

DYNAMICS OF GENRE AND THE SHAPE OF HISTORICAL FICTION:  
A LUKÁCSIAN READING OF WALTER SCOTT'S *THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN*

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## ABSTRACT

Georg Lukács' *The Historical Novel* continues to have a wide influence in Walter Scott criticism. However, Lukács' theoretical insights into the role of genre in Scott's work remains underappreciated. This thesis takes for its departure Lukács' summary that "the profound grasp of the historical factor in human life demands a dramatic concentration of the epic framework" (41). Lukács' description of these two forms, dramatic and epic, is then applied in a reading of Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*.

Lukács' terms offer a way of describing how Scott's fiction works, as the interplay of dramatic and epic motifs provide the aesthetic mediation for *Midlothian*'s social and political concerns. The chief problem raised through this reading is the role of genre in establishing a sense of historical necessity. In *The Heart of Midlothian*, the role of genre is made concrete in the novel's gradual transition. Opening with dramatic social unrest, the novel shifts attention to the epic journey of Jeanie Deans and how her intervention re-establishes domestic and political harmony within the world of the novel. The interplay of dramatic and epic forms establishes a sense of internal necessity, as each major character organically finds his or her role in the overall course of progress.

The thesis turns in its final chapter and conclusion to a resistance in *Midlothian* to the "dramatic concentration of the epic framework." Thus instead of solely applying Lukács' categories to a Scott, the conclusion of the thesis turns Scott against Lukács. *Midlothian*'s conclusion evinces the resistance of Scott the storyteller to Scott the novelist of historical necessity, as the storyteller re-opens a sense of unforeseen possibility at the novel's conclusion. The thesis concludes with a meditation on the ethical implications of Scott's competing narrative practices, that is, the dissonance between the historical novelist and the storyteller.

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## INTRODUCTION: LUKÁCS AND THE AESTHETIC STRUCTURE OF SCOTT'S HISTORICAL FICTION

This thesis explores relations between history and fiction as articulated by Georg Lukács in *The Historical Novel*. In his comments on Walter Scott, Lukács claims that “the profound grasp of the historical factor in human life demands a dramatic concentration of the epic framework.” (41). This claim links cognition, the “profound grasp of the historical factor in human life,” with an aesthetic structure, the interplay of dramatic and epic genres. Lukács’ statement goes to the heart of Walter Scott’s achievement as a novelist and sets a task for further interpretation. My thesis takes its departure from Lukács’ insight and organizes itself around the categories he presents. In my first chapter Lukács’ description of “dramatic concentration” and “epic framework” will receive due attention and explication. In chapters two and three I turn to Scott’s *The Heart of Midlothian* to interpret its opening sequence via Lukács’ categories. The problem that emerges already in my first chapter, however, is that the conception of history in terms of an interplay of genres tends toward casting historical change as an almost mechanical process. The “dramatic concentration of the epic framework” in Scott establishes a systematic pattern of progress through conflict. Such a pattern, when imposed retrospectively upon events, tends to conceal the role of agency and of accidental circumstance. Thus, in my fourth chapter and in my conclusion, I read the ending of *The Heart of Midlothian* for its resistance to the dramatic concentration of the epic framework, and as an example of Walter Scott the storyteller resisting his novel’s sense of historical necessity.

In selecting for my topic Lukács’ work on genres applied to Scott, I am taking an aspect of *The Historical Novel* that has received inadequate attention in recent scholarship. Stuart Ferguson, in “The Imaginative Construction of Historical Character: What Georg Lukács and Walter Scott Could Tell Contemporary Novelists,” takes interest in *The Historical Novel* chiefly for its argument concerning Scott’s characters. As Ferguson aptly summarizes, “what made Scott a greater ‘realist’ writer than Flaubert, in Lukács’ view, is that Scott succeeds in depicting *links* between the consciousness of his characters and the social-historical ensemble that shaped that consciousness” (33).<sup>1</sup> The track I am taking shifts from the question of the consciousness of

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<sup>1</sup> Likewise in *The Forms of Historical Fiction*, Harry Shaw cites Lukács chiefly for his argument concerning the historical and social construction of character in Scott and other writers: “In his view, the more significant an index

characters in their environment to the more thematic, plot-focused concern of aesthetic structure and historical events. Lukács' description of Scott's fiction as "a dramatic concentration of the epic framework" grasps conceptually the workings of Scott's fiction. Furthermore, the description directs attention from characters toward the significance of public events. To take genre as one's entry point into a work of fiction is already to focus not simply on compliance with formal requirements but also on the time and space, history and politics shaping characters and their creator, whether such a field is centered on a dramatic conflict or is gathered up into an epic achievement.

Before turning to the chapters in Lukács that concern Scott and genre explicitly, the opening argument of *The Historical Novel* should be considered. Under the heading "Social and Historical Conditions for the Rise of the Historical Novel," Lukács begins with the context of Walter Scott's historical fiction. Lukács argues that it was the "mass experience of history" in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the upheavals of the French revolution, which inspired the novels of Walter Scott:

It was the French Revolution, the revolutionary wars and the rise and fall of Napoleon, which for the first time made history a *mass experience*, and moreover on a European scale. During the decades between 1789 and 1814 each nation of Europe underwent more upheavals than they had previously experienced in centuries. And the quick succession of these upheavals gives them a qualitatively distinct character; it makes their historical character far more visible than would be the case in isolated, individual instances: the masses no longer have the impression of a 'natural occurrence.' One need only read over Heine's reminiscences of his youth in *Buch le Grand*, to quote just one example, where it is vividly shown how the rapid change of governments affected Heine as a boy. Now if experiences such as these are linked with the knowledge that similar upheavals are taking place all over the world, this must enormously strengthen the feeling first that there is such a thing as history, that it is an uninterrupted process of changes and finally that it has a direct effect upon the life of every individual. (23)

History as "a mass experience" evokes both a break with continuity and a totalizing scope. As Lukács claims, the "quick succession of upheavals" in the period 1789-1814 exposed the

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of historical process a character is, the more humanly true and esthetically powerful he or she becomes" (42). Thus Lukács juxtaposes Scott to writers that modernize the consciousness of their supposedly historical characters.

historically contingent, rather than naturally legitimate, character of human governments and institutions. Furthermore, the impact of historical change on the lives of individuals and communities opened a space for a shift in self-understanding. Exemplified here with Heine, persons everywhere began to comprehend how their lives were intertwined with the fate of surrounding society: individuals, communities, classes and institutions undergo contemporaneous changes. However, Lukács' terms for describing the mass experience seek to include both a sense of historical necessity and a demand for human agency. While the upheavals of the French Revolution bring to consciousness the recognition of historical change, these shifts are attributed to "an *uninterrupted process* of changes" (emphasis added). An "uninterrupted process" suggests the step-by-step workings of a system, a machine on a determined course. However, a sense of free agency remains insofar as individuals are expected to *respond* to changes and the possibilities they offer.

Lukács argues it is this "mass experience of history" in the early 19<sup>th</sup> C that inspired the novels of Walter Scott, and moreover, the complex mediations Scott would attempt through his practice of narration.<sup>2</sup> The disruptive experience of upheaval opened an uncertainty that called for a narrative response. Lukács finds in Scott a commitment to the narrative strategy of progress through warring extremes:

He [Scott] attempts by fathoming historically the whole of English development to find a 'middle way' for himself between the warring extremes. He finds in English history the consolation that the most violent vicissitudes of class struggle have always finally calmed down into a glorious 'middle way.' Thus, out of the struggle of the Saxons and Normans there arose the English nation, neither Saxon nor Norman; in the same way the bloody Wars of the Roses gave rise to the illustrious reign of the House of Tudor, especially that of Queen Elizabeth, and those class struggles which manifested themselves in the Cromwellian Revolution were finally evened out in the England of today, after a long period of uncertainty and civil war, by the 'Glorious Revolution' and its aftermath. (*The Historical Novel*, 32)

That opposing sides inevitably produce a synthetic resolution is indeed a promising and seductive meta-narrative. The shift that I will trace in *The Heart of Midlothian* is this trend from

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<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Harry Shaw argues that it is "impossible to overestimate the importance of the Napoleonic Wars in forming Scott as a moral being and a thinker about society and history" (*The Forms of Historical Fiction*, 72). Shaw supports his argument with details from the early novels *Guy Mannering* and *The Antiquary* (72-81).



upheaval and social conflict to consoling, middle-of-the-road paths of progress. Therefore, the argument about the shape of history, that warring extremes predictably produce a constructive middle way, corresponds with the aesthetic shaping of events in terms of “the dramatic concentration of the epic framework” (41). As dramatic form concentrates extremes around a central collision, a middle-ground epic theme of nation building emerges and endures. Narrative, argument, and aesthetics reinforce one another in Scott’s overall presentation of Britain’s history.

Having now set the stage with an initial characterization of Lukács’ interpretation of Walter Scott, I wish to lay out in further detail the task of this thesis. I have chosen to begin with the second chapter of *The Historical Novel*, “Historical Novel and Historical Drama” (89-152). For Lukács, it is the interplay of dramatic and epic elements that best describes Scott’s novelizing of history. The second chapter of *The Historical Novel* explicates at length Lukács’ theoretical insights into dramatic form and how such elements shape novels. My interpretation thus moves across Lukács’ first two chapters, starting with the theoretical descriptions in the second chapter and incorporating references to Scott from the first. The task of my first chapter is twofold: 1) to explicate Lukács’ theory of dramatic and epic form in such a way that it opens up a field of interconnected terms useful for application to a specific text and 2) to identify problems stemming from Lukács’ theory of genre. Lukács’ description of dramatic form leads into an unresolved aporia or constitutive contradiction: the dramatic ordering of historical events around central collisions creates the appearance of an overarching necessity, while yet claiming a place for human agency.<sup>3</sup>

My second chapter applies the Lukácsian theory of dramatic form to the opening sequence of Walter Scott’s *The Heart of Midlothian*. I have selected this novel from the range of Scott’s works because I think it provides one of the best opportunities to test the strengths of Lukács’ insights into genre and historical events. The chief concept I take from Lukács for my reading of Scott’s text is the “dramatic collision,” the central conflict around which a whole range of characters, socio-political forces and cultural traditions are arranged. Two questions will organize my reading: 1) What does the dramatic sequence concentrate and make collide? 2)

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<sup>3</sup>In “Lukács’ Concept of Dialectic,” István Mészáros describes the ambiguous place of agency in Lukács’ theoretical writings. At times, Lukács anticipates a positive victory for revolutionary workers’ movement based on a necessary historical process, while at other times Lukács declares “that the outcome of the objective economic forces that dialectically clash with each other is open-ended” and thus depends on human agency for determination (35-37). I cite Mészáros here as a support for drawing attention to the problematic place of agency in dialectical approaches to narrating history.

What does the dramatic collision manifest, or what changes are revealed through the performed conflict? Answering these questions demands close attention to detail in the novel's opening and riot sequence. As representatives of imperial rule and the outraged populace of Edinburgh collide, a whole range of cultural and historical tensions are simultaneously exposed. However, I will gather together the diverse components of this collision into an emerging pattern. Thus approaching the novel from the viewpoint of how it dramatically organizes its characters reveals a further dynamic at play. What I find continually opposed in dramatic fashion in *The Heart of Midlothian* is more subtle than order versus chaos, but what I will call a figural opposition between the enclosing power of a circle and the dynamism of a to-fro motion. On the side of the circle falls institutions, the important symbolism of the prison, and the image of "a besieged fort, or the crew of a ship at sea" (20). On the side of the to-fro motion falls the resistance to enclosure typified in contraband trade and, moreover, in the exchange of stories. I will describe the riot sequence as the dramatic culmination between forces symbolized by the enclosing circle on the one hand, and the to-fro dynamism of stories on the other.

With the third chapter I shift emphasis from the riot sequence to tracing how the novel reinstates order. The significance of the "dramatic element" in Scott's work thus gives way to how his novels contain and resolve conflict with an epic framework. Drawing upon the works of critics such as Avrom Fleishman, P.F. Fisher, and Ina Ferris, I identify three major containing patterns: the moralizing of historical events, the opposition of Providence and Fate, and a strategic use of anxieties surrounding gender. All three patterns interweave as the novel moves from the opening riot sequence to the intervention of Jeanie Deans and the conclusion's domestic security. The dramatic element yields to Scott's portrayal of gradual change. In Lukács' words, novels aim "at showing the various facets of a social trend, the different ways in which it asserts itself," and "the way in which the trend arises, dies away etc" (140). Thus, *The Heart of Midlothian* enacts a gradual humanizing of the law and reinforces religious and domestic values. Furthermore, the novel provides a space to lay out gradually the lives of its fictional characters, distributing rewards and punishments in accordance with a Providential sense of justice. Scott's novelizing of historical events produces the appearance of a gradual necessity at work, a secure "middle road" that reassuringly directs the course of events. Chapters two and three of this thesis thus pursue Lukács' insight that "the profound grasp of the historical factor in human life demands a dramatic concentration of the epic framework." In chapter three I address how the

novel provides this epic framework for dispersing and containing the effects of a dramatic collision.

In chapter four I return to the figural opposition that I found repeatedly animating the conflict in *The Heart of Midlothian*. From the novel's beginning the enclosing circle of an institution opposes the to-fro play of an exchange, in this case a prison institution and the trade in narratives occurring between prisoners. The dramatic collision builds out of the opposition of forces repeating this configuration: the contraband trade of local outlaws and popular stories concerning their exploits collide with the regulating interests of the city's English governors. As drama gives way to epic framework, the novel encloses the fate of its inhabitants, and affirms the binding power of ruling institutions. Therefore, Scott's novel orients the expectations of its readers, seeking to guide their allegiances and expectations regarding historical change. The power of narrative indeed mediates between a sense of historical necessity and human agency: Scott's novel discloses possibilities for action while rewarding those agents that support a certain historical direction. It is against this dominant trend, however, that I read the novel's final dramatic collision. Scott's concluding pages portray the encounter of Jeanie Deans and her nephew, a bandit known as "the Whistler." Set against the novel's conclusion, I read this dramatic collision as a resistance within the novel to the historical necessity it otherwise affirms. I find in the Whistler's escape a metaphorical affirmation of multiple themes and characters spread across the novel. I argue that the metaphorical plurality of meaning at the novel's conclusion opens a sense of *possibility*, in contrast to the dominant rhetorical effect of necessity.

Finally, in my conclusion I seek to gather together the themes of this inquiry, returning from the reading of Scott's novel to address some of the problems found in Lukács. In my conclusion I identify the figural opposition that I began tracing in chapter two with the opposing narrative practices of the speculative historian and the storyteller.<sup>4</sup> As the opening collision dramatized the movements of local people and the containing power of institutions, so Walter Scott's novel as a whole performs the conflict between storyteller and speculative historian. Therefore, Lukács' description of the competing forms of genre at play in Scott's historical

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<sup>4</sup> By "speculative historian," I am referring to the theorizing that modern academic historians generally eschew, as typified in this list from Hayden White: "any temptation to construct grandiose 'meta-historical' theories, to find the key to the secret of the whole historical process, to prophesy the future, and to dictate what was both best and necessary for the present" (*The Content of the Form*, 62). Lukács foregrounds Walter Scott's speculative tendencies in the claim that "he attempts by fathoming historically the whole of English development to find a 'middle way' for himself between the warring extremes" (32).

fiction leads me to identify competing *narrative practices*. Though I started with Lukács' attention to forms, the close reading of a specific novel draws attention to what I think is the deeper question of basic narrative practices at play in Scott, basic attempts to grapple with experience and history. It is from this location at the crossroads between storytelling and speculation that I will be able to address the question that has haunted this study throughout—the problem of historical necessity and the experience of human freedom.

