technical education relied heavily on the Classics, still the dominant element in education. They had not only a pedagogic function, but indeed paved the way for a social recognition, inasmuch as a knowledge of Greek and Latin was a tangible mark of gentility and refinement.

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<sup>57</sup> ANDERSON (1985: 459)

<sup>58</sup> CLARKE (1959: 138)

<sup>59</sup> PATTERSON (2009: 269)

<sup>60</sup> On the “close relationship of eighteenth century Scottish educational theory to the social vision of the Scottish Enlightenment” see HANLEY, 2011.

In the context of Edinburgh's lively urban life, among the elite circles that formed the intellectual community of the New Town, a thorough classical education was the most exploitable tool for social improvement that could also translate into an aristocratic pedigree. Obviously, gender-related issues were implied in the redefinition of teaching canons. As Wilson observes: "knowledge of the [C]lassics is a 'preserve', with strong class and gender associations: a classical education is a conscious confirmation of, or sometimes an available route to, membership of an élite".<sup>61</sup> Education presented another facet, that of "an overwhelmingly masculine affair" and consequently a "phenomenon and preoccupation of elite masculinity", insofar as a first-class enlightened education was the route through which to make one's way into the top echelons of society.<sup>62</sup>

The deputed locus for the application of the Enlightenment's ideas in education was the High School of Edinburgh, which Scott attended from 1779 to 1784.<sup>63</sup> The trailblazer was James Barclay, appointed master from 1742 to 1750, who inaugurated a generation of tutors concerned with extending the students' involvement beyond mechanical practices such as memorising and parsing.<sup>64</sup> The turning point however was the rectorship of Dr Alexander Adam (1741-1809), a towering intellect among the Edinburgh literati.<sup>65</sup> Appointed headmaster in 1768, Adam filled the role uninterruptedly up to his death and undertook crucial initiatives on both the curriculum and school syllabus. As a matter of priority, in 1772 he promoted the return of Ancient Greek to the curriculum. This innovation

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<sup>61</sup> WILSON (2012: 30)

<sup>62</sup> WILSON (2012: 30)

<sup>63</sup> See LAW, 1965 and 1996.

<sup>64</sup> The theoretical formulation of his method is developed in the *Treatise on Education* published by Barclay in 1743. This essay figures, together with other titles by the same author, in Scott's library at Abbotsford.

<sup>65</sup> HEMERSON (1810: 73)

was met with lively protests from the University and triggered a ‘conflict of powers’ as to the monopoly of classical disciplines with the University’s governing body, which overtly manifested its opposition.<sup>66</sup> The *querelle* was implicitly sorted out in 1814, when the Town Council established a gold medal as a reward for the most distinguished student in Greek: an initiative that basically meant a victory for Adam.

Determined to push the boundaries in terms of subject coverage, Adam introduced new formats and disciplines into the didactic programme. Along with the practice of verse composition, the study of ancient languages and literature was supplemented with history and geography.<sup>67</sup> This reform favoured a horizontal approach to the Classics, based on translation but supported by extensive reading. Adam was also the author of didactic texts, among which were a Latin grammar (1772), *Roman Antiquities* (1791) and *Summary of Geography and History* (1794).<sup>68</sup> The ‘Athens of the North’ could properly boast her own Lyceum.<sup>69</sup>

Known as “major centres of pedagogical innovation [...] and dynamic institutions of education”, the then Scottish Universities updated their profile

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<sup>66</sup> CLARKE (1959: 137)

<sup>67</sup> On the innovative figure of Adam as the champion of Edinburgh’ cultural development and icon of self-made-man the only extant biography is, to my knowledge, the one by HEMERSON (1810). Apart from being clearly dated, the work is affected by a heroism that verges on hagiography in purveying the portrait of “an *enlightened* teacher, capable of illustrating, by his copious erudition, every topic that came within his sphere” (73).

<sup>68</sup> The complete title is *Principles of Latin and English Grammar*. STEVEN (1849: 141) reports a first-person extract in which Adam clarifies the inspiration behind the project: “In the year 1771, I formed a resolution of making, during the vacation, an excursion to the continent, to observe the state of education there, and what grammars were taught in foreign schools”.

<sup>69</sup> CLARKE (1959: 134). The Scots showed a certain degree of initiative also in the sphere of pedagogical instruments. Again CLARKE: “Scotland had her own grammar books, and Scottish teachers show more enterprise than those of England in producing new Latin grammars”.

over fifty years, from 1700 to 1749, when “the most fundamental change was in the contents of the course offered”.<sup>70</sup>

Based on the tradition of liberal humanism, university study was mainly conceived as an extension of the secondary school curriculum.<sup>71</sup> The official subjects of the degree course were Latin, Greek, Philosophy and Mathematics. Without pursuing any specialist vocation, academia rather offered a ‘non-collegiate’ organisation where no pressure was exerted for compulsory attendance. The choice of lectures and courses was left entirely to the students’ discretion, and the inevitable cost of this freedom was a certain degree of anarchy.<sup>72</sup>

The academic ‘organogram’ changed as well. From para-ecclesiastical institutions with a local dimension aimed at preparing theology students for teaching and careers in the clergy, focussed on a scholasticism of a medieval flavour, Scottish universities became avant-garde hubs to address a fast-growing, career-oriented urban consumption. Open to the world of liberal professions and the demands of generations of scientists, engineers, magistrates, surgeons, Scottish academies exerted a pioneering role and acquired an internationally acknowledged reputation thanks to a new generation of highly specialised teachers “that established a ‘modern’ system of lectures”<sup>73</sup>. Scotland in fact boasted “among [her] professors gentlemen envied for their positions and

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<sup>70</sup> HANLEY (2011: 588); EMERSON (1977: 464).

<sup>71</sup> ANDERSON: “Scottish schools were particularly effective at feeding pupils into the universities [...]; but for those not aiming at the university, the system failed to develop alternatives that were intellectually and socially attractive” (1985: 477).

<sup>72</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 27); CLARKE (1959: 144).

<sup>73</sup> MURDOCH and SHER (1988: 130)

acknowledged as leading intellectuals in Britain, Europe and America”.<sup>74</sup> The result of this reform was crucial, as Emerson demonstrates: “Nowhere in Europe had the universities been so responsive to social needs; nowhere had they provided so high a proportion of enlightened intellectuals or ones who so profoundly shaped the [...] life of their country. The improving, modernising forces which had so marked eighteenth century Scotland had made her universities centre of much that was vital in the Scottish enlightenment”.<sup>75</sup>

To focus on Humanities, the label ‘classical languages’ involved antiquities and civilisation as well. While 1750 marked the *terminus* for Latin, which ceased to be the official language within didactic walls and was supplanted by English, Greek was restored in the curriculum, to be “firmly established [as] ... the regular first year subject, which by the nineteenth century extended to the second year”.<sup>76</sup> This was indeed a long trend, since from the beginning of the seventeenth century Greek’s “institutional place [was] reinforced [...] by the requirement that all Scottish Universities appoint a professor of Greek, as well as of Humanity or Latin, and the expectation was that they would take regular classes”.<sup>77</sup> Teaching was generally undertaken at beginner level, starting from the New Testament and then covering poets such as Homer and Hesiod.<sup>78</sup> Nothing substantially new was registered for Latin, where the syllabus contemplated the “usual grammar-school authors”.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> EMERSON (1977: 474)

<sup>75</sup> EMERSON (1977: 474)

<sup>76</sup> MURDOCH and SHER (1988: 128–9). “Latin finally lost its hold over Scottish letters, becoming a secondary language even within the halls of academia [and] [...] the medium of a polite, urbane Scottish culture”; CLARKE (1959: 139).

<sup>77</sup> WILSON (2012: 39)

<sup>78</sup> CLARKE (1959: 141; 156–7)

<sup>79</sup> CLARKE (1959: 134)

Although the lack of a deep-seated attention to philological accuracy made comparison with the English strongholds of learning an unrealistic prospect, the circumstances of classical knowledge in Scotland were indeed promising. As Clarke remarks: “There was [...] a good average level [...]; less stimulus perhaps to the brilliant boy [...], but less wastage in the case of the less gifted. Classical teaching was more widely diffused, and in the parish schools [...] Latin and Greek were available to a class which in England would hardly have come by such education”.<sup>80</sup>

In the long run, the results were significant, as (again) Clarke concludes: “[b]y the mid-Victorian period education in Scotland had come closer to that in England in that the position of Greek had noticeably improved and the range of reading had been extended.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, Wilson’s concluding remarks appropriately frame what we shall discuss in the subsequent pages: “whatever the defects and abuses in the system [...] [this was] an age of exceptional intellectual and literary achievement, [...] characterised by exceptional creative interaction with the Classics”.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> CLARKE (1959: 151–2)

<sup>81</sup> CLARKE (1959: 151)

<sup>82</sup> WILSON (2012: 34)

#### 1.4 Fighting for or against Rome

Throughout the French Revolution until well into the Napoleonic Wars that came in its wake, the classical past assumed a decisive political valence in terms of negotiation and resistance across the English Channel.<sup>83</sup> Here the association of the prefix ‘Romano’ with British civilisation became a matter of objection, with France –the arch-enemy of the day– constantly putting into play Britain’s defective profile in terms of *Romanitas*. Due to both their geographical position and their being a later conquest, the British Isles were allegedly unable to stand comparison with France.

The Anglo-French rivalry therefore translated into an aesthetic battle over the question of who had the right to speak in the name of Rome. The discredit that French propaganda constantly cast upon Roman Britain was purportedly meant to destabilise the enemy. The charge of being ‘not Roman enough’, together with the ‘blame’ for having remained under Roman rule for less time aimed at triggering a kind of ‘inferiority complex’ that mobilised cooperative efforts across the United Kingdom. To situate herself anew in the geo-political scenario on cultural grounds became a matter for urgency for Britain, which was called to show her credentials and to give proof of her authentically Roman pedigree. To a certain extent, this state of shared exertion showed how the iconic power of the borders was easy to fade, and in particular how the people beyond Hadrian’s Wall were coming to terms with the incontrovertible effects of Union.

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<sup>83</sup> SACHS, 2010.

As Emerson incisively puts it: “Scots who had wanted to be North Britons were becoming Britons”.<sup>84</sup>

The effort was, as Sarah Scott aptly describes it, “to assert Britain’s cultural leadership in Europe, with a view to challenging the widely held notion that Britain’s climate and national character were incompatible with artistic excellence”.<sup>85</sup> The rediscovery of Britannia as a Roman Province, which had been taking place for at least a century, came to help in facing the challenge, providing both inspiration and evidence for reassurance. Antiquarian studies were there to document Britain’s compatibility on a European scale, most eminently “to claim a cultural link with the [...] classical Mediterranean through the Roman conquest of southern Britain”.<sup>86</sup> The new agenda contributed to revitalising researches into Roman vestiges on British soil, a circumstance that was also favoured by the Continental Blockade. If it was not possible to admire Graeco-Roman antiquities abroad, it was still possible to do it within British shores. The re-appropriation of a classical past in her geographical map and genetic code set in motion a growing industry and a source of inspiration in the open air. Places such as Bath, Colchester and St Albans often referred to by their Latin denominations (*Aquae Sulis*, *Camulodunum*, *Verulamium*), nourished the imagination of artists and literate men for decades to come, thanks also to the incipient rail system that granted easy access to the archaeological sites and settlements later in the century.<sup>87</sup> As Sarah Scott again argues, this cultural policy was crucial in “demonstrating Britain’s cultural and moral superiority in the face of French

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<sup>84</sup> EMERSON (2010–2011: 42)

<sup>85</sup> SCOTT (2014: 309)

<sup>86</sup> HINGLEY (2008: 10–11)

<sup>87</sup> This topic is elaborately considered in VANCE (1997 and 2000)

bravura display and Napoleon's indiscriminate looting of Italian art and antiquities".<sup>88</sup> Also on this side, isolation from the continent became a decisive element for the formation of British identity, where insularity functioned as one of the main tenets of the British ethos.<sup>89</sup>

The one-to-one confrontation between Britain and France steadily escalated with Napoleon's rise to power. In the decades leading from the consulship to the Empire, responding to French *Romanitas* meant tackling the threat of a power that was building both emblems and nomenclature on the model of Rome. Indeed, the events of the most recent past from 1789 onwards were not overtly presented in terms of revolution or overthrow but rather patterned along a historical continuum that re-enacted at the same time the decisive junctures of the Roman past. Hence, the transition from regicide to republic, with the subsequent stipulation of a triumvirate, implicitly endorsed Napoleon's self-posturing in this trajectory as the reincarnation of the man of destiny, most obviously Caesar but frequently Augustus, according to necessity.<sup>90</sup> The display of imperial aspirations with which France was consolidating her self-representation inevitably impacted on British public debate, where this Rome à la française was seen a model of imperial aggression, on the border between illegality and dystopia.

The dramatic events of the Peninsular War contributed fuelling a vividly cultivated collective imagery where anti-French sentiment was strategically infused with classical allusions. Periodical printing became the privileged site for

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<sup>88</sup> SCOTT (2014: 325)

<sup>89</sup> COLLEY, 1992

<sup>90</sup> See HUET, 1999; VANCE, 1997 –especially chapter 2, 1 'The French Revolution'. See also PARKER, 1937. On the topic of figurative and literary perusal and their political implications see HERBERT, 1972 and CHEEKE, 2004.

promoting this tactical policymaking. The newspapers and pamphlets circulating in public houses and inns across the country spread the latest news and updates from around the Continent according to a narrative thread that framed France/Rome as the illegitimate invader. A precise example of this lies in the article in which *The Times* celebrated the heroic resistance that the city of Lisbon opposed to the French troops in 1811. Portuguese guerrilla fighters were explicitly compared to the shepherd-warriors under the command of Viriatus, the leader of the Lusitanians in their resistance against the Roman legions in 139 BC.<sup>91</sup> This opportunistic cultural strategy was soon to become an integral component of the anti-French propaganda machine. While responding to Rome meant counter-answering her French-mediated assimilation, Britain was inevitably brought into confrontation with her own aspirations: “[t]he long tradition of distrusting France [...] played its part in Britain in discrediting the Roman Empire as a model of government and besmirching the title of Emperor”.<sup>92</sup> The question soon became therefore: ‘if Rome, which Rome?’ The dilemma triggered debates over the Roman model in terms of applicability and rejection, on the newly acquired assumption that “Britain might avoid the dangers of imperialism and despotism, which were seen as characteristic of Napoleon’s attempts to establish Paris as a new Rome”.<sup>93</sup>

The potential for rupture that the parallel with Rome entailed promoted introspection, together with warnings against the triumphalist celebration of the British Empire and the allegedly leading mission of London as its command centre. In this context, as Bradley underlines, there was “[l]ittle surprise [...] that

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<sup>91</sup> 14 January 1811.

<sup>92</sup> VANCE (2000: 218)

<sup>93</sup> SCOTT (2014: 323)

Tacitus' *Agricola*, with his provocative comments on the nature and ethics of imperialism and its British settings, fuelled debates about the character of the British Empire".<sup>94</sup>

If the imperative was to rebrand Britain in contrast to absolutist France, there was a range of alternative options that stood in antagonistic relationship to Rome from which to choose. In her proposing herself as a model "of a prosperous, liberal, imperial, naval power", Athens proved a valuable ally for legitimising the role of Britain as mistress of the seas. On similar grounds, Carthage became another valid option, due to her naval supremacy and mercantile power. These parallels extended into the sensitive area of identity politics, as Lincoln reformulates the issue: "if, like Rome, Britain would have a civilising influence, unlike Rome it would exert its power through trade rather than military conquest".<sup>95</sup> Speaking in support of an empire in expansion that was called on to rule the waves for the sake of commerce and industry, Athens and Carthage provided Britain with the earliest references upon which to draw for the construction of her 'thalassocracy', that is to say, the promotion of a supremacy pursued in the name of the tenets of British liberty, viz. seafaring and trading.<sup>96</sup> A turn to Athens and/or Carthage offered Britain a model of hegemony over the sea that aptly mirrored the concentric circles of her colonial network but, more importantly, without backing the cause of a straightforwardly unrestrained militarism.

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<sup>94</sup> BRADLEY (2010: 126)

<sup>95</sup> MURRAY (2011: 305); LINCOLN (2002: 45).

<sup>96</sup> VANCE (2000: 216). For the most comprehensive overview on the topic of 'Britain and the Sea' see the eponymous essay by O'HARA (2010). On the "possible parallels in the narrative of British colonial expansion involving prolonged rivalry with France [and] [...] wanting to be the new Rome rather than the new Carthage" see again VANCE (1997: 72-4).

While the name of Empire on the other shore of the Channel became “a recurring British nightmare”, raising hostility against a tyrannical power and its despotic ruler, a palliative came from within the history of Rome herself.<sup>97</sup> It was indeed the constitutional asset of the British Monarchy, within the framework of her elective representative institutions that found a guarantee of liberty in Parliament. In direct contrast with the autocratic ambitions of Napoleon and his thirst for dominion, the two legislative assemblies (Lords and Commons) were permanent fixtures for the safeguarding of democracy and the promotion of reforms for the public cause.

It was no wonder, therefore, that Cicero was the object of debates and controversies around the thorny questions of political opportunism and resistance to tyranny. If we take the studies by Middleton (1741) and Mommsen (1854) as the two extremes representing Cicero’s *Nachleben* in the *longue durée* of the nineteenth century, in Legitimist Britain the pendulum predominantly swung in favour of Middleton’s more positive view. Cicero was perceived as the last, tireless defender of democratic institutions in the late days of the Republic and was often invoked as an antidote to the megalomaniacal pursuits of Napoleon. Indeed, the belief in a moderate, enlightened oligarchy, exclusively oriented towards the common good, also culminated in a counterfactual fantasy where, overturning the terms of the discourse, Rome might have had something to learn from modern-day Britain. As Turner clarifies: “the liberty of the republic and its good order might have been preserved had its ancient aristocracy been

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<sup>97</sup> VANCE (2000: 149)

wise enough to have established the kind of political structures Britain had enjoyed after the departure of the Stuarts”.<sup>98</sup>

The preference for Cicero is not accidental, if we think that in the very same years Marius was welcomed in the pantheon of French revolutionaries as the hero of the people’s cause –prominently in different stages of Mirabeau’s theorisation and propaganda.<sup>99</sup> The contrast is indeed intriguing in the light of the fact that Marius and Cicero can be seen as closer than they appear at first sight in reason of their distant kinship. We shall see this point better in Chapter Four, where both Marius and Cicero re-appear in *Redgauntlet*.

As we have begun to see, the classical heritage intervened in negotiating the fundamental tensions between France and Britain in the twenty-year long conflict between the two countries from 1789 onwards. Britain’s engagement with Rome was driven by a dynamic of appropriation and divorce at the same time. While, on the one hand, the success of her commercial power seemed to validate an imperial mission, on the other the opulence of Paris and the hawkish expansionism of her foreign policy were there to show that this compatibility with imperial Rome was only partial, and indeed controversial.

### **1.5 A Classical Education for Scott: school and university**

To evaluate the extent of Scott’s grounding in Classics against the backdrop of Edinburgh’s teaching standards of his age could to some extent be a controversial task. Curiously enough for an author destined to become the ‘pillar of the establishment’, the subject of Scott’s education has over the years provided more

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<sup>98</sup> TURNER (1993: 242)

<sup>99</sup> VANCE, 1997

hesitancy than evidence among scholars. Indeed, biographers and specialists alike seem to agree more on the limits and gaps of his formation than on his achievements, as witnessed by the occurrence of adjectives such as ‘patchy’, ‘interrupted’ and ‘desultory’ with reference to his studies. As far as I can determine, so far scholars do not seem to have fully considered that the idea of a superficial, unmonitored tutoring is a critical commonplace that Scott himself contributed to endorse in his fiction. Much ink has been spilt on Edward Waverley, as instantiating the archetype of the student who does not distinguish himself in terms of industrious habits and discipline, but is more inclined to randomly follow moments of inspiration. Nevertheless, the time has perhaps arrived to address the question of whether and how Scott shaped his own biography according to that archetype.

Indeed, throughout his adult life, Scott was apt to look back upon his youth as a time of waste: the successful author often regrets his backwardness and the lacunae in his preparation. This overlap of autobiography and fiction has led scholars to make statements such as the following: “his knowledge of ancient history is sketchy, he being little impressed by the prestige of classical studies”.<sup>100</sup> An evaluation of this kind, I am persuaded, needs to be readdressed.

Some realignments have mitigated, over the years, the scope of Scott’s declarations and the resulting scholarly deductions. It has been appropriately observed, for example, that the circumstances of his education were hastened by family pressure and further complicated by his health, which was constantly

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<sup>100</sup> ANDERSON (1981: 36)

under threat.<sup>101</sup> As Sutherland summarises: “[h]e was rushed to school and university at the earliest decent age”, to satisfy the ambition of his father, who wanted him to be a Writer to the Signet in the shortest time possible.<sup>102</sup> In operative terms, Walter was “literally rushed [...] through the forms of a gentleman’s education” that resulted in “a hopelessly accelerated course of study [...]. There was little chance that the boy could take full advantage of the educational opportunities that flashed by him”.<sup>103</sup> Yet, there is still a mythopoeic self-deprecation that weighs upon the topic of his formative years and that must be treated with some caution. The plausibility of his reflective assessments must be confronted with the question of whether and how Scott’s learned characters, which are halfway between amateur and autodidact, can be read as a surrogate for the author himself, as part of a strategy to promote his own scholarly persona, as will be discussed in Chapter Three. On the contrary, as I hope my study will make clear, the Classics played a significant role in his intellectual formation, representing also a key ingredient of his lifelong self-education.

As we have seen, Scott’s education took place during an age when Scotland was profoundly changing her outlook and updating her profile, her educational system being no exception. The national reputation that Scotland was acquiring in the sphere of education made Scottish students boast the privilege of a cutting-edge schooling. As Sutherland explains: “Scottish, and more particularly

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<sup>101</sup> The poliomyelitis he contracted soon after his birth confined him to lengthy convalescences in bed and left him with a weak constitution and a permanent invalidity.

<sup>102</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 25–8)

<sup>103</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 27–9). The scholar summarises the rather condensed trajectory of Scott’s upbringing as follows: “his formal ‘education’ came to an end, after a mere seven years, of which around two were lost to illness. He entered the High school at seven, the University at twelve and graduated at fourteen”.

Edinburgh, education was [...] the best to be had in Britain. Scots were themselves inordinately proud of the fact”.<sup>104</sup>

Born indeed in Edinburgh on 1771, Scott was taught and educated entirely there, except for the periods when the breakdowns of his health compelled him to move to his family’s country residence in Kelso, near the Scottish border. This meant, decisively, a life-long exposure to the cultural hub of the capital city and everyday contact with its scholarly community, where he made friendships and acquaintances that he maintained for the rest of his life. Another pivotal factor affecting his upbringing was the rise in status of his family. As Sutherland argues, the “rapid embourgeoisement of his family was the most formative event in Scott’s childhood”.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, the change in their residence in 1774 to the New Town testified to the rise of the family’s fortune, in parallel with the city’s expansion.<sup>106</sup> As mentioned earlier, the new neighbourhood was an intellectual enclave: “[t]he culture of George Square [...] was formed on Enlightenment principles, and put a high premium on cultivation”.<sup>107</sup> In adherence to the well-trodden route of social advancement for a family that was “in the throes of a rapid gentrification”, the Scotts nourished high expectations for a son who “[h]owever minor a cadet, must still have the education of a gentleman”.<sup>108</sup> The fact that all this was happening in a period when “education [...] meant primarily a

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<sup>104</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 21)

<sup>105</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 20)

<sup>106</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 20): “The Scotts [...] must have experienced something of the thrill of pioneers, and were obliged to master a whole new set of skills”.

<sup>107</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 19)

<sup>108</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 20–1)

knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages and literatures” is inevitably fraught with consequences for this study, as we shall see more fully in a moment.<sup>109</sup>

While Latin had long since lost its institutionalised role as the official language of teaching and learning, it was nonetheless a compulsory prerequisite to enter the High School. Around the age of eight (1778) Scott underwent preparation under the supervision of private tutors, as he writes in his journal: “I had received [...] some private lessons of Latin from Mr James French, now a minister of the Kirk of Scotland”.<sup>110</sup> In this phase of home-schooling, Homer counts among his early discoveries. The earliest document surviving from his pen dates back to the end of 1778, when “his mother had him read to her Pope’s translation of Homer, which was, as he recalls, the first ‘real’ poetry he had encountered”.<sup>111</sup>

From 1779 to 1884 Scott attended the High School.<sup>112</sup> To assure continuity for the *cursus studiorum* as a whole, the teaching arrangements required a sole teacher (also known as the Master) to be in charge of the first four years. In the last year the pupils passed under the supervision of the Rector himself. To inspire motivation and competition in the classroom, students were grouped into ‘forms’ (more commonly known as benches, an arrangement common in English schools) on the basis of their achievements and improvement throughout the entire school year.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> GRIERSON (1938: 39)

<sup>110</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 21); *Memoir* in HEWITT (ed. 1981: 20).

<sup>111</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 18). The supportive relationship with his mother and their shared moments of reading left a vivid trace in Scott’s memory: “hours of leisure were usually spent in reading aloud to my mother Pope’s translation of Homer”.

<sup>112</sup> There are some oscillations in the dates (see CLARK, 1969 and SUTHERLAND, 1995)

<sup>113</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 21)

Scott's first teacher was Luke Fraser, remembered as "a good Latin scholar and a very worthy man".<sup>114</sup> The self-portrait the writer later provided in his private pages gives back the physiognomy of "an ordinary, bright but not brilliant schoolboy: "I [...] disgusted my [...] master as much by negligence and frivolity as I occasionally pleased him by flashes of intellect and talent".<sup>115</sup> Scott experienced for the first time a sense of intellectual inferiority in realising that, though one year younger than himself, his classmates were significantly more advanced in Latin. As he himself comments: "I was [...] rather behind [...] both in years and in progress. This was a real disadvantage".<sup>116</sup>

It was a fortunate coincidence that in his last two years at the High School Scott attended the class run by the headmaster, Dr Adam, who notoriously knew how to captivate his students. Adam's aim was to expand their critical engagement beyond the essentials, even in the most difficult cases, as explained by Wright: "[Adam] recognised the ability of a sometimes-indolent sometimes-inattentive boy, and succeeded in making him realise that knowledge was worth a disciplined effort to win".<sup>117</sup> To such a motivated teacher, Scott must have presented an interesting challenge. Adam evidently touched the right chords and sensibilities, and Scott threw himself into the discovery of Horace and Virgil. It was especially in verse composition, a practice that the master had introduced anew into the curriculum, that Scott produced promising results. Under the revitalising guidance of the headmaster Scott improved in mastering the finer points of Latin and eventually achieved "a proficiency in the construing of the

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<sup>114</sup> *Memoir* in HEWITT (ed. 1981: 20)

<sup>115</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 17); *Memoir* in HEWITT (ed. 1981: 21)

<sup>116</sup> *Memoir* in HEWITT (ed. 1981: 20)

<sup>117</sup> WRIGHT (1932: 42)

Latin classics which took him into the higher form [...]”<sup>118</sup>. The beneficial effects did not take long to appear: “[f]or the first time, he felt the confidence of a scholastic ability”.<sup>119</sup> Adam’s incentive and encouragement boosted Scott’s self-esteem and helped him face the difficulties of a “curriculum obsessively concerned with mastering Latin” where “[g]rammar and syntax, translations and proses were the boys’ principal exercises in all four years, and [...] the main business of the Rector’s top classes”. Among the earliest extant examples of his literary attempts, Scott produced a lyric version of the episode of Mt. Etna’s eruption from Virgil, a translation exercise decidedly *à la Pope* - according to a practice that, as Sutherland observes “was prominent on the syllabus of the High School [...]”.<sup>120</sup>

Furthermore, in his journal Scott recalls a school memory of a visit paid by a nobleman to his class: “[I] recited my lesson with some spirit and appearance of feeling the poetry—it was the apparition of Hector's ghost in the *Æneid*—which called forth the noble Earl's applause. I was very proud of this at the time”.<sup>121</sup> At the end of the same school-year, Scott won a copy of Ruddiman’s *Rudiments* as a prize for his performance at the High School -the volume in question is kept at Abbotsford with the following inscription: *praemium virtutis Gualteri Scott*.<sup>122</sup>

All of this acquires further relevance in the light of the circumstance that saw in Adam not only Scott’s teacher, but also his family neighbour in George Square. It was very likely, therefore, that his parents must have had regular

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<sup>118</sup> WRIGHT (1932: 42)

<sup>119</sup> WRIGHT (1932: 42)

<sup>120</sup> The document was preserved by Mrs Scott, with the annotation at the top of the page ‘My Walter’s first lines, 1782’ (EJ 45); SUTHERLAND (1995: 19).

<sup>121</sup> 25 April 1829.

<sup>122</sup> Ruddiman’s *Rudiments of the Latin Tongue, or Rudiments of the Latin Grammar* (1714), was a staple of learning throughout all the Eighteenth century, joining together different generations of students across Europe.

discussions with Adam on the topic of Scott's education, and that his reading was influenced by Adam's suggestions also within the domestic walls. What has been said up to now drastically reduces the scope of statements like the following: "I did not make any great figure at the High School or at least any exertions which I made were desultory and little to be depended on".<sup>123</sup>

In the period spent at Kelso, Scott was temporarily enrolled in the local Grammar School under the supervision of Mr Lancelot Whale, whom Scott remembered as "an excellent classical scholar, [...] far too good for the situation he held which only required [...] a rough foundation in the Latin language".<sup>124</sup> The teaching standards at Kelso were not as arduous as at the High School, and the newcomer soon proved to be "far enough ahead of the others".<sup>125</sup> Indeed rather than a pupil, Whale found in Scott a companion in the pursuit of more advanced literary interests. As Scott himself looks back on this period of his youth:

"My time with him [...] was spent greatly to my advantage and his gratification. He was glad to escape to Persius and Tacitus from the eternal *Rudiments* and Cornelius Nepos and as perusing these authors with one who began to understand them was to him a labour of love I made considerable progress under his instructions".<sup>126</sup>

This intellectual affinity resulted in a real collaboration in school activities: "Walter [...] read Latin with [...] the other senior scholars, and helped the school

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<sup>123</sup> *Memoir* in HEWITT (ed. 1981: 23)

<sup>124</sup> *Memoir* in HEWITT (ed. 1981: 25)

<sup>125</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 24)

<sup>126</sup> *Memoir* in HEWITT (ed. 1981: 25). Persius was excluded from the syllabus "for the sake of his obscure and crabbed style, though, indeed, an author of excellent thoughts and refined morality, but much fitter for the perusal of men than boys". STEVEN, 1849, with detailed information on the Edinburgh elite schoolroom.

by teaching elementary subjects to the junior class”.<sup>127</sup> His promotion to master’s assistant remained impressed in Scott’s memory, together with the success he obtained in a public examination, in which he performed brilliantly a well-known extract from Tacitus: “I spouted the speech of Galgacus [*sic*] [...] which did not make the less impression on the audience that few of them probably understood one word of it”.<sup>128</sup>

Out of boredom and in the absence of other distractions, Scott became an avid reader, and a subscription to a network of circulating libraries compensated for the activities in the open air that were closed to him because of his physical disability.

In this light, later admissions by Scott himself with regard to his learning can be somehow misleading. Indeed, a commentary such as the following: “I did not make any great figure at the High School or at least any exertions which I made were desultory and little to be depended on” clashes with the above considerations.<sup>129</sup> Along the same lines, when Scott writes “I left the High School [...] with a great quantity of general information, ill arranged and collected without system yet deeply impressed upon my mind”, this admission cannot but sound like an understatement.<sup>130</sup> To take my argument a step further, when we consider that “[a] striking feature in Scott’s account of his early years is his prodigious and precocious memory”, there seems no great difficulty in assuming that he learnt swathes of classical quotations by heart.<sup>131</sup> As Garside claims: “the largest number of his references are to [c]lassical authors, Virgil, Horace, Ovid,

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<sup>127</sup> WRIGHT (1932: 44)

<sup>128</sup> *Memoir* in HEWITT (ed. 1981: 25); TAC. *Agr.* 30–32.

<sup>129</sup> *Memoir* in HEWITT (ed. 1981: 21)

<sup>130</sup> *Memoir* in HEWITT (ed. 1981: 27)

<sup>131</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 16)

Cicero and Pliny, whom [he] seems to know by heart, slightly misquoting sometimes, in a way which presumably [...] reflects Scott's own knowledge as acquired through his [...] education".<sup>132</sup> We are therefore warranted in concluding, with Sutherland, that the young Scott took his leave from the High School with "an adequate grounding in Latin to which his own later reading added".<sup>133</sup>

In November 1783 Scott matriculated at the University of Edinburgh, where he spent the concluding years of his education reading for a degree in Humanities, a combination of Classics, logic and moral philosophy. Again, his brief career was not exempt from interruptions due to the recrudescence of his illness, which brought him, again, to Kelso. It was for this reason, at least as Scott himself maintains, that he lost any notion and command of the Greek alphabet. This regression earned him the nickname of 'Greek blockhead', as his fellow students addressed him. According to an anecdote that cast a legendary light on his biography, he proudly refused the help of a schoolmate in catching up with Greek, allegedly because the offer came from the son of an innkeeper "which [...] [he] felt was beneath him".<sup>134</sup>

Is Scott somewhat exaggerating the terms and scope of this divorce from Greek? Most probably so, if we consider that he attended for two years the lectures by Andrew Dalzell, the Greek Professor at the time and "a man of

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<sup>132</sup> GARSIDE (2008: 253)

<sup>133</sup> GRIERSON (1938: 12)

<sup>134</sup> *Memoir* in HEWITT (ed. 1981: 27)

attractive character and an enthusiastic teacher, who did much to promote an interest in Greek [...]”.<sup>135</sup>

Sutherland considerably reduces the extent of this alleged inadequacy, by reminding us that “for all his self-castigation [...], one should not leap to conclusions based on today’s educational standards”.<sup>136</sup>

At the age of 14, Scott graduated from university and immediately afterwards started his legal training under his father’s supervision, a circumstance that strengthened his mastery of Roman law and rhetoric. Indeed, Classics continued to permeate his reading interests for the remainder of his lifetime, deeply involved as he was in the Edinburgh scholarly community.

Remarkably, Scott followed with interest the Homeric question that had arisen around F. A. Wolf’s *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795) and was constantly updated about the latest developments of the debate in Germany. This information can be inferred indirectly from the memories of his friend and poet Thomas Campbell, who writes in his journal after a lively debate on Wolf and his work, in which Scott participated and contributed alike, in the course of a dinner hosted by Thomas Norton Longman.<sup>137</sup> Likewise, a keen interest in Greek Tragedy undoubtedly underlies his *Essay on Chivalry, Romance and the Drama*, originally published in 1810 as a supplement to the *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, which from 1834 onwards circulated independently in the form of a concise handbook.

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<sup>135</sup> This opinion is reported by CLARKE (1959: 144). In the memory of a student, however, Greek was nothing more than a mere hobby for Dalzel. Lord Cockburn in fact criticises the lack of discipline in his class: “he was ineffective. How is it possible for the elements [...] of a language to be taught to one hundred boys at once, by a single lecturing professor? [...]. [T]he class was utterly useless”.

<sup>136</sup> SUTHERLAND (1995: 27)

<sup>137</sup> See CAMPBELL (1849: 1, 432–33) and JOSEFOWICZ GRECO (2016: 824–29).

In addition to this, German scholarship offered Scott a new window of reflection on the topic of the ‘disciplinarianisation’ of Classics. The process of cultural professionalisation that was gradually taking place all across Europe, with history and philology marking new routes in both school and academia, was the result of a decade-long debate on the value of Graeco-Roman culture, with the most prominent men of literature embarking on the question of why, when and how to study Latin and Greek. It is very therefore likely that the reflections carried out in Germany by the Schlegel brothers (Scott possessed Friederich's *Geschichte der alten und neuen Litteratur*, 1812), were influential in Scott's overseeing the foundation of the Edinburgh Academy, where he played a crucial role at the helm of its intellectual transactions, which he regarded with increasing optimism.<sup>138</sup> In a diary entry written after a morning spent in the fifth class at the newly born Academy, the writer positively comments:

“we heard Greek, of which I am no otherwise a judge than that it was fluently read and explained. [...] [W]e heard Virgil and Livy admirably translated *ad aperturam libri*, and, what I thought remarkable, the rector giving the English, and the pupils returning, with singular dexterity, the Latin, not exactly as in the original, but often by synonymes [*sic*], which showed that the exercise referred to the judgment, and did not depend on the memory”.<sup>139</sup>

We may conclude, with Anderson, that throughout Scott's career as a whole “his huge background of reading and his powerful memory provide[d] him with a

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<sup>138</sup> Remarkably, both in the original German and in English translation by Lockhart.

<sup>139</sup> 9 July 1827.

source of endless suggestiveness and stimulus”.<sup>140</sup> But in particular, what concerns us more is that he enjoyed life-long, though intermittent, access to Greek and Latin texts, as witnessed by his hugely comprehensive library at Abbotsford. In this regard, the digitised catalogue, recently made available online, offers a valuable tool for research of this kind, in the light, however, of some significant limits. As Garside observes, the catalogue presents some reservations in term of reliability: “[i]t would be futile [...] to go looking for direct equivalents in the Abbotsford Library –and if Scott had kept some of his early text books, they were likely supplanted as a result of a large donation by Constable of classical editions in 1824”.<sup>141</sup> This late acquisition, consisting of 140 volumes of *variorum* editions, would theoretically have helped Scott in his self-assigned task of resuming his classical studies. Disappointingly enough for this enquiry, Scott had never opened them. Indeed, “[h]e said he was going to use them to brush up his knowledge of the classic texts, but obviously he never had the time because the gilded edges that Constable used to decorate the volumes are still stuck together”.<sup>142</sup>

## 1.6 Concluding remarks

With all this in mind, it does not seem baseless to conclude that, despite his frequent declarations of ignorance, Scott was not as incompetent in the Classics as he himself recurrently professes. Although his achievements were undisputedly not what they might have been, we can determine, with a certain

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<sup>140</sup> ANDERSON (1981: 27)

<sup>141</sup> GARSIDE (2008: 253)

<sup>142</sup> I owe this information to Ms Lindsay Levy, Rare Book Cataloguer at Edinburgh Advocates Library, whom I sincerely thank (the cited text is an extract from an e-mail dated July 12<sup>th</sup> 2012).

degree of confidence, that he completed his education with full proficiency in the Latin language. As regards Greek, though his command of the language was minimal in terms of addressing the challenges of its phraseology, the availability of translations granted him, if not a minute, certainly an extensive mastery of ancient texts. Adam's teachings, along with his handbooks, of which Scott owned copies full of annotations, evidently served to guide him across the literature and civilisation of the Graeco-Roman world throughout the course of his life.

The complex and varied responses to the classical world that Scott would go on to produce in his fiction, as we are about to uncover, were grounded in the cross-fertilisation of ideas and debate on both the canon and significance of Classics in his own time and in particular in a context where “the development of an educational system [...] was [...] based on the study of the ancient world, and also expected it to explain the problems of the modern”.<sup>143</sup>

More importantly for this study, it was under these circumstances that Scott developed a clear preference for historical prose. Authors like Tacitus, Sallust, Curtius Rufus and Plutarch occupied a privileged position in his library, be that real or ideal, pointing towards future pursuits in his literary career.

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<sup>143</sup> MURRAY (2011: 304)

## Chapter Two

### **The Others at Home**

*This chapter sheds light on the role that classical models play in the novels under scrutiny with specific reference to the themes of colonial annexation and imperial foundation. In highlighting issues of ethnicity and national identity, both Greece and Rome provide Scott with a set of patterns and perspectives for investigating the vexed and thorny relationship between Scotland and England. The classically grounded reader is thus provided with a familiar tool allowing a new insight into the geo-political landscape of Great Britain and is also invited to join Scott and his characters in an ongoing meditation on the Scottish past, both in its ethnic background and in its direct opposition to the English element. The appraisal of what was commonly known as the quintessentially Scottish ethos extends to the present and future alike, prominently debating the leadership that England was claiming for herself within the framework of the British Empire in the aftermath of Waterloo.*

#### **2.1 Preliminary remarks**

As explained in the introduction, the main purpose of this study is to challenge the somewhat standardised scholarly interpretation, set in stone especially from Lukács onwards, which has seen in Scott the champion of the whitewashing of the historical tensions between England and Scotland, and in his novels a new Act of Union translated into fictional prose.

In this chapter I intend to challenge this view by demonstrating how the incorporation of classical authors, including Tacitus, Ovid and Herodotus, allows Scott to trace alternative spaces of engagement within a fictional project that indeed qualifies as “an attempt to bring to living representation cultures and

mentalities that [...] elude our cultural norms”.<sup>144</sup> We are about to see how Graeco-Roman discourse on power and conquest features repeatedly in Scott’s fiction, along with the political implications that such a discourse entailed in displaying frictions between local autonomy and central power.

As seen in chapter one above, in 1707 Scotland acquired official membership of the United Kingdom and full participation in the challenges, opportunities and civic ideals of the British Empire. This constitutional incorporation led subsequent generations of Scots to interrogate themselves about the contribution they were called upon to make to the new joint venture of which they had become part, but above all, to assess the profile and character of their own nationhood against the contrastive background of English supremacy. This issue became momentous in the second half of the century, when British policymaking did not seem to favour any idea of local specificity and self-determination in the ‘sister kingdom’.

Indeed, the legal measures promulgated in the years immediately after Culloden were designed to dismember the clan-system, perceived as the true hotbed of Jacobite plotting.<sup>145</sup> The suppression of patrilineal prerogatives, together with the banishment of customs and rituals of a longstanding tradition, inflicted a profound wound on the social fabric and cultural landscape of the Highlands. Systematically patrolled against any subversive drift, the map of Northern Scotland was re-planned to favour a redistribution of power and

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<sup>144</sup> SHAW (1998: 169)

<sup>145</sup> To briefly remind the reader of the most important enactments of the period: the Act of Proscription (1746), incorporated both the Dress and the Disarming Act. Later in the same year, the Heritable Jurisdictions Act extinguished the authority and capacity of clan-leaders in the administration of justice. I list the major statutes only, for an in-depth analysis of this historical juncture see conveniently ALLAN, 2002; INNES and ROGERS, 2000. Specifically on legislation CANNON, 1973.

resources among its territories, and became the scene of constant movements of population. The so-called ‘Highland clearances’ were the harbinger of the mass-emigration phenomenon, notoriously known as the ‘Scottish diaspora’, to America and Australia, which reached its peak around 1780.<sup>146</sup> In this state of things, a feeling of disillusionment was slowly circulating in Scotland about a political system that, while nominally in favour of a collaboration on the basis of equal partnership, was actually fostering a standardisation that was threatening the very ethos of Scotland. The flagging morale of Scottish public opinion is pertinently summarised by McCracken-Flesher: “[t]he Scots [...] began to realise that through subtle encroachment upon and quiet erasure of their Scottish difference, they had come to occupy a decidedly secondary, if not irrelevant position in the Union”.<sup>147</sup>

The endemic tensions in the Anglo-Scottish relationships were framed anew within the composite structure of a supranational empire that was soon to reach the peak of its power and its greatest geographical expanse but was not alien to animosities and ruptures, as the newborn United States of America were proving in the very same years. Furthermore, the debate as to equality among subjects represented a still unresolved issue not only within the borders of the British Isles, but also overseas. To give an example, the decline that was drastically affecting the native population in India became a first-order concern in public debate, which Scott himself expressed in a few entries in his diary, such

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<sup>146</sup> For contextualisation see RICHARDS, 2007; BUELTMANN *et al.* 2013.

<sup>147</sup> MCCRACKEN-FLESHER (1991: 297)

as the following one: “The Indians [...] are dying fast; they seem to [...] die whenever the white population approaches them”.<sup>148</sup>

Alongside the discussion on political affairs, these questions found a literary formulation in the so-called myth of the Highlands. The depiction of Northern Scotland as an indigenous community provided a suitable milieu for the ‘noble savage’ that Romanticism was nostalgically representing and that was increasingly taking centre stage in collective imagery. The intersection of these factors generated what we may define as the paradox surrounding Scotland in 1800: on the one hand, the world-renowned epicentre of Enlightenment, with her cosmopolitan bourgeoisie at the forefront of the liberal professions and trade, and on the other, a remote country on the edge of Northern Europe affected by endemic backwardness. This dichotomy is encapsulated by Williamson as follows: “Scotland emerged as a highly articulate culture but one that appeared [...] to have retained social attitudes which had long disappeared elsewhere in Europe”.<sup>149</sup>

We are about to see how a set of patterns, but, more importantly, perspectives from Greece and Rome, found their way into the fabric of Scott’s texts with reference to the burning issue of a diminished, not to say mutilated, national identity. The considerations in this chapter will hopefully prove enlightening in revealing how the ‘invention’ of Scotland as a cultural artefact was inextricably anchored in the complex array of responses and appropriations that classical reception was producing at that time.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> 24 January 1827.

<sup>149</sup> WILLIAMSON (1996: 66)

<sup>150</sup> On the myth of Scottish nationalism recent treatments include, with different emphases: TREVOR-ROPER, 2008 and BROWN (ed. 2010).

## 2.2 On the side of the vanquished with Tacitus

In *Old Mortality*, the depiction of the Covenanter rebels in their direct conflict with the Royalist forces reveals all the influence that an author such as Tacitus continued to exert on Scott even after his schooldays.

On the eve of the Battle of Drumclog (chapter 15), an impromptu army deployed on the battlefield observes the advancing enemy waiting for the signal to attack. The rebels, who approach the skirmish decidedly underprepared and inadequately armed, rely only on their “full [...] zeal for the cause”.<sup>151</sup> As the narrative voice explains, their ardour is fuelled by the presence of their families and offspring on the borders of the combat zone. The total devotion to the cause they are fighting for and the incitement they unrelentingly receive from their kinfolk compensates for the lack of military tactics among their ranks. Let us see the passage in question, which is worth quoting in full:

“[T]he sense of their having taken a desperate step [...], the ardour of their enthusiasm, were the means on which their leaders reckoned, for supplying the want of arms, equipage, and military discipline. On the side of the hill [...], were seen the women and even the children, whom zeal, opposed to persecution, had driven into the wilderness. They seemed stationed there to be spectators of the engagement, by which their own fate, as well as that of their parents, husbands, and sons, was to be decided. Like the females of the ancient German tribes, the shrill cries which they raised, when they beheld the glittering ranks of their enemy appear [...], acted as an incentive to their relatives to fight to the last in defence of that which was dearest to them. Such exhortations seemed to have their full and emphatic effect; for a wild halloo, which

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<sup>151</sup> *Mortality* (15: 131)

went from rank to rank [...], intimated the resolution of the insurgents to fight to the uttermost".<sup>152</sup>

The association of the Covenanters with ancient German warriors establishes a connection with Tacitus, who describes the participation and proximity of women in military circumstances as a typical feature that native Germans display in opposing their resistance to the invading Roman legions (*Germania*, 7). In Tacitus' own words:

*quodque praecipuum fortitudinis incitamentum est, non casus nec fortuita conglobatio turmam aut cuneum facit, sed familiae et propinquitates; et in proximo pignora, unde feminarum ululatus audiri, unde vagitus infantium. hi cuique sanctissimi testes, hi maximi laudatores: ad matres, ad coniuges vulnera ferunt; nec illae numerare et exigere plagas pavent, cibosque et hortamina pugnantibus gestant.*

[The strongest incentive to courage lies in this, that neither chance nor casual grouping makes the squadron or the wedge, but family and kinship: close at hand, too, are their dearest, whence is heard the wailing voice of woman and the child's cry: here are the witnesses who are in each man's eyes most precious; here the praise he covets most: they take their wounds to mother and wife, who do not shrink from counting the hurts or demanding a sight of them: they minister to the combatants food and exhortation].

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Tacitus played a significant role in Scott's formal education and loomed large in the memory of his early years.<sup>153</sup> In this specific case, the parallel is dense with repercussions, for it endorses the insurgents' presentation in terms of pre-conquest barbarism. Not only does the

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<sup>152</sup> *Mortality* (15: 131). Emphasis mine.

<sup>153</sup> Archival holdings in the Abbotsford library testify to Scott's perduring interest in Tacitus well beyond his school years and duties. In fact, an autographed copy of *La Germanie* by Charles Louis Fleury Panckoucke (Paris, 1824) is found among his bookshelves. The volume in question features on the title page the dedication 'à Sir Walter Scott hommage de l'auteur'. Although *Old Mortality* was published a few years before the French translation, this presence confirms nonetheless Scott's longstanding exposure to Tacitus' works.

narrator allude to Tacitus, but the allusion itself proves crucial in opening up a series of questions and reservations regarding the alleged reasons for, and goals of, the rebellion. As I want to suggest, a shift in viewpoint is implicit in the inclusion of Tacitus, insofar as the Roman historian allows Scott, and his learned readers alike, to enlarge the perspective so as to probe into what really led the Covenanters to take up arms against the Government. On the assumption that “the discourse of primitive liberty implicitly call[s] into question the values of the system of power”, as Lincoln has already underlined for Scott’s narrative, it seems not unreasonable to argue that by bringing into relief the sense of belonging and loyalty typical of primitive societies under threat of invasion, Scott invokes, via Tacitus, a different vision of the dissidents and of the establishment around them.<sup>154</sup> This becomes more visible as the narrative continues:

“These men had been the principal sufferers during the oppression of the time. Their minds were [...] driven to desperation by the various exactions and cruelties to which they had been subjected”.<sup>155</sup>

The classically alert reader is thus challenged as to which position to adopt on the subject of the rebellion: *a fortiori* since the protagonist, Henry Morton, not only joins the Covenanters, but also becomes, albeit temporarily, one of their military leaders. To quote Scott again:

“it is impossible to deny the praise of devoted courage to a few hundred peasants who [...] borne out only by their innate zeal, and a detestation

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<sup>154</sup> LINCOLN (2002: 48)

<sup>155</sup> *Mortality* (20: 169)

of the oppression of their rules, ventured to declare open war against an established government”.<sup>156</sup>

Here Tacitus confronts Scott’s reader with a clearly crucial complexity. Indeed, what has been presented up to now in terms of a religious conflict is only on the surface a dispute over faith and doctrine. Through the lens of Tacitus, Scott suggests that, beyond attritions of worship and orthodoxy, this is the story of an occupied people fighting for the sake of their own survival. The emphasis upon the national cause is however coterminous with the firm condemnation of fanaticism and extremism that irremediably taints the Covenanters’ enterprise. Once again, Tacitus intervenes in the characterisation of Habbakuk Mucklewrath, whose bigotry and fervency verge on psychosis. As the narrative voice describes him, Habbakuk “looked more like the resurrection of some cannibal priest, or druid red from his human sacrifice”.<sup>157</sup> This description relies on Tacitus’ ethnographic digression about barbarian practices across the Channel: *nam cruore captivo adolere aras et hominum fibris consulere deos fas habebant*.<sup>158</sup> This time, not only does Scott follow in the footsteps of Tacitus to distance himself from any kind of fanaticism, but he also overturns the perception of Habbakuk as a Christian martyr. In a sort of retaliation, the spiritual leader of the Covenanters, whom his followers venerate as a victim of religious persecution, becomes the Ur-specimen of paganism. We may argue here that Tacitus rightfully enters into the discourse of Enlightenment, by asserting the preeminence of rationality over fanaticism. This stance is not contradictory to the invitation,

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<sup>156</sup> *Mortality* (18: 156)

<sup>157</sup> *Mortality* (22: 181)

<sup>158</sup> TAC. *Ann.* 14.30.3, ed. Teubner [for they considered it a pious duty to slake the altars with captive blood and to consult their deities by means of human entrails].

previously issued to the reader, to consider that the Covenanters, by fighting for their religious liberty, are fighting for the very core of their existence.

If we approach *Old Mortality* through the theme of British civil war and its resulting oppositions, the novel turns out to be an anomalous case in Scott's output, on account of a civil strife that unfolds here as an exclusively internal affair of Scotland. As has been argued, the novel underscores the pernicious effects of religious contentions within the very same country. The catastrophe is epitomised by the feeling of estrangement and deracination that Morton experiences vis-à-vis the fellow countrymen with whom he temporarily aligns himself. For example, Dickson discerns an open condemnation of dogmatism in a narration where Scott "discredits the Covenanters and [...] glorifies the Royalists, all the while maintaining a rhetoric of fairness".<sup>159</sup> While Garside was the first, to my knowledge, to open up links with contemporary issues, his focus remains nevertheless limited to Scotland: in his view, the clash between the Covenanters and Episcopalians foreshadows the radical tensions that still affected the religious fabric of post-Union Scotland.<sup>160</sup> More recently, D'Arcy has put forward the hypothesis that *Old Mortality* was "far more politicised and nationalist in content than has perhaps hitherto been perceived".<sup>161</sup> In a similar vein, Krull argues that "the insurgency [...] provides the crucial historical locus [...] for posing questions about the nation's political and moral development. Internal struggles of self-definition are represented as the formative struggles of nation self-definition".<sup>162</sup> The present reading against the backdrop of Classics

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<sup>159</sup> DICKSON (1991: 59)

<sup>160</sup> GARSIDE (1980: 131–2)

<sup>161</sup> D'ARCY (2005: 110)

<sup>162</sup> KRULL (2006: 707)

substantially supports this opinion. As we have mentioned, Tacitus introduces decisive reorientations, in that the struggle between the Covenanters and Royalists goes far beyond religious dissensions. The conventicle of two thousand Covenanters eventually sacrificed at High Drumclog represents in miniature one of the many facets of Scotland's soul, inasmuch as the strife opposing Presbyterians and Episcopalians prefigures many other bloody pages to come in British history.

