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The Surfaces of History: Scott's Turn, 1820

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With the publication of *Ivanhoe* (December 1819, dated 1820), the career of 'the Author of *Waverley*' took a well-noted turn. The turn was topical, from the recent past of modern Scottish history, 'sixty years since' (the subtitle of Scott's first novel, *Waverley*), to the remote past of medieval England, six hundred years since. It was also technical, from a realism that modelled 'the objective dialectical framework of a particular historical crisis', according to Georg Lukács's influential account of 'the classical form of the historical novel', to an antiquarian and ephrastic rendition of period forms – from effects of historical depth, in other words, to effects of surface.¹ In a 'succession of brilliant pictures, addressed as often to the eye as to the imagination', *Ivanhoe* transports its readers 'from the reign of nature and reality, to that of fancy and romance', wrote Francis Jeffrey; Scott's novel glitters with 'splendid descriptions of arms and dresses—moated and massive castles—tournaments of mailed champions—solemn feasts—formal courtesies, and other matters of external and visible presentment'.² Other reviewers concurred, some dismissively: 'The costume which the actors have borrowed from ancient times, is perceived to be the only thing which claims affinity with reality', until 'no other impression is left on the mind, than that of a pageant or a masquerade'.³

Recent commentary develops the theme. Writing on *Ivanhoe*, Ina Ferris links Scott's 'unprecedented mobilization of reading's powers of visualization' with a contemporary vogue for the scientific explanation of apparitions, as effects of psychosomatic disorder (hallucinations)

¹ Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p. 60.

² [Francis Jeffrey], 'Ivanhoe. A Romance. The Novels and Tales of the Author of *Waverley*', *Edinburgh Review*, 33 (January 1820), 1–54 (pp. 7–8).

³ *Eclectic Review*, 13 (January 1820), in *Scott: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John O. Hayden (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970), pp. 188–94 (p. 190).

or optical technology (mirrors, lenses). Like those phenomena, on the uncanny interface between the visible and the visionary, Scott's fiction 'inhabits the equivocal zone of "appearing": at once a manifestation and a simulacrum'.⁴ Scaled for at-home consumption, historical romance became a portable analogue of the visual-media displays and devices that proliferated through the 1820s, like the 'Phantasmagoria Lantern' discussed by Phillip Roberts in Chapter 4 of this volume.⁵ Other critics refer such effects to the increasing theatricalisation of political life in public spectacles and ceremonies, like the neo-Elizabethan pomp of George IV's coronation in 1820 ('a gigantic fancy-dress pageant on the theme of the *Faerie Queen*, in which George IV played the part of a male Gloriana') and the tartan-clad, retro-Jacobite pageantry Scott himself designed for the king's visit to Scotland in 1822.⁶ Pageantry provides an aesthetic principle for Scott's second English historical novel, the Elizabethan romance *Kenilworth* – 'a clear-eyed meditation on the nature and uses of spectacle', according to Stephen Arata.⁷ Andrew Lincoln views *Ivanhoe* and *Kenilworth* (both of which would hold the stage in multiple dramatic adaptations) as exercises in 'the politics of style and spectacle': converting the novelistic 'drama of inner development' into 'a drama of surfaces', Scott aims 'to reconcile traditional aristocratic styles of public display with newer, egalitarian styles of imagining national community' in response to the civil unrest of 1819–20.⁸ For David Kurnick, disguise and performance in *Kenilworth* are tactical by-products of 'an unstable world in which theatricality goes all the way down'.⁹ And Timothy Campbell argues that Scott's saturation of that

⁴ Ina Ferris, "'Before Our Eyes": Romantic Historical Fiction and the Apparitions of Reading', *Representations*, 121 (Winter 2013), 60–84 (pp. 61, 80).

⁵ Ferris (ibid. p. 62) cites Maurice Samuel's discussion of the context for French Romantic historical fiction (flourishing in Scott's wake) in 'new illusionist technologies of reproduction (for example, panoramas, dioramas, and wax displays), stage entertainments, exhibitions of historical paintings, [and] museum displays': *The Spectacular Past: Popular History and the Novel in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 164.

⁶ See Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 26–8; Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People?: England, 1783–1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 31–6. For a comprehensive discussion of the period's media and performance culture, see Angela Esterhammer, *Print and Performance in the 1820s: Improvisation, Speculation, Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁷ Stephen Arata, 'Scott's Pageants: The Example of *Kenilworth*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 40.1 (Spring 2001), 99–107 (p. 104).

⁸ Andrew Lincoln, *Walter Scott and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 69, 86.

⁹ David Kurnick, 'Theatricality and the Novel', in *The Nineteenth-Century Novel 1820–1880*, ed. John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University

novel with descriptions of costume and décor installs a quintessentially modern mode of consumerist desire, bound to the cycles of fashion, which were not current in Britain before the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁰

Consequently, in Campbell's summary, Scott 'forges a historical "milieu" that is most fundamentally an anachronistic effect of commercialization'.¹¹ Nineteenth-century commentators noted a heightened visibility of anachronism in Scott's novels of the early 1820s, which they diagnosed as a by-product of the recourse to period surface. The author of *Ivanhoe* sets out to reproduce, 'with antiquarian fidelity, the manners and customs of the age': consequently, 'everything bordering upon palpable anachronism, must be avoided', or else 'the moment the antiquary is at fault, the pseudo-historian is detected in his forgeries'.¹² Sixty years later, Edward Augustus Freeman (Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford) devotes an index entry in his *History of the Norman Conquest* to '*Ivanhoe*, historical blunders in', which he blames for corrupting an actual work of history, Augustin Thierry's *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* (1825).¹³