## CHAPTER 1

### LUKÁCS' *HISTORICAL NOVEL*: THE DRAMATIC CONCENTRATION OF THE EPIC FRAMEWORK

According to Lukács, the main tendency that characterizes Scott's historical fiction is a vision of progress: "progress is for him always a process full of contradictions, the driving force and material basis of which is the living contradiction between conflicting historical forces, the antagonisms of classes and nations" (53). It is through the driving force of conflict that progress emerges in his novels as a "glorious middle way" (32). To this end Scott employs a wide ranging artistic form, capable of encompassing "the inter-relationships between the psychology of people and the economic and moral circumstances of their lives" (40). Lukács translates this pattern into terms of formal genre, identifying Scott's "profound grasp of the historical factor in human life" as a "dramatic concentration of the epic framework" (41). To explicate the significance of this statement I will offer a brief interpretation of the second chapter of *The Historical Novel*, where Lukács develops at length his understanding of dramatic and epic genres.

Lukács begins his work on the distinction between genres with a definition of the artistic work in terms of a synthesis of content and form (91-92). It is this creative synthesis that enables an "incomplete image to appear like life itself, indeed in a more heightened, intense and alive form than in objective reality." Three elements are thus brought together in creative synthesis: form, content, and effect. Tragic drama and epic produce the effect of appearing as "living images of the totality of life." "Totality" is thus an artistic *effect*, produced through performed social content: "the essential and most important normative connections of life, in the destiny of individuals and society." It is the portrayal of destinies, of climactic turns, of decisive directions, of endings and legacies, which produces the appearance of totality. Form arranges content and confers upon it "a new immediacy" (92). Form grasps characters in their surroundings and allows their destinies to be disclosed. One can organize the interpretation of Lukács' understanding of drama and epic around the three categories of form, content, and effect.

Lukács contends that the distinctive qualities of dramatic form rest upon "underlying facts of life," facts of human action and circumstance. Recognizable patterns of dramatic form thus presuppose and artistically reflect basic experiences. Drawing from both literature and the context of his own experiences, Lukács offers three examples of "typical facts" that already bear

dramatic form: “the-parting-of-the-ways,” “calling to account,” and the “link in the chain” (101-102). Firstly, the “parting” designates the moment of a dividing decision, whether between persons, groups, or whole societies. Such decisions do not happen spontaneously, but presuppose “a certain crucial sharpening of social or personal circumstances” (100). Changing circumstances bring to the fore differences between persons, exposing sources of conflict and sharpening division. Secondly, “calling to account” means for Lukács the sudden and forceful onset of consequences from past actions. Such consequences are often unforeseen: “Many people end their lives or have long since followed a different path before the consequences of their earlier actions come upon them in such a form” (101). A “calling to account” demands a reconsideration of a way of life or a past decision. Where “the parting of the ways” stresses conflict between persons or groups, the “calling to account” emphasizes the dynamic between past and present, act and consequence.

Thirdly, with “link in the chain” Lukács follows Lenin’s dictum that “in a situation demanding action one must choose from among the endless possibilities one particular link in the chain, which one must firmly grasp in order to keep a real hold on the entire chain” (102). To take action in complex circumstances requires a degree of concentration, reduction, and risk. To find and grasp a “link in the chain” is to make a “simplification and generalization” that marks a person’s commitment, a decision that contrasts with others and calls for conflict: “When such a ‘link’ problem arises and takes up the centre of political life, the often amorphous nature of the different tendencies and trends acquires a distinct and clearcut physiognomy on both sides” (103). The link-in-the-chain problem unites the previous facts, since taking hold of a problem often coincides with a parting of the ways, a sharpening of conflict, and a sudden calling to account. Lukács qualifies his typology as only “a few striking examples from among the large number of ‘facts of life’ of which drama is the concentrated and conscious reflection” (105). Dramatic form presupposes the “facts” of human action, consequence, and conflict. Lukács’ stress falls on how each of these facts reveals a kind of movement: “these are *the laws* of movement of life itself, of which the plays are artistic images” (105, emphasis added).

Dramatic form, then, is an expanded performance of “the link in the chain” problem. Drama concentrates the totality of its contents around “a firm centre, round the dramatic collision.” In his definitions of dramatic form Lukács combines a sense of movement with that of a shaping structure: It “is an artistic image of the system, so to speak, of those human aspirations

which, in their mutual conflict, participate in this central collision” (93). Characters are concentrated in a “parallelogram of forces,” brought into conflict through both personal motivation and historical, societal causes (107). A central collision thus sets the spatial and temporal scope of dramatic form; the many features of the performance are grasped as a totality with reference to the collision at the center. Moreover, like the “link in the chain” problem, drama demands a reduction: “by grouping all manifestations of life round this collision and permitting them to live themselves out only in relation to the collision, drama simplifies and generalizes the possible attitudes of men to the problems of their lives” (94). The dynamics of dramatic form, like the “link in the chain situation,” reduce attention to the inner movements of a conflict.

If collision marks the schematic form of drama, then the content of drama refers to that “*out of which* the collision arises and [into] which the collision dissolves” (94, emphasis added). Lukács approaches the question of content from the oblique angle of particular examples from Greek tragedy and Shakespeare. In *Antigone*, the dramatic collision forms through a daughter’s “heroic resistance to the king’s decree,” as morality, individual passion, and authority conflict (95). Similarly for Shakespeare, “the love of Romeo and Juliet comes into conflict with the social circumstances of declining feudalism,” as individual passion and the “bounds of feudal family enmities” confront one another (112). In both examples the collision comes “out of” a convergence of social forces and individual passions, and performs “the destiny of individuals and society.” Lukács summarizes the historical significance of tragic drama thus:

It is certainly no accident that the great periods of tragedy coincide with the great, world-historical changes in human society. Already Hegel, though in a mystified form, saw in the conflict of Sophocles’ *Antigone* the clash of those social forces which in reality led to the destruction of primitive forms of society and to the rise of the Greek polis. (97)

The content of dramatic form consists in the confrontation of representative social forces, embodied in characters, culminating in “the necessity, on the one hand, for each of the conflicting forces to take action and, on the other, for the collision to be forcibly settled” (97). As characters commit themselves to action, their movements and counter-movements bring to attention the contradictions of their surrounding social world. Therefore, the “movement” of content through form reveals not only a collision, but a social transformation. Through the death of Romeo and Juliet, Capulet and Montague change course and signal the decline of feudal social

structures. Drama as an art form thus concentrates and brings to attention social content drawn from the contradictions of lived, historical societies.

Form and content synthesize to produce an effect, the most important aspect of Lukács' entire discussion of artistic form. In drama effect has two interrelated aspects, persuasive and cathartic. Firstly, Lukács contends that the "supreme *persuasive force* of drama depends ... upon the inner accord between the character (with his [*sic*] dominant passion which evokes the drama) and the social-historical essence of the collision" (121, emphasis added). The persuasive effect emerges through the crisscrossing of particular characters and the general social conditions of their conflict. In terms of artistry, this persuasive effect emerges through plot and speech: "The character must give adequate expression to those thoughts, feelings, experiences, etc. which move precisely him [*sic*] in precisely this situation" (116). However, cumulatively the persuasive effect of drama creates "an *atmosphere of necessity*, and in and through this atmosphere its accidental character is dramatically erased" (121). A dramatic performance persuades the audience or reader that the individual characters and accidental, contingent circumstances of the plot *belong* together, that they accord in an "atmosphere of necessity." What begins to take shape from a dramatic collision is the sense that a necessary historical process is seen unfolding, and that the events of the plot happen for a greater purpose.

In the suffering that ensues from a dramatic collision a second effect emerges, a cathartic "affirmation of life":

Every really great drama expresses, amid horror at the necessary downfall of the best representatives of human society, amid the apparently inescapable, mutual destruction of men, an *affirmation of life*. It is a *glorification of human greatness*. Man, [*sic*] in his struggle with the objectively stronger forces of the social external world, in the extreme exertion of all his powers in this unequal battle, reveals important qualities which would otherwise have remained hidden. The collision raises the dramatic hero to a new height, the possibility of which he did not suspect in himself before. (172)

Thus the second effect of drama is this cathartic revelation, a revelation of "human greatness" that affirms "life."<sup>5</sup> In resistance to adversity, the central characters' heroic *agency* emerges

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<sup>5</sup> "Men's words, subjective reactions and thoughts are shown to be true or false, genuine or deceptive, significant or fatuous, in practice – as they succeed or fail in deeds and action. Character, too, can be revealed concretely only through action. Who is brave? Who is good? Such questions can be answered solely in action." Lukács's "Narrate or Describe?" *Writer and Critic*. Ed. Arthur Kahn. 123



from the “atmosphere of necessity.” Thus under the first effect the character appears *fated*, appears to belong exactly to the world that surrounds to enclose her, yet her action reveals an affirmation of her life, her “new height.” Out of heroic exertion, then, emerges the “enthusing and uplifting qualities of drama” (122). In the cathartic effect of drama, an affirmation of human freedom appears to counterbalance the sense of historical necessity.

To understand the significance of drama’s effect for Lukács’ argument about Scott, three points demand attention: first, the persuasive effect, the “atmosphere of necessity” whereby each circumstance and each individual character appears to belong together by an inner accord; second, the cathartic effect, the “affirmation of life” produced through heroic resistance and downfall; and facing both of these effects, the social-historical transformation revealed through drama. Recall that in the examples of *Antigone* and *Romeo and Juliet*, form and content together reveal the conflict of passion and law: as individual passion collides with an old social structure, a new direction for society begins to take shape. The combination of persuasive and cathartic effects together with an implied social direction affirms a vision of history: the collision of individuals and social forms not only appears necessary, but appear to belong to a broader development. Seen in retrospect, tragic suffering has a place in the greater pattern of progress-through-collision. Even freedom and necessity are held in balance, as individual agency appears to serve greater historical ends. For Lukács, dramatic form is significant for its capacity to narrate historical change, and for its persuasive and cathartic effects. It is in through these effects that drama can harmonize loss and progress, human agency and the sense of historical necessity.

Lukács argues that Scott’s fiction balances dramatic concentration with an “epic framework.” This second concept draws closer to a direct discussion of Scott, since Lukács uses “epic” almost interchangeably with “novel” in *The Historical Novel*. Epic form expands rather than concentrates. Following Goethe, Lukács distinguishes drama and epic on the basis of plot motifs. Drama furthers action with *progressive* motifs, while epic distances action from its culmination, employing *retrogressive* motifs (145). Epic requires only a basic framework: an initial source of on-going conflict, and a capacity to integrate a wide range of characters, circumstances, and sub-plots. The epic framework allows its performance to advance through retrogressive moves. For example, the anger of Achilles suspends the capture of Troy; the anger of Poseidon keeps frustrating the homecoming of Odysseus (146). In terms of content, epic

brings into motion “a totality of objects” natural and human. Epic form translates its heterogeneous content “into human activity”: a great “series of natural circumstances, human institutions, manners, customs etc” provides “occasions against which man [*sic*] reveals the social-moral moving forces within him” (146). The epic synthesis thus incorporates a wide range of recognizable cultural artifacts, rituals, values and institutions into a heroic plot with range and depth. An ongoing conflict and a wide-ranging inclusive capacity mark the typical form and content of an epic work.

Concerning the effect of epic performance, Lukács emphasizes its persuasively *integrative* aspect: “Epic, in all its forms, presents the growth of events, the gradual change or gradual revelation of the people taking part in them; its maximum aim is to awaken this convergence of man [*sic*] and deed in the work as a whole, which it portrays, therefore, at most as *a tendency*” (123). The repeated use of “gradual” and “growth,” together with the correspondence between parts and whole suggest the organic character of epic art. Major events lend a unifying significance to a plurality of individual persons or factions, since all participants contribute to and share in the overarching public importance of an event. What marks the persuasive effect of the epic, however, is its capacity to articulate the direction of events, the destiny of the organic entity: “For the subject of epic is a struggle of national character and thus, necessarily has a clear and definite aim” (148). Within the organic diversity of the epic, therefore, the defining directions that emerge bear upon the understanding of “national character” (148). As the epic action discloses the heroic qualities of a people or articulates the obstacles their nation collectively faces, the epic poet has a power to define a people’s set of identifications and allegiances, and to articulate the vying trends within their social world.

In the “bourgeois epic,” the novel, the unifying power of ancient epic persists in a softened, subtler fashion. Novels have a capacity to articulate diverse trends, and to widen distances between separate individuals and groups. Furthermore, novels lack the concentration of drama around central collisions: “A collision in a novel does not have to be represented in its highest and sharpest form and then violently resolved. What must be shown rather is the complexity, multiplicity, intricacy and ‘cunning’ (Lenin) of those trends which produce, solve or abate such conflicts in social life” (142). One conflict between persons persists alongside other conflicts, without immediate relation. The broader temporal scope of the novel portrays the “fact of social life that conflicts abate or peter out, achieve no clear and definite resolution, either in

the lives of individuals or in society as a whole.” Furthermore, the temporal range of a novel allows for greater fluidity in the personalities of characters: “the typical quality of a character in a novel is very often only a tendency which asserts itself gradually, which emerges to the surface only by degrees out of the whole, out of the complex interaction of human beings, human relations, institutions, things, etc.” (140). Like the epic, the novel opens a space for artistically clarifying gradual trends, but the greater indeterminacy of the novel, and the fragmentation of bourgeois society, resists synthesis: in the “bourgeois epic,” the rhetorical effects of organic form take subtler turns.

To summarize these directions of artistic form in drama and epic, I will apply the features described above to Lukács’ general characterization of Walter Scott: “progress is for him always a process full of contradictions, the driving force and material basis of which is the living contradiction between conflicting historical forces, the antagonisms of classes and nations” (53). Progress emerges as the epic theme, the struggle that defines the national character of Scotland and England. Within this epic framework, the vast inclusive capacity of Scott’s fiction articulates major trends. Dramatic concentration, moreover, brings to the foreground particular characters engaged in struggle. As characters take action in their local circumstances, their personal engagement in conflict serves as the means of change. Gradually, the appearance of necessity emerges through Scott’s novelistic form, as conflict between sides produces transformation and renewed progress. Furthermore, the epic shaping of diverse individuals and social groups around major events creates the organic power of unification: through adversity, the gradual organic integration of a United Kingdom takes shape.<sup>6</sup>

Three particular plot strategies emerge in Lukács’ description of Scott and articulate the interplay of genres in more concrete terms: the “major disturbance of life,” the “middle-of-the-road hero,” and the notion of the historical novel as “prehistory of the present.” Firstly, the notion of a “major disturbance of life” formulates how a dramatic concentration emerges out of an epic background. Scott prepares for a dramatic conflict by first “disclosing the actual conditions of life, the actual growing crisis in people’s lives, [and] depicts all the problems of

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<sup>6</sup> Linda Colley’s *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* provides a recent example of a historiographical portrayal of organic, though ever problematic, British unification. Colley here summarizes her view of the century following the Act of Union in 1707 : “ For a half-century or more after the Union, as we have seen the relationship between Scotland and the rest of Britain was marred by suspicion and hatred, as was the relationship between Lowland Scotland and the Highlands. Thereafter, growing prosperity and a common investment in Protestant warfare and lucrative imperial adventure – as well as the passage of years – worked to make these internal fractures conspicuously less violent, though they never faded away completely” (373).

popular life which lead up to the historical crisis he has represented” (38). The novel thus approaches a central conflict through representatives of different economic classes, as their multiple voices provide “a rich and graded interaction between different levels of response to any major disturbance of life” (44). Rhetorically, such embodiment of social trends through representative incidents builds the “atmosphere of necessity,” the complex sense of conflict’s inevitability. However, while broad sections of society gradually form allegiances and divide themselves between warring camps, Scott “recognizes that no civil war in history has been so violent as to turn the entire population without exception into fanatical partisans of one or other of the contending camps” (37). Scott dramatizes the “fluctuating sympathies” of particular characters in relation to the forces around them. Thus a degree of indeterminacy tempers the novelist’s “atmosphere of necessity.”

