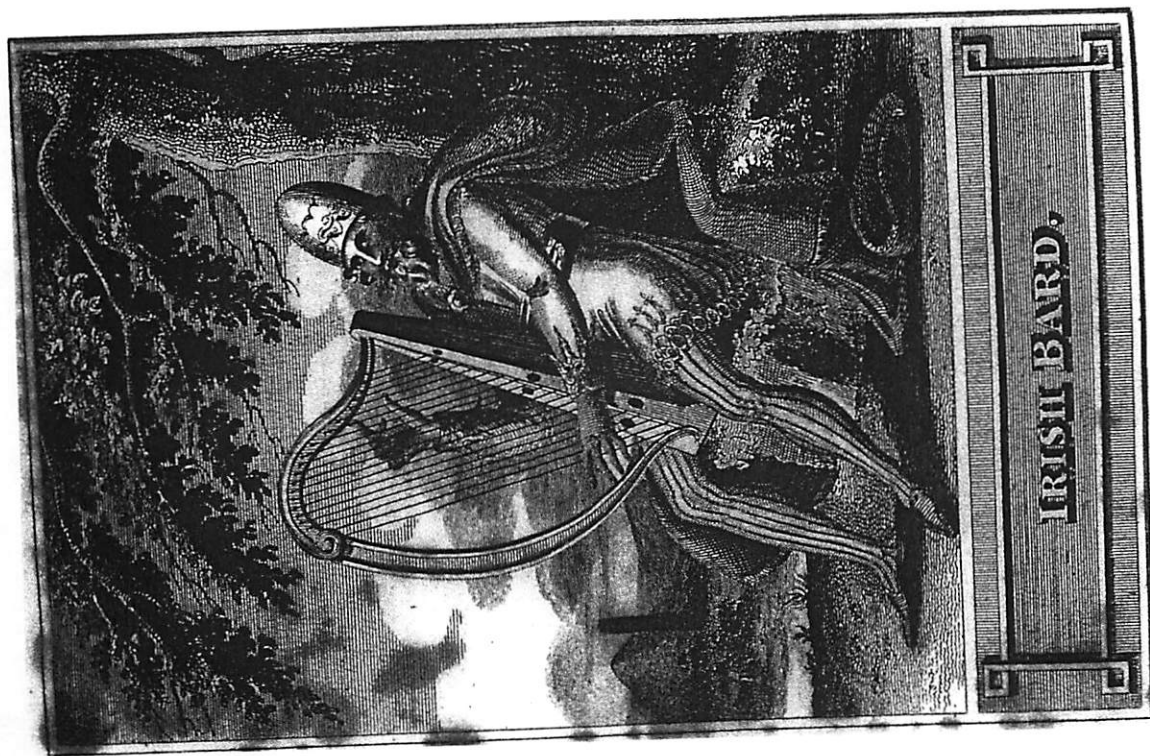


Bardic Nationalism

THE ROMANTIC NOVEL AND
THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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Joseph Cooper Walker, *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards*. 1818 ed.
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Chapter 3

NATIONAL CHARACTER, NATIONALIST PLOTS:
NATIONAL TALE AND HISTORICAL NOVEL
IN THE AGE OF WAVERLEY, 1806–1830

But if the Union be an Incorporation . . . to the extent of the Letter, it must then be a Union of the very Soul of the Nation, all its Constitution, Customs, Trade, and Manners, must be blended together, for the mutual united, undistinguish'd, good, growth and health of one whole united Body: and this I understand by Union.

—Daniel Defoe, "An Essay at Removing National Prejudices
Against a Union with Scotland"

Ireland is a small country, connected by a mysterious bond of union with a larger, a poor country with a richer. . . . She is governed by men sent from England, to do the business of England, and who hold the honors, the emoluments, the sword, and the purse of Ireland. . . . England has 8,000,000 of united people, and they are free; Ireland has 4,000,000, of whom much above half are degraded, and ought to be discented slaves. Instead of watching the insidious arts of our

Government here, we are watching each other. . . . The English Government here was founded, has been supported and now exists but in the disunion of Ireland. . . . Ireland is paralytic; she is worse; she is not merely dead of one side, whilst the other is unaffected, but both are in a continual and painful and destructive struggle, consuming to waste and to destroy each other.

—Theobald Wolfe Tone, "Essay on the Necessity of Domestic Union"

A VERY CURIOUS EMPTINESS

A year before the 1937 publication of Georg Lukács's *Historical Novel* (whose famous first chapter on Walter Scott's *Waverley* argues for the sociohistorical genesis of the genre), Scottish modernist Edwin Muir published his controversial and influential *Scott and Scotland: The Predica-*

ment of the *Scottish Writer*, which in striking ways anticipated Lukács's use of Scott to postulate a reflection theory of literature. "The riddle," Muir argues,

in approaching Scott himself, by far the greatest force in Scottish literature as well as one of the greatest in English, was to account for a very curious emptiness . . . behind the wealth of imagination . . . to account for the hiatus in Scott's endowment by considering the environment in which he lived. . . . [H]e spent most of his days in a hiatus, in a country, that is to say, which was neither a nation nor a province and had, instead of a centre, a blank, an Edinburgh, in the middle of it. But this Nothing in which Scott wrote was not merely a spatial one; it was a temporal Nothing as well, dotted with a few disconnected figures arranged at abrupt intervals . . . with a rude buttress of ballads and folk songs to shore them up and keep them from falling. Scott, in other words, lived in a community which was not a community, and set himself to carry on a tradition which was not a tradition; and the result was that his work was an exact reflection of his predicament. . . .

A people who lose their nationality create a legend to take its place. The reality of a nation's history lies in its continuity, and the present is its only guarantee. . . . But where national unity is lost, the past is lost too, for the connection between past and present has been broken, and the past turns therefore into legend, into the poetry of pure memory.¹

Concurring in a symptomatic reading of Scott, Muir and Lukács differ about what he represents: Lukács stresses his historical position, Muir his links to a country with a static relationship to its own history. For Lukács, Scott is an "English writer," who mirrors the cumulative history of the English novel, the protoindustrial state of English society, and a new European consciousness at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Muir sees Scott as an ambivalent Scottish nationalist, suffering from and reflecting Scotland's intellectual unevenness and linguistic dividedness. Directly shaped by recent history, Lukács's Scott develops a historical consciousness that outstrips his class consciousness. Muir's Scott, like Scotland itself, is engaged in a mythologizing reinvention of the national past, his traditionalism expressing, in its negativity, the felt absence of continuous national traditions. Muir sees an unconsciously regressive Scott, caught in contradictions. Lukács posits an unwittingly progressive Scott who embodies his contradictions transformatively, as the *Waverley* novels' dynamic notion of representative character initiates new modes of registering historical change and links social processes to psychic development in ways that anticipate Lukács's and Muir's sociobiographic approaches to literary history.²

Together, Lukács's and Muir's claims for Scott represent an influential conjunction in the formation of a Marxist literary method and in the

historiography of romantic fiction. Their exploratory attempts to link literary, political, and national transformations remain stimulating (Muir's nuance and acuity, in particular, seem newly useful for current discussions of literary nationalism). Yet the long-term effect of their work was to reinforce the underlying assumptions of a conservative historiography: historical determinism, the coherence of national traditions, a belief in great men who embody and shape their epochs. With its foregrounding of Scott's singular representative status, and its displacement of formal or generic analysis in the service of a national-historical reflection theory, the work of Muir and Lukács helped to foreclose not only contextual accounts of Scott's relationship to his contemporaries but with them serious study of the body of romantic fiction. Muir's Scott is a figure in a vacuum, alone in his stretch of literary-historical landscape, whereas Lukács polemicalizes against all "fashionable" attempts to place Scott in relation to "a long list of second and third-rate writers . . . who were supposed to be important literary forerunners of his. All of which brings us not a jot nearer to understanding what was *new* in Scott's . . . historical novel."³

Following Lukács and Muir, most modern Scott scholarship has placed the *Waverley* novels above and outside the fiction writing of their time, seeing Scott as the sole inventor of the historical novel, at once the adjudicating biographer of his novelistic predecessors and the kindly patron of "lesser" novelists.⁴ Yet most of the conceptual innovations attributed to Scott were in 1814 already established commonplace of the British novel. Even Scott's notion of historically representative character (for Lukács, his greatest innovation) is adapted from the novels of his contemporaries, from their experiments with characterological allegory and their attempts to represent the psychosocial effects of historical experience.⁵ Equal to Scott's in formal and political complexity, their novels in fact give us radically different political perspectives—Enlightenment, Jacobin, feminist, and anti-imperialist—on the same historical processes. Yet because of Lukács's influential claims for Scott's influence—that *Waverley's* mode of depicting social totality and dramatizing historical change shaped nineteenth-century realism, narrative history writing, and modern historical thinking as we know it—Marxist critics have spent the last fifty years continuing to explicate the *Waverley* novels as the major novelistic record of the political transformations of their era. So there are high stakes in displacing *Waverley* as a singular yet symptomatic event, to recover alternative forms of historical explanation that emanate from the same historical moment.