Scott himself was alert to the issue. 'It is extremely probable that I may have confused the manners of two or three centuries, and introduced, during the reign of Richard the First, circumstances appropriated to a period either considerably earlier, or a good deal later than that era', he concedes in the 'Dedicatory Epistle' to *Ivanhoe*, adding, 'It is my comfort, that errors of this kind will escape the general class of readers.'¹⁴ He addresses the inescapable role of anachronism in historical fiction:

It is true, that I neither can, nor do pretend, to the observation of complete accuracy, even in matters of outward costume, much less in the more important points of language and manners. But the same motive which prevents my writing the dialogue of the piece in Anglo-Saxon or in Norman-French,

Press, 2012), pp. 306–21 (p. 309). See also J. H. Alexander, 'Introduction', in Walter Scott, *Kenilworth*, ed. J. H. Alexander (London: Penguin, 1999), pp. xiii–xiv.

¹⁰ Timothy Campbell, *Historical Style: Fashion and the New Mode of History, 1740–1830* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), pp. 214–22. For this vein of commentary as cliché, compare Daniel Mendelsohn (reviewing Hilary Mantel's Tudor trilogy in the *New Yorker*, 16 March 2020): 'the Walter Scott approach . . . is to focus on exteriors, to dress things up with florid gold script and quaint period diction' (p. 82).

¹¹ Campbell, *Historical Style*, p. 220.

¹² *Eclectic Review*, in *Scott: The Critical Heritage*, p. 190.

¹³ Edward Augustus Freeman, *History of the Norman Conquest of England, its Causes and its Results* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), vol. VI (1879), p. 139; vol. V (1876), pp. 825, 839.

¹⁴ Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, ed. Ian Duncan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 21. Future references to this edition will be cited in the text.

and which prohibits my sending forth to the public this essay printed with the types of Caxton or Wynken de Worde, prevents my attempting to confine myself within the limits of the period in which my story is laid. (p. 17)

An authentic mode of historical fiction, in Scott's view, is one that brings into play the relation between past and present, activating it on the textual surface, rather than – as in Thomas Chatterton's Rowley forgeries – covering it up: 'It is necessary, for exciting interest of any kind, that the subject assumed should be, as it were, translated into the manners, as well as the language, of the age we live in' (pp. 18–19). The principle informs Scott's stylistic innovation in *Ivanhoe*, the counterpoint of modern narration with a dramatic pastiche of antique speech, synthesised from English literary sources ranging from Chaucer (two hundred years after the novel's period setting) to Shakespeare (four hundred years afterwards). The medium of the 'modern antique romance' (Scott's own term, p. 505) is a 'mixed, artificially created language'.¹⁵

If *Ivanhoe* proceeds on the premise that England in the late twelfth century is remote enough, hence unfamiliar enough, that most readers will not notice anachronisms embedded within the story (as distinct from the interplay of narrative and dramatic styles on its textual surface), *Kenilworth* – published a year later, in January 1821 – flaunts its internal anachronisms, as if daring us to spot them.¹⁶ Set in the summer of 1575, the novel has its characters refer to poetic and dramatic masterpieces of the Elizabethan age, by Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney and William Shakespeare, which would not be printed or performed for another two decades. Shakespeare, born in 1564 and thus eleven years old according to the official chronology, is already at the height of his career in *Kenilworth*. His *Venus and Adonis* charms Philip Sidney; passages from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Troilus and Cressida* are quoted by Walter Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth; other characters recite songs from *Hamlet*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* (the latter not composed until 1612, according to Edmond Malone's still-authoritative chronology).¹⁷

¹⁵ Graham Tulloch, *The Language of Walter Scott: A Study of his Scottish and Period Language* (London: André Deutsch, 1980), p. 14.

¹⁶ For a list of anachronisms in *Kenilworth*, see John Sutherland, *The Life of Sir Walter Scott* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 248.

¹⁷ Edmond Malone, 'An Attempt to Ascertain the Order in which the Plays Attributed to Shakespeare Were Written', in *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, 5th edn, 21 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1803), vol. II, pp. 228–9. Malone's essay was published in the first edition of 1778. Scott owned the fifth: J. G. Cochrane, *Catalogue of the Library at Abbotsford* (Edinburgh: T. Constable, 1838), p. 210.

These anachronisms, planted within the historical *mise en scène*, are of a different order from the mode of anachronism noted by Campbell, in which the profusion of period detail triggers a modern affective relation between scene and reader, as well as from the analogous mode avowed by Scott himself in *Ivanhoe*, in which a modern narration encloses a simulation of antique speech: operations of anachronism that cross the diegetic frame, from the represented past to the present time of reading. Anachronism turns out to be a more complex and variable device, or suite of devices, than most commentary has recognised. Far from bearing a single effect, it assumes multiple forms and functions. Focusing on *Kenilworth*, this essay will explore the relation between anachronism and the new style of representation, oriented to period surface, that composes the turn in Scott's practice from the 'classical form of the historical novel' towards a different historicist aesthetic, one that has remained elusive to critical analysis, at the beginning of the 1820s.