Secondly, the “middle-of-the-road hero” serves an inverse function. While the “disturbance of life” builds the dramatic conflict out from an epic background, Scott’s typical hero mediates conflict and restores the dominance of an epic framework. It is the task of Scott’s heroes “to bring the extremes whose struggle fills the novel, whose clash expresses artistically a great crisis in society, into contact with one another” (36). The hero, lacking a defining commitment to either side of the conflict, moves from one side to another allowing the novelist to give personality and texture to both sides. Thus the accidents and seemingly chance encounters that cause the hero to contact the camps serve a calculated purpose: “Through the plot, at whose centre stands this hero, a neutral ground is sought and found upon which the extreme, opposing social forces can be brought into a human relationship with one another” (36). The personal destiny of the hero, in friendship, suffering, marriage, and fortune thus emerges from the background dramatic conflict: Scott’s hero, abstaining from fanaticism, stands for the moderation and organic continuity of British society. Holding these two plot strategies together, the “major disturbance of life” and the “middle-of-the-road hero” one can discern an almost systematic approach in Scott’s plots: dramatic concentration emerges from a background epic framework, and then conflict gives way again to an epic synthesis embodied in the hero.

The third plot strategy Lukács discerns, the conception of the historical novel as “prehistory of the present,” summarizes the cumulative rhetorical effect of Scott’s historical fiction. As “a plot strategy,” the idea of historical narrative as “prehistory of the present” moves outside of the dynamics of genre and into hermeneutics: questions of how the text interprets

history, and how the text is itself received. Lukács praises Scott for writing fiction that could bring to consciousness how “historical necessity asserts itself ... through the passionate actions of individuals, but often against their individual psychology” and showing “how this necessity has its roots in the real social and economic basis of popular life” (59). What emerges through the “dramatic concentration of the epic framework” is an image of how individuals and societies are necessarily shaped by historical forces. From the historian’s bird’s-eye-view, the agencies of particular characters unintentionally serve the greater trends of historical necessity, trends that emerge from the framework of cultural life, institutions, and economic conditions. Therefore this “necessity,” Lukács qualifies, is not some “other worldly fate divorced from men[sic]” but rather “the complex interaction of concrete historical circumstances in their process of transformation, in their interaction with concrete human beings” (58). The idea is not that history has a single fated script, but that historical causality can indeed be likened to the workings of a system, an organic interaction of mutual forces that become discernable only in retrospect. Historical fiction, then, has the power effectively to portray the dialectical patterns that are retrospectively shown to produce the present.

Lukács further clarifies the notion with a comparison of Goethe and Hegel at the end of the section on Scott:

Goethe is concerned chiefly with the break-through of universal human and humanist principles from the concrete basis of history. He wishes to remould the historical basis so as to allow for this break-through while preserving historical truth in its essentials. Hegel, on the other hand, interprets this relation to the present historically. He maintains that ‘necessary anachronism’ can emerge organically from historical material, if the past portrayed is clearly recognized and experienced by contemporary writers as the *necessary prehistory* of the present. .... And then the remoulding of events, customs etc. in the past would simply come to this: the writer would allow those tendencies which were alive and active in the past and which in historical reality have led up to the present (but whose later significance contemporaries naturally could not see) to emerge with that emphasis which they possess in objective, historical terms for the product of this past, namely, the present. (62)

Though Lukács describes the concept of “the prehistory of the present” through Hegel, the concept illuminates his own reading of Scott. For Scott, the epic poet of national history, it is the

view from the present that determines the significance of the past. Thus for Lukács, Scott represents an advance over Goethe, who still projected an atemporal humanist ideal into every historical period. Scott, unlike the romantic humanist, took pains to show how characters and events emerged from the circumstances of their own times. The model of historical fiction Lukács upholds in Scott is indeed the defense of progress, the defense of those trends that had to emerge to bring the current institutions and cultural life of Britain to the present. In the chaos of history, the historical novelist searches for and grasps the link in the chain that secures a continuous process. The prevailing forces of the past and prospects for the future begin to interlock: what will proceed will surely resemble the pattern that has necessarily carried Britain thus far.

It is of course impossible to work with historical problems apart from a perspective grounded in the present. It is impossible to not work out from the pre-understandings, questions, and concerns of the inquirer. I do not question the necessarily partial view from the present that Lukács attributes to Scott, but rather the retrospective attribution of historical necessity. The most questionable uses of necessity, closure, and progress are evident when Scott cast events in terms of tragic decline:

In Scott's life-work we find marvelous scenes and characters from the life of the serfs and the free peasants, from the fortunes of society's outlaws, the smugglers, robbers, professional soldiers, deserters and so on. Yet it is his unforgettable portrayal of the survivals of gentile society, of the Scottish clans where the poetry of his portrayal of past life chiefly lies. Here in material and subject-matter alone, there is present such a powerful element of the heroic period of mankind. ... Scott was the first actually to bring this period to life, by introducing us into the everyday life of the clans, by portraying upon this real basis both the exceptional and unequalled human greatness of this primitive order as well as the inner necessity of its tragic downfall. (56)

To attribute the fall of Scottish highlander society to an "inner necessity," runs close to invoking a greater historical process at work, of which the fall of any particular society is but a necessary step. "Scott sees the endless field of ruin, wrecked existences, wretched or wasted heroic, human endeavour, broken social formations etc. which were the necessary preconditions of the end-result" (54). The end-result, of course, is the expansion of the British state up until Walter Scott's own present. To look back and reawaken the "the poetic life" of the Scottish clans, and

to confront the severity of the “field of ruin,” thus serves a subtler political purpose of persuasion and closure. Questions of injustice, directed to both past and ongoing colonial expansion are placated and mediated: the heroic potential of defeated cultures is both affirmed and consigned to the past, while “wrecked existences” are both remembered, and explained as necessary. In short, when a conquest is explained as a necessary stage of progress, the historian of tragic decline becomes something of an apologist for the present establishment, and for the victors.

Before turning to Scott’s *Heart of Midlothian*, I wish first to address the question of the status of “genre.” Having now summarized the major interweaving strands Lukács finds in Scott’s form, what does it mean to interpret another text with his weave in mind? Drawing from Paul Ricoeur’s study *Time and Narrative*, I will identify “dramatic” and “epic” genres as species of plot, a recognizable narrative schematic produced through an act of emplotment. To cite one crucial definition, the act of emplotment “combines in variable proportions two temporal dimensions, one chronological and the other not” (66). The chronological dimension of a plot is episodic: one thing happens after another. The second temporal dimension “is the configurational dimension properly speaking, thanks to which the plot transforms the events into a story.” This configurational act consists of ‘grasping together’ the detailed actions and incidents (66). To grasp together discrete episodes is to bend them into a recognizable shape and extract a “configuration from a succession” (66). Thus when Lukács finds the “inner, objective dialectic of the collision itself which ... circumscribes the ‘totality of movement,’” it is the performance of those discrete incidents *as* a ‘collision’ that shapes and grasps together the plot (Lukács 95). Configuration introduces the guidance of a pattern of meaning, an “expectation that finds its fulfillment in the ‘conclusion’ of the story.” To recognize that a text introduces a sharp opposition is already to expect a possible collision and to anticipate the course of the drama. This play of recognition and expectation constitutes the temporal aspect of configuration. What stands against Hegel and Lukács in this conception of emplotment is the fact that plots always construct their shapes out of *contingency*, out of factors that could always be configured *differently*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “The paradox of emplotment is that it inverts the effect of contingency, in the sense of that which could have happened differently or which might not have happened at all, by incorporating it in some way into the effect of necessity or probability exerted by the configuring act.” Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*. Tr. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago, 1992. 142.

If genre amounts to the act of emplotment, is it the act of the author, the linguistic codes of the text, or the act of reading? Literary genres appear to pass between and across all these players. Following Ricoeur, I will locate the problem in the dynamics of narrative tradition, a historically effective “interplay of sedimentation and innovation” (68). For the sake of brevity, I will appeal to an articulation of the “sedimentation” pole from Hayden White’s “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact”:

The historian shares with his audience *general notions* of the *forms* that significant human situations *must* take by virtue of his participation in the specific processes of sense-making which identify him as a member of one cultural endowment rather than another. In the process of studying a given complex of events, he begins to perceive the *possible* story form that such events *may* figure. (86)

The power of sedimentation is this ability of forms to integrate a community into “specific processes of sense-making” drawing upon a “cultural endowment.” When Scott makes sense of the 1736 Porteous Riots in Edinburgh, casting them into the form of a dramatic collision, he writes those events into a familiar and recognizable shape. It is by participation in a common culture endowed with the sediments of form and genre that we continue to name our experiences as comedic, ironic, farcical, or dramatic. In this way, genres interweave fiction and history, blurring their boundaries.

The status of genre as a literary construction points to the political ramifications of form: when there is a parting-of-the-ways, where does the ensuing narration follow, and whom does the text exclude and forget? When there is a collision, who is heroically elevated, and who is tragically bound to necessity? Genre’s power of formation extends beyond questions exclusive to literary structure. As emplotment can serve traditional powers in an authoritarian sense, plot formations can likewise serve subversive purposes. In tension with the sedimentary aspect of genre, Ricoeur explicates the dynamic capacity for innovation within tradition. Ricoeur compares the act of emplotment to the relation between the act of speaking and paradigms of grammar: “in the same way as the grammar of a language governs the production of well-formed sentences, whose number and content are unforeseeable, a work of art- a poem, play, novel – is an original production, a new existence in the linguistic kingdom” (69). New combinations of words held in separate contexts can merge into sentences, into unforeseen speech-acts. The traditional sediments of genre can be stirred up and shaken out, drawing possibilities from within



their shapes, or reshaping them entirely. New combinations of form and content, new readings of events spring from what we believed were already *complete* histories.

Indeed, it is a question whether Scott the historical novelist is as unified in his vision of history as Lukács claims. Through reading *Heart of Midlothian*, I will seek to draw out an alternate reading of Scott that owes its rigor to Lukács, but follows an alternate route. There will be a “parting-of-the-ways.” I owe to Lukács a thorough enrichment of my thought concerning the multiple intersections of form, plot, and rhetorical effect. What I wish to retain from Lukács is the capacity to read on multiple-levels, from broad configuration to the minute interaction of historical detail. However, what I shall challenge is of course the attribution of necessity and closure to Scott’s own project. To that end, I will begin my reading of *Heart of Midlothian* with attention to a dramatic collision, a richly textured vision of riot in 18<sup>th</sup> century Edinburgh. In my second chapter, I will trace how Scott’s narrative raises characters and social trends out from the riot that surround and enclose the conflict in an epic framework. My last chapter and conclusion will seek to find an unresolved dialectic within Scott, a tension between the storyteller and the novelist. Scott the storyteller neither serves the ends of progress nor the historical novelist’s sense of an ending.

## CHAPTER 2

### DRAMATIC CONCENTRATION: *THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN* AND THE STAGING OF CONFLICT

Lukács' theory of dramatic collision readily applies to the first six chapters of *The Heart of Midlothian*. I have selected this novel because it begins with the account of a 1736 riot in Edinburgh, a focal dramatic point around which Scott's narration gathers characters and social forces. I will first give close attention to the novel's title, then to the introductory material, where a group of characters discuss their perceptions of Scottish national character. Lukács identified one of the strengths of Scott's historical fiction in this portrayal of "the direct coming-to-grips of colliding opposites in conversation" (40). Through the introductory encounter, Scott begins *Heart of Midlothian* in setting out what Lukács would call "the inter-relationships between the psychology of people and the economic and moral circumstances of their lives" (40). With this interaction between psychology and historical conditions in mind, Scott opens his novel proper with a building atmosphere of necessity. My second task then is to describe the "supreme persuasive force of drama" Scott creates through what Lukács describes as the "convergence of character and collisions" (121). Furthermore, once the characters are brought into conflict, Scott's riot sequence "reveals important qualities which would otherwise have remained hidden" (122). Therefore, the third part of this chapter addresses the kind of "qualities" disclosed through the concentrated dramatic form.

Scott's title refers to a popular name for Edinburgh's Tolbooth prison, a symbol that dominates the novel's landscape. Two travelling lawyers introduce the subject to Peter Pattieson, the first-person narrator of the opening chapter and fictional writer of the ensuing novel. "A prison is a world within itself, and has its own business, griefs, and joys, peculiar to its circle," states one of the lawyers (20). This "circle" inscribes a limit and binds economics and human passions into a structure. The prison, an institution, furnishes a symbol that could contain a world. With an interest in novel writing, Pattieson asks the two lawyers for stories: "'And for such narratives,' I asked, 'you suppose the History of the Prison of Edinburgh might afford appropriate materials?'" (22). Writers manufacture a value-added product from historical raw materials: commercial historical fiction. The tales of the Tolbooth, however, present an

alternate economy.<sup>8</sup> Pattieson observes: “Jails, like other places, have their ancient traditions, known only to the inhabitants, and handed down from one set of the melancholy lodgers to the next who occupy their cells” (26). Tales move through the prison’s inmates, as they are traded from one to another without fixing a final product. Like the prison the novel fixes limits around a whole world, enclosed in print. Prisoner’s stories pass between cells and visitors and disseminate outward, some to continue as oral tradition and some to be forgotten. There is a resistance, a freedom yet to be seen in this trading of tales. These differing motions and the kinds of world they embody—containing or passing between – produce forceful collisions in the novel, especially manifest in the opening riot.

A second opposition follows from the semantic ambiguity of the title. “*Heart of Midlothian*” as a phrase presents contrary meanings; the bodily center of affection uncomfortably merges with the edifice of law and order. Pattieson and the lawyers play on the possibilities: “I think ... the metropolitan county may be said to have a sad heart.” A lawyer returns: “And yet it may be called in some sort a strong heart, and a high heart” (20). How can heart and prison comfortably cohere? If the law can either discourage or secure the heart, the passions of the heart can likewise uphold or threaten the law. Continuing the discussion of prisoner’s tales, Pattieson doubts that the records of a Scottish prison could feature accounts of excessive passion - ‘The general morality of our people, their sober and prudent habits’ - when a lawyer interrupts to conclude the thought:

‘Secure them,’ said the barrister, ‘against any great increase of professional thieves and depredators, but not against wild and wayward starts of fancy and passion, producing crimes of an extraordinary description, which are precisely those to the detail of which we listen with thrilling interest. (22)

This exchange discloses an opposition Scott finds in his nation’s traditional character, between “sober and prudent habits” on the one hand, and the capacity for “wild and wayward starts of fancy and passion” on the other. The unsettling proximity between law and heart in the novel’s title expands outward to expose a conflict within the habits of the Scottish people.

Furthermore, the barrister Hardie identifies the Scottish capacity for wildness with the texture of the landscape: “But Scotland is like one of her own Highland glens, and the moralist

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<sup>8</sup> For a thorough and provocative study of Walter Scott and his fiction in relation to economic theory, see Kathryn Sutherland’s “Fictional Economies: Adam Smith, Walter Scott and the Nineteenth-Century Novel.”

who reads the records of her criminal jurisprudence, will find as many curious anomalous facts ... as the botanist will detect rare specimens among her dingles and cliffs” (23). This crucial identification amplifies and naturalizes the tension between heart and law.<sup>9</sup> While Scottish traditions of prudence and sobriety uphold the rule of law, a contrary wildness appears grounded in the very correspondence between a people and their natural environment. Carrying this tension further, Hardie compares the harshness of the Scottish landscape to the “cultivated field” of England. The environment of one nation harbors yet untamed wildness, while the fields of the colonial power evince orderly arrangement. Now the uncomfortable tension of heart and prison extends outward to include the question of Scottish identity and imperial rule. As the prison encloses its inhabitants within its circle, so London’s centralized authority encircles Scotland within its empire. Caught within the circle are the shifting loyalties of the Scottish people and their multiple characterizations. On the one hand, Scottish tradition inclines with a “high heart” to uphold the law, and on the other inclines to wildness and resistance.