As has been acknowledged, the parameter of otherness serves in Tacitus' vision as a contrastive background where the degeneration of Rome stands out, prelude to her inevitable decline in a not-too-distant future.<sup>163</sup> It is my contention that in making this link, Scott responds, in a similar, albeit subtle, vein, to a certain imperialist rhetoric that saw the future of Great Britain anchored in England's intrinsic superiority. Scott's usage of Tacitean material appears therefore as a response to an establishment that was claiming the inheritance of Rome and her civilising mission, not only overseas, but immediately beyond Hadrian's Wall. Drawing on Tacitus, Scott covertly inserts his perplexity about an appropriation of Rome that, apart from consecrating England in her leading role, provided the justification, in terms of *Realpolitik*, for the inevitable costs of its military expansion and the suppression of local identities. More importantly, resorting to Tacitus means for Scott inserting reasons for disquiet and circumspection about the agenda of the Empire. The implied warning concerns the risks of underrating quiescent factors –the so-

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<sup>163</sup> On Tacitus' declinist vision see for example KREBS, 2011. Earlier work is still useful: see, among the others, SADDINGTON, 1961 and 1975 and WALBANK 1985. For a recent treatment, though limited to the United States, see LACHMANN and ROSE-GREENLAND (2014).

called ‘barbaric virtues’ of the conquered people, such as fortitude, bravery and a love of liberty– that, although seemingly at rest, had the potential, in the long run, to destroy the Empire from within.

Like the Highlanders, the Covenanters encapsulate the aboriginal element of primeval societies. In adherence to the criterion ‘wild-but-free’, their native simplicity works as the antidote for the trickeries and impostures of refined societies. Tacitus proves instrumental for Scott in implying that “the dispute between England and Scotland commenced in Roman Times”.<sup>164</sup> As previously mentioned, the weight and import of the Romano-British past acquired special appeal in Scotland in the light of the incontrovertible historical circumstance that saw in Scotland the unconquerable, missing part of *Britannia*. Therefore, while Scotland matches Northern Britannia in temporarily resisting an invading force, the parallel with Tacitus equates England with Rome, in her self-posturing as the leading metropolitan centre irradiating progress and improvement. The thorny question of the advent of Rome to British shores emerges, with the trail of controversies we have previously mentioned. In keeping with what has already been discussed in chapter one, Scott’s engagement with Tacitus offers a vivid example of how “[t]he Roman Empire [...] offered a set of evocative templates for [...] appropriating Britain’s own role as imperial superpower”.<sup>165</sup>

While previous scholarship on Scott and the Classics has mainly focussed on the *Aeneid*, in an attempt to foreground a shared ideological perspective, where the trajectory from civil war to national union encapsulates a process of integration of a native rebellious element within a supranational power, here I

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<sup>164</sup> HINGLEY (2013: 144)

<sup>165</sup> BRADLEY (2010: 128)

start to challenge this assumption, by focussing instead on the fragmented dissonant voices that intersect and collide in the fabric of the texts. In many respects, drawing on Rome offered more problems than solutions, and it is precisely in the light of these controversial aspects that Scott resorts to Tacitus. The series of Jacobite uprisings at home and the recent failure of American colonisation abroad (not to mention the recrudescence of American hostilities in 1812) were all fresh wounds in collective memory, and were there to testify that empires are easy to lose just as they are easy to found. A colonial reading against the backdrop of Rome worked in both an active and a passive sense, that is to say, by addressing England in her role of present conqueror and at the same time reminding her of her past as a formerly conquered territory. To borrow from Bradley, Scott appeals to Tacitus as a sort of preventive remedy: “by showing what happens when the British are given a taste of their own medicine, Tacitus stimulates national introspection and self-analysis”.<sup>166</sup>

Thus, the adoption of Tacitus’ standpoint casts a transhistorical gaze raising the question of if and how the preservation of minorities (be they ethnic or religious) was really an issue on the Empire’s agenda, and if and how England was ready to take up the challenges and scenarios in store for her colonial project. Scott’s re-appropriation of Tacitus leaves room only for a caveat about the triumphalist optimism over the mission of the British Empire.

Indeed, we may agree with Hingley that imperial Rome “provided a civilising discourse of immense symbolic power in the context of territorial domination of Scotland, Ireland, America, and India”.<sup>167</sup> Rather than an

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<sup>166</sup> BRADLEY (2010: 126)

<sup>167</sup> HINGLEY (2008: 13–4)

achievement, however, the model represents in Scott a distorted perspective that the narrative voice usually transfers to his ‘wavering’ protagonists, who ‘land’ in Scotland full of stereotypes and prejudices. The arrival of Francis Osbaldistone among his Northern relatives offers itself as the most self-evident example of this. As Lincoln comments on the scene: “he looks as with the eye of an imperial Roman upon a strange primitive northern culture”.<sup>168</sup> His first dealings with Northumberland as a gateway to Scotland mark “an encounter with a culture not yet transformed by modern refinements”, leading the hero in “a journey back in time: Osbaldistone Hall and its inhabitants belong to a former age”.<sup>169</sup>

It is only thanks to the intervention of Diana Vernon that his perspective is gradually realigned: the girl exhorts Frank to avoid hasty judgement and to give himself time to observe instead the local inhabitants and their habits in action with his own eyes.<sup>170</sup>

### **2.3 Radically different neighbours**

Roughly halfway through *Waverley*, the eponymous hero joins the Jacobite army on the outskirts of Edinburgh, where his fellow soldiers are already preparing for the march eastwards that will take them to victory at Prestonpans. With their departure imminent, Edward’s attention is captured by the display of tartans and weapons among the Highland columns, and especially by the bustle of batmen and other subaltern figures hustling around the chieftains:

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<sup>168</sup> LINCOLN (2002: 54)

<sup>169</sup> LINCOLN (2002: 44); HARTVEIT (1983: 57).

<sup>170</sup> *Rob Roy* (10: 89): “respect the land [...] until your own observation has proved them [sic] to be unworthy of your good opinion”.

“in an inferior rank [...] there were found individuals of an inferior description, the common peasantry [...], who [...] bore [...] the livery of the extreme penury, being indifferently accoutred, and worse armed, half naked [...] and miserable in aspect. Each important clan had some of these Helots attached to them [...]. Now these same Helots, though forced into the field by the arbitrary authority of the chieftains [...] were, in general, very sparingly fed, ill dressed, and worse armed”.<sup>171</sup>

In describing this satellite presence that Waverley confusedly perceives moving in the midst of each clan, the storyteller resorts to a specific social category of ancient Sparta. The lowest class in the Spartan hierarchy, the Helots provided a subordinate workforce appointed to domestic duties and manual labour and also to the service of their masters in wartime.<sup>172</sup> It is indeed the storyteller who intrudes on the hero's viewpoint here, as we realise from the apologetic explanation that immediately follows, where the exiguous number of helots and clans given by way of example –“the M'Couls [...], a sort of hereditary servants to the Stuarts of Appine. The Machbeaths [...] subjects to the Morays, and clan Donnochy, or Robertsons of Athole” –is justified to avoid the risk of “drawing a Highland tempest into the shop of [the] publisher”.<sup>173</sup>

To Waverley, as to any reader familiar with the Classics, the recourse to Sparta implies, more largely, a parallel in terms of civilisation and social practice. The prominence that Sparta acquires among the other Greek cities in both ancient and modern historiography lies in her accentuated militarism and

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<sup>171</sup> *Waverley* (44: 228)

<sup>172</sup> The most exhaustive treatment of the Helots in Ancient Sparta up to now is to be found in LURAGHI and ALCOCK (edd. 2003). See also LEVY, 2003 and DUCAT, 1990.

<sup>173</sup> *Waverley* (44: 228)

memorably acknowledged virtues, involving firmness and courage.<sup>174</sup> These distinctive qualities are the product of an education characterised by physical training and discipline and, notably, experienced by both men and women alike, within the framework of a frugal lifestyle strictly limited to the basics and essentials and based on the avoidance of luxury and refinements.<sup>175</sup>

Strictly regulated by life-long military service, life at Sparta saw the citizen-soldier committed to permanent warfare for the defence of liberty.<sup>176</sup> This spirit of abnegation and sacrifice was exemplarily proved in 480 BCE, when a Sparta-led coalition of Greek cities faced the Persians at Thermopylae, fighting to the last man before being defeated.<sup>177</sup>

The contribution paid by Sparta to the Greek cause offered a mirror in which the key events of the recent past were reflected back as successes, by foregrounding the joint effort and common strategy that had been the key to the triumph of the confederate British army in Napoleon's defeat. Indeed, it was at the most high-pitched moments within the prolonged confrontation with France that Athens became a controversial paradigm for Britain, on account of her imperial aspirations, and "the counter-example of Sparta came into greater prominence".<sup>178</sup> In the post-Waterloo transition, the composite identity of Ancient Greece purveyed a powerful prism for the classically educated reader through which to view the delicate state of the present. This was particularly in the light of the internal conflict between Athens and Sparta which, despite their

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<sup>174</sup> Among the ancient sources see Plutarch, Herodotus, Thucydides, Pausanias and Strabo.

<sup>175</sup> POMEROY (2002: 3–4)

<sup>176</sup> KENNEL, 1995.

<sup>177</sup> For the most recent treatment of this episode of the Graeco-Persian War (499–449 BC) see CARTLEDGE, 2011.

<sup>178</sup> MURRAY (2011: 305)

shared victory over the Persians, began shortly afterwards and lasted for nearly three decades. The Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC) was indeed a struggle between martial prowess and naval supremacy, cultural conservatism and artistic flowering.<sup>179</sup> As a whole, the Greek history of the fifth century BC worked as a comparator dense with opposed implications for both the Scottish and English reader, who already knew the epilogue –viz. the victory of Sparta and the capitulation of Athenian leadership.

The parallel with Sparta has proved particularly versatile across centuries serving the purpose of “imagining traditional Scotland within the terms and values of classical political virtue”.<sup>180</sup> It is little surprise, then, that from the Humanist tradition through to the Enlightenment, Sparta was repeatedly relocated to Scotland, with her inhabitants cast as new Dorians and celebrated for their uprightness and endurance.<sup>181</sup> The fascination that the Spartan state exerts lies primarily in its embodying a notion of otherness within the same borders of the country. The myth of Sparta becomes a central point of reference for the depiction of Scotland as the ‘neighbouring foreigner’, or, in Cartledge’s formulation, the ‘internal other’.<sup>182</sup> From the English viewpoint this analogy recasts Scotland as the ‘foreigner-at-home’ within the pursuit of a domestic

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<sup>179</sup> On this phase of acute generational conflict in the history of Ancient Greece see REINHOLD, 1976<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>180</sup> WILLIAMSON (1996: 69)

<sup>181</sup> See on this topic CARTLEDGE, 2004. John Calvin (1509–1564) was a fervent admirer of Spartan institutions, whereas Rollin in his *Histoire ancienne* carries on a thorough reflection on the advantages of the Spartan constitution in comparison to the Athenian one. For Rousseau, see again CARTLEDGE (1999: 311 ff.) and LEIGH, 1979. Further insights on Sparta and modernity are in RAWSON, 1969; POWELL and HODKINSON, 1994 and 2002. As CARTLEDGE points out (2002: 170, n. 26), such long-standing association continues to shape the self-perception of Scotland, having been politically exploited until recent times to promote dissociation from London: “[t]he website of the Scottish National Party has been known to be (dis)graced by racist appeal to ancient Sparta”.

<sup>182</sup> CARTLEDGE (2002: 80)

colonisation scheme wherein the annexed country struggles to remain something remarkably different. This mutual usage of Sparta provides a reversible focal point to convey the strife between England and Scotland, by drawing an ‘us-them’ distinction that is revelatory of the frictions caused by the cohabitation of two nations in the same island territory.

Interestingly enough, the association with Spartans in the depiction of the Scots is not limited to the military sphere, but extends to their characterisation ‘in civilian clothes’ and, even more interestingly, to the delineation of the female element. Close to the epilogue of *The Heart of Midlothian*, the Duke of Argyll describes to Reuben Butler the encounter he recently had in London with a certain Lady Staunton –who, as the characters are still unaware (or seem to be unaware), is no other than Effie Deans, Reuben’s sister-in-law under her new identity. But let us see how Argyll– a Scottish noble by birth who, thanks to a brilliant military career in the service of the Hanoverian crown, has entered with full rights the English aristocracy– evokes the first impressions of this new acquaintance: “She is a Scotchwoman, and speaks with a Scotch accent [...] that is quite Doric”.<sup>183</sup>

In the Duke’s words, the description of the aristocratic woman stops at her exotic allure, which sounds intriguing to the English eye. Scottishness is thus figured and perceived in terms of a merely picturesque phenomenon, in a turn of expression that reflects the London-centric viewpoint to which the speaker now belongs. Things take a thought-provoking turn if we look behind and beyond the surface of this discursive enactment and in the light of its conversational context.

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<sup>183</sup> *Midlothian* (50: 424)

The dialogue with Reuben takes place during a visit that the magnate is paying to the Butlers, who live and work on his estate and therefore owe a life-long debt of gratitude to him. At the immediate level of communication, the learned allusion seems to create a shared ground with his interlocutor, a schoolmaster and minister of the Church of Scotland who indeed can grasp its reference. However, this complicity is only apparent, since I am persuaded that the utterance also contains a veiled, though mordant, implication by which the speaker dissociates himself from his native environment to advocate full membership of the metropolitan high society of London. While the Duke relies on his addressee's cultural background, Scott appeals in turn to the pragmatic competence of his readers to show how classical imagery becomes instrumental for an exponent of high-brow culture to trace a class boundary and to consolidate his new belonging to the dominant elite. Argyll's lost connection with his homeland casts a shadow on the role as *deus ex machina* in which we have seen him so far. Behind the tones of philanthropy and condescension of the benevolent aristocrat concerned with promoting interclass collaboration, this comment about Lady Staunton brings forward a 'dissonant element' that situates him among the "supposedly 'good' characters" who, according to D'Arcy, show their "rather negative or completely unattractive facets [...] which can make a reader reluctant to accept their apparently positive function within the text".<sup>184</sup>

It is my contention that this move is designed by the narrator to encourage his classically-learned readers to take a meditative attitude to the risk of

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<sup>184</sup> D'ARCY (2005: 49)

extinction threatening Scottishness, by drawing attention to the side-effects of a Union from which a true Scottish native emerges inexorably brainwashed.

## 2.4 The Scythians among us

The present section aims to show how the complex interaction between Scotland and England is mediated in Scott by a parallel equating the Highlanders with the Scythians, an ethnic group that was proverbially synonymous with indomitableness and savagery in Greek and Latin literature alike.<sup>185</sup>

We shall see how this comparison provides a focal point capable of mirroring the reciprocal attitudes of his two-edged cultivated audience, whether the reader is Scottish or English.

At the edge of the ‘civilised’ world, the Scythians marked the border between Europe and Asia. In Herodotus’ account, they constituted a pastoral race whose lifestyle constantly translated into a struggle against nature and climate.<sup>186</sup> The harshness of the geophysical conditions characterising an impassable land, unfavourable to permanent settlement, affected in turn the human portrait of its inhabitants and their social organisation.<sup>187</sup> Among the defining features that set the Scythians apart from the rest of ‘civilised’ humanity, their accentuated militarism, along with their sense of loyalty, linked their confederated tribes on the basis of family alliances and networks of mutual obligations. These qualities

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<sup>185</sup> See for example HOR. *carm.* 4.5.25–7: *quis Parthum paveat, quis gelidum Scythen,/[...], incolumi Caesare?* [Who would fear the Parthian, who the frozen Scythian, [...] as long as Caesar is safe?]. For a brand-new account of the Scythians in Roman literature see GERSTACKER *et al.* 2015.

<sup>186</sup> As Herodotus tells us, the extreme North of the region is desert and uninhabited, and the whole area, surrounded by mountains and affected by rigid winters, is difficult to cross or explore. See HER. 4, 28.

<sup>187</sup> The idea of environmental determinism is already sketched out, in embryonic form, in Herodotus. In particular with reference to his treatment of the Scythians see ISAAC (2004: 257 ff).

crucially contributed to their resistance and endurance against any external invasion. In particular it was the strength they showed in repelling the Eastern subjugation, when they came face-to-face with a Persian expedition in 512 BC, which consecrated them as the unconquerable people *par excellence*.<sup>188</sup>

Herodotus' extensive account inaugurates a narrative continuum destined to have a massive impact on Western culture over the centuries, by offering a fully codified paradigm of barbarism: in the words of Hartog, the label 'Scythian' embodies "a ready-made expression denoting solitude, wildness, distant places".<sup>189</sup> A key intermediary in the chain of reception is Ovid, who rightfully claims first-hand knowledge on account of his banishment to the Black Sea in AD 8. Ovid's displacement and estrangement finds expression in the exilic verses of *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, where the polarisation centre vs. periphery opposes the savage wasteland where the poet is relegated to the memory of Rome.<sup>190</sup>

In Scott's fiction the Scythian myth comes into play when Waverley first ends up, seemingly by accident, in a Highland camp. As he looks around, he realises that this military station differs from what he has been accustomed to, even in matters of ordinary management: "All the domestic accommodation of milk, poultry, butter etc., were out of question in this Scythian camp".<sup>191</sup> Once again, the narrative voice interferes with the hero's viewpoint to convey the

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<sup>188</sup> See HEROD. 4, 83–144. The earliest depiction of the Scythians can be traced back to Strabo (7), upon whom Herodotus admittedly draws throughout his work as a whole. The same characterisation takes place in the domain of philosophy. In his *Laws*, Plato places the Scythians among the most belligerent peoples, providing a categorisation on which Aristotle relies for his taxonomy of warlike people, where the Scythians occupy the first position (*Pol.* 1324b).

<sup>189</sup> HARTOG (1988: 13)

<sup>190</sup> See for example OV. *Tr.* 3.4.49–51. WILLIAMS (1994: 3–25). The most comprehensive analysis on the reception of Ovid's exiled persona is in INGLEHEART (ed. 2011).

<sup>191</sup> *Waverley* (18: 90)

cultural shock he experiences in a place entirely alien to him, where he confronts for the first time customs, hierarchies, and even a language of which he is completely ignorant.

The same perspective on Scotland from the standpoint of the deracinated, though colonising, travelling hero is further illustrated in *Rob Roy*, in an interesting conflation where Ovid's personal tragedy is recast against the background of Herodotus' ethnographic treatment. Soon after his arrival in Northumberland, Francis Osbaldistone is addressed with sarcasm by his cousin (and antagonist to be) Rashleigh, who caustically comments on his lyrical inclinations:

“Fame and freedom are cheaply purchased by a few weeks residence in the North, even though your place of exile be Osbaldistone Hall. A second Ovid in Thrace, you have not his reasons for writing *Tristia*”.<sup>192</sup>

Although without specific textual reference, Scott's engagement with the ancient Scythians is undoubtedly based on Herodotus and Ovid, who were subjects of his early studies (see chapter one above). The classical appropriation is instrumental here to the representation of the Highlands as a world quintessentially apart, but more importantly, to conveying the viewpoint of an English elite that perceives Northern Scotland with a mixed attitude of attraction and repulsion, in opposition to its own nation's moral self-fashioning.

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<sup>192</sup> *Rob Roy* (11: 93). Here we come across an example of misremembering, or misappropriation in Scott. Indeed, the classically learned reader cannot but notice that Ovid's exile place was not Thrace, as Rashleigh erroneously puts it, but the Black Sea's coast. It remains to be established whether the mistake is due to a memory lapse by Scott, or if, more elaborately, the novelist deliberately attributes the error to Rashleigh himself –as though suggesting that his classical knowledge is not as accurate as he pretentiously assumes.

In the British Isles and beyond, the Scythian myth lent itself to multifarious post-classical mediations. In the Middle Ages, a link to Scotland was established by means of etymology. In adherence to the trope of ‘mythological colonisation’, chroniclers traced the foundation of Scotland back to a Scythian princess named (programmatically) *Scota*, who left the Black Sea to travel all the way through the Mediterranean to settle in Ireland, whence her descendants later set sail for Scotland, to name the new country after their progenitor.<sup>193</sup> The idea of a linkage between the Scythians and the Scots proliferates in the early modern period, as the distinction between Ireland and Scotland becomes blurred and almost interchangeable in the eyes of the dominant English elite. Among the supporters of the Scottish lineage, William Camden claims for the Scots the autochthonous moral fibre of the Scythians, whereas Spenser endorses the parentage, insisting on the triangulation with his home of Ireland.<sup>194</sup> Interestingly enough, a common ascendancy is claimed via the Scythians against a common invader.

Herodotus’ scope and method find resonance in the encyclopaedic vocation that mobilises the French *philosophes* during the Enlightenment, in the light of the privileged place that historical inquiry gains as a combination of

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<sup>193</sup> For a definition of the pattern of ‘mythohistoricising’ see, among the others, HALL (1989: 36) and FOWLER (1996: 73 and n. 82). More recently, HARRISON explains “how the names of different peoples have changed, almost always as a result of a [...] mythical eponymous ancestor” (2002: 256). On the equation Scythia-Scotland, the *Declaration of Arbroath* (1320) leaves no doubt, as illustrated in the second section of the document, which is stored in the National Library of Scotland.

<sup>194</sup> CAMDEN (1577): “to derive descent from a Scythian stock, cannot be thought any waies dishonourable, seeing that the Scythians, as they are most ancient, so they have been the Conquerours of most Nations, themselves alwaies invincible, and never subject to the Empire of others”–cit. in MOFFAT and WILSON (2011: 54). SPENSER (1596): “the Chiefest [nation that settled in Ireland] I Suppose to be Scithians ... which firste inhabitinge and afterwarde stretchinge themselves forthe into the lande as their numbers increased named it all of themselues Scuttenlande which more brieflye is Called Scuttlande or Scotlande”.

domains as diverse as geography, and ethnography.<sup>195</sup> In their reflections, Voltaire and Montesquieu draw on Herodotus in developing the theory of environmental determinism, based on the correspondence between geophysical conditions and political organisation.<sup>196</sup> Moreover, Herodotus' comparative approach suits the cosmopolitan bias of the Enlightenment in the light of the cultural relativism and invitation to tolerance that his narrative endorses.

On the opposite side of the Channel, names such as Robertson, Hume and Gibbon frame their focus on Herodotus within the rising domain of narrative history, in a debate that puts into question his status as historian and the degree of scientific authority to be ascribed to the *Histories*. It is within this hermeneutical strain that Scott comes across Herodotus, an old acquaintance since school-time in the class run by Doctor Adam, who not only introduced Greek in the curriculum, but supplemented its study with ancient history and geography. Alongside his teaching commitments, Adam was the author of handbooks such as the *A Summary of Geography and History* (1794), a historical atlas that conspicuously draws on Herodotus and that Scott often consulted even as an adult, as is evident from his annotations.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> See MOORE *et al.* 2008. For a comprehensive exploration on both the nature and origins of ancient historiography see MARINCOLA, 1997 and 2001.

<sup>196</sup> Voltaire's essays are indicatively entitled *On the History of Herodotus*. For an illuminating critique of the attempts to grapple with these issues, see for example JOHNSON (1967: 46–48), who thoroughly explains that Enlightened theories about climate and environment have their roots in Graeco-Roman thought and literature. More recently, cf. ISAAC, 2004.

<sup>197</sup> On Herodotus in English literature from the early modern period to nineteenth century see WELLS (1923: 54–56). Scott's library collection includes an English translation of the *Apologie pour Hérodote* by Henri Estienne (1602), a work composed in the climate of geographical discoveries that influenced widely the long Sixteenth century. Against past and contemporary sceptics, here Estienne defends Herodotus' credibility as a historian and chronicler of ancient customs. A treatment of the Scythians was also to be found in Rollin, *Histoire ancienne* of which Scott had a signed copy (English trans. 1738–40).

In the light of Scott's role as inventor of the English historical novel, it does not seem unreasonable to argue that Herodotus, whom Western tradition acknowledges as the 'father of history', plays a significant role in terms of generic allegiance in a literary project where historiography becomes an integral component of a narration that, in such cases as *Old Mortality*, is overtly rooted in oral tradition.<sup>198</sup> Besides, by adopting the role of recorder of local folktales and legends in lyrical verses, Scott had already cast himself as the latter-day Herodotus in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, as it appears in lines that sound like paraphrasing the Greek historian: "I cannot tell how the truth may be; I say the tale as 'twas said to me".<sup>199</sup> While source reliability is difficult, if not impossible to assess, with regard to the topography and customs the travelling historiographer qualifies as a trustworthy eye-witness thanks to the first-hand knowledge of the sites that he describes –the same approach that Diana recommends Frank to adopt in evaluating the North.<sup>200</sup>

The 'autoptic criterion' is valid *a fortiori* for Scott, who was at home in the very places that become the object of excursions on nature and landscape in his narrative, in adherence to the taste for sublime and picturesque of Romantic sensibility.<sup>201</sup> As Herodotus scrutinises foreign people according to what they are not in the eyes of Greek citizens, the adoption of a polarised perspective of

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<sup>198</sup> The interrelation between sources and material is emphasised by FIELDING, who foregrounds the heterogeneous nature of a narrative "made up of many different textual media: letters, a personal journal, third-person narrative, oral inset tales: none of these takes narrative precedence but together they explore the conditional nature of historical recollection" (1996: 104).

<sup>199</sup> *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805: ii, 22); HER. 2.99.1: "I am going to tell the [...] stories according to what I have heard" or also 2.123.1: "I, however, stick to the principle, in relation to the entire story, that I write down what is said by each party according to what I hear".

<sup>200</sup> WEST (2000); BRAUND (1999) in TSETSKHLADZE (ed. 1999).

<sup>201</sup> Scott's 'autopsia' is an early acknowledged point of scholarship, as an early reviewer of *Waverley* comments with regards to space treatment: "the delineation has been made from actual experience and observation". See also the review of *Waverley* by JEFFREY (1814) in the *Edinburgh Review* –nowadays in HAYDEN (1970: 79–84).

analysis, by means of comparison and contrast, provides Scott with the ethnographical criterion by which his narrative voice takes his readers further into the ‘other’, beyond their allegedly normal limits.<sup>202</sup> Assessment criteria such as ‘known’ vs. ‘alien’, and ‘familiar’ vs. “strange’, contribute to positioning the audience within a discourse of internal colonisation, where fiction becomes a travelogue of the ‘exoticism of history’, to borrow the formula from Makdisi.<sup>203</sup>

In addition to this, Herodotus’ osmosis between history and fiction, both conceived as integral constituents of the narrative treatment, does suit the generic agenda Scott’s novel is serving<sup>204</sup>. Here we touch upon the issue of verisimilitude that lies at the heart of Scott’s novels, inasmuch as it conjures up an interplay of imaginative ingredients where the characters’ crossing paths, with their coincidences and incidents, develop against the epiphenomena of ‘capital H-history’.<sup>205</sup>

The points mentioned above count principally among the reasons why I am persuaded that, perhaps better than any other ancient model, Herodotus has potential for inspiration and exploitation to offer to Scott’s fictional project. As Marsh has recently noted: “For Scott, as it was for Herodotus, stories are a valuable commodity as they are key to understanding the history and culture of the people from which they come—in Herodotus’ case, the ancient Greeks and their neighbours, and for Scott the Scottish Highlanders”.<sup>206</sup> This remark also opens a gender-related perspective, in which Herodotus effectively works as a

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<sup>202</sup> HARRISON (ed. 2002)

<sup>203</sup> MAKDISI (1995: 156)

<sup>204</sup> For further discussion see PITTOCK, 2012.

<sup>205</sup> For an excellent discussion of this aspect see TRUMPENER (1997: 104).

<sup>206</sup> MARSH (2015: 136)

‘masculine model’ in providing the aesthetic framework for Scott to step into a genre that was until then largely the prerogative of female writers.

In the light of his purpose of writing for an audience conceived as multilayered but, ultimately and most fundamentally, British, Scott’s engagement with Herodotus, as appears evident from the Scythian myth, betrays assumptions about race perception that foreground the effort to go beyond commonplaces and preconceptions. Indeed, the ongoing oscillation between proximity and distance allows him to define Scotland as the neighbouring nation and ‘the foreigner at home’, with a view to shifting the focus so as to mirror the clashing orientations among the different strata of his public. The readers, English and Scottish alike, are thus invited to step outside their comfort-zone and to renegotiate their clichés and stereotypes. The literate gentleman, be he Scottish or English, reaches out from nineteenth century Britain to find a cultural signpost in ancient Scythia, to find first an acknowledgement of cultural specificity, then a veiled warning against the danger of neglecting this diversity. It is especially the cognitive and epistemological stance that Scott borrows from Herodotus that provides both the lens and the visual angle through which to challenge the prevailing attitudes of the Anglo-centric viewpoint, with its limits and restrictions.

While Scott finds in the Scythian paradigm a pattern of ‘hyper-elsewhere’ well-established in Western historiography, the standpoint implied by this model proves crucial in constantly challenging the criteria by which the English reader approaches the narrative. This attitude closely mirrors Herodotus’ hermeneutic process, as Rood describes its sequence: “Herodotus presumes that people will first be aware that they perceive their own costumes as best; then be aware that

everyone shares this perception; and finally understand that their own perception of superiority is culturally conditioned”.<sup>207</sup>

Classical ethnography plays a role in Scott’s narrative in shaping an aesthetic engagement with Scotland that enables the reader to visualise the country in terms of past and future colonisation. The Scythian model matches the portrayal of the Scottish clan structure also in terms of sociopolitical organisation, together with the ferocity and dauntlessness they showed in warfare. The reverse side of such an iconography lies in their capacity for endurance against external attacks, a virtue that acquired relevance in the light of the anti-French sentiment that had kept Britain united in the past decades of wars against Napoleon.

More than an innocuous note of nostalgia for a lost cause, this appropriation contains a veiled warning against an overconfident belief in the imperial supremacy, as though wishing to remind in particular the English reader that the ‘Scythians are still among us’ with all their potential for disturbance and subversion, but also, with their intrepidity and fearlessness: a resource that the new state system may want to redirect to its own advantage.

## **2.5 Concluding remarks**

As I hope this chapter has made clear, multiple moments of Graeco-Roman ‘ethnographical thinking’ are recaptured throughout Scott’s fictional output with a firm eye on the present day. Classical reception is bound up with the debate as to the status and jurisdiction of the British Empire in its multiform identity.

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<sup>207</sup> ROOD (2006: 299)

Indeed, classical imagery provides the background against which to re-assess the traumatic experience of British Civil War in a delicate phase. While Scotland had to come to terms psychologically with the end of her monarchy, and, with the loss of her political distinctiveness, the British establishment was facing the question of how to integrate, or indeed reconcile local minorities into the new body politic, and of what degree of autonomy to grant them after centuries of conflict and bloodshed.

This results in an eclectic array of ethnic groups that, not by accident, have historically represented a thorn-in-the side of imperial aspirations, thanks to their unparalleled martial abilities and defining prerogatives such as resilience, tenacity, and austerity. Scottishness defines itself through the interplay with some pages of Greek and Roman history, which Scott exploited in their capacity to convey to the cultivated segment of his audience shifting points of observation. This enabled him to keep his double-edged readership within reach and to facilitate their mutual perception. Classics provided Scott with a cultural compass by which to rewrite the space of Scots according to alternative coordinates. For the Scottish reader, this nodded to the variety and richness of a cultural capital in jeopardy under the roof of a colonising project, together with the sense of displacement that recent attempts at standardisation were causing among its inhabitants. For the English one, the fierce determination of the Scots to preserve their distinctiveness was emphasised as an aspect that the new Kingdom may want to endorse in a forward-looking policy framework.

We may conclude, therefore, that within, and indeed despite Scott's official commitment to the Union, which he undoubtedly accepted *in toto*, his narrative

is far from straightforwardly celebratory of the Empire structure in the name –or at worst, as has sometimes been claimed, in the service– of the newly established *pax Britannica*. Conversely, the reworking of classical material allows him to covertly insert dissociative hints about the flaws and shortcomings of British rule, by rephrasing paradigms such as overseas conquest and dominance. The role of England as empire-builder and spreader of civilisation is thus questioned in the light of a cautionary tale from the classical past warning against the risks of over-aggressive imperialism.

## Chapter Three

### ***In limine: a palette of narrative voices for an anonymous self-portrait***

*By drawing an area of intersection between authorship and fiction, this chapter explores the ways in which classical allusions and presences contribute to Scott's stage-management of his artistic portrait, through and behind his fictional recounting. As I shall argue, Latin poets, including Horace, Ovid and Catullus, play a crucial role in the ramifications of the narrative voice in its structural complexity. As such, this dynamic extends, by way of triangulation, to Scott himself, who indeed lurks behind the fashioning of the characters who take an intellectual mission upon themselves in a number of ways –for example, by claiming an instructive role, be it for the sake of self-improvement or to the advantage of others, or in their aspiring, more or less declaredly, to a literary career. While Scott sets up an intricate narrative frame for the purpose of anonymity, we shall see how this goal inevitably (or indeed deliberately) clashes with its outcome, since his storytellers turn out to be stuntmen, who conceal, but at the same time end up revealing, his own identity.*

#### **3.1 Preliminary remarks**

As has been established by a number of studies, the mystery surrounding the signature of 'the Author of Waverley' is inextricably tied to issues of canon formation. Scott's anonymous debut as a novelist shows his own awareness of the risks involved in choosing an option that put at stake his literary career. The adoption of a genre tailored to popular tastes and intended for widespread consumption inevitably raised concerns about reputation and reception. The challenge awaiting Scott was to conceive a cultural project able to address the general public for entertainment's sake, and, at the same time, to critically engage the most intellectual layer of his audience on some of the most pressing issues of

the time. Last but not least, Scott felt it imperative to distance himself from the growing crowd of novelists whose professional status was not yet fully acknowledged, and also because they were, in most cases (although not all), women writers. To put it another way, Scott's choice of anonymity is somewhat revelatory of the cultural stigma attached to fiction and female authorship. In this regard, as observed in chapter two, Herodotus' infiltration into Scott's fictional discourse signals in our study the beginning of a realignment on the axis gender/genre through which the novel, commonly perceived as a lowbrow and commercial cultural product, renegotiates its own boundaries, not only in meeting the desiderata of a male elite audience, but also in fostering, *volens*, the propagation of Graeco-Latin culture among the middle and lower strata of the reading public. This is in line with what Wilson persuasively argues: “[p]ublishing in the [C]lassics has much more to do with an opening out, or extension of access, beyond th[e] elite –a process of removing barriers [...] which also points towards the construction of a new national literary identity”.<sup>208</sup>

The characterisation of the authorial stance, which in Scott's fiction is closely connected to the definition of the narrating subject, assumes in the novels under scrutiny distinct modes of presentation, featuring prominently in the form of an anonymous, external (and of course male) narrator-figure. The ‘Author of *Waverley*’ thus represents the typically outermost layer of a careful framing that is further complicated in the so-called *Tales of my Landlord* (comprising *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *Old Mortality* and *The Heart of Midlothian*). Here the narrative voice is materialised in a gallery of meta-characters who show, in

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<sup>208</sup> WILSON (2012: 31)

diverse ways, artistic talents and scholarly aspirations. The monopoly of the storyline is thus competed for between Jedediah Cleishbotham, ‘schoolmaster and Parish-clerk of Gandercleugh’, and his fellow colleague Peter Pattieson, collector of anecdotes and memoirs of local folklore in the same district. Both of them show inclinations towards authoritative writing that result in the pomposity of their phraseology, and in their bombastic circumlocutions. As the border expands between the core plot and its telling, or, in scholarly jargon, the *fabula* and story<sup>209</sup>, the bardic-like wanderer known by the nickname of ‘Old Mortality’ crops up in the eponymous novel as the third link in this labyrinthine narrative chain.<sup>210</sup>

In this multi-layered framework, the first to intervene is usually Cleishbotham, who presents the story in its ultimate printed form, as the result of a holograph manuscript that he allegedly received from Pattieson on his deathbed. The latter, who devoted his life to the preservation of the stories and anecdotes orally transmitted by Old Mortality, thus left a prearranged work that he never saw published. His intermediate role, as Ferris persuasively suggests, was that of a phantom narrator: “the representative figure of spectral authorship”.<sup>211</sup> The surrogate figures of the reporter, relator and chronicler kaleidoscopically blend into a recounting that is not traceable to a single identifiable source. In this kind of post-modern array of every possible form of narration tending towards what we currently define as ‘degree zero’ of

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<sup>209</sup> The crucial distinction between *fabula* and *syuzhet* is, of course, in the Russian formalists. For a sketch of the main features of this aesthetic principle see, among the others, LEMON and REIS (1965: 137).

<sup>210</sup> This is the reason why the alternative title *The Tale of Old Mortality* is still preferred in the Edinburgh edition of the novel, forasmuch as it encapsulates the purely oral nature of a story whose sources sink into a remote, ancestral past.

<sup>211</sup> FERRIS (2009: 490)

focalisation, the question of who is actually spinning the thread of the story, so to speak, becomes unanswerable.

Such a display of delegated narrators finds an explanation, as Kelly elucidates, against the backdrop of the post-Napoleonic political agenda, where interclass cooperation, to be pursued by means of a horizontal negotiation of interests, was regarded as essential to prevent a drift into radicalism. This atmosphere of restoration also pervades the domain of literature, which in turn was called upon to respond to this concern through the mobilisation of centripetal drives in the body of society.

In narratological terms, this materially means that a third, neutral, almost undistinguishable voice emerges as a compromise solution that becomes imperative in Kelly's words, to "avoid identification of reader with protagonist through immediate first-person narration, and prefer the detached, intrusive, authoritative, witty, learned, worldly-wise narrator –a model professional-genteel consciousness representing a dialectic between the professional middle class and the landed gentry".<sup>212</sup> Given this discursive arrangement, the narration is carried out under the aegis of an extra-textual warranty figure that "formalises the modified paternalist social order advocated in the novels' thematic material".<sup>213</sup> Nevertheless, on the assumption that the construction of a mediated subjectivity draws on the notion of self-referentiality, it can hardly be denied that there is also a marketing operation involved in the forging of this assorted narrative frame. As Gottlieb rightly argues: "[t]o diversify his product, as well as to maintain his ruse

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<sup>212</sup> KELLY (2010: 195)

<sup>213</sup> KELLY (2010: 197–198). Thanks to the mediation of initiators such as Austen and Scott, the device of omniscient narrative entity was to become a staple in the "great tradition" of Victorian fiction for decades to come.

of anonymity, Scott invented multiple authorial and editorial personae”.<sup>214</sup> While the alternation of these ‘masks’ has been explained in the light of the fact that a limiting factor for Scott was fear of the reputation that an engagement with the novel might bring, no-one has so far addressed the question of whether the display of classical knowledge that these narrative voices exhibit, specifically in the form of engagements with Roman poets, is there to surreptitiously channel self-images of Scott’s historic persona, with a view to disseminating marks of ownership into a narrative construction designed to exert control on his fiction and his audience alike. This is strikingly evident at the paratextual level, as the deputed place to assess and/or anticipate the challenges and obstacles in store for the work as a whole.<sup>215</sup>

The introduction to *Old Mortality* acquires relevance in the present discussion with reference to the prefatory statement that it contains, which is specifically and purposely defined as a ‘proem’. Here Cleishbotham emphatically declines any responsibility for what the reader is about to come across in the novel. As he asserts: “I am NOT the writer, redactor, or compiler [...] nor am I, in one single iota, answerable for their contents”.<sup>216</sup> In front of such a disclaimer, the reader has as much time as s/he needs to realise how weirdly it colludes with the densely scholarly pose that Cleishbotham himself assumes throughout the narration as a whole: not only in advocating for himself “the task of recording”,

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<sup>214</sup> GOTTLIEB (2013: 7)

<sup>215</sup> The term ‘paratext’ is used throughout this discussion to refer to the eminently discursive dimension encapsulating the way in which a text is formally organised and articulated into subunits and chapters. In this valence, as Genette formulates it, the paratext is the liminal area at the intersection with the main body narrative whose function is essential in providing the audience with a reading compass, by means of devices such as titles and epigraphs. The category also includes the supplementary appendages to the main text, e.g explanatory notes and prefatory material such as prologues and introductions. For a through overview of the concept see of course GENETTE (English transl. 1997). For a more recent treatment see also GOSTA, 2011.

<sup>216</sup> *Mortality* (Oxford, 1993: 6)

but also in awkwardly invoking the precedents of Odysseus and Homer in substantiation of his flat and uneventful life:

“...I, who have sat in the leathern armchair, on the left-hand side of the fire, in the common room of the Wallace Inn, winter and summer, for every evening in my life [...] must have seen more of the manners and customs of various tribes and people, than if I had sought them out by my own painful travel and bodily labour. [...] Ithacus, the most wise of the Greeks, acquired his renown, as the Roman poet hath assured us, by visiting states and men [...]”.<sup>217</sup>

As has been argued, the attempt at joining together Homer and Odysseus (scarcely models of a sedentary lifestyle) in his sole persona undoubtedly proves comic. Cleishbotham’s exhibited credentials as a cosmopolitan observer of the world indeed clash with the limited, anonymous existence that he has had in the periphery of a Scottish corner. However, as Vance has recently noted, beyond any speculation we may carry regarding Cleishbotham misappropriating or misusing classical archetypes, this association is telling in terms of generic alignment: “[t]here is a more serious point behind the humour [...]: Cleishbotham is hardly an epic hero himself, but he is introducing an old story of epic scope and significance”.<sup>218</sup> The paratext thus provides the appointed place for the narrative voice to resort to the epic device of the proem, by which Cleishbotham inscribes himself within a codified, and hence recognisable, tradition. In following Vance, I would venture further into this reading to expand on the third (and, I may add, crucial) element of this allusive engagement with Graeco-Roman literature. It is perhaps no coincidence, in fact, that the “Roman poet”, who obliquely conveys the grandeur of the epic genre, albeit by means of a rather circumlocutory

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<sup>217</sup> *Mortality* (Oxford, 1993: 6)

<sup>218</sup> VANCE and WALLACE (2015: 292)

periphrasis, is the Horace of *Ars Poetica*. Instead of taking on board Homer directly, the narrative instance opts for an alternative route to reach the epos via meta-literary reflection. Seen in this light, the allusion to *Ars Poetica* in the novel's opening is a manifesto of artistic awareness. Cleishbotham aspires to cast himself as Horace in the meditative stance of his scholarly role, acting as an intermediary among different aesthetic pursuits and committing himself to a through rethinking of the existing genres of literary expression.

No less significantly, because again it is in a liminal position, the second part of the work is inaugurated, this time by Pattieson, through an allusion to Aristotle's theory of dramatic construction: the very same theory from which the novel in progress is programmatically diverging. As Pattieson explains in detail: "It is fortunate for tale-tellers that they are not tied down like theatrical writers to the unities of time and place, but may conduct their personages to Athens and Thebes [...] and bring them back at their convenience".<sup>219</sup>

Once again, the paratext is instrumental in the proposal of a new, alternative vision of narrative in a form that characterises itself by the freedom it takes from the allegiance to unity of time. Presences such as Horace and Aristotle –the most prominent guiding lights of literary theory in the classical age and for centuries to come– which we find enmeshed in liminal places and in-between areas, prove effectual for Scott in announcing the newness of the generic operation that he is undertaking: to signal to his readers that something new and unprecedented, though meticulously meditated, is on its way.

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<sup>219</sup> *Mortality* (37: 286)

These programmatic assumptions are furthered by certain passages from Scott's private writing, as for example in a journal entry where the author claims the didactic purposes of his work, in a declaration that borrows a line from Horace: "*Virginibus puerisque*. I would as soon compose histories for boys and girls which may be useful..."<sup>220</sup> Now we can see, perhaps more clearly than ever before, how the parallel with Horace gestures towards an act of self-investiture by which Scott ambitiously presents himself as the laureate novelist of his age in front of a specific layer of his audience in need of guidance and with the same confidence with which Horace proposed himself as the national *vates* of Augustan Rome.<sup>221</sup>

On an inner textual level, this treatment also involves characters who present themselves as classical scholars and, according to this self-qualification, show their penchant towards historical research and verse extemporising.<sup>222</sup> Among the characters who draw on their cultural repertoire in shaping themselves as Horatian figures, we find most eminently Cosmo Bradwardine, the old veteran of the 'Fifteen', whose inclination towards the Classics borders on a sort of monomania and Jonathan Oldbuck, who embodies the perfect country gentleman in his "strange mixture of frugality and industry, and negligent indolence".<sup>223</sup> A close engagement with Ovid is then to be found in *Rob Roy*, a

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<sup>220</sup> 7 January 1828. HOR. *carm.* 3.1.2–4: *carmina non prius/audita [...] /virginibus puerisque canto*. [I am singing to girls and boys songs never heard before].

<sup>221</sup> On the pervasive role played by Horace in Western literature see the systematic treatment by HOUGHTON and WYKE, 2009, together with MARTINDALE and HOPKINS (edd. 1993). On the efflorescence of translations from the early modern period to Neoclassicism see AYRES, who signals that "[t]here were [...] more translation of Horace into English in the period 1600–1800 than of any other Latin or Greek author". The scholar also underlines how this contagious enthusiasm for translation resulted into a widespread availability of "Horatian tone and phraseology" in the realm of literature – AYRES (1997: note 140)

<sup>222</sup> For a full, though perhaps descriptive, discussion of this aspect see SIGNAROLI, 2011.

<sup>223</sup> *Antiquary* (2: 15)

novel that to some extent marks a rupture with the narrative framework as modelled up to now, on account of the centre stage granted to Frank Osbaldistone, who conflates in his unique role both the main character and the first-person narrator of his exile in the North, within the format of an epistolary exchange.

### **3.2 Horatianising**

As already outlined in Chapter One, Horace was a staple of both the school and university curriculum in Scott's age. This centrality, which was to remain in place on the British cultural map for many decades to follow, extended well beyond the educational system. Inside - but especially outside - the classroom, Horace offered a ready-made code of manners and property in the social dealings that came into play within the machine of the Empire and its larger civic fabric, in which club life and male conviviality constituted the cement of interpersonal ties and business alliances.<sup>224</sup> As Harrison accurately explains, Horace's savoir-faire paved the way for "an honorary English gentleman who represented the values of the male and homosocial Victorian English elite: moderation, clubbability, leisured gentility, patriotism and (even) religion".<sup>225</sup>

This was especially the case in Scotland, where a considerable degree of Horatianism informed both the experience and the discourse of the Enlightenment, in its setting as an eminently urban phenomenon foregrounding

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<sup>224</sup> Limited to Horace as a stronghold in Scott's formative years, see chapter one above. For the high degree of sociability marking both the Enlightenment and Victorian period in their "intimacy with Horace", with "issues [being] discussed and debated over port and claret [...] in the many taverns to be found in the towns" see VANCE, 1993 and HARRISON (2007a and 2007b). Still on Horatianism in the same ages, albeit with emphasis on poetry, see the eponymous chapter by SOWERBY in HOPKINS and MARTINDALE (2012).

<sup>225</sup> HARRISON (2007a: 207)

a rising bourgeoisie engaged in the process of improving its rituals and credentials. Put another way, Horace constituted what has been defined as a “paradigm of recognisability”.<sup>226</sup> Working as evidence of cultural and social status, the Latin poet served as a reference model in which to recognise oneself and through which to make oneself recognisable at the same time, thus pervading the picture of the Enlightenment in terms of both intellectual refinement and acquired gentility.<sup>227</sup> This applied *a fortiori* to literary practice and production, by affecting the dynamics of self-placement in an intellectual environment where “more great men [were] provid[ing] patronage for the *literati*”.<sup>228</sup> As Garside argues: “[t]hroughout his career, Scott was an unrelenting and unrepentant advocate of the ‘patronage’ system” in which he recognised “a pragmatically sound method of social and political organisation”.<sup>229</sup> This remark is, to a certain extent, biographically confirmed by Scott himself, who joined a number of associations in his lifetime, one being the Speculative Society, founded in 1764, of which he became a member in 1791, and another being the Academy of Edinburgh, of which he figures amongst the most prominent supporters in 1824. But it is in particular the identification with Horace’s “mature” persona, as found most notably in the *Odes* - about which more will follow in a moment - that provides a repertoire of behaviour and inclinations that well suit a British

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<sup>226</sup> The definition is borrowed from QUONDAM (1999), though the scholar extensively illustrates it at various times of his theorization relating to the classical tradition.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. ALLAN: “One aspect of their sociability was their clubbability. [...]. These clubs were a central feature of the Scottish Enlightenment, providing a context for discussions and debates ...” And again: “[t]he fashionable pursuit of the new urban elite. [...] the emergence of a thriving community of clubs and societies, all of them dedicated to the promotion of polite values, speculative discussions and particular projects” (1993: 6).

<sup>228</sup> GARSIDE (1985: 75)

<sup>229</sup> GARSIDE (1985: 75)

gentleman advanced in years and, above all, with a period of civil unrest behind him.

Such a Horatian filiation is epitomised, most patently, by well-defined choices of lifestyle. The joys of the feast, sealed by a bottle of wine, along with the value of friendship, conceived and displayed as an ongoing exchange of courtesy and caring expressions (which found its most manifest formulation in the *Epistles*), not to forget the necessity of moderation and proportion, both in lifestyle and in politics, by respecting the legal order and *status quo*: all of these Horatian aspirations and requirements were appropriately in tune with the “Britishness” of the time. Along this line, Horace fixes the portrait of the good-mannered bachelor of mature years, who has received a gentlemanly education and whose position in life renders him familiar with power and its holders, among which he moves at ease, amidst networking and learned conversations. We get a taste of this in chapter 2, when Lovel and Oldbuck stop to refresh themselves in the tavern of Fairport. In such a typical venue for a symposium with friends, an eminently Horatian atmosphere informs not only the setting of the scene, but also the characters’ speeches and behaviour. To celebrate the presence of Lovel as guest of honour at his table Oldbuck, who not by accident usually refers to dinners and social occasions as ‘symposia’, asks for a special bottle of wine: “we must for once prefer the Falernian to the *uile Sabinum*”.<sup>230</sup> The request is addressed to the host Mackitchinson, an intelligent man who

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<sup>230</sup> *Antiquary* (2: 17). HOR. *carmin.* 1.20.1 (to Maecenas): *Vile potabis modicis Sabinum* [You will drink from modest cups a cheap Sabine wine]. For Oldbuck’s sympotic habits and expressions see for example 6: 45: “...Mr Lovel [...], if you will venture on a glass of wine, you will find it worthy of [...] the maxim [...] –Old wood to burn–old books to read–old wine to drink–and old friends [...] and young friends too, to converse with”.

knows the secrets of his profession and who immediately understands his customer's rather puzzling command, and fetches the more expensive wine.<sup>231</sup>

Yet, more decisively than merely being an admission ticket to high society, Horace proves conducive to the development of a critique from within the closed upper-class circle to which he belongs. As Oldbuck himself repeatedly admits, military life is not for him: having no inclinations for sports in general, he disregards hobbies such as hunting and fighting, and finds intellectual pursuits much more agreeable. In this regard, the dialogue in chapter 39 between him and his nephew Hector, who instead represents the new generation and its sporting pastimes, is revelatory of the extent to which Oldbuck 'swims against the tide', so to speak. In a mutual exchange of reproaches, Oldbuck blames Hector for wasting money in the purchase of arms and other sporting equipment: in response to this criticism Hector answers that he does precisely what his uncle does with books. Not happy to leave the last word to his nephew, Oldbuck replies with a tag by Horace: "if my collection were yours, you would make it fly to the gunsmith, the horse-market, the dog-breaker, *Coemptos undique nobiles libros - mutare lorice Iberis*".<sup>232</sup> Then we suddenly see that Oldbuck proudly refers to Horace to mark his difference and to set himself apart from the prevalent trends of the establishment.

In a counter-tendency to the vogues of the fashionable elite, he finds pleasure in poetry, and shows good ability in versification, even producing impromptu lines. This is clear when he ironically draws a parallel between his

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<sup>231</sup> We find this allusion to wine preferences again in 35: 276, where the narrative voice informs us that Oldbuck "boasted his best port, and assimilated it to the Falernian of Horace".

<sup>232</sup> *Antiquary* (39: 368). HOR. *carm.* 1.29, 13–5 [you, who have collected from every quarter [...] famous [...] books [...], are now hell-bent on exchanging the lot for a Spanish breastplate?]

nephew's nasty confrontation with a seal on the shore of Fairport and the myth of Proteus, the sea-god defeated by Menelaus on his way back to Sparta, whose story is recounted by Menelaus to Telemachus in *Odyssey* 4. Oldbuck encapsulates the incident in what results as an unprecedented conflation of Virgil and Horace, by making Hector the protagonist of a rather hilarious reversal: "*Sternunt se somno diversae in litore phocae*, which might be rendered "Here *phocae* slumber on the beach/Within our Highland Hector's reach".<sup>233</sup> Along the same line the amused uncle later recalls the episode by resorting to Horace: *Omne cum Proteus pecus agitaret/visere montes*.<sup>234</sup>

It is clearly still under the influence of *Odyssey* 4 that Oldbuck again quotes Horace on another sympotic occasion, to dissuade Lord Glenallan from his intention of giving two horses to Hector - with both the setting and the offer being reminiscent of the Homeric banquet. In declining the offer, Oldbuck underlines his nephew's preference for chariot racing: "My lord—my lord—much obliged [...]— But Hector is a pedestrian, and never mounts on horseback [...]—it is the vehicular, not the equestrian exercise, which he envies—*Sunt quos curriculo pulverem Olympicum/Collegisse juvat*".<sup>235</sup> I see no reason why we should not interpret this reference to the first poem of the *Odes*, where indeed Horace considers the diverse tenors of life, in their allegedly offering a route to glory, as deliberate by Oldbuck. Among these inclinations, three in particular belong to Hector's interests, and are strongly contested by Oldbuck, who shares

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<sup>233</sup> *Antiquary* (39: 368). VIRG. *georg.* 4.432 [The seals lay them down to sleep, here and there along the shore]

<sup>234</sup> *Antiquary* (38: 302); HOR. *carm.* 1.2.7–8: *omne cum Proteus pecus egit altos/visere montis* [when Proteus drove all his seals to visit the high mountains]. It is worth noting that Scott's text gives a slightly different reading of the Latin original: Oldbuck is quoting rhythmically, but inaccurately.