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Anachronism has been recognised as a primary technique of Scott's historicism since Lukács drew on the Hegelian concept of the 'necessary anachronism' for his analysis of the 'dialectic of contradictory development' in the Waverley novels.¹⁸ The necessary anachronism 'can emerge organically from historical material,' Lukács notes, 'if the past portrayed is clearly recognized and experienced by contemporary writers as the *necessary prehistory* of the present.'¹⁹ It forges a teleological link between the represented past and the present scene of writing – and, implicitly, the present scene of reading – by disclosing the present's immanence in the past. 'History is only ours,' Hegel affirmed in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, 'when it belongs to the nation to which we belong, or when we can look at the present in general as a consequence of a chain of events in which the characters or deeds represented form an essential link'. Anachronism maintains that link by revealing 'the higher interests of our spirit and will, what is in itself human and powerful, the true depths of the heart', within 'what is strange and external in a past period'.²⁰ The past is made recognisable, imaginatively habitable, 'ours', by the revelation of a universal human spirit investing the contingent, transient forms of historical difference.

¹⁸ Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, pp. 61, 182.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 61.

²⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), vol. I, p. 272.

1 Scott's first novel activates the necessary anachronism through a
 2 simultaneous discovery of the past in the present and the present in
 3 the past. *Waverley* reanimates a past social formation, Highland clan
 4 society, which appears as archaic within the novel's represented world as
 5 well as to the modern reader. During the 1745 Jacobite Rising, Lowland
 6 Scots and English witnesses view the clansmen (swarming down from
 7 their mountains) as savage remnants of a superseded historical stage.
 8 Meanwhile the novel's protagonist, equipped with modern liberal
 9 habits of sympathy and taste, acts as a proxy for the reader, dropped
 10 into the scenery of sixty years since. The intrusion of the modern visitor
 11 (an army officer in the guise of gentleman tourist) forecasts the clans'
 12 demise, while their primitive appearance confirms the ascendancy of
 13 his – and our – enlightened sensibility. *Waverley* himself, in short, is
 14 the vehicle of the necessary anachronism. Our recognition of the past
 15 as necessary prehistory of the present takes place through Scott's 'more
 16 or less mediocre, average' hero, who personifies the historical novel's
 17 mediation between then and now.²¹ *Waverley* redeems its protagonist's
 18 untimely relation to the scenes through which he moves with a domes-
 19 tication in modern civil society which is realised by ourselves, in the
 20 act of reading, more than it is by him – and hence the novel's objective
 21 status, signalled in the necessary anachronism, as a work of fiction
 22 rather than 'real history'.

23 The teleological, domesticating function of anachronism, as realised
 24 in *Waverley*, thus differs from the alienating force ascribed to it in recent
 25 critical accounts of anachronism's effects of 'untimeliness and temporal
 26 heterogeneity', its disruptions of a linear, unified, progressive history of
 27 "before" and "after", cause and effect', and (hence) of 'the assumed
 28 futurity that useful history naturalizes'.²² Scott brings this disruptive
 29 force to bear in some of the novels published between *Waverley* and
 30 *Ivanhoe*. The protagonists of *Old Mortality* (1816) and *The Bride of*
 31 *Lammermoor* (1819) inhabit what Ferris calls 'the time of the remnant',
 32 characterised by 'a suspension of connection and continuity that gener-
 33 ates a curiously insubstantial existence in the present'. At odds with their
 34 historical moment, both characters struggle to reclaim the *Waverley*-
 35 hero's function as vessel of the necessary anachronism. Their passive
 36 disposition (in contrast to *Waverley*'s) 'signals less the prudential reflex
 37

38 ²¹ Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, p. 33.

39 ²² Justin Sider, "Modern-Antiques," *Ballad Imitation, and the Aesthetics of*
 40 *Anachronism*, *Victorian Poetry*, 54 (2016), 455–75 (p. 458); Jeremy Tambling, *On*
 41 *Anachronism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 4; Mary Mullen,
 42 'Anachronistic Aesthetics: Maria Edgeworth and the "Uses" of History', *Eighteenth-*
Century Fiction, 26 (2013–14), 233–59 (p. 235).

of modernity's civil hero, than a disconnection from historical time altogether'.²³

Scott restores the positive operation of the necessary anachronism in *Ivanhoe*, but at the cost of a drastic redistribution across the novel's character system. Its avatar is not the eponymous protagonist, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, but the Jewish heroine Rebecca. Debating Norman chivalry at the centre of the novel, Rebecca pleads for what modern readers are trained to recognise as humane, liberal principles, while Ivanhoe defends the institution's extravagance and violence – effects, to a modern point of view, of its moral obsolescence, its failure to transcend its era. 'In the dialectic between past and present values,' writes Alide Cagidemetrio, 'Rebecca consistently embodies contemporary England much more than does the novel's canonic mediator, Ivanhoe'.²⁴

Yet historical necessity excludes Rebecca from the future national community convened at the close of the novel, banishing her to the prehistory of an unrealised present. The exclusion launches the most flagrant of all the anachronisms in *Ivanhoe*. Rebecca and her father prepare for an exile that will transport them not just through space but through time, three centuries into the future, to the court of 'Mohammed Boabdil, King of Grenada' (p. 499) – whose surrender to the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492 will unleash the final expulsion of Jews and Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula. Reminding us that further cycles of persecution and exile await Rebecca's people, Scott's anachronism opens onto a sublime, turbulent, unfinished history of worldwide dispossession and vagrancy, in contrast to the English destiny of compromise and settlement that *Ivanhoe* is usually taken to be promoting. Rebecca personifies the Hegelian ideal of a universal human spirit which, now, cannot find its home within a national history fenced about by bigotry and xenophobia. Instead, the necessary anachronism poses a hard question to modern readers about the adequacy of their social and political order to the ethical values supposed to sustain it.²⁵

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²³ Ina Ferris, "'On the Borders of Oblivion": Scott's Historical Novel and the Modern Time of the Remnant', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 70 (2009), 473–94 (pp. 475, 482).