As a corrective to Muir and Lukács, this chapter takes a primarily formal approach. It reopens old-fashioned matters of influence, character, setting, and plot as problems with important political ramifications. As a corrective

to previous, nationally focused accounts of the romantic novel, it establishes a more precise generic genealogy for Scott's first novel, and it traces the course of generic transformation by examining the intertwined history of the novel in Scotland and in Ireland, and the intertwined development of the historical novel and the national tale (a genre developed in Ireland, primarily by women writers, over the decade preceding the publication of *Waverley*). In this case, as one genre crystallizes out of another, authors, publishers, and reviewers mark (and market) distinct developmental phases by shifts in their use of generic designations.⁶ The emergence of the national tale out of the novels of the 1790s and the subsequent emergence of the historical novel out of the national tale can be plotted quite precisely, book by book, through the 1810s. Yet the two genres remain interdependent, still almost identical in plot and characters, but already highly polarized in their overall novelistic strategies and political implications. The transition from the first genre, with its thick evocation of place, to the second, with its plot of loss and growth through historical change, may seem, in retrospect, to render irrevocable the movement away from an eighteenth-century novel of passage through place, a "traveling fiction" of picaresque and epistolary motion, into a nineteenth-century novel in which a society and a place pass through time together. Yet the further development of the realist novel depends not only, as Lukács argues, on the ascendance or "victory" of the historical novel over earlier novelistic types but also on an ongoing interplay and friction between two successive, related, and increasingly enmeshed generic forms. The national tale and the historical novel demonstrate both the fluidity and the stake of generic convention. Names, characters, set pieces, and plots are constantly borrowed back and forth between the genres, even among writers of sharply divergent political views who claim to disapprove of each other's work; in many cases, in fact, they mark their political differences in the way they order and recombine the same generic repertoire.

The national tale continued to evolve in the wake of *Waverley* and in reaction to it, as its authors historicize, politicize, and hybridize the tale, incorporating Gothic and annalistic elements and developing alternative models for representing historical processes.⁷ Most histories of the novel, with teleological hindsight, have either ignored the genre altogether or mentioned it only as a historical "experiment" without issue or consequence. This chapter argues its importance at once on teleological and on nonteleological grounds. National tales were widely influential in their own right and of formative importance for nineteenth-century realism. As they evolved along with the historical fiction they spawned, they continued to offer a critical alternative to it; their noncanonization is therefore of historical and political interest.

The national tale is a genre developed initially by female authors, who from the outset address questions of cultural distinctiveness, national policy, and political separatism; when the genre shifts tack, it is due partly to their growing self-confidence in their ability to theorize political complexities. With its ambitions both to reflect and to direct national sentiment, the national tale considerably complicates that traditional account of Regency fiction which saw novelistic production polarized between Jane Austen—and other “lady novelists” preoccupied with female socialization, domestic dynamics, and the morality of novel reading—and Walter Scott, who repoliticized (and masculinized) the novel by reinserting it into the larger social field it had occupied with Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett.⁸ For Scott derives much of his impetus with Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett.⁸ For Scott derives struggles from his female contemporaries. In their main authorship, implied readership, and political perspectives, the national tale and the historical novel might seem to represent differently gendered ways of situating characters, cultures, and history.

The interconnection of the genres instead suggests a dialectical relation between the spheres of male and female authorship, as between Scottish and Irish literature.⁹ For a brief moment in the early nineteenth century (as Edinburgh becomes a major center for novel publishing and reviewing) the intense mutual influence of Scottish and Irish novelists and their influence on novel readers of both nations begin to constitute a transperipheral Irish-Scottish public sphere. As genres, nonetheless, the national tale and the historical novel reflect their respective origins in differing historical and cultural experiences. In the Dublin of 1806 and the Edinburgh of 1814, the intensity and immediacy of political sufferings are quite different: the Lowlanders’ carefully sentimentalized relationship, sixty years after Culloden, toward Highland culture has no easy parallel in Ireland.¹⁰ There, in the wake of the 1798 United Irishmen rebellion and the 1802 Union with Britain, as many national tales record, the relationship of an Ascendancy intelligentsia to the Gaelic-Catholic culture outside the pale remained unstable and ambivalent; if Irish historical novels and national tales alike return repeatedly to the national trauma of the United Irishmen rebellion, this is because it is both an exemplification and a culmination of many decades of civil unrest.¹¹

If Muir and Lukács had analyzed Ireland and the national tale instead of Scotland and the historical novel, they would have seen in Ireland’s political turbulence a sufficient explanation for the genre’s intermittent political radicalism, instability of tone, and alternation between formula and formal experimentation. Still affected by the desperate unrest of the 1790s, Ireland—Lukács would have argued—proved inauspicious for the birth of realism but sufficiently tortured for the birth of a novelistic protomodernism instead.¹² As Elizabeth Bowen put it in *Bowen’s Court* (1942), an

annalistic history of Ireland through the history of her own family, “[I]t is not lack of people that make the country seem empty. It has an inherent emptiness of its own.”¹³

THE MYSTERIOUS BONDS OF UNION

In “The Story of an Injured Lady, Being a True Picture of Scotch Perfidy, Irish Poverty and English Partiality” (written circa 1706 but published only in 1748), Jonathan Swift uses sustained personification allegory to recount the historical woes of Ireland, the injured lady, at the hands of England, her heartless seducer, and to describe Irish jealousies toward an apparently more favored Scotland, about to enter an official Union with Britain. In Swift’s epistolary tale, matters of state are presented as private, familial, and sentimental problems.

Being ruined by the inconstancy and unkindness of a lover, I hope, a true and plain relation of my misfortunes may be of use and warning to credulous maids, never to put too much trust in deceitful men. A gentleman in the neighbourhood had two mistresses, another and myself; and he pretended honourable love to us both. Our three houses stood pretty near one another; his was parted from mine by a river [the Irish Sea], and from my rival’s by an old broken wall [Hadrian’s Wall]. . . . Some years ago, this gentleman taking a fancy either to my person or fortune made his addresses to me; which, being then young and foolish, I too readily admitted . . . and, to dwell no longer upon a theme that causeth such bitter reflections, I must confess with shame, that I was undone by the common arts practised upon all easy credulous virgins, half by force, and half by consent, after solemn vows and protestations of marriage. When he once had got possession, he soon began to play the usual part of a too fortunate lover, affecting on all occasions to shew his authority, and to act like a conqueror.¹⁴

Now he plans to marry his other neighbor instead of herself. What is surprising is that she has not joined forces with her rival; the most inexplicable part of this story is that two women betrayed by the same scoundrel should continue to compete with one another for a man who “pretended honorable love to us both” and deserves neither.¹⁵

His courtship, complains the injured lady, was a long series of persecutions, which have turned her “pale and thin with grief and ill-usage.”¹⁶ He used false promises and physical threats to make her his mistress, then seized control of her household, sapped her domestic authority (insisting that his own “steward” [Stuart] govern her house), and robbed her blind, forcing her to pay the wages of many of his servants, even those (the absentee landlords) who remain living with him.¹⁷ She has met all of these insults with long-suffering patience. Her rival, however, has met their suitor’s bad

behavior with rebellious and demanding behavior of her own. "Tall and lean, and very ill-shaped," with "bad features, and a worse complexion," this "infamous creature" has set thieves and pickpockets (the Scottish Highlanders) to rob and to beat him.¹⁸ Yet she is still the one chosen for matrimony.

Recasting the political relations of Ireland, Scotland, and England as a courtship drama, Swift sketches a colonial psychology dominated by envy, passivity, self-reproach, and a tragic inability to see beyond one's own blighted chances. "I am sure, I have been always told," the injured lady says plaintively, "that in marriage there ought to be a union of minds as well as of persons."¹⁹ To many of Swift's Scottish contemporaries, the Act of Union appears as a forced marriage, undertaken against the bride's better judgment. "Why Should I Be So Sad On My Wedding Day?" played the carillon of Saint Giles, Edinburgh, on the day the Treaty of Union was signed. In Ireland, however, many view the Union with envy: Scotland will be Britain's true partner, rather than merely its exploited colony.

