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BRIAN HAMNETT

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL IN

Nineteenth-Century Europe

Representations of Reality
in History & Fiction

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Nineteenth-Century
Europe

The Historical Novel in
France and Germany

Edited by

John Mullan

John Mullan



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The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe

*Representations of Reality in
History and Fiction*

BRIAN HAMNETT

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To my former students and colleagues at the
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Brian Hamnett

Colchester, Spring 2015

Introduction

Curious: how all Europe is but like a set of parishes of the same country.

Thomas Carlyle, 'Sir Walter Scott', in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. 7 [1839], p. 54.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, history and the novel became parallel modes of representing reality. They developed together, sometimes in a complementary way, but were increasingly perceived to be in opposition to one another. Each had intrinsic differences and ultimately developed according to its own principles and necessities. Yet, both examined human experience in time and space. They were linked by their common expression through the medium of narrative. Frequently the two modes overlapped or influenced one another. Each contested the terrain of fact and imagination, and, in different ways, sought, for distinct purposes, to arrive at truths concerning the human experience in time. The historical novel, realistic and innovative as it developed during the nineteenth century, sought to integrate, seamlessly if possible, reality and imagination. Even at the beginning the tension between the two threatened to undermine this type of fiction.

Discussion of the overlap of history and fiction is admittedly not new. I discuss some of the relevant literature on this central analytical question particularly in Chapters 1 and 2. Even in the early nineteenth century, considerable discussion was taking place concerning the relationship between history and fiction. Yet, in recent decades, there has already been too much theorizing around the issue. For that reason, I have thought it best to deal with this theme in terms of what the historical novel set out, or failed, to achieve. Consequently, we need to look at the novels themselves. My belief is that the boundaries between the two disciplines should be understood through the contextualizing of the relationship between the development of fiction, history, and the historical novel. I argue that this provides the dynamic of the historical fiction examined in this book. We need to do this in our capacity both as historians and literary critics.

I

Accordingly, the present study sets historical fiction in relation to the development of historiography in general. This relationship rapidly became unsteady, especially

in view of history's development as an academic discipline during the course of the nineteenth century. The aim is to restate the case for historical fiction as a major branch of literary fiction. The purpose of this book is also to challenge two types of parochialism prevalent mainly in academic fields: the disciplinary compartmentalizing of literature and history, and the containment of both disciplines into particular national straight-jackets.

The overriding concern of this book is to explain the tension at the heart of the historical novel and the changing nature of the dilemma of fact and imagination. It is important to do this because of the early impact of the historical novel as a medium for expressing often unresolved historical issues and illuminating national or social identities through the medium of individual experience. This book does not attempt a chronological and all-inclusive study of the nineteenth-century historical novel. For that reason, it does not examine novels written before the nineteenth century, which may have had 'history' in their titles or had some root in history, whether in a specific period or in the shape of the fictional work itself. The historical novel has a history of its own, but, important as that is as a subject of study, my book's emphasis is on the intrinsic problems that arose in the nineteenth century from writing this type of fiction. For that reason it is not a collection of individual studies according to country or author.

A critical analysis of the historical novel forms the first part of the book. Here it is vital to appreciate the conflicting truth claim of history and fiction, with the historical novel obviously caught in the middle. Beset by internal dilemmas of its own, the historical novel at the same time has never managed to escape from this entrapment between the rival claims of fact and fiction. The second part of the book offers a comparative study of a group of historical novels selected because they clearly illustrate these problems. I have not chosen the novels on which I focus because I believe them to have been particularly representative of the historical novel of their time and place. On the contrary, they are here because they, most of all, reveal the problems which novelists encountered when trying to write this type of fiction. The dilemma of fact and imagination represents the principal focus for an understanding of the intrinsic instability of the sub-genre of the historical novel. One could go as far as to argue that in this instability lay its strength.