²⁴ Alide Cagidemetrio, 'A Plea for Fictional Histories and Old-Time "Jewesses"', in *The Invention of Ethnicity*, ed. Werner Sollors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 13–43 (p. 19).

²⁵ For a fuller treatment of anachronism in Scott's novels from *Waverley* to *Ivanhoe*, see my essay 'Scott's Anachronisms', in *Walter Scott at 250: Looking Forward*, ed. Caroline McCracken-Flesher and Matthew Wickman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), pp. 46–64.

1 *Waverley* rehearses a comic variant of the necessary anachronism, align-
 2 ing the historical past with the gestation of the present. Subsequent
 3 novels (*Old Mortality*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*) experiment with
 4 an ironic technique that releases anachronism's alienating, dislocating
 5 force, casting characters adrift in history and unsettling our time of
 6 reading. In *Ivanhoe* Scott radicalises this exilic tropism for a critical
 7 and utopian mode of anachronism expressive of the separation of a
 8 spiritually evolved humanity from its historical homeland. More than
 9 a technical modulation of the 'classical form of the historical novel',
 10 *Ivanhoe* stages its ideological crisis, one in which the necessary anach-
 11 ronism splits the enlightened prospect of a humane civil society from
 12 the diminished – merely domestic – achievement of an ethno-national
 13 community. The crisis, depleting the past's teleological realisation in our
 14 present, accompanies the other kind of anachronism noted by critics
 15 of *Ivanhoe*: not the overlay of past and present, confirming their posi-
 16 tive relation, which signals the necessary anachronism, but instead a
 17 more banal confusion of objects and styles from different periods, a
 18 misplacement of the past in the past, which we might call the local or
 19 contingent anachronism. If such anachronisms remain undetected by
 20 ordinary readers of *Ivanhoe*, as Scott protested, *Kenilworth* – to which
 21 I now turn – puts the device under scrutiny, activating anachronism's
 22 critical potential by making it obvious, unignorable.

23 *Kenilworth* does so by insisting on a date for its events, with a
 24 sharpened specificity new to the *Waverley* novels. We tend to think of
 25 the date as a defining topos of historical fiction – as in Victor Hugo's
 26 *Notre-Dame de Paris: 1482*, with its fanatically punctual opening, 'Il
 27 y a aujourd'hui trois cent quarante-huit ans six mois et dix-neuf jours
 28 que les Parisiens s'éveillèrent.'²⁶ But Scott's earlier historical novels are
 29 chary of specifying dates. While the informed reader of *Waverley* may
 30 track the convergence of the novel's plot with the public history of the
 31 Jacobite Rising, the narrator mentions 1745 only twice, in stances of
 32 retrospective distance from the narrated action (pp. 219, 363). The
 33 opening paragraphs of *Ivanhoe* immerse the novel's historical setting,
 34 'a period towards the end of the reign of Richard I', in the more
 35 diffuse medium of 'ancient times', emanating from the primeval English
 36 greenwood – the chronotope of romance rather than history, haunted
 37 by legendary dragons as well as by Robin Hood (p. 25). *Kenilworth*
 38 also opens by evoking 'the old days of Merry England', *Ivanhoe*-style:
 39 but that legendary time dissipates as the action moves into the arena
 40

41 ²⁶ Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris: 1482*, ed. S. de Sacy (Paris: Gallimard, 2002),
 42 p. 37.

of Elizabethan court politics.²⁷ 'It was the twilight of a summer night, (9th July, 1575,) the sun having for some time set, and all were in anxious expectation of the Queen's immediate approach', the narrator announces in volume three (pp. 284–5). The marking of date and time brings a frisson of urgency as the story marches to its crisis. It also calibrates the operation of the local anachronism to a micro-scale, a difference of a few years or decades within the period setting, rather than (as in *Ivanhoe*) across 'two or three centuries'. With the formula 'sixty years since', the span of a human lifetime, *Waverley* had marked the innermost boundary of a historical period, while acknowledging (in Scott's 'Postscript, which should have been a Preface') that the boundary is shrinking as the pace of historical change speeds up towards the present.²⁸ The anachronisms in *Kenilworth* notate a radically diminished temporal scale of historical event and period. They are expressions of 'the peculiar form of acceleration which characterizes modernity', in Reinhart Koselleck's analysis, within the longer-duration 'temporalization' (*Vertzeitlichung*) of history' characteristic of 'the period in which modernity is formed'.²⁹

Jonathan Sachs argues that the modern acceleration of historical time made itself felt through the industrial-scale increase of literary production and consumption in Romantic-period Great Britain: 'The regular appearance of an ever-proliferating quantity of printed materials – from books to broadsides, pamphlets to periodicals, annuals to almanacs, prints to playbills, newspapers to magazines – exacerbated the sense of hurry in commercial life.'³⁰ No one was more attuned to the phenomenon than Scott, financially bound to the firm that printed his own works. The calendrical spate of print – cresting in the 1820s – was manifest not only in the frenetic pace with which he was writing new novels (two per year, at this stage of his career) but also, now, in their repackaging in cheaper collected editions. Just one year after its initial printing *Kenilworth* was reissued in a new series, *Historical Romances of the Author of Waverley*, which would appear in two formats (eight volumes, octavo, 1822; six volumes, duodecimo, 1824), on the heels

²⁷ Scott, *Kenilworth*, ed. Alexander, p. 1; future references will be given in the text.