In addition to these oppositions, prison or prisoner’s tales, centralizing law or local passion, a third crucial opposition emerges in the novel’s first line: “The times have changed in nothing more ... than in the rapid conveyance of intelligence and communication betwixt one part of Scotland and another” (13). Three paragraphs are devoted to the topic of mail coaches and their increased efficiency. The “miserable horse-cart” has been replaced: “But in both countries these ancient, slow, and sure modes of conveyance, are now alike unknown; mail-coach races against mail-coach, and high flyer against high-flyer, through the most remote districts of Britain” (13). What is at stake in symbolizing historical change through an apparently prosaic difference in means of communication? The security of efficient mail delivery from London to Edinburgh and from Edinburgh to the Highlands circumscribes the domain around a central authority.<sup>10</sup> Efficient lines of command and control, or simply of business transaction, are decisive for responding to contingent events. Thus, at stake in the figure of the coach is the opposition of central organization and unforeseeable historical events. Central authority can expand its power to respond efficiently to conflict, but it cannot fully foresee the movements of

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<sup>9</sup> A poetic articulation of the correspondence between people and landscape, and the distinction between England and Scotland, is found in Lord Byron’s “Lachin Y Gair” (1807): “England! Thy beauties are tame and domestic / To one who has roved o’er the mountains afar: / O for the crags that are wild and majestic!” (Perkins, 787-788).

<sup>10</sup> “To the possibility of transferring orders over long distances without serious distortions may be connected the birth of political rule exercised by a distant state. This political implication of writing is just one of its consequences.” (Ricoeur *Interpretation Theory*, 28).

people and groups. Though the mail coach may symbolize historical change, the chain of communication always runs behind its times.

What then will Scott concentrate and make collide in the Porteous Riot? The contradictions between Scottish sobriety and Scottish passion, between an imperial rule of law and a local environment, and a system of central command and the unforeseeable tumult of events. The complexity exceeds the capacity for interpretation, and this list is far from complete. However, the shape of the collision that I will follow matches the first contradiction I traced: the prison's circumscribing circle and its imposed limits, and the passing-to-and-fro of freely traded tales. Permeating the field is an unresolved tension that Walter Scott finds in the Scottish national character. Scott's narration draws out these contradictions and then shapes, guides, and directs them into a stable narrative.

With the opening of the novel proper, Scott introduces the characters and figures that will collide in "an atmosphere of necessity." Scott begins his account of the Porteous riots three times, and with each point of departure sets in motion a new dynamic. The first three paragraphs of chapter two describe Grassmarket, the square in Edinburgh and "scene of public executions." Scott evokes around the gallows a gothic atmosphere: "As this apparatus was always arranged before dawn, it seemed as if the gallows had grown out of the earth in the course of one night, like the production of some foul demon" (27). Public execution is a kind of central dramatic collision: the full force of the law's *sentence* collides with the human *body*, enacting a scene for "a great number of spectators" (27). Prior to any characters, Scott introduces the "apparatus" and "scene" of the law's power, prefiguring the collision to come.

In addition, the description of the gallows discloses anxiety over the law. Scott praises executions for the "useful end of all such inflictions" in preventing crime, but offers a measured objection: capital sentences "can be altogether justified" in consideration of this "appalling effect upon the spectators" alone. Hart describes the phenomenon of heightened concern over the legal system in the late eighteenth century: with growing confidence in human reason and a decline in religious enthusiasm, British thinkers created "a potent rhetoric and aesthetic" around the legal system.<sup>11</sup> Hart cites historian Douglas Hay: "the criminal law ... was critically important in maintaining bonds of obedience and deference, in legitimizing the status quo, in constantly

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<sup>11</sup>Hart refers to historian E.P Thompson's example of the Black Acts: "the law assumed unusual pre-eminence ... as the central legitimizing ideology, displacing the religious authority and sanctions of previous centuries" (51).

recreating the structure of authority.” The association of gallows, power, and quasi-supernatural force transfers symbolism from religious to legal discourse, and simultaneously exposes anxiety over the law’s fragility.

With the second point of departure Scott introduces a social practice and a character simultaneously: “Contraband trade, though it strikes at the root of legitimate government, by encroaching on its revenues, - though it injures the fair trader and debauches the minds of those engaged in it, - is not usually looked upon ... in a very heinous view” (28). The seemingly prosaic concern of local smuggling in fact threatens the “root of legitimate government,” and moreover, sets Scott’s narrative on its course. “Smuggling was almost universal in Scotland in the reigns of George I. and II.; for the people, unaccustomed to imposts, and regarding them as an unjust aggression upon their ancient liberties, made no scruple to elude them whenever it was possible to do so” (28).<sup>12</sup> Andrew Wilson, “possessed of great personal strength, courage, and cunning,” incarnates the contraband trade phenomenon. Originally a village baker, Wilson “was perfectly acquainted with the coast” in the county of Fife, allowing him to baffle “the pursuit and researches of the king’s officers” (29). In contrast to Scott’s view of the gallows as a malevolent yet necessary force, the threat from contraband trade receives from Scott an imaginative excitement. Nonetheless, Wilson transgresses too far and robs the house of the Collector, a local government revenue official. The to-fro motion of contraband trade proves a threat to “the root of legitimate government,” eliciting a counter-response.

Chapter three introduces the third element crucial for setting into motion the central collision. John Porteous, captain of the City Guard and officer of police, begins not unlike Wilson – a son of a city tradesman who leaves urban life behind for adventure. However, without the adventurous glow that Scott’s narrator casts around Wilson, Porteous’ history begins under foreboding signs: “the youth, however, had a wild and irreclaimable propensity to dissipation” (33). Porteous rises in the ranks of a foreign military service and returns to serve Edinburgh, bearing his “wild and irreclaimable” passions into a position of authority. Porteous receives his position of authority through merit, rather than through inheritance. However, while his “military discipline” wins him his public position, “he is said to have been a man of profligate habits, an unnatural son, and a brutal husband” (33). In Porteous Scott introduces the

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<sup>12</sup>The attention Scott gives to popular resistance in matters of local trade and government imposed regulation recalls the conflicts over taxation that fuelled the American and French revolutions.

theme of public and domestic spheres, and the crisscrossing of dangerous passions one into the other. It is this capacity for transgression, this excessive quality, that casts the captain as an intimidating if not utterly unfit representative of authority.

Furthermore, Porteous' guards display a similar discordance: "the soldiers of the City Guard ... for the greater part, Highlanders, were neither by birth, education, or former habits, trained to endure with much patience the insults of the rabble, or the provoking petulance of truant schoolboys ... with whom their occupation brought them into contact" (34). Highlanders, a group usually linked with wildness and conflict with the Empire for the remainder of the novel, are here serving as London's guards over Edinburgh.<sup>13</sup> What is at stake in this deliberate rhetorical fusion of wildness, dissolution, and the Empire's forces over Edinburgh? After the initial escape of Wilson and Geordie Robertson (Staunton), Porteous seeks vindication of his authority: "the honour of his command and of his corps seems to have been a matter of high interest and importance. He was exceedingly incensed against Wilson for the affront he construed him to have put upon his soldiers" (35). From the uneasy mixture of power and wildness – or excess – springs an anxiety over defining the legitimacy of power. Porteous and his guards unite uncivil passion with civil authority, representing simultaneously the Empire and its northern unrests.

Over each of the introductory figures, then, an uneasy cloud settles: first the "demonic" gallows, the defining center of the law's power over the denizens of Edinburgh, secondly Wilson, as he embodies the charismatic but politically threatening local contraband trade, and thirdly Porteous with his "wild and irreclaimable" habits. Placing the three into relation brings into question the stability of the notion of evil: for which is the greater evil, a local smuggler's transgression or the brutality of the state's reaction? Moral ambiguity grows through the remarkable escape scene, when Wilson sacrifices his own chance at liberation for the sake of his comrade. Scott's narrator describes Wilson's internal deliberation: "Minds like Wilson's, even when exercised in evil practices, sometimes retain the power of thinking and resolving with enthusiastic generosity. His whole thoughts were now bent on the possibility of saving Robertson's life, without the least respect to his own" (30). In his particular situation, Wilson

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<sup>13</sup> E.g. The Highland 1745 resistance disturbs the tranquility of the novel's final section in the glen of Knocktarlitie, as marauders "or men that had been driven to that desperate mood of life" plunder the Lowlands (462).

reveals a heroic capacity: the smuggler, who strikes “at the root of legitimate government,” transforms into a redeemer.

Scott heightens the excitement of Wilson’s action through placing it in close proximity to the linguistic intensity of a preacher. Breaking up the narrator’s discourse, the preacher’s address to the prisoners is the first voice heard in the second chapter:

‘Therefore,’ urged the good man, his voice trembling with emotion, ‘redeem the time, my unhappy brethren, which is yet left; and remember, that, with the grace of Him to whom space and time are but as nothing, salvation may yet be assured, even in the pittance of delay which the laws of your country afford you.’ (31)

It is as if this theology of God’s transcendence –“space and time are but as nothing”- and the possibility of redeeming a time quickly slipping away, carry a rhetorical effect further than the preacher’s apparent intentions. For Wilson is next to give voice, seizing “the soldiers, one with each hand, and calling at the same time to his companion, ‘Run Geordie, Run!’” Robertson, however is slow to grasp the link in the chain, and stands “for a second thunderstruck ... unable to avail himself of the opportunity of escape” (32). Only when the bystanders take up the call, “‘Run, run!’ being echoed from many around,” can Robertson throw “himself over the pew,” and mix himself with “the dispersing congregation” (32). There is a coincidental but rhetorically powerful resonance between religious redemption and a generous act, between heavenly transcendence, and an earthly escape. When Geordie stands “thunderstruck,” as if trapped under a fateful doubt, it is the power of words to resonate beyond their initial speaker that frees him. No longer are the smugglers under the weight of evil, and the public celebrates their escape. Even more, this “general feeling was so great, that it excited a vague report that Wilson would be rescued at the place of execution, either by the mob or by some of his old associates” (32). From heroic action springs the to-fro telling of tales, and from the energy of this social imagination a counter-response from Porteous.

In chapter three all the major figures converge: Porteous and his guards bring Wilson to the gallows. While the narrated action gave Wilson an almost miraculous reversal, from noxious smuggler to generous savior, Porteous receives no such transformation. Already eager to avenge “the honour of his command” for Robertson’s escape, the police commander suffers an added insult from watching the magistrates summon extra infantry to aid his own guard. Scott’s narrator describes Porteous’ internal state as a chaos of passions:



On the present occasion, however, it seemed to those who saw him as if he were agitated by some evil demon. His step was irregular, his voice hollow and broken, his countenance pale, his eyes staring and wild ... and his whole appearance so disordered, that many remarked he seemed to be *fey*, a Scottish expression, meaning the state of those who are driven on to their impending fate by the strong impulse of some irresistible necessity. (37)

Scott's narrator has shifted the burden of evil from Wilson squarely to Porteous. A wild physiognomy and disordered appearance portends more when the body belongs to a public official: the ancient synecdoche of the body politic and the body of the king or authority figure comes into play.<sup>14</sup> When the commander of Edinburgh's police is himself disordered, and the local smugglers have won popular appeal, a crisis of authority is indeed imminent. Furthermore, critic P.F. Fisher has articulated the importance of this sense of fate, or "*fey*," for Scott and throughout the novel:

But respect for tradition prevented him [Scott] from espousing any radical opinions whatever, and the sense of historical force and movement was expressed through the older faith in Providence rather than the newer belief in progress. The ordered movement of history is represented as providential, and the chaos of accident and destruction is attributed to the fate that man brings from himself. (102)

Fisher continues:

Fate is the order of history without God, and if man does not live by the fear of God, he must live by the necessary contingencies of his fate. The most favored of Providence are men of character; character is based on principle, and principle is derived from the moral law. (106)

Porteous, "always too ready to come to blows and violence; a character void of principle," has surrendered himself to transitory passions rather than binding his heart to the laws of God (35). Fate becomes then the "irresistible necessity" of suffering the consequences of this surrender to personal passion. Understood historically, the *fey* one moves outside the orders and structures

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<sup>14</sup> The capacity for a synecdoche to unify and integrate opposites symbolically and imply a conservative, organicist view of history and society is discussed in White's *Metahistory*, 35-36. Avrom Fleishman's reading of *Heart of Midlothian* follows with care the significance of the body synecdoche throughout the novel, especially in the transfer of "heart" from the prison to Jeanie Deans, "whose heart ... will both reaffirm the value of law and social order represented by the Tolbooth, and also qualify it" (*The English Historical Novel*, 79).

that uphold the laws of God and thus *endure*. The fated one suffers the isolation of his or her own destiny, fallen from the order of history.

The further Porteous acts upon his unruly passion, the further surrounding events enclose him in his fate. Thus Porteous deviates from the orderly conduct of his mission to secure the execution; he tortures Wilson by personally forcing his wrists into handcuffs too small (36). When Wilson replies with a rebuke and a plea, 'May God forgive you,' the words "took air, and become known to the people" (37). Wilson's adherence to forgiveness unintentionally wins increased hatred for Porteous from the surrounding people (37). With the death of Wilson and the fulfillment of the law's sentence, suddenly the "mob" reacts, with "tumult among the multitude," stones thrown, "whoops, shrieks, howls" and a "young fellow, with a sailor's cap" cutting the body down (37). Porteous collides forcefully with the crowd's onrush, as he abandons his duty to protect and instead orders his guards to give fire; he himself discharges a musket (38). Thus Porteous surrenders his claim to legitimate authority, and the crowd stands not intimidated but "incensed" with him (38). Chapter three closes in antithesis to chapter two: it closes with an incensed crowd gathering for vengeance instead of celebration, and with a court sentencing the accused to death, rather than a prisoner's escape. Moreover, chapter three closes with a court finalizing the official account of the event—Porteous indeed shot with a musket—instead of proliferating stories about a heroic act.

Through the collisions of chapters two and three, the initial triangle of figures has expanded to include most of Edinburgh. Chapters four and six follow the initial collision through to the people's confrontation with the Tolbooth structure itself. Considering especially then *what* Scott's narrative discloses about the people of Edinburgh, I shall here trace two movements in chapters four and six: first, the poetic figuration of the crowd's elemental passion and secondly, the crowd's experience of the historicity of power. Instead of the specter of moral evil surrounding the individual lives of Wilson and Porteous, the symbolic emphasis shifts as Scott's attention turns to the crowd. When the crowd assembles around the gallows awaiting Porteous' execution, Scott figures them thus: "The area of the Grassmarket resembled a huge dark lake or sea of human heads, in the centre of which rose the fatal tree, tall, black, and ominous" (40). Again, with growing suspicion that Porteous has received some reprieve, the "hitherto silent expectation of the people became changed into that deep and agitating murmur, which is sent forth by the ocean before the tempest begins to howl" (42). The crowd "fluctuated

to and fro without any visible cause of impulse,” which Scott likens to “the unsettled states of their minds,” and to “the agitation of waters.” Threatening waters provide a pattern for bringing the crowd’s indeterminate motions and upheavals into language. More than serving a purely decorative purpose, the marine language articulates the crowd’s power: the invisible passion of the crowd and its effects are manifest through metaphor.