<sup>235</sup> HOR. *carm.* 1, 1, 3–4 [there are some who enjoy raising Olympic dust with their chariots]

with Horace the same lack of interest in modern entertainments, aside from the already mentioned chariot racing, war, military life and hunting. If we expand for a moment on Horace's lyric, we realise that Oldbuck follows precisely the order in which Horace gives them:

*multos castra iuvant et lituo tubae  
permixtus sonitus bellaque matribus  
detestata. Manet sub Iove frigido  
venator tenerae coniugis immemor  
seu visa est catulis cerva fidelibus  
seu rupit teretis Marsus aper plagas.*<sup>236</sup>

[Many enjoy camp life: the braying of horns and trumpets, and the battles so abhorred by mothers. The huntsman, without a thought for his young wife, stays out beneath the freezing sky if a deer has been sighted by the faithful hounds, or a Marsian boar has broken through the fine-spun net].

In Oldbuck's phraseology, the Latin verse acts as a rounded turn of phrase that must have sounded like a lapidary 'Whatever makes him happy!' as in a dismissive gesture aimed at belittling Hector's amusements. Here again, it is an opportunity for Oldbuck to remark upon his 'think differently-mode' and to insert a dissenting voice to claim his freedom from the transient vogues of the new generation.

On the different ground of public employment, Horace's lesson is still telling with regard to the costs of involvement in politics in both the pre and post-civil war eras. While Horace, as we shall be reminded in a moment, finds a new national function as the official poet of Augustus' programme, in his official role and public duties as a magistrate, Oldbuck stands as the model citizen for the establishment of a United Kingdom that is hopefully secure against inner risks (quieted after the last Scottish rebellion of 1745), but still dangerously exposed to

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<sup>236</sup> HOR. *carm.* 1.1.23–28.

external threats (Napoleon and absolutist France). However, there is a shady past behind him, since he was a Stuart supporter, the same being true of Bradwardine, who was imprisoned by the Hanoverian army in the aftermath of 1715.

As Vance illustrates, “Horace appealed to many involved with affairs of state or public administration not only because he had been part of their education but because he was close to Augustus and had taken part in a war”.<sup>237</sup>

Here we come to a crucial point, that is to say the effort and price of collision with high spheres of power and participation in collective history. I would insist on the point of joining a war by raising, perhaps provocatively, the question: which war? The theme of the wrong alignment emerges in fact to join Horace with Scott’s characters in a shared feeling of forced diversion, especially in the necessity to cope with the unsuccessful military experiences behind them in a present time where re-conversion is a keyword, with all of the struggle it implies. If we focus on them as intellectuals in their effort to find a position in a puzzling historical moment, the affinity with Horace works, for Oldbuck and his generation, with reference to the political and institutional context of their age. His republican fancies and his youthful enthusiasm led Horace to join the losing cause of Brutus and Cassius, proving his military skills and achieving the grade of *tribunus militum*.<sup>238</sup>

Notwithstanding the promising beginnings, with Augustus’ victory Horace ends up another victim of land confiscations in the aftermath of Philippi (42 BCE).<sup>239</sup> Hence, the need to learn the art of *recusatio* to dissociate himself from

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<sup>237</sup> VANCE (1997: 210)

<sup>238</sup> HOR. *serm.* 1.6.48. A promotion that contained the promise of a successful career, along with the admission to the equestrian class.

<sup>239</sup> HOR. *epist.* 2.2.50–1. See also Appian, *Bell. Civ.* 4.3.

early loyalties and to develop, decade after decade, the skills of tact and sensitivity in the awareness that power, with its delicate balances, is a slippery enterprise, where allegiances and complicities are vulnerable and transient. While Horace is a poet in line with Augustus' regime, the memory of the political and institutional change he witnessed still percolates through his lines, e.g. in openly confessing his retreat from battle, according to a well-established *topos* from Archilochus onwards.<sup>240</sup> Interestingly enough, the same trope is applied in *Redgauntlet* to the older Fairford, who has fought with the English troops at Falkirk, giving no particular proof of valour. As Darsie Latimer sarcastically recalls to his friend Alan:

“the recollections of the Forty-five, when he retreated [...] so soon as they heard the Adventurer was arrived with his clans [...]. The flight of Falkirk –*parma non bene selecta* [...] does not seem to have improved his taste for [...] the Highlanders”.<sup>241</sup>

In his borrowing from Horace, whose original line sounds *relicta non bene parmula*, Darsie's substitution of *selecta* for *relicta*, at least in my opinion, goes beyond a simple misremembering.<sup>242</sup> Apart from signalling the licence the writer (an aspiring poet himself) takes with the source-text, but with a similar-sounding participle which maintains the same metrical quantity of the Latin text, on the content level the replacement shifts the focus from the consequence to its real cause: that is to say, from the indecorous retreat to the necessity of choosing the

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<sup>240</sup> HOR. *serm.* 1.6.48; 1.7; *carm.* 2.7; 3.14.37–8; *epist.* 2.2.46–48. On the *topos* of the abandoned shield in Horace see for example FRAENKEL (1957: 11–12).

<sup>241</sup> *Redgauntlet* (iii: 16)

<sup>242</sup> HOR. *carm.* 2.7.10 [a shield not well forsaken]. As it is possible to infer from the manuscript of the interleaved edition, here Scott has deliberately transformed the Latin original, *relicta*, into *selecta*.

right side on the battlefield - which in this case, in Darsie's viewpoint, cannot be anything other than the Stuart one.

In his proposing himself as a latter-day Horace, the antiquary-like character implicitly reawakens the awareness of a historical passage with no return-point. The sense of a historical fracture is accompanied by the wish for a new age of peace and prosperity, with an invitation to sobriety and respect for the state and its new legal order. As previously mentioned, Horace embodies the official poet, who follows the path of an intellectual fully integrated into a state system that is going to erase the last resistances of republicanism. Similarly, in taking on a public role, Oldbuck always acts moderately: as a magistrate, but also as a political observer, he maintains a balanced attitude, trying to weigh reasons in favour of and against and to avoid extremism. Yet, he seems to be aware of the risks that such a cautious attitude implies: for example, when his friendship with Lovel and his sudden reconciliation with Lord Glenallan become the object of the talk and suspicions of the Fairfort community.<sup>243</sup> Determined to obey only his own judgement, Oldbuck is not afraid to express his views on the French Revolution, a taboo topic that is mentioned at in the dinner with Lord Glenallan, who is horrified at the mention of events across the Channel, "with all the prejudiced horror of a bigoted Catholic and zealous aristocrat".<sup>244</sup> Oldbuck gives a more critical analysis, by distinguishing the first, "reformist" moment from the ensuing Jacobin Terror:

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<sup>243</sup> *Antiquary* (36: 345): "and so I, that have never interfered with their bickerings, but to recommend quiet and moderate measures, am given up on both sides as a man very likely to commit high treason, either against King or People?". As his valet himself promptly confirms: "your honour never meddled wi' the like o'sic things where there was like to be straits and bloodsheed".

<sup>244</sup> *Antiquary* (35: 277)

“There were many men in the first Constituent Assembly [...] who held sound Whiggish doctrines, and were for settling the Constitution with a proper provision for the liberties of the people. And if a set of furious madmen were now in possession of the government, it was [...] what often happened in great revolutions, where extreme measures are adopted in the fury of the moment [...]”.<sup>245</sup>

Here we realise that the filiation with Horace involves the dimension of interiority alike. With his good-humoured approach to life, alien from the risks of excessive moralising, Horace is a model of aspiration towards a balanced and composed lifestyle, in pursuit of intellectual independence and self-sufficiency. Oldbuck himself openly admits his abiding by the rules of “independence, self-reliance [...] firmness of mind and tenacity of purpose recommended by Horace”.<sup>246</sup> Thereby, Horace provides a repertoire of sentences and instructions to be made available to future generations, along with a conveniently shared medium for the expression of wisdom and prudence. Thus, the reminder “*aequam servare mentem*, is the motto of our friend Horace”, represents the behaviour that Oldbuck prudently recommends to Lovel, because *ira furor brevis*.<sup>247</sup> Via engagement with Horace, Oldbuck casts himself in the role of moral *praeceptor* but without too stern or dogmatic a discipline, as he himself clarifies: “I am not *monitoribus asper*”, and dispenses his moral testament to hot-tempered youngsters, underlining the choice of a life far from violence and excess.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> *Antiquary* (35: 277)

<sup>246</sup> *Antiquary* (11: 85)

<sup>247</sup> HOR. *carm.* 2.3. 1–2 and *epist.* 1.2.62.

<sup>248</sup> *Antiquary* (39: 305); HOR. *Ars poetica* 162.

Such a psychological portrait is confirmed in both its lights and shadows. Notwithstanding his exterior efforts towards inner balance and tranquillity, Oldbuck is not alien to moral weaknesses. Besides being patently inclined to the pleasures of food and wine –all harmless vices that link him, once again, with Horace, his laziness in his daily habits, together with his tendency to procrastinate bring him closer to the ‘existentialist version’ of Horace, so to speak.<sup>249</sup> The display of symptoms such as weariness, lethargy and self-isolation that we find at different times in Horace’s mature poetry, and which today would elicit the diagnosis of a mild form of depression, is the result of a disillusionment that Oldbuck too acknowledges in an act of self-criticism: “We harden ourselves in vain [...] to be the self-sufficing invulnerable being, the *teres atque rotundus* of the poet”.<sup>250</sup> The same *ennui* joins together the mature Horace and Oldbuck in a disenchanted attitude towards love and sentimental involvement, which however assumes remarkably misogynistic poses in the latter. Thus, love belongs to the brief joys of youth and is later regarded in a detached and lucid way, with touches of humour and mild bitterness.<sup>251</sup>

However, behind the mask of the easily irritable misanthrope that he presents to the world, we infer that Oldbuck too was a naïve youngster, as the backstory of his past reveals: indeed, he was fervently in love with Eveline Neville, but his feelings were not reciprocated. Here we begin to suspect that his

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<sup>249</sup> *Antiquary* (36: 343). Described as “something of a sluggard”, Oldbuck is definitely not an ‘early bird’, as it is possible to infer from his irritated reaction at the news of the unexpected morning visit paid by Lord Glenallan.

<sup>250</sup> *Antiquary* (13: 100); HOR. *serm.* 2.7.86.

<sup>251</sup> The theme is a bulwark of ancient lyric genre from Anacreon onwards. See for Horace *carm.* 1.5. where the poet presents himself as a sailor miraculously escaped from a shipwreck and in the act of consecrating a votive gift to the walls of the temple: *me tabula sacer/votiva paries indicat uvida/suspendisse potenti/vestimenta maris deo* [As for me, a votive tablet on his temple wall records that I have dedicated my drenched clothes to the deity who rules the sea].

attitude, half ironical, half surly, is the result of that disappointment, something Horace must have experienced as well, as Oliensis reveals: “Horace’s detached perspective on mismatched desire is the fruit of bitter experience”.<sup>252</sup> In his assuming the typically defensive disposition of someone who has learnt to look at life with an ironical detachment, without being surprised at anything Oldbuck confines himself to the Horatian precept *nil admirari*, a.k.a ‘marvel at nothing’.<sup>253</sup>

Such ironical detachment often verges on sarcasm, especially towards his nephew Hector, but is also capable of transforming into wise advice when he tactfully suggests to him that the time has arrived to forget about Isabella Wardour, as she is already promised to Lovel. Upon this occasion, which is also noteworthy as reenacting the unrequited love of his own youth, Oldbuck brings Hector back to reality by resorting to Horace, who is involved in the admonition, and in the expression of his wish for the future as well –to find a wife suited to military life, who can support his career in the army. “A showy figure, [...] with two cross feathers above her noddle [...], who would wear a riding-habit of the regimental complexion, drive a gig one day, and the next review the regiment on the [...] pony [...]: *hoc erat in votis*”.<sup>254</sup> In the above passage, we find an antidote to disappointment in love aphoristically condensed in Horace’s recipe for *pax domestica*.<sup>255</sup> Here Oldbuck qualifies not as much as the voice of trite authority, but rather as the spokesperson of experience and intimacy, by creating a shared

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<sup>252</sup> OLIENSIS (2007: 229)

<sup>253</sup> HOR. *epist.* 1.6.1.

<sup>254</sup> *Antiquary* (43: 343). HOR. *serm.* 2.6.1.

<sup>255</sup> The encouragement sounds like a *Ne doleas plus nimio* (HOR. *carm.* 1.33.1), the advice against lovesickness that Horace gives to his poet-friend Tibullus after the abandonment of Glycera, the volatile mistress who opted for the courtship of a younger lover –as Horace recalls *cur tibi iunior/laesa praeniteat fide* (*carm.* 1.33.3–4) [her promises have been broken and a younger fellow outshines you].

viewpoint that sheds light on events with hindsight, not without touches of sincere participation.

Rather than creating a distance with the interlocutor, by showing off erudition, Oldbuck relies on the complicity of the members of an all-male social elite as ready to grasp the potential for discreet empathy that Horace implies. We understand then that it is exactly Horace's mediation that renders Latin the code repository to which Oldbuck entrusts his inner dimension, through which he expresses feelings he keeps jealously secret in his memory. Hence, the envelope-dossier about Eveline, which he has hidden for years in a box, carries the label '*Eheu, eheu Evelina!*' –where the repeated interjection is reminiscent of the Horatian style of nostalgic reflection on the swift passing of time.<sup>256</sup> Contrary to the ostentation and sterile philological exercise that have chiefly been attributed to this character, Oldbuck identifies himself with Horace, as the wealthy landowner who looks at youth and looks back to his own youth as a paternal advisor who engages his interlocutor in a private conversation. What results is a triangulation that involves the authorial portrait alike: we find in Horace a reconfiguration of Scott's ambition to become a landed gentleman, where baronetcy represents the culmination of his aristocratic pretensions, which actually found realisation in the construction of the manor house at Abbotsford.

We understand therefore that characters of the likes of Oldbuck and Bradwardine are of vital importance in their pointing to an appropriate sense of measure in life, and in their doing it precisely with the help of Classics, which offer a 'moral recipe' that proves still valid for the young generation –represented

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<sup>256</sup> The *Eheu Postume* –the interjection that comes in the first line of HOR. *carm.* 2.14. For the themes of love and desire in Horace see OLIENSIS (2007: 231), who probes the "erotic appeal of Horatian poetry".

by Edward and Fergus, among many others. This is why Oldbuck extols the virtues of Lovel, a youngster who, in his view:

“has all the qualities of a safe and pleasant companion by land or by sea—one [...] whom [...] I would choose, did I ever go a sea voyage [...] *fragile mecum solvere phaselum*, to be the companion of my risk, as one against whom the elements could nourish no vengeance”.<sup>257</sup>

As a typical “out-of-office” pastime, Horace represents for these characters an enjoyable ally to indulge in the aftermath of the defeat, in what begins as a rather meditative turn in their lives.

In his re-appropriation of Horace, Scott goes decisively against the dominant trend of his age, when “Horace’s artistic qualities of precision, elegance, and fine workmanship” were not reputed to last in the updated aesthetic and sensibility of Romanticism but rather “struck the Romantics as frigid and uninspired”.<sup>258</sup>

We may also add that Scott exerted a pioneering role in launching a literary form destined to achieve more and more success in the decades to follow. As Harrison indicates: “[t]he practice of Horatian pastiche, like that of Horatian translation, became extensive in the nineteenth century, with some interesting adaptations to Victorian social and intellectual contexts”, especially in the direction of parody and burlesque. Thereby, we can see in Oldbuck the progenitor of “[s]everal characters in Victorian literature seeking intellectual self-

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<sup>257</sup> *Antiquary* (38: 299); HOR. *carm.* 3.2.28–9 [to cast off a fragile boat with me on board]

<sup>258</sup> GAISSER (1994: 444). Horace’s poetic was generally regarded as stemming from an intellectualism unsupported by authentic inspiration: “too much *ars* and not enough *ingenium*, too much intellect and not enough emotion”.

improvement and consequent increase in social standing that use Horace as a potential way to success”.<sup>259</sup>

Ultimately, an examination of the role played by Horace in Scott’s fiction sharply reduces the scope of the charge of pedantry and ostentation often (and perhaps unfairly) brought against Oldbuck and Bradwardine. Far from merely embodying a caricature of the *laudator temporis acti*, these figures stand out, on the contrary, for their capacity for critical insight, empathy and genuine affection: all features that will exert momentous effects on the *Bildung* of the main hero, both as an individual and as a social agent.

What has been said up to now opens a new dimension on the subject of the superficial attitude that Edward shows towards his studies in *Waverley*. As the storyteller stresses from the very beginning, in pursuing transient interests and volatile caprices, the hero seriously jeopardises the faculties of decision of which he shall give evidence in a not too distant future: “[he] might justly be considered as ignorant, since he knew little of what adds dignity to man, and qualifies him to support [...] an elevated situation in society”.<sup>260</sup> Such a diagnosis condenses in a nutshell the sociological function that a solid classical background has in connecting and adjusting the individual to the challenges and duties in store for him in the world outside, so to speak. *Waverley*’s insubstantial grounding in Classics is the first cause of the uneasiness and disorientation he constantly experiences whenever he is called upon to take resolutions or initiatives.<sup>261</sup> A thorough assimilation of Classics is essential for the attainment of self-awareness

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<sup>259</sup> HARRISON (2007a: 209); (2007b: 337).

<sup>260</sup> *Waverley* (3: 15)

<sup>261</sup> *Waverley* (4: 16) “[W]hen Edward mingled with accomplished and well-educated young men of his own rank [...], he felt an inferiority in their company, not so much from deficiency of information, as from the want of the skill to command and to arrange that which he possessed”.

and restraint, together with a sense of commitment and perseverance. In other words, Classics provide the social compass against which to set the coordinates with a view to making the right moves in the world. The lack of this reference system, or *ubi consistam*, is the reason for Edward's permanent irresolution: a psychological condition that borders on sociopathy.<sup>262</sup>

This constitutional fragility reaches its climax upon the occasion of his family's misfortune, when he finds himself not only incapable of reacting, but unable even to properly understand the situation around him; a paralysis that, once again, is blamed on "desultory style of his studies":

"he had not any fixed political opinion to place in opposition to the [...] indignation which he felt at his father's supposed wrongs. Of the real cause of his disgrace, Edward was totally ignorant; nor had his habits at all led him to investigate the politics of the period which he lived, or remark the intrigues in which his father had been so actively engaged".<sup>263</sup>

Then, we realise that Bradwardine's retrievals of and responses to Horace, indeed a sort of refrain in his speeches and utterances, function as an emergency solution in which the Baron plays a crucial role in helping Edward to secure mastery over his actions in critical situations. As Matteo puts it, albeit perhaps too rapidly: "an education in classical letters has a deeply formative effect on

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<sup>262</sup> *Waverley* (4: 16) "The idea of having committed the slightest solecism in politeness [...] was agony to him; [...] and therefore [...] Edward [...] supposed that he disliked and was unfitted for society, merely because he had not yet acquired the habit of living in it with ease and comfort". The hero's structural tendency towards indecisiveness and tergiversation is inscribed, not by accident, in his family name –Waverley, as in the verb 'to waver', to vacillate. Specifically on this see MAGETTE, 1982. More generally on speaking names in Scott's fiction see NICOLAISEN, 1979 and 1980.

<sup>263</sup> *Waverley* (25: 132)

one's later moral judgement, and accounts for the shape of these providential plots".<sup>264</sup>

This said, it is not surprising that the adult Edward, as we find him rapidly though vividly sketched out in the novel's epilogue, proves to be a Horatian character in his turn, along the footsteps of Bradwardine. The new attitude surfaces, more or less unexpectedly, as he recalls his past experience on the battlefield with hindsight:

“to confess the truth [...] I am heartily tired of the trade of war. [...] The plumed troops and the big war used to enchant me in poetry; but the night marches, vigils, couched under the wintry sky, and such accompaniments of the glorious trade, are not at all my taste and practice [...]. I am quite satisfied with my military experience, and shall be in no hurry to take it up again”.<sup>265</sup>

Here we find the happy ex-soldier, content with the prefix that now characterises his new status, who precisely like Horace, prides himself on his own achievement of *aurea mediocritas*.<sup>266</sup> Aside from fulfilling the hopes of Bradwardine, this conclusion confirms the predictions of Flora, who had long since understood that “high and perilous enterprise is not Waverley's forte”.<sup>267</sup> The girl's sagacity in guessing his real inclinations in life results in the picture she gives, of the ‘homely-settled’ Waverley-to-be, surrounded by indoor comfort:

“at home [...] in the quiet circle of domestic happiness, lettered indolence, and elegant enjoyments [...] he will refit the old library [...]

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<sup>264</sup> MATTEO (2000: 63)

<sup>265</sup> *Waverley* (62: 309)

<sup>266</sup> HOR. *carm.* 2.7 and 2.10.

<sup>267</sup> *Waverley* (52: 265)

and garnish its shelves, with the rarest and most valuable volumes; and he will [...] write verses [...] and [...] will be a happy man”.<sup>268</sup>

This Horatian conversion to domesticity that Edward eventually embraces mirrors a shift in the concepts of masculine ethics: a topic that shall be explored at length in the next chapter but that we can start mentioning, for now, by concluding with Welsh that indeed “the hero of civilisation and refinement is a passive hero of quiet and retiring character”.<sup>269</sup> As we have seen, Horace aptly fulfils the new requirements of civilisation and refinement.

### **3.3 In retrospect with Ovid**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the main hero of *Rob Roy*, Francis (a.k.a. Frank) Osbaldistone, is often lampooned for his literary ambitions and his refusal to undertake a career in trade to support his expanding family business. Frank’s struggle to reconcile his artistic talent with his responsibilities towards his household, and the ensuing repudiation by his father, renders him an object of derision most of all in the eyes of his antagonist and cousin Rashleigh, who immediately upon his arrival in Northumberland pours scorn on his condition as a stranger and outcast in a distant and uncivilised place. Among the means by which Rashleigh purportedly nurtures Frank’s feeling of alienation, we can see the parallel he explicitly develops between the displaced Frank and the exiled Ovid. To recall briefly the facts and circumstances related to Ovid’s banishment, in AD 8 at the age of about fifty the Latin poet was forced to leave Rome and take up permanent residence in the colony of Tomis on the Black Sea. Although the

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<sup>268</sup> *Waverley* (52: 266)

<sup>269</sup> WELSH (1963, 1992: 18)

reasons that led the *princeps* to take this punitive measure are still obscure, the ostracism of Ovid seems somehow framed by another two VIP expulsions, with the victims both answering to the name of Julia: respectively, Augustus' daughter, banished in 2 BC, and his granddaughter, who met the same destiny as her mother in AD 8. There was, it would appear, a sensitive case lurking behind Ovid's downfall, where suspicions of adultery intermingle with allegations regarding the erotic contents of his output, mainly concerning the *Ars Amatoria* ('Art of Love'), the offensive topics in which might supposedly have encouraged such illicit behaviour.<sup>270</sup> This conjecture surfaces at times in the letters Ovid writes to his wife and friends, which constitute the updated flair of his poetic vocation, for example in *Tr.* 2.211-12: *altera pars superest, qua turpi carmine facto/arguor obsceni doctor adulterii.*<sup>271</sup>

The engagement with Ovid in *Rob Roy* endorses the adoption of a colonial perspective, where the North of Britain offers the setting for the geographical dislocation of Frank, who finds himself surrounded by "a people singularly primitive in their government and manners".<sup>272</sup> This focus resonates with — and radicalises — the highly polarised dichotomy that opposes North and South within the same homeland: Frank's eradication takes place *intra moenia*, so to speak, in the cultural estrangement he experiences from his own family and in

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<sup>270</sup> I touch here on a web of voluminously and hotly debated questions: Ovid's *relegatio* is still an enigma that divide scholarship among different conjectures, of which THIBAULT's contribution (1964) remains a seminal synopsis.

<sup>271</sup> [The other remains: the charge that by an obscene poem I have taught foul adultery]. The so-called post-exilic epistolary corpus includes *Tristia* ('Sad Things') in five books, *Epistulae Ex Ponto* ('Letters from the Black Sea') in four books, together with a short poem entitled *Ibis* (seemingly the pseudonym of Ovid's most fervent detractor). According to some scholars, the category also comprises in a broader sense the double *Heroides* (16–21) and sections of *Metamorphoses* that were subject to revision in the Pontic years, whereas the authenticity of the *Halieutica* still remains controversial (see on this RICHMOND, 1981: 2746–57).

<sup>272</sup> *Rob Roy* (1: 5). *Tr.* 1.1.3; *Pont.* 1.1.22.

the uneasiness he feels in a place he should call home. In this sense, the pairing with Ovid not only re-channels the trauma of exile, but also amplifies its paradoxical scope in the solitude from which the hero suffers in what should be his homeland, in his feeling no connections at all with a place that carries his own name.

All this can be explained in the light of a shift in the preposition characterising the exile route: to Ovid's exclusion *from* Rome corresponds to Frank's banishment *within* Osbaldistone Hall. The rigidity of the climate, together with the radical difference in languages, emblematises a human landscape of barbarism and danger. While Ovid often complains about the isolation he experiences in the freezing steppes of the extreme periphery of the civilised world, for instance in *Tr.* 3, in light of this parallel Scotland is visualised as a *terra ultima*, the furthest place from the centre of imperial power. This orientation does fit into Scott's discourse on colonial incorporation since, as Dimmick has pointed out: "Ovid is the ideal guide in reclaiming, questioning and revising the cultural authority of the ancients, precisely because he is himself already engaged in the effort of reclamation and problematisation. His perspective [...] on Augustus' Rome is already retrospective, as well as being [...] geographically displaced. As such he becomes the model for all future efforts to recapture, reinvent or pick apart the central authority of Rome".<sup>273</sup>

On the level of the plot, the allusive engagement with Ovid becomes all the more significant as the story proceeds, culminating when the hero ends up, without his knowledge, at the very centre of a political conspiracy. Indeed Frank

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<sup>273</sup> DIMMICK (2002) in HARDIE (ed. 2002: 286).

drops into a web of treachery and increasing danger, against a shady background where the supervision of his arch-enemy Rashleigh and the scheming of a noblewoman gradually become distinguishable. Among the elusive machinations and *éminences grises*, the lady in question turns out to be Diana Vernon, with whom in the meantime –and perhaps not accidentally –he has fallen in love. Ovid’s subtext thus infiltrates, in a subterranean way, a scenario where private reasons are inextricably conjoined with political intrigues, and the attempted *coup* proceeds in tandem with the jealousies engendered by the love triangle.

The adoption of the memoir mode obviously explains the double role Frank performs on the narratological level: he is in fact both the protagonist and the narrative ego of a story that takes on the same standpoint of Ovid’s exilic poetry. This binary identity directly affects the treatment of time, which splits into two frames: the ‘now’ that is underpinned by the act of writing and the ‘then’ of the bygone past that is recounted in the first person.<sup>274</sup>

It remains beyond doubt that, as recently remarked by Ingleheart, “Ovid first-person exilic poetry seems to give his readers direct, unmediated access to his experiences and thoughts in a manner [...] unprecedented in ancient literature (and rare in modern works too)”.<sup>275</sup> However, the engagement with Ovid in Scott’s novel is specifically recognisable in the light of the pose the narrating ‘I’ assumes towards the act of writing, which takes shape as a fictional narrative that exploits the retrospective stance and the –at least partly–

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<sup>274</sup> “Ovid is unique [...] for the sheer number and quasi-systematic regularity of autographic situations: in his extant production, every single work [...] has a space of self-expression and, often, of recapitulation” BARCHIESI and HARDIE (ed. 2010: 59).

<sup>275</sup> INGLEHEART (2011: *Introduction*, 6).

consolatory potential granted by epistolary form.<sup>276</sup> While Ovid speaks to his close circle of relatives and friends, similarly Frank addresses an old acquaintance, Will Tresham, the son of his father's partner in trade. This recipient is repeatedly apostrophised as "a dear and intimate friend" and fittingly represents both Frank and Scott as an *alter ego* who shares their cultivated background "with the fond vanity of a book-collector".<sup>277</sup> The novel's programmatic incipit confirms this genre alignment: "You have requested me, my dear friend, to bestow some of that leisure with which Providence has blessed the decline of my life, in registering the hazards and difficulties which attended its commencement".<sup>278</sup>

The nostalgic attitude that the storyteller, in common with Ovid, maintains towards the past stems from his present-day desolation within the descending trajectory of old age, a constant theme in post-exilic Ovid.<sup>279</sup> While the Latin poet often complains about his separation from his wife, a condition he equates with widowerhood, Frank's solitude is actually increased by his current status as a widower. In both cases, the narration qualifies also as an ongoing meditation on death approaching: "your greener age and robust constitution promise longer life than will [...] be the lot of your friend".<sup>280</sup> The endpoint to which Frank feels instinctively close is hinted at as "an event which may happen at any moment,

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<sup>276</sup> On first-person writing in Ovid's career in its capacity to "test the relationship between literature and life" see again BARCHIESI and HARDIE (ed. 2010: 64).

<sup>277</sup> *Rob Roy* (1: 6). Of course, this conformity includes the 'advanced' layer of readers in their educational background and interests.

<sup>278</sup> *Rob Roy* (1: 5)

<sup>279</sup> See for example OV. *Tr.* 4.10.93–95: *iam mihi canities pulsus melioribus annis/venerat, antiquas miscueratque comas* [Already had white hairs come upon me driving away my better years and mottling my ageing locks].

<sup>280</sup> *Rob Roy* (1: 5)

and which must happen within the course of a few, - a very few years”.<sup>281</sup> Past and present coincide in what we may call a prolonged exile of the soul:

“When we are parted in this world [...] you will, I am well aware, cherish more than it deserves the memory of your departed friend, and will find in every detail which I am now to commit to paper, matter for melancholy, but not unpleasing reflection [...]: I put into your hands a faithful transcript of my thoughts and feelings, of my virtues and of my failings”.<sup>282</sup>

In addition to this, the forced removal from his homeland translates in Ovid into an inclination to self-mythologising, by proposing himself as a conflation of Odysseus and Aeneas: a connection with the myth of the travelling hero that, as we shall see later, has a counterpart in Scott.<sup>283</sup>

The parallel with Ovid therefore conjures up associations beyond Rashleigh’s scornful treatment, by investing the tale of Frank’s life as a whole in terms of a self-representation characterising not only his old age, but also the earliest days of his youth in retrospect. Ovid’s hostility to law and court in response to parental pressure transforms his youth into an act of transgression. The memory of his father, who wanted him to enter the legal profession, emerges throughout his whole poetic production, along with emotional responses in terms of reluctance and refusal to fulfil his family expectations. This is evident in *Tr.*

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<sup>281</sup> *Rob Roy* (1: 5–6)

<sup>282</sup> *Rob Roy* (1: 6)

<sup>283</sup> For the comparison with Odysseus *Tr.* 1.5.53–84; 1.6.21–22. See also *Pont.* 3. 1. 53 and 4.10–9–30. More generally on Ovid as an “epic hero rescued by the gods from a *poetica tempestas* in [...] an elaborate *synkrisis* of himself and Odysseus [...]” see MARTINDALE (1998: 14–15).

4.10 where “[t]he exile poetry also gives a more veristic account of the relationship between life and literature at the beginning of Ovid’s career”:<sup>284</sup>

*at mihi iam puero caelestia sacra placebant,  
inque suum furtim Musa trahebat opus.  
saepe pater dixit 'studium quid inutile temptas?  
Maeonides nullas ipse reliquit opes.'  
motus eram dictis, totoque Helicone relicto  
scribere temptabam verba soluta modis.  
sponte sua carmen numeros veniebat ad aptos,  
et quod temptabam scribere versus erat.*<sup>285</sup>

[But to me even as a boy service of the divine gave delight and stealthily the Muse was ever drawing me aside to do her work. Often my father said, “Why do you try a profitless pursuit? Even the Maeonian left no wealth.” I was influenced by what he said and wholly forsaking Helicon I tried to write words freed from rhythm, yet all unbidden song would come upon befitting numbers and whatever I tried to write was verse].

We find the same generational conflict right at the outset of Scott’s novel, which begins with a rather heated father-son confrontation, at the end of which Frank is sent to the far North of the country under threat of disinheritance.<sup>286</sup> As the youngster explains his resolve to follow his natural inclinations:

“my principal attention had been dedicated to literature and exercises. My father[’s] [...] chief ambition was, that I should succeed [...] to the views and plans by which he imagined he could extend and perpetuate the wealthy inheritance which he designed for me [...]. I, however, I

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<sup>284</sup> BARCHIESI and HARDIE (2010: 64). The frequency of adjectives qualifying, or associated with, judicial activities generally present negative connotations –see for example *am.* 1.15.6 *ingrato...foro*; *fasti* 4, 188: *fora...litigiosa*.

<sup>285</sup> *OV. Tr.* 4.10.19–26.

<sup>286</sup> As BARCHIESI and HARDIE emphasise: “[t]his divergence from the public *cursus honorum* onto an alternative path of poetry is perhaps in conscious rejection of a conception of Roman literary career as equivalent to the public *cursus honorum*” (2010: 65).

was also a party to be consulted, and [...] I had formed a determination precisely contrary”.<sup>287</sup>

Besides casting a new light on Ovid as an exemplar of rebellion against parental aspirations, the appropriation finds convergent validation in Scott himself, who as a student and practitioner of law later ‘drawn away’ by his interest in literature and poetry should not have been unaware of the contrast between *otium* and *negotium*. In his iconising the irregular poet *par excellence*, Ovid/Scott underlines the non-conformist choice of the second over the first.

In addition to this, I would suggest that Ovid, as in the case of Horace above, plays a role in marking the progression of Scott’s literary career from the lyric poetry of his beginnings to the wider breadth of historical-national fiction to which he commits himself in his mature years, in adherence to a sequence that in Ovid takes a decisive turn, for example in *Fasti*: a work deeply concerned with power and politics and thoroughly informed by historical knowledge. However, to re-approach Ovid means inevitably to confront oneself with the inherent complexity of his figure, stuck in an unresolved oscillation between the melancholic posture of the exile and his reputation as a ‘bad example’. Certainly, the latter clashes with the ideals of austerity and gravity typically ascribed to *humanae litterae*. These two dominant components of Ovid’s portrait have enucleated the different strands of his own *Nachleben* across the centuries, as Vance underlines: “Ovid the rake, the sophisticated tactician of love’s siege warfare tended to be separated from Ovid the highly convenient if barely acknowledged source of decorative and sometimes disturbing myths and legends

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<sup>287</sup> *Rob Roy* (1: 10–11)

[...] making Ovid simultaneously obnoxious as a personality”.<sup>288</sup> As a result of this Janus-faced reception, “[t]he poetry and the poet drifted apart in popular awareness” and “[f]rom an *arbiter elegantiae* ... [Ovid] became a rather raffish *éminence grise* [...], a valuable imaginative asset with which no one was entirely at ease”.<sup>289</sup> Hence the difficult relationship of Postclassical literature with Ovid, as he has come to us with the issue of “an easily disowned *alter ego*, the impudent rogue he sometimes liked to appear himself”, which transformed him, when necessary, into “a degenerate in a degenerate age”.<sup>290</sup> To answer the question of what is Scott’s insight on the issue as a whole, it is my belief that the alert reader is invited here to recognise the two facets of Ovid in the antagonism between Frank and Rashleigh, who indeed embodies the callousness and lack of morality of the villain of the piece. Crowning himself as the tutor of Diana, the ambition-driven Rashleigh represents the deviant (or deviantly received) Ovid in his role of *praeceptor amoris* whose perverse goals translate into a didactic misguidance exerted through the cynical practice of deception and seduction –the very potential for subversion for which the *Ars Amatoria* was blamed.

The ‘mitosis’ at play in Scott points in the direction of a disambiguation, as suggesting that these two characters, however genetically linked by family connection, not only prove incompatible with each other, but are indeed antipodes. Paradoxical as it may sound, the uneasy contact into which Ovid brings the two cousins contributes to create the unbridgeable distance between them. The reworking by Scott inserts a clear-cut distinction in which victim and

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<sup>288</sup> VANCE (1988: 216)

<sup>289</sup> VANCE (1988: 215–6)

<sup>290</sup> VANCE (1988: 216–231)

dark plotter are separated: Rashleigh represents in this sense what Francis could have become, an aborted potentiality to be an aspiring conspirator.

Though not overtly declared, Scott's alignment is implicitly perceivable within the novelistic refiguration he gives of Ovid and his exile in *Rob Roy*, where the author is sympathetic to Ovid and the disgrace of his exile –the dramatisation of topographical remoteness being arguably inspired by Romantic sensibility.<sup>291</sup> Thus, Scott has the exiled Ovid rehabilitated in the figure of Frank, and precisely in the light of his distance to and difference from Rashleigh. We are invited therefore to distinguish between the real Ovid and the received one within an act of reception where the Machiavellian plotter is contrasted with the naïve, genuine poet whose personal fault, or misdeed, is to have temporarily disobeyed the head of his family. Such empathic treatment configures as a metatextual nod to distinguish between *carmen* and *crimen*: we may want to conclude that Ovid obtains his pardon, if certainly not from Augustus, at least from Scott.

### **3.4 Catullus, or to say it better, not exactly as an untouched flower**

In the previous chapter, I attempted to show how a look at Scott's engagement with Classics corroborates the alternative reading that has recently been proposed by D'Arcy in response to the role prevalently ascribed to the Duke of Argyll in *The Heart of Midlothian*. This view challenges the mainstream valorisation of the Scottish magnate as epitomising the philanthropic benefactor who acts out of altruism, by emphasising instead his overtly –though wisely dissimulated– condescending attitude towards others in general. In the light of

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<sup>291</sup> On the theme of Ovid's "self-dramatization" in casting himself as "lonely aesthete fallen among Philistines –or Scythians" see VANCE, 216–17.

this feature, which emerges as a typical trait of upper-class snobbery, his acts of generosity are unmasked as mere attempts to maintain privileged access to (and a monopoly of) knowledge and power. This argument receives further substantiation when seen within the frame of a potentiality of the novel that I have equally proposed, very sketchily, in Chapter Two, and which lies within a not fully developed twist that momentarily emerges in the main plot; namely, that despite apparently being a confidential matter between two sisters, the secret of Lady Staunton's identity is already out long before being openly revealed by Jeanie Deans. Here I will attempt to venture further into this prospect by drawing attention to the allusive interplay that, in my view, seems plausibly to hold the key to answering this point.

This task brings us back to the scene in which Argyll pays a visit to the Deans, as the novel approaches the end and Jeanie is about to meet Effie again after years of there being no trace of her. The recovery of the lost sister is indeed precluded by Argyll's unexpected appearance. After the usual exchange of pleasantries, the three start talking about matters of little consequence until the conversation accidentally turns to the topic of a new acquaintance of the Duke's: Lady Staunton, a charming lady of gentle station who, as the nobleman reports, is gaining increasing popularity among the gatherings and chats of London's polished society.

It is a hard job for Jeanie to keep her countenance at the very mention of the name and not to betray any emotion or reaction that could compromise her sister's identity –which, as the reader knows, hides behind the pseudonym. From this moment onwards, all of her efforts are aimed at hiding this sensitive

information, of which she believes she is the only custodian, from both her husband and her patron. As the dialogue goes on, the heroine silently listens to the Duke eulogise her incognito sister as the new ornament of the beau monde. Yet, interestingly to us, the description takes a vivid turn –to cut the conversation short immediately afterwards– under the sign of Catullus.

“–You see at once the rose that had bloomed untouched amid the chaste precincts of the cloister, Mr. Butler.

True to the hint, Mr. Butler failed not to start with his *ut flos in septis secretus nascitur hortis* etc”.<sup>292</sup>

We may well suppose at this juncture that the competent reader well trained in classical poetry (in the past as today) has no hesitation in recognising that the speaker is referring to Catullus 62, specifically to the simile comparing the young bride to a garden-flower.<sup>293</sup> We may suppose that the same reader will remember that the image in question epitomises Catullus’ wedding poem as a celebration of, and admonition to, virginal modesty: the same innocence that, as it transpires from the portrait above, radiates from Lady Staunton.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> *Midlothian* (50: 424); CATULL. 62, 39 [As a flower springs up secretly in a fenced garden...]

<sup>293</sup> The image (of which another occurrence in Catullus is famously 11, 22–4 *velut prati/ultimi flos, praetereunte postquam/tactus aratro est* – like a flower on the meadow’s edge, when it has been touched by the plough passing by) boasts a long-standing pedigree, as well as a rich history of reappraisals and mediations, with attestations from at least as early as the time of Sappho and assimilation into the epic genre. On the reception of the simile as “one of the most frequently imitated passages in Catullus” see for example WILSON, who reminds us of how “[i]t has been paraphrased by Ariosto (i. 42), and closely translated by Ben Jonson (*The Barriers*) and Pope in *The Dunciad*. More lately Browning has transfused it, *The Ring and the Book* iii. 233–240” (in HOPKINS and MARTINDALE, eds. 2012: 31).

<sup>294</sup> Although Catullus does not appear at Abbotsford, in the versions that Scott was likely to find available at his age –such as the translation by John Nott (1795, London), the poem occupies an earlier position compared to that of the current-day arrangement of the collection– being numbered as 59 instead of 62. Commentators generally interpreted the epithalamium, in its staging of the performative, highly ritualised sequence of acts and gestures articulating the wedding ceremony, as the continuation of the poem that celebrated the nuptials between Junia Aurunculeia and Manlius Torquatus (number 58).

Here I would like to insist on a thematic linkage that, apart from being easily discernible to the skilled reader, is not purely casual, but rather shows a much deeper degree of intertextual connection once we take into consideration the content at stake. Catullus foregrounds femininity as placed under pressure to conform to requirements such as preservation of virginity and parental obedience, where the latter condition needs to be associated with (and turned into) subordination to the husband's authority. All of these moral obligations Euphemia Deans (a.k.a Lady Staunton) has shirked, with the scandalous affair of her past behaviour that has dragged her family into dishonour. Both Scott's novel and Catullus 62 are concerned with feminine sexuality in so far as they revolve around underlying tensions inherent to male-female interactions. The host of burning issues that Catullus voices throughout the epithalamium relevantly emerge anew in a novel that deals with the unwelcome phenomenon of premarital pregnancy (which, a fortiori is allegedly followed by infanticide) and where female agency shows the potential to jeopardise the patriarchal social arrangement that awards men privileged control over sexual desire and reproduction.

This is what allowed me to suppose that the Catullan tag is perhaps not so carelessly dropped into the conversation, but rather instantly obeys a somewhat calculated orientation. On closer inspection, the subtext brings the reader who knows his Catullus well back into the thematic frame of the poem. The sudden, unpredictable turn that the dialogue takes against the grain of Catullus poses a series of interlinking questions. Are Reuben and Argyll totally unaware of who really stands behind the disguise of Lady Staunton? Or is it reasonable to guess

instead from the way they silently nod at each other, precisely through the continuity in flower imagery, that they already know, or at least suspect, the secret that Jeanie is guarding so closely? Does Catullus provide a kind of metalanguage enabling them to maintain a simulated ignorance of the lady's identity in front of Jeanie?

The subversion-through-inversion of the simile, by which the fallen woman paradoxically replaces the *casta virgo*, hits at the very heart of narrative suspense, inasmuch as it inserts an element of rupture that breaks the primary surface of the plot and generates an alternative picture. Catullus works as the verbal trigger enabling the interlocutors to hint at Effie on the grounds of what she has, so remarkably, not been. The fake identity of Lady Staunton is something they have already grasped, though they abstain from publicly acknowledging it. The clever and sensitive usage they make of the Latin tag allows them to touch upon a delicate topic, which calls for considerable tact in the presence of a respectable lady - who is, a fortiori, the sister of the fallen woman in question. By saving the interlocutors from a faux pas, and Jeanie from embarrassment alike, the Catullan line preserves the urbanity of the convivial setting, while concomitantly enabling the male speakers to abide by the standards of decorum that the conversation requires. As Stead has recently observed à propos of the nineteenth-century-reception of Catullus, the Latin poet offers a valuable tool to bypass the uneasiness of taboo subjects that were usually occluded in the literary, and a fortiori everyday discourse: "In a [...] climate that equated classical

education to cultural taste, claiming descent from a Roman poet had the effect of adding a layer of legitimacy and protection from charges of obscenity”.<sup>295</sup>

This discussion opens up a perspective on moves and trends at work on the social ladder. The display and mastery of classical learning that Reuben exhibits by resorting to Catullus comes to be figured as a masculine prerogative compensating for the class divide with his aristocratic interlocutor. This act of reception is thus indicative of the remedial role played by Classics, as an integral part of a gentlemanly education, in providing a route - if not properly of access, at least of contact - to the high spheres of society.

This also bears implications in a gendered perspective. While on the one hand the quotation cements an inter-class male friendship that develops on the grounds of intellectual equality and in the name of shared cultural tastes, on the other it immediately cuts Jeanie off from the conversation, by drastically restricting the exchange to the two adult males sitting at the table. Knowing no Latin at all, Jeanie remains silent and unaware of the meaning of her husband’s utterance. Yet her silence significantly prompts an intervention by the storyteller, who comments on her dismissal in a way that presupposes a specific shared ground with a specific reader: “his wife could hardly persuade herself that all this was spoken of Effie Deans, and by so competent a judge as the Duke of Argyll; and had she been acquainted with Catullus, would have thought the fortunes of her sister had reversed the whole passage”.<sup>296</sup> The deliberately misleading or misled image of Effie that the Catullan allusion brings forth with it acts, I would argue, as the signpost for a readership that can appreciate behind the surface of a

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<sup>295</sup> STEAD (2015: 24–25)

<sup>296</sup> *Midlothian* (50: 424)

neutral, innocent digression, the ‘tongue-in-cheek’ attitude by which both Argyll and Reuben agree on the spot without the need for further explanation. In the light of this, doubt also arises as to whether the Duke paid his visit to the Butlers out of a disinterested spirit of courtesy, or instead to ‘test the waters’ on the cloudy business of Effie Deans. This re-orientation, which I am proposing here, seems to be in line with a further insight by Stead, who again illustrates how Catullus worked in terms of justifying gender exclusion, by reinforcing the mechanisms and bounds of a male-dominated world among the “hyper-masculinist and deeply learned ways that can distance many readers”.<sup>297</sup>

In building upon this view, my contention is that in Scott’s episode the citation from Catullus serves the multiple ends of truncating the conversation about a scandalous affair, while concomitantly silencing the person who believes herself to be the only depository of it and leaving the reader with the unsorted riddle as to who knows what.

As I have tried to explain thus far, the tag conveys potential resonances that the learned reader is invited to infer in the chain of mental associations it unleashes between Argyll and Butler. While this excites the suspicion that the secret (of Effie and Jeanie as well) is very likely to have already been uncovered, it also casts light on the role of male authority, and especially on the Duke as a champion of an upper-class snobbery bent on the safeguarding and perpetuation of patriarchal privileges.

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<sup>297</sup> STEAD (2015: 7)

### 3.5 Another version of the same story

This last section, like the preceding one, rests on the premises that have been traced in the previous chapter. Indeed, the issues raised there about togetherness in the midst of (and after) the civil war, as well as the debate on the role that a subordinate and marginalised ‘Other’ plays within the imperial discourse and practices of ‘Britishness’, find application in *The Antiquary*. With this, I refer to the literary project that Oldbuck proposes to Lovel to mark his debut in the realm of literature.

This brings us to chapter 14, which contains discussion and plans for a future work, to be entitled the *Caledoniad, or the Invasion Repelled*: an epic-historical poem set during the Roman Campaign in Northern Britain and where the native tribe of Caledonii, contrary to what history recounts, defeat the Roman invaders on the battlefield forcing them to retreat from the island (around AD 83).

The project, which is clearly contemplated as an imitation of the *Aeneid*, never advances beyond the planning stage and remains accomplished only in the title. However, its outline and the potentialities it entails in terms of fictionalising the past made me wonder whether this attempt to ‘write history differently’ operatively translates into *Redgauntlet*, in the light of the fact that the invasion repelled is the one that Scott himself will write in that novel, almost a decade later. Indeed, the failure of the fictitious Jacobite coup occurring outside the maximum time limit, which Scott conceives as the last, aborted instalment in the long series of conflicts between England and Scotland across the centuries, offers the reader an extreme case of revising history. Here I shall be concerned with the

developments such an association invites within the larger discussion of Scott's approach towards literary craft in its interdependence with power relations and networks. As I am persuaded, this has important implications not only in challenging the commonly accepted notion of epic, but also in problematising the assumptions of pro-Union affiliations that have been traditionally ascribed to the writer himself, and to his surrogate voices alike.

Oldbuck's resolution to put himself on Agricola's track - Gordon's *Itinerarium* in his hands, is meant to demonstrate that the battle of Mons Graupius, which Tacitus describes in *Agricola*, took place in the lands that constitute his own estate of Monkbarns. This conjecture is illustrated in the famous scene at the Kaim of Kinprunes, which he points out to Lovel as the location where Calgacus sounded the rallying cry and led the charge against the Roman army. This fieldwork is conceived as the theoretical requirement for the epic poem that will cast the native leader as the victor in a battle that everyone knew he had lost. Let us see how Oldbuck envisions such an achievement:

“What think you of a real epic?—the grand, old-fashioned historical poem which moved through twelve or twenty-four books. We'll have it so. I'll supply you with a subject—The battle between the Caledonians and the Romans—*The Caledoniad*; or, Invasion Repelled—[...]. [W]e will revive the good old forms so disgracefully neglected in modern times—You shall invoke the Muse [...]—Then we must have a vision—in which the genius of Caledonia shall appear to Galgacus [*sic*], and show him a procession of the real Scottish monarchs”.<sup>298</sup>

What is particularly noteworthy here is that, in response to the objection that Lovel reasonably raises –namely that “the invasion of Agricola was not repelled”,

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<sup>298</sup> *Antiquary* (14: 108)

Oldbuck encouragingly retorts: “No; but you are a poet—free of corporation, and as little bound down to truth or probability, as Virgil himself—You may defeat the Romans in spite of Tacitus”.<sup>299</sup>

This approach invites reconsideration in the light of the implications it carries in terms of authorship, be it claimed or declined. While Cleishbotham refuses any responsibility towards the works he is presenting to his audience, Oldbuck has clear ideas and a lot to say about poetic composition and in advertising his skills exhibits a seemingly confident mastery of epic devices, along with a self-assurance that borders on narcissism. Among the accoutrements and requirements he lists with a view to anchoring the poem intertextually in the epic tradition, directions are given as to length –in 12 or 24 books– and starting framework incipit –the work must begin with the canonical invocation to the Muse. The only difference concerns metrical choice: hexameter is replaced by Miltonic blank verse, reputed as “more grand and magnificent for an historical subject”.<sup>300</sup> More specifically, the work-to-be is conceived in its structure as a virtual epitome of the *Aeneid*: such positioning can most tellingly be seen when Oldbuck presents it as “*aureum quidem opus*”.<sup>301</sup>

A closer engagement with the Latin model lies within the way in which the prophetic vein is displayed: the special vision that the new poem should include is modelled on *Aeneid* 6, where Anchises shows his son the descendants of his line in the Elysian Fields, strategically marking a pre-battle scene for the main hero –for Calgacus as well as for Aeneas, who is about to disembark on Italian shores. However, as Oldbuck proceeds, rather emphatically, in instructing the would-be

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<sup>299</sup> *Antiquary* (14: 107)

<sup>300</sup> *Antiquary* (14: 108)

<sup>301</sup> *Antiquary* (22: 180)

epic poet about the desiderata for this debut, it emerges that instead of positioning himself at the centre, he is withdrawing from such a joint enterprise. Indeed, the honour of literary ownership is left entirely to Lovel, whereas his own contribution will be limited to the redaction of background information and paratextual notes. In keeping his distance from authorship, Oldbuck remains true to a well-established practice of his: as he himself reveals with reference to both his already published works and his essays under preparation, he remains a mysterious, shadowy figure, who hides his identity behind pseudonyms. An example at hand is a recent proposal for the decoding of an inscription, which appears in print under the signature of ‘Oedipus’ –a mask that overtly alludes to the ‘epigraphic enigma’ that Oldbuck is deciphering, but which also suitably features the riddle he is creating about his own identity. Rather than a solution, the dialogue with Virgil poses a problem, the full scope of which will arise later. As we are about to see, it is precisely in this connection with the *Aeneid* that the reason why the project is destined to remain just an abortive attempt lies.

At a first glance the juxtaposition between Oldbuck and Scott seems suggestive of a dichotomy, marking the difference between amateur and professional writer –with the former’s attempts at an epic poem remaining unachieved, whereas the latter hits the target in his historical prose narrative, initiating a fictional output that proves in turn an experiment in genre switching. However, things are more complicated than this rather black-and-white distinction seems to imply. For however easy it is to dismiss Oldbuck as a caricature of the pedantic antiquarian involved in bizarre research, which indeed

in part he is, I cannot totally subscribe to the view that relegates his literary personality to a merely imitative display of dry erudition lacking in originality.