²⁸ On Scott's innovation of a period setting in the recent past, taken up by Victorian realism, see Helen Kingstone, *Victorian Narratives of the Recent Past* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 142, 149–53.

²⁹ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), p. 5. On the Romantic-period sense of history, see James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 100–17.

³⁰ Jonathan Sachs, *The Poetics of Decline in British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 70–1.

of a previous venture, *Novels and Tales of the Author of Waverley* (twelve volumes, octavo, 1819, 1822; sixteen volumes, duodecimo, 1821, 1825). Scott was already involved, in other words, in a commercial, chronological and taxonomical sorting of his ongoing oeuvre that recombined it into a new hybrid format of popular serial miscellany and classical author's edition (anticipating the later, better known 'Magnum Opus' edition, 1829–33), synchronised to the 'informational time' of an ascendant industrial capitalism.³¹

Meanwhile, the new collective name 'Historical Romances' reaffirms the generic category affixed to the first-edition title pages of *Ivanhoe: A Romance* and *Kenilworth: A Romance*, in avowal of their modal distinction from the 'Novels and Tales', based on modern Scottish history, that preceded them. 'Romance' signals the works' bondage to the accelerated time of modernity and an industrialising print market, in spite of a subject matter embedded in the deeper past of English history. Richard Cronin analyses the seeming paradox. Scott's historical novels satisfied contemporary readers' conflicted desire 'at once to be confirmed in, and relieved from, [their] own modernity' by offering them 'an experience of deep time, sometimes, as in *Ivanhoe* of 1820, very deep time', within a genre – the novel – that 'of all established literary genres had the shallowest history': its 'shallow time' exacerbated in the reprint format.³²

This literary context provides for the other effect that distinguishes the local anachronisms in *Kenilworth* from those in *Ivanhoe*. Not only do they mark a micro-scale of historical misplacement (by years or decades rather than epochs): they obtrude upon our notice, demand (in short) to be read, insofar as they refer to literary history – a history that is 'ours' both spiritually, as a cultural heritage, and also materially, as a commodity in our possession, the novel we are reading, purchased or rented from a circulating library. Literary history presents itself as the medium both of the commodity form, with its accelerated temporality, and of Hegel's universal spirit, transcending time. Above all, it is a history that belongs to us (in Hegel's formulation) by virtue of its specific condensation in what Nassau Senior, reviewing *Kenilworth* in

³¹ Sachs, *The Poetics of Decline*, p. 70; Peter Garside, 'Waverley and the National Fiction Revolution', in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 3: Ambition and Industry 1800–1880*, ed. Bill Bell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 222–31 (pp. 227–9).

³² Richard Cronin, 'Magazines, *Don Juan*, and the Scotch Novels: Deep and Shallow Time in the Regency', in *Rethinking British Romantic History, 1770–1845*, ed. Porscha Fermanis and John Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 165–78 (pp. 173–4).

the *Quarterly Review*, called 'the pleasing anachronism of Shakspeare [sic]'.³³

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Shakespeare stands out from the other literary sources from which Scott concocts his stylistic pastiche. J. H. Alexander's notes to the Edinburgh Edition identify dozens if not scores of those sources, among which the Elizabethan dramatists are especially prevalent.³⁴ Many of these authors and works are known today only to specialist scholars, and they would have been more obscure in Scott's day – although *Kenilworth* rides on a Regency-era revival of interest in the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, marked by Charles Lamb's anthology *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* (1808) and Scott's own *The Ancient British Drama* (1810: a reissue of Robert Dodsley's *Select Collection of Old Plays*, 1744), as well as editions of Philip Massinger by William Gifford (1805), and of John Ford (1811) and Beaumont and Fletcher (1812) by Scott's protégé Henry Weber. These minor literary sources belong to the condition analysed by Campbell, for whom the modern fashion system, with its rapid commercial cycles of innovation and obsolescence, made the modern phenomenology of historical change legible to Scott and his contemporaries.³⁵ Like the minutiae of styles of dress and grooming, they too are lost from present view in the ephemeral cycles of production and obsolescence – absorbed, like mulch, into a generic period texture. The condition is extreme for the dramatists, whose works are extinct in stage history and hence only available as texts, secreted in the antiquarian archive unless harvested for anthologies or scholarly editions.

Shakespeare is the glorious exception. 'Not of an age, but for all time' (Scott quotes Ben Jonson in *Kenilworth*, although not this line), Shakespeare transcends the flux of fashion – hence his status as the anachronism we are supposed to recognise, the avatar of a history that 'belongs to us', as well as Scott's precursor in the proud practice of anachronism. (The notorious striking clock in *Julius Caesar* calls attention to the very question of historical punctuality.) By 1800 Shakespeare was established as the unassailable classic among British authors: a prize, consequently, in the intensifying culture wars of the Regency, fought over by rival party interests.³⁶ Furnishing 'the quoted banner, the originating sign', for Scott's own project of national historical romance on the title page

³³ Scott: *The Critical Heritage*, p. 253.

³⁴ See Alexander, Introduction to *Kenilworth*, p. xxii.

³⁵ Campbell, *Historical Style*, pp. 217–21.