In chapters six and seven the citizens of Edinburgh carry through a nocturnal assault on the Tolbooth, release the prisoners, and execute Porteous in Grassmarket. The dominant metaphor changes from sea to fire, as the faces of the crowd flicker in and out of sight under torch light, and as they name their leader “Wildfire” (59). After securing the gates of the city—and leaving their own guards to flit there to and fro mostly unseen (60) – and disabling the guards, the two metaphors converge: “Now, however, having accomplished all the preliminary parts of their design, they raised a tremendous shout of ‘Porteous! Porteous! To the Tolbooth!’” With their power and intent both visible and audible, the crowds surround the Tolbooth and set the gate alight:

A huge red glaring bonfire speedily arose close to the door of the prison, sending up a tall column of smoke and flame against its antique turrets and strongly-grated windows, and illuminating the ferocious and wild gestures of the rioters who surrounded the place, as well as the pale and anxious groups of those, who, from windows in the vicinage, watched the progress of this alarming scene. (64)

The physical and symbolic architecture of legal power and social order—the prison – has been consumed by the people for this moment. From a tumultuous upheaval to a consuming fire, metaphors disclose the elemental and unruly power of the crowd.

Therefore, Scott’s narrative articulates what I have referred to as “the historicity of power.” If the power of the crowd resonates into the text through figurative language and elemental imagery, then the recognition or *consciousness of* that power requires a different kind of representation. With the announcement of royal reprieve for Porteous, Scott represents the crowd through a fictional collective voice:

‘This man,’ they said – ‘the brave, the resolute, the generous, was executed to death without mercy for stealing a purse of gold, which in some sense he might consider as a fair reprisal; while the profligate satellite, who took advantage of a trifling tumult ... is deemed a fitting object for the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy. Is this to be

borne? – would our fathers have borne it? Are not we, like them, Scotsmen and burghers of Edinburgh?’ (43)

As the royal intervention interrupts the expected course of the execution, the townspeople must interpret and understand how they have been thwarted. In other words, a powerful agent has taken away an expected outcome, and this discontinuity provokes questions: “Is this to be borne? – would our fathers have borne it?” The disruptive event opens an undetermined space that leads the townspeople to ask questions beyond ‘what has happened?’ Rather: who is this power that disrupts us, what is their claim upon us, and even more, *who are we* to submit to this claim? What precisely happens when the crowd that has gathered around the gallows asks these questions? To draw from Lukács practical symbolism, I would identify the experience as a combination of “calling to account” and “parting of the ways.” To understand the unexpected interruption, the crowd gathers historical accounts of themselves: in situations past, our predecessors—distinctly gendered male—would have acted against this imposition from above. Scott’s narrator has repeatedly identified the “mob of Edinburgh” with a historical precedent for upheaval against governing authority (41). Therefore, gathering together this narrative of past action, the crowd identifies with a course of action that departs from that of their magistrates and representatives from London: two narratives of action are held together, then divided and judged. To ask the question “would our fathers have borne this?” therefore, is to put contrasting narratives of action into play, and to deliberate between them a possible course of action for the future.

In the chorus-like question-- “would our fathers have borne this?”--the riot sequence reaches its highest point of tension before the opposing sides take action. Lukács articulates in *The Historical Novel* how the experience of a public upheaval manifests the historical condition of political institutions and social forms. Considering the example of the French Revolution, Lukács interprets the practical significance of a “mass experience of history”:

Hence the concrete possibilities for men to comprehend their own existence as something historically conditioned, for them to see in history something which deeply affects their daily lives and immediately concerns them. There is no point in dealing here with the social transformations in France itself. It is quite obvious the extent to which the economic and cultural life of the entire nation was disrupted by the huge, rapidly successive changes of the period. (24)

The Edinburgh crowd experiences the act of comprehension in asking themselves “would our fathers have borne this?” If past persons in our place could throw off the commands of a ruling power, could we not repeat such action again in this present situation? The movement from “calling to account” to “a parting of the ways” could be translated to another vocabulary: a movement from crisis to initiative. Crisis, Frank Kermode notes, has in its early theological uses in the Greek language, a pun “which means both ‘judgment’ and ‘separation.’” (*Sense of an Ending*, 25). The imposition of the royal reprieve throws the expected continuity of Porteous’ execution into crisis. Furthermore, the crisis manifests the people’s political alienation from London, hostility toward the imperial authority, and growing sense of injustice. A division from and judgment against the present situation takes support from past historical precedent: as past citizens of Edinburgh acted in spite of authority, so we can again now. Initiative for present action proceeds through re-imagining past possibilities and applying them in the present. The people of Edinburgh dramatically comprehend their own existence as something historically conditioned, yet not in terms of a determined necessity, but in terms of a capacity for initiative.

The power of Scott’s historical fiction is the capacity of narrative to concentrate together diverse elements into a dramatic confrontation. Particular characters, their voices and agency, interact with a surrounding social context, manifesting the varied conflicts and anxieties of a historical situation. Having begun this chapter with the opposition of the prison and the exchange of prisoner’s tales, I have followed the dramatic configuration of the plot and reached a similar concluding place. In Scott’s account of Pattieson’s discussion with the lawyers, a series of entangled conflicts within Scottish character were articulated. Thus the dialogue points to sober commitment to the rule of the law, and an equally entrenched defiance of central authority in favour of local custom. Entangled in this uneasy balance of heart and law is the relation of Scotland and England. These historical conditions are concentrated together through the dramatic collision of Wilson the charismatic smuggler and Porteous the unruly governor. Scott’s narrator places specters of evil over each figure including the gallows, refusing to take clear sides in the conflict. As Porteous oversteps his bounds the people of Edinburgh surge against him, poetically figured in elemental power. At the drama’s culminating point the crowd speaks in chorus against the royal reprieve for Porteous. The chorus grasps the moment in the question “would our fathers have borne this?” where memory and future possibility are summoned to bear upon the present. An exchange between memory and possibility happens here that counteracts

the limits imposed from institutional authority. It is this to-fro moment of deliberation that recalls the opening opposition of an exchange between experiences and the imposed limits of the prison.

CHAPTER 3  
THE EPIC FRAMEWORK: *THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN* AND STRATEGIES OF  
CONTAINMENT

After the dramatic concentration of characters and forces, Scott turns the *Heart of Midlothian* toward a consoling depiction of progress. Lukács describes Scott's progress as dialectical, a "process full of contradictions" (53). The dramatic element of Scott's fiction thus serves the synthesizing epic element, as conflict gives way to progress. My task in this chapter is to identify the strategies with which Scott contains conflict and re-directs it toward a dominant narrative of progress.<sup>15</sup> Firstly, the novel's shift toward domesticity contains the energy of the riot. As Captain Porteous had represented the corruption of both private and public spheres, so the tale of Jeanie Deans and Reuben Butler addresses the restoration of harmony in both. Secondly, the moral judgments surrounding the initial figures expand to contain the riot and its conclusion. Instead of an opportunity for political change, the riot enacts an inherently destructive cycle of retribution. Evil thus settles over the entire riot sequence, suggesting a moral explanation for conflict. Countering the cyclical pattern of retribution Scott affirms the Providential ordering of history. It is this third narrative strategy that seeks to grasp a totalizing vision of historical change. Indeed, this third angle carries much of the social anxiety manifested in the Porteous Riot toward a stable conclusion. As Fleishman has articulated, the titular "Heart" of Midlothian must be transferred from the Tolbooth prison to a new law within the human heart, a law of justice and mercy embodied in Jeanie Deans and Reuben Butler.<sup>16</sup> Thus a trend toward domesticity, the figuring of conflict in terms of moral failure, and the invocation of providential order interweave. To employ Lukács' terms, the combination of these trends produces the "epic framework" that encloses the dramatic elements in a vision of gradual change.

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<sup>15</sup> The notion of "strategies of containment" and the interconnected concepts of narrative and ideology comes from Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. 1981.

<sup>16</sup> Fleishman: "The topographical setting of the novel becomes a series of concentric circles radiating out from the Tolbooth, the 'Heart of Midlothian,' to the city of Edinburgh, to the county of Midlothian, to the whole of Scotland and ultimately to all of Great Britain. This image pattern will become symbol, capable of reconciling opposites and of functioning on several planes of reality, for the heart of Midlothian will come dramatically to be Jeanie Deans, whose heart or *Gemüt* will both reaffirm the value of law and social order represented by the Tolbooth, and also qualify it by values which social institutions generally lack, i.e. 'heart'" (79).

The shift toward anxiety over gender and a concern for domesticity begins in the fourth chapter. Scott here focuses on particular characters engaged in what Lukács calls the “direct coming-to-grips of colliding opposites in conversation” (40). Furthermore, this shift from the narration of general trends to particularized voices and agents follows the pattern of “dramatic concentration of epic framework” (41). The *retrogressive* movement of epic suspends the action’s progression and allows for “a rich and graded interaction between different levels of response to any major disturbance of life” (44). Thus in this example, the narrative moves toward the riot, the central collision, by first moving down and across into the concerns of working class Edinburgh women engaged by the conflict. The retrogressive, epic mode of the historical novel thus integrates these strands into the collision, and moreover, introduces a theme for containing the conflict. When Scott allows female figures to voice the strongest criticism of the Imperial state, he simultaneously expresses local passion and confines it to the “feminine” sphere: his sober male voices turn the women—and the reader-- back toward the domestic order of the home, and associate upheaval and passion with a kind of dangerous and subversive femininity.

If the enclosing circle of the state incarnates its power in the prison, the domestic sphere of the home presents a no less constraining institution in Scott’s *Heart of Midlothian*. Tensions between containment and free motion appear in the differing responses of women and men to the Queen’s reprieve for Porteous. Mrs Howden, a “rouping-wife, or saleswoman,” attempts to summarize the mood of the conversation among several characters:

I’ll tell ye what it is, neighbours,’ said Mrs Howden, ‘I’ll ne’er believe Scotland is Scotland ony mair, if our kindly Scots sit down with the affron they hae gien us this day. It’s not only the blude that *is* shed, but the blude that might hae been shed, that’s required at our hands; there was my daughter’s wean, little Eppie Daidle – my oe, ye ken, Miss Grizel – had played the truant frae the school as bairns will do, ye ken, Mr Butler’ – ‘And for which,’ interjected Mr Butler, ‘they should be soundly scourged by their well-wishers’ (48).

Howden invokes the name and identity of Scotland against the affront from London’s central authority. Mr Butler, a deputy schoolmaster, here interrupts her political argument to focus attention on the proper discipline of children. Even as male characters give voice to a moderate degree of political dissent, they are purposeful in rebuking their female neighbours for overstepping boundaries. Howden continues despite Butler: “Aweel ... the sum o’ the matter is,



that, were I a man, I wad hae amends o' Jock Porteous, be the upshot what like o't, if a' the carles and carlines in England had sworn to the nay-say" (48). Miss Grizel, an "ancient seamstress" adds: "I would claw down the tollbooth door wi' my nails ... but I wad be at him." Grizel's words anticipate the imminent action of chapter six, while the deputy schoolmaster continues to rebuke the women: "Ye may be very right, ladies,' said Butler, 'but I would not advise you to speak so loud.' Like the tales of the prisoners exceeding the boundaries of their cells, the women continue to voice their dissent, allowing their passion to spread to others.

Moving through the collision of the imperial authorities and the populace of Edinburgh, then, is a second fissure between genders and the spheres defined for them. The women's voices in chapter four carry the linguistic articulation of political crisis toward initiative and action. Male characters, especially those in positions of local authority, however, urge restraint. What is at stake in this effort to divide vocal dissent and cautious restraint along genders? Ina Ferris has illuminated the complex play of gender and imagination in Scott's literary and social context. In writing novels Scott entered into "a form linked to the middle class, the product of the antihierarchical technology of print, and a genre whose long-standing association with women was intensified in the early years of the century when all the notable novelists were female" (8).<sup>17</sup> It is the possibility of "passion, sentiment, and delusion"—or simply subversive thought--erupting into the social order through women's voices that won from male critics an anxious intervention. For Scott to vocalize passionate dissent through his female characters, then, is precisely to identify the riot with the "potential for chaos" associated with the novel, "sentiment," and the women. The danger of his own work—its capacity to inspire subversive thought, and unbalance the "psychic order" of politics and gender – is both confronted and contained. The male characters, chiefly Reuben Butler, continue through the novel's action, while Grizel and Howden are forgotten after the riot. Ending chapter four with the solemn-- and *masculine*-- discussion of Saddletree and Butler assigns the danger of riotous women to the background.

As Scott reinforces the inherent danger of the riot as a threat from female passion, so he casts the riot as an outpouring of another incendiary passion: the destructive cycle of retribution.

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<sup>17</sup> Women novelists and readers were imagined as a field "marked by passion, sentiment, and delusion" (36). Ferris finds through her reading of Scott's contemporary literary critics and journals that what "emerges as most disturbing about novels and women is that they represent the potential for chaos *within* the nonfictional and male discourse that was so central to social, moral, intellectual, political, and – not so incidentally – psychic order for those in charge of the culture" (37).

After the rioters burn their way into the Tolbooth the capacity for political transformation is forgotten; initiative gives way to the desire for retribution. Without a doubt, the storming of a prison draws a close resemblance to the iconic events of 1789 and the opening fire of the French Revolution. Scott even lends to Porteous an air of aristocratic excess as he celebrates his reprieve, configuring his fall in the dark irony of revenge tragedy:

It was, therefore, in the hour of unalloyed mirth, when this unfortunate wretch was ‘full of bread,’ hot with wine, and high in mistimed and ill-grounded confidence, and alas!

With all his sins full blown, when the first distant shouts of the rioters mingled with the song of merriment and intemperance. (65)

Clustering together a fallen fortress-prison, an enraged populace, and the hubris of authority, Scott both evokes and evades the specters of 1789. Scott calls to mind the players and the stage of revolution, but performs the scene as revenge tragedy: a time “when churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out contagion to the world” (*Hamlet*, 3.2.388-390). Indeed, the mistimed celebration alludes specifically to Claudius, and thus Staunton and the vengeful crowd takes on Hamlet’s role. Where for Hamlet, a constant internal debate paralyzes any decisive action, for the Porteous riot the logic of retribution overrides any revolutionary vision. George Staunton, the charismatic leader of the rioters directs the action in ritualistic terms: “This sacrifice will lose half its savour if we do not offer it at the very horns of the altar. We will have him die where a murderer should die, on the common gibbet – We will have him die where he spilled the blood of so many innocents!” (67). The logic of retribution and its ritualistic execution bind initiative to reaction; the revolutionary acts of defying authority and seizing its structures are contained in a closed system. Staunton precisely articulates the binding logic of retribution when he rejects Butler’s pleas for mercy: ““Now, sir, we have patiently heard you, and we just wish you to understand, in the way of answer, that you may as well argue to the ashler work and iron-stanches of the Tolbooth as think to change our purpose – Blood must have blood” (69). As Staunton invokes the “iron-stanches of the Tolbooth,” the literal and symbolic function of the prison is repeated and confirmed, rather than abolished. Staunton rallies the rioting population with “Remember Wilson!” and narrows the subversive act to the logic of life for life: the revolutionary insight voiced in the question “Is this to be borne? – would our fathers have borne it?” is lost. Instead of a creative confrontation with the political order, the logic of retribution binds action simply to repeat the tyranny of the past.