Almost one hundred years later, in the wake of the United Irishmen rebellion, a short-lived Irish satirical newspaper, *The Anti-Union* (1798–99), offers two updated versions of Swift's "Injured Lady," to protest the plans for Ireland's Union with Britain. The governing sentiment here is antimatrimonial, and the magazine's masthead quotes an excerpt from the marriage service: "If any of you know any just cause or impediment why these two may not be lawfully joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace." In the first story, a young orphan describes the efforts of her elderly relative, John Bull, to take over her shop, then force her into marriage. "I to marry Mr. Bull!" Sheelagh recoils with horrified scorn. Even "in the year 1783, when he was tolerably vigorous, and reasonably wealthy and well reputed, I would have rejected [him] with contempt!" Now his impending bankruptcy and "repeated fits of the falling sickness" make him less desirable than ever.²⁰ And the settlements he proposes are ridiculous: "There is to be no cohabitation, for we are still to continue to live on different sides of the water—no reduction of expenses, for our separate establishments are to be kept up—all my servants to be paid by me, but to take their orders from him. . . . He tells me . . . that I am to reap great advantages, the particulars of which he does not think proper to disclose."²¹ He even has another wife still living, "who, though of harsh features and slender fortune, was of honourable parentage and good character" and has been shamefully treated by her husband, "with every mark of slight and contumely," with many of her marriage articles "scandalously violated."²² Mr. Bull, then, is both bigamist and bully; the example of his first marriage makes his current promises impossible to believe. A century after the Union with Scotland, Ireland sees the neglect, bad faith, and con-

descension she can expect from a Union of her own—and the sight of Scotland's sufferings, over the course of the eighteenth century, has rendered this first consort more sympathetic than she appeared in 1706.

Realizing that he can no longer play his mistresses against each other or force Ireland to his will by exciting her jealousy, Mr. Bull plants a servant in Sheelagh's household to embezzle her money and foment discord among her other servants.

Some of my servants he has persuaded (by infusing groundless fears and jealousies into their minds) to put on orange liveries, and to threaten death and destruction to the rest; those others again, by similar misrepresentations, he has induced to array themselves in green, and to commit the most horrible excesses, and others he has actually and openly paid with my own money, to aggravate and perpetuate the quarrels between the two former . . .²³

What appears as an insoluble internal discord within Ireland is actually trouble created by an outside agitator, for John Bull's ends. The influence of United Irishmen rhetoric (particularly Wolfe Tone's argument for a *domestic* union, and a joint fight by Irishmen of all creeds against their English oppressors) is evident here: the refusal of a Union with Britain must be accompanied by an attempt to promote internal unity, by emphasizing a commonality of interests that transcends livery color.

Yet as another "True Story" argues only two weeks later in the same journal, the restoration of domestic harmony is no simple matter: the French invasion of Ireland, under Wolfe Tone's leadership, has shattered Ireland's peace of mind. In this story, the depraved Mr. Britton lusts after the beautiful young Ierne: "[T]ho' in every respect she would have been an eligible match, yet his pride would not suffer him to think of an honourable connexion." His ambitious steward Henry encourages him in "vicious schemes," and Britton finally conquers Ierne by raping her. "[O]verpower[ing] her defenseless innocence, and invading the rights of hospitality and honour," he forces "the unfortunate and degraded lady" to acquiesce to "a life of dependent concubinage."²⁴

Yet Britton is an amiable man, under more ordinary circumstances, and Ierne a woman of sensibility. To Britton's great fortune, then, his victim grows "fond of her violator; and to the first emotions of resentment, and wounded pride, succeeded those tenderer sentiments."²⁵ Ierne bears him several children, and the family develops an increasingly harmonious domestic life; eventually Britton resolves to "make her his wife." The "ill-adviser" Henry is long dead; his successor, George, concurs in Mr. Britton's plan; and Britton's sentimental attachment toward Ierne is heightened when his ward, Columbia, elopes to America with a Frenchman. In 1782 (at the beginning of Grattan's Parliament) he marries "his old and attached

friend" with chastened heart, and for more than ten years, the couple is very happy. Then, the libertine younger brother of Columbia's seducer arrives in the neighborhood and lays siege to Britton's wife, bribing family servants to his cause and trying to stir up Ierne's memories of past resentments. Her response is to arm "the most able of her domestics and the most respectable of her tenants, with orders to horsewhip the intruder, whenever he should have the insolence to approach her," and then to reveal the full plot to Britton.²⁶ Far from praising his wife's loyalty, however, Britton blames her for what has happened, and his unjust suspicion and misdirected anger disillusion Ierne forever. Although she eventually agrees to a formal reconciliation with her husband, they face permanent emotional estrangement. Their former happiness is irretrievable.

The loving, ardent, faithful wife had vanished; and the injured, abject, cold and reluctant slave remained. Love was for ever fled. She returned not caresses which she loathed, and submitted to, rather than participated. . . . Mr. Britton, conscious that he could not be loved, precipitated into the usual corruption of the human heart, and determined that he should be feared.²⁷

Now, when the profligate Frenchman renews his addresses, his chance of success seems greater, given Ierne's "pitiable and alarming" condition.

She often exclaims—"Foolish and unprincipled man, how happy might we have been together! I plighted thee my troth, and would have been proud to be thine to my latest hour, but I am abandoned, betrayed and forlorn, and it little matters what becomes of an injured spirit, and a broken heart."²⁸

If "A True Story" resembles the previous "Injured Lady" stories, the loyalties it describes are new and newly complex; its tone is no longer that of political satire but of female domestic tragedy, from Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747–78) and Frances Sheridan's *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761) to Elizabeth Inchbald's *Simple Story* (1791). Its political message is more ambiguous as well: under bad influence, Britton is capable of rape and, later, of misdirected anger and inappropriate cruelty. Yet in the interim, he is lovable and beloved; it is impossible to dismiss him or his marriage. Ierne, too, shows a complexity and a complicity beyond any previous allegorical embodiment of Ireland; capable of forgiving the original violation of her person, she cannot forgive Britton's subsequent violation of her trust.

Perhaps it is in the nature of marriage that the smaller betrayals prove most damaging and most lasting. In "A True Story," the French invasion of Ireland, and even the United Irishmen rebellion, are less culpable than the original, far more brutal conquest of Ireland to which they offer belated, indirect response. Yet what is most damaging, in the face of overall Irish

"loyalty," is the contempt and distrust these events inspire in Britain. There can be no union now, "A True Story" argues, because the marriage has already irrevocably failed.

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, novelists in Ireland, then in Scotland and England, continue to rewrite this national marriage plot. In its initial post-Union reincarnations, in the early novels of Owenson, Edgeworth, and Maturin, the national marriage plot gives the deceptive appearance of allegorical—and therefore political—transparency, stepping back from the emotional ambiguities of "A True Story," to present the Union as a happy ending. Yet these novels are also engaged, from the outset, in a complicated political reconciliation process. What they attempt is not only the cultural rapprochement of a colonizing nation and a colonized one, separated by a huge power differential and a bloody history, but also, more paradoxically, the reconciliation between the imperialist project of a United Kingdom and Wolfe Tone's vision of an internally united Ireland, in which shared purpose transcends differences of creed and culture. The novels of Owenson's and Maturin's middle periods envision cross-cultural marriage as a form of countercolonization: when the English fall in love with the natives of Ireland, their courtship and union become occasions for proselytizing and revelation. In learning to live with those scarred by a history of English contempt, English characters are forced to see their own country from the perspective of its victims. Such stories may represent a retrenchment from the revolutionary goals of the United Irishmen (in almost all cases, their authors carefully distance themselves from armed revolution), but their political vision is radical nonetheless, as they imagine a union able to widen the worldview and the historical understanding of *both* partners equally.

FROM WAVERLY TO WAVERLEY

Conceptually, both the national tale and the historical novel develop out of Enlightenment comparative political analysis, from Montesquieu's contrasted cultural geographies to the Scottish Enlightenment's four-stage theory. Throughout the eighteenth century, the picaresque novels of Defoe, Swift, and Fielding, of Smollett and Goldsmith, of Anglo-Irish novelists Thomas Amory, Charles Johnstone, and Elizabeth Hamilton developed parallel modes of social scansion, from the fluid survey offered by picaresque and picturesque travel to the juxtaposition of perspectives made possible by epistolary exchange and the framing conceits of the Oriental satire.²⁹ During the era of the French Revolution, the novel is influenced directly by political theory: the heated exchanges between supporters and opponents of the Revolution (such as Burke, Paine, and Wollstonecraft)

established influential rhetorics with which to present conservative and radical visions of society, and the shape and vehemence of the Jacobinism debate helped to enshrine the polemical contrast of alternative social forms as a major mode of political discussion. Already in 1789 Ann Radcliffe's first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, organized its Gothic plot and political analysis around the schematic juxtaposition, in the castles of two warring Highland chiefs, of good and bad variants of feudal life: Castle Athlin is a despotic dungeon, Castle Dunbayne a well-run civitas. By 1792 Charlotte Smith's pro-Jacobin *Desmond* used the same comparative framework much more elaborately, using a travel plot to anchor sustained political and social analysis.