Beyond the generally held image of the ivory-tower scholar, isolated from the flow of events around him, Oldbuck's uneasy engagement with classical models helps us to uncover nuances and suggestions that betray the confusion and disorientation experienced by the intellectual in relation to the new network of power surrounding him. His approach to the interplay between Virgil and Tacitus provides an insight into the effort to take part in the construction of a new national identity within a literary agenda that prioritises the inclusion of both the voice and viewpoint of the colonised into the canon of the coloniser. The revision of the *Aeneid* that Oldbuck proposes is notable because the focus, this time, is not on the Trojans and Romans-to-be, but on their indigenous opponents, who fight for their country and their families in a struggle of resistance and liberation: a perspective that thus recognises the need for representation of an oppressed element that history has silenced.

In confronting authors he was thoroughly steeped in, Scott, like his storyteller, registers growing hesitation in affirming an optimistic vision of the colonial design as propelled by the English-dominant elite. The prospect of the Caledonians repelling the invasion should be seen not so much as offering an example of mis-assimilation, with the resulting 'declaration of death' of the *ancien régime* narrative, but rather as putting the authority of Virgil into question as a reliable interpretation of historical facts. The unsuccessful attempt at appropriating classical epic can be described as a form of discourse ideally suited to voicing "pessimism about epic possibility" precisely in the light of the

profound reservations it assumes about the *Aeneid* as a paradigm.<sup>302</sup> In this frame, Oldbuck resists being reduced to the comic dimension alone, as most of the scholarship so far would make us believe. By this I mean that, while he certainly qualifies as a failed narrator, he is not solely determined by his naïve mimicry, emerging instead as one among the many who, as Hingley argues, were “anxious about the likelihood of political and cultural domination by England, and drawing upon stories of native resistance derived from various classical texts, used the ideas of Roman monumental fortification to define the valour of ancient Caledonians and Picts (perceived as their ancestors) who had successfully opposed Roman domination on their land”.<sup>303</sup> Thus, the impossibility of pursuing a Virgilian trajectory translates into the impossibility of conferring a sense of legitimacy or of historical teleology on the past. This repositioning excludes any reading in laudatory or encomiastic terms, by spreading a layer of negative colouring over the imperial rhetoric that celebrates English supremacy, as if to imply that there are no praiseworthy actions to commemorate under the banner of a providential mission.

The considerations drawn so far work a *fortiori* on account of the story-time of the plot, in broader terms within a novel that gives an “entirely convincing picture of provincial life during the French revolutionary wars”<sup>304</sup>, by “enshrining the moment when the Scottish people rose to the defense of Great Britain as a whole, in response to a false alarm of French invasion in 1804”.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> JENKYNS (2006: 321)

<sup>303</sup> HINGLEY (2008: 26)

<sup>304</sup> WILSON (1980: 70)

<sup>305</sup> SHAW (1983: 74)

In fact, the prospect of an invasion hints not only at the remote past, but at the immediate present too, working as a metaphor for the –much more real– fear of a French attack on British shores. Although the risk is dispelled –as D’Arcy grasps the linkage when he writes that “[t]he apparent non-event of the Scots repelling Agricola’s invasion is [...] matched by the non-invasion of the French fleet”, we should however remember that, in the apprehensions of such a socio-political climate, Lovel is regarded with diffidence at Fairport, being suspected of collusion with France.<sup>306</sup> It is in this context that Oldbuck’s proposal to compose an epic of patriotic resistance sounds like a ‘recruiting attempt’ inasmuch as it conceals a way to put the youngster to the test with regard to his loyalties and sympathies. The invitation to indulge in artistic licence and consider himself ‘free of corporation’ sounds rather like surreptitiously inserting the question: ‘which corporation are you with’? The immersion in the viewpoint of the defeated, which Oldbuck projects as an apparently harmless flight of the imagination, seems instead to be calculated to touch a raw nerve of uneasiness in the political sensitivity of the time.

Oldbuck’s efforts at ‘creative writing’, however tentative and speculative, cannot be reduced to an innocent, not to say pointless diversion, but call rather for a reassessment in the light of their capacity to reflect the oscillating, ambivalent attitude toward geo-political balances, where signs of resistance to a dominant ‘legitimate’ culture coexist with the need for co-ordinates under which to lead a pan-British joint reaction against outside threats.

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<sup>306</sup> D’ARCY (2005: 91)

With regard to literary form, such literary pursuits can be framed to a certain extent as the prelude to a later trend amongst the Victorians in their dealing with how to –or, better still how not to– approach the epic norm, a development that Harrison describes as follows: “Victorian poets [...] felt the challenge [...] but declined to take on the full poetic enterprise of extensive epic, avoiding it”.<sup>307</sup> However, I would add that the playful mode within the limits of verisimilitude as proposed by Oldbuck also prefigures the adoption of the ‘what if...’-approach that Scott will follow in *Redgauntlet*, the idea of a Stuart reinstatement being already textually situated in the ineffective yearning for an epic poem *more maiorum*. In its ‘proto-postmodernist’ slant, the *Antiquary* thus conveys the struggle to construct a meaning for the past and the immediate present alike: a struggle that will find its extreme instantiation in a novel where the failure of a doomed cause coincides with the wasted energy of its eponymous character. While in the first case the ‘what if...’ puts into question the achievements of centuries of hostility, by denying a conciliatory compromise within a providential scheme, in the second one the tragic register of a foretold defeat prevails over any epic norm. This discussion shall be furthered in chapter five, where we shall reconsider *The Bride of Lammermoor* as a work closely bound to Virgil, in that the novel functions as Scott’s rewriting of the Dido-and-Aeneas story.

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<sup>307</sup> HARRISON (2013: 21)

### **3.6 Concluding remarks**

In this chapter we have explored the ways in which the set of spokespersons that Scott deploys in his fiction overlap in the concentric circles that articulate the 'architexture' of the narrative framework. In particular, I hope to have explained how the tactical usage of classical voices embedded in authorial self-projections qualifies as an attempt to foresee and direct his own reception, by disseminating traces of his own literary pedigree. Such a self-referential strategy plays a crucial role as Scott comes face to face with the risks posed by his genre allegiance. The inclusion of Latin models, be they employed or questioned, translates into an attempt to make the literary form of the novel accommodate the standards of elite readers, so as to make the novel attractive to the top layer audience, and to redeem a genre that was principally reputed as an entertainment product for a wide range of readers, especially women.

By resorting to para or pseudo-authorial stances that, to different degrees, express the awareness of a creative role, Scott inscribes himself within a mainstream scholarly tradition and literary practice. The learned reader, to whom Scott winks, thus finds before him the tools by which to look through and around the surface of paratextual manoeuvres and is invited to try, at his own pleasure, to disentangle the enigma of his identity.

Last but not least, models such as Ovid and Horace prove particularly versatile in Scott's re-usage, in the light of the discrepancy they are able to set out throughout their career in terms of early vs. mature, private vs. official, in an attempt to perform the delicate art of negotiation between old loyalties and new

powers.<sup>308</sup> These distinctions allow for separating the 'outer dimension' of the author's sociocultural existence from an inner sphere where it becomes possible to insinuate countercultural tides or even anti-establishment elements. Against the fluidity and elusiveness of a narrative act that excludes a single, identifiable narrative entity, the display of these *alter egos* compensates for the vacuum created by anonymity and proves strategic in establishing a channel of communication behind the safe cover of the incognito.

Paradoxically as it may sound, we have seen how Scott transforms his choice of anonymity into a choice of situatedness and rootedness: a re-interpretation of the multiple facets that the 'speaking I' assumes in terms of classical reception could thus help explain why, and how, in certain circles, the identity of the 'Author of Waverley' was nothing more than an open secret.

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<sup>308</sup> On the theme of literary progression, as Horace and Ovid encapsulate it in a ready and reusable trajectory that proves to be inspirational for later poets, see the systematic treatment in HARDIE and MOORE (2010). See also DAVIDSON and EVANS (eds. 2015)

## Chapter Four

### **Masculinity under question**

#### **4.1 The burden of consanguinity in a doomed household**

*This section looks at the ways in which a reassessment of the characterisation of Darsie Latimer, as constructed through literary allusion to the model of Orestes, can be used to illuminate more broadly the tragic subtext that Scott mobilises in Redgauntlet. It is particularly the treatment adopted by Euripides that acquires relevance here, due to different aspects of not only characterisation, but also political perspective, that Scott develops in turn in his novel. As I shall discuss at length, Darsie takes on some of Orestes' qualities. I intend to begin by addressing these elements in the following order: the scar-motif that sets in motion the recognition process; the depiction of the protagonist in his weakness and passivity, with the consequent gender-related implications within a portrait that undermines the allegedly epic calibre of the main hero; and ultimately, the generational conflict, epitomised, as it is, in the struggle with a controversial uncle figure, whose authority and reliability as a surrogate father are constantly put into question.*

*This tragic paradigm reveals itself most eminently in the tragic course marking the collapse of an ancient lineage, where the hero represents the last ring in a dynasty on the verge of extinction within a narrative that contemplates the themes of expropriation and usurpation as its subject-matter.*

While it can hardly be doubted that *Redgauntlet* calls into question the attitudes that Scott nourishes towards the Stuart cause, it is precisely in this regard that the recourse to Greek tragedy offers a new reading key against the dominant interpretation of the novel as a whole. As we shall explore in what follows, rather than legitimating the utility of the Union for averting riots and disorders, the tragic subtext triggers a bitter meditation on the irreparable damage that a century-long civil strife has done to the fabric of society. As I believe, Greek

tragedy runs through the novel to suggest a reading that tends to undermine the credibility of the official, overoptimistic rhetoric of pacification.

As we saw in chapter one, Greek tragedy initiated a highly prominent debate on the literary scene among philosophers and intellectuals across Europe, a topic of increasing contemporary interest to which Scott himself was not alien. It is perhaps no coincidence that during the composition of *Redgauntlet* he was writing his *Essay on Drama* (1819-26), whilst recording diary entries in which he expressed his burgeoning interest into Greek tragedy, particularly as a reader of Schlegel.

The appropriation of the model of friendship epitomised by Orestes and Pylades emerges right at the outset of the novel. In his first epistle to Alan, Darsie claims connection with the mythical duo, as an example of mutual affection and unconditional devotion that is left to Darsie and Alan to replicate in their profession of loyalty:

“We have an advantage over the dear friends of old [...]. Neither David and Jonathan, nor Orestes and Pylades, nor Damon and Pythias—although in the latter case [...] a letter by post would have been very acceptable—ever corresponded together”.<sup>309</sup>

As outlined in the introduction, the contribution made by Classics to the discourse of sexuality in Scott has deserved only parenthetical mention so far. “[H]omoerotically charged exemplars from the Greek and Roman traditions” are

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<sup>309</sup> *Redgauntlet* (i: 6). All of these names stand as epitomes of trust and loyalty in same-sex friendship at least from the early modern period. For further discussion see NORTON (2008). Following the Edinburgh edition of the novel, references to the epistles are indicated with Roman numerals, whereas references to the chapters are indicated with the Arabic ones.

acknowledged by Incorvati to pepper the text of *Redgauntlet* as “fairly patent instances of male attraction”.<sup>310</sup> However, the scholar limits himself to registering this presence, without discussing at length the implications that such a parallel entails. Yet, perhaps more interestingly, he points in the direction of an echo from Byron’s diary, where the example of Orestes and Pylades appears to be fraught with subliminal messages in a passage where the 19-year-old poet confesses his attachment to John Edleston, a young chorister at Trinity College, Cambridge. As Incorvati suggests: “in an interesting coincidence [...] with Byron about the same age as Darsie”.<sup>311</sup>

Apart from setting a precedent for exclusive friendship, Orestes and Pylades are indeed called into play throughout the narrative within a scheme of collaboration that extends as the story proceeds to involve a sister figure, Lilius, who is firstly known by the obscure name of ‘Lady of the Greenmantle’. While remarking on this scheme, Incorvati unwittingly evokes Euripides: “in being linked by a sister, Darsie and Alan follow a pattern set by Darsie’s exemplars, Orestes and Pylades, the latter of whom marries Orestes’ sister, Elektra, in a gesture meant to solidify their privileged bond”.<sup>312</sup> In other words, Orestes and Pylades have found their Elektra: as the third angle emerges, the Euripidean triangulation is again achieved in Scott’s novel. Such a dynamic reveals itself in the interaction among three youthful characters who are joined together within a

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<sup>310</sup> INCORVATI, 2004–5

<sup>311</sup> INCORVATI (2004–5). As Byron annotates in his diary entry: “We shall put Lady E. Butler, & Miss Ponsonby to the Blush, Pylades & Orestes out of countenance, & want nothing but a Catastrophe like Nisus & Euryalus, to give Jonathan & David the ‘go by” (July 5th 1807; 1: 124–5). Though scholarship agrees (on the fact) that both Byron and Edleston experienced homosexual relationships in their adult life, this is not enough, at least according to CROMPTON, to establish with certainty that their university friendship also entailed a physical involvement, although –as CROMPTON admits–“inevitably a certain ambiguity hovers over the names” (1985: 102).

<sup>312</sup> INCORVATI, 2004–5

frame of kinship and mutual support, and especially when they are called to face the prospect of a criminal plan, with the conflict of loyalties and moral duties resulting from their controversial family attachment. According to Incorvati, the danger of drifting into illicit tendencies is only ostensibly averted in the epilogue, which celebrates, perhaps too hastily, in the nuptials between Alan Fairford and Lillas, a union that is functional in “linking the friends together conjugally and perpetuating the homoerotic bonds that pervade the story”.<sup>313</sup>

Contrary to the well-consolidated formula of the ‘resolving marriage’, which represents a sort of fixed arrangement for Scott’s readers, in *Redgauntlet* the main hero remains unmarried, embodying an exception to a well-tested rule. Indeed, we do not see him either getting married or on the road to marriage. Darsie remains a bachelor in what many scholars have defined as a ‘mutilated epilogue’ of the novel, a closure that goes blatantly against the rules and laws of Scott’s narrative. This feature sets *Redgauntlet* firmly apart from the other Waverley novels –a fortiori, since Scott, who even in the haste that often characterises his denouements, could have at least provided a clue in this direction, prefers to leave the prospect of a future marriage aside, even in a future that the actual scope of the narrative does not contemplate.

The fact that Darsie limits himself to acting as a witness to a marriage, without taking a wife in his turn, is a circumstance that, according to Whyte, contributes to redeeming his vulnerable reputation: “the scandal of barely concealed homosocial desire between male rivals is ultimately defused by the convenient plot device of making the woman in the case the sister of one, onto

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<sup>313</sup> INCORVATI, 2004–5

whom the other's desire can safely be deflected".<sup>314</sup> Whyte unravels the details of this dynamic where the female character acts as the connecting link, mediating and perpetuating the bond between the two men: "a dotted line would link Alan and Darsie, signifying an erotic tension which cannot even be named [...]. A zigzag line between Darsie and Greenmantle would indicate an erotic tension which cannot be given expression for reasons which are made explicit: namely, that they are brother and sister. A straight line, linking Alan and Greenmantle, would indicate the only possible pairing, and the one through which the plot reaches a problematic resolution".<sup>315</sup>

The trope in question here is what has been called a 'homosocial triangle', in which femininity remains subservient in merely acting as a function of the homosocial desire that stands as the prominent and defining component of this complex net of impulses and emotions.<sup>316</sup> Although the triangulation in question manifestly results in a heterosexual union, it suggests at the same time that an endogamous connotation persists at the close of the novel. This aspect reiterates (and leaves inherently open) the enigma of Darsie's sexual orientation, given that this union contributes to legalising the connection between the two friends who now become, literally, brothers-in-law. The process of fraternisation that we see in action from the very beginning of the narrative, which starts with the non-official adoption of Darsie Latimer by the Fairford family, is eventually sealed among the clauses of the matrimonial contract between Alan and Lilius.<sup>317</sup> I am

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<sup>314</sup> FERNS (1996: 162–3)

<sup>315</sup> WHYTE (2004: 170)

<sup>316</sup> For a thorough formulation of this trope see KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK (1985)

<sup>317</sup> This would fit in the colloquial the label of 'Bromance'. It is also worth bearing in mind that, both in Aeschylus' *Choēphoroi* and Euripides' *Electra* Pylades figures also as cousin of Orestes. Indeed, he is the son of the king of Phocis, who has welcomed Orestes in the years of his exile. The

persuaded that the denouement of *Redgauntlet* –the happy ending of which so blatantly deviates from the other happy endings of Scott’s output– is not just a tool that the author finds at his disposal among the repertoire of possible epilogues, but is instead target-oriented. With regard to this aspect, I distance myself from the interpretations of other scholars, Levine among them, who argues that “[Redgauntlet's] plot is severed radically from the narrative, and becomes merely a set of mad conventions: the happy ending, the inevitable marriage, the inheritance”.<sup>318</sup> On the contrary, I am inclined to suggest that by means of triangulation, Scott deliberately alters his usual concluding strategy in order to leave the subtopic of Darsie’s gender-confusion simultaneously elusive and eluded. While promoting the process of fraternisation, this triangulation brings to the fore three characters closely related to each other, all of whom resent, to varying degrees, the absence of a parental figure. Finally, and importantly for our purpose here, it opens a further avenue on the tragic dimension of the novel, inasmuch as the tale of the fictional Jacobite rebellion is also the personal story of an impossible homecoming against the background of a generational conflict, where insubordination against adult authority recalls the seditions and fractures leading to the destruction of the doomed household of the Atreidai, of which Orestes is, in all probability, the last descendant.<sup>319</sup>

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themes of hospitality and shared growth are brought together in Scott’s version, in a way that they were intermingled in antiquity too.

<sup>318</sup> LEVINE (1981: 127)

<sup>319</sup> The saga of the cursed household of the Atreidai, which consisted of a cycle of violence and a reiterated chain of ‘blood repaid for with blood’ leading to fratricidal slaughter and cannibalism, started with the conflict Tantalus vs. Pelops, to continue then in the contrast Atreus vs. Thyestes, and to affect eventually the destiny of Menelaus and Agamemnon. On this intergenerational struggle see BERTMAN (éd. 1976). The role of Orestes as the last heir is already in Apollodorus

In what follows, I will demonstrate how Scott's intertextual engagement with the myth of Orestes is based upon an amalgam of motifs and narrative nodes from Euripides.<sup>320</sup>

Firstly, the identity of Darsie Latimer is mysteriously connected to a physical mark: a horseshoe-shaped scar that he, like all his male ancestors, supposedly bears on his forehead. The disclosure of this hereditary feature emerges in a crescendo of anticipation and suspense, where the first suggestion is unwittingly provided by the bard Willie Steenson: "Ye maun ken he had a way of bending his brows, that men saw the visible mark of a horseshoe in his forehead, deep dinted, as if it had been stamped there".<sup>321</sup>

The scar becomes the main topic in the first face-to-face encounter between uncle and nephew, when Darsie is taken by surprise by Redgauntlet while anxiously looking in the mirror in search of traces of his biological kinship. Redgauntlet warns his heir-to-be not to be hasty in inspecting his skin, since the mark he is trying to detect will appear in due course as though in adherence to a mysterious, gloomy fatality attached to the family: "Doubt not that it is stamped on your forehead—the fatal mark of our race; though it is not now so apparent as it will become when age and sorrow, and the traces of stormy passions and of bitter penitence, shall have drawn their furrows on your brow".<sup>322</sup>

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(*Bibl.* 2.176), where it is reported that Orestes generates only a son whose untimely death marks the lineage's extinction.

<sup>320</sup> The dramatic version of the myth appears first in Aeschylus' trilogy (*Oresteia*, which included *Agamemnon*, *Choēphoroi* and *Eumenides*), to receive subsequently treatment by both Sophocles (*Electra*) and Euripides (*Orestes* and *Electra*). However, for the sake of ease, I shall hereafter simply refer to this subtext at play in *Redgauntlet* by using the all-encompassing formula of 'the tragedy of Orestes'.

<sup>321</sup> *Redgauntlet* (xi: 89)

<sup>322</sup> *Redgauntlet* (8: 189). Emphasis mine.

In the highly charged dialogue that follows this confrontation, Redgauntlet explains in detail the backstory of this hereditary mark, which horizontally unites different generations. Let us see this exchange, which is worth citing in full:

**Darsie:** “And has the fatal sign [...] descended on all the posterity of this unhappy house?”

**Redgauntlet:** “It has been so handed down from antiquity, and is still believed. [...]. But perhaps there is, in the popular evidence, something of that fancy which creates what it sees. Certainly, as other families have peculiarities by which they are distinguished, this of Redgauntlet is marked in most individuals by a singular indenture of the forehead [...]. It is certain there seems to have been a fate upon the House of Redgauntlet, which has been on the losing side in almost all the civil broils which have divided the kingdom of Scotland from David Bruce's days, till the late [...] attempt of the Chevalier Charles Edward”. [...].

**Darsie:** “And am I then [...] descended from this unhappy race? Do you belong to it? And if so, why do I sustain restraint and hard usage at the hands of a relation?”.<sup>323</sup>

If we consider this juncture of the novel in the light of Darsie's fashioning as a latter day Orestes, which we have seen at play from its outset, the detail of the scar as a trope of identification indeed brings us back to the scene of Orestes' recognition in Euripides' *Electra*. Here, the old servant of the house of the Atreidai exhorts the eponymous heroine to pay attention to one of the two *soi disant* foreign visitors at the palace, and to observe in particular the scar that one

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<sup>323</sup> *Redgauntlet* (8: 192). See how Redgauntlet does not miss the opportunity to insert his scepticism about credulous tendencies qualifying as the spokesperson of Enlightened rationalism.

of the young guests bears on his brow.<sup>324</sup> This suggestion presents an unequivocal sign for Electra, who immediately recognises her brother, and in his scar the consequence of a childhood incident they experienced together during the pursuit of a fawn in the forest.

**Servant:** Then look, my daughter, at this man you love best.

**Electra:** I have been looking for some time: have you gone mad?

**Servant:** Am I mad if I see your brother?

**Electra:** What do you mean, old man, by this extraordinary claim?

**Servant:** That I see Orestes, Agamemnon's son.

**Electra:** What mark have you seen that deserves my trust?

**Servant:** The scar next to his eyebrow: once in your father's house he fell and cut it as you and he chased a fawn.<sup>325</sup>

However, in the case of Darsie, the very nature of the scar still remains to a certain extent undecipherable and surrounded by an aura of supernatural fantasy. More than a distinguishable physical trait ascribable to a past circumstance, the mark he bears on his face is much more blurred and faded, mysteriously connected, as it is, to the recurring materialisation of a congenital curse. This is perhaps why the very existence of the scar is put into doubt by Redgauntlet himself, who does not exclude in his explanation the effects of a century-long superstition in the imagination of those who presume to see it.

Whether visible to the unaided eye, real or the fruit of suggestion, the scar has the effect of triggering the *anagnorisis* that sets in motion the process of

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<sup>324</sup> In his treatment of the recognition scene Euripides deliberately inserts a point of dissent against his predecessor Aeschylus, whose identification stratagems –the lock of hair and the footprint Orestes leaves on Agamemnon's grave before disappearing from human sight– sound like unrealistic and weak to him. On this, see PUCCI (1967).

<sup>325</sup> EUR. *El.* 556–74.

resolution, as the token of a quest for a past that is impossible to recover, but that at the same time overwhelms the hero with its trail of violence and aberration.

Upon closer scrutiny, the perspective that the scar opens in *Redgauntlet* is dramatically different from its function for Orestes. For in this physical trait lies a key to his past, of which Darsie, for the entirety of his life thus far, is unaware. Paradoxically, when the secret of his family origins is unveiled, the character ends up imprisoned in a past, the main details of which he is unable to reconstruct, and which therefore exerts a paralysing effect on him, acting as another blocking factor preventing his maturation and leaving him suspended on the verge of adulthood. However, things may be closer to Euripides than they seem at first to be. As classical scholarship has long since agreed, the mark on Orestes' brow is a clear version of a far more famous scar –the one that Odysseus bears above his knee.<sup>326</sup> While the scar of Odysseus is a permanent reminder of a victorious deed, where the young hero distinguishes himself in front of his peers for the first time, conversely Orestes does not prove to be up to the same *rite de passage*. As Tarkow claims, the scar “serves to remind us of the essentially unheroic fellow Euripides is portraying in Orestes”. In Goff's words, the presence of this physical mark, a “far from simple token”, is instrumental in calling into question the masculinity and heroic status of the Euripidean Orestes.<sup>327</sup>

In spite of the fact that Orestes and Odysseus share the same circumstances as dispossessed heroes, a dynamic of diminution is evident in

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<sup>326</sup> This is the mark that notoriously precipitates the moment of recognition in *Odyssey* XIX, when the wet-nurse Eurycleia gives Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, a bath. Eurycleia immediately associates the scar with her former master, who injured his knee in the course of his first boar-hunt early in his youth.

<sup>327</sup> TARKOW (1981: 147). The “problematic relation” of this episode with its Homeric model is exhaustively investigated by GOFF (1991: 260–1) against the background of the anthropological insights of Vidal-Naquet.

Euripides' text, where "each item in the Odyssean story [...] is systematically scaled down in its [...] counterpart".<sup>328</sup> With his treatment, Euripides illustrates "how loaded with irony the scar can be" by endorsing a comparison that is instrumental in "depriving Orestes of any analogous claim to manhood".<sup>329</sup>

This defective masculinity is not limited to the acquisition of an heroic pedigree: "the relation between the two scars is not only that between heroism and lack of it, [...], but also that between man's estate and childhood".<sup>330</sup> In Euripides, Orestes does not achieve an equal standing to male, adult heroes due to his "failure to make the transition to full adulthood, because he is ultimately unable to replace Agamemnon as proprietor and head of the household".<sup>331</sup> As Goff explains:

"the moment when Orestes should be proving his manhood [...], the story of his scar locks him into a symbolic childhood. In the absence of a youthful heroic gesture that would have already proved his competence, Orestes appears evermore unqualified for the task that awaits him".<sup>332</sup>

As a result, "the story of the scar that identifies [Orestes], in its refiguring of the Odyssean narrative, condemns him forever [...], and inscribes him firmly into a childhood and a sonship that will destroy him".<sup>333</sup> This suspended condition fundamentally contributes to the making of Orestes as "a young man with a

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<sup>328</sup> GOFF (1991: 260). "Orestes already evokes Odyssean patterns of action in that he is returning to reclaim his palace and possessions [...], and these patterns of action condition any reading of Orestes' scar".

<sup>329</sup> GOFF (1991: 260–4)

<sup>330</sup> GOFF (1991: 264)

<sup>331</sup> GOFF (1991: 265)

<sup>332</sup> GOFF (1991: 264)

<sup>333</sup> GOFF (1991: 267)

young man's failings, suddenly thrust into a world governed by passions he is ill equipped to deal with".<sup>334</sup>

On a very similar level, Darsie's moral weakness and Alan's delicate health (though in the latter case, as we shall see later in this same chapter, a further development is in store) are two sides of the same coin here inasmuch as they belong to a wider discourse of defective masculinity, certainly one of the most privileged *films rouges* in Scott's narrative. Euripides is again relevant in this regard, given that the very first scene of *Orestes* represents the sickness of the main hero, who lies down with Electra sitting at his side and attending to him.<sup>335</sup> The first part of the drama provides the representation of the somatic distress that Orestes experiences after committing his crime, by alternating between moments of convulsions and slumber, in a tension that leaves him constantly confused and exhausted.<sup>336</sup>

Orestes seems to provide an interesting study case for modern psychiatry, in particular with regard to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): "Orestes suffers a psychotic attack: terrifying visions, wild ravings interspersed with periods of sleep, fits of despair, refusal of food and drink, and repeated wishes of death".<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> NISSETICH (1995: 9). Another typical feature of unachieved masculinity in need of being restrained lies in the impetuosity and rashness of youth, of which another famous example is in *Aeneid* 2. 567–76, the moment when Aeneas is suddenly seized by the impulse to kill Helen on the verge of Troy's collapse.

<sup>335</sup> THEODOROU (1993: 37) registers the frequency of "[the word νόσος, recurrent in Orestes (34, 21lf., 227, 232, 282, 314, 395, 407, 791, 800, 831)]".

<sup>336</sup> In a similar light SMITH describes how Euripides' "clinical approach" on stage, as an aspect that emerges "[b]y detailing [...] the metaphor of disease and the medical concepts it implies [...]" (1967: 306). For a recent treatment see KOSAK (2004)

<sup>337</sup> As THEODOROU argues: "Euripides' description [...] follows modern definitions of delirium almost perfectly: the mental state in which altered consciousness is combined with psychomotorial overactivity, hallucinosis and disorientation; [where the] awareness of oneself and surroundings is impaired" (1993: 34). For an in-depth analysis from a medical perspective see TZEFERAKOS-DOUZENIS (2014).

In a similar manner, Darsie too is incapable of taking care of himself and in constant need of the assistance of both his friend and his sister. The sense of uneasiness and disorientation that permanently accompanies him takes shape within the domain of Gothic taste, and “his life assumes the shape of the most bizarre nightmare vision, offering as normative the irrationalities of the wildest Gothic romance”.<sup>338</sup> The contradictions surrounding his identity lead him constantly to distort every experience that he has, evoking disturbing aspects that he cannot help but take to the extreme consequence. The foremost example of this neurotic behaviour is the encounter with his sister Liliás, which provokes in him conflicting emotions and, above all, the obsessive fear of drifting into the taboo of incest.

The controversial masculinity, as already depicted by Euripides, according to which “[Orestes is transformed into] an anarchic and cocky youth, whose appalling rudeness [...] both shocks and amuses” is treated by Scott as something that shows the potential to call gender into question in his own appropriation of the myth.<sup>339</sup> As I am persuaded, this unsettled sexual identity is orchestrated as the germinating ground for such an exclusive male friendship to assume homoerotic implications. I think that this reading is particularly cogent for the case of Darsie, since the chaos and confusion that are the hallmarks of his life and

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<sup>338</sup> SUTHERLAND (1985: xi)

<sup>339</sup> For further discussion see HALL (2001; 2013). This basic homosexual drive takes centre stage in the rewriting of the myth by PASOLINI (*Pilade*, 1963). I should like to thank most gratefully my friend and colleague Marzia D’Amico to whom I owe this suggestion and my discovery of this tragedy by the Italian intellectual, the existence of which I was not aware of previously. For a detailed analysis of Pasolini’s play see BERTI, 2008. Further discussion also in FABBRO, 2004 and FUSILLO, 1996.

family past significantly affect his sexual orientation, whereas Alan, as will be discussed later, seemingly manages to redirect this ambiguity at a later stage.<sup>340</sup>

The myth of Orestes acquires further significance in the light of the intergenerational struggle that devastates a family in an uninterrupted chain of mourning and bloodshed - about which there is also more in the next sections.<sup>341</sup> Indeed, *Orestes* is “a play about youth, its relation to the adult world, and the passage from youth to adulthood”, where Euripides “describes a group of youths and a group of elders who become adversaries”.<sup>342</sup> The same generational divide is to be found in *Redgauntlet* where adult figures come across as sternly patronising (the case of Saunders Fairford) or even showing a resentful and tyrannical attitude. The latter qualities are indeed embodied by Hugh Redgauntlet, whose “understanding of history as the working out of inevitable destiny in the lives of men is as tyrannical and narrowly hereditary as his notions of kingship; and believing in the necessary accomplishment of the family curse [...] he reads events in this light”.<sup>343</sup> Paradoxical as it may sound, when the mystery of Darsie’s identity is revealed, family reconciliation becomes impossible, as the nephew resists the pressure the uncle exerts to convert him to his desperate cause. An argument that Redgauntlet often resorts to, in order to

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<sup>340</sup> For a counter to the matter of a homoerotic tension between Orestes and Pylades, see the “negative verdict” given by POOLE, however through the lens of an approach that seems at times to indulge in a positivistic mode, where the acknowledgement of “no discernible homosexual component” relies too heavily on the attempt to reconstruct the author’s intention: “Euripides could easily have made this explicit if he had wanted to, and one must wonder whether his failure to do so reflects a deep reluctance to present a homosexual attraction in such a positive way” (1990: 134–136). On the assumption that “Euripides put a high value on male friendship [...] for its innate affection as well as for any practical assistance which one friend may bring to the other, or any sacrifice he may be prepared to make” (109) this is not enough to read more: “[t]here is a very close bond of affection between them, but nothing that compels us to believe that they are or have been lovers, though undoubtedly there must have been members of Athenian audience willing to put this construction on their relationship” (135–6)

<sup>341</sup> For a discussion of this aspect see FREYMAN (1976) and FALKNER (1983)

<sup>342</sup> FALKNER (1983: 289)

<sup>343</sup> SUTHERLAND (1985: xv–xvi)

convince his reluctant nephew, lies in the aristocratic origin of the family, with the consequent duties towards the Stuart line.

A similar psychological pressure is found in Euripides, where “[t]he φύσις of Orestes [...] is young, tentative and untutored. Both youths [Orestes and Elektra] are acutely aware of their paternity, and are reminded by others of their φύσις and their descent from a father that neither has known”.<sup>344</sup> Nonetheless, Darsie and his sister resist the thirst for revenge of their relative, by showing a considerable resilience in repudiating the pressures and compulsions exerted by the deviant adult figures around them in an attempt to commit them to their criminal plan. From this moment onwards, the generational gap is unbridgeable:

“I have told you, Sir Arthur, [...]; [...] the consequences of a refusal would be so dreadful to yourself, [...] that I would not risk, by a moment's impatience, the object of my whole life. [...]. My first wish on earth is for that restoration and that freedom—my next, that my nephew, the representative of my house and of the brother of my love, may have the advantage and the credit of all my efforts in the good cause. But [...] if Scotland and my father's house cannot stand and flourish together, then perish the very name of Redgauntlet! Perish the son of my brother, with every recollection of the glories of my family, of the affections of my youth, rather than my country's cause should be injured [...]!

[H]e continued [...] while he pressed his finger against his forehead; 'and if you yourself crossed my path in opposition, I swear, by the mark

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<sup>344</sup> FALKNER (1983: 293). Hence the parallel the scholar draws between Orestes and Neoptolemus, the son of dead Achilles in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*.

that darkens my brow, that a new deed should be done—a new doom  
should be deserved!”<sup>345</sup>

There is no possibility of restoration in the Greek myth for a lineage that has been annihilated once and for all: “the house of Atreus is destroyed utterly, not [...] by its internal enemies, but by its own internal contradictions”.<sup>346</sup> The main conflicting aspect in *Redgauntlet* is the difficult relationship between foster-father and male heir, which becomes a tangible element in the diminishing attitude that the adult figure (and head of the family) constantly shows towards his nephews, something that becomes a rather obsessive leitmotif for him - as he continuously repeats, his young heirs are “but half Redgauntlets”.<sup>347</sup>

Redgauntlet’s despot-like authority and inflexibility of thought cannot contemplate the prospect of a new generation that tries to think differently. The reluctance Darsie manifests in refusing to adhere to the political intrigue increasingly diminishes Redgauntlet’s expectations, both towards the cause and towards his heir. As Lilius reveals, the uncle ascribes the failure of his dynasty to a sort of genetic degeneration: “the metal of which our father’s family was made, has been softened to effeminacy in our mother’s offspring”.<sup>348</sup> The accusation is generally charged towards both nephews, but it is obvious here that the main target is Darsie, as the potential male heir who does not agree to undertake this role and responsibilities –and overtly inserts a hint of denigration that indeed fits within the aforementioned gender perspective.

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<sup>345</sup> *Redgauntlet* (19: 320)

<sup>346</sup> SEAFORD (1990: 172)

<sup>347</sup> *Redgauntlet* (17: 297)

<sup>348</sup> *Redgauntlet* (17: 297)

However, Scott's re-appropriation should be understood in the light of an epilogue that, most significantly, takes in a diversion from the crime-and-punishment pattern of the ancient myth.<sup>349</sup> Indeed, whilst "Orestes rejects [the] most 'natural' of blood-ties [...] in order to regain his patrimony", Darsie opts for his hereditary mis-identification.<sup>350</sup> The continuity of the Redgauntlet lineage is deliberately sacrificed in the awareness that the disruption and separation of a cursed dynasty means the survival of the state.<sup>351</sup>

The departure that Scott makes from the ancient myth mainly centres around the exclusion of the matricide theme, with the consequent substitution of the slaughter of Clytemnestra with the idea of a sacrilege against the motherland: a perspective that, nevertheless, is not without gender connotations, with the country exposed in its vulnerable body to the threat of an attack.<sup>352</sup>

Contrary to Orestes, Darsie is not a criminal in need of acquittal of the charge of homicide, but an innocent who struggles to remain thus at all costs. Darsie's rejection of his family allegiance is the essential condition for him not to

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<sup>349</sup> For a vision that puts the stress on the illusory charge of intergenerational tensions see FALKNER (1983: 299). "[But what is more significant and [...] more typically Euripidean is that] the play looks through such conflict and denies its significance. The conflict of generations [...], is only an apparent one, for in character the young are the image of their elders". HALL points the finger at 'pessimism' as the predominant feeling of Euripides' play, which was "directly related to the dark days when [the play] was first written and acted". See HALL (2001: xxiii).

<sup>350</sup> GOLDHILL (1986: 153). Italics already in the text.

<sup>351</sup> This move forward from the Odyssean text to the *Oresteia's* tragic version has been aptly described by GOLDHILL (1986, 153–154): while in Homer the discourse is delimited to the sphere of family within the close dimension of the *oikos*, the dramatic medium allows, thanks to its performative nature, for an extension of the meditation on blood ties and duties within the collective dimension of the larger *polis*.

<sup>352</sup> On the contrary, Darsie preserves an affectionate, though nebulous, memory of a caring and blameless mother "[...] I recollect my mother in her deep widow's weeds, with a countenance that never smiled but when she looked on me [...]. I think on my mother, and am convinced as much as of the existence of my own soul, that no touch of shame could arise from aught in which she was implicated". Later in the same letter "I have but a recollection of unbounded indulgence on my mother's part [...]. She is dead, that kind, that ill-rewarded mother! I remember the [...] mysterious impression made upon my mind by the hearse and mourning couches, and the difficulty I had to reconcile all this to the disappearance of my mother". *Redgauntlet* (1: 5)

be responsible for a capital crime.<sup>353</sup> He does not need the verdict of a legal homicide court, as Orestes does instead in *Eumenides* thanks to the institution of the Areopagus. This rewriting qualifies, to a certain extent, as an ‘optimistic tragedy’. Legality and justice are notions that Darsie has already thoroughly assimilated during his upbringing in Scotland –a country that emerges in this light as an efficiently operating nation, capable of achieving high standards, in particular in the legal profession. In shifting the focus from the crime *per se* to the drama of a lost son of a prolonged age of turmoil, Scott suggests that the true hero is the one who has the courage to say no, so as to break the chain of violence and vendetta.

By declining an inheritance that he finds impossible to accept, Darsie (who, against the expectations of Fairford senior, proves in the end to possess good sense in distancing himself from his uncle) refuses to get involved in the new series of bloodshed, in what becomes a story of voluntary self-dispossession. This is why, as I am persuaded, to locate Orestes’ subtext within Scott’s narrative means to cast a new light on the (highly debated) conclusion that excludes Darsie from a matrimonial pattern. The answer to this “anomaly” lies precisely within the re-usage of the myth of Orestes: nothing is left open for other developments or conjectures, precisely because no restoration of family ties is possible. In representing the last, truncated link in the chain, no reintegration means for Darsie no generational continuity. Hence, I am inclined to think that Scott purportedly dismisses Darsie to a dead-end route in his celibacy as a ‘leader

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<sup>353</sup> Of course, this difference relates to the characterisation of the foster-father figure: while in Scott the uncle pushes for revenge and bloodshed, in Euripides Menelaus is a lenient relative, too much of a consummate politician, who in vain tries for an appeasement by means of verbal sophistication.

manqué', not just for his controversial sexual identity. Darsie declines the offer to become the head of the household, with the alleged duties and responsibilities the role entails, because he realises that there are no margins for the survival of his dynasty. It is mainly for this reason that I find it difficult to align my view with Bruzelius, when she interprets the novel's epilogue as the triumphalist consecration of Darsie as "a solid member of the Scottish gentry".<sup>354</sup> On the contrary, I am persuaded to read the conclusion of *Redgauntlet* as channelling a further marginalisation in terms of both gender and social status. Notwithstanding his regained identity, Darsie remains an outcast on the verge of exile, an exile that, as paradoxical as it may sound, takes place in his own home town, precisely the same condition in which his alter ego Orestes finds himself in Argos: "an alien in his own land and his own home".<sup>355</sup>

While marriage represents, in a *Bildung*-oriented perspective, the achievement of maturation and socialisation, from a psychoanalytical viewpoint Darsie remains locked and suspended in the limbo area of a regressive status of sub-adulthood, and still to deal with confused ideas (even about sexual roles). The saga of Atreus' doomed house emerges as particularly appropriate in the light of Scott's fictional output as a whole, within a narrative "obsessed with the problems associated with the possession and transmission of property".<sup>356</sup>

What I have defined at the beginning of this section as 'the tragedy of Orestes' results therefore in a pattern deeply ingrained in the revisionist attitude that sustains the novel as a whole. However, this subtext does not seem to align

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<sup>354</sup> BRUZELIUS (2007: note 28, 232)

<sup>355</sup> FALKNER (1983: 290)

<sup>356</sup> BRUZELIUS (2007: 112). For this aspect cf. WELSH (1963), especially the chapter dedicated to the 'Romance of Property' (77–85).

with the view that, as many scholars maintain, *Redgauntlet* celebrates the Union's success in archiving, once and for all, a dreadful chapter of British history - the very same past that Redgauntlet wants to reactivate at all costs by enlisting his nephew Darsie within his cause.

Indeed, it is the last chapter of this family tragedy, as epitomised by Orestes, that presents Scott with an opportunity to emphasise how, beyond any propagandistic celebration of Hanoverian extirpation of tensions and violence, the ruinous effects of a conflict that have opposed nations and generations across centuries are still perceptible, in their enduring repercussions, in the allegedly pacified United Kingdom.

#### **4.2 Special friendship: Horace and Virgil**

*This section aims to consider allusions to Horace and Virgil among the homoerotic hints that are couched as 'secret signals' in Redgauntlet's literary texture, specifically among the effusions of complicity and intimacy taking place, as Sutherland aptly pinpoints, between two "undergraduate heroes [who] parade their classical quotations and literary allusions with self-conscious and tedious regularity".<sup>357</sup> On this proviso, I should like to propose an argument for treating the Horatian and Virgilian tags interspersed in the letters of the two young men as elements that are worthy of close attention due to the way in which they subliminally convey further evidence of the question marks concerning the youngsters' sexual inclinations. As I hope to demonstrate, Classics play a part in planting the possibility in the knowing reader's mind that the friendship between Alan and Darsie might be indeed of a deeper nature.*

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<sup>357</sup> SUTHERLAND (1985: x)

Much has been written about Darsie Latimer's psychological profile, whose dysfunctional aspects are ascribable to what would currently go under the diagnosis of affective disorder syndrome. Throughout the narration as a whole, we see him unrelentingly struggling at the mercy of his unbalanced affective impulses. The lack of parental figures creates a gap in his emotional horizon, which affects and distorts his perception of reality, a cognitive impairment that arrests his psychic maturation by preventing him from acquiring a firm grasp on reality. Prey to a crescendo of morbid attachments, the youngster randomly directs his inclinations towards members of his enlarged family, both biological and adoptive. Consequently, he develops a controversial affection towards his brotherly friend, Alan Fairford and later becomes fascinated by the Lord of Redgauntlet, who will prove to be his uncle, and ultimately by the Lady of the Green Mantle, who will turn out to be none other than his long-lost sister. The risk of indulging in erotic investments –which also present, in different measures, an incestuous connotation– is regularly thwarted, or more simply delayed, by sudden complications or unexpected twists that constantly arise to enliven the plot.

It is in particular the power of a strong, relentless virility that meets no obstacle in its deployment that appeals to Darsie's repressed desire. As Incorvati acknowledges, "his gaze [...] gravitates to signs of strength, command, and masculine features".<sup>358</sup> This fascination becomes evident in the first encounter with Redgauntlet himself, who represents the embodiment of a charismatic, hypermasculine leader. The charge of attraction felt by Darsie at the sight of this

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<sup>358</sup> INCORVATI, 2004–5

stranger, who –true to form– enters on stage in the role of his rescuer, is highlighted by Incorvati as follows: “Having just been saved by this man, Darsie seems predisposed to idealise his physical beauty, evoking the masculine contours of Greek statuary and emphasising the strength, the virility, and command that he feels himself lacking”.<sup>359</sup> From the portrait created by Darsie of Redgauntlet, it is evident how adherence to the aesthetic canon of classical art encourages the youngster’s infatuation in homoerotic terms: “He [...] stood before me [...] [with] his large and sinewy frame [...], small well-formed ears, sparkling grey eye, aquiline nose [...] well-formed mouth [...] [and] chestnut locks, curling close to his head, like those of an antique statue”.<sup>360</sup> In a description that enlists Redgauntlet in an ideal lineage of *virī Romani*, Darsie comments on the association that this encounter has triggered in his own mind, still fresh from school:

“running mentally over the ancient heroes, to whom I might assimilate the noble form and countenance before me. He was too young, and evinced too little resignation to his fate, to resemble Belisarius. Coriolanus, standing by the hearth of Tullius Aufidius, came nearer to the mark; yet the gloomy and haughty look of the stranger had [...] still more of Marius, seated among the ruins of Carthage”.<sup>361</sup>

As such, the homoerotic idealisation in play in this depiction lingers on the aesthetic paradigms of Roman virility. As Incorvati concludes in his analysis of Darsie’s erotic imagery: “[t]here can be no doubt that Scott designedly depicted

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<sup>359</sup> INCORVATI, 2004–5

<sup>360</sup> *Redgauntlet* (4: 27)

<sup>361</sup> *Redgauntlet* (4: 28). The predatory attitude which emerges as the key feature of *Redgauntlet* places him indeed in the same line of Marius, who was responsible for civil war.

Darsie as a singularly effeminate young man, an unmanly hero for a relentlessly farcical adventure [and whose] lack of solidity partakes of an emotional and erotic predisposition toward his own sex”.<sup>362</sup> According to Whyte, a pivotal moment in this perspective lies in the patently engendered episode of Darsie’s abduction at the command of Redgauntlet: an event that the scholar tries –in a perhaps awkward stance– to reinterpret against a vaguely classical framework: “[a]pparently it was customary, in certain ancient Greek communities, for a mature male to abduct a younger male and disappear with him for a limited period into a wild place, thus removing him from normal social intercourse”.<sup>363</sup> The fact that Whyte does not expand any further on what remains just a barely sketched parallel is relatively unfortunate for an argument that, in my opinion, does not carry much weight in its current formulation. As it is, such an analogy with ancient Greek civilisation runs the risk of appearing far-fetched or pointless, inasmuch as it does not seem to extend beyond a cross-cultural juxtaposition of anthropological remarks.<sup>364</sup>

As we shall see, the involvement of Horace and Virgil as authors both appealing to a closed circle of male friends who share the same sensibility and artistic interests turns out to be crucial for establishing a dialogue between two

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<sup>362</sup> INCORVATI, 2004–5

<sup>363</sup> WHYTE (2004: 158)

<sup>364</sup> The level of detail on the matter provided by the Greek historian Strabo, for example, far exceeds Whyte’s account in what remains a rather blithely conducted association. Strabo describes the custom also known as *harpagmos*, (kidnapping), which was a typical *rite de passage* within the noble elite in archaic Crete. The upbringing of a male adolescent was not considered as fully achieved if he did not spend a period of seclusion under the wing of an adult male figure. This temporary elopement translated into a mutual acknowledgment of social esteem for both parties involved (10.21.4)

men in a sympathetic, homosocial mode that seems particularly suitable to the epistolary dimension of Scott's novel.<sup>365</sup>

Before embarking on my discussion, a preliminary remark seems necessary. The investigation that follows closely ties in with the hybrid status of *Redgauntlet* as the novel where, most blatantly in Scott, genre and gender are inextricably connected and instrumental to each other. The key to this special status lies in its diptych structure, where the first half, consisting of the exchange of letters between Darsie Latimer and Alan Fairford, offers a privileged insight into their private sphere of communication. Here the usage of first-person form, which is to be replaced and supplemented by the external, omniscient narrator only in the remainder of the narrative, leaves space for the intimate domain of feelings and emotions that the characters share and express, drawing on the privacy requirement that underlies the nature of epistolarity in assuring a secret exchange sheltered from interceptions and indiscreet eyes. On this assumption, written correspondence realises its potential to become the medium and site of publicly unmentionable desires, by taking the form of an exchange of expressions of devotion, esteem and reciprocal loyalty in a special friendship that, as gender scholars have aptly reminded us, decidedly seems to drift into a sentimental courtship.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> On the topic of Horace as "a poet more for men than for women" see, among the others, OLIENSIS (2007: 221)

<sup>366</sup> Almost needless to say, Scott was stepping on a ground that had already been prepared by Richardson, and was proceeding on the trail of the sensational literary case marked by *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1741) and *Clarissa: Or, the History of a Young Lady* (1747–1749). On *Redgauntlet* as "Scott's most Richardsonian novel" see, among the others, SUTHERLAND (1985: xxii). INCORVATI also reminds in his treatment that "Scott's use of the epistolary and diary forms also suggests that these two mates are firmly under Samuel Richardson's spell". It is not mere coincidence that, at the very same time of the novel's composition, Scott was drafting his own biography of Richardson.

The very outset of *Redgauntlet* is inaugurated by what we may call a 'sphragis' from Horace. Darsie begins his first letter: "*Cur me exanimas querelis tuis?* –In plain English words, why do you deafen me with your croaking?".<sup>367</sup> The Horatian apostrophe is the tool for Darsie to allude to the expressions of melancholy and disappointment that Alan demonstrates after their separation - a circumstance that, as Darsie poignantly reminds him, could have been avoided if only Alan had accepted his own invitation to accompany him (on his journey) to England, along with his offer to cover the travel expenses. The same mild reproach recurs, in a sort of *Ringkomposition*, in the conclusion of the epistle, where the incipit formula recurs in a valediction, which, on closer inspection, looks like nothing other than a cleverly adapted English periphrasis of the same Horatian tag: "I know nothing so useless, so utterly feeble and contemptible, as the groaning forth one's helpless lamentations into the ears of our friends".<sup>368</sup>

The import of the Horatian quotation is hard to extrapolate from the homoerotic undertones that it conveys in a poem where Horace greets Maecenas using *querela* ('complaint') blatantly drawing on the vocabulary of love elegy to portray, in slightly mocking terms, his addressee in the pose of the disappointed lover.<sup>369</sup> The borrowing of a line that already sounds dense with *double entendre* to the Roman ear, as indisputably aping love speech, is instrumental here in conveying the pattern of erotic role playing, a fortiori since the typical scheme of love lamentation expands in the novel to include, among its ingredients, the

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<sup>367</sup> *Redgauntlet* (i: 1). As SUTHERLAND points out in her note (13, 422), the line is slightly misquoted from *carm.* 2.17.1, which originally sounds like *Cur me querelis exanimas tuis?* [Why do you frighten me to death with your moaning?]

<sup>368</sup> *Redgauntlet* (i: 6)

<sup>369</sup> This being the situation between Ulysses and Penelope in HOR. *Epist.* 1.7.2. For '*querela*' and its homoerotic connotations see LEE (2001: 2; 17). For the frequency of the term in elegy see PICHON (1966: 248). General considerations on the "erotic appeal of Horatian poetry" are in OLIENSIS, 2007.

obstructive figure of Alan's father, who shows every intention of separating the two, under the pretext of Alan's delicate health.<sup>370</sup>

What is at stake in this reappraisal is how, in his role as Darsie's patron, Alan is recast as a latter-day Maecenas within the frame of a friendship that reveals itself through a continual emphasis of the social gap that separates the two.<sup>371</sup> That is, on the underlying assumption that, given that they occupy different places on the social ladder, Alan and Darsie are peers more in name than fact.<sup>372</sup> In this respect, Darsie is well aware of his inferiority, as we can infer from his insistence on his obscure origins, e. g. when he emphatically declares himself to be "alone in the world" with the resignation of someone who knows his place very well: "with my want of ancestry, [and] with my want of connexions".<sup>373</sup> Likewise, the awareness of his limited situation emerges when Darsie mimics Alan's viewpoint in presenting his friend as the luckier one, in both age and circumstance:

"The disconsolate tone in which you bade me farewell [...] still sounds  
in my ears. It seemed to say, 'Happy dog! You can ramble at pleasure

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<sup>370</sup> On the theme of effeminacy in Horace, along with the potential for seduction of his ephebic characters, OLIENSIS highlights how "[o]ne recurring figure for th[e] seductive confusion of qualities is the girlish boy [...], marked out by his 'softness' (*mollitia*) as a fit object of desire for men, yet himself on the verge of manhood, and potentially attractive to women as well" (2007: 230)

<sup>371</sup> As is well known, the encounter with Maecenas, who was *de facto* minister of culture and propaganda to Augustus, was crucial to Horace's experience, symbolising a before and after in his life and career – a lucky opportunity to which the poet recurrently alludes throughout his output. See in particular *serm.* 1.9 where the formal invitation to join Maecenas' circle, after a probationary period of nine months, is described in terms of an ideal rebirth.

<sup>372</sup> Seen in this light, (the fact) that Maecenas too suffered from poor health is, as it stands, perhaps little more than an intriguing coincidence in Scott's reworking. Indeed, Horace presents his sponsor as *inbellis ac firmus parum*, 'unwarlike and not robust enough for the battlefield' (HOR. *epod.* 1.16). An account of the symptoms that seemingly gave no rest to Maecenas in his last years is in Pliny the Younger, who informs us about his constant fever and insomnia (PLIN. *Nat.* 7. 172), whereas Seneca's diagnosis points the readers in the direction of *philopsychia* (*ep. mor.* 101. 10–14; 114. 4, *Dialogus* 1, 3, 10). All circumstances that, according to QUINN (*ad loc.*), made him "a morbid hypochondriac". For a counter to such a diagnosis see WEST, 1991.