Moreover, Scott settles the sign of *evil* over the central collision of a people and its rulers. The demon of the gallows, the evil of contraband trade, and the brutality of an unprincipled police commander converge. Scott has combined together two legal transgressions with the severity of capital punishment, and the results are manifest in retributive violence. Scott's novel encourages a moral comprehension of social unrest: its sources are in the combination of a corrupt official, the illegal activities of citizens, and an overly zealous penal system. Thus the cure lies not in political transformation, then, but a more rigorous personal adherence to the law in all members of society, together with gradual amelioration of the law's severity. What manifests as evil on the level of personal morality appears as chaos in the public realm. Recall the spectacle of the rioters burning through the Tolbooth gates (64). Hellish flames reveal the "ferocious and wild gestures of the rioters who surrounded the place," and the description suggests an outburst of animal energy. Chapter seven closes soon after Porteous' final moments:

Butler, then, at the opening into the low street called the Cowgate, cast back a terrified glance, and, by the red and dusky light of the torches, he could discern a figure wavering and struggling as it hung suspended above the heads of the multitude, and could even observe men striking at it with their Lochaber-axes and partisans. The sight was of a nature to double his horror, and to add wings to his flight. (71)

The writhing body of Porteous emerges as an iconic image for the entire riot sequence: his body is both the final object of the rioter's action, and serves as a metaphor for the chaos engulfing the body politic of Edinburgh. As Porteous himself could not contain his unruly dissipation and thirst for violence, so now the crowd unleashes an equivalent response upon him. Moreover, the final image of a single body continues the political significance of organic metaphors: as the healthy society holds diverse parts in an organic whole, so the corrupt society collapses into internal violence. Butler turns from the horror, and following his exit the novel's plot sets another course.

If the riot is grasped under the sign of moral evil, then Scott's novel counters this chaos with an affirmation of Providence. As P.F. Fisher explains, Scott's sense "of historical force and movement was expressed through the older faith in Providence rather than the newer belief in progress" (102). The institutions upholding law, order and morality endure under the guidance of Providence, while "the chaos of accident and destruction is attributed to the fate that man

brings on himself” (102). It is precisely the departure from moral order that spurs both the “chaos of accident and destruction,” and *removes* individuals from the order of history: Porteous, the willful and undisciplined, yields himself to his fate, while the generous and forgiving Wilson returns to the order of Providence in his last moments: “You know not how soon you yourself may have occasion to ask the mercy, which you are now refusing to a fellow-creature. May God forgive you!” Scott notes that these words were “long afterwards quoted and remembered,” while Porteous is remembered “to be *fey*, a Scottish expression meaning the state of those who are driven on to their impending fate by the strong impulse of some irresistible *necessity*” (36, emphasis added). In a remarkable footnote, Scott recounts a traditional narrative for understanding the *fey* one:

There is a tradition, that while a little stream was swollen into a torrent by recent showers, the discontented voice of the Water Spirit was heard to pronounce these words [‘The hour’s come, but not the man’]. At the same moment a man, urged on by his fate, or, in Scottish language, *fey*, arrived at a gallop, and prepared to cross the water. No remonstrance from the bystanders was of power to stop him – he plunged into the stream, and perished. (513)

The *fey* one not only leaves the public order of law and tradition, but consigns himself or herself to an obliterating force, figured as a torrential current. Porteous, too, in his desire to overstep the lawful bounds of his position hands himself over to “a huge dark lake or sea of human heads,” an almost sublime image for the enraged Edinburgh populace.

Therefore, as moral disorder serves to explain the root causes of social unrest, Providence explains the broad course of history. Providence navigates its heroes through human history, raising them to sustain tradition and order, while fate obliterates those who step outside the moral law. Against the ill-fated Porteous, the Duke of Argyle emerges in the latter half of the novel as the true guardian of Scotland: a man of both charisma and principle, who would not “rise from the earth in the whirlwind” but “chose a course more safe and more honourable” (345). As historical events proceed, the dynamic of Providence and fate allows the novelist to configure the chaos of human history into a discernible shape: order and tradition slowly change and endure under Providence, surviving against the violence of human fate. Providence constitutes a strong imaginary structure for encircling and containing human history; the flow of time itself is symbolically held within order and tradition. The to-fro motion of events and persons deviating

from the circle of the law, however, is comprehended under the sign of fate – the torrent that pulls against the structure of history.

As chapter seven ends with “an express ... dispatched to London with the tidings” of the riot and Porteous’ fall, the theme of societal change symbolized in secure communication returns. Francis Hart describes a “crisis of authority” evident in Scott’s “abiding concerns with the certain decay and problematic restoration of traditional authority and with the instability and corruptibility of a new legalism” (49). While the lingering monarchical system appeared increasingly corrupt, the system of “rational-legal authority” that rose with bourgeois society lacked charismatic appeal (48-50). Hart locates Scott’s attempted solution in “a complex act of imaginative transferral”: the emotional heroism of past authority must be transferred to “a new and ‘natural’ aristocracy, grounded in traditional values but also in the obligations of property, legality, and humanity” (52). Porteous and his “harsh and fierce habits” embody more than the danger of human passion; he embodies the uncertainty and tumult of past forms of authority. In his “high interest” for defending “the honour of his command and of his corps,” Porteous follows a traditional pattern of feudal honour and rule by display of force. The fall of Porteous thus confirms again the downfall of the “warlike chieftain” and the advance of rational-legal authority. Leaving behind the chaos of the Edinburgh body politic, Scott’s narrator follows Butler the schoolmaster and voice of orderly restraint. Therefore, the collision of the police commander and the crowd confirms more than the fate of an individual, but rather the historical shift between forms of authority. The return of the mail-coach signals the response of central communication to changing times.

The question remains, however, if the “warlike chieftain” must yield to the reign of lawyers and bureaucrats how can these new forms of rational authority secure imaginative, *charismatic* appeal? For Fleishman, the *Heart of Midlothian* leaves behind the Porteous riots to enact a historical trend:

Thematically, the Porteous episode sets in motion an ethical dialectic which gives the Heart a specifically historical relevance, relating it to the emergence of a non-aristocratic heroic ideal in modern Scotland, responsive to the need for social justice but anxious to avoid the specter of revolution. (85)

Butler moves from the dramatic riot scenes into the novel’s major plot concerning Jeanie Deans, the object of his affections. Jeanie Deans’ walk to London to intercede on behalf of her sister

precisely embodies the “non-aristocratic heroic ideal in modern Scotland.” While Porteous’ rule of force and the crowd’s dramatic response produce only retributive violence, Jeanie’s heroic action vindicates the workings of law and order within organic social bonds. To win imaginative appeal for the modern rational-legal authority, Scott offers a narrative that humanizes law and order: both the “demonic” brutality of the police commander and the “specter of revolution” must be left behind on Jeanie’s walk to London.

The containing patterns I have identified-- domestic, moral, and Providential-- interweave. As Fisher has outlined, Scott saw the “ordered movement of history” within enduring institutions as the will of Providence. Historical-political institutions and moral values mutually sustain each other: the failure of Porteous to bind himself to both moral and political order engulfs him in a violent fate. Similarly, the threat of contraband trade to “legitimate government” corrupts Andrew Wilson, casting him into the evil of retributive violence. Thus the elemental force of the Edinburgh mob- responding in outrage against Porteous- discloses its meaning as the chaotic waters of a collective fate, threatening to engulf the divinely sanctioned human order. The novel’s shift from the dramatic collision to the epic journey of Jeanie Deans reflects a gradual transformation of legal and political structures. Citing Scott’s introduction to *The Fortunes of Nigel*, Fisher outlines how Scott understood gradual historical change:

For Scott, the older ‘turbulent independence and ferocity’ which he so much admired in the past (and used as the basis of his romances) was contained and disciplined in the manners and customs which arose out of ‘the illumination of increased or revived learning, and the instructions of renewed or reformed religion.’ (108)

Organic social bonds, learning, and religious infused morality harmonize together to gradually transform feudal Scotland into the modern Union under London. Furthermore, the shift from dramatic collision to moral integration invokes again the fissure manifest between genders in the riot sequence. In portraying the elemental violence of the crowd, Scott’s narrator simultaneously attributed the “turbulent independence and ferocity” to the voices of female agents. Conversely, the integrating walk of Jeanie Deans and her power to humanize the law depends on her staunch commitment to the bonds of family and belief in Providence. Thus in the novel’s final third, the domesticating trend emerges as the dominant strategy of containment. Jeanie Deans and Reuben Butler are securely enclosed in the domestic sphere, under the guardianship of the Duke of Argyll. The interweaving of moral values, gradual political change, and providential order are

harmonized: the wildness of both individuals and societies are enclosed in Scott's vision of historical change.

## CHAPTER 4

### TURNING AGAINST THE EPIC FRAMEWORK: RESISTANCE TO CLOSURE IN *THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN*

If the opening riot sequence concentrates social content around a central collision, then Jeanie Deans' journey to London reorients the novel toward domestic and political stability. To the extent that the successful mission of Jeanie Deans and her marriage to Reuben Butler captures the reader's final attention the riot recedes to the background. Scott's novel narrows to its conclusion: the uncertainty of human plurality and public affairs are left behind for domestic stability within the moral order. Yet even within the final movements of the plot Scott's novel contradicts the claims of closure.

Recalling my previous discussion of the status of genre, I wish again to reflect on my own act of reading. Through the reading of Lukács with Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*, I identified "dramatic collision" as a configuration that grasps what happens in a plot. However, to articulate this figure and identify it as a "collision" refers to actual human practice, to the recognizable experience of colliding things. When used to describe narration, "contain" and "domesticate" likewise refer both to emplotted action and to understandable human practices. It is precisely the movement from collision to containment and from wildness to domestication that reveals the figure I have traced. Drawing from Ricoeur again, I can identify the "artistic shaping" of configuration as the invention of the "as-if." Thus, Scott takes the pre-existing records of two separate tales and re-imagines them *as if* they were connected, *as if* the journey of Helen Walker responded to the Porteous crisis.<sup>18</sup> When Butler turns from the horror of Porteous' death, the reader of the novel turns with him and enters the journey of Jeanie and Reuben Butler. Forward and behind, the two separate episodes are grasped together in a narrative configuration.

For Scott's novel, then, the temporal experience of the narrative invites the reader to follow history in a similar way. Using Ricoeur again, the *temporal* movement of the plot invites and persuades the reader to follow. The collisions of the plot and its containment proceed through time, and this experience invites the reader to repeat this movement, this action: "in this work I will say that making a narrative resignifies the world in its temporal dimension, to the

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<sup>18</sup> Scott provides footnotes concerning historical details of "The Porteous Mob" (514-523), and recognizes the historical inspiration for Jeanie Deans in an oral tradition concerning Helen Walker and the Duke of Argyle (4-5).



extent that narrating, telling, reciting is to remake action following the poem's invitation" (81). Thus Harry Shaw interprets the significance of Scott's historical fiction: "narration was a way of controlling and reliving history in which he could identify his own creativity with the process that most fascinated him – historical change and development" (247). Again, "[n]arration ... gives Scott the opportunity to render the historical process less terrible to the imagination by weighing its merits and giving it a conclusive shape" (249). It is this *conclusive shape*, the movement from collision to order and domesticity, that Scott confers upon his historical materials and moreover *invites others* to expect. The complexity and violence of history can settle into a discernible path, a followable middle course. Scott's *Heart of Midlothian* artistically shapes historical events and seeks to orient the expectation of his readers.<sup>19</sup>

However, while the plot of *Heart* enacts a discernible figure of containment, it does not follow that the novel's significance is limited to this enclosure alone. If only an imaginative "as if" holds the Porteous riot with Jeanie Dean's walk, then that "as if" opens a space for alternate possibilities. To say that the significance of the Porteous riot can be seen in relation to another event simultaneously reveals that it *could be* seen differently. One can follow from a collision in one direction and conclude with a marriage, and one can trace from a series of entangled events and conclude instead with tragic death. Hayden White argues that the significance of any historical event depends upon the plot the historian—or historical novelist—sets around it:

It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by 'finding,' identifying,' or 'uncovering' the 'stories' that lie buried in chronicles; and that the difference between 'history' and 'fiction' resides in the fact that the historian 'finds' his stories, whereas the fiction writer 'invents' his. This conception of the historian's task, however, obscures the extent to which 'invention' also plays a part in the historian's operations. The same event can serve as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the role it is assigned in a specific motific characterization of the set to which it belongs. The death of the king may be a beginning, an ending, or simply a transitional event in three different stories. (*Metahistory* 6-7)

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<sup>19</sup> Among Scott's works, however, the most vivid phrasing of this shaping of expectation occurs in *Waverley*: "He felt himself entitled to say firmly, though perhaps with a sigh, that the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced" (283). Scott's hero "firmly" pronounces the narrative that shapes his life and orients his expectation. The passion and uncertainty of past events give way to "real history." Scott thus refers the weight of "real history" to a specific pattern of human practice: the advancement of career, marriage, and social status. Real history is made within the order of these institutions; the rest is fiction and romance.

The closure ascribed to an event is fictional to the very extent that it claims finality. Like the death of the king, the collision of Porteous and the Edinburgh populace opens onto an inexhaustible plurality of surrounding circumstances—and thus, alternate possible narratives.

After Jeanie Deans' successful mission to the Queen the novel moves gradually to the conclusive marriage of Reuben and Jeanie. Beyond the ending stands Scott's moral lesson, hovering as if outside of time: "This tale will not be told in vain, if it shall be found to illustrate the great truth, that guilt, though it may attain temporal splendor, can never confer real happiness" (507). The human moral order stands under the judgment of a just Providence, ensuring that the wicked receive due punishment, and the virtuous due reward. As the logic of retribution contained the riot, so now the histories of Scott's major characters confirm the providential justice of history.<sup>20</sup> While Jeanie and Reuben Butler prosper, Jeanie's sister Effie and George Staunton – the leader of the Porteous riot – are struck down.

To execute this division between his characters, Scott returns to one of the initial specters over Edinburgh: contraband trade. Butler, now a minister, and Staunton journey together to Roseneath, the novel's final island setting and the location of Butler's living with the Church of Scotland. On the ferry, Butler points out an "old shattered boat" partially concealed on shore:

It is impossible for you to conceive, Sir George, the difficulty I have had with my poor people, in teaching them the guilt and the danger of this contraband trade – yet they have perpetually before their eyes all its dangerous consequences. I do not know any thing that more effectually depraves and ruins their moral and religious principles. (496).

All the novel's initial anxieties return: the connection between smuggling and a local countryside, the opposition of local practice and central authority, the movements of persons outside the official structures of government and economy, and the effort of overseers to contain motion within "moral and religious principles." Staunton's response voices equally potent concerns: "Sir George forced himself to say something in a low voice, about the spirit of adventure natural to youth, and that unquestionably many would become wiser as they grew older" (496). Wilson's fate and Staunton's own participation in contraband trade return to the foreground. Moreover, the "spirit of adventure" and its corresponding charisma are invoked, recalling the perceived "crisis of authority" that concerned Scott: "Scott saw the values of the

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<sup>20</sup> James Kerr succinctly expresses the moral pattern of the novel's conclusion: "The larger social organization of these chapters is a politicized version of the brief epilogue's simple moral theme of virtue rewarded and wickedness punished" (815).

Scottish clans as clearly as he saw the virtues of the chivalric ideal, and he often bursts into his narratives to express his sense of how badly they are needed to uplift the calculating manners of modern, business-minded Scotland” (Fleishman, 95).<sup>21</sup> In fact, the vessel that Butler spied belongs to Donacha Dhu and his band of marauders. Scott describes Dhu:

This fellow had been originally a tinkler or caird, [tinker] many of whom stroll about these districts; but when all police was disorganized by the civil war, he threw up his profession and from half thief became whole robber; and being generally at the head of three or four active young fellows, and he himself artful, bold, and well acquainted with the passes, he plied his new profession with emolument to himself, and infinite plague to the country. (462)

Donacha has neither the charisma of a Wilson nor the traditional authority of a highland chief. Instead, he represents a kind of debased “spirit of adventure” and the social consequences of civil war.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, his band dwells within a fringe space not yet under surveillance, not yet domesticated. Staunton’s own son—the long estranged child of his affair with Effie—suddenly returns “from the novel’s underworld” as one of Dhu’s bandits (Kerr, 815). Scott employs “the Whistler,” as the foundling is named, to enact providential retribution upon Staunton and Effie.