Lionel Desmond accompanies a flighty youth on a pleasure trip into revolutionary France and, as this is an epistolary tale, is soon sending long letters home to his conservative friend Bethel, describing the social conditions that led to the Revolution and the unfolding of the Revolution itself. Bethel's letters, in return, counter Desmond's growing Jacobin sympathies with a Burkean skepticism; the reformers, he argues, appear "wavering and divided in their councils . . . which occasions me again to entertain some doubts of the permanency of the revolution."³⁰ The novel's first volume thus focuses simultaneously on the transformations in France, on the process of political conversion, and on the growing gap between a progressive political rhetoric based on a firsthand knowledge of social conditions and a reactionary rhetoric grounded in abstract political sentiment. In matched set pieces, furthermore, which reiterate both Third Estate polemics and Radcliffe's two-castle contrast, Desmond visits a democratic aristocrat-reformer, whose pleasant estate is being improved, cultivated, and drained, and then the reformer's despotic uncle, whose estate, still run according to feudal principles, shows signs of wastefulness, corruption, and want.³¹ Here the peasants do not sing cheerfully at their work, the landscape is despoiled, and even the ceremonial avenues of trees are ragged from ill-considered chopping.³²

This contrast between the feudal order and a new social contract implicitly grounds the novel's main story, a platonic but adulterous love that raises the question of women's rights in marriage. In the longer term, the succession and combination of Radcliffe's Highland castles, juxtaposed as discrete political systems, and Smith's plot of travel, cultural comparison, and marriage provide the national tale with its central plot device: the spatialization of political choices, as a journey of discovery and homecoming through the British peripheries.³³ Both the main political bifurcation within the national tale—Edgeworth's pro-Union Irish novels, Owenson's Jacobin-feminist national tales of Ireland, Greece, India, and Belgium—and the political thrust of Scott's historical novel can be measured by their differing adaptations of the novels of the 1790s.³⁴

Edgeworth's Irish novels reiterate the Enlightenment critique of feudalism. If *Castle Rackrent* temporalizes Radcliffe's juxtapositions (as an elderly retainer chronicles the successive variants of feudal lordship the same castle has experienced over his lifetime), Edgeworth's subsequent novels respatialize them into discrete, if synchronous, social stages and political states between which her aristocratic characters move and among which they choose. Following Enlightenment discussions of improvement and modernization, *Ennui*, *The Absentee*, and *Ormond* see pre-rebellion and pre-Union Ireland as embodying numerous developmental stages, economic systems, and thus political and moral possibilities for the ruling Ascendancy. For Edgeworth, as for Radcliffe, the choice is between good paternalism and bad feudalism. Yet the Irish situation is complicated: a peasant culture, already formed and deformed by centuries of feudalism and religious strife, is now suffering anew under capitalist landlords, who exploit their political monopoly of power, rack rents, and expect feudal obedience without assuming feudal responsibility. The country's governors can either allow Milesian and Anglo-Irish castes to continue to grow apart or try, through improvement, to forge a new Union between landlords and tenants.

Scott's *Waverley* redacts Smith's *Desmond* both directly and indirectly, under the influence of the national tale genre that Smith's novel helps to shape, as well as of Jane West's antirevolutionary redaction of *Desmond*, *The Loyalists: An Historical Novel* (1812). Throughout his novelistic writing, Scott systematically plays down all of these influences, acknowledging only Edgeworth as a precedent. In the introduction to his first novel, he distances himself from chivalric, sentimental, Gothic, and women's fiction, by pointing to his "neutral" choice of name for his title character: "WAVERLEY, an uncontaminated name, bearing with its sound little of good or evil, excepting what the reader shall hereafter be pleased to affix to it."³⁵

To the reader of Charlotte Smith and Jane West, however, this name is already occupied, in a way that sheds an important intertextual light on Scott's political project. Desmond's light-headed charge and travel companion, Waverly, is true to his name in his perennial inability to decide where he should travel and which woman he should marry. Put drunk into the packet boat, Smith's Waverly is so preoccupied with his own confused dissipations that unlike Desmond he is unable to grasp the significance of the political events going on in France. West's *Loyalists* (a tale of the English civil war, as "the reign of terror in England") is even more critical of its character, Sir William Waverley, and his political wavering; during a national emergency that calls for a decisive stand, Waverley is trapped into repeated double crossings, until he has "turned, and trimmed, and cut in, and cut out, till nobody knew whether he was of any side at all."³⁶ Forced

to hide from both sides, he takes refuge in the ruins of his ancestral home, destroyed by the "ravages of civil war."³⁷

Waverley Hall was a complete ruin. A few of the meaner offices, and a part of the walls, marked where the residence stood, which once sheltered crafty selfishness. . . . [T]he unclaimed demesne, [was] once guarded even from the intrusion of admiring curiosity, by the secluding jealousy of a cold-hearted worldling, whose pride counteracted his ostentation, and whose timidity was even greater than his self-love. . . . The streets of the village were silent and deserted. Neither the loom, the flail, nor the anvil were heard.³⁸

If West's extended description of the despoiled estate echoes Smith's description of the ill-managed aristocratic estate of midrevolutionary France, it anticipates Scott's description, at the end of *Waverley*, of the stately home despoiled during the Jacobite Rebellion, its outlawed aristocratic owners hiding in its ruins, and its blasted oaks marking the end of an epoch. Twenty years after *Desmond* and two years after *The Loyalists*, *Waverley* wavers between Smith's and West's visions of revolution. In contrast to West, Scott narrates a hapless journey into civil war from a perspective sympathetic both to the forces of rebellion and to Waverley himself: in a time of historical upheaval, loyalty is not a simple duty but requires repeated adjudications as circumstances shift. Like *Desmond*, *Waverley* uses set-piece comparisons to describe the collapse of aristocratic authority. Yet its political inferences end up reversed, Tory rather than Jacobin; a conservative rebellion, not a progressive one, receives the author's partial endorsement, and the feudal world of the Highland clans commands the deepest allegiance and easiest loyalty.

If Scott's first novel adapts both Jacobin and anti-Jacobin novelistic forms while disavowing the Jacobin political legacy, the title of Sydney Owenson's first novel announces its redaction of Smith with perhaps unconscious force. Like *Desmond*, Owenson's *St. Clair, or The heiress of Desmond* (1804) is an epistolary novel that juxtaposes a travel plot with a plot of adulterous longing. It is preoccupied with the politics of redaction, transposing the plot of Goethe's *Werther* to Ireland, so that its ubiquitous Ossian references are not only sublime rhetorical tags but have geopolitical correlatives. Owenson's second novel, *The Novice of St. Dominick*, historicizes the redaction process in order to examine the surprising overlap between historical epochs and discursive systems. Compared with Owenson's later oeuvre, these early novels are striking for their grasp of how the contrastive plots of the 1790s can be used to launch a discussion of literary history—and for the way their preoccupation with the politics of writing preempts a more extended discussion of contemporary or national politics.³⁹ Developing a still more complex variation of the same romance plot, Owenson's third novel, *The Wild Irish Girl*, juxtaposes the concerns of her

previous novels to explore the tension between a literary, antiquarian sense of Ireland and a nationalist, bardic one. This suddenly recovers the political implications of Smith's traveling plot and the political analysis of Edgeworth's Irish chronicle.⁴⁰

Banished by his father to his Irish estates, the English hero of *The Wild Irish Girl* is delighted to find picturesque scenery and customs: the dispossessed Princess Glorvina, singing to her harp; the priest's explanation of the antiquity and venerability of Irish traditions; and the eerily keening voices of the peasant funeral procession. A landscape assumed to be barren and backward reverberates with the sounds of an ancient culture. Growing to love Ireland, the hero ends the novel by marrying Glorvina, its allegorical embodiment, and settling on "their" joint estate. For the next ten years, the national tale will present increasingly stylized repetitions of this basic plot: the contrast, attraction, and union of disparate cultural worlds. In each subsequent version, an English character again travels to a British periphery, expected to be devoid of culture. Instead, under the tutelage of an aristocratic friend, he or she learns to appreciate its cultural plenitude and decides to settle there permanently. Each national tale ends with the traveler's marriage to his or her native guide, in a wedding that allegorically unites Britain's "national characters," or, to quote the title of an 1814 national tale by Christian Johnstone, *The Saxon and the Gaël*.⁴¹

Developed by Owenson and Edgeworth, influencing and influenced by Madame de Staël, the national tale reaches generic turning points first with Maturin's brilliant 1812 *Milesian Chief* (arguably the single most important source for *Waverley*) and then with the 1814 publication of *Waverley* itself; together, these two novels reiterate and transform the national tale's generic premises by historicizing its allegorical framework. The national tale before *Waverley* presents late-eighteenth-century culturalist assumptions, the influence of geography on character, setting, and events, in particular concentrated and politicized forms, upholding the distinctiveness and autonomy of place. And from *Waverley* onward, the historical novel shows the collapse and transfiguration of place, as an annalistic accretion of time within the stability of place gives way to the phenomenological development of places. The national tale before *Waverley* maps developmental stages topographically, as adjacent worlds in which characters move and then choose between; the movement of these novels is geographical rather than historical. In contrast, the historical novel (which still, at the outset of *The Milesian Chief* and of *Waverley*, relies on a schematic juxtaposition of stratified cultural zones) finds its focus in the way one developmental stage collapses to make room for the next and cultures are transformed under the pressure of historical events. With their respective focuses on the domestic and political spheres as the sites of national and historical formation, on the stability of culture in place and the fragility of

culture over time, the two genres develop dialectically opposed ways of situating culture. The national tale before *Waverley* presents national character as a synecdoche of an unchanging cultural space; here nationalism is a self-evident legacy, the result of unbroken continuity and a populist community that unites aristocracy and folk. The historical novel draws heavily on this vision of national continuity, but it posits the moment of nationalism at a further stage of historical development: only through the forcible, often violent, entry into history does the feudal folk community become a nation, and only through dislocation and collective suffering is a new national identity forged.