³⁶ See Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism, 1730–1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 34–44, 102–4, 134–84.

of *Waverley*, in the form of an epigraph from 2 *Henry IV*, Shakespeare would be a dominant allusive presence in the novels that followed.³⁷

Scott evokes Shakespeare in different registers in *Kenilworth*. He figures as a historical character, on the edges of the action, hailed by the Earl of Leicester: ‘Ha, Will Shakespeare – wild Will! – thou hast given my nephew, Philip Sidney, love-powder – he cannot sleep without thy Venus and Adonis under his pillow!’ (p. 168). Other characters allude to him as already a living classic, cited by the queen herself:

‘Think of what that arch-knave Shakespeare says – a plague on him, his toys come into my head when I should think of other matter – Stay, how goes it? – Cressid was your’s, tied with the bonds of heaven;
These bonds of heaven are slipt, dissolved, and loosed,
And with another knot five fingers tied,
The fragments of her faith are bound to Diomed.
You smile, my Lord of Southampton – perchance I make your player’s verse halt through my bad memory.’ (p. 163)

Shakespeare is also a sort of Renaissance Robert Burns, a snapper-up of popular tradition. ‘But age has clawed me somewhat in his clutch, as the song says’, someone quotes from the gravedigger’s song in *Hamlet* (p. 247). Alexander’s note (p. 442) tells us that the line is first recorded in a book of poems by Sir Thomas Vaux, printed in 1557, eighteen years before the action of *Kenilworth* and four decades before the first performance of *Hamlet* (according to Malone, who dates the play to 1596): ample time for it to have gone into popular circulation before being appropriated by Shakespeare. The voice of Shakespeare, sampling popular tradition, has the power to generate further allusions and anachronisms: the present speaker (the narrator cannot help himself) ‘might have been the very emblem of the Wife of Bath’ (p. 247).

Lastly, and most potently, Shakespeare functions as a model, a matrix of types and paradigms, available to shape the novel’s characters and events: not just a passing period form but an abiding imaginative structure. What Diane E. Henderson calls Scott’s ‘Shakeshifting’ creates ‘a “modern” Shakespeare’ in a symbiotic rather than parasitic reworking of the elder author.³⁸ Disaster ensues when Leicester falls into the role

³⁷ Judith Wilt, *Secret Leaves: The Novels of Walter Scott* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 24–5. The *Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels* maintains an online database of Shakespearean allusions and quotations: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/sll/documents/Shakespeare.docx> (accessed 7 February 2022).

³⁸ Diane E. Henderson, ‘Bards of the Borders: Scott’s *Kenilworth*, the Nineteenth Century’s Shakespeare, and the *Tragedy of Othello*’, in *Collaborations with the Past: Reshaping Shakespeare across Time and Media* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 39–103 (p. 42).

of Othello, at the prompting of his Iago-like familiar Richard Varney, and succumbs to murderous jealousy of the innocent Amy Robsart. Presumably *Othello* has not been produced yet, in 1575 (Malone dates it to 1611; modern scholarship indicates a date between 1601 and 1604) – or if it has, Leicester has not seen it, otherwise he would surely have known better.

Shakespeare transcends the flux of fashion, as Scott's flourishes of anachronism remind us. At the same time, as virtuoso of a popular, commercial art, he belongs to it; it is his original medium. 'The public, . . . in the widest sense of the word, was at once arbiter and patron of the [Elizabethan] Drama', Scott had written in his 'Essay on the Drama' (1819) for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 'The effect of the genius of an individual upon the taste of a nation is mighty; but that genius, in its turn, is formed according to the opinions prevalent at the period when it comes into existence. Such was the case with Shakspeare', who '[composed] for the amusement of the public alone'.³⁹ In a witty set piece, Queen Elizabeth and her courtiers debate the merits of the new form of entertainment currently enthralling crowds on the South Bank (a hotbed of popular theatrical novelties in Scott's day, as in Shakespeare's). Placed where it is, at the very centre of *Kenilworth*, the scene glosses the social role and function of modern literature, including Scott's own art.

The debate opens with the presentation of a petition to the queen by the keeper of the royal bears, who complains that the playhouses are drawing audiences away from the adjacent bear-garden. (Scott mentions this episode, evidently historical, in his 'Essay on the Drama'.) Seconding the petition, the veteran Earl of Sussex dismisses the drama as 'all froth and folly – no substance or seriousness in it . . . What are half a dozen knaves, with rusty foils and tattered targets, making but a mere mockery of a stout fight, to compare to the royal game of bear-baiting?' – a spectacle that yields 'the bravest image of war that can be shown in peace' (p. 174). In staging an actual bloody combat between beasts, the bear-baiting provides a more authentic mimesis of heroic violence than the drama, which features men who are only playing at it. Sussex supports his reactionary preference with the description of a fight between bear and mastiffs that reproduces the decorum of Homeric simile (embedding scenes of animal-on-animal violence, belonging to the domestic reality of the poem's audience, amid the epic narration of battlefield carnage) vividly enough to earn the queen's accolade.

³⁹ *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart, Volume 6: Chivalry, Romance, the Drama* (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1834), pp. 334, 337.

Nevertheless, the appeal to an older – primitive – epic regime fails to dislodge the ascendancy of the modern dramatic art, the power of which resides in its commercial, public and popular character. Leicester speaks up for the players:

I must needs say that they are witty knaves, whose rants and jests keep the minds of the commons from busying themselves with state affairs, and listening to traitorous speeches, idle rumours, and disloyal insinuations. When men are agape to see how Marlow, Shakespeare, and other play artificers work out their fanciful plots, as they call them, the mind of the spectators is withdrawn from the conduct of their rulers. (p. 175)