<sup>373</sup> *Redgautlet* (i: 1)

[...]; while I, your senior and your better, must, in this brilliant season, return to my narrow chamber and my musty books. Such was the import of the reflections with which you saddened our parting bottle of claret [...].<sup>374</sup>

As the person who - at least up to that moment - is benefiting the most from this friendship, Darsie's prose is constantly animated by the urge to reiterate his gratitude to Alan, whom he acknowledges as his "most venerable monitor".<sup>375</sup> Among the expressions of indebtedness directed towards "a brother whose merits would throw my own so completely into the shade", Alan figures indeed as the object of a sort of worship in Darsie's words: "If I became the pride of the Yards [...], it was under thy patronage. [...]. In a word, before I knew thee, I knew nothing".<sup>376</sup> In recognising the privilege of a personal growth that was only possible under Alan's star and in his household, Darsie resorts again to Horace: "your example and encouragement roused me to mental exertion, and showed me the way to intellectual enjoyment. You made me an historian, a metaphysician, (*invita Minerva*)".<sup>377</sup> In keeping with the praise of his own Maecenas, Darsie reveals how he found in Alan not only the best of patrons, but also a source of inspiration: "thou shalt be, not my Apollo –*quid tibi cum lyra?*– but my Lord Stair".<sup>378</sup> Far beyond the convention of exchanging compliments according to the do's and don'ts of epistolary etiquette, the involvement of Horace marks the acknowledgement of a moral debt within the framework of an intensely closed bond that joins (and at the same times separates) two youngsters, whose

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<sup>374</sup> *Redgauntlet* (i: 1). Emphasis mine.

<sup>375</sup> *Redgauntlet* (iii: 15)

<sup>376</sup> *Redgauntlet* (i: 2)

<sup>377</sup> *Redgauntlet* (i: 3)

<sup>378</sup> *Redgauntlet* (i: 5); HOR. *carm.* 3.19.20: *cur pendet tacita fistula cum lyra?*

situations in life are not equal, and whose friendship cannot be perceived, therefore, for the time being, as equal.

But more crucially, Horace conveys a pattern of friendship that also goes beyond (and notwithstanding) the acknowledged social differences, thus bringing Scott's knowing readers into the very core of 'soulmatedness'. In this light, Darsie's declaration of his exclusive affinity with Alan "I am a solitary individual, having only one kind heart to throb in unison with my own", brings us back to Horace recurrently addressing Maecenas as 'half of my soul, e.g. *meae partem animae*'.<sup>379</sup> Thus, the constant reference to Horace and his friendship with his patron helps Scott to foreground the nature of an affective bond whose dynamics and expectations were, as West has put it: "not of a formal patron and client relationship [...], but of a deep sympathy, based on shared danger, shared pleasure, and shared sense of humour".<sup>380</sup>

Again in social terms, the involvement of Horace goes as far as to forewarn the learned reader about the permutation of the initial circumstances that is underway in the plot. Indeed, the starting situation of disadvantage for Darsie is reversed by the discovery of a mysterious source of income that assures him of relative financial independence for the future - whence the resolution to undertake a journey southward in search of his family past.

Although the provenance of these resources remains for the moment obscure, the riddle comes full circle at the end of the novel, with the revelation of Darsie's aristocratic ancestry in an epilogue in which the newly blue-blooded Darsie turns out to be the last heir of an ancient family of rank. As Darsie himself

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<sup>379</sup> *Redgauntlet* (i: 4); HOR. *carm.* 2.17.5.

<sup>380</sup> WEST (1991: 48)

will emerge as the true Maecenas, even more important in rank than Alan, we understand how the presence of Horace, whose self-emancipatory claims towards Maecenas are the reverse of his relationship with his patron, is pivotal in raising the question of who really owes whom. Though Scott can reasonably be seen, on general terms, as “an unrelenting and unrepentant advocate of the “patronage” system [as] [...] a pragmatically sound method of social and political organisation”, as Garside portrays him, the permutation of social situations that we have considered up to now under the lens of Horace shows that things are not what they reassuringly seem to be against the ‘safety net’ of patronage. The reversal of fortune that affects both deuteragonists in the epilogue is a factor that puts the social hierarchy under pressure, thus inviting a re-evaluation of notions about choice, social promotion and political power. Via engagement with Horace, Scott casts into relief unexpected factors of advancement that, paradoxical as it may sound, emerge from the past, and points us in the direction of a reading in which the illusory aspects and fluctuations of the power polarity operating between patron and protégé arguably come into the reckoning.<sup>381</sup>

Another indication of the complex and subtle way in which Scott paints this friendship in terms of same-sex attraction lies within the allusive engagement with pastoral Virgil that the characters display in their epistles. In this regard, two quotes from (the) *Bucolics* acquire special significance here. The first one is borrowed, almost exactly, from *eclogue 2. 65: Sua quemque trahit voluptas*.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> GARSIDE (1985: 75)

<sup>382</sup> *Redgauntlet* (ii: 12). VERG. *ecl. 2.65: trahit sua quemque voluptas* [each is led by his liking].

The status of the second one –but *nigri sunt hyacinthi*– is far more debatable, and is very likely to be the result of a short-circuit in Alan’s memory – or, possibly, in Scott’s own memory. The quote in fact enters the self-portrait that concludes his second letter to Darsie, where he describes his reaction after his first meeting with Lilius, who pays him an incognito visit to deliver a rather cryptic message. After the ‘Lady of the Green Mantle’ has hastily disappeared, Alan looks at himself in the mirror, dazzled and confused:

"that cabinet-counsellor pronounced me rather short, thick-set [...]not handsome enough for blushing virgins [...] yet not ugly enough, either [...] dark, to be sure, but *nigri sunt hyacinthi*– there are pretty things to be said in favour of that complexion".<sup>383</sup>

In his note to the Edinburgh Edition, Pinkerton interprets the line as a slightly altered rewording of 2.18: *uaccinia nigra leguntur* [black hyacinths are gathered]. It is worth noting that this would undeniably point in the direction of homoerotic content, since the eclogue in question foregrounds the love lamentation that the goatherd Corydon expresses about his unrequited love for the shepherd Alexis. However, I am persuaded that another (and perhaps more cogent) intertext can be detected in 10.39: *et nigrae violae sunt et vaccinia nigra*. Indeed, this line contains remarkable insights for our purposes, not so much for the colour predicates ascribed to flowers –which is clearly the motif that Scott

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<sup>383</sup> *Redgauntlet* (vii: 69)

picks up in his version, but on account of the communication context that underpins the eclogue as a whole.<sup>384</sup>

The poem, dedicated to the poet - and close friend of Virgil's - Cornelius Gallus, is both a celebration of same-sex friendship and a consolatory message for the addressee, who suffers from the abandonment of Lycoris –the girl who has recently spurned him for another lover.<sup>385</sup> A first person voice materialises to cast Virgil in the role of the sender, and recounts the vicissitudes and disappointments of Gallus, who in turn intervenes to lament his condition while regretting the caring, disinterested nature of homoerotic love.

In emphasising the friendship between the writer and the recipient, this eclogue, perhaps the most epistolary in construction of the *Bucolics*, seems particularly appropriate to have informed the intimate exchange that Scott deploys here under the framework of epistolary discourse. This is especially interesting, I think, considering that the Virgilian line is dropped, so to speak, at the very moment in which Alan tells Darsie of a girl who has captured his attention. As though anticipating his friend's disappointment in sensing a potential rival (as indeed Darsie will do), the quotation contains subliminal reassurance about where his 'loyalty' lies.

In whichever way they can be extrapolated, however, both Virgilian tags are prominent for our consideration here in the light of the homosexual content they convey, as something that has left little space for a different interpretation, or even for expurgation, across centuries of textual transmission.

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<sup>384</sup> Indeed, *uaccinium* is properly the Latin for 'blueberry'. However, some ancient commentators assume that Virgil uses the term to refer to the flower –*uaccinium* and *hyacinthus* being thus interchangeable due to homophony with the Greek ὑάκινθος. See CLAUSEN *ad loc.*

<sup>385</sup> For a thorough analysis of this last eclogue see PERKELL, 1996.

In the light of the basic situation of Virgil's pastoral poetry, it is frankly hard not to interpret the lines that Darsie picks up as alluding to his homoerotic propensity - inclinations that, in a very similar way to Gallus, take form only as an unattainable wish - namely, the desire to belong to a parallel ultra-dimension in full communion with nature and safely sheltered from sufferings and anxieties. What Gallus regrets is a life in tune with the cycles of the seasons and work in the fields, in an exclusively masculine horizon where homosexual liaisons take place among music and poetry lovers. This yearning however remains confined to the domain of 'if only I were', just like a forlorn sigh describing a diversionary escape from a reality that is much more cruel and implacable to him.

By entering, in his turn, into the the private epistolary dimension of the two youngsters, Virgil proves to be a catalyst in presenting Darsie as a figure of anxiety, by uncovering the regressive proclivities of his profile. A fortiori since in this moment of the narrative Darsie is reacting, *suo modo*, against contemporary adult values that he is reluctant to assimilate. Such a response to Virgil is thus closely tied to the theme of intergenerational relationships, which, unsurprisingly, are another key feature of the novel. The lines by Virgil sound like an invitation to indulge in a world of natural inclinations and passions that endorses the rejection of any responsibilities. This prospect is a tantalising one for Darsie, who finds himself at odds with the imperatives and expectations of bourgeois society, as incarnated by the father-figure Alexander Fairford. It is indeed not by chance that the established top lawyer, wholeheartedly oriented towards the growth and prosperity of his firm, does not see Darsie with a benevolent eye and does not miss any occasion to blame his weaknesses –which

he defines, most tellingly, as his “little solidity”.<sup>386</sup> Perceiving him as lacking the spirit of initiative and self-confidence that he wants to see in his son Alan, Fairford *père* is determined to prevent by all means his attachment to this insipid, irresolute youngster who has seemingly no ambitions in life. Darsie’s rash and inconclusive attitude, alongside his refusal to undertake a career in law in order to pursue his literary aspirations, make him a friend “*pessimi exempli*”, bad company for Alan. Having accepted the orphan into his household as a temporary arrangement exclusively for the sake of his son’s wellbeing, to offer his only child a playmate and companion in his studies, now that school is over and real life is beginning Fairford cannot see any reason for the continuation of their friendship, which is becoming a source of anxiety for him.

A fortiori in the light of what has just been said about Darsie’s regressive attitudes, I have become persuaded that something of a statement is blended, as for Horace above, in the Virgilian quotations, hinting at the morbid implications of their attachment. It is not unreasonable to think that Virgil is called into question in this context to insinuate (and in a controversial way also to legitimate, to a certain extent) homoerotic affection.

The homoerotic undertones at stake here are telling in the case of two youngsters who are supposed to mature into honourable citizens. The confused, ambiguous response to Virgil, as it takes shape in Darsie’s postures, perhaps contains a warning about the destabilising effects that potentially equivocal models exert on young men whose maturation is still in progress, by promoting regressive attitudes that, if not redirected, end up paralysing them in a sort of

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<sup>386</sup> *Redgauntlet* (ii: 9)

eternal present, precisely like the psychological dimension encapsulated in a pastoral setting. While this risk is higher for Darsie, it is only provisionally valid for Alan. As we shall see later in this chapter, another model will intervene as an effective antidote to exorcise, metaphorically speaking, the risk of homoerotic dalliance, by instead promoting self-centredness and firmness of character.

The notion of a male friendship whose homoerotic implications are not only the consequence of sharing the same environments with highly homosocial connotations (the school, the gymnasium, the army, public assemblies), but are also a requirement for the relationship to work at its best is deeply rooted in Graeco-Roman thought and iconography.<sup>387</sup> This condition was generally approved for adolescence but was contemplated in some cases in adulthood as well, with different degrees of acceptability.<sup>388</sup> While ancient literature provides examples of same age pairs displaying a sentimental affection - to mention a few amongst the most famous, aside from Orestes/Pylades (which we discussed in the previous section): Achilles/Patroklos, Theseus/Pirithous and Euryalus/Nisus, these attitudes found philosophical foundations in the treatment by Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. In their extolling male comradeship as a source of mutual admiration and promoting cooperative activities, these dialogues became seminal texts of homoerotic literature, as well as a stronghold of gay culture.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> See HUBBARD (ed. 2013)

<sup>388</sup> RICHLIN, 1993.

<sup>389</sup> POSNER (1992: 112) "the idea of a male friendship spilling over into a (homo)sexual relationship that in turn cements the friendship [a]s an element of ancient homosexuality". With the advent of the Christian era and after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the combination male friendship/homosexuality becomes an object of debate anew, provoking reformulations or dissent in the light of a new epistemic climate that was setting new political hierarchies and social tidemarks. A valuable point of departure with reference to early modern Europe is to be found in the works by BOSWELL (1980; 1982, 1994). The scholar illustrates how the sanctioning attitude towards homosexual orientations that we customarily ascribe to the Christian religion has never been an intrinsically structural assumption among the dogmas of the Western Church. The

As for the approach that Scott took towards homosexuality, the perspective emerging from his private writing seems to adhere to the biblical perspective on sodomy that was the result of centuries of interpretation of and commentary on Holy Scripture.<sup>390</sup> Crucial in this sense was the sharp divide between potential and act, which needed to be kept safely distinguished. In other words, it was one thing to temporarily indulge in propensities and affinities the nature of which was (and was meant to remain) nothing other than virtual and probationary. However it was quite another thing to let these inclinations find material expression in the physical sphere, with the risk of incurring a charge of obscenity whose public stain was difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate. This stance clearly emerges from an episode found in his own journal: on 25 June 1826 Scott writes seemingly in a state of shock, after his friend William Clerk told him in detail about the outbreak of a scandal involving two acquaintances of his: Charles Henry Hartshorne and Richard Heber.<sup>391</sup> The observations that Scott draws on the margin of this event are in line with the social constraints of his age, which saw physical consummation as an outrage to morality. However, in his open condemnation, disgust goes hand in hand with the wish to exorcise dangerous

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declared hostility to same-sex love was rather a late drift datable around the Thirteenth and Fourteenth centuries. In support of his interpretation, Boswell appeals to the resistance of rituals meant to permanently formalise same-gender friendship –e.g. the so-called ‘*adelphopoiesis*’ (‘brother making’) as a canonised practice of the Eastern Christian Church up to the first half of the Twentieth century.

<sup>390</sup> The controversial category of ‘sodomy’ covered, however, a wide range of attitudes and practices considered as degenerate within the sphere of sexual behaviour, thus extending beyond what we are currently led to think of as homosexuality.

<sup>391</sup> More than a simple acquaintance, the former was one of Scott’s collaborators on *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802) and the dedicatee of the sixth canto of *Marmion* (1808); whereas the latter was a close friend of the author. An eminent antiquary and distinguished book collector, his career had achieved its peak in his election as Member of Parliament for Oxford. Following the notice of an imminent indictment, Heber resigned his post and went on voluntary exile for five years.

tendencies by which everybody is in danger of being afflicted: “Here is learning, with gaiety of temper, high station in society and compleat [*sic*] reception every where [*sic*] all at once debased and lost by such a degrading bestiality [...]. Our passions are wild beasts. God grant us power to muzzle them”.<sup>392</sup>

As Burke states with regard to homosexual drives in Scott’s fiction: “Scott, tolerant and understanding [...], had to be careful in broaching this subject, and being careful involved deniability: there could be no obvious fingerprints”.<sup>393</sup> In operative terms, discretion for him meant to disseminate clues in the fabric of his texts that acquire meaning only retrospectively, when looking back at the bigger picture. This strategy is symptomatic of a constantly monitored self-censorship, where “the unpalatable fact of [...] difference [...] gives rise to a peculiarly evasive rhetoric, characterised by omissions and euphemism that, well designed to conceal the fact of difference, nevertheless [...] signal the speaker’s awareness of it”.<sup>394</sup> It is unsurprising then, that, as Burke notes “Scott treated this matter so discreetly that his best readers seem to have missed it”.<sup>395</sup>

The growing interest in Graeco-Roman homosexuality that, as seen in chapter one, was gaining momentum in philosophical speculation, entered literary production too, paving the way for a literary appraisal of homoerotic content. Classics were increasingly invoked as a key strategy for gay writers to treat homosexual and autobiographical contents while avoiding censorship and social stigmatisation. As Kaylor acknowledges, “[b]y overlapping past and present [...] [s]uch appropriations were common for homoerotic and pederastic writers

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<sup>392</sup> 25 June 1826. Emphasis mine.

<sup>393</sup> BURKE, 2000.

<sup>394</sup> FERNS (1996: 162–3)

<sup>395</sup> BURKE, 2000

[...] who resort to antiquity to hide and express at the same time their sexual orientations”.<sup>396</sup> The publicly acknowledged propriety, elusiveness and suggestiveness of classics provided a spectrum of possibilities to avoid charges of immorality, or even worse, actual criminalisation. Among the various expedients at their disposal: “directly appropriating a Graeco-Roman tale [...]; or appropriating a historical figure [...]; translating a Graeco-Roman work [...]; or creating a derivative work [...]; or crafting a historical fiction”.<sup>397</sup> The classics/homoerotics combination was a further contributing factor in radicalising the Romantic idea of the intellectual as a social outsider, whose unruly lifestyle was concomitantly cause and consequence of a misalignment with the body of society.<sup>398</sup>

The illustrations set out in this chapter may be of benefit in confirming *Redgauntlet* as a novel more than ripe for readings through the lens of a gender-based interpretation, while concomitantly arguing for the necessity to reframe the text in a more flexible articulation of nineteenth-century sexual identity, where unspeakable desires collide with the social constraints and prescriptions of a normative sexuality.

As I hope, a further step has been taken towards fully probing the import of homoeroticism in what is still currently perceived as nineteenth century canonical fiction, a point that still represents an open scholarly challenge for both classical reception and queer studies. The conclusions we have drawn so far on the role that Horace and Virgil, albeit implicitly, play in adding an erotic flavour

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<sup>396</sup> KAYLOR (2013: 589)

<sup>397</sup> KAYLOR (2013: 589)

<sup>398</sup> Especially around the 1820s, a season marked by works such as Hazlitt’s *On Effeminacy of Character* (1822) and Hogg’s *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824).

to Alan and Darsie's bond provide a scholar like Incorvati with further answers to the question, as he himself posits it, of: "how a character like Darsie could take the central role in a work of popular fiction during a time when sodomy remained a capital offence and the cause of extreme and nearly universal disgust".<sup>399</sup> My contention is that there are grounds to believe that Latin texts provided Scott with the best tools to insinuate without openly declaring. By appealing to models that a portion of his audience (as the characters in question) had already found on their school desks, as well as in the exclusively male environments and institutions among which their everyday life was articulated, Scott suggests more than what he can overtly assert, while concomitantly inviting the alert reader to look beyond the brotherly devotion that his characters openly profess.

The incorporation of classical subtexts already charged with erotic components within the fabric of the novel works as a subliminal reading suggestion, insofar as it promotes a deeper comprehension of the dynamics of interaction and socialisation between the co-protagonists. In this regard, the Latin poets are instrumental in drawing the behavioural framework of a comradeship that is not alien from romantic overtones, and are thus appropriated on account of the impact of the Graeco-Roman intellectual legacy on the aesthetic education of elite male groups. In this regard, the involvement of Horace and Virgil, who intrude discreetly here and there by means of quotations and periphrases, is pivotal in affording significance to an inchoate stage of sexual disorientation, a sort of ephebic, transitional phase that was perceived nonetheless as part of personal growth.

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<sup>399</sup> INCORVATI, 2004-5

The adoption of classics works as a strategy to textually encode erotically-charged energies and tensions, as a sort of laissez-passer to cover burning issues against the backdrop of recognisable models. Behind the well-known, reassuring and indisputably prestigious framework of classical knowledge, troubling questions that were collectively perceived only in their illicit import result as 'domesticated' so as to facilitate, provisionally, their absorption, at least on a literary territory that, in Scott's case, presented itself as safely sheltered from public prudery and female readers alike.

As shown above, Horace and Virgil are put on the agenda to let two 'sub-adults' make their provisional 'coming out', in the only possible way permitted to a novel of Scott's age, and (not least) to a pair of gentlemen-to-be who are negotiating their admission into the high circles of Edinburgh respectable society. To conclude, I hope that I have demonstrated how *Redgauntlet* appropriates two examples of homoerotic interaction from Roman antiquity, against which Scott's classically-educated readers are meant to read the correspondence between Darsie and Alan, so as to envision their relationship beyond what it looks like on the surface. On account of their integral role in the syllabus of a gentlemanly education, the Latin poets provide the youngsters with a model that informs and explains their proximity, also adding a flavour of homoerotic colour in a relationship that is thus framed in an emotive sphere of affection and sincerity, in spite (though in constant awareness) of their social differences. From a gender-focussed perspective, the involvement of Horace and Virgil in the narrative is instrumental in putting Darsie's masculinity in a far less secure position, by subtly mocking his homo-erotic attitudes. Ultimately, the reversal of fortune that

affects Darsie in the epilogue, by transforming him from a lifelong guest into a monied heir of genteel breeding, represents a way for Scott's characters to challenge the notion of patronage, which is therefore reprocessed via the Horatian frame. This perspective brings to the fore the ephemerality and incongruities of a shifting social mobility that, in its chameleonic aspects, ends up revealing how the deeply entrenched force of inherited advantage still prevails upon middle-class networks.

#### **4.3 Cicero vs. Catiline, or “such are the characters formed in times of civil discord”<sup>400</sup>**

*This section considers how the characterisation of Alan Fairford finds a model in Cicero, in his proposing himself as an example of a self-made man and as the champion of non-violence in a moment of civic turmoil. Drawing on Cicero helps Scott to align with an alternative notion of masculinity to the cult of the soldier-warrior, against and beyond traditional paradigms. As will be seen below, a re-assessment of Alan against the background of Cicero opens up a meta-narrative dimension, inasmuch as the character stands for an alter ego of Scott himself.<sup>401</sup> Thus, the parallel sets in motion a process of identification that assumes a triangular shape in joining together Alan, Scott and Cicero as their model, by taking the author back to his youth and his legal apprenticeship under the supervision of an ambition-driven father-figure. At the same time, and perhaps more crucially, the condensed version of Catiline's plot at work in the novel serves as a vehicle for establishing a new platform to explore the domain of political action and tackle the issues of the role and limits of citizens as active agents in history.*

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<sup>400</sup> *Mortality* (12: 101)

<sup>401</sup> For evidence of this see FETZER, 2011.

From the very first moment when he makes his debut in the justice court, Alan displays a thorough knowledge of law, together with a considerable mastery of rhetorical art. While taking inspiration from a number of classical sources, the young barrister quotes particularly from Cicero. A number of occurrences can be traced in this regard, amongst which the most substantial one seem to be his comment ‘*Hinc illae lachrymae!*’ –sealing Alan’s discovery of an obscure backstory connected to the so-called Laird of the Loch (Redgauntlet incognito).<sup>402</sup>

However, most relevant for our purpose here is the way in which the character models himself on Cicero as a champion of non-violence in a moment of danger for the state, by foregrounding a paradigm that emerges from both Cicero’s own writings and Plutarch’s biography –more than presumably first-hand sources for him.<sup>403</sup>

Although never explicitly acknowledged, as we shall see, this engagement with Cicero plays an elusive game throughout the narrative, within a protracted, subterranean osmosis that can be however cast into relief on account of the fact that Alan (as Scott did before him) has extensively dealt with Cicero’s forensic speeches and rhetorical works. In the course of an education in which the Latin author occupied a prominent place, these texts must indeed have been on Alan’s study desk since school.

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<sup>402</sup> *Redgauntlet* (10: 209). The phrase is borrowed however from TER. *Andr.* 1.1.112 and readapted by CIC. *Cael.* 25.61. HALL (2013: 218) comments on how “[t]he statement presents an ambitious, perhaps naive challenge to the accepted hierarchy of values in ancient Rome; nevertheless, it succeeds in portraying Cicero as a man of non-violence”.

<sup>403</sup> A single example among the many possible others: CIC. *Brut.* 312 ff. In his turn, Plutarch draws upon Cicero’s writing for the deployment of his biography –a circumstance that reveals the extent to which Cicero’s life can be considered as another masterpiece of his own rhetorical talents. On Cicero as a source for Plutarch’s life see PELLING, 1979. Of course, another source available to Scott was QUINTIL. *Inst. Or.* 12.6.7.

At the beginning of *Redgauntlet*, Alan is about to start his training for the bar under the shadow of an exasperatingly career-oriented father, who has no other wish in his life than to see his only heir triumphing in the justice court: “Mr Fairford’s mind was constructed upon so limited and exclusive a plan, that he valued nothing, save the object of ambition which his own presented”.<sup>404</sup> However, the awareness of a bourgeois, middle-class origin is described by the narrative voice as a disadvantaged circumstance: “Deprived of the personal patronage enjoyed by most of his contemporaries, who assumed the gown under the protection of their aristocratic alliances and descents, [Alan] early saw that he should have that to achieve for himself which fell to them as a right of birth”.<sup>405</sup>

The same lucidity about his unfavourable beginnings fully emerges close to the end of the novel, when Alan is introduced to the obscure figure of ‘Father Buonaventure’ (Charles Edward Stuart incognito), in front of whom the youngster does not show the least scruple in acknowledging “a plebeian descent”.<sup>406</sup> As he proudly declares, rather by emphasising his origins: “My father’s industry has raised his family from a low and obscure situation - I have no hereditary claim to distinction of any kind”.<sup>407</sup>

The same beginning marked the career of Cicero, of moderate social status and provincial family.<sup>408</sup> As a *homo novus* (that is to say, a man who was the first in his family to enter the Senate) Cicero could not benefit from a distinguished family pedigree, which was a *sine qua non* in a patron-client based society, but

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<sup>404</sup> *Redgauntlet* (1: 127)

<sup>405</sup> *Redgauntlet* (10: 205)

<sup>406</sup> *Redgauntlet* (16: 277)

<sup>407</sup> *Redgauntlet* (16: 277)

<sup>408</sup> Cicero’s want of connections is notoriously encapsulated within the derogatory label *inquilinus urbis*, cast upon him by Catiline (CIC. *Brut.* 312). For an outline of Cicero’s early life and career see MAY, 2002.

could only boast some value in a distant, acquired kinship with Marius - a 'newcomer' himself before him.<sup>409</sup> Remarkably, the theme of a distant family linkage with the rebel plotter returns in Scott's novel as well, for Darsie describes to Alan his first meeting with Redgauntlet by drawing an analogy with Marius: "the gloomy and haughty look of the stranger had [...] still more of Marius, seated among the ruins of Carthage".<sup>410</sup> The anticipatory potential of this parallel promotes in the cultivated reader hints of the civil war that is to follow immediately. As they later discover, the Lord of the Loch is much more than a stranger to the pair of friends, destined, as he is, to become an uncle to Alan as well (after the marriage with Lilies).

In his attempt to gain the esteem of the local elite of which he wants to become a member, the only option for Alan is to perform at his best in the justice court, and go the extra-mile if needed. It is to the law, therefore, that he devotes all of his energies and efforts. In Plutarch's narrative Cicero "was naturally ambitious and was urged on by his father and his friends, and so when he gave himself in earnest to the work of an advocate, he did not advance slowly to the primary, but his fame shot forth at once, and he far surpassed those who strove with him for distinction in the forum".<sup>411</sup>

As a talented and self-disciplined practitioner, Alan gives proof of his diligence and perseverance. In the course of his apprenticeship he is punctiliously hard working and a true perfectionist, his endurance bordering on self-exhaustion - the same efficiency Cicero himself recalls when remembering the late hours spent on the composition of his speeches.

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<sup>409</sup> For further details on his kinship with Marius see WISEMAN, 1971 and RAWSON, 1971 and 1975.

<sup>410</sup> *Redgauntlet* (IV: 28)

<sup>411</sup> PLUT. *Cic.* 4. Emphasis mine.

The connection with Cicero is indeed a fitting one also on account of the fact that, with both his life and career, he marked a watershed for his Roman fellow-citizens, inasmuch as he proposed a model of ‘manliness’ different from the traditional paradigm that depicted the *vir Romanus* in his role of citizen-soldier, devoted to the life-long defence of the fatherland.<sup>412</sup>

Cicero did not undertake a military career due to his poor health, the symptoms of which he manifested since early infancy.<sup>413</sup> This restriction resulted in a compensatory strategy that Cicero subtly put into action to redeem himself from the lacunae of his formation, by paralleling his achievements in the justice court to war exploits.<sup>414</sup> The imagery of militarism thus becomes a recurrent *topos* in his oratory, where the power of words is equated with *vis* (the Latin for force and military vigour).<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> On the subject of militarism in Roman society cf. CAMPBELL, 2002 and NICOLET, 1980.

<sup>413</sup> As Plutarch states “[...] his body needed medical assistance. [...] [H]e was thin and undernourished in physique”. (*Cic.* 4 transl. by LINTOTT, 2012). On the topic of his early life, the first source to be mentioned is, of course, Cicero himself, who largely discusses his beginnings both in his private correspondence and his dialogues, such as *Brutus*. Some scholars see health-related reasons behind Cicero’s tour around Greece and Asia Minor in 79 BC. For instance, MITCHELL tells us that “the pressure of work, [...] took a heavy physical toll, and, concerned for his health, Cicero decided [...] to take an extended trip [...] to seek to strengthen his voice and lungs and refine his style of speaking to a manner more suited to his delicate physique” (1979: 93). See also MAY (2002: 5). Military training only represents a short parenthesis in his youth, when he performed his compulsory service under the orders of Pompeius Strabo in the siege of Nola in 89 B.C, a phase of the protracted Social War (91 B.C–87 B.C). Cf. *Div.* 1. 72 and *Phil.* 12. 27. The experience, however, left no significant trace in his memory, apart from the mention of a “brief tour of duty as a soldier [that] had [...] done nothing but confirm [the] decision” to pursue a forensic career. MITCHELL (1979: 52–92)

<sup>414</sup> AS CONNOLLY phrases it: “Cicero compares giving speeches to competing in wrestling and fighting on the battlefield” (2007: 97). Cf. *De Or.* 1.81, 3.220 and *Orat.* 229. Perhaps the most famous instance in this regard is the epistle to Brutus, where Cicero describes his *Philippics* against Mark Antony as an example of glorious deeds *CIC. ep.* 1.3, 2.1.

<sup>415</sup> In their struggling for the welfare of the state, good orators are described as “muscular” and “tanned”, exposed to toil and sweat. For instances of this motif see *Opt. Gen. Orat.* 8, *Orat.* 228, *Brut.* 93, *De Or.* 3.74–6; QUINT. *Inst.* 1.11.18, 2.15.10–22. On the relationship between rhetoric and manliness see GLEASON, 1995 and RICHLIN, 1997. More recent contributions by GUNDERSON, 2000 –with a chapter devoted to gender construction in Cicero, building predominantly on psychoanalytic theory– and DUGAN, 2005.

Relying on the idea that “rhetoric plays an important role in symbolising the security and stability of the masculine social order”, Cicero paved the way for the proposal of an alternative model of heroism, for men who prove to be unfit for military action.<sup>416</sup> Far from the battlefield and encampments, aggression and assertiveness find a reward in the verbal domain of forensic pursuits.<sup>417</sup> Alan also suffers from delicate health, a circumstance that does not make him a champion of physical strength, as he is well aware: “My courage consists [...] in strength of nerves and constitutional indifference to danger; which, though it never pushes me on adventure, secures me in full use of my recollection and [...] self-possession when danger actually arrives”.<sup>418</sup>

If we extend this consideration to Scott, another triangulation is complete. The author himself was in fact unfit for martial activities, his military ambitions being cut short by the invalidating consequences of the poliomyelitis contracted soon after his birth. With his career, Cicero is thus offering a paradigmatic example of climbing the social ladder for youngsters who, in spite of their birth circumstances, achieve brilliant success in the legal profession. Likewise, the progression from the periphery to the beating heart of the state, to the lofty label of *parens patriae*, was a trajectory to which Scott was likely to be especially receptive, considering that his aristocratic aspirations were rewarded with the dignity of baronetcy conferred upon him in 1818.

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<sup>416</sup> CONNOLLY (2007: 94)

<sup>417</sup> Again CONNOLLY: “The [...] emphasis [...] on the orator's masculine nature and his obedience to the rules of masculine propriety is born from Roman political ideology, which equates masculinity and its virtues with the order of society itself. To perform according to expectation and custom is thus a matter not only of obeying the ethical and aesthetic code of masculine convention as an individual Roman, but of making visible the unity and health of the body politic” (2007: 91)

<sup>418</sup> *Redgauntlet* (ii: 13). As we are informed in different moments of the novel, such as the one that follows: “his spirit [...] was more ready to encounter labour than his frame was adequate to support it”. *Redgauntlet* (15: 263)

However, there is a drawback to this –for Alan, as we have seen in the previous section, but for Cicero too. Although rhetorical training “was designed to instil in Roman boys habits that would make their masculinity literally visible to the world”, with “at stake [...] the inculcation and perpetuation of a particular set of attitudes and behaviours associated with masculinity and men”, rhetoric was not a universally effective solution.<sup>419</sup> An excessive affectation of expression constituted in fact a dangerous zone, where the borders between grace and elegance were indeed blurred and verbal artfulness and sophistication, axiomatically inclining towards manipulation and mystification, were not seen as properly masculine qualities. This endorsed or justified the suspect of effeminacy.<sup>420</sup> In judicial oratory the idea of sexuality thus translated into currency for reciprocal accusations, a point of contention between prosecution and defence. Hence, the charges of deviant sexual conduct that Cicero made throughout his career, against defendants of the likes of Verres and most famously Mark Antony, were the same weapons that his detractors promptly turned against him.<sup>421</sup> The first target for denigration that his opponents were ready to hit out at was his delicate physical constitution, which took him far from the battlefield and which was artfully exchanged for unmanly cowardice.<sup>422</sup> The

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<sup>419</sup> CONNOLLY (2007: 88)

<sup>420</sup> CONNOLLY appropriately describes the boomerang effect typical of a self-feeding vicious circle: “rhetorical discourse may be seen to undermine its own quest: in its effort to inculcate the essence of manliness, rhetoric ends up constantly at war with itself”(2007: 90)

<sup>421</sup> PLUT. *Cic.* 4. “Verres had a young son, who had the name of lending himself to base practices. [...] when Cicero was reviled by Verres for effeminacy, “You ought,” said he, “to revile your sons at home”. See, of course, CIC. *Verr.* 2.2.192. The attack against Antony goes—much more directly: *sumpsisti virilem, quam statim muliebrem togam reddidisti* [you assumed the manly toga, which you quickly exchanged for a whore's womanly gown] *Phil.* 2.44. Further speculations, more or less explicit, concerning sexual conduct with males are found in the invectives against Catiline and Clodius Pulcher –see CIC. *Cat.* 2.8, and *Red. Sen.* 11, respectively.

<sup>422</sup> PLUT. *Cic.* 4. Cicero himself was fully aware of the risk: *cavendum est ne quid in agenda dicendove facias, cuius imitatio rideatur* [you must guard against acting or speaking in ways that

same could be valid for his noted humour: “[Cicero’s] readiness to indulge in [...] jests and pleasantry was thought indeed to be a pleasant characteristic of a pleader; but he carried it to excess and so annoyed many and got the reputation of being malicious”.

Other elements of mockery lie eminently in the performative side of his oratory, Cicero being made fun of for his *actio* or delivery –for his gesticulations, or for a tone of voice that sounded vulnerable at times: “his voice [...] was full and strong, but harsh and unformed, and, when it regularly rose to a high pitch through the violence and passion of his oratory, it was always forced into the higher tones, gave rise to fears for his health”.<sup>423</sup>

Never explicit on this point, Plutarch limits himself to hinting at a vaguely engendered perspective, which, I think, provides us with a pivotal insight for reading some points of Cicero’s life, as I suppose Scott would also have done. However, what indeed matters here is how the combination of delicate health and rhetoric results in the self-making of a barrister, by marking the emergence of a new hero with his updated ethical code, where the new qualities on display are the courage of caution and circumspection, and even leniency, if needed. While a shade of ambiguity remains with regard to his friendship with Darsie, especially in the early years, the parallel with Cicero opens up a further development for

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may be ridiculed], *Brut.* 225. On the perception of the female body as biologically associated with weakness and delicacy, rejecting self-restraint and control see HANSON, 1990.

<sup>423</sup> PLUT. *Cic.* 4. For voice and body shape as unequivocal markers of masculinity in Roman society see GLEASON (1995: 91). Prescriptions concerning the vocal training are for example in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.22: *acuta exclamatio vocem vulnemt: eadem laedit auditorem, habet enim quiddam inlibemle et ad muliebrem potius vociferationem quam ad civilem dignitatem in dicendo adcommodatum* [a high-pitched outburst damages the voice: and further, it irritates the hearer, for it has something of the vulgar about it, and in oratory, is more fit for womanish screeching than the dignity of a citizen].

Alan. Even assuming that a latent tendency towards homoeroticism surfaces temporarily, his maturation along the line of Cicero suggests that this is not meant to last beyond the season of adolescence.

As is well known, the model of Cicero finds a nemesis in Catiline, the aristocratic rebel who, in spite of his high social origins, spirals down into a degradation that culminates with a subversive plot against the state.<sup>424</sup> As I shall demonstrate in the remainder of this chapter, the same combination is respected in Scott's fiction, where Catiline's portrait reverberates, in a prism of effects and refractions, through highborn rebel characters whose seditious plans are depicted as suicidal challenges.

The fertility of the story of Catiline, an episode especially apt for reappropriation at times of national tension, is described by Vance as follows: "In an atmosphere of conspiracy and political crisis, Catiline's revolutionary conspiracy [...] was as useful a metaphor as any, though the gangster-like activities of Clodius and Milo would also serve".<sup>425</sup> That this inherent potential actualises itself in Scott is perhaps less of a coincidence for a fictional universe where the conflict England vs. Scotland takes centre-stage. This is especially the case for *Redgauntlet*, where the theme of a *coup* against history and out of time indeed finds a counter-image, as we are about to see, in Catiline's conspiracy.

Sallust enters into the narrative by providing the paradoxical portrait of the political rebel who adheres to a desperate cause. Catiline matches the identikit of the aristocratic rebel of conservative inclinations motivated by a thirst

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<sup>424</sup> Member of the *gens Sergia*, one of the most ancient families of Roman aristocracy, both Cicero and Sallust describe him as one day presenting his candidature for consulship, and the day after plotting against the state in 63 B. C.

<sup>425</sup> VANCE (1997: 38)

for revenge, whose toxic cocktail of anger and charisma puts the community under threat. Catiline's display of a two-sided nature, a combination of vices and virtues, is a crucial ingredient for the development of rounded characters exposed to the forces and movements of history, whose motivations, however reprehensible, are nonetheless worth taking into consideration. In *Redgauntlet*, this results in the presence of charismatic leaders of noble birth and outstanding military expertise who end up victims of a parable of moral degradation and whose destructive power finds an antidote in Cicero - who, as we have just seen, is embodied in the character of Alan.

First among them, Charles Edward Stewart is described as “young, valiant, patient of fatigue, and despising danger”, where Scott directly borrows the Sallustian formula *corpus patiens indediae algoris vigiliae supra quam quoiquam credibile est* to express endurance and military courage.<sup>426</sup> The parallel with Catiline extends to the Lord of Redgauntlet as a “man, so sternly desperate in his purpose— [...] who seemed willing to take on his own shoulders the entire support of a cause which had been ruinous to thousands”.<sup>427</sup> Hardly by chance are his partisans described by Darsie in the following comment: “[t]hat men should be found rash enough to throw away their services and lives in a desperate cause, is nothing new in history, which abounds with instances of similar devotion”.<sup>428</sup> Although this model could theoretically extend beyond *Redgauntlet* to include many other rebel characters in Scott's novels, in what follows I shall

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<sup>426</sup> *Redgauntlet* (*Magnum Opus* introduction: 350). Emphasis mine. SALL. *Cat.* 5.3–4 [His body could endure hunger, cold and want of sleep to an incredible degree]

<sup>427</sup> *Redgauntlet* (8: 188)

<sup>428</sup> *Redgauntlet* (8: 188). To give some examples: John Balfour of Burley; Ephraim Macbriar and John Graham of Claverhouse in *Old Mortality*. In *Rob Roy*, Rashleigh Osbaldistone, the arch-schemer and political intriguer matches the same identikit of the outlaw gifted with remarkable *vis animi*.

illustrate what, at least for me, is the most potent example of this allusive engagement.

The star of Alan's ascending career meets a nemesis in the declining trajectory represented by Nanty Ewart, the pirate-smuggler in command of the Jumping Jelly, who accompanies the youngster on his voyage across the Solway Firth. Sallust as author is involved in this episode, firstly because he is physically present as a material object on stage –in the volume of *Catiline's Conspiracy* that Alan brings along with him. In a rather unexpected turn, the work becomes the topic of discussion between the young and promising barrister, and the faded outlaw. These figures, though irreconcilably opposed, find in Sallust a shared moment of reflection and confrontation.

As Alan takes his Sallust out of his pocket, the smuggler readily intercepts it and starts reading some pages aloud –an unequivocal clue to an education that, despite his present appearance, must have been that of a gentleman:

*“Catilina [...] omnium flagitiosorum atque facinorosum circum se habebat [...]. Etiam si quis a culpa vacuus in amicitiam ejus inciderat, quotidiano usu par similisque ceteris efficiebatur.* That is what I call plain speaking on the part of the old Roman [...].”<sup>429</sup>

Indeed, Alan recognises in him “a reasonably good scholar, and [...] fond of showing it, by recurring to the subject of Sallust”.<sup>430</sup> Not only does Nanty read

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<sup>429</sup> *Redgauntlet* (13: 249). Cf. SALL. *Cat.* 14.1–4 [Catiline gathered around himself throngs of all depraved and criminal sorts [...]. [I]f anyone without guilt had happened to become his friend, daily intercourse and allurements easily made him just like the rest]. Scott provides the following translation on behalf of the reader by Sir Henry Stuart of Allanton (1824: 2, 17): “The youth, taught to look up to riches as the sovereign good, became apt pupils in the school of Luxury. Rapacity and profusion went hand in hand. Careless of their own fortunes, and eager to possess those of others, shame and remorse, modesty and moderation, every principle gave way”.

<sup>430</sup> *Redgauntlet* (14: 273)

and translate Latin confidently, he also engages in a confrontational dialogue with Sallust as his imaginary interlocutor. His familiarity with the text becomes more and more visible as he addresses the author himself in the second person, as though speaking with his “friend Crispus”.

*“Igitur ex divitiis juventutem luxuria atque avaritia cum superbia  
invasere: rapere, consumere, sua parvi pendere, aliena cupere;  
pudorem, amicitiam, pudicitiam, divina atque humana promiscua,  
nihil pensi neque moderati habere — there is a slap in the face now, for  
a honest fellow that has been buccaneering! Never could keep a groat of  
what he got, or hold his fingers from what belonged to another [...]. Fie,  
fie, friend Crispus, thy morals are as crabbe and austere as thy style —  
the one has little mercy as the other has grace [...]. On my soul, Master  
Sallust deserves to float on the Solway”.*<sup>431</sup>

The characterisation of Nanty results in a mix of strength and unlimited willpower on account of the intimidating effect this figure exerts on Alan, who sees in him a man able to challenge perils and obstacles of any nature. This is further strengthened by Alan being at the low point of his energy and presence of mind and is also completely overwhelmed by sea-sickness.

What is crucial here is the psychological involvement that the reading of Sallust promotes: a self-identification thanks to which Nanty, aware of it or not, begins to see his life through the mirror of Sallust and gradually unveils his dim

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<sup>431</sup> *Redgauntlet* (14: 274). SALL. *Cat.* 12.2–3 [Therefore, as a result of riches, the youth were suddenly consumed with luxury and greed, together with insolence. They robbed, squandered, valued little their property, coveted that of others; they treated without distinction modesty, chastity, things human and divine; they had no scruples and no moderation]

past.<sup>432</sup> An impoverished aristocrat, he was the son of a gentleman and destined for a career in the church. Notwithstanding a promising start, his current situation is the result of a moral degradation that, according to a trajectory of self-destruction, culminates first with a sexual scandal and then with a descent into alcoholism. In betraying his sense of guilt and responsibility with regard to his family's misfortune, Nanty shows no hesitation in defining himself as the "*origo mali*" and the indirect cause of the sudden death of his father. The accusation of parricide, which results in his banishment, is reminiscent of Catiline being charged with parricide and officially declared a public enemy –*hostem atque parricidam vocare*.<sup>433</sup> Paradoxical as it may sound, the more Nanty tries to deflate Sallust's lesson, the more he approaches his own weaknesses and mistakes. At this point, the dismissive attitude that he uses against Sallust –whom he had first addressed as a sort of 'old companion'– encapsulates a psychological dynamic of self-censorship, as though suggesting that the identification with Catiline is so cogent that it is impossible for him to bear it on a rational level. The instinct to get rid of the book can thus be explained in the light of the process of assimilation that we have seen at play here, which alternates between moments of appropriation and refusal, and through which Nanty, consciously or not, recovers emotions and memories of his past.

Such a reading, however, has a dual effect, since it reactivates past memories of a personal life but also acts as a comment on the margin of the political intrigue that is taking form in the background. Illuminating in this sense

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<sup>432</sup> The process of internalisation is suggested by language choices in Scott's diction –such as "my Sallust"; "my friend Sallust"; "thy morals [...] thy style" –where the repeated possessives and the address in the second person create the sensation of a certain degree of familiarity (*Redgauntlet*: 13: 249).

<sup>433</sup> SALL. *Cat.* 31.9

is the way in which Nanty in turn echoes the narrative voice and moral attitude of Sallust as a reporter and interpreter of past historical events to comment on the contemporary political climate. While Sutherland has already drawn attention to Catiline's antecedent in the background of the last Scottish *coup* – "Nanty Ewart compares Charles Edward Stewart to [...] Catiline who had plotted against the State of Rome" – I am persuaded that Nanty's target is more probably the Lord of Redgauntlet.<sup>434</sup> It is in fact in him that the smuggler unmask the true present-day Catiline: "this fellow the Laird is a firebrand in the country [...] he is stirring up [...] honest fellows, by telling him stories about their ancestors and the Forty-five".<sup>435</sup> As a lucid critic of the historical circumstances, Nanty's verdict is implacable and involves Redgauntlet as the one morally responsible for inciting discontented aristocrats and desperate accomplices who have nothing to lose. By emphasising their origins and the disrepute their condition has brought upon their family names, Redgauntlet uses the same method of recruitment that Catiline adopted to find adherents and partisans: "he gets encouragement from some, because they want [...] money from him, and from others, because they fought for the cause once, and are ashamed to go back, and others, because they have nothing to lose; and others, because they are discontented fools".<sup>436</sup>

It is at this point that the classically educated reader begins to realise that Sallust is not merely the first volume that Alan absentmindedly picked up in the hope that "the perusal of a favourite classical author might help to pass away an

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<sup>434</sup> SUTHERLAND (1985: 453, note 271 *bis*). "Nanty Ewart compares Charles Edward Stewart to [...] Catiline who had plotted against the State of Rome".

<sup>435</sup> *Redgauntlet* (14: 261)

<sup>436</sup> *Redgauntlet* (14: 261)

heavy hour”.<sup>437</sup> The choice falls upon Sallust as a text capable of anticipating the future scenario in which Alan is going to find himself trapped. Rather than representing literary escapism, Sallust is there to prefigure events of which Alan is still unaware, and that he is going to unwittingly experience. As though obeying a sort of instinct, he opts for Sallust, among all the other volumes, which will travel with him as a mute companion and a kind of survival handbook.

There is, however, an unexpected twist in store. Contrary to appearances, Nanty is merely aware of the conspiracy, not involved with it. Furthermore, he shows neither sympathy nor justification for an initiative that he condemns *in toto* in terms of disenchanting realism: –“plotters, that can make no plot to better purpose than their own hanging; and incendiaries, that are snapping the flint upon wet tinder” – and in fact, silently works against Redgauntlet’s plan.<sup>438</sup>

In a further movement towards becoming a ‘redeemed Catiline’, the presumed plotter cares for the “sick and exhausted” Alan by “wrapp[ing] around him, as softly as he could, a great boat-cloak [...] to defend him from the morning air”.<sup>439</sup> Indeed, Nanty’s eventual intervention is providential both in rescuing Alan and averting the *coup*. This reversal, which makes Nanty an anti-plotter, against the expectations of Scott’s cultivated audience, is the proof that history is not repeating itself, though reasons for concern are indeed present.

In the confrontation between Alan and Nanty, the assimilation of the protagonist with Cicero assumes significance, a fortiori since the young man of law stands in front of the outlaw as his antagonist, in every possible sense. Alan is the prototype of the ideal British citizen that Scott is pointing out to the new

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<sup>437</sup> *Redgauntlet* (13: 248)

<sup>438</sup> *Redgauntlet* (14: 261)

<sup>439</sup> *Redgauntlet* (13: 247)

generations of both English and Scots. Industrious, and loyal to the laws and institutions of his country, he embodies a *homo novus* who makes his fortune thanks only to his talents and relying exclusively on his skills –and, last but not least, one who gains success and honour in the unmasking of a political coup. But the redeemed Catiline is there to point the finger at other energies that the Union has left behind.

The early nineteenth century constituted a particularly suitable breeding ground for the reception of Cicero, especially in his role as antidote to Catiline: “not only was Cicero a watchword for eloquence and virtue, but the absence of any modern equal was something to be lamented”.<sup>440</sup> As Fox puts it: “it is the respect for Cicero as an orator, and as an all-round literary giant, that sees figures at both ends of the eighteenth century comparing themselves to him [...]. The reading leads to inspiration and imitation, rather than a critical examination or attempt to understand either Cicero’s actions or his texts within a context responding to wider historical or literary concerns”.<sup>441</sup> I think this is precisely what Scott does in *Redgauntlet*, not only by involving Cicero as an example of improving reading, but also by transforming him into a fictional character, thus promoting an identification that proves pivotal both in a *Bildung* and historical perspective.

As recalled in chapter three, scholarship on Scott substantially agrees that *Redgauntlet* represents an anomalous case in Scott’s output insofar as the author, rather than plunging into factual history, opts for the role of a fantasist. In adherence to this view, the novel presents an opportunity for Scott to take full

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<sup>440</sup> COLE (2013: 337–349)

<sup>441</sup> FOX (2013: 322)

advantage of artistic licence and to indulge in the domain of creative invention. In this unconventional approach lies the germinating ground for his invention of the last, aborted *coup*. In light of my previous considerations, I would like to readdress this interpretation and to extend the scope that Scott attributed to the novel as a whole.

In this interpretation I follow Vance's reading of Catiline's exemplarity, as he argues that "[t]he turbulent political history of the Roman Republic could furnish example of political disaster as well as of political virtue".<sup>442</sup> However, that Scott here defies his readers' classically-infused expectations, by deliberately creating confusion about where virtue and disaster lie, rather complicates this idea. We need also to keep in mind that Redgauntlet's conspiracy cannot be defined as entirely invented *ex novo* –since there is historical evidence for plans of rebellion against the Union up to 1759 at least.<sup>443</sup> In this regard, the insertion of Cicero and Catiline draws us back not only to the very brink of a new catastrophe, but also to the very domain of history, and is there to suggest that the risk of another civil war is far more real than a mere divagation of fiction. Fictionality does not represent here a comfort zone in which to draw an innocent counterfactual situation. As we have already seen with reference to the tragedy of Orestes, classical models serve to point to the domestic sphere as the ideal milieu for pathogenic agents to develop.

I believe that Scott is suggesting, via this episode of Roman history, that the virulence of the most resistant ones is still spreading around and that their side-effects are still visible in some dysfunctional aspects of the Union. By

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<sup>442</sup> VANCE (1997: 35)

<sup>443</sup> SZECHI (1994: 85–124)

encapsulating in his narrative a story that, though belonging to other chapters in the timeline, is already, properly and indisputably, history, I think Scott is warning his upper-class readers about how precarious the state still is, against any overoptimistic propaganda, and how much there was and still is to do: yesterday (in the summer of 1765) and today, in the now of the narration (1824).

The comment by Joshua Geddes on the margin of the action is illuminating in this sense: his words “in this probationary state of society” can be interpreted as a critique of the political void and shortcomings of the Union’s institutions - a fortiori if we consider that at the crucial hour, the destiny of the nation falls into the hands of a youngster who is ‘constitutionally’ unable to raise a sword against the enemy, and is saved *in extremis* by a redeemed Scottish Catiline.<sup>444</sup>

The involvement of Catiline and Sallust in the story of this (relatively) invented rebellion is the sign of how much Scott feels the need –ten years exactly after *Waverley*– to reiterate his argument on Jacobitism and to make amends for the misleading, idealised vision his first novel endorsed. *Redgauntlet* therefore marks a watershed and a turning point at the same time: to address Jacobitism under the lens of Roman history means to eradicate the romantic and sentimentalist memory of Jacobitism to which he himself had contributed with his debut novel. What we find on the page now is only a fanatic who devotes himself to a desperate cause. The rebellion is no longer presented in terms of a colonial struggle between two national elements in the process of a problematic incorporation. As readers, we have to face a real civil war among British citizens,

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<sup>444</sup> *Redgauntlet* (vi: 47)

which arose at the very heart of the unitary state. Catiline helps Scott suggest more than he declares, by radicalising the message he wants to offer to the male cultivated ruling elite, present and future alike.