NATIONAL JOURNEY, NATIONAL MARRIAGE, NATIONAL CHARACTER

As the national tale moves toward and past the historical novel, its key generic features change in emphasis. Focusing on the genre's three most distinctive features—the journey, the marriage, and the national character—this section will sketch its overall development, describing the shifting relationship in Owenson's work between tourism and textual tradition, the movement of the marriage plot from a comedy of national reconciliation toward a tragedy of doomed love in Maturin's *Milesian Chief*, and the transformation of an allegorically flattened national character, over the history of the genre, into one torn apart by the contradictions of uneven development. As it moves from the unchanging national world toward the dislocations of the historical novel, the national tale (as a genre centered on an allegorical equation of personal and cultural identity) becomes the birthplace of a new literary schizophrenia.

Throughout the nineteenth century, complains Daniel Corkery, Anglo-Irish writers create a self-consciously "Colonial" literature, their "account of this strange country they are condemned to, written not for their brothers and co-mates in exile . . . but for their kinsfolk in England . . . for what are all their books but travellers' tales?"⁴² The national tale is at once traveler's tale and anticolonial tract; it sets out to describe a long-colonized country "as it really is," attacking the tradition of imperial description from Spenser to Johnson and constructing an alternative picture. The physical and cultural landscape of the periphery has its own beauty; as it arises organically from specific historical and geographical circumstances, a national art must be understood on its own terms, not forced into a prior aesthetic mold it can never fit. Yet nationalist authors also embrace all aspects of the national culture with even a remote resemblance to Mediterranean cultural prototypes, for such similarities provide a particularly powerful means of establishing cultural legitimacy.⁴³ The footnotes to *The Wild Irish Girl* labor to establish connections or analogies between the customs, religious rituals, music, dancing, and literature of ancient Greece and those of present-day Ireland; they also point out more esoteric resemblances between Hibernian

and ancient Egyptian dress.⁴⁴ Already, then, the impulse to develop original, indigenous criteria for cultural evaluation is matched, or checked, by the resort to precedent.⁴⁵

Owenson's next novel, *O'Donnel*, focuses explicitly on problems of cultural interpretation and the difficulty of ensuring that the English tourists who begin to visit Ireland after the Act of Union will be properly sensitive to Irish culture. The novel opens with a collective journey of national exploration; the boorish behavior of aristocratic Londoners as they traverse "the wilds" of northern Ireland, more interested in each other than in where they are, provides a negative exemplum for real-life English tourists.⁴⁶ Even in the presence of the most "venerable ruins," these travelers remain offensively "flippant," sprawling on ancient tombstones and treating all natives (including their social equals) with insulting condescension. They neither accord to Ireland the respect due to an ancient civilization ("It is totally impossible that an *Irish* scene could resemble anything in *Italy*: the comparison is really quite comical") nor take notice of its current efforts to modernize itself.

[W]e happen to have no taste for coal-mines:—besides I don't give any credit to your knowing how to work coal-mines in Ireland. You had better stick to your bogs. . . . But have you nothing about Fingal here? No place that Ossian mentions? We are told that this is the spot for that sort of thing.⁴⁷

O'Donnel at once parodies and promotes a touristic view of Ireland. For although it criticizes the way literary tourism blinds the visitor, ever searching for the ancient site, to the lived connections between past and present, the novel sets itself up as a literary guidebook to the north of Ireland, setting an agenda for future tours.⁴⁸ This is a growing double bind for the national tale: it uses Irish and Scottish picturesqueness to buttress claims to inherent worth and to English attention while trying to keep its own antiquarianism from obscuring either the peripheries' current problems or England's historical responsibility for them.⁴⁹

In Owenson's *Florence Macarthy*, the literary mediation of Ireland not only accompanies but overshadows the journey of national exploration. As *Il Librador* lands in Dublin harbor, the vessel's passenger (actually Lord Fitzadelm, returning Anglo-Irish absentee) and its captain (actually General Fitzwalter, hero of South America's wars of liberation and rightful heir to Fitzadelm's estate) argue about Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland* and Volney's *Ruines des empires anciens* (1791); political differences can be restated as hermeneutic and aesthetic ones.

"[I]n viewing Ireland through Spenser's pages, you will see it, as children do an eclipse, through a smoked glass. He was one of those, whose policy it was to revile the country he preyed upon, to spoil, and then to vituperate. . . . Spenser, the deputy of a deputy[,] . . . is no author for impartiality to judge by;

and when he stoops to eulogize the 'dreadless might' of his ferocious patron, Grey, one of Ireland's Herods . . . however he may please as a poet, he is contemptible as an historian, and infamous as a politician."

"Oh! as a historian or politician I give him up, because both characters are equally ridiculous. . . . The imagination alone is always right; its visions are alone imperishable. The *Fairy Queen* of Spenser will thus survive, when his State of Ireland shall be wholly forgotten: and, for my own part, so much do I prefer the visions of his fancy to the historical relations of any period connected with the history of men, that I would go a thousand miles to visit the ruins of his Irish *Kilcoleman*. . . . But I am not sure that I would turn one point out of the way to tread upon the spot where legitimate despotism signed the fiat of its own destruction, and gave Magna Charta to an emancipated nation."⁵⁰

Entering an impoverished, bedraggled Dublin, Fitzadelm and Fitzwalter gaze at the former Irish Parliament, turned into the Bank of Ireland in the wake of the Union.

"It is a beautiful thing of its kind [says Fitzadelm] . . . what will it be centuries hence, touched by the consecrating hand of time, when its columns shall lie prostrate, its pediments and architraves broken and moss-grown, when all around it is silence and desolation? Then haply . . . may cast some future Volney of the Ohiho or the Susquehanah upon the shores of this little Palmyra, and he may surmise and wonder, may dream his theories, and calculate his probabilities; and, bending over these ruins, see the future in the past, and apostrophize the inevitable fate of existing empires."

"Or an American freeman," observed the Commodore, "the descendant of some Irish exile, may voluntarily seek the bright green shores of his fathers, and, in this mouldering structure, behold the monument of their former degradation." (1:49–50)⁵¹

"The one spoke in epic, the other in epigram" (1:78); the Anglo-Irish proponent of Spenser and literary autonomy, scorning any connections between literary representation and political life, reads post-Union Ireland, too, in "aesthetiquarian" terms: the more ruins, the more beautiful. His Irish nationalist interlocutor condemns Spenser's imperialism and reads Ireland's ruins politically rather than aesthetically, as evidence of British oppression. Fitzadelm evokes the famous opening of Volney's *Ruins*: as a traveler contemplates the ruins of an ancient temple and mourns the destruction of past greatness, the genius of the ruins—the spirit and voice of the past—addresses him. Imagining his own present as some future traveler's tragically lost cultural past, Fitzadelm is affected by the melancholy and pathos of history. In his philosophy, the ruin of successive cultures is a recurring historical necessity as much as a recurring historical tragedy;

contemplating a ruined Irish abbey (and recalling a Spanish convent, whose cloisters adjoined a Moorish ruin), he muses "on the course of things, from the fragments of Arabic taste and Mahometan superstition, into the temple of Christian rites" (1:113).

This model of historical transubstantiation, in which one culture is wholly, inevitably, subsumed into the next, informed Owenson's *Novice of St. Dominick*. Now she condemns it for feeding political resignation; the Moors' conquest of and expulsion from Spain, the English conquest of Ireland, and the Spanish conquest of South America, with all their accompanying bloodshed, are in this worldview unalterable facts of natural history. When General Fitzwalter discusses the South American wars of liberation, Fitzadelm argues that any revolutionary struggles will prove futile in the end, as the forces of liberation become identical to the forces of oppression.

Man . . . in whatever region he is found, may best be typified by a squirrel in a cage. . . . His little sphere is so planned . . . that he can be nothing but what he is, do nothing but what he does. He goes round his circle, and repeats his rotations, with no difference in the performance, but a little acceleration or a little retardment. These South Americans, therefore, but repeat an old story: they are savage and unprotected, they are conquered;—they are slaves, and degraded, they endure;—they are pressed to the quick, they turn and resist;—they struggle and succeed, become great, properous, illumined; conquer and oppress in their turn, moulder away. (3:143–44)

If Fitzadelm glorifies the ruin as an emblem of political futility, Fitzwalter, "the brave Guerilla Chief," refuses the ruin as an aesthetic spectacle to claim it instead as the evidence of historical crimes: his Volney laments the enslaving subjection of empire to proclaim the universal rights of man in its stead; his genius of the ruins appears not to mourn the past but to call for liberation. If Fitzadelm enthusiastically anticipates a distant age in which Ireland's ruin becomes picturesquely complete, Fitzwalter is impassioned by the signs of ruin visible already in the present day, in a parliament turned into a bank, a nation destroyed by its transformation into an economic colony. With such contrasts, Owenson implicitly refuses literary modes of reading culture, along with a colonizing tradition of literary depictions: from Spenser to Johnson, the great English poets are politically complicit with the imperialist expansionism of the English government. At the same time, like Jane Austen and other contemporaries, she continues to use literary judgments as touchstones of character and metaphors of reading to describe the problem of deciphering Ireland, that "text, whose spirit and whose letter were mis-rule and oppression" (1:94–95).