Confirming Reuben Butler’s Scriptural warning “that mischief shall hunt the violent man,” the Whistler unknowingly kills his father (497, 500). Effie responds with unbridled emotion: “In the vivacity of her grief she gave way to all the natural irritability of her temper; shriek followed shriek, and swoon succeeded to swoon” (501). Effie’s excessive emotion is in fact a contributing cause of her punishment under Scott’s novelized Providence. Kerr summarizes Effie’s sin: “In returning to her seducer [Staunton], Effie places herself outside the emotional and social valence of the Deanses and the Butlers, rejecting the moral authority of her sister and father to follow the dictates of her own passion” (811). Passion and individual will separate Effie and Staunton from the communal bonds of domestic and social order.

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<sup>21</sup> Fleishman’s general summary of the dichotomy is useful here: “Throughout the Waverley Novels we have seen the ‘wild spirit’ of chivalry at odds with and occasionally schooled by the modern spirit, in the form of bourgeois prudentialism. ... That wild spirit derives from the folk institutions and aristocratic castes which have dominated societies up to the modern age” (94).

<sup>22</sup> What I have called a “debased ‘spirit of adventure’” refers to the gradual decline of heroic capacity that Scott portrays in his novels, whether or not such a decline does justice to historical records and experience. Fleishman discusses this decline with respect to Staunton: He “exhibits the lust for adventure and propensity to bring trouble in his wake that have characterized Scott’s medieval knights and Jacobite intriguers. In modern times the adventurous hero has lost his occupation – the only outlet of his flamboyant energies is crime” (94). Dhu’s band and the Whistler embody something similar, an outburst of energy against the rise of “bourgeois prudentialism.”

Furthermore, this outburst of passion registers the formal shift in the novel's final chapters. Horror and surprise are combined in the fantasies of the miraculous foundling, the *deus ex machina* of a vengeful god, and the Oedipal fantasy of a father killed and a mother violated. The Whistler at once appears as the most implausible and contrived narrative instrument, and an unsettling return of the themes the novel strives hardest to contain. Before Scott can allow his novel to close the realism of Scottish progress must once more confront gothic horror. In a sense, it is the very implausibility of the Whistler that allows the sequence to be easily dismissed. "Real history" endures through the dutiful marriage and obedient children of Jeanie, while Effie and Staunton's immorality ends with bizarre fantasy. The difficulty in interpreting the Whistler sequence is this unsettled union of containment and fantasy: the implausible return of the Whistler secures the moral distribution of punishment and invokes the easily dismissed gothic and sentimental genres. The Whistler episode serves the novel's tactics of containment precisely through use of the imaginative "as if": it is as if the only real futurity belongs to the children of Jeanie and Reuben.

The Whistler remains on the novelist's hands after fulfilling his retributive function. Duncan Knockdunder, the local official and retainer of the house of Argyle, has no second thoughts about promptly executing the brigand, answering to any objections: "the soul of such a scum had been long the tefil's property, and that, Cot tam! he was determined to gif the tefil his due" (504). For Scott to allow the execution, however, would allow a sudden collapse of the legal reform the novel has humanely enacted. To end with a happy marriage *and* an execution would perhaps return too close to the "demonic" gallows, too close to a refutation of progress. Therefore, Scott sends Jeanie on one last intervention. The concentrated dramatic scene merits full quotation:

In the silence of the night, however, Mrs Butler arose, resolved, if possible, to avert, at least to delay, the fate which hung over her nephew, especially if, upon conversing with him, she should see any hope of his being brought to better temper. She had a master-key that opened every lock in the house; and at midnight, when all was still, she stood before the eyes of the astonished young savage, as hard bound with cords, he lay, like a sheep designed for slaughter, upon a quantity of the refuse of flax which filled a corner in the apartment.

'What is your first name?' said Jeanie, by way of opening the conversation.

‘The Whistler.’

‘But your Christian name, by which you were baptized?’

‘I never was baptized that I know of – I have no other name than the Whistler.’

‘Poor unhappy abandoned lad!’ said Jeanie. ‘What would ye do if you could escape from this place, and the death you are to die tomorrow morning?’

‘Join wi’ Rob Roy, or wi’ Sergeant More Cameron,’ (noted free-booters at that time,) ‘and revenge Donacha’s death on all and sundry.’

‘O ye unhappy boy,’ said Jeanie, ‘do ye ken what will come o’ ye when ye die?’

‘I shall neither feel cauld nor hunger more,’ said the youth doggedly.”

There may be good in him yet, thought Jeanie; I will try fair play with him.

She cut his bonds-- he stood upright, looked round with a laugh of wild exultation, clapped his hands together, and sprung from the ground, as if in transport on finding himself at liberty. He looked so wild, that Jeanie trembled at what she had done.’

‘Let me out,’ said the young savage.

‘I wanna, unless you promise.’

‘Then I’ll make you glad to let us both out.’

He seized the lighted candle and threw it among the flax, which was instantly in a flame. Jeanie screamed, and ran out of the room; the prisoner rushed past her, threw open a window in the passage, jumped into the garden, sprung over its enclosure, bounded through the woods like a deer, and gained the sea-shore. (504-505)

The proximity of this drama to the novel’s ending—only three paragraphs follow—forces upon it what seems disproportionate pressure. Not the Edinburgh Tolbooth, but Jeanie’s home encloses the criminal: prison and home draw uncomfortably close.<sup>23</sup> The Heart of Midlothian and Jeanie’s own heart, with its adherence to law and mercy, begin to blur into a single institution. Jeanie finds him a “sheep designed for slaughter,” her vision tinted with the biblical enjoinders of mercy for the strayed, protection for the weak. Intervention appears possible: even this wolf could return to the fold, a miraculous rehabilitation could yet occur. Instead, the Whistler utterly refutes Jeanie’s mission. Not only is he without Christian name or baptism, but he stands indifferent to the thought of eternal justice. The Whistler stands outside the recognition of any

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<sup>23</sup> Leland Monk, in “The Novel as Prison: Scott’s ‘The Heart of Midlothian,’” provides a thorough study of the novel’s ending and the connection between Jeanie’s home, the prison, and the novel.

providential order binding history. Stripped of his purpose within Scott's moral plot, the Whistler now enacts the threat of sheer uncontained humanity: in more contemporary terms, *surplus humanity*. Outside economy, education, law, duty, or religion, the Whistler's only ambition is to join the others shifting without place in the Scottish civic order. His "laugh of wild exultation" explodes the earnestness of Jeanie's effort to tame and to secure. Without fear for giving offence, without concern for playing in Jeanie's game, the Whistler springs from the ground in "wild exultation" for his own life.

Jeanie reaches the parting of the ways with the Whistler in the exchange immediately preceding his escape. When she cuts his bonds Jeanie affirms his person instead of the punitive order: she commits herself to mercy instead of the gallows' retributive logic. However, Jeanie's mercy is tinged with what she calls "fair play." To the Whistler's "Let me out," she responds with a condition: "I wanna, unless you promise." Unless you meet my condition first, I shall not recognize your demand. Unless you are ready to become what I think you should be, I shall not recognize you. What exactly is invested in the "fair play" behind Jeanie's approach in mercy? The Whistler responds with his own version of fair play: "Then I'll make you glad to let us both out." Taking hold of a link in the chain surrounding him, he seizes the candle and sets Jeanie's home, his prison, ablaze.

The Whistler's action, plotted at the end of the novel, evokes other events and characters from across the work. As previously discussed with respect to the Porteous riot, fire metaphorically evokes power and change. Like the Tolbooth prison, the bourgeois domicile proves to be flammable; both institutions are symbolically refuted at least once in the novel. Fire as a symbol has a capacity to gather figures together in a kind of participation.<sup>24</sup> Fire evokes the vitality and creativity of varied characters across the novel's landscape: Madge Wildfire with her abounding creativity, George Staunton with his writhing impatience, David Deans with his fierce independence and internal strife, and Jeanie herself, with her fierce sparks of courage and initiative.<sup>25</sup> The Whistler's action thematically denounces the novel's closing domesticity. It is as if he gathers the surplus of human possibility represented in the novel, rallying against the rigidity of Scott's conclusion: human history – lived bodily experience – is not reducible to the

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<sup>24</sup> For fire as participation one could reach as far as Heraclitus, or within Scott's own century no further than "As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame."

<sup>25</sup> For Staunton's "writhing impatience" see 322, for Jeanie's spark see the "vague idea that darts" across her mind as a "sun-blink on a stormy sea"— when she first grasps the possibility of walking to London (180).

finality of moral judgment. The Whistler's resistance differs from the Porteous riot, which ended with retribution and a renewal of the containing institution. Conversely, the Whistler's action is a point of departure; he forces Jeanie to recognize his freedom. When read as though it gathers symbolism of fire from throughout the novel, the Whistler's dramatic collision with Jeanie manifests a human creativity that resists the bounds of moral constraint.

In "gaining the seashore" the Whistler not only makes his escape, but crosses further thresholds that challenge the novel's closure. The coastline, as for Wilson at the novel's opening, provides the permeable boundary that mediates adventure and contraband trade. Furthermore, for the Whistler and the Butlers, the sea provides the medium that divides and connects vast distances. Scott's narrator offers a brief account of the Whistler's fate:

The anxious enquiries of Butler at length learned, that the youth had gained the ship in which his master, Donacha, had designed to embark. But the avaricious shipmaster, inured by his evil trade to every species of treachery, and disappointed of the rich booty which Donacha had proposed to bring aboard, secured the person of the fugitive, and having transported him to America, sold him as a slave, or indented servant, to a Virginian planter, far up the country. When these tidings reached Butler, he sent over to America a sufficient sum to redeem the lad from slavery, with instructions that measures should be taken for improving his mind, restraining his evil propensities, and encouraging whatever good might appear in his character. But this aid came too late. The young man had headed a conspiracy in which his inhuman master was put to death, and had then fled to the next tribe of wild Indians. He was never more heard of; and it may therefore be presumed that he lived and died after the manner of that savage people, with whom his previous habits had well fitted him to associate. (505)

This account of the Whistler's fate challenges the *narrowness* of the novel's peaceful, domestic closure. Jeanie's nephew has crossed the ocean, bringing the flesh of the Deans family to the transatlantic slave trade, the brutality of forced labour, the commodity market, and the violence of imperialism. It is as if the bourgeois prosperity represented in Jeanie and Reuben Butler must for a moment confront the true brutality of the economic conditions supporting its existence: the economic dominance of the British Empire made possible through labour conditions such as those forced upon the Whistler. The uncontained political and social contradictions stemming

from the slave trade, forced labour, and imperialism threaten to destabilize the moral simplicity of Scott's conclusion.

Like Jeanie, Butler now attempts an intervention: sending money through the mail to "redeem" him from slavery and turn him from his "evil propensities." Again, the effort to domesticate and moralize fails: the Whistler has already committed himself to heading a conspiracy among the slaves against their "inhuman master." As his father George Staunton did against Porteous, so the Whistler leads a revolt against "inhuman" authority. Only now the conditions are more desperate: not free burghers, the slaves act against naked force itself. Progress, as the novel's scope suddenly expands outward, appears increasingly uncertain. Furthermore, that the Whistler joins with a "tribe of wild Indians" presents a greater shock to a peaceful domestic closure. The flesh of Jeanie's family has crossed the furthest threshold, turning from the domestic and the "civilized" to the wild and the "savage." Scott's narrator consigns the Whistler to his fate as if it marks a just moral consequence: "it may therefore be presumed that he lived and after the manner of that savage people, with whom his previous habits had well fitted him to associate." If the shock for the Butler family—and Scott's readers – is the extent to which he has travelled, then the shock for the modern reader is the stark recognition of the full consequences of Scott's moral shaping of history: is colonial conquest and the corresponding system of assimilation or alienation, is that too a providential plan-- a just and moral imposition upon 'savage' people.

Therefore, the Whistler's collision with Jeanie not only manifests the thematic importance of the fire metaphor, but also that of the ocean. Water imagery recurs throughout the novel, articulating the medium in and through which human beings struggle. The common need to cross threatening water provides an epic simile for the solidarity of the Deans and Butler families: "They had a common danger and a mutual deliverance. They needed each other's assistance, like a company, who crossing a mountain stream, are compelled to cling close together, lest the current should be too powerful for any who are not thus supported" (81). Scott articulates the growing anger of the crowd as "that deep and agitating murmur, which is sent forth by the ocean before the tempest begins to howl" (42). The seductive danger in such metaphors, however, is the capacity to conceal difference: to imagine a union of self and other through an elemental image conceals as much as it reveals. It is this tension between solidarity and obliteration that produces an unsettling energy. Thus Staunton evokes the torrential



movement of water to articulate the destructive power of time, and the power to obliterate, exclude, and forget: “We love not to think that we shall mix with the ages that have gone before us, as these broad black rain-drops mingle with the waste of waters, making a trifling and momentary eddy, and are then lost for ever” (495). In solidarity and obliteration, remembering and forgetting, it is these waters that Scott’s historical fiction attempts to shape and order. As *Heart* narrows its conclusion to a central affirmation of the stable nuclear family, the collision with the Whistler exposes how much such a conclusion conceals without containing.

The tale of the Whistler threatens to destabilize the enclosing structure of Scott’s novel. The contrived *deus ex machina* exceeds his containing function; he sets the domestic prison on fire and crosses an ocean to lead a slave uprising. Scott’s description of the Whistler’s flight bears a remarkable similarity to the novel’s opening escape story. Thus compare the Whistler episode with Staunton’s escape:

‘Then I’ll make you glad to let us both out.’

He seized the lighted candle and threw it among the flax, which was instantly in a flame. Jeanie screamed, and ran out of the room; the prisoner rushed past her, threw open a window in the passage, jumped into the garden, sprung over its enclosure, bounded through the woods like a deer, and gained the sea-shore. (505)

...when all at once, Wilson, who, as we have already noticed, was a very strong man, seized two of the soldiers, one with each hand, and calling at the same time to his companion, ‘Run, Geordie, run!’ threw himself on a third, and fastened his teeth on the collar of his coat. Robertson stood for a second as if thunderstruck, and unable to avail himself of the opportunity of escape; but the cry of ‘Run, run!’ being echoed from many around, whose feelings surprised them into a very natural interest in his behalf, he shook off the grasp of the remaining soldier, threw himself over the pew, mixed with the dispersing congregation, none of whom felt inclined to stop a poor wretch taking this last chance for his life, gained the door of the church, and was lost to all pursuit. (32-33)

Scott narrates the two scenes with the same kind of breathless energy. Participial clauses cannot follow the fugitives fast enough as Scott generates an almost poetic effect in their escapes. I have little doubt that Scott relished scenes like these where he could affirm the rogues instead of carrying the burden of moral judgment.

Both escapes produce far more than the immediate thwarting of an execution: the tale of the prisoner's escape from judgment opens a space of possibility. Scott's escape scenes provide the reverse effect of his moral conclusions. Instead of grasping the shape of a life under the law of wickedness punished and virtue rewarded, the escape tales affirm freedom from the law, and open into an undetermined future. What then is celebrated in their telling? The tale of Wilson's generosity and Geordie's escape travels quickly among the town's people in Edinburgh, exciting "a vague report that Wilson would be rescued at the place of execution" and thus contributing to the riot. The Whistler's escape interrupts the security of the novel's close, presenting a tale of resistance to colonial brutality instead of patriotic prosperity. Is the fascination of the escape tale the fact that it is improbable, and yet it happens? Against the structure and the 'necessity' of law and morality, the improbable possibility of human freedom is made manifest. It is this improbable possibility that unites the escape tales to the riots in Edinburgh and Virginia. "Is this to be borne?" Is there another way, improbable though it may seem? And can we act upon our imagination and affirm the improbable possibility of freedom *and* justice? In the escape tale, human freedom *is* born in spite of improbability. In the dramatic collision of opposing political forces, it is precisely the memory of human freedom that is so easily forgotten in the return to retribution. Revolution requires the imaginative strength to part ways with the past, or it suffers the prison's return.