Such entertainments are politically useful, in short, in that they distract their audience from thinking critically about government. (Elizabeth rejoins that she welcomes the people's scrutiny of her conduct, since 'the more closely it is examined, the true motives by which we are guided will appear the more manifest'.) A Puritan churchman objects that the plays, far from distracting public attention, promote 'such reflections on government, its origin and its object, as tend to render the subject discontented, and shake the solid foundations of civil society' (p. 175). The complaint is deflected rather than answered by Elizabeth's assertion that the new chronicle plays – Shakespeare's history cycle, the model for Scott's historical fiction – are wholesome combinations of amusement and instruction. Walter Raleigh then bolsters her approval by quoting the famous compliment to the queen (Oberon's vision of the 'fair vestal, throned by the west') inserted into Act 2 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (p. 176). The question of the political effect or function of the new art form is left unresolved, diverted, via the appeal to the Shakespearean exception, into courtly flattery. Scott's refusal to settle the question, in light of the struggle over Shakespeare as partisan trophy in his own time, no doubt reflects a desire to position his own art outside the fray. What the debate does establish is that these representations *are* political interventions, by virtue of their commercial medium – the public theatre – and their status as popular entertainment, addressed to the common people rather than a noble coterie. They may flatter a sovereign, promote harmless amusement and edification, distract the public from paying attention to politics, stir up discontent and sedition – all or any of these. They overflow the constraints that define literary production in the conditions of royal and aristocratic patronage – which are still potent enough, however, to motivate the 'fair vestal' passage in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

'By collaborating with Shakespeare, Scott creates a romanticized British tradition of authorship based on elective affinities', Henderson

writes.⁴⁰ *Kenilworth* develops the theme, established in eighteenth-century poetry and criticism, of the Elizabethan age as foundation of a glorious, continuous national literary heritage.⁴¹ Its great authors are at once classical and modern; Shakespeare, the greatest, inhabits both the shallow time of popular entertainment and the deep time of national culture – the amphibious temporality, according to Cronin, that Scott's historical fiction made imaginatively available to readers. Despite frequent comparisons of his art with Shakespeare's, Scott began to internalise complaints, on the rise through the 1820s, that the industrial-scale output of Waverley novels might relegate them to the class of ephemeral amusements, 'market commodities' rather than 'contributions to literature', after all.⁴² This precarious double occupancy – of an age and for all time – rhymes with Lincoln's account of the pageantry in *Kenilworth*: 'an exclusive, privatized, hierarchical order that has to be defended by force, and the site of an inclusive national festival answering to the popular imagination' (p. 82). The popular festival opens the deep or transcendental time of national culture, providing legitimacy for a closed, corrupt, violent regime, in what amounts to Scott's invention of the modern 'heritage' concept.⁴³ And the revels at Kenilworth replicate (in fractal logic) *Kenilworth* itself: a novel that combines esoteric learning and literary game-playing with Gothic and melodramatic ingredients of suspense and terror, comedy and pathos, appealing at once to groundlings and to connoisseurs.

*

Except that the 'inclusive national festival' does not take hold. Having opened the arena of communal festivity, Scott steers his plot away from it. Bent on their missions, his characters bypass the 'throng and confusion' of 'players and mummers, jugglers and showmen of every description' converging on Kenilworth Castle (p. 252). The novel's avatars of popular culture, puckish Flibbertigibbet and onetime player Wayland Smith, fail to achieve the structural function of romance rescue they so vividly promise on their first appearance. Entering the plot as charismatic helpers from legend and folklore, they fade away again, distracted by the bustle of the revels (Flibbertigibbet) or depressed by an inability to translate theatrical performance into effective action (Wayland). Amy

⁴⁰ Henderson, 'Bards of the Borders', p. 92.

⁴¹ See Jonathan Brody Kramnick, *Making the English Canon: Print-Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700–1770* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), especially chapters 4 (on Spenser) and 5 (Shakespeare).

⁴² Cronin, 'Magazines, *Don Juan*, and the Scotch Novels', p. 173.

⁴³ Lincoln, *Walter Scott and Modernity*, pp. 82, 84–6.

1 Robsart herself restages the central romance scenario of an earlier Scott
 2 novel, *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*: the heroine's supplication, bypassing
 3 the traps of political justice, to the grace-bestowing sovereign. Once
 4 again, the performance fails, in part because of its literalisation as a
 5 theatrical performance. Mistaking Amy for a decorative nymph in one
 6 of the Kenilworth masques, Elizabeth interprets her passionate sincerity
 7 (the keynote of Jeanie Deans's eloquence) at first as an amateur actor's
 8 awkwardness and then, when the theatrical illusion is dispelled, as
 9 scheming or madness (pp. 318–26). As for the Kenilworth revels, these
 10 are not a public but a private entertainment, mounted by noble patron-
 11 age for a royal audience of one. The popular crowd, in contrast to the
 12 Bankside audience that stands as 'arbiter and patron' of Shakespeare's
 13 art, is part of the show: supernumeraries in the pageant of national
 14 glory. The revels' brilliant magnification of Elizabethan court ceremony
 15 enhances the claustrophobic sense of the novel's action closing in, its
 16 redemptive options running out, as it drives toward catastrophe.