From its original didactic attempts to educate English readers (by providing them, in *The Wild Irish Girl* and *O'Donnel*, with picturesque and

polemical guidebooks) the national tale moves toward critical sociologies of colonial society (*Florence Macarthy, The Absentee, and Ormond*), then militant histories of colonialism (*The Milesian Chief, The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys, and The Anglo-Irish of the Nineteenth Century*).⁵² In parallel, its central political tendency shifts gradually from a celebratory nationalism, which both recognizes cultural distinctiveness and believes in the possibility of transcultural unions, toward a more separatist position; continuing meditation on a history of cultural oppression makes rapprochement and reconciliation increasingly inconceivable.⁵³

These shifts deeply affect both the national tale's marriage plot and its national characters.⁵⁴ The culminating acts of union become fraught with unresolved tensions, leading to prolonged courtship complications, to marital crises, and even, in two of Susan Ferrier's novels, to national divorce.⁵⁵ The resulting traumas erode the mental stability of national characters, where they do not tear them apart. Owenson's 1811 *Missionary: An Indian Tale* (whose seventeenth-century Indian setting highlights the thematics of colonialism, domination, and forced modernization beginning to emerge in the genre as a whole) evokes the tragedy of Westernization through the ill-fated love of Hilarion, apostolic nuncio to India, and Luxima, Kashmir princess and priestess of Brahma. His attempts to convert her to Christianity and their subsequent romance result in her banishment and loss of caste and his defrocking and trial by the Inquisition.⁵⁶ Deeply irreconcilable, the two cultures of India and Rome can meet only when the analogous despotism of their respective superstitions becomes visible: the moment when Luxima attempts to perform suttee at the very stake on which the Inquisition has condemned Hilarion to be burned. Luxima's increasing self-alienation, as her thoughts are pulled back and forth between old cultural alliances and new emotional ties, suggests a sociohistorical genesis of mental illness.

Her mind was wandering and unsettled; the most affecting species of mental derangement had seized her imagination, the melancholy insanity of sorrow: she wept no tears, she heaved no sighs—she sat still and motionless, sometimes murmuring a Brahminical hymn, sometimes a Christian prayer—sometimes telling of her grandsire, sometimes of her lover—alternatively gazing on the mantras she had received from one, and the cross that had been given her by the other.⁵⁷

The madhouse scene in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) suggests a vertiginous proliferation of such divisions, as the imprisoned narrator is surrounded on both sides by men driven into alternative forms of schizophrenia by different aspects of the English civil war. On one side, a Loyalist tailor, ruined by giving credit to Cavaliers, spends his days reciting "fragments of Lovelace and Aphra Behn" in "a voice half in exultation

and half in derision." On the other side, a Puritan weaver is driven mad by religious enthusiasm: "[H]alf the day he imagines himself in a pulpit, denouncing damnation against Papists, Arminians, and even Sublapsarians. . . . At night his creed retaliates on him: he believes himself one of the reprobates he has been all day denouncing, and curses God for the very decree he has all day been glorifying him for."⁵⁸ The early national tale's timeless, flatly allegorical characters are here transformed into tormented, bifurcated characters who wage a perennial civil war within themselves; entering violently into history, such characters are at once forced into rapid change and have a part of their psyche permanently numbed by shock, remaining behind in a state of arrested development.⁵⁹

As Maturin's *Milesian Chief* demonstrates, the national tale becomes increasingly sophisticated in representing the link between cultural/character formation and a complex historical temporality. With its journey of national discovery, its national characters (Armida, the harp-playing Anglo-Italian aristocrat who returns from the Continent to her father's newly acquired Irish estates, and Connal, the fiery, dispossessed Irish prince), and its allegorical love story, on the one hand, and its setting in recent history, on the other hand (as its hero becomes unwittingly entangled in the United Irishmen rebellion), *The Milesian Chief* straddles the divide between *The Wild Irish Girl* and *Waverley*, national tale and historical novel. The novel also reiterates every Ossianic, sentimental, and Gothic trope of the last fifty years—in the moment before the paradigm shift, before the birth of a new genre, the concentration of sheer literariness results not only in many passages of great rhetorical intensity but in a powerful evocation of the need for tradition.

The novel's love story stages the meeting, mingling, and suppression of two adjacent, dialectically opposed cultural traditions, Greco-Roman and Greco-Hibernian, antiquarian and bardic, neoclassical and sentimental.⁶⁰ Over performances of respective national song and harp traditions, and an argument over Volney in a ruined cemetery, the Continental artistic genius and ruin enthusiast falls in love with the Irish genius loci and comes to see Ireland as a ruined and desolate country.⁶¹ The diametrically opposed positions that Owenson develops, six years later, between Fitzadelm and Fitzwalter here confront each other, then begin to merge, as Connal adopts Armida's habit of classical allusion and as Armida learns to appreciate Ossianic poetry not just as "primitive" artistry but as sophisticated cultural expression and testimony. As in previous national tales, universalizing judgments and standards are replaced with a political energy based on local attachments. A decorative, scholarly neoclassicism becomes infected with the "wild energy" of national feeling; antiquarianism gives way to revolutionary romanticism.⁶²

The Milesian Chief thus begins to allegorize historical development along with cultural essence, dramatizing the process by which one cultural episteme overlaps with, and gives way to, the next—only then, in its almost apocalyptic ending, to suggest the end of culture and of developmental history under the crushing forces of the modern state. The national revolution fails, brutally suppressed by the armies of the new English property owners; Connal is executed by a firing squad; Armida takes poison; and the cultural and aesthetic principles they stand for die. In comparison, the ending of *Waverley* (with its love in the ruins and its marriage of English and Lowland aristocracies, a private happiness that sublates the historical dislocation of Highland culture) comes to look unduly optimistic, giving the violence of history a retroactive meaning, purpose, and alibi.⁶³

In other respects, it is but a small step from *The Milesian Chief* to *Waverley*, from Armida (herself a descendant of Glorvina and Corinne) to Flora, from national tale to historical novel. Scott's novel simultaneously traces and reverses the national tale's journey of discovery and homecoming, depositing and eulogizing its hero's romantic fantasies; while *Waverley* is moving northward and backward in cultural time (leaving the eighteenth century and traveling by way of the fourteenth century to discover what is left of the third), historical forces are beginning to move Highland culture toward modernity. The wavering of *Waverley*; the madness of David Gellatney, appearing first as regression and then as timely elegy; the fading of Flora as her culture withers and the second blossoming of Rose as the fortunes of her house recover: Lukács sees in *Waverley* an emerging characterological roundness or psychological realism, as the behavior or meaning of characters changes with their historical situation. But this increasingly phenomenological notion of character (which he sees as particularly suited to demonstrating the subtleties of historical change) has clear continuities with the ancient forms of personification allegory found in the early national tale and with the historically induced neurosis studied in the later national tale. The idea of representative character comes full circle.

GENERIC INNOVATION AND LITERARY HISTORICAL RECAPITULATION

One purpose in studying the history of genre is to trace how specific intellectual-historical formations within which new genres are forged and flourish become subsumed, over the course of the genre, into its formal and tropic vocabulary and thus live on long after this original context is forgotten, perhaps long after the genre is defunct. Even today, the haunted house of horror fiction and horror films horrifies because of its antiquity, the layers of memories and lives entombed within it. This horror of the past is the product of a long-distant historical moment, born of the obsessions of the

eighteenth-century antiquarian revival and the Gothic fiction to which it gives rise. Both of these, in turn, have their roots in specific national histories. In the wake of the Reformation, the Elizabethan campaigns in Ireland, and the reign of Cromwell, eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland were full of historically resonant ruins, full of abandoned abbeys and desolate manor houses, in a way that the fifteenth century was not. The eighteenth century's new awareness of period is due not only to the increasing pace of economic modernization and cultural change but also to the lasting sense of historical rupture caused by the political and religious developments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶⁴ "Tonight the walls are lonely," writes one seventeenth-century Irish bard, lamenting the ruin of his master's ancestral home, "where we once heard harps and poets . . . sounds of soldiers sharpening weapons . . . wise men's voices over old books"; if, as translator Thomas Kinsella notes, a "catalogue of beloved sounds . . . which once enchanted the poet is a feature of Irish poetry from the earliest times," that cataloging tradition echoes very differently, with almost Ossianic resonance, from the walls of the abandoned castle.⁶⁵ So, too, the Gothic topos of the haunted house resonates with the half-repressed memory of these cultural defeats. The seventeenth-century Irish bard and the memorializing bard imagined by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literari are equally obsessed with memorializing a lost cultural moment as a way of holding on to its fragments. The memory of genre functions both in parallel and in contrast to such bardic memory.