## CONCLUSION: HISTORICAL NOVELIST AND STORYTELLER, COMPETING NARRATIVE PRACTICES

Scott's novel thus includes a powerful resistance to its sense of closure. From the Porteous Riot to the restoration of order enacted through Jeanie Deans' walk, the novel configures together a pattern for historical events: gradually, the tumult of human passions yields to providential order. Scott's narrative accomplishes this pattern through grasping together two unrelated stories. However, this combination is only one possibility, only one "as if" that could pattern the inexhaustible plurality of interpretation surrounding either story. Thus, the inclusion of the Whistler's collision with Jeanie unsettles confidence in the dominant pattern. It is "as if" the Whistler's escape symbolically resists the novel's closing pattern, rallying together the surplus possibilities opened up in Scott's text. After the Whistler fulfills his function as an agent of retribution, he stands as a threat to Scott's order: shall he be executed, returning the novel to the "demonic" gallows? Shall he be integrated into the Deans family? Scott allows the Whistler to contradict Jeanie, and the bandit's escape scene recalls the significance of fire and of water symbolism across the novel. It is especially the parallel between the Whistler's escape and the early scene of "Run, Geordie, Run!" that convinces me that the novel performs the conflict between Scott the storyteller and Scott the historical novelist. The movement of stories within Scott's own novel resists the enclosing structure that the speculative historian ascribes to Providence and progress.

In returning from Scott to Lukács, I wish to draw upon the reading of *Heart of Midlothian* to address questions that arose from *The Historical Novel*. First, I wish to recall Lukács' description of dramatic collisions and his argument for their role in portraying history. For Lukács, the "inclusion of the dramatic element in the novel" and the corresponding "concentration of events" are "intimately linked with the attempt to portray historical reality as it actually was" (40-41). Lukács identifies the "dramatic element" with colliding movement. Historical novels achieve their persuasive effect through uniting the personal experience of characters with societal conflict. In Lukács' words, the "supreme persuasive force of drama depends ... upon the inner accord between the character ... and the social-historical essence of the collision" (107). Therefore, the artistic portrayal of a dramatic collision depends on a reductive focus upon a central event, a collision between figures acting against each other.

However, it is this reductive focus upon the collision that allows dramatic form to perform its social content: as characters, groups and classes are brought into collision, the differences between them are manifest. Furthermore, interactions between diverse circumstances that contribute to the collision are disclosed. Form and content fuse together to produce what Lukács calls a “totality of movement” (93). Moreover, the totality of the dramatic collision, the conflict of opposing forces, is grasped in its significance to an “epic framework.” The dramatic element in Scott serves the wider epic theme of nation building and slow progress. Thus the performance of social content through the formal shape of a collision gains its significance in retrospect, as the dramatic element serves the enclosing epic theme.

Therefore, in my reading of the novel’s opening chapters, the Porteous riot allowed Scott to narrate social content in a form that disclosed internal contradictions, and moreover, gathered such contradictions into a retrospective sense of providential order. Contraband trade and a charismatic local smuggler collide with the commander of Edinburgh’s police. Or, described from another angle, the personal character of Porteous and his anxiety over securing his authority collide with local enthusiasm for a smuggler. Through a personal collision between characters, the tensions between a local community and an Imperial government are disclosed. Furthermore, the collision exposes a crisis of authority in the growing division between feudal attitudes toward governance and growing bourgeois independence. Scott’s novel performs all these social contradictions through the dramatic collision of his characters. The dramatic element culminates in the chorus-like question of the crowd at Grassmarket “is this to be borne?” Using a device from the stage, Scott portrays the crowd’s vocal response to the crisis facing them. Furthermore, as the novelist portrays a “major disturbance of life,” Scott’s narrative carries the collision further to expose tension between genders. In Lukács’ words: “Parents and children, lover and beloved, old friends etc. confront one another as opponents, or the inevitability of this confrontation carries the collision deep into their personal lives” (41). Scott’s tradeswomen characters both add to the richness of the social context, and expose the novelists’ own anxiety over female agency. It is this movement of conflict into personal and family lives that Scott’s novel portrays, and then employs to gradually contain the dramatic element in his work. Thus from the midst of all these contradictions, the novelist raises Jeanie Deans and her journey to the Queen, placing the dramatic collisions in retrospect, and in service to the overarching epic framework.

To pursue this insight further, I wish to recall the connection made in Lukács' work between genre or form and the "facts of life" or experience. For Lukács, the formal structure of a dramatic collision arises from "the laws of movement of life itself," particularly exemplified in certain "typical facts": "the parting of the ways," "the calling to account," and the "link in the chain" (99-105). Lukács bases his description of dramatic form on "typical facts" that are verbal symbols of practical experience. "Collision" too, I argued, is a verbal symbol that performs the action of a drama; it confers an initial readability upon a course of events. To say that Porteous and the townspeople of Edinburgh collide is already to grasp the relation between figures in a narrative. Again using Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*, I identified the power of genre with this configurational act of "grasping together" detailed actions and contingent circumstances, bending them into a recognizable shape (66). Here is the question that connects this previous discussion to my conclusion: If the dramatic collisions of *Heart of Midlothian* reveal a parting of the ways between storyteller and historical novelist, what then are the kinds of practice implicated in these opposing genres? I have already differentiated the two on the basis of figurative pattern: the novelist composes a structure that could enclose a world, much as the travelling lawyer in Scott's opening chapter suggests: "a prison is a world within itself, and has its own business, griefs, and joys, peculiar to its circle." The *Heart of Midlothian* gathers together a field of characters and encloses them within a stable conclusion, distributing justice, and especially the kind of justice appropriate to central institutions. In contrast, the storyteller suggests a to-and-fro motion or an exchange of tales, as performed in the opening banter between the travelling lawyers. I have especially focused on the imaginative power of the escape tales included in the novel, as they resist both the law and the novel's sense of an ending. What is at stake in the differing practices suggested by these genres? Though the question opens problems that exceed the scope of this study, it presents an opportunity to draw the insights gathered here to a close. Lukács' philosophical approach to literary form will aid my description of the opposition between storyteller and historical novelist.

To consider first the practice of the historical novelist, I wish to return to Lukács and the dramatic element of historical fiction. Recall that for Lukács the dialectic of freedom and necessity articulates the chief concern of drama: "Dramatic necessity, the supreme persuasive force of drama depends precisely upon the inner accord ... between the character (with his dominant passion which evokes the drama) and the social-historical essence of the collision"

(121). For Lukács, therefore, drama presents the human capacity to act through an enveloping “atmosphere of necessity”:

The convergence of character and collision is the fundamental basis of drama. The more deeply thought out, the more direct is its effect. We used the expression ‘atmosphere of necessity’ advisedly, wishing to describe the organic, direct nature of this connection between character and collision that is far removed from any kind of sophistication. The fate against which the hero of drama struggles comes as much ‘from without’ as ‘from within.’ His character, so to speak, ‘predestines’ him for the particular collision. (121)

In dramatic form character and social circumstances are united in the definite, particular collision. In Scott’s novel, the particular characters of Wilson and Porteous collide, drawing together complex surrounding circumstances. Though Lukács qualifies his sense of necessity—it is certainly not for Lukács a crass determinism—it is nonetheless this “atmosphere” of fated human action that unites the dramatic form. Thus Lukács praises Scott’s sense of necessity:

Scott then becomes a great poet of history because he has a deeper, more genuine and differentiated sense of historical necessity than any writer before him. Historical necessity in his novels is of the most severe, implacable kind. Yet this necessity is no otherworldly fate divorced from men; it is the complex interaction of concrete historical circumstances in their process of transformation, in their interaction with the concrete human beings, who have grown up in these circumstances, have been variously influenced by them, and who act in an individual way according to their personal passions. Thus, in Scott’s portrayal, historical necessity is always a resultant, never a presupposition; it is the tragic atmosphere of a period and not the object of the writer’s reflections. (58)

Again, Lukács struggles here to retain the severity of necessity without ascribing to history a presupposed or preordained direction. The historical novelist gathers together the “complex interaction of concrete historical circumstances” and through this colliding interaction a “tragic atmosphere” of necessity results. Necessity emerges at the end of the artistic production, rather than guiding it from the beginning. However I must ask whether this atmosphere of necessity is not in fact closely related to the “strategies of containment” I have traced in *Heart of Midlothian*. Scott indeed gathers together a complex interaction of concrete historical circumstances, but it is precisely this artistic gathering together that produces the effect of necessity: Was it necessary

that Porteous would fire a musket at the crowd? Was it necessary that the crowd would rally on Wilson's behalf? Was it necessary that the Queen would issue a reprieve for Porteous, or that a riot would ignite in response? Scott narrates the characters and circumstances together and produces the complex interaction, but at each and every stage the circumstances could have interacted in a different way. It seems to me that the power of Scott the historical novelist-- and the kind of practice that is at stake-- is this capacity to lend the appearance of a necessary unity to diverse and contingent events. The appearance of necessity, as Lukács rightly says, results from the telling of history: the appearance of necessity results from enclosing historical events within a recognizable form.

The practice of uniting historical events with an "atmosphere of necessity" is therefore a practice of closure. To grasp together social and economic causes with personal passions around a central collision is to produce the persuasive effect of a complex causality: because of the tension between Edinburgh and London, because of the violence of the gallows and the threat of contraband trade, because of the charisma of Wilson and the hubris of Porteous, the Tolbooth riot occurred the way it did. This narrative configuration allows Scott to submit the events to judgment: because of the illegal contraband trade, because of the unruly disposition of Porteous, because of an inhumane legal system, the riot occurred the way it did. Judgment is performed through Scott's transition from the riot to the walk of Jeanie Deans: the past must be left behind in favour of a closer bond with London, a more humane legal system, and the moral improvement of civil society under the rule of law. The historical novelist encloses past events within an appearance of necessity, submitting the result to judgement. The rhetorical effect of the novel consists in an attempt to shape social imagination: Scott's novel weaves together a narrative of past events, producing an imaginative vision of society and a conclusive affirmation of morality, law, and the rising middle class.<sup>26</sup> This direction of change, however, is one produced through the narrative: its appearance of necessity is a work of fiction.

While the practice of Scott the historical novelist is one of containment and judgment, the practice of Scott the storyteller resists closure. The historical novelist weaves together diverse events and produces the appearance of a necessary social direction. In contrast, Scott the

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<sup>26</sup> My use of the concept "social imagination" comes from Ricoeur. "We have to articulate our social experience in the same way that we have to articulate our perceptual experience. Just as models in scientific language allow us to see how things look, allow us to see things *as* this or than, in the same way our social templates articulate our social roles, articulate our position in society *as* this or that," *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*. Ed. George H. Taylor. New York: Columbia, 1986. 11-12.

storyteller affirms tales of improbable circumstance and of escape from law and necessity. I have located the dramatic element of Scott's novel in the opposition not only between characters but also within Scott's own approach to narrative imagination. Thus, the confrontation between Jeanie Deans and the Whistler represents a conflict between the historical novelist and the storyteller. Put in other words, the dramatic element at the end of Scott's novel performs a contradiction between the pressure of an overarching plot and the storyteller's delight in defying containment. What is the practice then of the storyteller? Recall that in the first chapter of the *Heart of Midlothian*, the travelling lawyers tell Pattieson that though "a prison is a world within itself" it contains an inexhaustible resource:

'But what variety of incident,' said I, (not without a secret view to my present task,) 'could possibly be derived from such a work as you are pleased to talk of?' 'Infinite,' replied the young advocate. 'Whatever of guilt, crime, imposture, folly, unheard-of misfortunes, and unlooked-for change of fortune can be found to chequer life, my Last Speech of the Tolbooth should illustrate with examples sufficient to gorge even the public's all-devouring appetite for the wonderful and horrible.' (20)

The storyteller who could draw from the oral traditions of the Tolbooth prison could harness an "infinite" range of human experience. Not only guilt and crime, but "unheard-of misfortunes, and unlooked-for change[s] of fortune" infuse the tales. Under the pressure of the prison's containment there pulsates this source of infinite variety, which in the lawyer's hyperbolic expression could even quench "the public's all-devouring appetite." It is this experience of an "unlooked-for change of fortune" that Scott includes in the near miraculous tale of Wilson: the smuggler entangled in the "evil" of contraband trade who nonetheless becomes a public hero and a figure of redemption. The storyteller's practice opens possibilities that defy the appearance of necessity. Even at the novel's conclusion, when the historical novelist concludes with the order of Providence and the "necessary" rise of bourgeois modernity, the storyteller resists. Jeanie's dramatic confrontation with the Whistler performs this contradiction, returning to the opening division between the containing prison and the inexhaustible tales. The Whistler escapes the novel's concluding order, appearing to gather with him the novel's surplus of fiery personas: Madge Wildfire, George Staunton, even the fire within Jeanie and David Deans. The storyteller performs a verbal contraband trade, drawing together improbable connections and unforeseen



possibilities. The practice of the storyteller challenges the historical novelist's narrative construction of necessity.

Taking as my point of departure Lukács' description of the dramatic element within the epic framework of the historical novel, I have now concluded with a position that appears to have parted ways with Lukács. In reading the dramatic collisions within *The Heart of Midlothian*, I identified the novel's crucial contradiction in the resistance of Scott the storyteller to Scott the historical novelist. The local storyteller who hears and exchanges the unexpected and unlooked-for tales of his people opposes the historical novelist's affirmation of an enclosing necessity. The storyteller shifts between experiences and dwells within plurality, while the historical novelist configures diverse experiences into a recognizable pattern. Scott the historical novelist directs the social imagination toward law and order. Though I have now affirmed the storyteller and revealed my suspicion of Scott the novelist I cannot leave the historical novelist—nor Lukács—completely behind. This then is my inconclusive conclusion: what is at stake in the tension between the historical novelist and the storyteller is the sense of historical responsibility. If the social imagination is indeed social, rather than solipsistic, does it not require the narration of public events and of the turning points of institutions? And does the sharing of stories require the effort to collate, to dialogue between various accounts? If the historical novelist presents the fiction of a necessary direction of history, then the singular storyteller risks a retreat from the burden of historical and social responsibility. The two challenge one another: the storyteller holds possibilities that confront the historian's grasp of conditioning circumstances. The storyteller interrupts the fictions of fate and necessity in whatever guise they take, offering alternate possibilities and differing accounts. Moreover, the storyteller reminds the historian that all narratives depend on the imaginative work of "as if" to produce their shape.

Yet Lukács defends the value of historical fiction for its capacity to relate individuals to social and historical problems facing the public realm. The historical novelist or narrative historian takes on the responsibility to connect stories to further conditioning circumstances. It is Scott the historical novelist-- not the storyteller--that grasps together the conflicted view of Scottish society in *The Heart of Midlothian*. It is Scott the historical novelist that takes on the burden of bringing voices from the past back within a richly textured world. The two figures collide and yet they intersect. Lukács held that Walter Scott emerged from the early nineteenth century's "mass experience of history," an age that offered "concrete possibilities for men [sic]

to comprehend their own existence as something historically conditioned, for them to see in history something which deeply affects their daily lives and immediately concerns them” (24). The dramatic collisions in Scott turn us to consider the practice of social justice: the question of how to live with a historian’s commitment to social responsibility, a storyteller’s capacity to remember the improbable and unforeseen, and the ability to creatively act, from somewhere in between.

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