#### **4.4 Live differently: a Cynic Gaberlunzie**

When he was asked what was miserable in life, he answered: “An indigent old man”<sup>445</sup>

*My treatment here examines the characterisation of Edie Ochiltree in The Antiquary as it takes shape as an updated version of Diogenes of Sinope, the Cynic Greek philosopher famous in antiquity for his impertinence and bluntness. Recognition of the way in which Scott models his mendicant hermit on the example of Diogenes –thanks, as we shall see, to an iconographic mediation via figurative art– enables us to reposition Edie’s role in the light of the contemporary political issues that he raises. By focussing on the strategies that ‘politicise’ Edie and make him relevant to a classical learned reader in the aftermath of both the British Civil and Napoleonic Wars, a new look at this figure against the grain of Diogenes will help to nuance the native cultural identity prominently (and perhaps too reductively) ascribed to him within the discursive framework of Romantic simplicity and folklore.*

Perhaps one of the most appreciated characters in Scott’s fiction, and very dear to the author himself, Edie Ochiltree is the jester-beggar who relentlessly wanders across the estate of Monkbarrow, living on charity and gaining a reputation for his extravagant behaviour. On his first appearance, the storyteller presents him in minute detail by stressing his “exterior appearance of a mendicant”: “a slouched hat of huge dimensions; a long white beard [...] mingled with [...] grizzled hair; an aged but strongly marked and expressive countenance, hardened by climate and

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<sup>445</sup> DIOG. LAERT. 6.6.

exposure [...]”.<sup>446</sup> As the description continues, the focus shifts to the extravagance of his attire:

“[A] long blue gown, with a pewter badge on the right arm; two or three wallets [...] slung across his shoulder, for holding the different kinds of meal when he received his charity [...]: these marked at once a beggar by profession, and one of that privileged class which are called in Scotland the King’s Bedesmen, or vulgarly, Blue-Gowns”.<sup>447</sup>

But what is crucial to see in this picture is the emphasis on what we may subsume under the label ‘body language’, which indeed exhibits all of the features of singularity: “as he lay half-reclined [...] turned up towards the sky, his staff and bag laid aside beside him and a cast of homely wisdom and sarcastic irony in the expression of his countenance [...] he might have been taken by an artist as a model of an old philosopher of the Cynic school”.<sup>448</sup>

It goes without saying that Edie’s debut on the page is followed by a presentation deliberately aimed at producing an impression of uniqueness and extravagance upon the English audience. As D’Arcy remarks, this character is the epitome of Scottishness: “it hardly seems likely that [...] an itinerant beggar dressed in blue [...] [was] very familiar to contemporary readers in the drawing rooms of Mayfair or the sitting rooms of Hertfordshire”.<sup>449</sup> However, I want to complicate this assumption by suggesting that, at least for the classically aware implied reader, the figure of Edie does not sound so unconventional as to forbid its identification with the substantive model that Scott is evoking in his

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<sup>446</sup> *Antiquary* (4: 30)

<sup>447</sup> *Antiquary* (4: 30)

<sup>448</sup> *Antiquary* (12: 91)

<sup>449</sup> D’ARCY (2005: 36). For an analysis of Edie’s “elemental, genuine Scottishness” see ALLEN (1954: 132–33). On Edie as an emblem of “locality” see also REED (1980: 50ff).

presentation, that is to say, the portrait of Diogenes as it appears in Raphaël's *School of Athens*.

As the founder of the Cynic school, Diogenes (c. 412-323 BC) initiated a trend of thought that was alternative to conventional values and against the obligations of society.<sup>450</sup> Self-sufficiency and moderation are proposed in his moral code as being *sine qua non* for a life far from compromises and hypocrisies. A practical manifestation of this alternative recipe lies precisely in Diogenes' lifestyle and behaviour. Born the son of a money-changer, as the story goes, after his father's reputation was ruined following a financial scandal, Diogenes opted for perpetual exile. Rejecting the hypocritical masks of social coexistence in order to obey exclusively his natural needs, he wandered throughout the most important cities of Greece –mainly Athens and Corinth– where he became hugely popular, thanks to the anecdotal literature that effloresced around his figure, and which contributed to nourishing his myth in posterity.

Among the sources, the most important account of this figure is the biography by Diogenes Laërtius, which figures in the collection of the *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (6.20–81). Further stories related to Diogenes are to be found in Plutarch, Cicero and Lucian, whereas anecdotes and maxims surrounding his figure are scattered in *florilegia* and anthologies available in wider literary circulation. Turning to modernity, Diogenes indeed lent himself to post-classical reappropriations. His figure held sway in the picaresque novel, which became a place to renegotiate a space for his wanderings, whereas his

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<sup>450</sup> For an exhaustive treatment of this philosophical current see BRACHT BRANHAM and GOULET CAZÉ (eds. 1996). In parts outdated, but still an excellent guide, is DUDLEY, 1937.

refusal of conventions and his preaching resonated anew in the notions of a return to nature and oral culture, which underlay Romantic sensibility.<sup>451</sup>

More broadly, it was compulsory school education that set up, across the ages, a substantial engagement with Diogenes, on account of his potential for both satire and moralising –an aspect that appealed to pedagogy and rendered his figure palatable for educational use. In the schoolroom, Diogenes was an icon of a strange lifestyle and eccentric attitudes, e.g having a large amphora for his dwelling, or accepting charity without submitting to acts of servility. Famous, instead, for his scorn of any form of privilege, Diogenes depreciates titles and decorations– his shocking answers to personalities such as Plato and Alexander the Great are memorable in this regard.<sup>452</sup> In the light of the above considerations, we may well suppose that Scott came across Diogenes with a certain frequency during his school-age years, and knew the various episodes of his biography, along with the anecdotes and caustic aphorisms attributed to him.

Even more decisively for our purposes here, Diogenes figures among the philosophers assembled in Raphaël's *School of Athens*. The fresco portrays Diogenes in his blue gown close to the centre of the composition, in a reclining posture and bearing marks of senility in his grey hair and whitened beard - a description that betrays reliance on the iconographic tradition in the footsteps of Diogenes Laërtius, who offers vivid descriptions of both his appearance and his garments.<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> Unfortunately, the contribution by SHEA (2010) on this topic is limited to France and Germany.

<sup>452</sup> DIOG. LAERT. 6.4 and 6.

<sup>453</sup> See for example the following passage: “He was [...] the first person who doubled up his cloak out of necessity, and who slept in it; and who carried a wallet, in which he kept his food; and who used whatever place was near for all sorts of purposes, eating, and sleeping, and conversing in it”. DIOG. LAERT. 6.11.

Located in the *Stanza della Segnatura* at the Vatican Palace, the masterpiece was the object of critical attention and admiration as early as the 16th century. Raphaël's glory as a painter hugely increased in Britain when some of his tapestry cartoons arrived in London in 1623 after being purchased by the Crown. In 1824, with Raphaël's reputation at its zenith, the British Institution staged an exhibition of the cartoons, which triggered a debate among specialists regarding whether they should be displayed instead in the newly founded National Gallery.<sup>454</sup> In addition to this, a full-scale copy of the *School of Athens* was commissioned from Anton Raphael Mengs by the Duke of Northumberland in 1749: the painting remained on display in the family dwelling in London before ultimately being donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1926.

Edie's Diogenean disdain for vanities and superfluous matters finds expression in his witty remarks and in his irreverent answers. In line with Diogenes' disposition, his mode of living based on poverty qualifies as a choice of freedom by someone who considers himself a citizen of the world. Moreover, his lifestyle is regulated according to a strict ethical code –merely, to accept charity, but never to ask. This principle keeps him away from nihilism or parasitism. Accepting only the essentials, he rejects any form of material comfort offered by “those who were but a degree richer than himself”.<sup>455</sup> As the butler of Wardour House awkwardly reports to Isabella, Edie declined her invitation to find shelter under her own roof simply by saying: “He will come up at no rate [...], he says his

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<sup>454</sup> In 1865 the cartoons were moved to the South Kensington Museum, later renamed the *Victoria and Albert Museum*, where they are still on display. Further details in EVANS and BROWNE (eds. 2010) and SHEARMAN 1972.

<sup>455</sup> *Antiquary* (4: 30)

clouted shoes never were on a carpet in his life, and that, please God, never shall”.<sup>456</sup>

Neither a scholar nor a cultivated man –‘I am na that book-learned’, as he proudly declares– Edie is the spokesman of a counterculture that, as Bragg highlights, points to “the failure of typical knowledge-gathering methods”.<sup>457</sup> His unexpected interventions unmask nonsenses and sophisticated trickeries, often to the detriment (and embarrassment) of upstanding citizens (Oldbuck being the first among them). In his first appearance (chapt. 4) he emerges out of the blue “amid the energy of the Antiquary’s enthusiastic declamation” to abruptly interrupt his speculations about the *Agricola* setting: “A voice from behind interrupted his ecstatic description –‘Praetorian here, Praetorian there, I mind the bigging o’it”.<sup>458</sup> While sabotaging Oldbuck’s convoluted constructions, Edie also gives his own version of the story– a version that, though much more prosaic than Oldbuck’s, seems much more plausible.<sup>459</sup>

Scholarship has often seen in Edie a socially marginalised figure who, precisely due to his role as Ur-Outcast, is the holder of “preternatural knowledge of the past and of the landscape”.<sup>460</sup> However, far from remaining a marginal presence, this bizarre individual turns out to be the agent of resolution. Indeed, he is more than a key figure, most of all for Lovel, who finds in him a reliable

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<sup>456</sup> *Antiquary* (12: 91). This episode seems to be reminiscent, at least to me, of a scene described by Diogenes Laertius when “Plato had invited some friends [...] to a banquet, and Diogenes trampled on his carpets, and said: “Thus I trample on the empty pride of Plato”. DIOG. LAERT. 6.4.

<sup>457</sup> *Antiquary* (24: 197); BRAGG (2010: 213)

<sup>458</sup> *Antiquary* (4: 30)

<sup>459</sup> A well-known example of the contrast between written culture and practical experience polarised in Diogenes lies in this episode: “When Hegesias entreated him to lend him one of his books, he said: ‘You are a simpleton, Hegesias, you do not choose painted figs, but real ones; and yet you pass over the true meaning and would apply yourself to written rules”. DIOG. LAERT. 6.6.

<sup>460</sup> BRAGG (2010: 215)

assistant, as well as the repository of the secret of his own identity. Edie acts as the fulcrum that directs the multiple threads, not only of the main plot. In this regard, as we have already seen with regard to Catiline, Scott's latter-day Diogenes acquires relevance also for what he does *not* do in comparison to his model.

Indeed, in the haste of organising an impromptu army against the French that enlivens the epilogue, Edie figures in the front line in superintending the military forces: "instead of being left, like Diogenes at Sinope, to roll in his tub when all around were preparing for defence".<sup>461</sup>

This 'teamwork' is reciprocal, since the citizenry of Fairport grants him support in time of trouble –even the most influential personalities do not hesitate to intervene on his behalf: Oldbuck is in pole position here, since his public role as a magistrate is decisive in getting Edie out of prison.<sup>462</sup> Such a benevolent attitude is reminiscent of the high favour in which Diogenes was held by the Athenians, who were ready to accord him protection in case of need: "when a youth had broken his cask they beat him, and gave Diogenes another".<sup>463</sup>

Such a cooperative, inclusive version of Diogenes who, against the learned reader's expectations, commits himself to the cause of the common good in an emergency hour promotes a rehabilitation under the banner of a solidarity that is aimed at fostering positive interclass relationships: a condition which, according to the philosophical ethics of the Scottish Enlightenment, is essential for the survival of the social organism. As such, the parallel bears relevance to the mythography of Scotland as the 'Athens of the North', of which Oldbuck is the

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<sup>461</sup> *Antiquary* (45: 351)

<sup>462</sup> *Antiquary* (37–38: 291–304)

<sup>463</sup> DIOG. LAERT. 6.6.

(collaborative) Diogenes, along a line that sees at the opposite end Oldbuck, who, according to the formula that qualifies the two characters as poles apart, can perhaps be recast as a comic version of Plato.

With neither family nor fixed dwelling, Edie's way of life replicates that of Diogenes as well as the backstory of his self-exclusion from society. As he himself makes clear to Hector, who at times treats him with disdain: "I am an auld fallow [...] but I am also an auld soldier o' your father's, for I served wi' him in the 42nd".<sup>464</sup> His adventures at Lovel's side are often accompanied by memories of his youth in the army: "I hae seen mony a man killed, and helped to kill them mysell, though there was nae quarrel between us".<sup>465</sup> From these 'windows' on his past, we can trace the stages of a military career that has brought him to fight on both sides of the Atlantic: "I have kept guard on the outposts baith in Germany and America [...] in mony a waur night [...], and when I kend there was maybe a dozen o' their riflemen in the thicket before me".<sup>466</sup> But, more crucially, Oldbuck was one of the '45, as we may indirectly assume from this declaration of his: "I didna think my auld legs could have brought me aff as fast; I ran amaist as fast as if I had been at Prestonpans".<sup>467</sup> Although the reasons for his taking leave from society go unexplained in the text, the parallel with Diogenes is there to suggest to the learned reader that they are very likely to be connected to the mental aftershock of war and defeat.<sup>468</sup> As a sort of self-inflicted reaction to that traumatic event, finding it impossible to come to terms with the decline of the

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<sup>464</sup> *Antiquary* (20: 161)

<sup>465</sup> *Antiquary* (21: 166)

<sup>466</sup> *Antiquary* (25: 202)

<sup>467</sup> *Antiquary* (26: 216)

<sup>468</sup> *Antiquary* (5: 34). A vague hint of this is given by Oldbuck, who explains to Lovel that Edie was a soldier, and "has borne his hard fate with unbroken spirits".

Stuart cause, Edie withdraws from human society: a choice that qualifies as an act of political disobedience, specifically as a protest against the new Unionist government.

Seen in this new frame, Edie is not as native and indigenous as some have argued: he is also the result of a mediation that adds another layer to the Romantic myth of the 'return to nature' and the spirit of Enlightened egalitarianism. Without denying that local legends and popular stories find in him the preserver of an age-long ethos of folk wisdom, and without denying the emblem of inter-class solidarity that he represents, the model of Diogenes that we have seen underlying his figure infuses a subterranean political commentary on Scotland's present state.

#### **4.5 Concluding remarks**

This section has established the visual mediation thanks to which the character of Edie Ochiltree finds his iconographic counterpart in Diogenes. The portrait of Edie, as delineated by Scott against the background of Raphaël, acquires a level of dignity and authority, not to say sacredness, which consecrate him as the holder of power in terms of both words and actions, in whom Scott acknowledges the dignity of the *homo pro se*.

The resultant reading suggested here is that while transforming Diogenes into a fictional character, Scott ascribes to Edie a role as a silent debunker of the new political order established after Culloden. The ways in which this parallel is handled, to develop into the figure of the redeemed pariah, serve as a warning not to dismiss Edie too easily as a 'folklore phenomenon', so to speak, suggesting

that, though he is certainly the emblem of oral tradition and sense of belonging, this is not his only function.

The situation of voluntary exile, in which Edie is cast anew through the model of Diogenes, stresses still-open wounds that demand collective attention, by prioritising in this case the ‘interrupted lives’ of veterans who came back from the war to find themselves unable to cope with the memory of their experience on the battlefield, but also with the traumatic changes that new political settlements have brought to their country.

Chapter Five

**The price of membership:  
unconventional women between magic and war**

“There was a time when we thought we knew what Scott’s women were about...”<sup>469</sup>

**5.1 “Under the edge of a law so cruel”: Antigone in the Toolboth**

*This new and last chapter proposes a new argument for treating The Heart of Midlothian in the light of the conglomerate version of the Oedipus myth that underpins the novel, by focussing in particular on the representation of unconventional femininity embodied by the character of Jeanie Deans. As I shall demonstrate in a moment, Scott’s heroine can be interpreted as a re-enactment of Antigone, the titular character of Sophocles’ tragedy (441 BC). The Sophoclean subtext provides Scott with the opportunity to explore again the theme of blood ties, and especially to shed light on the repercussions that the conflict between conscience and sociability implies within the application of law and the domain of statesmanship more in general. A new reading of the novel under the lens of its still unacknowledged engagement with the Theban mythical cycle is crucial to answer the unresolved question of why Scott has a peasant woman in the major role. Last but not least, I shall further argue that, in her embodying the virtuous heroine and loyal sister who achieves the mission of saving her sibling from a sentence of death without jeopardising her moral integrity, Jeanie presents us with the first, and in my view strongest, example of how the notion of the feminine in Scott resists any categorisation, in particular eluding the quasi-mechanical distinction of ‘blonde vs. brunette’ proposed by Welsh.*

To resume briefly a well-known story, Antigone is the devoted daughter of Oedipus, king of Thebes, who has died in exile after discovering that the woman he has married –Jocasta– was his own mother (this being the plot of Sophocles’

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<sup>469</sup> SHAW (2002: 285)

*Oedipus Rex*). After assisting her father during his last days (as Sophocles depicts in the sequel tragedy, *Oedipus at Colonus*), Antigone goes back to Thebes, where the Sophoclean play named after her begins. Following the death of her two brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, who kill each other in a battle for the throne of Thebes, her uncle Creon becomes head of the family and king of the city.<sup>470</sup> The first public decree of the sovereign forbids anyone from performing the funeral rites for Polynices: as a traitor and invader of the fatherland deserves, his corpse must remain unburied in the open air. Any attempt to transgress will be punished by death. In spite of the banishment, Antigone is firmly resolved to pay the last homage to her dead brother, in adherence to the unwritten, perpetual laws that the gods above have established for blood kinship.

After a heated confrontation with her sister Ismene, who shows instead her docile nature and begs her not to act against the new king's law, Antigone secretly sets out to accomplish her plan. When she is discovered *in flagrante*, she openly admits that she was fully aware of the prohibition, and claims a superior religious duty to mourn her family members regardless of any human prerogative or sanction. Offended by her outrageous initiative, the king immediately sentences his niece to death. Haemon, son of Creon and betrothed to Antigone, tries in vain to intercede for his fiancée, blaming his father for his intransigence. Only the intervention of Tiresias, the blind prophet who foretells the future misfortunes that for his family if Antigone should die, will eventually convince Creon to revoke his decision. But it is too late: as a messenger reports, Antigone

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<sup>470</sup> The prequel of this story is in Aeschylus's *Seven against Thebes*, a play centred on the siege of Thebes that follows Oedipus' death, with his two sons competing for the succession.

has hanged herself and, on discovering her lifeless body, Haemon too has committed suicide.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the myth of Antigone underwent a significant rediscovery in both literary and philosophical debate across Europe.<sup>471</sup> Vittorio Alfieri –a dissident and controversial author himself– figures among the first who promoted this revival: his translation into Italian verse (1783, revised in 1789) refashions Antigone as a heroine of titanic proportions, already romantic in her indomitable will to oppose tyranny. It is very likely that Scott knew this version, since a copy of *Quindici tragedie di Vittorio Alfieri da Asti* was on his bookshelves at Abbotsford.<sup>472</sup> In the *longue durée* of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, the tragedy suitably channelled sensitive matters on the political agenda, such as legitimacy and resistance to anti-democratic ambitions. It is especially in Germany that the character of Antigone mostly acquires relevance: the translations by Goethe and Hölderlin accompany the reflections that German idealism was developing in the footsteps of Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*, leading to the dialectical interpretation by Hegel, who most famously in his *Aesthetics* and *Phenomenology of the Spirit* points to Antigone as the embodiment of the clashes within *Sittlichkeit* (“ethical life”).

As we have seen previously, Scott was acquainted with the recent developments that the notion of the ‘tragic’ was registering in dramatic theory, in particular with the contributions by the Schlegel brothers, who were discussing

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<sup>471</sup> I touch here on a web of voluminously detailed aspects, famously discussed *in extenso* by STEINER (1984). Particularly important in recent scholarship in this field are: GOLDHILL, 1986; GOLDHILL and HALL, 2009; MEE and FOLEY, 2011.

<sup>472</sup> In 3 volumes, edited by Antonio Montucci (Edinburgh, Mannes and Miller, 1805–6).

the requirements of the ‘inherently tragic’. In his *Essay on Drama*, for example, Scott quotes long passages from *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur* by August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845).<sup>473</sup>

Turning more closely to the novel under scrutiny, it has long been acknowledged that *Midlothian* is centred on the deployment of a moral dilemma, which presents itself to its protagonist as a last-minute call for a white lie by one sister to save another. As the storyteller illustrates: “the means of saving her were in her power, but were such as her conscience prohibited her from using”.<sup>474</sup> The tragic scope of the novel has indeed offered scholars a remarkable window onto the *Weltanschauung* that underlies the work itself. As Morgan puts it: “[t]he question [the novel] asks and Jeanie Deans faces, expressed as an issue of conscience, is what are the grounds on which we can win over doom”.<sup>475</sup> Along the same line of thought, Lincoln has more recently underscored what he defines as “[t]he undeclared project” of [the novel] “as an attempt to bridge the gulf between conscientious resistance and polite acquiescence”.<sup>476</sup>

But what does Scott have to say about this? As he himself admitted more than ten years after the novel’s publication, the story of Jeanie Deans took inspiration from a real episode, in what he defines as a “sketch of high principle and steady affection” that he allegedly found in an anonymous letter. This letter reported to him the incredible story of Helen Walker, a Scottish peasant who had walked barefoot all the way to London to obtain mercy for her sister, who was

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<sup>473</sup> Scott possessed both the French translation by Albertine-Adrienne Necker de Saussure (Paris, 1814), and the English edition by John Black (London, 1815). Among his volumes at Abbotsford we also find Friederich Schlegel (1772–1829), with his *Geschichte der alten und neuen Litteratur*, translated by Lockhart in 1818.

<sup>474</sup> *Midlothian* (20: 182)

<sup>475</sup> MORGAN (1983: 581)

<sup>476</sup> LINCOLN (2000: 73)

detained in jail on a charge of child murder.<sup>477</sup> The *ex post facto* picture that Scott offers us indeed seems to argue for a chronicle, rather than for a tragedy, and some valuable attempts have also been made in order to establish the historical identity of the Walker sisters. In this respect, I would like to point to some reservations about what sounds, rather suspiciously, like a speaking name for a long-distance pedestrian, in line with the stratagems the author resorts to in order to lead his readers into the labyrinth of narrative possibilities.

Whether based on a real event or the fruit of literary invention, the story of Jeanie and Effie suitably expresses Scott's two-fold profile as a writer and a lawyer, by engaging him both with the domain of aesthetics and moral philosophy. The novel in fact represents a literary attempt to incorporate the essence of the tragic in prose fiction, while appealing at the same time to his expertise in the field of the administration of justice and criminal proceedings. This perspective seems to fit within the theoretical framework that Edith Hall establishes in her work, where she emphasises on the potential for fiction intrinsic in any tragic text: a potentiality that, in her view, allows for the reshaping of tragic contents and issues in narrative prose. Indeed, the reader of Scott cannot help but think about *Midlothian* when coming across this reflection by Hall: “[s]pecific legal cases often reminded novelists of ancient tragic plots, prompting them to fuse mythical archetype and contemporary new reports before transforming them into a brand new fiction [where] [t]he metaphysical dimensions of tragedy, especially the ideas of ineluctable destiny and inherited

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<sup>477</sup> See the *Magnum Opus* introduction (1830).

pollution, appear [...] transformed into more secular imperatives imposed by social, psychological and even economic forces”.<sup>478</sup>

Torn between contrasting feelings and obligations, Jeanie finds herself “in the cruel position of either sacrificing her sister by telling the truth, or committing perjury in order to save her”.<sup>479</sup> Apart from obeying the tragic rhetoric of despair, the disconsolate sigh by which the heroine expresses the conflict between nature and written law specifically gestures towards Antigone: “we are cruelly steeled between God’s laws and man’s laws –What shall we do?– What can we do?”.<sup>480</sup>

There can be little doubt that a sense of the tragic is deeply enmeshed in the novel’s narrative structure, but there are also particular echoes of the Theban saga in play throughout the articulation of the plot, within a train of events that condenses the suspense in the denouement. The tension in fact culminates with the catastrophe of George Staunton, who is unknowingly murdered, like Laius, on the street by his son, like Oedipus, whom he thought dead at birth.

The last section of the novel has often been regarded by critics as its weakest point. Scholars and readers alike have chastised Scott for the prolonged coda as being somehow gratuitous and unnecessary. For instance, both *Blackwood’s* and the *British Review* took a clear stance towards the tragic parricide: “[t]his event, so unnatural and unexpected, is another atonement made

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<sup>478</sup> HALL (2009: 24). Although the scholar refers here to a much later moment in the timeline (mid-20th century), her study has been inspirational for its methodological assumptions and critical orientation.

<sup>479</sup> *Midlothian* (20: 180)

<sup>480</sup> *Midlothian* (20: 180). For a discussion of despair as a rhetorical trope in tragic texts see FOWLER, 1987.

to the stunted morality of the tale”.<sup>481</sup> The conjectures advanced about this epilogue did not conceal the suspicion that the author had lengthened the story on purpose for reasons of profit. In a similar fashion, the *Monthly Review* dismissed Staunton's death as a conclusion beyond the laws of verisimilitude and probability. However, as it has already been –though rather succinctly– acknowledged, the choice to condemn George Staunton to a death that seems far more a pre-determined event than an accidental one acquires relevance, as Fisher cursorily remarks, exactly in the light of “the fated Oedipus-myth of Greek tragedy”.<sup>482</sup>

The appropriation of Sophocles is not limited to plot-line but involves characterisation as well, first and foremost in the contrast between two sisters who could not be more different.

On the one hand, we have the decidedly opaque Euphemia, the silent and passive victim of a system that overwhelms her with scandal and damaged reputation, a woman limited in strength and destined to succumb to her own weakness.<sup>483</sup> By way of parenthesis, it may be said here that a tragic register can also be subsumed in the way we may assume Scott to expect his learned reader not to miss the pun on her name in Greek –literally ‘she who speaks good’, or in the passive sense is ‘well-spoken of’. Similarly to what we have seen above in the case of ‘Walker’ as a properly fitting surname for a bare-foot wayfarer, Euphemia indeed sounds like an ironically speaking name for a fallen woman.

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<sup>481</sup> British Review, anonymous quot. by HAYDEN (1970: 169)

<sup>482</sup> FISHER (1955: 105)

<sup>483</sup> Such a delicacy of temper drifts, especially when the novel turns towards the end, into mental instability. The characterisation of Euphemia seems curiously in line with some of the conclusions that feminist criticism has drawn on the figure of Ismene, portrayed as “indisputably a woman in her weakness, her fear, her submissive obedience, her tears, madness, hysteria”. See on this IRIGARAY (1985: 217).

On the other hand, we find Jeanie, whose firmness and obstinacy borders on stubbornness, as clearly emerges when she refuses any help in undertaking a task that puts her future at stake: “my ain distress I can bear, and I maun bear [...]. I will bear my load alone - the back is made for the burden”.<sup>484</sup> The farewell scene where she takes leave of her fiancé Reuben Butler due to a decision that entails the breaking of their engagement is reminiscent of the last meeting between Haemon and Antigone (who is however already destined to die unwedded in the prime of her youth): “It’s e’en a grief the mair to me to see you in this way. But ye maun keep up your heart for Jeanie’s sake, for if she isna your wife, she will never be the wife of a living man”.<sup>485</sup> Furthermore, the devotion the heroine shows to her father in his later years of old age and infirmity –acting as his dutiful and inseparable companion affectionately attending to his needs– closely recalls the role that Antigone performs in Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*.

The divide between the two siblings finds its most dramatic expression in the words by Effie herself, who in her anonymous letter addresses her sister as follows: “you, the pure, the virtuous, the heroine of unstained faith, unblemished purity, what can you have to fear from the world or its proudest minions?”<sup>486</sup> It is interesting to remark, however, that the novel deploys this polarity in a rather dynamic way, by which the model of Antigone results in a prism of oscillations and refractions. Such a fluctuation is encapsulated in the words that George Staunton writes to the magistrate in his desperate attempt to set his lover free - where the latter day Antigone, at least to George’s eyes, is Effie:

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<sup>484</sup> *Midlothian* (12: 106)

<sup>485</sup> *Midlothian* (28: 247). Soph. *Antig.* 730, 813, 917.

<sup>486</sup> *Midlothian* (24: 213)

“There is a woman in your jail, fallen under the edge of a law so cruel that it has hung by the wall, like unscoured armour, for twenty years, and is now brought down and whetted to spill the blood of the most beautiful and most innocent creature whom the walls of a prison ever girded in”.<sup>487</sup>

As hinted at above, the choice to set up a woman, and indeed a lower-class one, as the protagonist of the narrative seems to mark an anomaly within the usual pattern established in the Waverley novels. This is why Fleishman sees the novel as “a thing apart in his oeuvre”, whereas Hart shows no hesitation in reducing the scope of Jeanie to a “heroic fanatic”.<sup>488</sup> Welsh himself, in his (pre)-determination to confirm the monopoly of male protagonists as the rule with no exception in Scott, sees the true heroes of the novel in Staunton and Butler, and considerably marginalises Jeanie as a pale stunt performer.

A preliminary step towards answering the question of “why heroic action is dramatized through a heroine” has been taken by Morgan, but in a contribution that, at least to me, seems insufficiently to the point.<sup>489</sup> The scholar rightly adopts the perspective set by Carolyn Heilbrun and Catharine Stimpson, according to whom the “[w]oman as hero was born [...] from the author's realization that women at that moment best symbolised the human condition”.<sup>490</sup> This, Morgan argues, is why we need to look, in the case of Jeanie, for “other kinds of reasons [...] that have to do with the issues and condition inside fictions: matters of influence, of the development of the genre”.<sup>491</sup> Yet, and unfortunately, her actual

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<sup>487</sup> *Midlothian* (18: 165)

<sup>488</sup> FLEISHMAN (1971: 100)

<sup>489</sup> MORGAN (1983: 576)

<sup>490</sup> HEILBRUN and STIMPSON (1975: 65)

<sup>491</sup> MORGAN (1983: 560)

investigation of these reasons seem to start and end, in a sort of vicious circle, with Pamela Andrews and her ‘virtue rewarded’.

I think that the answer lies in large part in the allusive engagement with Greek myth that we have just illustrated, which recasts *Midlothian* as the novel of *Antigone*, a main heroine with a long-lasting literary pedigree. However, although the moral dilemma they are involved into is the same, on a closer look Jeanie and *Antigone* are sisters more in spirit than in action. While *Antigone* refuses to obey the ruler’s orders, Jeanie refuses to transgress the established, written law of her country. Indeed the two heroines share the same nature: the same spirit of dedication and self-commitment, the same tenacity and perseverance that does not hesitate, even at the prospect of self-sacrifice. While they display the same rigour in conducting their lives according to their own principles and beliefs, it is the order of their priorities that is reversed, not to say diametrically opposed. Indeed, Jeanie decides to adhere to the same law that *Antigone* deliberately rejects, even at the price of her sister’s life. In Scott’s novel the bonds of consanguinity are put at risk precisely by the very same law that *Antigone* refuses to accept - in Jeanie’s own words: “[God] has given us a law [...] for the lamp of our path; if we stray from it we are against knowledge –I may not do evil, even that good may come out of it”.<sup>492</sup>

In rejecting any compromise or easy arrangement in terms of immediate opportunity (and convenience), Scott’s modern *Antigone* is not a radical and subversive heroine, rather the exact opposite. “She is not a rebel, but she wishes for a more fair world and society”.<sup>493</sup> Of a different opinion, Fisher underlines the

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<sup>492</sup> *Midlothian* (16: 142)

<sup>493</sup> BAKER (1967: 122)

potential for fanaticism inherent in her Presbyterian upbringing: “[b]y avoiding the dangerous doctrine that the end justifies the means, she embraces the equally dangerous one that adherence to a revealed law justifies the means regardless of the end”.<sup>494</sup> My contention is that far from embodying an icon of civil disobedience, Jeanie is rather a heroine of active virtue: a dutiful and obedient daughter but at the same time an assertive, uncompromising ethical agent whose noble action consists of struggling for the right outcome, at whatever cost.

Paradoxical as it may sound, Scott sets out, again, a tragedy that contemplates a happy ending for its leading heroine, who not only preserves her rectitude in the end, but also returns home to marry her fiancé, leading a long, honest and frugal life. The choice to resolve Effie’s case by means of an exceptional royal pardon has been interpreted in some cases as a trivialisation of the tragic scope of the novel: “By means of the *deus ex machina* in the form of the reprieve, [Scott] retreats from the immemorial ethical dilemma into a neat, but somewhat evasive, solution”.<sup>495</sup> Similarly, Daiches sees in the trial’s epilogue “the reluctant victory of prudence over claims of romantic action”, by resorting to what Bernard Shaw labels as a typically ‘common-sense solution’.<sup>496</sup>

Which sort of conclusion should we draw from this reformulation of Antigone’s myth? Are we to read a censure of Antigone’s ‘transgression’ into the reworking that Scott proposes to us via the character of Jeanie? Not properly so. On the assumption that “Scott had a profound distrust of disorder [...] when it was not in the process of being assimilated into the form of civilised order”, we should not forget that the author sees his main heroine not only as an ethical

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<sup>494</sup> FISHER (1955: 111)

<sup>495</sup> FISHER (1995: 110)

<sup>496</sup> DAICHES (1958: 46)

agent but also as a subject in the historical context.<sup>497</sup> The *sine qua non* for Jeanie's initiative lies in a socio-political system where "[t]raditional beliefs are not in conflict with historical movement; they form the framework which makes its ordered advance humanly possible".<sup>498</sup> This ideal balance is possible only if individual undertakings find shelter within a benevolent state, which proves ready, in turn, to interpret the law with flexibility and to make exceptions when needed. It is unsurprising therefore, that in the new version of *Antigone* that Scott proposes to us, the figure of the tyrant is replaced by a sympathetic sovereign who understands and steps in at the right moment. Under such circumstances, the intervention of Queen Caroline indeed functions according to the *deus ex machina* trope, on account of the fact that she is also, among her many prerogatives, the wife of the head of the Church of England, and thus represents in the novel the emissary of a divine character that is properly a Greek tragic element. When written and unwritten laws coincide, Scott seems to suggest, within the providential framework of an enlightened jurisdiction, there is always room for appeasement, and subversion is always avoidable, and perhaps even *Antigone's* sacrifice would not have been necessary.

There is however another prerequisite that makes this resolution possible: it lies within the Christian perspective on divine justice, in the name of which Jeanie firmly refuses "to transgress one of those divine commandments which Christians of all sects and denominations unite in holding most sacred".<sup>499</sup>

This is all the more impressive, in view of the fact that Jeanie provides Scott with the means to tackle the disturbing implications that the myth of

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<sup>497</sup> FISHER (1995: 111)

<sup>498</sup> FISHER (1995: 103)

<sup>499</sup> *Midlothian* (20: 182)

Oedipus has exerted for centuries with reference to its interpretation under a Christian lens. The inevitable downfall of Laius and his descendants under the blows of a destiny that remain inscrutable represents a structural aspect that resists any readjustment in terms of self-redemption and atonement, a scholarly dilemma that arises dramatically both before and after the Reformation. The impasse between predestination and free will, which was already under incubation as a matter of discomfort in Augustine first and Erasmus, was in the Early Modern period one of the main reasons for dissident elements to separate from the Church of Rome, at least from a doctrinal viewpoint. With his incomprehensible trajectory of aberration and ruin, Oedipus virtually provided the most drastic doctrines of the Reformed Church –Covenanters *in primis*– with an example of downfall and disgrace compatible with their concept of guilt and predestination, according to which man is the result of deviation and vice, and notwithstanding his merits and intentions, he is constitutionally incapable of avoiding fault and guilt. Against the risk of an overly-rigid determinism that could potentially lead to radicalism, as well as to atheism and nihilism, Jeanie manages to extricate herself from this entrapment: “Never believing she is fated to do evil, to herself or to Effie, she chooses to follow conscience, not because she fears God but because she does not fear men”<sup>500</sup> and opts therefore for “a walk [that] also asserts choice, responsibility, hope, commitment to forgiveness”.<sup>501</sup>

To conclude, I hope that I have been able to illustrate the way in which the epitomised version of Antigone that Scott sets out in *Midlothian* helps him to give his own interpretation of the notion of the tragic, whose essence is confirmed in

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<sup>500</sup> MORGAN (1983: 582)

<sup>501</sup> MORGAN (1983: 581)

the fundamental clash of individual choice, familial bonds and collective normative values.

With its refractions and vacillations, Greek myth offers the author a tool to explore the issues of justice, and proves (to be) crucial in shedding light on the novel as a whole, as the sequence of its episodes takes shape against the background of an eclectically –not to say loosely– led engagement with the Sophoclean model.

In his own encounter with Antigone, Scott takes a stand in a century-long debate over religious controversies and philosophical disputes, by aligning with the proposal of a conceptual shift where the Theban myth is integrated within the domain of Christian Providence, especially in the assumption of a moderately Protestant slant where self-improvement is always rewarded against any causality and imponderableness.

These are the main reasons why I do not agree with Bruzelius when she states that in Scott “[w]omen are [...] incapable of self-management”<sup>502</sup> and concludes that in his novels “[t]he women who win are the ones who don’t know anything”.<sup>503</sup> On the contrary, I believe that the parallel with Antigone confirms Jeanie’s assertiveness in her claiming her right to effective action and the privilege of deciding for herself about familial duties, within a vision that indeed “does allow women an independent life beyond the saga of courtship and the settlement of marriage”.<sup>504</sup>

In his usual rejection of radicalism, Scott reshapes the figure of Antigone in the anti-romantic counter-tragedy of Jeanie Deans, by proposing a new model

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<sup>502</sup> BRUZELIUS (2007: 111)

<sup>503</sup> BRUZELIUS (2007: 123)

<sup>504</sup> AUERBACH (1978: 11)

for wives, sisters and daughters: a ‘domesticated’ version of a law-abiding femininity where the devotion to domestic duties leaves however a margin for personal initiative and self-determination, where the invitation to moderation does not preclude the right to resist pressures and interferences, and the courage to act differently, when needed.

From a broader perspective, the themes raised by Antigone in terms of resistance, acquiescence and renegotiation of ethical pressures are highly relevant in a post-revolutionary scenario replete with struggles and agitations - elements that, as we have hinted at in Chapter One, were threatening the stability of a Union whose existence rested on precarious foundations.

The controversial aspects of the British presence in India, together with the discontent that Scotland frequently manifests towards the ‘interference’ of London are just two of the sensitive issues emerging in Scott’s private correspondence at the time of writing.<sup>505</sup> In this respect, the latter-day Antigone that he presents in the figure of Jeanie Deans offers a valuable antidote to any absolute, extremist gesture of rebellion, while concomitantly warning about the risks of mutiny on the part of the citizens-subjects, and of inflexible short-sightedness on the part of state rulers alike.

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<sup>505</sup> See for example the letters to Charles Erskine and the Duke of Buccleugh (9 and 10 January 1817, respectively).

## 5.2 Killer virgins: murder on the wedding night

*This section addresses The Bride of Lammermoor within a perspective that sees the novel as a rewriting of the story of Aeneas and Dido, which features a failed attempt at both a love match and a political reconciliation. As I subsequently argue, a condensed amalgam of Aeneid 2 and 4 is embedded in the novel's plot, as the subtext shaping the development of a tragic love story whereby separation triggers a crescendo of despair that irreversibly culminates in self-annihilation. This reverberates through the character of Lucy, who emerges as the conflation of different interpretive elements layered in the 'bigger picture' of Dido and her reception across the centuries. Behind this intertextuality, as we shall see, lies the story of the Danaids, with its ramifications in dying heroines of Greek tragedy such as Alcestis and Deianeira.*

*The interplay with Dido acquires relevance for the psychological portrait of Scott's heroine, which not only sets out a case study in line with a diagnosis of mental disorder but also affects, in narratological terms, the management of suspense through the display of symptoms that characterise the trajectory of self-destruction in an escalation of nightmares, omens and hallucinations. To demonstrate how this allusive engagement takes on board generic affiliations, providing Scott with the means to engage and measure himself with the Gothic, will be the task of the remainder of my discussion.*

The case of a young bride who resorts to violence in order to extricate herself from an enforced marriage –which terminates disastrously, with bloodshed and failure to consummate, on the wedding night, leads us to one of the core aspects of Graeco-Roman sensibility: an aspect that, true to form, finds place and expression in Classical mythology.<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> As in the case of *Midlothian*, a true story is allegedly lurking behind the novel: the marriage between Janet Dalrymple and David Dunbar of Baldoon in 1669 –see the *Introduction* to the Edinburgh Edition.

The sudden breaking of a new marriage-bond, with violence taking its setting in the bridal chamber, provides Rush Rehm with a ‘wedding-to-funeral’ trope that the scholar investigates as a pattern the within Greek tragedy. In his own words, marriage and death converge as “journeys along the same path, although heading in opposite directions” within the intermingling and crossover of their respective ceremonies and social duties.<sup>507</sup> I intend to use this template as a conceptual tool for my investigation of *Lammermoor*.

In effect this trope is underpinned by the larger dichotomy of ‘*eros* vs *thanatos*’. Such a primal archetypal conglomeration of opposing drives, in which love and death are inextricably enmeshed, works even more effectively in a wedding that presents a sudden reversal, with the sequel of the ceremony at once turning into a brutal affair of killing and revenge. In this instance, the bloodshed of murder replaces, as a specular counterpart, the blood of defloration in marking the fulfilment of a *rite de passage*.<sup>508</sup>

Zeitlin describes these instinctual drives merging into each other in terms of opposition and complementarity in a passage that is worth quoting in full: “a psychology of *eros* that senses the potential conflict [...] in a union of contraries [...] and yet strives [...] to maintain the boundary with sexual violence and the pleasures of love. Thus, if men are supposed to be made for war and women for marriage, the two institutions determining the requisite passage to adulthood, then feminine resistance may [...] turn to a war between the sexes. Militant

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<sup>507</sup> REHM (1994: 86)

<sup>508</sup> For this idea in classical texts see FOWLER (1986).

virginity can indeed resort to masculine weapons and in a striking reversal, work retaliatory violence upon men”.<sup>509</sup>

The legend of the Danaids takes place in Egypt, where the twin brothers Danaus and Aegyptus share the kingdom in a co-regency. Reasons of dynastic convenience lead the two to agree on a marriage between their respective offspring: the fifty daughters of Danaus will be married to their fifty cousins, also known as the Aegyptids. However, events assume another turn when the oracle reveals to Danaus the future in store for him: he will die by the hand of one of his grandsons. This revelation casts a gloomy light on the marriage prospect, but it is too late to withdraw from the agreement. The only way for Danaus to escape is to instruct his daughters to stab their bridegrooms on the wedding night.<sup>510</sup> All the Danaids obey their father’s order, with the sole exception of Hypermestra, who spares the life of her allotted groom, Lynceus.<sup>511</sup>

The argument about the Danaids’ guilt has provided both literature and scholarship with a vexed and contentious issue for centuries, particularly in relation to their position with regard to social institutions. The question is further complicated in the only dramatic version of the myth that we know, Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*.<sup>512</sup> The play describes an intermediate stage where the girls find release by fleeing to Argos, followed by their cousins, who claim their rights over

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<sup>509</sup> ZEITLIN (1996: 128). See also ‘The politics of Eros in the Danaids’ Trilogy of Aeschylus’ (1992). This dualism is dense with implications that have been the object of study in scholarship at least since the last century, attracting contributions from both psychology and anthropology. The crucial formulations that have initiated the study of this polarity in the *longue durée* of the twentieth century are in Sigmund Freud (*Das Ich und Das Es*, 1923).

<sup>510</sup> See KEULS (1974). Among the mythographical sources cf. Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 2.1.5.

<sup>511</sup> According to a presumably later addition to the main story line, in the Underworld the retaliatory punishment of the forty-nine guilty Danaids consists of a mechanical ‘repetition compulsion’: they must pour water into a perforated container, in compensation for the wasted blood of their grooms. See again Apollodorus.

<sup>512</sup> WINNINGTON-INGRAM (1983)

them. Here the Danaids ask for support from king Pelasgos, threatening suicide if he should turn them away.<sup>513</sup> The citizens of Argos are then faced with the dilemma of whether to deliver them to the Aegyptids or to grant the women the asylum they seek.

The story of the Danaids invites conflicting interpretations. On the one hand, they are seen as embodying the disturbing nature of the feminine element, in its 'biological' proclivity to deceit and potential for breaking the rules and putting at risk the codified norms of social control.<sup>514</sup> On the other hand, they have equally been read as victims of the male hegemonic power. From this perspective, violence suggests itself as the only means to escape from a conjugal prospect that presents the features of rape and assault.<sup>515</sup>

This latter view is prominently espoused by Zeitlin, who, in reading the male element as performing "an unacceptable exercise of power [...] in the violent seizure and control of women's bodies", asserts the Danaids' innocence while stressing the selfishness and rapacity of their aggressors.<sup>516</sup>

This oscillating viewpoint is perhaps why the Danaids' myth resurfaces in Greek tragedy –with its long-term issues and due variations on its theme–

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<sup>513</sup> This is the only extant play of the Danaid tetralogy. We know the remainder of the cycle only in its titles: *The Egyptians*, *The Danaids* and the related satyr play *Amymone*, together with a few fragments. The position of *The Suppliants* in the articulation of the saga seems to satisfy different conjectures, none of them definitive.

<sup>514</sup> Horace in *Od.* 3, 11 sees the Danaids as guilty murderers. See LEACH, 2008. From this perspective, their ethnic background also acquires relevance by emblematising the dangers of an exotic femininity.

<sup>515</sup> On this topic see in particular CALDWELL (1974).

<sup>516</sup> ZEITLIN (1996: 150–1). The scholar links the myth to an observed trend among brides-to-be that was (the) object of clinical studies: with the wedding day approaching, some women suffered what many call today a nervous breakdown, which in the worst cases was a prelude to suicide. The remedy recommended in the *corpus Hippocraticum* was to ultimate the preparation for marriage without further delay and leave the rest to the 'healing powers' of an immediate pregnancy.

especially in the sacrificial roles of heroines such as Alcestis, in Euripides' eponymous tragedy and Deianeira, the protagonist of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*.

Alcestis, the wife of Admetus, king of Thessaly, volunteers to die in place of her husband so as to fulfil the extraordinary condition that the Fates bestowed upon him as a result of Apollo's intercession: he can avoid death if someone takes his place. Notwithstanding her being young and already a mother, Alcestis accepts to die in Admetus' stead. However, conjugal devotion is rewarded, as soon after her death she is brought back from the underworld to Heracles, who delivers her back to her husband.

Sadly, a happy ending is not in store for Deianeira, Heracles' wife, who out of fear for her husband's infidelity, resorts to the deceptive concoction that the centaur Nessus gave her to secure Heracles' fidelity. In accordance with Nessus' advice, the heroine smears some drops of this potion onto her husband's tunic: as soon as Heracles wears it, he feels acute pain and finds release only by throwing himself onto a pyre. Following his death, Deianeira commits suicide using Heracles' sword.

In the fate of both Alcestis and Deianeira, paradox verges on retaliation. Here, the marriage bed, which the victims-to-be carefully prepare, becomes both the site and focus of the death scene, which is alluded to by an ellipsis after the heroine delivers a farewell speech.<sup>517</sup> In accordance with dramatic convention, a

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<sup>517</sup> As REHM highlights, the heroines clearly engage themselves in "an activity traditionally linked to a wife preparing to have sex with her husband" (1994: 77). Moreover, in the case of Deianeira, the use of a typically male weapon assumes in its turn phallic connotations: "[u]sing a weapon of male combat, [...] introduces the bloodshed of the battlefield into the marriage chamber" REHM (1994: 78). SOPH. *Trach.* 910–26. On "the sacrificial knife [as] the favourite instrument of death" see LORAUX (1985: iv)

performance of death is avoided on stage, and is instead reported by the messengers and servants who witness the scene.<sup>518</sup>

The theme of a youth abruptly interrupted by violence and deprived of the joys of marriage is frequent in the *Aeneid*, and is clearly emblematised in the story of Dido.<sup>519</sup> The loyal widow, determined to keep faith to the memory of her murdered husband, obstinately refuses the prospect of a second marriage with Iarbas, neighbouring king of the Gaetulians, regardless of the political advantages that a new union might provide. This resolution is kept until Aeneas lands on African shores due to the persecution of Juno, queen of the gods and chief opponent of the Trojans' arrival in Italy –*saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram* (*Aen.* 1.4).

After welcoming Aeneas and the Trojan fugitives at her palace, a love affair takes place between the two. The matchmaking, in which Venus and Juno opportunistically team up for a truce, takes place in the course of a hunting expedition interrupted by the outbreak of a storm, from which they take shelter in a cave (*Aen.* 4.172). The union is merely temporary, since the hero is summoned by Jupiter to do his duty towards his people. After Aeneas' departure, Dido succumbs to despair and commits suicide with his sword, not before hurling

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<sup>518</sup> Alcestis laments: "Oh bed on which I gave up my maidenhood [...] farewell", whereas Deianeira "jumped up and sat in the middle of the bed [and cries] 'Oh bed, my bridal couch, goodbye forever". EUR. *Alc.* 177–180; Soph. *Trach.* 917. Here we find again the rhetoric of despair that we have seen at stake previously; LORAUX: "tragedy put virgins on the stage only to remove them and deliver them out of sight to the slaughterer's knife [...]. It is this reluctance to die in public that marks the limit of the invention of femininity in tragedy" (1985: ix–x)

<sup>519</sup>To my knowledge, the most recent overview of the myth and its reception in Western literature across the centuries is to be found in BONO and TESSITORE (1998).

her curse at him and the future dynasty he will found in Latium, the antecedent of the struggle with Carthage that will lead to the Punic Wars.<sup>520</sup>

The ‘marriage to death’ trope occurs in other episodes of the poem, by encapsulating a “bizarre conflation of virginity, sterility and destruction” in which “[v]irginity is transformed from a state of pure, innocent completeness to an agency of destruction”.<sup>521</sup> Most notably, the Danaids figure as the decorative element on Pallas’ golden sword-belt –*impressumque nefas: una sub nocte iugali/caesa manus iuvenum foede thalamique cruenti*.<sup>522</sup> Turnus takes the *balteus* as a war trophy after killing its original owner, only to be killed himself by Aeneas shortly afterwards (12.942–52). The multiple interplays between the descriptive framework and action here are interpreted by Harrison within a dynamic of progressive encapsulation, on account of which the *balteus* is “both an *analepsis*, a flashback to the past, looking back to the killing of Pallas [...] and a *prolepsis*, an anticipation of the future, looking forward to the death of Turnus himself”.<sup>523</sup> In this light, Turnus’ death comes in retaliation for his act of misappropriation, as Barchiesi describes it as “the final defloration and culmination of the intertwining strands of virginity, violence, marriage and politics which have been running through the entire epic”.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> Like tragic dying heroines, Dido herself assumes a theatrical pose in her last self-address: *Dixit et impressa toro: Moriemur inultae!/Sed moriemur, ait. Sic, sic iuvat ire sub umbras* (4. 659–660) [And with the words she buried her lips in the bed, and cried “We shall die, with none to avenge us; but let death be ours. This way, yes, this, I am resolved to take my shadowy path]

<sup>521</sup> MITCHELL (1991: 223–4). Indeed, “the marriage [...] fuses with the funeral rite just as the related acts of murder and defloration became one” (*ivi*, 230).

<sup>522</sup> *Aen.* 10.497–8. The visual representation of the Danaids’ legend finds material correspondence in the topography of ancient Rome, where the well-known portico of the Danaids adorned the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine. For the most up-to-date attempt to reconstruct the layout of the monument, which was the architectural masterpiece of Augustus’ propaganda, see QUENEMOEN, 2006.

<sup>523</sup> HARRISON (1998: 231). See also GILLIS (1983); CONTE (1986); PUTNAM (1987).

<sup>524</sup> BARCHIESI (1997: 279)

In the figure of Lucy, Scott stretches the ‘marriage to death’ trope to the extreme consequences, by extending the catastrophe to both protagonists: the heroine herself, for whom frenzy marks nothing other than the beginning of the end, and the hero as well, who succumbs shortly afterwards. Most tellingly, Scott returns to Virgil, and displays, over the course of his narrative, textual cues that set out the terms for the cultivated reader to experience the novel as a fictional rendition of Aeneas and Dido that casts in deep relief the politically-charged dimension of an impossible love match. The engagement between Lucy and Edgar in fact represents the failed attempt to seal a union between two enemy lines, potentially paving the way for the reconciliation of two opposing families.

At the plot level, the sentimental attachment between the two gradually emerges throughout a series of meetings and accidents, all of which take place within the rituals and obligations of hospitality. In the same progression as in the episode of Aeneas and Dido, the hunting session, and the thunderstorm that suddenly interrupts its course, pave the way for the secret engagement between Lucy and Edgar [chapters 5, 14–16]. In this regard, the theme of hunting plays a significant role, by affecting both the landscape and its symbolic imagery.<sup>525</sup> Indeed, the appearance of Lucy dressed for the occasion in Amazon attire – “[t]he richness of her dress [...] together with the silvan compliments paid to her by the huntsmen, pointed her out as the principal person in the field” – brings us back to Dido’s majestic figure at the hunting parade, where the queen looks splendid in her hunting dress and radiates “gleaming brilliance and beauty”.

*tandem progreditur magna stipante caterva*

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<sup>525</sup> For hunting metaphors as part of the imagery of love courtship see, again, ZEITLIN, who defines it as: “a well-known trope in the semantic of amorous pursuit” (1996: 156).