Literature's (involuntary) historical expressiveness, argues Owenson in the preface to *O'Donnell*, exists in tension with its recurring crisis of conventionality.

Literary fiction . . . has always exhibited a mirror of the times in which it is composed; reflecting morals, customs, manners, peculiarity of character, and prevalence of opinion. Thus, perhaps, after all, it forms the best history of nations; the rest being but the dry chronicles of facts and events, which in the same stages of society occur under the operations of the same passions, and tend to the same consequences. But, though such be the primary character of fictitious narrative, we find it, in its progress, producing arbitrary models, derived from conventional thinking amongst writers, and influenced by the doctrines of the learned, and the opinions of the refined.⁶⁶

The relationship between the genres of the national tale and the historical novel could be described in comparable terms. Throughout Britain and Central Europe, national literary histories were established or reestablished, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, through the publication or republication of representative literary works in a few key genres. Some of these genres are philological and scholarly (including

dictionaries, collections of folk songs, and editions of oral narratives and medieval literary "monuments"); some (national epics from *Ossian* to the *Kalevala*) are semi- or pseudoscholarly. The national tale and the historical novel belong to the few genres that are openly imaginative, although they too incorporate scholarly elements and many of the key features of the nationalist genres that precede them. This recapitulation is self-conscious, an accretion of literary conventions that corresponds on a formal level to the accretion of national characteristics, conventions, and experiences that forms the setting or subject of their narratives. For both the national tale (with its stress on the thick accretion of cultural life-forms) and the historical novel (with its stress on the fragility and malleability of cultures in the face of historical crisis), cultural memory and "genre memory" come to seem intimately linked.

The transition from national tale to historical novel, as a moment of generic accretion and generic rupture, offers an interesting place to examine how this process of recapitulation and repertoire sorting takes place. It also offers the opportunity for a second kind of theoretical speculation, about our ability to model the origins, development, standardization, and metamorphosis of generic forms. Where do genres come from? Why and how do they change? They arise, we might argue, in response to historical crises.⁶⁷ The growing inadequacy and obsolescence of social paradigms and thus also of literary forms used to represent a changing world leads at a particularly charged historical moment to the creation of a new genre; this literary equivalent of a paradigm shift gives expression to a new epistemology, a new constellation of social concerns. Thereafter, however, as it develops its own conventions, the genre may drop out of history again, become increasingly literary in its reference and models, and grow increasingly detached from the new social, historical, or national situation it was designed to describe, until the gap between literary representation and lived reality reaches crisis proportions and the cycle begins again.

This description of generic metamorphosis, like much of the modern vocabulary used to discuss historical change, is derived (at least indirectly) from the Waverley novels, with their depiction of clear historical thresholds and their related notion that those moments of transition, those breaking points, are the moments that are most historically charged, moments in which history is "entered" dramatically and irrevocably. But there are things this model cannot account for, given the fixed relationship it assumes between historical reality and representational form, between original, pathbreaking generic prototype and increasingly convention-bound copies. If literary works group themselves into genres, they do so by a number of means: through their methods of establishing narrative voice, perspective, and tone; their techniques of characterization; their demarca-

tion of the narrative and sociopolitical space through which the characters move; and the range of social and literary concerns they address. But they are also patterned by their conscious recycling of a preexisting range of plot patterns and moves, the way they borrow and deploy tropes, themes, and characters from earlier works and announce their literary consanguinity with other works of the same genre. Literariness, conventionality, can express a powerful relationship to tradition. And the development of genre, seen from inside, can seem dynamic as well as static, as its conventions are worked over, tried out, discarded temporarily, fought over, and realigned from work to work.

If the national tale before *Waverley* habitually presents a regionalist chronotope so strong that it pulls cosmopolitan modern travelers back into it, the historical novel presents a violent struggle between different possible future worlds derivable from the same past, a process complete only when a particular present subsumes the past, with all its historiographical and narrative possibilities. Lukács and subsequent historians of the novel have seen the Waverley novels (immediately, rightly, and inevitably) supplanting or subsuming other narrative forms because they represented the most historiographically complex, politically nuanced, and psychologically sophisticated account of historical forces available in the British novel of its time. But if, with the historical novel, a progressivist history of linear progressions, paradigm shifts, and epistemic breaks seems to have gained a clear victory over other, more accretive models for representing temporality and change, its triumph was by no means so absolute in the historical moment in which it was apparently consolidated.⁶⁸

After 1814 (while a late national tale is developed in interesting and diverging directions by Edgeworth, Ferrier, and the Banims) the Waverley novels are challenged by Galt's "theoretical histories" (his *Tales of the West*), on the one hand, and by the late work of Maturin and Owenson, on the other.⁶⁹ With the national tale as one starting point, these authors begin to explore the coexistence of multiple layers of time in place and the discontinuities of place in time. Problematising schematic or totalizing explanations of historical causation, they approach history instead as a network of synchronous and nonsynchronous causes, effects, and processes.

Their most important divergence from Scott lies in their attention to the long-term effects of historical trauma, the deliberate or amnesiac repression of historical memory, and the neurotic mechanisms developed to contain its explosiveness. The historiographical structure of the Waverley novels depends on an important paradox. Continuously, omnisciently, and for the most part unobtrusively narrated, their central narratives represent the triumph of a single-focus narrative history; they thus point forward, toward the realist novel. At the same time, their elaborate documentary framework

of footnotes and pseudoeditorial commentaries echo the footnoted debates among late-eighteenth-century antiquarians, foregrounding the retroactive, antiquarian production of historical knowledge out of a myriad of experiences, records, and possible reconstructions. Such framing lends density to Scott's historiographical survey. Yet it also privileges the perspective of antiquarian narrators over that of historical participants, for the intellectual complexity of the act of historiographic assembly potentially exceeds the psychological complexity of historical experience itself.

United in their criticism of this textualist vision of history, Galt, Maturin, and Owenson develop differing strategies, in the wake of *Waverley*, to recapture the thickness and jaggedness of lived history. Ironically, they choose to refigure the relationship between experience and text by appropriating elements from the Gothic novel and from annalistic history, although these represent even more extreme forms of textualism than the historical novel. The Gothic, with its self-conscious nesting of narratives, its chapters overshadowed by poetic epigraphs, and its plots matching characters to ancestral portraits or prophecies to fix their identities, is often textually as well as psychologically claustrophobic, presenting a real world overshadowed by textual tradition, a history mediated by previous representations.⁷⁰ The annal, conversely, with its apparently naive listing of narrated events in an order dictated only by chronology, levels banalities and catastrophes in a single dead-pan narrative voice.⁷¹

Yet the fusing of these genres with each other and with the national tale produces an alternative historical fiction of enormous psychological and political power. If Scott's novels depict the process of cultural erasure under the violence of history, Maturin's and Owenson's historical Gothics describe a historical and political repetition compulsion. And where Scott's novels telescope long-term historical processes into single dramatic events, played out by small groups of major and minor actors, Galt and Owenson refashion the annal form to explore the temporal unevenness of development and the otherwise invisible connections between local occurrences and long-term processes, local agency and centralizing institutions. Owenson's panoramic *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys* (1827) demonstrates how the cumulative weight of Irish history affects individual historical players. The very names of the O'Briens and the O'Flahertys are saturated with historical meaning: "Every thing in Connaught is the sign of the feuds and alliances, of hatreds and loves, of ancient inheritances, and recent usurpations. What an abridgement of the history of the land. . . is the story of the O'Briens and the O'Flahertys."⁷²

In a novel littered with historical namesakes, revenants, and reincarnations, the culminating union of Murrough O'Brien and Beauvoine O'Flaherty cannot provide a unifying resolution so much as suggest (because another Murrough O'Brien married another Beauvoine O'Flaherty

several generations earlier, in an Ireland just as divided in her sufferings) the repetitive loop in which the Irish people are caught.

Despite its concern with revolutionary upheaval (culminating in the United Irishmen rebellion), the novel's sense of historical breakthrough is relativized by the interpolation of an illuminated chronicle of the two families, the *Annals of St. Grellan*, which details the history of Ireland from its first settlement through various waves of English conquest and occupation, breaking off with the unbearable horrors of the recent past.