17 The pageantry culminates in a masque performed before the queen
 18 in which four bands of players represent 'the various nations by which
 19 England had at different times been occupied': 'aboriginal Britons', 'sons
 20 of Rome, who came to civilize as well as to conquer', 'Saxons, clad in the
 21 bear-skins which they had brought with them from the German forests'
 22 and 'knightly Normans, in their mail shirts and hoods of steel' (p. 349).
 23 The narrator explains: 'In this symbolical dance was represented the
 24 conflicts which had taken place among the various nations which had
 25 anciently inhabited Britain' (p. 350). Elizabeth herself supplies a gloss:

26 [It] seemed to her that no single one of these celebrated nations could claim
 27 pre-eminence over the others, as having contributed to form the Englishman
 28 of her own time, who unquestionably derived from each of them some
 29 worthy attribute of his character. Thus,' she said, 'the Englishman had from
 30 the ancient Briton his bold and tameless spirit of freedom,—from the Roman
 31 his disciplined courage in war, with his love of letters and civilization in
 32 time of peace,—from the Saxon his wise and equitable laws,—and from the
 33 chivalrous Norman his love of honour and courtesy, with his generous desire
 34 for glory.' (p. 351)

35 We read, in short, the ideological theme of British history that has
 36 informed Scott's preceding novels, most explicitly in *Ivanhoe*. However,
 37 this admirable compound of national virtue, synthesised from a prehis-
 38 tory of ethnic antagonisms and imperial conquests, is starkly at odds
 39 with actual English character as we read it in *Kenilworth* – splintered
 40 into poisonous shards of ambition, duplicity and cruelty by the faction-
 41 alism of court politics. Neither ancient organic community nor modern
 42 civil society, the Elizabethan court musters a gangster-like formation of

alliances and rivalries among nobles vying for the sovereign's favour. The ethical best option seems to be withdrawal into melancholy passiveness, exemplified by the novel's ostensible protagonist Tressilian; a Cornishman (the descendant of aboriginal Britons), he can do little more than act out the Waverley-hero's decline into worldly impotence.

All the world's the court, which destroys those it does not corrupt. Koselleck dates 'the period in which modernity is formed' as lasting from around 1500 to 1800: Elizabeth's reign, in other words, already belongs to modernity. Our period category 'early modern' was anticipated in Scottish Enlightenment stadial history, with its identification of modernity with the formations of a centralised state apparatus and commercial empire. The difference between the Elizabethan era and Scott's consists in the latter's having that historical transition available, at the culmination of the three-centuries-long *durée* of modernisation, as an object of retrospection and analysis – available, thus, for the formulation of a 'philosophy of historical process', the historiographic blueprint of the Scottish Waverley novels.⁴⁴ However, Scott's depiction of the age of Elizabeth in *Kenilworth* (in contrast to the Jacobean London of *The Fortunes of Nigel*, set fifty years later) does not open an active space of commercial, bourgeois culture – the engine of modern civil society – alongside the royal court. The court is absolute, the core of a world without political alternatives. The novel may register the emergent forces, as Lincoln contends, of a 'rapidly modernizing world' (a market economy, competitive individualism and social mobility, international trade and colonial expansion), but those forces remain enclosed within the absolutist system, not yet sustained and regulated by a civil society. The timeless domain of popular culture, outgrowth of an organic community residual with the folk, persists alongside or rather beneath the regime, harnessed by Shakespeare for his at once fashionable and universal art, but unavailable for the generation of a transformative politics.

This closed or absolute milieu affords a stark contrast with Scott's earlier novels, which model historical process through the 'dialectic of contradictory development' (Lukács) between residual and emergent social or anthropological stages, secured (in *Waverley*) by the necessary anachronism that aligns past with present, and in doing so produces the effect of historical depth. Here the old feudal moral economy (represented by Tressilian and Amy Robsart's ailing father) resides with faded remnants of the rustic gentry, while new commercial energies have yet to crystallise into the institutions of civil society. In abandoning (or

⁴⁴ Koselleck, *Futures Past*, pp. 16–17.

sidelining) the dialectical model, *Kenilworth* departs drastically from the 'classical form of the historical novel'. Historical alternatives are reduced from structural forces to forms, to (textually mediated) semblance and performance, as well as to thematic abstraction.

It is as though in *Kenilworth* Scott anticipates Lukács's vision of the lamentable collapse of historical realism, a generation later, in the wake of the failed European revolutions of 1848:

[The] past appears, more so even than the present, as a gigantic iridescent chaos. Nothing is really objectively and organically connected with the objective character of the present . . . And since history has been deprived of its real inner greatness – the dialectic of contradictory development, which has been abstracted intellectually – all that remains for the artists of this period is a pictorial and decorative grandeur.⁴⁵

Kenilworth, however, stages this intellectual abstraction in front of us, quite literally, in the pageant of national history played before Queen Elizabeth. In rendering national history through official spectacle and ideological gloss, Scott's novel acknowledges its constructed, literary status and relocates his own historical theme to that medium: Tudor state propaganda, animated in the poetic and dramatic masterpieces of the Elizabethan age, revived as a poetic and critical topos in the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ The dialectic internal to historical process, the narrative motor of the Scottish historical novels, is extruded and flattened out in the present scene of entertainment. The operation analysed by Campbell, of a virtual emporium of period surfaces that solicits 'a romantic consumer's eye', enacts an implosion of the necessary anachronism which bears, however, a critical rather than merely symptomatic force.⁴⁷ (The 'romantic consumer's eye' may be an anachronistic projection of our own historical viewpoint more than it is of Scott's.) That critical force hollows out the ideological achievement of an 'end of history' which Scott commentators have ascribed to *Waverley* and its successors.⁴⁸ *Kenilworth* holds up a mirror to a cold, hard world without historical alternatives – lacking the utopian shimmer of a civil society to come, or still-glowing embers of primitive virtue.

⁴⁵ Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, p. 182.

⁴⁶ See, for instance, Howard D. Weinbrot on the 'national ode', in *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 384–402.

⁴⁷ Campbell, *Historical Style*, p. 215.

⁴⁸ See, for instance, Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 53, 87–105; Jerome Christensen, *Romanticism at the End of History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 157–75.

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