*Sidoniam picto chlamydem circumdata limbo;  
cui pharetra ex auro, crines nodantur in aurum,  
aurea purpuream subnectit fibula vestem.*

[At last she comes forth, attended by a mighty throng, and clad in a Sidonian robe with embroidered border. Her quiver is of gold, her tresses are knotted into gold, a buckle of gold clasps her purple cloak]<sup>526</sup>

The temporary, ‘informal’ nature of the love pact is an element that strikes a chord in the knowing reader. Indeed, the engagement exists only in the form of a private, unofficial agreement: an ambiguity that crucially leaves room for equivocation and doubt. Before leaving Carthage, Aeneas himself reduces the scope of his commitment to Dido by reminding her that their union was never acknowledged as having the legal value of a proper marriage: *nec coniugis umquam/prætendi taedas aut haec in foedera veni* (4. 338–9: “I never held out a bridegroom’s torch or entered such a compact”), as though inwardly suggesting that a romantic affair is not a formal engagement, nor does it prelude to a formal union between two states.<sup>527</sup> In a similar manner, Lady Ashton insists on declining any obligation towards an insignificant promise, which she sees as nothing but the fruit of a transient infatuation (ch. 33).

The notion of marriage as an exclusively political allegiance is certainly a key concern in *Lammermoor*.<sup>528</sup> In this regard, the *Aeneid* seeps as a pervasive undercurrent through a plot in which a marriage contract is a plan made by parental figures, who orchestrate their daughter’s engagement in adherence to their own interests, and with total disregard for her will and wellbeing: this is just

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<sup>526</sup> *Lammermoor* (9: 80); *Aen.* 4. 136–9. AUSTIN *ad loc.*

<sup>527</sup> HIGHET (1972: 72–8)

<sup>528</sup> For a fuller discussion see GARSIDE (1984)

like Dido, who falls victim to the truce between Venus and Juno, with Cupid acting as the material executor of their superior, inscrutable plans.

For the anger she feels against Edgar and for her patronising and plotting influence over marriage affairs, Lady Ashton fitly represents a double for Juno, who is, remarkably, also the protecting goddess of wedlock. As a wife and a mother, Lady Ashton “represents a feral will to power in the home”, and performs a Juno-like role in her anger against the male hero, embodying the subtle, avid plotter whose cruel and manipulative nature marks the ruin of her protégée.<sup>529</sup>

Seen from this perspective, Lord Ashton, who initially looks kindly on Edgar as his future son-in-law and undertakes the role of a matchmaker – “The accidental storm did more to furthered [his] plan” – but afterwards cannot but surrender to the machinations and subterfuges orchestrated by his wife, is equated with Jupiter and his hard time in dealing with his capricious divine consort.<sup>530</sup> When the narrative voice ponders his relentless efforts at union: “the charms of the daughter [...] had been heard and registered in the book of fate”, we come across another place where Scott may be specifically invoking the *Aeneid*.<sup>531</sup>

In his introduction to the novel’s Italian translation, Groppali gets close to the point, but does not go deep enough when he argues that “[t]he mythical figurations of classical antiquity preside over the narrative of the tragic love”.<sup>532</sup> The scholar continues perhaps too generically, that “[w]e find again the same divinities of Greek tragedy: they survive [in the novel], who survive, though

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<sup>529</sup> BRUZELIUS (2007: 123)

<sup>530</sup> *Lammermoor* (15: 126)

<sup>531</sup> *Lammermoor* (17: 136). Cf. *Aen.* 1, when Jupiter shows to Venus the destiny in store for his son.

<sup>532</sup> GROPPALI (1982: xvi)

reduced to an auxiliary function (if not ancillary)".<sup>533</sup> These remarks complement Magette's concomitant intuition that "Scott finds in historical inevitability an excellent equivalent to the Homeric and Virgilian gods".<sup>534</sup> Yet, I am inclined to think that it is specifically to Virgil that Scott is turning here, while offering his own take on Aeneas and Dido, where the emphasis shifts to the role played by the gods in a love story, as if to suggest that Lucy is an innocent victim of a perverse system of coercion that adults have put into play to prevent her from escape. Scott's reworking takes place in what therefore qualifies as an indoor, domestic tragedy, in which parental figures become the real focus, as the culprits responsible for failing in their tutelage duties of protection.

This reading casts a new light on the male hero. An outcast and reduced to misery after a glorious family past, Edgar stands for the Scottish nobleman in search of a new position in society. The issues of expulsion and usurpation are reconfigured by Scott through the prism of Virgil. However, while Edgar's 'best side' emerges when he admits, in terms of political realism, the necessity of going beyond political division, his efforts are destined to fail. While Aeneas' struggle in reconciling Italians and Trojans proves successful, the novel precludes any epic glorification of its hero, who, in Levine's words, ends up "trapped between past and future, unable to destroy one or join the other".<sup>535</sup>

In the light of the intertextuality that we are unravelling, it is not surprising, then, to find physical isolation as the 'objective correlative' for a traumatic drift into madness. In the moments that immediately precede the catastrophe, both Dido and Lucy appear as prisoners in the private domain of

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<sup>533</sup> GROPPALI (1982: xvi). Translation mine.

<sup>534</sup> MAGETTE (1982: 166)

<sup>535</sup> LEVINE (1981: 390)

their household: an environment that becomes a narrow, stifling place dense with a sinister sense of misunderstanding and hostility. The solitude of Lucy, locked inside the castle under her mother's surveillance, prey to phobias and superstition, matches with Dido's self-concealment in the inner courtyard of the royal palace –*penetrati in sede* (4. 504), where she is discreetly supervised by her sister Anna. The claustrophobic seclusion, no matter whether it is self-inflicted or imposed by others, becomes the tangible sign of a social marginalisation that is perceived as the consequence of a choice that finds no favourable reception or further encouragement. Lucy's last monologue stems from "an oppressive sense of desertion and desolation": namely, the awareness of being the cause of her parents' disapproval becomes a burden that is too hard to cope with. Here the sense of guilt for an unsanctioned love prevails the rhetoric of the abandoned heroine: "It is decreed [...] that every living creature [...] [is] to shun me, and leave me to those to whom I am beset. [...]. Alone and uncounselled, I involved myself in these perils –alone and uncounselled I must extricate myself or die".<sup>536</sup> In a similar fashion, Dido increasingly perceives the aversion of her subjects and expresses some self-pity while appealing to her status as *sola* and *incomitata* (4. 321).

The same is valid for the setting of the crime scene, which takes place in the private domain of the bridal chamber and is presented through a focalisation *ex post facto*. True to tragic convention, in the novel too violence is kept offstage: Lucy is found when it is too late, in the aftermath of her deed. Most notably, the visual detail of her blood-stained robe, with the sexual innuendo that permeates

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<sup>536</sup> *Lammermoor* (31: 240) and (29: 301). Emphasis mine.

the scene –“her night-clothes torn and dabbled with blood”– takes us back to *Aeneid* 4, where the red/white colour contrast in Dido’s dress –*Atros siccabat veste cruores* (4. 687)– is in turn replete with allusions to erotic imagery.<sup>537</sup> The two heroines are thus joined in a fate of untimely death that does not intervene immediately to release them from sufferings, but instead takes the form of a prolonged agony. Virgil tells of the *longum...dolorem* and *difficilis obitus* of Dido (4. 694–4): in a similar manner Lucy only dies only a couple of days after the ceremony and its disastrous outcome. This delay emphasises retaliation the premature, unfair demise of a young heroine before her time: *nec fato, merita morte peribat/Sed misera ante diem subitoque accensa furore* [she perished neither in the course of fate nor by a death she had earned, but wretchedly before her day, in the heat of sudden frenzy] (4.696–7).

By this point, there is enough evidence to suggest that Scott is offering a new take on Aeneas and Dido for his classically educated audience. A closer look at the milieu in which the novel was produced reveals how a classic like the *Aeneid* comes into play within the generic operation that sees Scott both experimenting and challenging Gothic aesthetics. As a form considered, for more than one reason, as anti-classic *par excellence*, the Gothic novel is a stronghold of women writers, but also represents a sphere of operations “for writers wishing to exploit popular conventions associated with Gothic writing in their own work [.] [T]he challenge became one of dissociating oneself from the very readers and

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<sup>537</sup> *Lammermoor* (34: 337). This further level of meaning has been signalled by KEITH on the margins of another passage in the same book, always stressing the binary opposition red-white in Dido’s portrait: *Sanguineam volvens aciem maculisque trementis//interfusa genas et pallida morte futura* (4, 643–4). “This description of the queen’s wild appearance, especially her bloodshot eyes and the spots on her cheeks, suggest physical illness [...]. Yet Virgil admits an erotic undercurrent [...] which conventionally symbolises sexual initiation in Latin poetry” (2000: 52). On this red-white contrast in Virgil see LYNE (1983; 1998); and FOWLER (1987). The very same chromatic effect has been explored within the context of Latin erotic elegy by CLARKE, 2003.

forms of publication that made Gothic a recognizably “low” generic entity in the first place”.<sup>538</sup>

This is what Scott does, by resorting to Virgil. In adherence to the prescriptions of the Gothic, dramatic tension is generated as the story progresses with the strategic dissemination of clues, in the form of elements that apparently have no connotations or just subtly hint at sinister developments: all of these will serve as clear proof only in retrospect. This is the case, for example, with the murder weapon: a couple of days before the ceremony, the dagger of Lucy’s younger brother inexplicably disappears. As the crime scene will show later, but as the reader already suspects *in legendo*, Lucy had taken it. Scott’s internal narrator deliberately casts a shadow of premeditation on a gesture that, upon a closer look, seems, rather than a fit of madness, seems the accomplishment of a project already planned in a clouded mind. Remarkably, the reader who knows the full story of Dido may notice that the way in which the tension is accumulated in *Lammermoor* echoes the development of the plot in *Aeneid* 4. Thus, Dido commits herself to preparing the scene of her suicide in the courtyard, where she orders Aeneas’ weapons and the nuptial bed to be brought –*Quin morere, ut merita es, ferroque averte dolorem* [die as you deserve, and with the sword end your sorrow] (4. 547–549) –and covers her request with the pretext of religious scruples– *monstratque sacerdos* (4.498 –“the priestess so directs”).

....*secreta pyram tecto interiore [...]*  
*Erige et arma viri, thalamo quae fixa reliquit*  
*exuviasque omnis lectum iugalem*  
*Quo perii, super imponas* (4.494–497).

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<sup>538</sup> GAMER (2002: 92)

[Secretly raise up a pyre in the inner court under the sky, and heap up on it the arms that heartless one left hanging in my bower, and all his attire and the bridal bed that was my undoing].

The story of Dido adds another hermeneutic layer for the classically educated reader, whose expectations are also confused in the light of a conundrum that Scott leaves deliberately unresolved. Indeed, against the background of Dido, there are clear questions about Lucy's plan at the very moment of taking the dagger. Is she about to replicate Dido's gesture? Predictably, the repressed aggression culminates in the extreme act of violence –which for Dido is self-directed, but for Lucy finds a target in the bridegroom himself: an irrelevant difference, by the way, considering that Bucklaw receives only a superficial wound, whereas Lucy succumbs irreversibly. The suspicion is further fuelled a fortiori since in the *Aeneid* Dido's destructive anger temporarily takes the form of a vengeance against Aeneas:

*Non potui abreptum divellere corpus [...]?*  
*[...] Non socios, non ipsum absumere ferro*  
*Ascanium patriisque epulandum ponere mensis? [...]*  
*Implessemque foros flammis natumque patremque (4.600-605)<sup>539</sup>*

[Could I not have seized him, torn him limb from limb, and scattered the pieces on the waves? Could I not have put his men to the sword, and Ascanius himself, and served him up as a meal at his father's table?]

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<sup>539</sup> A prospect of vengeance that the speaker herself however contemplates as an impossibility in the past, as confirmed by the verb tense. HEINZE points out the way in which the idea comes to her in a flash: “the idea of physically attacking Aeneas to punish him [...] only occurs when [Dido] is in a demented state of delirium” (1915: 139); The psychological mechanisms that these divagations underlie are explored by RIVOLTELLA, who observes how “the inversion of experience data” through which Dido “re-elaborates the charge that she herself has previously moved against Aeneas –namely, his callousness and cruelty [...], in a form that dramatically adulterates their mutual roles [...]: Dido, who plays in her dream the character who is *Furiis agitatus*, behaves [...] in reality as a tormenting fury”. RIVOLTELLA (2005: 77). Translation mine.

Scott's handling of Gothic suspense brings to light Virgil's mastery of dramatisation. The Latin poet, as Heinze observes, "envisages the action in dramatic form from the very beginning".<sup>540</sup> Examples of this are when he casts a gloomy shadow on the couple's affair, as soon as it takes place in the cave: *Ille dies primus leti primusque malorum/causa fuit* (*Aen.* 4. 169–170: "That day the first of death, the first of calamity was cause"); and when Dido is already described as *infelix* and *moritura* long before her suicidal resolution becomes obvious.<sup>541</sup>

Seen in this way, the aforementioned iconography relating to the domain of hunting becomes another cue for the alert reader.<sup>542</sup> Indeed, the theme of resistance to marriage is archetypically associated with hunting Amazons –as we shall see further in the next section –as though to suggest that whenever a woman is associated with hunting, death is around the corner. Scott's classically-sensitive audience is faced, again, with anticipatory elements that reduce their hope for an optimistic epilogue.

There is, however, another, more important theme calling for the collaboration of this particular readership: that is, the clinical picture of mental illness. The devastating effects of the heroine's breakdown intermingle with the display of anticipatory symptoms, which are indeed prescribed by Gothic fiction, but that Scott also finds in Virgil. Thus, the burst of uncontrolled impulses that jeopardise rational faculties: nightmares, disturbed sleeping,

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<sup>540</sup> HEINZE (1915: 129)

<sup>541</sup> *Aen.* 4, 415; 519 and 610, the latter with variation: *di morientis Elissae*. The proliferation of ominous markers continues in the heroine's depiction as already speaking with her last voice (*voce[m] extremam* –4. 621) and impatient to die *invisam quaerens quam primum abrumpere lucem* –4. 631)

<sup>542</sup> *Aesch. Suppl.* 751 suitors are 'ravens'. Cf. DUMORTIER, (1935: ch. 1). In Aeschylus the fleeing Danaids are explicitly paralleled to Amazons (287–289). For the "Amazonian affinities in their violent retaliation against their [...] cousins" see ZEITLIN (1996: 163).

misleading sense perceptions (e.g. altered visual and auditory sensations) are psychic phenomena that merge into obsessive and paranoid attitudes, and pave the way for the final delirium. The depiction of Dido's morbid state as soon as she realises Aeneas' intention to leave fits this diagnosis:

*Saevit inops animi totamque incensam per urbem  
Bacchatur, quails commotis excita sacris  
Thyas, ubi audito stimulant trieterica Baccho  
Orgia nocturnusque vocat clamore Cithaeron* (4. 300–3)<sup>543</sup>

[Helpless in mind she rages, and all aflame raves through the city, like some Thyiad startled by the shaken emblems, when she has heard the Bacchic cry: the biennial revels fire her and at night Cithaeron summons her with its din].

This preludes to the crescendo of hallucinations to which Dido falls victim after Aeneas' departure: the voice of her dead husband, the call of an owl, which she interprets as an evil omen and finally the apparition of Aeneas:

*Vidit [...]  
(Horrendum dictu) latices nigrescere sacros  
Fusaque in obscenum se vertere vina cruorem.  
[...] *exaudiri voces et verba vocantis*  
*Visa viri, nox dum terras obscura tenet:*  
*Solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo*  
*Saepe queri et longas in fletum ducere voces;*  
*Multaque praeterea vatium praedicta priorum*  
*Terribili monitu horrificant. Agit ipse furentem*  
*In somnis ferox Aeneas [...]* (4. 453–466).<sup>544</sup>*

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<sup>543</sup> AUSTIN points out that Dido “behaves like a Maenad [...], like a person ‘possessed’ ” and identifies Euripides’ *Bacchae* as the subtext of Virgil’s description (*ad loc.*). Interestingly for our purposes, OLIENSIS draws our attention to the self-victimisation at play here “Dido is not the pursuer but the pursued; in flight from a savage Aeneas, she wanders dazed and alone” (1997: 305–6)

<sup>544</sup> The accident is also in Ovid: [...] *ego me sensi noto quater ore citari; ipse sono tenui dixit: “Elissa, veni”* (*Her.* 7, 101–102). In the *Aeneid*, the owl is an evil omen for Turnus alike: *Alitis in parvae subitam conlecta figuram/Quae quondam in bustis aut culminibus desertis/Nocte sedens*

[she saw, [...] —fearful to tell— the holy water darken and the outpoured wine change into loathsome gore. [...]. Thence she heard, it seemed, sounds and speech as of her husband calling, whenever darkling night held the world; and alone on the housetops with ill-boding song the owl would oft complain, drawing out its lingering notes into a wail; and likewise many a saying of the seers of old terrifies her with fearful boding. In her sleep fierce Aeneas himself drives her in her frenzy]

In *Lammermoor*, the ill-omened bird is the raven, whose persistent presence affects different layers of the narration, starting, most blatantly, from Edgar's family name.<sup>545</sup>

Dido offers Scott a precedent to explore the pathology of madness following a tragedy of separation and desertion. Borrowing from Virgil as both an educational set book and a literary canon of male elite status, provides him with an alternative route to 'reconnect' with Gothic within an elite circle with cultural pretensions. The special treatment that the Gothic grants to the story of Dido and Aeneas is a demonstration of how a mass entertainment literary colouring still allows room for classics. While Scott maintains the figurative Gothic charge of medieval architecture, as emblematised by the gloomy atmosphere of the ruined tower in decay, it is to Virgil that Scott resorts to shape both his storyline and

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*serum canit inportuna per umbras/Hanc versa in faciem, Turni se pestis ob ora/Fertque refertque sonans clupeum everberat alis*). [suddenly shrinking to the shape of that small bird which often, perched at night on tombs or deserted roofs, sings her late, ill-omened song among the shadows, so changed in form the fiend flits screaming to and fro before the face of Turnus, and beats his shield with her wings (*Aen.* 12.862–6)]

<sup>545</sup> For the owl in antiquity, see also Pliny the Elder: *bubo funebris et maxime abominates publicis praecipue auspiciis deserta incolit nec tantum desolata sed dira etiam et inaccessa, noctis monstrum, nec cantu aliquo vocalis sed gemitu* [The eagle-owl is a funereal bird, and is regarded as an extremely bad omen, especially at public auspices; it inhabits deserts and places that are not merely unfrequented but terrifying and inaccessible; a weird creature of the night, its cry is not a musical note but a scream] *Nat. Hist.* 10.34. PEASE (*ad loc.*) collects examples of owl ill presages from Latin and English literature (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 2, 2: "It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman, which gives the stern'st goodnight"). In the taste for sepulchral scenarios and ruins typical of pre-romantic sensibility, night birds find significant place and usage, for example, among the Graveyard Poets.

characterisation, leading us to the very core of the ‘dark side’ of the Classical, or, as Freud would have later called it, to their *Unheimlich*.<sup>546</sup>

Of course, Scott is not the first to raise this possibility, nor is he alone on this path. In the same years, works such as the poem *Lamia* by Keats and *Die Braut von Korinth* by Goethe (among many others) were emphasising the creative potential of classical antiquity within the most successful trends of literary taste, as Burke and Addison had previously done, in the wake of what Duncan has defined as “a masculine takeover of what had hitherto been characterised as a feminine kind of writing”.<sup>547</sup>

Throughout this discussion we have seen how *Lammermoor* functions as an abridged version of *Aeneid* 2 and 4, as the novel’s fulcrum relies on the trope of the sudden reversal from nuptial to burial, which deploys itself against the background of Dido’s story. The Virgilian design is echoed in Scott’s structure, which progresses according to the sequence hunting-storm-engagement, in which the heroine falls victim to parental manipulation - especially by Lady Ashton, who is so self-absorbed by her plans for revenge against the male hero that she ends up sacrificing her daughter’s safety.

Furthermore, the myth of the Danaids resurfaces over the course of a narrative where union with a man features as a prospect of both physical and psychological abuse and, in rejecting prevarication, the victim is transformed into

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<sup>546</sup> FREUD (1919: 234–7). FELTON identifies the theme of the ‘haunted dwelling’ in “the repeated manifestation of strange and inexplicable sensorial phenomena – sounds, tactile sensations, smells and visual hallucinations generally said to be caused by ghosts or spirits attached to a certain locale”. Surprisingly, the scholar only briefly touches on Dido’s visions and hallucinatory persecutions, as they recur both in the *Aeneid* and in the following version provided by Ovid’s *Fasti*. However, her main focus remains on Plautus, Pliny and Lucian, considered as three cases study for “ghost-stories [which] are literary adaptations of stories that had been circulating in society”.

<sup>547</sup> DUNCAN (1992: 251–2)

the executioner. Although Lucy's death is left deliberately suspended between suicide and murder, precisely through Dido's mediation, what really matters is the attitude by which the heroine visualises marriage in terms of death.

Scott's Gothic revision of Dido and Aeneas casts a sympathetic gaze at the situation of helplessness and exclusion that sees in women the weakest element even in the most important social transaction that regulates their lives. Wedlock is conceived exclusively in terms of political allegiance, as a means to reinforce or acquire social ties, and is planned at the expense of the female partner, where love is foreseen as an optional ingredient. Under these circumstances, intermarriage is a failed prospect, and the tragic story of Lucy as Dido is indeed the occasion for Scott to include as a cautionary tale to warn against parental interference. The intersection between Gothic and Classical texts proves productive here as a way of addressing the disastrous consequences of female subordination, by revealing the mechanisms that have created it, and the disastrous consequences for women themselves.

### **5.3 A (mis-)education in the name of Diana**

*This section continues to explore the depiction of a femininity that crosses allegedly normal limits as a central theme in Scott's fiction, by closely focusing on the Amazon-like figure of Diana Vernon (aka. Die). As I will demonstrate, the unconventional heroine of Rob Roy functions as a rewriting of the story of Camilla, the defeated Amazon-like warrior that Virgil portrays among the Italian (loosing) forces in Aeneid 7 and 11. Scott's handling of Virgil in shaping the character of Die exerts a cautionary role in anticipating the development of the main action in the novel. My aim is to address the questions of how the model of Camilla reflects on the other characters of Rob Roy, and, more importantly, how a re-examination of Diana in the light of Virgil's narrative of*

*Camilla is instrumental in complicating the issues of her own identity and life choices. In his reading of Virgil, Scott offers a counter to the dominant view on Diana, going against the idea that her repressed sexuality and renunciation to procreative prerogatives are the main reasons for a demise that intervenes in a sort of retaliation for a parable of transgression that she would have deliberately followed.*

Diana is the mysteriously charming young lady whom Frank encounters on his arrival at his uncle's seat, Osbaldistone Hall, where the girl is presented as a distant relative and permanent guest at the manor due to her precarious situation in life. Indeed, she is parentless, having lost her mother soon after she was born, while her father is reported as recently dead in obscure circumstances. As the days pass in her company, Frank gradually discovers her 'tomboy-like' nature: not only is she a skilled huntress, but she also rejects *in toto* the frivolities of her own sex.

Beyond her unconventional lifestyle, her profile as a rebel extends to religious observance and political alignment: indeed, she is Catholic and does not conceal her nostalgia for the Stuarts. As Frank is soon informed, the future has two alternatives in store for her: a marriage contract arbitrarily planned on paper, which binds her to the Osbaldistone family in exchange for her unofficial adoption, or a life of monastic seclusion in a convent.

However, things turn out very differently. As the epilogue unfolds, her father, Sir Frederick Vernon, is still alive and concealing his identity under the guise of Father Vaughan, a phantom-like presence who secretly wanders the corridors of Osbaldistone Hall. A prominent figure among the *éminences grises* conspiring for the return of James Stuart to the British throne, Sir Frederick's

political loyalty results in a price being put on his head. Notwithstanding, he continues plotting incognito, and Diana in turn makes her contribution in backing the coup. As soon as the rebellion breaks out, father and daughter are forced to flee together as outlaws, and when the Jacobite defeat is declared, they eventually take shelter under Frank's protection.

The unexpected circumstances of the epilogue help Diana to extricate herself from the cage-like destiny that awaits her, and she eventually marries Frank. However, a tragic coda is in store, for she dies soon after the wedding, leaving her husband without progeny. As already suggested above, the figure of Diana is deeply entwined with the characterisation of Camilla, queen of the Volscians, the maiden-huntress that Virgil presents among the Italian allies under the command of Turnus, king of the Rutuli.

Camilla first appears in the catalogue of fighters with whom she serves (7, 641–817 esp. 803–817), where she is memorably described as *bellatrix* ('she-warrior') and as proceeding on horseback at the head of her cavalry –*agmen agens equitum et florentis aere catervas*.<sup>548</sup> Leading her mountain people, she acts with Turnus as military co-leader of the Latin forces, but is doomed to fall on the battlefield (11. 498 ff; 648 ff.). As the “anti-type of the idealised stay-at-Rome Roman matron”, Camilla embodies a deviant, rebellious womanhood:

*Agmen agens equitum et florentis aere catervas,  
Bellatrix, non illa colo calathisue Minervae  
femineas adsueta manus, sed proelia uirgo  
dura pati*

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<sup>548</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 7. 804–805.

[leading her troop of horse, and squadrons gay with brass—a warrior maid, never having trained her woman’s hands to Minerva’s distaff or basket of wool, but hardy to bear the brunt of battle and in speed of foot to outstrip the winds].<sup>549</sup>

This display of deviant womanhood is sealed in her role as a devotee of Diana, the goddess who presides over hunting and chastity. In fact, Camilla’s devotion to Diana lies in a backstory that the goddess herself recounts to the nymph Opis in a digression in which the traumatic events of Camilla’s infancy are recalled. Born a princess of aristocratic lineage, *Volscorum egregia de gente*, she was the only daughter of Metabus, king of Privernum, a town that would become famous as a stronghold of anti-Roman resistance in 329 BC.<sup>550</sup> When she was still a child, her father was dethroned due to his tyrannical government – *pulsus ob invidiam regno irisque superbas* [driven from his realm by his subjects’ hatred of his oppressive tyranny].<sup>551</sup> After sharing the vicissitudes of the flight with her father –*cum excederet urbe/[...] fugiens media inter proelia belli/sustulit exilio comitem* [as he fled amid the conflict of battle he took with him his infant child to share his exile]– Camilla remained devotedly at his side as the sole ‘companion for his exile’.<sup>552</sup> Their fleeing registers a turning point when the river Amasenus blocked their passage: in order to ensure a safe crossing, Metabus vowed his daughter’s virginity, by dedicating her to Diana –*donum Triviae* ‘an offering to Diana’.<sup>553</sup> As a token of his gratitude –*‘Alma, tibi hanc, nemorum cultrix, Latonia*

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<sup>549</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 7. 805–7. On Camilla’s role as *Dianae ministra, comes* and *socia* see ARRIGONI, 1982. As the scholar diffusely explains: “the bond linking Camilla to Diana implies two main norms: permanent hunting and –likewise permanent–virginity”, 88 [transl. mine].

<sup>550</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 11. 432. On Privernum and its anti-Roman resistance see LIV. 8. 19–21.

<sup>551</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 11. 539.

<sup>552</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 11. 540–1. As Wilhelm underscores: “Both Dido and Camilla had strong fathers who exerted great control over their lives” (1987: 47).

<sup>553</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 11. 566.

*virgo/Ipse pater famulam voveo*, [Gracious lady, dweller in the woods, virgin daughter of Latona, to your service I, her father, vow this child]– the girl spent her youth *sola contenta Diana*: as West comments, her “unusual upbringing [...] leads her to reject the traditional pursuits and trappings of women”.<sup>554</sup> However, as we infer from the goddess’ regret, Camilla is fated to die soon on the battlefield: a defeat that is already inscribed in the ‘genetic code’ of the heiress to a lost cause.

As scholars have long since established, the Virgilian figure is something more than a simple character, but condenses in her portrait the different facets of the feminine that we find interspersed in the *Aeneid* as a whole. In the words of Harrington Becker, Camilla is “a compilation of different types of unorthodox women [...] a conflation of the virginal huntress and the warrior princess”.<sup>555</sup> The “cumulative force” of Camilla lies in fact in the triangulated mirroring that, through the prism of Diana, reflects multiple attributes of the feminine in Virgil, where Venus and Dido herself resonate in each other and in turn foreshadow Camilla.<sup>556</sup> The working of this intra-textual circuit is thoroughly described by Wilhelm:

“Venus prepares Aeneas and the reader to meet Dido [...] by appearing as Diana, for Dido also appears falsely to Aeneas as Diana, and Diana is not who she really is either. Dido is a combination of both Venus and Diana, for she will become torn between her vow of fidelity to her dead husband and her love for Aeneas. Venus as Diana is the visual manifestation of

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<sup>554</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 11. 557–8 and 11. 344–5. On this aspect see West (1985).

<sup>555</sup> “Camilla [...] is extraordinary in that she is a creation of Virgil, unknown before him and unattested after”. HARRINGTON BECKER, 1997

<sup>556</sup> HARRINGTON BECKER, 1997

Dido's inner torment".<sup>557</sup> This ongoing osmosis leads us back to Dido's first appearance in the Temple of Juno (l. 498-504), with Aeneas being fully absorbed in the contemplation of its newly painted walls. The very minute his attention is captured by the bas-reliefs of the 'virgin warrior' Penthesilea, Dido makes her entry - to be immediately associated with Diana. As Pöschl also notes, the painting "inwardly prepares the reader and Aeneas for the appearance of Dido which follows immediately".

Such a complex interplay of different elements, which Virgil displays by means of a network of allusions and references, is condensed into the single character of Diana Vernon, who kaleidoscopically incorporates the virtues and qualities of Venus, Diana and Camilla in the *Aeneid*.<sup>558</sup> The (only) apparent incongruity that "[n]either Venus nor Dido can [...] be compared to Diana, the virgin huntress" is cast into relief by Fratantuono who, however, demonstrates how this incompatibility turns out to be "deliberately inappropriate" in book 11, in which Camilla "amplif[ies] Dido's character, for she too is a combination of Diana and Venus".<sup>559</sup>

Diana Vernon echoes Camilla on multiple levels, most blatantly from her very name, which immediately associates her with the domains of hunting and chastity. This etymological correlation is explicitly acknowledged by Rogers: "[w]hen Frank first meets Diana, she is hunting (an appropriate activity, considering her mythological namesake, chief hunter to the gods)".<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> WILHELM (1987: 43-48)

<sup>558</sup> As Camilla encapsulates in turn the figures of Penthesilea, Harpalyce and Artemisia (see ARRIGONI, 1982)

<sup>559</sup> FRATANTUONO (2006: 29-43); WILHELM (1987: 46)

<sup>560</sup> ROGERS (2007: 103). The identification with Diana also involves her horse, Phoebe -in Roman tradition, the other name of Diana when associated with the cult of the moon. By a sort of 'propagation effect', therefore, the animal becomes an extension of her rider.

Furthermore, the destiny of her impending, premature death is already ingrained in her nickname –in a tragic irony, she is referred to as ‘Die’.

As in Virgil, Scott’s heroine proudly demonstrates her lack of any feminine accomplishment: as she proudly declares to Frank, she is ignorant of the art of taking care of the house and devotes herself exclusively to riding and shooting: “you neither see a [...] cage full of canary-birds, or a housewife-case [...] –or a toilette-table [...] –or a [...] spinet, –or a lute [...]. None of these treasures do I possess”. Frank is thereby decidedly overwhelmed by her “superior manliness”, which Die has no reservation in acknowledging: “I belong, in habits of thinking and acting, rather to your sex, with which I have always been brought up, than to my own”.<sup>561</sup> As a result “Die’s masculine habits disrupt the polite categories by which Frank tries to judge her”.<sup>562</sup>

Another aspect of Die’s portrait that suggests the Virgilian model acting behind it is the denigrating attitude she displays towards men. From the very beginning, she does not spare Frank any sarcasm, “with the air of one who thought herself fully entitled to assume the privilege of ironical reproach, which she was pleased to exert”.<sup>563</sup> For example, when Frank admits he is neither keen on nor good at hunting or sports in general, Die scornfully asks him: “Then [...] what can you do?” The tone of this address reminds us of Camilla’s irony in confronting the giant Ornytus:

*siluis te, Tyrrhene, feras agitare putasti?  
aduenit qui uestra dies muliebribus armis  
uerba redargueret [...].*<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>561</sup> *Rob Roy* (13: 110); LINCOLN (2002: 54)

<sup>562</sup> LINCOLN (2002: 55)

<sup>563</sup> *Rob Roy* (13: 105)

<sup>564</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 11. 686–688.

[The day is come that will refute your boasts with woman's weapons].

Unsurprisingly, the parallel with Camilla is made explicit within the text, and focalised through Frank's viewpoint in a moment of intense confrontation with Diana, when he describes her in the following terms: "[s]he started up with the animation of a Camilla about to advance into battle". As if grasping his emotional response, Die congruently expands the parallel by presenting herself as "a creature motherless [...] alone in the world, left to her own guidance and protection".<sup>565</sup>

In her embodiment of virginal innocence without affectation, Die is "an object of desire in whom both masculine and feminine characteristics are disconcertingly conflated".<sup>566</sup>

"Miss Vernon's extreme beauty, of which she herself seemed so little conscious, [...] the evils to which she was exposed, the courage with which she seemed to face them – her manners, more frank than belonged to her sex, yet [...] exceeding in frankness only from the doubtless consciousness of innocence".<sup>567</sup>

It is precisely this intoxicating combination of rebellion and innocence that what captivates Frank, echoing the fascination that Camilla exerts over the onlookers and the Etruscan mothers gathered at the parade in *Aeneid* 7, who are enraptured by her air of distinction and refinement: *attonitis inhians animis* – 'gaping upon

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<sup>565</sup> *Rob Roy* (13: 107)

<sup>566</sup> FERNs (1996: 156)

<sup>567</sup> *Rob Roy* (13: 113)

her with minds awe-struck'.<sup>568</sup> This is what makes them daydream about the desirable prospect of having her as a daughter-in-law: *multae illam frustra Tyrrhena per oppida matres/Optavere nurum* [Many a mother in Tyrrhene towers longed in vain for her as daughter].<sup>569</sup> The two heroines therefore share the same charisma, where a hint of masculinity does not detract from desirability: “Camilla, although spurning men and marriage, seemed heroic but not overtly masculine to other women”.<sup>570</sup> However, the prospect of marriage is not entertained by either. Indeed, Camilla declines proposals from Etruscan suitors, and Die similarly rejects the idea to prioritise exclusively a superior vocation as a nun: “the fatal veil was wrapped round me in my cradle”.<sup>571</sup>

As the novel reaches the epilogue, the mutual devotion that joins together Diana and her father fully emerges in the episode of their flight, which again points to Virgil as it takes place in the form of a flashback encapsulated in a digressive turn of the narration. In Sir Frederick’s words Die marks an example of “courage and filial piety”:

“My daughter accompanied me through the perils and fatigues of a march so long and difficult [...]. She endured trials [...] she has faced danger and death [...]; she has undergone toil and privation, from which men of the strongest frame would have shrunk: she has spent the day in darkness,

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<sup>568</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 7. 814. *Inhians* as ‘open-mouthed’. See Page *ad loc.* and LUCR. 1. 36: *Venus pascit amore avidos inhians in te, dea, visus.*

<sup>569</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 11. 581–2.

<sup>570</sup> WILHELM (1987: 47). ARRIGONI (1982: 29): “Camilla non è più la ruvida piccola cacciatrice plasmata dal padre Metabo e recante [...] una pelle di tigre, che le ricopre la testa e il dorso, un programmatico segnale di vocazione cinegetica iperbolizzata –modelli Atalanta e le Amazzoni–totalmente sproporzionata con la tenera età della piccola”. [Camilla is no longer the rough little huntress raised by her father Metabus in the woods, her head and shoulders covered with a tiger skin. This detail of her attire stands as a programmatic marker of a vocation for predatory action that is hyperbolically out of proportion in relation to the early age of the girl. Atalanta and the Amazons are of course the archetypes behind her portrait]. Translation mine.

<sup>571</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 11. 581–2; *Rob Roy* (13: 110)

and the night in vigil, and has never breathed a murmur of weakness or compliant”.<sup>572</sup>

As for Camilla and Metabus, the tension of the flight culminates when the fugitives are faced with the obstacle of a river to cross: “We rode in a [...] street [...] which leads to a marshy ground [...] extending to the river Ribble. [...]. We crossed the river [...] and then dispersed to seek several places of concealment and safety”.<sup>573</sup> The sacrificial act by which Diana consecrates herself to a monastic life in exchange for safety links her to Camilla, since in both cases vowed virginity and chastity are sufficient currency to ensure a safe flight.<sup>574</sup>

Last but not least, the exile experience starts for both with expulsion from the urban environment, which triggers a parable of regression in the primitive habitat of Northumberland, among the mountains and woodlands of Osbaldistone Hall. In a scenario where wild nature stands as a correlative of the human landscape, Diana is raised among her cousins who are used to “carrying [...] [their arms] from boyhood to the grave”.<sup>575</sup> Similarly, Camilla spends her infancy and childhood exposed to the habits and dangers of a primitive environment: *Pastorum et solis exegit montibus aevom/[...] in dumis interque horrentia lustra* [among shepherds and on the lonely mountains he passed his days [...] amid the woods and beasts].<sup>576</sup>

Turning from characterization to action, the Venus-like side of Camilla in Die’s portrait emerges from the first encounter between Frank and Diana, which indeed marks one of a series of epiphanies in *Rob Roy*. Newly arrived on the

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<sup>572</sup> *Rob Roy* (38: 331–2)

<sup>573</sup> *Rob Roy* (38: 331)

<sup>574</sup> *intacta...incompacta* or again *intemerata*. VERG. *Aen.* 11. 584.

<sup>575</sup> *Rob Roy* (10: 89)

<sup>576</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 11. 569

outskirts of Osbaldistone Hall, Frank finds himself in the middle of a fox hunt. Suddenly, the appearance of a beautiful huntress leaves the youngster amazed:

“A vision that passed me interrupted [my] reflections. It was a young lady, the loveliness of whose very striking features was enhanced by the animation of the chase and the glow of the exercise, mounted upon a beautiful horse, jet black, unless where it was flecked by spots of the snow-white foam which embossed his bridle. She wore, what was then somewhat unusual, a coat, vest, and hat, resembling those of a man, which fashion has since called a riding-habit [...]. Her long black hair streamed on the breeze, having in the hurry of the chase escaped from the ribbon which bound it. [...]. [S]he guided her horse with the most admirable address and presence of mind [...] and brought her closer to me. I had [...] a full view of her uncommonly fine face and person, to which an inexpressible charm was added by the wild gaiety of the scene, and the romance of her singular dress and unexpected appearance. [...] the fair Amazon had too much self-possession to have been deranged”.<sup>577</sup>

The visual detail of Diana’s loose, flowing hair takes us back to the same presentation of Camilla *venatrix dederatque comam diffundere ventis* [she had given her hair to the winds to scatter].<sup>578</sup> The setting of the scene leads us back to Aeneas’ landing at Carthage (*Aen.* 1) and meeting his mother under the guise of a nymph-huntress in the forest, whom the hero mistakes for Diana –thus the questions he addresses to her: *an Phoebi soror? an Nympharum sanguinis una?* [sister of Phoebus, or one of the race of Nymphs?].<sup>579</sup> After giving him the

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<sup>577</sup> *Rob Roy* (5: 36–37)

<sup>578</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 1. 319

<sup>579</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 1. 329

essential instructions, Venus disappears with an air of mystery and secrecy, leaving her son disappointed and frustrated. Indeed, Frank literally stumbles upon Diana, who immediately enquires about his identity by asking him: “whether, in the course of your travels, you have heard any thing of a friend of ours, one Francis Osbaldistone, who has been for some days expected at Osbaldistone Hall?”<sup>580</sup> Die welcomes the new guest and leads him to the manor: “you will permit me [...] to stand mistress of ceremonies”.<sup>581</sup> As soon as they reach the hall, she simply dismounts from her horse and disappears, leaving her new acquaintance –again– alone and dumbfounded:

“She threw me the rein [...] jumped from her saddle, tripped across the court-yard, and entered at a side-door, leaving me in admiration of her beauty, and astonished with the overfrankness of her manners [...]. I was left awkwardly enough stationed in the centre of the court of the old hall, mounted on one horse, and holding another in my hand”.<sup>582</sup>

This scene is just the first in a series of encounters where a “strange and unexpected apparition [...] vanishe[s] as she spoke, leaving [Frank] in astonishment at the mingled character of shrewdness, audacity, and frankness”.<sup>583</sup> In chapter 33, Diana delivers to him vital papers that she has managed to intercept from his villainous cousin Rashleigh: again, the appearance of the heroine “wrapped in a horseman’s cloak” takes Frank by surprise, “like one thunder-struck”, to vanish then as precipitously as she appeared.<sup>584</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> *Rob Roy* (5: 37)

<sup>581</sup> *Rob Roy* (5: 38)

<sup>582</sup> *Rob Roy* (5: 41)

<sup>583</sup> *Rob Roy* (6: 49; 33: 284)

<sup>584</sup> In Chapter 38, Diana appears again in her usual manner, to then disappear “like a meteor”: “I stared up in amazement –Diana Vernon stood before me [...]. My first idea was, either that I had

The arrival of the travelling hero in a foreign land, where a charming creature readily intervenes to identify the newcomer and give him recommendations, is obviously a common motif in folk tales and picaresque literature, which Scott evidently has in mind here.<sup>585</sup> However, I am persuaded that the ‘greet-and-welcome function’ that Diana exerts, identifies her specifically as a ‘Venus in disguise’ by anticipating the guiding role that she will subsequently undertake.

This role of tutelary guardianship includes forewarning Frank of the traps and challenges that the future may hold for him, and, more importantly, casts him as a modern Aeneas, who consequently regards Die as his “fair preserver”.<sup>586</sup> The parallel with Venus acquires significance for the Oedipal triangulation that prompts Frank to find a maternal surrogate in the heroine, who often acts as a patronising “merciless monitor”.<sup>587</sup> It is in particular the commanding and distant nature of the maternal type that Diana embodies –with her “air of authority”, “cold firmness which approach[es] severity” and “firm resolution”– that points to Venus in her role as an intermittent, unattainable parent, and to an

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gone suddenly distracted, or that the spirits of the dead had arisen and been placed before me. A second glance convinced me [...] that [...] it was Diana herself [...], and astonishment actually riveted my tongue to the roof of my mouth”. This scene is much used by Thackeray too. See on this HARRISON, 2000.

<sup>585</sup> For an analysis of the novel under the lens of Structuralism see HARTVEIT (1983: 58–59): “The wilderness is [...] felt to be a labyrinth in which Frank would be completely lost without a guide. His old on reality and his [...] sense of identity are under constant attack. [...]. Lonely and unprotected, in a state of mind raging from uneasiness to despair, Frank is confronted with trials in which is fortitude and endurance are tested”.

<sup>586</sup> *Rob Roy* (9: 75 )

<sup>587</sup> *Rob Roy* (13: 105)

attitude that Camilla indeed shares in turn –being depicted as *interrita* (*Aen.* 11. 711), *horrenda* ‘awe-inspiring’ (*Aen.* 11. 507) and *aspera* (*Aen.* 11. 644).<sup>588</sup>

Furthermore, Die nods to Venus when she promptly intervenes in restraining Frank from his *vehement* instinct to kill Rashleigh:

“I was so much struck [...] that I rose [...] hardly knowing what I did, laid my hand on the hilt of my sword [...]. Miss Vernon threw herself between me and the door [...]. “Stay!” she said - “stay! However just your resentment [...] you cannot assail him without endangering other lives and wider destruction”.<sup>589</sup>

This *rational* stance that the female element embodies takes us back to the last night of Troy in *Aen.* 2 , where Venus prevents her son from directing an attack on Helen, whom he sees as the sole reason behind the destruction of his city. Similarly, Die recommends that Frank shows moderation and prudence in dealing with Rashleigh: “You [...] must bear with him with patience, foil his artifices by opposing to them prudence, not violence”.<sup>590</sup>

According to a commonplace that still seems to affect a considerable portion of the scholarship on Scott –and on Virgil alike, misalignment, where a woman is concerned, occurs on the twofold level of politics and gender. Broadly speaking, a woman commits a wrong from the very moment she decides to enter the political sphere. This is the stance that Keith adopts in her interpretation of Camilla’s paradox: “Virgil emphasises the transgression of gender norms entailed

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<sup>588</sup> *Rob Roy* (13: 109). On Aeneas in vain addressing his mother, deploring the cruelty and indifference that she shows in abandoning him see VERG. *Aen.* 1. 407–9. The same characterisation in terms of implacable harshness is found also in portrait of the Sybil (*Aen.* 6. 10) and Juno (1. 279; 7. 323).

<sup>589</sup> *Rob Roy* (13: 109–10)

<sup>590</sup> *Rob Roy* (13: 110)

by a woman's participation in the male arena of warfare [...]. The entry of a woman [...] clearly disturbs the code of Virgilian epic discourse".<sup>591</sup> In this light, Camilla is instrumental, for Virgil, in reminding his readers of the importance of distinguishing gender roles in view of the foundation of a new society. In a similar vein, the same has been argued by specialists on Scott with reference to Die Vernon and more broadly on the topic of deviant femininity in his fiction. For example, Rogers states that, "Scott played with gender differentiation to demonstrate the instability and fragility of gender roles and identity".<sup>592</sup> This critical perspective could prove suitable to join together two heroines whose reasons are as noble as their actions are ineffective. Given the Virgilian parallel, Camilla and Die would share the same anti-foundational role, on account of which their acting against the course of history would ultimately result in their exclusion from biological maternity and premature death. Thus, in the case of Camilla "[Virgil] conflates [...] the loss of the nurturing feminine. [...] [W]hile virginity may be a purity, purity can be sterile, barren, uncreative".<sup>593</sup> Similarly: "[t]he ultimate matrophobic trope [...] for [...] Scott is barrenness, represented most poignantly in his characterisation of Diana Vernon".<sup>594</sup>

Along the same lines, Bruzelius concludes that Die is the living proof that "[w]omen who persevere in the attempt to control their own desire, i. e, women who plot, are invariably punished by the genre, either by death or by exclusion from the final haven of the story".<sup>595</sup> Diana and Camilla share the destiny of women who try to preserve their virginity and in retaliation are denied life. Their

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<sup>591</sup> ROGERS (2007: 96)

<sup>592</sup> ROGERS (2007: 97)

<sup>593</sup> MITCHELL (1991: 224)

<sup>594</sup> ROGERS (2007: 97)

<sup>595</sup> BRUZELIUS (2007: 114)

asceticism would ascribe them to the category of “rigidly cloistral character[s]” inaugurated by Flora MacIvor in *Waverley*, but at a higher price.<sup>596</sup> It is for this reason that, to reprise Keith’s reading of Virgil: “[t]he death of a beautiful woman [...] serves as a catalyst [...] for the epic hero’s assertion of political agency [...]. The death of a dangerous woman [...] authorises the epic hero’s establishment of a normative order imperilled by her deviance” where “the female corpse guarantees the stability of the cultural order achieved”.<sup>597</sup>

However logical and consistent these interpretations may sound, it is my belief that things do not stand exactly like this. Rather, I am persuaded that the model of Camilla raises questions that indeed relate to what is reprehensible about this femininity, but also stresses where exactly the irregularity lies.

First of all, we may want to reflect on a misalignment that in Virgil is considerably less gendered than we may at first think. Upon closer scrutiny, Camilla’s role in the war - along with her right to play it - is never put into doubt. On the contrary, she receives the charge from Turnus himself in a legitimate act of delegation of power: *Ducis [...] tu concipe curam* –‘you take command’.<sup>598</sup> Harrington Becker makes the point explicitly: “Nowhere does Virgil imply that Camilla as a leader is unwelcomed or unfit. Virgil does not depict Camilla as a *dux femina* [...]. [Q]ualified, prepared for battle, and successful [...] Camilla is to be admired for her martial prowess rather than feared as an example of woman out of control”.<sup>599</sup> Along a similar line, Arrigoni stresses her right to be exactly

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<sup>596</sup> HART (1966: 20)

<sup>597</sup> KEITH (2000: 80)

<sup>598</sup> VERG. *Aen.* 11. 519

<sup>599</sup> HARRINGTON BECKER (1997). The label *dux femina* “indicate[s] the female ruler, a barbarian institution which signified a society gone awry [...] an indicator of female usurpation of male

where she is: “Camilla [...] è un’ esperta e scelta cacciatrice della scuola di Diana, [...] un’ Amazzone in potenza, ma non necessariamente una regina barbara”.<sup>600</sup> With this in mind, Harrington Becker opens up another dimension on “the very purpose of her ambiguity”: “Vergil pointedly uses Camilla to question the glories touted in epic battle, to remind us of the lost hopes [...] as a focus on griefs and the exacting cost of final victory”.<sup>601</sup> As a result, “Camilla neatly expresses [...] the ambiguity of the *Aeneid* as a whole [...]. The enemy is often sympathetic, familiar roles and stereotypes often fail, one’s allegiance is divided, and there is no secure place for the audience to stand”.<sup>602</sup>

By resorting to Virgil, Scott reminds us that the problem is beneath the surface. Like Camilla, Die is the result of an unusual upbringing consisting of “several profound studies [...] more fitted for a churchman than for a beautiful female”.<sup>603</sup> This upbringing has been orchestrated by her tutor Rashleigh (and proportionately a Turnus-like figure), with a view to disorienting and misplacing her priorities, and ultimately to bend her will to his own purposes; indeed, as Frank realises, “to break down and confound in her [...] the difference [...] between the sexes [...], by which he might [...] invest that which was wrong with

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power, and thus a sign of serious malady in society”. We shall see in the next section the portrait of Helen MacGregor against the backdrop of Boudicca.

<sup>600</sup> ARRIGONI (1982: 29): Camilla is an expert huntress trained by Diana, indeed a potential Amazon, but not necessarily a barbarous queen (translation mine). Along the same lines West (1985: 24): “Camilla’s fierce though brave behaviour in battle has required us to take her seriously as a great warrior”.

<sup>601</sup> HARRINGTON BECKER (1997)

<sup>602</sup> HARRINGTON BECKER (1997). As West observes, this ambiguity is epitomized by Virgil himself in the identification between Camilla and Chloereus, which is conducive of the “complimentary weaknesses in the Italians and the Trojans [that] hinder the founding of a new regime combining both peoples” (1985: 22).

<sup>603</sup> *Rob Roy* (13: 113)

the colour of that which is right”.<sup>604</sup> In another act of plotting and manipulation that counts among his many ‘crimes’, Rashleigh takes advantage of the lack of parents “of a deserted orphan of noble birth and so intimately allied to his own family, with the perfidious purpose of ultimately seducing her”.<sup>605</sup> This remark sheds more light on Camilla’s freedom of behaviour, which, rather than stemming from a deliberate act of rebellion against norms, is the consequence of a damaging condition of endemic exclusion and alienation.

There are grounds to believe, therefore, that the model of Camilla casts a controversial light on the character of Diana, by reason of her oscillating role between a political rebel and Venus-like mother. “Helpers such as Die [...] do not appear in an unambiguous light. Die is associated with the sinister element [...] through her link with the Jacobite plot”.<sup>606</sup> The unpredictability of her movements and her closeness to Rashleigh makes of her a Venus on the wrong side, in a version of the story that proposes a different ending to the one told by Virgil, where Aeneas eventually marries his Camilla.

The parallel with Camilla helps Scott to fix the portrait of a quintessentially native heroine inscribed within a parable of “virginity, doom, aristeia, valor, heroism”.<sup>607</sup> Nevertheless, Scott takes us far from the conventional ideal and gives us a more nuanced portrait where the heroine presents us with the price of alliance that a civil war implies, by focalising the issue through a weak subject at the mercy of a patriarchal system that constantly fails to protect her. While her helper-role stresses her innocence as a victim of psychological abuse,

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<sup>604</sup> *Rob Roy* (13: 113)

<sup>605</sup> *Rob Roy* (13: 114)

<sup>606</sup> HARTVEIT (1983: 60)

<sup>607</sup> HARRINGTON BECKER (1997). For Camilla as “a representative of primitive Italy at its most and least attractive” see West (1985: 25).

we understand that one of her misfortunes, *inter alia*, is to end up trapped in Rashleigh's net –as perhaps Camilla did with Turnus. Scott's reprocessing of the story of Camilla promotes a repositioning of the Virgilian tale, in my view by exposing her true nature as a scapegoat in times of political turmoil and calling attention to the male share of responsibility for fomenting bellicosity and resentment in women, partly on their own interests. Scott's response to Virgil breathes new life into the character of the Italian Amazon, qualifying as an attempt to voice her own side of the story by emphasising the non-consensual aspects of her alignment and the coercion and seclusion she must constantly undergo, in the impossibility of finding a proper place within society. Far from iconising the mouthpiece of an emancipatory and self-aware proto-feminism, with her story, *Die Vernon* unwittingly brings us to reflect on the fact that women are perhaps the first victims of use and exploitation by men in times of political convulsion.