1691. King William's army plunder and murder the poore Irish at pleasure . . . what sport they made to hang up poore Irish people by dozens, without pains to examine them; they scarcely thinking them human kind: so that they now began to turn rapparees, hiding themselves . . . in glens and crannies of O'Flaherty's mountains . . . nothing was commoner than to find many, who from too much melancholy, grief, fear of death, and constant danger, subsisting upon herbs . . . and the like. . . . And wild indeed were they, in these troublesome times, and down to the present; and when one of them was taken . . . it would be with long and extraordinary care and management that they were brought to their senses, and sure were they ever to remain affected or light. (Pp. 241–42)

The continuation a century later of a subculture of political outlaws and guerrilla fighters, based in the same hills and engaged in the same struggle, makes it difficult to dismiss the chronicle's portrait of the "rapparee, or wild Irishmen, Of the 18th century" either as mythology or historical aberration (p. 243). We are a long way, suddenly, from the "maddening" charms of the wild Irish girl and from an Ireland whose history of conquest poses a picturesque and empathy-inducing picture. The disconnected, repetitive nature of the family chronicle bears witness to the unassimilable nature of the violence done to Ireland: to become "wild," to go mad, is the only sane response. The annal both offers an enormously complex account of Ireland's religious and political conflicts and mournfully records the constancy of her woe. It "was curious," the hero remarks understatedly, "to observe the same system still reproducing the same effects" (p. 232).

In *The Entail* and *The Provost* (both 1822), John Galt emphasizes the nonsynchronicity of historical change and the increasing invisibility of historical agency. A family chronicle that ends as a romance, *The Entail* offers an indirect intellectual, political, and literary annal of eighteenth-century Scotland, presented as a complex tissue of innovations, survivals, nostalgias, and throwbacks. Its form reflects the shifting *Zeitgeist* of Scotland through a slow metamorphosis of literary genre and stylistic register, opening at the beginning of the eighteenth century with a hard-edged Defoean realism and closing late in the century in Ossianic elegy and Mackenzi-esque sentimentalism. The novel also offers a psychologically nuanced

picture of how historical change is internalized by a succession of characters, fundamentally affecting their self-perception and moral choices; although the basic pattern of family history repeats itself, the changing social and economic context renders successive generations of the family mutually unintelligible. Galt's foregrounding of economic factors as the most important long-term motor of plot and character development not only lets him escape cultural nostalgia but places its euphemisms historically and politically. In 1711, Joseph Addison's essay on the Border ballad "Chevy Chase" inaugurates the ballad revival, in London. In Scotland, however, during the same year, eleven-year-old Claud Walkinshaw (born, orphaned, and impoverished during the failed Darien Expedition, which paved the way for the 1707 Union) prepares to travel the Borders as a peddler, eschewing "Chevy Chase" (and the heroic tales that inspired his father to his fatal patriotic adventure) for Dick Whittington's story of economic advancement. Even decades later, when he has become a prosperous landowner, the remembered weight of his pack and of his early poverty makes Walkinshaw hunched, pinched, and pathologically stingy, obsessed with reassembling his lost estate and passing it down intact, so that at least one descendant will escape the curse of recent Scottish history.

And so, in the 1760s, while his neglectful elderly relative, Miss Christiana Heritage, draws up a codicil to her will "for the purpose of devising, as heir-looms, the bedstead and blankets in which Prince Charles Edward slept, when he passed the night in her house," Walkinshaw is in the next room, disinheriting his beloved oldest son, Charlie (namesake of the Young Pretender and "ay [his father's] darling chevalier"), out of a fear of historical repetition that actually compels him to repeat history. "Ye ken how I was defrauded," Walkinshaw explains to his lawyer in a greedy voice, "of my patrimony, by my grandfather."⁷³ The middle-class nostalgia of the 1770s for the heroic events of the '45, the cult being built up around the Heritages of Scotland, is historically synchronic yet emotionally nonsynchronous with Walkinshaw's sharp voice, with the long-term economic fears, the indelible trauma of class displacement inflicted by the Darien disaster seventy years earlier.

The Provost is Galt's most bravura handling of the motor, mechanism, and force of historical changes, as well as of the narrative voice that filters, explains, and trivializes them.⁷⁴ Framed as the provost's reminiscences at the end of a personally profitable career in public office, the novel gradually makes visible (under the annalistic accumulation of incident and anecdote) the equally gradual transformation of small-town society from the 1760s to the 1820s, the establishment of a new middle-class hegemony under the guise of improvement, and the disfranchisement of the new Scottish working class. Like its most important model, Tacitus's annals of the

erosion of Roman republicanism, Galt's account of the consolidation of power by a new ruling class does not focus on consequence-laden historical turning points, dramatic psychomachian struggles in which old and new forces battle to the death. Instead we watch the unnoticed, almost imperceptible leaking away of one age, one political system, while another is slowly and deliberately constructed in its place, an accumulation of small but decisive incidents (the enclosure of the town moor; the repair, enclosure, and leasing of the Kirk pews to introduce a new hierarchy of property into the congregation; the suppression of the traditional fairs and of a meal mob protesting prices) that lend power to the new forces of bourgeois self-interest and erode the participatory power of everyone else.

The motors of historical change, here, are neither abstract historical forces nor larger-than-life world-historical agents. Historical change appears to be partly the result of deliberate attempts to alter the organization and character of social life and partly the indirect effect of such manipulations, the self-perpetuation and proliferation of changes once they have been introduced. On the most visible level, change appears as an incidental (even unintended) byproduct of the growing ambition and insecurity of small-time operators, who find themselves reorganizing social life to protect the economic interests of an already-prospering middle class. The provost suppresses the traditional fairs on two indirectly related grounds. With their inexpensive goods and low overhead, the traveling peddlers might challenge or break the growing monopoly (and rising prices) of village shopkeepers. And in the face of growing economic disparities, it seems best to abolish quietly any forum where a potentially mutinous lower class might assemble.

The attempt to set aside local traditions and to silence oppositional ones at first requires direct (if covert) intervention by the city's governors. But once they have set in motion the new social apparatus, it not only maintains and perpetuates itself, constantly justifying the expansion of its own scope of operations, but also renders increasingly invisible the human agency that put it in place. Once a few measures of improvement have been pushed through, they can be used to justify a virtually endless and increasingly repressive series of changes: once the road has been widened and sidewalks erected, a whole set of laws, surveillance procedures, and self-regulating "habits" follow quite naturally.

New occasions call for new laws: the side-pavement, concentrating the people, required to be kept cleaner, and in better order, than when the whole width of the street was in use; so that the magistrates were constrained to make regulations concerning the same, and to enact fines and penalties against those who neglected to scrape and wash the plainstones forment their houses, and to

denounce, in the strictest terms, the emptying of improper utensils on the same, and this, until the people had grown into the habit of attending to the rules, gave rise to many pleas, and contentious appeals and bickerings, before the magistrate.⁷⁵

If in Scott's novels the motor of history is strangely impersonal, Galt's novel masterfully presents both the human agency by which social change is effected (demonstrating clearly whose interests are served and whose repressed) and how the machinery of change, once put into operation, camouflages this agency as the movement of history, freeing the manipulators to appear, even to themselves, as public benefactors.

If read backward from Galt's *Provost*, the first three Waverley novels (*Waverley*, *Guy Mannering*, and *The Antiquary*) might look annalistic as well. Set in the 1740s, the 1770s, and the 1790s, they together form a chronicle whose complicated continuities and discontinuities palliate the force of the specific historical ruptures of each novel. In *Waverley* the oral world of the Highland clans breaks apart under external pressures and a failed rebellion. In *Guy Mannering* the gentry's impulse toward improvement and domestic enclosure (synchronous with imperialist expansion abroad) intensifies the gap between property holders and the propertyless, erases feudal allegiances and aristocratic memory, and dislocates the people forever. Twenty years later, faced with the threat of foreign invasion, the community of *The Antiquary* (gentry, middle classes, and wandering beggars) are reunited precisely through an interpretive struggle over the past, the reconstitution of lost traditions.

Scott's novels as written by Galt would produce the Waverley novels as radical critique; the modernization of Scotland, this first trilogy would then suggest, was effected in three stages, each of which manages successfully to conceal its connection to those which preceded it. First the remnants of Highland clan society are decimated and dispersed *militarily*, in open warfare. Then the introduction of new *economic* principles and pressures weakens the traditional bonds of Lowland society as well, creating a new caste of pariahs and outlaws. And finally, the threat of Jacobin uprising and invasion can be used *ideologically* to consolidate the changes of the previous forty years, as a new patriotism and a new cultural nostalgia for a distant age of social harmony blunt the edge of popular protests, erasing more recent, vengeful memories and effectively occluding the human agency that produced present social inequities.

These are not quite the Waverley novels we know. The historical novel and the postcolonial novel, the politically quietistic realism of Scott and the politically seismographic protomodernism of Maturin, Owenison, and Galt were invented almost simultaneously, from the same peripheries and the same novelistic genealogy.⁷⁶ Yet despite these intermeshed histories, they

point in crucially different directions. Lukács's championing of Scott's magisterial historical survey and his lack of interest in exploring the historical paranoia and neurosis of Scott's contemporaries are not accidental, in view of the political climate of his own writing. As Galt's provost instructs us, the reconstruction of how apparent historical breakthroughs actually occur is often the only way to understand how and why this "progress" is retroactively constructed, what it suppresses, what used to be there instead—in short, to understand how, in Muir's phrase, "the past turns to legend." So the traverse, here, of a more agitated fiction previous and parallel to Scott's own, can suggest what a still monolithic "Scott legend" continues to conceal, all that is hidden in Scott's "very curious emptiness."