#### **5.4 Boudicca in Tartan**

*This section intends to illustrate how the interplay between Scott's fiction and Romano-British history is emblematised in the controversial figure of Helen Campbell, the wife of the legendary chieftain Rob Roy in the eponymous novel. The prototype of the Amazon, which we have previously discussed with reference to Diana Vernon, is radicalised here in a character that is loosely, yet demonstrably, based upon the portrait of Boudicca, the Celtic heroine who led a series of upheavals against Rome in the age of Nero (54–68 AD).*

Wife of Prasutagus, client king of the Iceni, upon the death of her husband (59 AD), Boudicca succeeded him in temporarily ruling the tribesmen on behalf of

her daughters –who were mentioned in the king’s will as his legitimate heiresses.<sup>608</sup> The Romans did not accept this solution and instead reclaimed their right to control the tribe without any mediation: to give a tangible sign of their supremacy, they publicly flogged Boudicca and raped her daughters. These acts of outrage and humiliation marked a point of no return in the relationship of the Iceni with the occupying forces, and the rebellion broke out almost immediately. Apart from temporary victories, the revolt ended with the dispersal of the indigenous forces and the death of their queen-leader. Here is part of the account by Tacitus:

“The whole island rose under the leadership of Boudicca, a lady of royal descent –for *Britons make no distinction of sex in their appointment of commanders*. They hunted down the Roman troops in their scattered posts, stormed the forts, and assaulted the colony itself, which they saw as the citadel of their servitude; and there was no form of savage cruelty that the angry victors refrained from. In fact, had not Paulinus [the general of the Roman army], on hearing of the revolt, made speed to help, Britain would have been lost”.<sup>609</sup>

In fighting against the English invasion, Helen MacGregor represents the quintessential matriarchal ruler, and acts as leader *in absentia* against an occupying power. As is often the case in Scott, the prominence that the ‘warrior queen’ is about to receive in the narration is anticipated in the paratext, since

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<sup>608</sup> For a cursory overview of ancient sources, references on Boudicca are: TACITUS, *Agricola* 14.3 and 16.2; *Annales* 14. 29–39 and Cassius Dio 62. 3–6. A brief mention of the Iceni’s rebellion in Suetonius, *Nero* 39. In late antiquity, GILDAS, *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* 6. 1–2, along with the Constantinople-based monk XIPHILLINUS, have been crucial for the transmission and circulation of the episode, also after the so-called dark ages (*Epitomes*, 62). On the oscillating spelling of Boudicca’s name, still a debated question in scholarship, see JACKSON (1979: 255)

<sup>609</sup> TAC. *Agr.* 16, 1. Italics mine. After more than a century of raids and incursions, the south of England was conquered in 43 AD, as a result of the military campaign of the emperor Claudius (41–54 AD) –who named his son *Britannicus* precisely after this military triumph on the other side of the Channel.

Scott uses in the epigraph of the very same chapter lines borrowed from *The Tragedy of Bonduca* by Beaumont and Fletcher (1611–14).

General,  
Hear me, and mark me well, and look upon me  
Directly in my face—my woman's face—  
See if one fear, one shadow of a terror,  
One paleness dare appear, but from anger,  
To lay hold on your mercies.<sup>610</sup>

The implications of such a connection were first underlined by Frenee-Hutchins in a perhaps cursory observation to this appropriation, which is however worth quoting in full:

“Boudica [sic] is evoked by Sir Walter Scott in 1817 when he compares Rob Roy's wife to the cruel but courageous Bonduca of Fletcher's *Tragedie of Bonduca*. [...] Scott inscribes Rob Roy's wife in a tradition of women's resistance to oppression and [...] registers empathy and pity for both women; like Bonduca Helen Campbell is a brave, cruel and merciless woman with a masculine cast of beauty [...]. She is also a mother, a virago and an Amazon [...] seeking revenge for her rape and other acts of violence committed against her. Rob Roy also tells the reader that he loves and respects his wife because she is his wife and has suffered enough”.<sup>611</sup>

Indeed, the portrait of Helen MacGregor is not immune from psychological implications, since her memory of a dreadful past leaves traces in her complexion and attitude alike. Such an impression is visualised from the (English) viewpoint of Francis Osbaldistone:

“the heroine of the day, whose appearance, as well as those of the savage, uncouth, yet martial figures who surrounded us, struck me [...] with

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<sup>610</sup> *Rob Roy* (30: 245)

<sup>611</sup> FRÉNÉE-HUTCHINS (2009: 293)

considerable apprehension. [...] the specks of blood on her brow, her hands and naked arms, as well as on the blade of the sword which she continued to hold in her hand –her floushed countenance, and the disordered state of the raven locks [...] seemed all to intimate that she had taken an immediate share in the conflict. Her keen black eyes and features expressed an imagination inflamed by the pride of gratified revenge, and the triumph of victory”.<sup>612</sup>

The physical description of Boudicca, as set out in detail by Cassius Dio (150–235 AD), is re-echoed here, with the particular detail of the long, unruly hair –though of a vaguely reddish shade, which actually becomes a hallmark in the physiognomy of the Celtic race:

“In stature she was very tall, in appearance most terrifying, in the glance of her eye most fierce, and her voice was harsh; a great mass of the tawniest hair fell to her hips; around her neck was a large golden necklace; and she wore a tunic of diverse colours over which a thick mantle was fastened with a brooch”.<sup>613</sup>

Furthermore, the details of the attire also underline the martial lifestyle and daily exercise of power in Helen’s portrait:

“She wore her plaid, not drawn around her head and shoulders, as is the fashion of the women in Scotland, but disposed around her body as the Highland soldiers wear theirs. She had a man’s bonnet, with a feather in it, an unsheathed sword in her hand, and a pair of pistols at her girdle”.<sup>614</sup>

Agitated by “violent passions”, and showing a “countenance in which anger was mingled with apprehension”, Helen’s wildness is only the prelude to the implacability she feels towards her enemies:

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<sup>612</sup> *Rob Roy* (31: 264)

<sup>613</sup> Cassius Dio, LXII, 1, 1–12.

<sup>614</sup> *Rob Roy* (30: 253). Most curiously, but just by way of parenthesis, a recent observation by WATTS on the chromatic impact of Boudicca’s garment seems to confirm a vaguely Scottish linkage: “this fabric appears to resemble modern tartans” (2005: 94). On this topic see also RUTLEDGE, (2000).

“It was impossible to describe the scorn, the loathing, and contempt, with which the wife of MacGregor regarded th[e] wretched petitioner for the poor boon of existence”.<sup>615</sup> As for Boudicca, this trajectory of brutality and lack of any human feeling finds reason in a back-story of injustice and humiliation, as Rob Roy later specifies: “naebody will deny that Helen MacGregor has deep wrongs to avenge”.<sup>616</sup>

The insertion of Boudicca as a figurehead in the depiction of Helen Mac Gregor is brought out in the finale, when the revolt is suppressed, together with any form of dissent. The end of the uprising, along with the consequent dispersal of the rebellious forces, marks the ultimate collapse of a hopeless cause. For now, it seems that Scott, like Tacitus, is envisioning the catastrophic epilogue as already inscribed in gendered terms, and specifically in the lack of a male figurehead to lead the rebellion. In this light, Helen and Boudicca would constitute the emblem of a deviant femininity biologically uncongenial to leadership and incompetent within the field of strategy and military tactics.<sup>617</sup> The - not so much- subliminal message seems to be that a woman is by nature unfit to lead an army: an assumption that finds further expression in the words of Rob Roy himself, who comments on the disastrous consequences of the uprising as the spokesman of a male-oriented society: “this comes o’ trusting women [...], that have neither measure nor reason in their dealings”.<sup>618</sup> Faced with these views, the reader is persuasively invited to line up with Rob Roy, Frank and the internal narrator as well in a vision that asserts the need to limit female degeneracy so as to preserve a patriarchal establishment.

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<sup>615</sup> *Rob Roy* (32: 266)

<sup>616</sup> *Rob Roy* (35: 303–4)

<sup>617</sup> For Boudicca as well, none of the ancient sources mentions her supposed expertise in warfare.

<sup>618</sup> *Rob Roy* (35: 305)

However, such a straightforwardly ‘misogynist’ interpretation becomes complicated for the British cultivated reader, in the light of the deeply-rooted sense of identity that this borderline femininity entails, inscribed, as it is, in the model of Boudicca. A fortiori, this figure has represented a tutelary icon in the British islands across the centuries, by constituting a recurring ‘mytheme’ in the national patriotic imagery, and the object of re-appropriations and re-proposals at crucial moments. Indeed, threads and vestiges of her story are inscribed in the mythography of the British past, along with gestures, poses and iconic elements belonging to her visual apparatus –memorably, the chariot, which also symbolises Celtic civilisation.<sup>619</sup> The myth of the Celtic leader has always exerted a significant vitality in disparate causes and media: “[a]s a home-grown heroine Boudica greatly contributed to the idea of Britishness and became a focus for national unity, identity and imperial aspirations, remaining that focal point even today”.<sup>620</sup>

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<sup>619</sup> COLLEY reminds us of the cart-parades celebrating peace before and after Waterloo, for example the procession taking place at Taunton (Somerset) in 1814, with a “bourgeois gentleman [...] playing the part of the Duke of Wellington [...] joined [...] by a woman of the same social rank dressed as Britannia” –the primary source for this episode is in the *Taunton Courier*, 30 June 1814. The scholar also mentions the quite sensational case of a no better identified Miss Patterson, who addressed a speech to a regiment of volunteers during a parade in London in 1799 (242; 269–270). Boudicca is still nowadays an integral part of popular culture, and finds a place in the pantheon of founding figures such as King Arthur and Robin Hood. As a material signpost in the urban landscape of London, tourists at the Thames-Embankment can admire the bronze sculpture group by Thomas Thornycroft (1902). The project was carried out under the supervision of Prince Albert: this detail confirms how actively the monarchy was involved in the fabrication of a symbology –and of a cult– linked to the national past.

<sup>620</sup> COLLEY (1992: 25). Among her latest updated versions, Boudicca has eminently found an ‘heiress’ in Margaret Thatcher, as the defender of British insularity against the expansion of the Euro-zone, and also as the most fervent pursuer of the Falklands war in April 1982. In the 1980s, satirists and detractors referred to Boudicca with a view to caricaturising the ‘Iron Lady’. Two vignettes in particular are still vivid in the collective memory. The first one (*Daily Express*, 24 June 1982, after British victory in Falklands) depicted Thatcher triumphant on horseback, leaving in the background a bewildered Ronald Reagan mounting a pony and staring at her in a desolate pose and confused expression. The second cartoon (*Daily Telegraph*, 11 June 1987, after her third consecutive victory in the polls) features Thatcher on a horse-driven chariot, wearing a toga and a laurel crown, and leading behind her a series of prisoners in chains (European male leaders). As an example of the controversial conflation of Romano-British antiquity, the depiction is

According to Frénée-Hutchins, the positive reception of Boudicca is caused by her belonging to an unrepeatable past. The chronological gap separating her story from the present time and confining her figure to a remote past works as the perfect antidote for more cogent speculation. In her own words:

“The interest in Boudica was probably due to the fact that the presence of a powerful woman in British culture is seen as a sexual anomaly and often arouses social anxiety. The polemical discussion of such an issue could only be carried out safely at a temporal and metaphorical distance through the airing of Boudica’s story in the literary texts and the visual arts”.<sup>621</sup>

Thus, Boudicca should provide an innocuous medium and a safe ground to incubate the preoccupations and insights of the present time. Along the same line, Hingley and Unwin emphasise the controversial nature of Boudicca’s story –where the potential celebration of insurgency and resistance inscribed in her legend proves an uncomfortable topic for an imperial society.<sup>622</sup>

In fact, the theme of female leadership represents a sensitive notion for Britain, inscribed as it is in the nature of her constitution and in the history of her ruling practices. The hereditary norms regulating the succession on a patrilineal basis grant the possibility to ascend the throne to direct female descendants. This was an issue on the agenda at Scott’s time too, the heir apparent being Princess Charlotte (1796–1817), a symbol of rebellious femininity herself, especially if we

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reminiscent of a Roman leader in triumph, rather than a native tribal heroine –as FRÉNÉE-HUTCHINS puts it, it “represents Margaret Thatcher as a Roman senator and military general after her political victory” (291). See JOHNSON (2012: 130). Further references in FRASER (1988).

<sup>621</sup> FRÉNÉE-HUTCHINS (2009: 285)

<sup>622</sup> See on this topic HINGLEY and UNWIN (2005: 78–81)

recall that the vacuum that her imminent premature death provoked led to the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837.<sup>623</sup>

This brings us to the question of Tacitus' silence on the nature of Boudicca's regency as the legitimate beneficiary of Prasutagus' testament. The Latin historian, in fact, underlines Boudicca's aristocratic birth but never explicitly refers to her either as a queen (where we should expect the Latin *regina*) or as a legal heir of her dead husband. According to this view, a branch of scholarship claims that this is an 'omission on purpose': Tacitus deliberately avoids the word *regina* since the term is reminiscent of bad memories to a Roman ear, evoking instead a problematising gaze on Roman expansionism and political affairs.<sup>624</sup>

The depiction of Helen MacGregor registers a different trajectory (and a surprise effect) from chapter 35 onwards. After making a public lament on the sort of the uprising, the bloodthirsty virago now acts as a real princess, showing a regal and distinguished attitude, and –in another unexpected turn, speaking proper English. As a decent, welcoming hostess she performs her duties towards her guests with dignity: “the dark and undisturbed gravity which sat on [her] brow [...] the calm and melancholy sternness of her countenance [...]”.<sup>625</sup>

This mutation into a benign, harmless mistress of the house is endorsed by the blending of Homeric tradition Scott that is following in assimilating in the same figure two representations of Helen of Troy. The first one is in *Iliad* 14 (720-21) where the Spartan queen gives a lament in the midst of the war, whereas the

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<sup>623</sup> Charlotte's refused the husband her father had chosen for her and married for love Leopold Saxe-Coburg, to die later of childbirth-related complications.

<sup>624</sup> See for example SANTORO L'HOIR, 1994.

<sup>625</sup> *Rob Roy* (35: 308)

second one is in *Odyssey* 4, when the Trojan war is over, and we find Helen back in Sparta presiding with Menelaus over the reception offered in honour of Telemachus (not without silent expressions of repentance for the past). The insertion of Helen within the Boudicca-like characterisation of Helen MacGregor is, in my view, a deliberate option Scott that Scott adopts in order to take the learned reader by surprise, by derailing his expectations so as to bring him on a different path of revision and re-qualification. The addition of Helen works as the perfect antidote with a view to dispelling the impression of abnormality and brutality that Boudicca endorses at first sight with her primitive portrait.

Only when we are faced with the complete picture of this character do we realise how Boudicca offers an illuminating metaphor to put forward a series of interlinking questions about female rulership. We may conclude that the clash between defective masculinity and unorthodox femininity is the result of the fluidity and permeability of gender categories in his novels. By means of this interchangeableness, what should be customarily perceived as being at the fringes poses a challenge to the prerogatives of what stands traditionally at the forefront, thus unveiling the process of undermining the hegemonic power that is at stake in the narrative. Far from confirming a monolithic, unproblematic sexual 'binarism', classics in fact introduce alternative patterns of behaviour and interactions, along with elements of resistance –not to say dissidence– against any stereotyped and conventional vision (and division) within gender roles. Once again politics and gender emerge as inextricably connected, and their interaction as a propulsive engine of the narrative. To some extent this goes against the dominant view of elite male thought and culture, with the application of a

colonial viewpoint that corroborates problematic aspects of imperial expansionism, promoting a reflection on the destabilising impact of invasion and conquest, and on the double price that women have to pay.

It is undeniable that classical elements, as Sabiron puts it, serve the purpose of giving a majestic past to Scotland, in promoting “la représentation du pays en lui donnant une histoire fédératrice ancienne et en l’intégrant ainsi aux plus grandes civilisations”.<sup>626</sup> But more importantly, Graeco-Roman antiquity provides Scott (and his readers, today as yesterday) the opportunity to re-think the definition of national consciousness and both personal and political self-identity.

### **5.5 To see before and beyond: a Gipsy *parca***

*In the last section of this study we shall focus on Meg Merrilies, the wandering gipsy and fortune teller ‘by profession’ in Guy Mannering, as the female character whose potential for destabilisation and subversion is taken to the furthest extent, by reason of her constant, yet debatable, association with the sphere of the magic and occult.*

*By virtue of the supernatural endowments and the mantic gifts she is alleged to exercise, the sybil-like Meg Merrilies is granted the privilege of an exclusive insight into past and future events. Such a prerogative makes her contribution paramount, inasmuch as she proves to be the repository of secrets and past scenarios rich with vital information for the process of recognition and reinstatement of the main hero. As I want to suggest, the appeal to classical culture in such a marginal figure foregrounds the controversial warnings and subliminal messages that are in store for the classically educated reader.*

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<sup>626</sup> SABIRON (2010: 7.2)

Scott displays a wide range of feminine creatures who seem mysteriously to possess a mastery of future events associated with clairvoyance and foresight. The category includes former governesses, such as Elspeth Mucklebackit in *Antiquary* and Old Alice in *Lammermoor*, as well as social outcasts on the verge of mental insanity, like the duo Margaret and Meg Murdockson in *Midlothian*, not to forget the blind and maniac Elizabeth Maclure in *Mortality*. All of these figures represent, in different degrees, an unsettling, deviant femininity that at first provokes feelings of aversion and repulsion, and are mostly described as they are *said* or *thought* to be. Their characterisation oscillates tantalisingly between sybil (positive prophet) and witch (negative magician), usually by means of a shifting focalisation that relies on the limited viewpoint of the characters who observe them from time to time (and who mostly takes them for hags or madwomen). Only with one exception (remarkably, that of Meg Merrilies) is the sybil directly represented, as we shall see, in the act of performing a divinatory practice and giving a prophecy. Meg outstandingly emerges as a unique character among the others, not only because of what she knows, but also because of what she does with her knowledge, which functions as the *sine qua non* for her action. Apart from giving instructions, she readily offers material help, and therefore represents a proactive Cassandra, who does not limit herself to expressing what she sees and not being believed. Far more than this, she “tirelessly guides, instructs, saves and provides until the homecoming and recognition are fulfilled” and performs this role until the very end at the price of self-sacrifice.<sup>627</sup>

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<sup>627</sup> DUNCAN (1992: 131)

Furthermore, the ‘exotic’ undertones implied in her characterisation emphasise her conditions of untrusted stranger, overtly pointing to the myth of Cassandra, marking the dramatic trajectory of a voice that accurately points to future events but whose predictions, however reliable and trustworthy they shall prove, as confirmed retrospectively by the facts, are destined to fall on deaf ears. In this regard, the hero makes the difference exactly because he, against others’ expectations and advice, follows her directions.

The aforementioned fragmentation of viewpoints is at work especially in *Guy Mannering*, mirroring the discrepancy between plot and discourse that is the real fulcrum of the novel. Indeed, not all of the characters share the same knowledge of events and backstories: some of them know partially, very few know a bit more, and only one –Meg– knows everything, as becomes evident in the episode of her oracle, which we shall discuss in a moment. Significantly, the hostility ‘with immediate effect’ that Meg provokes is meant to change as the plot develops, thanks to a strategy that the narratorial voice puts into effect in order to complicate and promote second readings with retroactive effect.

Chapter Four of *Guy Mannering* introduces us to the main hall of Ellangowan Castle, on the eve of the birth of Harry Bertram. Here we find the Laird Godfrey Bertram waiting for news from his wife’s apartments. His trepidation is partially mitigated by the company of Abel Sampson, the erudite pedagogue and factotum of his house, and Guy Mannering, a travelling Oxford scholar who happens to be a guest at the manor that night. The indoor scene is soon to be dominated by the arrival of Meg, who, exceptionally, is granted access to the dwelling to take part in the waiting and share the anxieties of her master.

As soon as she enters, the description of Meg evokes the typical characterisation of a witch, with her dark, thick and curly hair associated with snakes: “her dark elflocks shot out like the snakes of the Gorgon”.<sup>628</sup> Consistent with this presentation, Abel Sampson, when asked about her by Mannering, speaks of her vituperatively as the mouthpiece of popular lore: “harlot, thief, witch, and gipsy” and unabashedly dismisses her as an untrustworthy woman.<sup>629</sup>

As we are later informed, the heir’s birth is one of the few circumstances when Gipsy women are formally admitted inside the walls of Ellangowan –as Meg must have been in the past on the occasion of the wedding of the Laird, when she was called on purpose together with the women of her tribe who “blessed the bridal bed, and the cradle of the heir when born”.<sup>630</sup>

Such a special concession is interpreted by Irvine as a way to acknowledge the gipsy element as an integral part of the social and economic neighbourhood that constitutes the estate of Ellangowan as a whole. As the scholar accurately explains: “the gypsies [...] are [...] carriers of the traditional superstitious lore of the area. One of the forms of occasional service they give the landowner in return for toleration is the legitimation of his family’s continued authority”.<sup>631</sup> It is in adherence to this role that, as soon as the news of a safe delivery of a male heir is given, Meg offers her availability to predict the destiny of the newborn, a service the Laird kindly declines this time, expressing his preference for a horoscope traced *secundum artem* and according to scientific methods by his guest Guy

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<sup>628</sup> *Mannering* (3: 14)

<sup>629</sup> *Mannering* (3: 15)

<sup>630</sup> *Mannering* (7: 37)

<sup>631</sup> IRVINE (2000: 30)

Mannering.<sup>632</sup> As soon as the latter accepts the request of his host as a way to repay the hospitality he has received, Meg goes back to the place where she lives, among the ruins of the old part of the estate. It is precisely here, in the solitude of her dwelling, that we find Mannering again a few hours later, spying on the divinatory ritual the gipsy is performing by following the prescriptions of her tribe's art. The ritual, which Mannering is silently observing through a crack in the door, consists of reading the future by spinning and accompanying the crossing of fingers and threads with a song: "she spun a thread, drawn from wool of three different colours, black, white and grey".<sup>633</sup>

This iconic presentation of Meg in the act of spinning and singing the future re-presents her as a sort of Parca and leads me to suspect that Catullus 64 could possibly be lurking behind Scott's episode. I would like, therefore, to expand on a parallel that has already been grasped *en passant*: "like one of the Fates, Meg spins and chants Harry Bertram's nativity".<sup>634</sup>

The occasion and setting of the episode, marked by the indoor presence of the very source of the prophetic voice, closely reshapes Catullus' presentation of

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<sup>632</sup> *Mannering* (4: 20)

<sup>633</sup> *Mannering* (4: 23).

<sup>634</sup> RAGAZ (2001: 61). On the basis of what we established in chapter one, there are grounds to believe that Catullus did belong to Scott's poetic memory since his formative years. However, there are no specific references of Catullus' editions in his library holdings at Abbotsford, and the translation by George Lamb, which was pivotal in promoting a new wave of interest within Catullus' rediscovery in the long nineteenth century, was not published until 1821, six years after *Guy Mannering*. For further information about Catullus' British readership in the very period see again STEAD (2015). One must not forget, however, that the loom and its related accoutrements pertain to the imagery of an exclusively feminine sphere, within a typically folk-tale dimension. In his notes to *Mannering*, LANG already identified Grimm's fairy tales and other German fables as possible sources for Meg's spinning (1892: 1, 282) –as reported by NORD, 2006: 181, n.35). A recent contribution on the topic of Scott's imaginative affinity with the Grimm brothers is in DUNNIGAN (2012). As an aside, it is worth mentioning *Old Meg she was a gipsey*, a lyrical ballad written by John Keats on completion of a summer tour in Scotland with his friend Charles Brown in 1818, and clearly under the novel's influence. In the epistolary exchange which followed that vacation, Brown evokes Meg Merrilies as "a good description of that mystic link between mortality and the weired sisters" cit. in ROLLINS (1958: 1, 437–8). For an analysis of Keats' poem in its intertextual evocation of Scott's character see LAMONT, 1987.

the epithalamium at the wedding reception of Peleus and Thetis in Thessaly – a region closely linked in ancient times with magic and witchcraft.<sup>635</sup> As special guests seated at the loom, the Parcae are depicted by Catullus in the act of spinning and weaving their gift to the newly married couple consisting precisely of the prediction of Achilles’ birth and deeds –*egregias virtutes claraque facta*.<sup>636</sup> The procedures of the rite, articulated by a complicated crossing and weaving of threads, are described in Scott through the focalisation of Guy Mannering, who observes in amazement and curiosity how “she took the spindle [...] and, undoing the thread gradually, measured it by casting it over her elbow, and bringing each loop round between her forefinger and thumb”.<sup>637</sup> The sequence of motions following in the alternation of hands and threads reworks Catullus’ meticulous depiction:

*laeua colum molli lana retinebat amictum  
dextera tum leuiter deducens fila supinis  
formabat digitis, tum prono in pollice torquens.*

[Her left hand held a distaff wrapped in soft wool, and then her right hand, lightly bringing down the threads, would shape a mantle as her fingers faced upward; then, with her thumb facing the ground, she would turn her spindle, which is weighted with a round weight].<sup>638</sup>

At stake we find the future of two main heroes with a controversial destiny in store for them –full of epic promises of glory and success, alongside difficulties and obstacles. However, as we have just seen, in Scott the communication of the oracle is deliberately forbidden: an interdiction rich with consequences, since by

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<sup>635</sup> See for example CLARK, 2011.

<sup>636</sup> CATULL. 64, 348.

<sup>637</sup> *Mannering* (4: 24)

<sup>638</sup> CATULL. 64, 392–4. See COLAFRANCESCO: “Spinning is described in detail in its diverse stages, within a picturesque mode in which language accuracy is tied to vivid colourful touches” (2004: 15). Translation mine.

reducing Meg to silence, the Laird has inadvertently neutralised her power. This resolution, as we shall see, will have major effects.

The ancillary function that the Parcae exert –and that Bertram senior will deny to Meg– was fully acknowledged in Latin civilisation, but Catullus was the first to give the Parcae this special role in literature, deliberately deviating from the tradition preceding him and in the awareness of making an unconventional choice –a choice that has opened the way for discussion in scholarship. As Gaisser has recently underlined: “there is no authority for their singing at this wedding, and even as [Catullus] introduces their song (*carmine, perfidiae quod post nulla arguet aetas*, ‘a song which no age afterwards will charge with bad faith’; 322), [he] slyly reminds us of his innovation [...]”.<sup>639</sup> Also in the light of our previous remarks, when the scholar concludes that “although the fact of their singing is patently without authority, the Parcae themselves are authoritative singers, and their song is true”, we can perhaps attempt to suggest that their singing has a specific authority, ascribable precisely to their atavistic role and function.<sup>640</sup> Borrowing from Colafrancesco: “if we acknowledge the theme of birth as the central one in the prophecy song, the choice of entrusting the Parcae with it becomes clear in the light of its deepest cultural reason”.<sup>641</sup>

In the same vein, when Gaisser comments: “[i]t is strange that we did not see [the Parcae] come in [...]. But their work is eternal and unending, and perhaps [...] they were here all along” and eventually asks herself: “Yet why are they here at all?”, we can try to answer that not only are they there, but they

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<sup>639</sup> GAISSER (2007: 253)

<sup>640</sup> GAISSER (2007: 253)

<sup>641</sup> COLAFRANCESCO (2004: 19). Translation mine.

cannot be anywhere else at all.<sup>642</sup> Their presence on the very spot has a precise goal, in the light of the prerogative that they are deputed to perform: to grant the legitimacy of the wedlock. The Parcae define their song as *veridicum oraclum* (326), and Catullus himself has no doubt about the reliability of what he defines as *veridicos [...] cantus* (306).

The monopoly of knowledge held by the Parcae refers to “to the oldest heritage of Latin beliefs, the one of prophecy, which - in its association with spinning, transforms the Parcae in the sole guarantors of immutability of human destiny”.<sup>643</sup> We therefore understand the reason why Catullus grants them the song precisely, and how the authority of the source dissipates any doubt regarding the content of the oracle:

“in Catullus’ version, the Parcae [...] preserve and even strengthen their prophetic prerogatives [...] typically associated to ancient Latin goddesses presiding over birth [...]. This characterisation [...] closely intertwines with the most common feature of spinning: the deployment of the thread goes hand in hand with the song”.<sup>644</sup>

Hence, the coincidence and interplay of gestures and utterances according to which one stems from the other occurs in a conglomeration of words and action that Gaisser also acknowledges:

“As for authority —paradoxically [...], the song of the Parcae has both no authority at all (only Catullus makes them sing) and all the authority in the world (they sing truly). The ultimate authority of the Parcae [...] lies in their spinning. The Parcae are not merely prophetic; they actually spin the future into existence. [...]. *Fata* (that is, both ‘fate’ and ‘oracular

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<sup>642</sup> GAISSER (2007: 253)

<sup>643</sup> COLAFRANCESCO (2004: 21). Translation mine.

<sup>644</sup> COLAFRANCESCO (2004: 19). Translation mine.

utterance’) are brought into existence by the threads of the Parcae [who are], quite literally, [...] spinning their song”<sup>645</sup>

On an even deeper level “Meg is particularly associated with the hidden rites of femaleness—not to say, female sexuality”.<sup>646</sup> Indeed, she was present at the time of Harry’s birth, and this circumstance makes of her the best witness to testify, seventeen years later, to the legitimacy of his name against the villain Glossin, who will declare him the illegitimate son of the late Ellangowan. Together with Mannering and Sampson, she is the only one who can oppose to this slander, exactly because she was there to sanction the birth lineage. Her presence on the night of the delivery will act in the future as a guarantee of authenticity. Her role puts at stake issues of lineage and confirms that identity is called into question from the very first hours after birth. As Bruzelius puts it: “a woman must be guarded in order that her child be recognised as the offspring of the male whose name she bears, since absolute knowledge is impossible”<sup>647</sup>. By exerting the same anthropological function that Catullus ascribes to the Parcae, Meg was there to validate the fruit of conjugal love, acting as a kind of surrogate midwife:

“while generation is between man and woman, birth is a female process in which a woman enters a zone controlled by women (there are no male obstetricians in adventure fiction). It is the midwife/witch’s control of the birth chamber that powers the parallel female world [...]. [O]nly a mother can guarantee that her child is the son of a particular man, although even this can be problematic [...]. As midwives and servants they possess female, bedchamber knowledge scorned by men but nevertheless necessary to them”.<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> GAISSER (2007: 254–5)

<sup>646</sup> EPSTEIN NORD (2006: 28)

<sup>647</sup> BRUZELIUS (2007: 111)

<sup>648</sup> BRUZELIUS (2007: 111)

The conceptual issue at stake here lies in “the problem of what women know and what they can do with their knowledge”, “of controlling the generative powers of the female body—of knowing what women know”<sup>649</sup>. It is precisely in consideration of the validating role that she exerts within the domestic sphere of the ruling family that Meg is granted access to the castle in the imminence of the heir’s birth. As she enters the parlour, Meg acts as a spokesperson of her tribe, whose loyalty and devotion to the ruling dynasty emerges periodically through participation in the crucial events of the family’s life.

This reciprocal acknowledgment marks the harmony between the peripheral community of the Gypsies, the outsider satellite-presence, and the ruling family of the estate in a pacific coexistence of a mutually supportive nature<sup>650</sup>. The act of declining Meg’s offer is charged with consequences for the Laird: by preventing Meg from exerting her supervision over such a special occasion, the landlord is striking the first blow against an ‘ecosystem’ that has worked for centuries. The clearances that Bertram senior will later carry out, beyond marking a step back in history, were already prefigured in his dismissing Meg. His refusal marks the first ‘swing of the axe’ by setting in motion a trend of progressive detachment and hostility that will culminate five years later, in its most dramatic form, in the perpetual banishment of the Gipsy community from the estate and the disappearance of the laird’s only son and heir.<sup>651</sup> In this light, the geographic dislocation and consequent degradation of the Gipsy element is neither a cause nor a premise of their degradation, but is, on the contrary, the

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<sup>649</sup> BRUZELIUS (2007: 122)

<sup>650</sup> See EPSTEIN NORD (2006: 30): “Scott’s Gypsies not only are a mixed and substantially tamed group, but also maintain a symbiotic relationship with Scottish landowners...”

<sup>651</sup> “The laird [...] interrupts this history of amelioration and integration when he banishes the Gypsies from his land and sends them into exile”.

result of a deliberate action of exclusion promoted by the dominant spheres of society, and that finds in Meg the dramatic symbol of a communion-bond that has been broken.

The portrait of Meg in Scott reflects the collective attitude towards (or would it be better to say against?) her race: “[a]s a Gipsy, Meg belongs to a group whose development is perceived to be non-synchronous with the rest of society”.<sup>652</sup> At the time of Scott’s writing, scholars and historians were already engaged on the frontline with the fabrication of the myth of Gypsies, or Roma people, with the implied trail of stereotypes that are still familiar to us nowadays –e.g. associating them with kidnapping and the traffic/exchange of children.<sup>653</sup> Gypsies are represented as an anachronistic enclave whose characteristics (complexion, habits, traditions) are allegedly set once and for all and destined to remain alien from progress and improvement, presenting an exception in the domain of history: “an embarrassing atavism in a society undergoing a rapid rate of social change or ‘improvement’ and whose central conceptual paradigm [...] identified progress as the motor of history”.<sup>654</sup>

Marking a counter-tendency, Scott chooses to treat Gypsies as historical subjects, in a light “that emphasises their deep and mystical presence in the

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<sup>652</sup> RAGAZ (2001: 66–7)

<sup>653</sup> Most likely known by Scott: HOYLAND (1816). *A Historical survey about the customs, habits, and present state of the Gypsies*, at Abbotsford, with autograph dedication on the front page), and PRINGLE (1817). *Notices Concerning the Scottish Gypsies*. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1, (April, May & September: 43–58; 154–161; 615–620). A famous anecdote in this sense concerned the infancy of Adam Smith, who as a child was ‘abducted’ by gypsies for a couple of hours: this legend was still vividly present in collective memory, as Abel Sampson himself will recall in the novel: “It is curious to think what might have been the political state of so many nations [...] if the father of political economy and free trade [...] had had to pass his life in a Gipsy encampment”.

<sup>654</sup> SHUM (2003: 2)

Scottish past, their intermingling with the Scots themselves, their vulnerability to the vagaries of historical, political and economic change”.<sup>655</sup>

His counter-image undermines the monolithic view of the Gipsy element as alien from historical development: “Gipsy history [...] begins with segregation and outlawry; moves [...] to integration, domestication, and salutary coexistence; and ends [again] with banishment”. In his own version, history makes no exemption, the Gypsies are deeply immersed in its flux and exposed to its forces: over the span of two generations circumstances radically change and they have to pay, like everyone else, the price of history’s dynamics.

“Scott’s Gypsies do not simply represent a static and mystical moment in a distant time. They are subject to history, and they change in an ongoing process of intercourse with those whose lands and imaginations they inhabit. He gives them political identity by inserting them into a historical situation [...] and figures them as the object of legal harassment and persecution”.<sup>656</sup>

Significantly, far from reproducing the standard portrait of Gypsies as a reassuring stereotype of anomalousness and a comfort zone of abnormality ready to be filled with preoccupations and anxieties by the dominant layers of society, Scott opts for something different in *Mannering*: “one of mixture and variation, of an ancient presence that had, over centuries, become an integrated, although not wholly assimilated, part of European culture and had not remained completely insulated or unchanged in the nations of the West”.<sup>657</sup>

This is why Meg does not limit herself to foreseeing and expressing what she knows, but takes an active and initiating part in the event that follow,

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<sup>655</sup> EPSTEIN NORD (2006: 25)

<sup>656</sup> EPSTEIN NORD (2006: 41-42)

<sup>657</sup> EPSTEIN NORD (2006: 23)

mirroring with her role the parable of absorption and rejection that has heavily affected her ethnic group and exemplifying therefore a past that was not a priori worse than the present. We have similar tones of nostalgia in the epilogue of the epyllion in Catullus 64, which also surfaces throughout the poem as a whole, overtly presenting the sense of loss for a golden age that has been irreversibly superseded to leave space to generational degradation and decadence<sup>658</sup>.

As we have seen, Scott condenses in Meg the myth of Cassandra along with the role of the Parcae so as to make the gipsy the vehicle of a “power [that] is a prophetic and performative word-of-mouth”.<sup>659</sup> This prerogative substantially corresponds to the *unicum* fixed by Catullus 64 in the special power of the Parcae to preside over birth, and in the threefold act of singing, spinning and predicting the future.<sup>660</sup> The highly ritualised framework in which this role takes place fulfils the anthropological function of tutelage with which both Meg and the Parcae are invested with. The very content of the Catullan prophecy, with the bad omens it overshadows –eternal glory, unrivalled epic deeds but untimely death– casts a note of melancholy and a touch of mourning alluding to a misfortune veiled by a shadow of anguish and concerns.

By presiding over the *rites de passage* that articulate the sequel of generations, and therefore granting the legitimacy of both the wedlock and the offspring, Meg acts as a guarantee of the safety and preservation of the family unit. Through the imagery that he sets out in his epyllion, Catullus enables Scott to explore the epistemological issues of agency and responsibility, and in

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<sup>658</sup> TRIMBLE, 2010

<sup>659</sup> DUNCAN (1992: 131)

<sup>660</sup> “Thus fixed by Catullus, these two elements –namely, the image of spinning and its inherent relationship with individual destiny in its deployment, will accompany the Parcae’s *Nachleben* on every level in Latin literature”. COLAFRANCESCO (2004: 21). Translation mine.

particular to address the limits and scope of action that a male-dominated society is disposed to grant to a woman who, not by coincidence, is also a social outsider.

This reworking of Catullus retrospectively fulfils a compensatory function to rehabilitate Meg from a marginality she does not deserve and that is ascribable neither to her exterior strangeness nor supposedly transgressive behaviour. The redeeming effect of such an association is confirmed at plot level, since as the novel progresses Meg is gradually reabsorbed and eventually acquitted of the crimes she has not committed. Glossin is the real and sole responsible for the abduction of Bertram, whereas Meg, who was once charged with this accusation, is innocent, having only attended to the child in an attempt to alleviate his suffering and protect him during his captivity. My interpretation of Meg aims at reassessing her role, arguing against the usual interpretations, which –erroneously, in my view– see the gipsy figure as temporarily or permanently the main obstacle in the plot.<sup>661</sup> In Trumpener’s view “Meg Merrilies [...] was instrumental in the kidnapping of the young Henry Bertram and [only] later repents”<sup>662</sup>, whereas on a mildly different front, Bruzelius includes Meg in the category of women who “are [...] well-disposed towards the hero, [...] because they actively damaged his father and seek to make reparation”. In both cases, I think that these readings do not take account of the exact developments of the plot.

Another point that I would like to consider concerns the question of the extent to which the figure of Meg can be interpreted as conveying the position of the author towards the historical phenomenon of Gipsy clearances, and more in

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<sup>661</sup> TRUMPENER, 1997

<sup>662</sup> BRUZELIUS (2007: 117)

general the treatment/management of minorities within society. In this regard, I do not share the same vision as Ragaz, who sets the question as follows: “[a]lthough the novel is critical of Bertram’s specific methods, it seems probable that Scott also felt that breaking up the encampments was an important first step in acculturation, and the end of the novel validates this inference”.<sup>663</sup> I think rather that a first answer can be drawn in the light of what the narrator himself says about the destructive effects of the clearances in eradicating social bonds:

“The ‘long-remembered beggar’, who for twenty years had made his regular round within the neighbourhood, received rather as a humble friend than as an object of charity, was sent to the [...] workhouse. The decrepid dame, who travelled round the parish [...] circulating from house to house [...] even she shared the same disastrous fate [...]. These things did not pass without notice and censure. We are not made of wood or stone, and the things which connect themselves with our hearts and habits cannot [...] be rent away without our missing them”.<sup>664</sup>

Furthermore, I am persuaded that Scott’s comments and reflections about issues of his own day concerning the gypsies and marginalised groups in general are telling about his position, retroactively shedding light on his treatment of Meg. See for example the following consideration extracted from his travel journey to the Western islands (1814): “How is the necessary restriction to take place, without the greatest immediate distress and hardship to these poor creatures?”<sup>665</sup> This was also mirrored by what was happening overseas, not least in Bengal, where the colonial mission under the flag of the British Empire was showing

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<sup>663</sup> RAGAZ (2001: 60)

<sup>664</sup> *Mannering* (6: 33)

<sup>665</sup> LOCKHART (1844: 277) cit. in EPSTEIN NORD (2006: 27).

controversial aspects, giving voice to a Scott who seemed to be “decidedly skeptical [...] of the imperial adventure”.<sup>666</sup>

But it is, again, the figure of Meg who speaks once and for all. According to Ragaz “the death of the ancient woman [...] seems entirely appropriate” since it marks the removal of a disturbing element from the fabric of society. The scholar compares the death of Meg to that of Bertha Rochester in *Jane Eyre*:

“death puts closure on her liminality and suppresses her power to disturb [...]. That Meg dies means she can be sentimentalised; she can evoke tears from Bertram who can be grateful without ever having to confront the hard question about her sanity, his indebtedness to her, the possibility of allowing the exiled Gipsy encampment to be rebuilt”.<sup>667</sup>

I am not much persuaded by this conclusion, which sounds somewhat questionable, in particular in the light of the methodological point that seems to support it –the choice to put Meg on the same level as Bertha Rochester, whose madness is presented as the rather incontrovertible fruit of a clinical diagnosis or however never put into discussion. Significantly, Meg is not insane, rather she is the provider of precious information that men around her invariably fail to recognise. Her importance is only acknowledged thanks to the initiative of Guy Mannering, who somehow shares the same sphere of the supernatural with her, and who perspicaciously decides that the question of her mental sanity must be put aside and left unanswered. She “links Bertram to his past, helps him reconstruct his nearly erased identity, and serves as a confirmation of the need to

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<sup>666</sup> EPSTEIN NORD (2006: 34). For a discussion of the socio-political significance of Meg Merrilies against the background of the contemporary controversies regarding British colonial rule in India see GARSIDE, 1993.

<sup>667</sup> RAGAZ (2001: 66)

preserve [...] the cultural amalgam of which the Gipsy is a part”.<sup>668</sup> Catullus is involved in the characterisation of this modern Cassandra as an authoritative voice against the male-centred clichés generally associated with nomadic or out-of-the norm individuals.

By associating her with familiar prototypes of the past, whereby her belonging to an atavistic dimension is already readable, Scott aims at overturning the misconception about her figure and her racial group. The involvement of Catullus, who had no hesitation about presenting the Parcae as an integral part of Graeco-Roman culture, in their role as guarantors of the preservation and authenticity of a bloodline, is crucial for Scott to acknowledge the role within the family that Bertram senior denies Meg. While favouring her ‘metabolisation’ in the cultivated reader, Catullus grants Meg the sympathetic gaze she really deserves –and concomitantly provides Scott with an opportunity to insinuate that, against any theory of progressive development, the present is not *per se* better than the past. Far from retaliation, Meg’s death is not a punishment inflicted upon her to redeem an order that has been altered by her transgressive charge, as has long been argued, nor does it represent the suppression of an element of discomfort/embarrassment for the future ruler to be. I am inclined to think, rather, that Scott presents us with his Meg as an Edie Ochiltree *manquée*, so to speak –to mention the decidedly luckier case of a rehabilitated outcast– thus representing the opportunity that an allegedly ‘civilised’ society has missed.

Meg is thus pivotal in the domain of epistemology and ethics, by raising issues of knowledge and agency –questioning the degree of authority and

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<sup>668</sup> EPSTEIN NORD (2006: 25)

reliability that we are meant to attribute to her own 'version', as well as to her eccentric vehicles of information. This problem entails, of course, the bigger question of who is in charge of the circulation and sharing of knowledge in a distinctively patriarchal society, and who can claim the right to control its sources.

## Conclusion

### **How to read Scott differently today**

This study has represented an attempt to shed light on the role that classical allusions and subtexts play in a selected portion of Sir Walter Scott's novels. By addressing an aspect that criticism has heretofore significantly under-researched, it has offered a platform to readdress the question of where the author stands in the literary landscape of today.

As has been established, creative engagement with, and usage of, the Graeco-Roman past in an author like Scott deserve adequate scrutiny, for the decisive role that it plays in addressing a specific layer of his elite audience, not least on both sides of the Anglo-Scottish border. A substantial background in classical education, which Chapter One illustrated via the example of Scott himself, draws an area of intersection between his Scottish and English readership that proves instrumental in establishing a further level of communication, in the name of a shared intergenerational lore. Well-educated elite readers are thus invited to an act of self-criticism that endorses alternative interpretations and dissonant sentiments in relation to the supremacy of Hanoverian England.

Thus, the inclusion of classical models functions as a strategy of dissemination of 'signals' beyond the words on the page. Approaching Scott through the lens of classical reception yields a convenient platform to unveil the ways by which the author shapes the response of the top level of his audience. Instead of endorsing a triumphal pan-British rhetoric, as one of the most tenacious tenets of Scott's scholarship suggests, this strategy seems rather to

insert a reminder about how much was changed or lost after the Union, and at what cost, together with a warning not to dwell upon the illusion of peace.

An exploration of this kind has meant, in some ways, travelling off the beaten track, insofar as the insertion of subliminal classical elements prompts the reader to look backwards as well as forwards and sideways, beyond the sclerotic impasse that has left the author suspended in the unresolved dualism between Hanover and Stuart, Scottish independence and British empire. While attempting to understand the fluid interaction and revisionary relationship that Scott cultivates with classical antiquity, this work has also questioned the discursive patterns that post-Lukács scholarship has established by making of Scott the champion of Tory landlordism and the standard bearer for the British empire – a somewhat reassuring image that has represented, perhaps for too long, a comfort zone for mainstream criticism.

As we have seen, Scott's concern with classical culture closely coincides with a process that can be defined as 'masculinisation' of the novel. This experiment in genre negotiation engaged him in an attempt to shape the historical novel as a sub-genre for a learned readership, which was intellectually recognisable in its profile and requirements. Thus, the aim of addressing an upmarket audience, as well as meeting the expectations of a male-centred establishment, is achieved by relying on the collaboration of a reader who, be he Scottish or English, is assumed to have prior knowledge of classical texts and culture, and is invited, at the same time, to renegotiate that very knowledge through the proposal of a demanding interpretive effort.

Densely blended into the narrative prose rather than recognisably ‘exhibited’, classical material is transformed and adapted in Scott’s texts as a sort of secret code for expert users, at different levels of plot line and characterisation. His responses to the ancient world enable the learned reader to transcend historical and geographical dimensions, directly or by implication, to join an ongoing reflection on the exercise and limits of colonial power –specifically, on those elements that end up marginalised and disenfranchised by a socio-political system intent on silencing dissonant voices.

Thus, the familiar, somehow domesticated paradigms of Diogenes and the Parcae –which are embedded in anomalous figures at risk of stigmatisation, such as Edie Ochiltree and Meg Merrilies– are there to show that, despite the official policy of reconciliation, the trauma of civil war is not yet processed. In this regard, the acknowledgement of Diogenes as a precedent for Edie Ochiltree sheds light on his emancipatory act of nonconformity in a silent, protracted boycott of London-centred government in post-war years. Rather than writing the imperial myth of Great Britain, Scott underscores the ‘fault lines’ of her colonial project, pointing to the inadequacies and shortcomings of her historical mission.

By tracing an alternative route for fiction, the classical past represents a safe elsewhere, in which the sense of distance and remoteness that its alterity implies allows the reader to address the tensions and constraints of the present and the future alike.

The preceding chapters have sought to break fundamentally new ground in revealing that, despite his conservative sympathies, and behind the façade of a substantial acceptance of the British settlement, Scott was far from being the

propagandist for a ‘pan-British’ imperial narrative, nor was he straightforwardly aligned with the machinery of power. Conversely, the involvement of authors such as Tacitus, Virgil and Sallust –all of them, significantly, offering their own ‘narratives of crises’ in relation to the Roman expansion– helps the author to draw attention to the changes underway in Scotland in the post-civil war era.

In Chapter One we saw the extent to which, in their approach to teaching and learning, the Classics mirrored pressing concerns in Scott’s age, when the United Kingdom was at the beginning of its transformation into a global superpower. As we have observed, the Graeco-Roman past proved an invaluable resource, and constituted a powerful tool for self-definition, working at two distinct levels. First, the near past of Napoleonic wars, when Great Britain was isolated, both in a commercial and a political sense, and exposed to the risk of libertarian and republican demands passing through the Channel. Second, the remote past of the last Scottish resistance, in a phase during which English hegemony exerted significant repercussions in terms of governance and reduced self-determination. Tensions were particularly felt in Scotland, which was called upon to adjust to her new concentric ‘citizenship’ under the constitutional arrangements of the Union. Under these conditions, the ‘rediscovery’ of Scotland’s classical past goes hand in hand with her effort to carve a new position within the British horizon.

Chapter Two brought into play the ethnographical drive in Scott’s fiction, insofar as his endeavouring to give Scotland a sense of purpose and belonging is mediated by Graeco-Roman examples, which in turn illuminate controversial aspects of British historical identity. The characterisation of Scotland as a

primitive and backward place, one to be looked down upon with disdain, appeals to readers familiar with the conventions of ancient historiography, who are invited to come to terms with the rhetoric of the 'barbarians-around-the-corner' that portrays Scotland as an inherently and uniformly uncivilised country.

Shifting to the characterisation of the authorial instance, Chapter Three examined the paratextual manoeuvres that are layered in the portrait of the narrative voice, where classical models result in an embedded amalgamation of literary personae that invite learned readers to form their own set of expectations. While Scott's choice for anonymity mirrors his anxieties about entering the massive marketplace of prose fiction, nevertheless the adoption of classical 'masks' allows the 'Author of Waverley' to travel in well charted territory. In this regard, Horace acquires particular relevance on account of the issues of political wavering and the vexed question of the right alignment –a delicate matter for the intellectual in his relationship with political power. The Latin poet thus sets the social compass within a highly hierarchical world, with its social rituals, obligations and professions of gratitude. A reconsideration of social ties in the light of Scott's appeal to Horace, reduces the importance of what Garside reads as ostensible proof of Scott's endorsing attitude in favour of artistic patronage.

In the last two sections of this work, the Classics were viewed as an integral part of Scott's attitude towards matters of gender and sexuality, insofar as they play a crucial role in proposing an alternative notion of male heroism and acquiescent femininity, in a scenario in which the challenge remains for both poles, to resist the pressures of adult patronage.

Calling into discussion concepts typically ascribed to the male element, such as leadership, authority and supremacy, Chapter Four took us far from the optimistic view commonly associated with masculine elite in the prime of its ruling power. On the contrary, Scott's protagonists are disoriented in both time and space, due to the devastating marks left by a civil war that, despite over optimistic propaganda, the traces of which still lingered in the social fabric. In his struggle to position himself as both an historical and ethical agent, the conflict that Darsie Latimer experiences as a latter day Orestes, brings to the fore the enduring, tangible effects of civil war on a family whose unity and cohesion are lost once and for all, in a perpetual cycle of hatred and violence.

As we have seen, the theme of classical eros, with its controversial and contested endorsement of same-sex attraction, proves to be particularly fitting in channelling issues pertaining to the private realm of emotions and desire in *Redgauntlet*. Here, Horace and Virgil provide a safe 'screen' for homosocial orientations, whereas the confrontation between Virgil and Cicero offers two models of masculinity, both not alien to ambiguities, which allow Scott to 'tiptoe' around latent issues of sexuality. Likewise, the subsequent characterisation of Alan Fairford on the model of Cicero –whose building blocks Scott finds encapsulated and ready for use in Plutarch's fictionalised biography– is instrumental for the promotion of a notion of heroism not immune to the controversies of a society that was based, just as the Roman one, on the cult of military prowess. While the insertion of Cicero hints at a new kind of 'low profile' heroism, that recasts their friendship from an adult perspective, where the sentimentalism of a teenage affection is counterbalanced by the sobriety of

bourgeois sociality, I remain persuaded that a karstic trend of latent homoeroticism still remains among the undeveloped potentials of Scott's fiction –a topic that future criticism may wish to pursue. While illuminating the subconscious sides and erotic undertones of the comradeship between Alan and Darsie, the Classics therefore showed, in this chapter, new avenues open for research in terms of gender and sexuality within the corpus of Scott's novels.

In the last chapter, we saw how the currently available catalogues of female figures in Scott do not pay justice to the rich spectrum of unconventional womanhood that the author proposes across the lines of his fiction. Regardless of any effort to provide inventories of them, and apart from proving central to the definition of a subversive womanhood, the inclusion of classical paradigms lurking behind this allegedly abnormal femininity illustrates how much room for multiplicity and variability there is still in Scott's fiction. Moving beyond Welsh's binary opposition and Bruzelius' too rigid schematism, a reassessment of Scott's female agents, through the lens of classical reception, illuminates the web of connections and tensions at work in an inherently open network. What we have seen emerging, is in fact, an osmotic exchange of prerogatives and traits that articulates the ongoing renegotiation of a femininity capable of resisting male supervision, and threatening the stability and order of society: from the milder, though firm, resoluteness of Antigone, to the seductive appeal of the fascinating Amazon, not to mention the bloodthirsty virago modelled on Boudicca.

Furthermore, the analysis of *The Bride of Lammermoor* as a Gothic rewriting of the Dido and Aeneas story showed how the appropriation of Virgil proceeds in Scott against any teleological perspective, within a reading of the

*Aeneid* that emphasises the controversial aspects of a historical process, where revenge and resentment triumph against any hope for progress. The tragic story of Dido and Aeneas is reconfigured in a Gothic novel that marks the return of the gods in the form of oppressive, manipulative parents, who act within a patriarchal perspective, in which the female element is not only reduced to a currency for social advantage, but also falls victim to domestic patronage and adult responsibility.

In brief, Graeco-Roman models help Scott to voice, in the fabric of his texts, issues and controversies concerning the sphere of the female, by calling into question concepts such as motherhood and virginity. This attitude leads him to dispute the notion of a 'manageable' femininity –where 'manageable' rhymes with 'marriageable' –contributing, therefore, to the anticipation of the apprehensions and expectations of Victorian society.

In the final analysis, a focus on classical reception forces us to rethink our understanding of how Scott perceived the past, present and future of the United Kingdom. In foregrounding tensions between seeing and knowing, seeming and being, Graeco-Roman ingredients play a crucial part in the characterisation of outcasts who, nevertheless, perform key roles and provide the author with the means to point a critical finger at the upper orders of both state and society. Far from validating the *status quo*, classical presences are instrumental in inducing meditations on the still unsorted challenges that are in store for the Union such as the drama of the veteran returning home, as emblematised by Edie Ochiltree, or of a youth denied, as in the case of Lucy Ashton and Diana Vernon.

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