At the same time, this book is designed to encourage historians to engage both with historical literature in fictional form and with the ongoing debate concerning the relation between history and literature as portrayals of human experience in time. I have spent my professional career in Departments of History in the United States, Scotland, and England, not Departments of English Literature or Modern Languages. This will explain my purpose here and the way I have approached my subject matter. I am very much aware of the compartmentalization of both history and literature at academic levels. I am aware that my book may be consigned to the abyss between these two disciplines, each concerned with defending its identity, especially from the other, but, nevertheless, I hope to transcend this narrow compartmental approach. I know that most historians regard the historical novel with, at best, suspicion and, at worst, disdain. Literature specialists similarly have difficulties dealing with it, usually regarding the historical ingredient as potentially

a dead weight in a work of fiction. They would wonder, in any case, why a historian was straying on to their terrain.

Fortunately, the market for historical novels, where there is an avid reading public, continues to grow. This suggests to me the need for a broad examination of the issues arising from the historical novel, focusing first of all on the nineteenth century—the period of its maturation. Several questions will immediately arise, the principal of which will be the nature of historical truth. This is an issue familiar to historical and literary theorists, but it is generally avoided by practising historians, who regard theoretical issues as an interference with the empirical reconstruction of the past. Yet, historical novelists can also immerse themselves in primary, including archival, sources, as was recently discussed in a London University seminar on the subject of the historical novel. This seminar made the point that the new kinds of history, emerging over past decades and exploring different sorts of past, have made possible new kinds of historical novel. As we shall see in the course of this present study, it was new approaches to history and new methods which made possible the emergence of the nineteenth-century historical novel in the first place.¹

Historical novelists also write about real people who lived in the past, although there are two fundamental distinctions between them and historians. The novelist who uses real historical characters places them in a fictional setting, along with invented characters. He or she may also alter the chronology and scale of actual events for dramatic purposes. In other words, the novelist commits the crime impermissible to the historian: he or she invents. A fictional character, however, may embody the spirit of a particular historical time or culture, even though he or she has been invented. There are, then, many gradations and discriminations in the relationship between history and fiction.

Grounding fiction in history at the time of the rise of the realist novel reflected the nineteenth century's search for roots and origins, causes and explanations. The historical novelists discussed here—Scott, John Galt, Alfred de Vigny, Prosper Mérimée, Alessandro Manzoni, Honoré de Balzac, Dumas, George Eliot, Gustave Flaubert, Benito Pérez Galdós, Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Count Leo Tolstoy, and Theodore Fontane—all grappled with the uneasy relationship between creative imagination and historical accuracy. Although I place considerable emphasis on the realist novel as it developed in the course of the nineteenth century, readers should not assume that all the novels selected for specific treatment were, in whole or in part, representative of the realist novel. Neither Eliot's *Romola* [1863] nor Flaubert's *Salammbô* [1862] can be defined satisfactorily as novels in the realist tradition. I have given them prominence here, because they provide excellent illustrations of the problems which even great authors found in attempting to locate their fiction in historical contexts. They have not been selected because they were representative of the historical novels of their time or country. Each presented

¹ Talking Books: “Novel History”, held at Birkbeck College, London, 6 June 2009. The seminar featured Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall* [2009], which later won the Booker Prize, and Sarah Dunant’s *Sacred Hearts* [2009], historical novels dealing respectively with Thomas Cromwell’s early life and female convent life in sixteenth-century Ferrara.

problems for their readers, and neither proved popular in the long term. Most readers in England preferred Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* [1861]—a novel now largely forgotten—or Charles Kingsley's patriotic *Westward Ho!* [1855] to Eliot's complex symbolism and subterranean patterns. Similarly, French readers preferred Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* [1831] and the historical romances of Dumas [1844–9].

II

I see the flourishing of the historical novel as a general European phenomenon, ranging, at different historical stages, from the British Isles to the Russian Empire, and from the Germanic territories to Italy and Spain. The historical novel played a significant role in the creation of both national identities and a pan-European identity. This would later be the case outside Europe, particularly after c.1970. Nineteenth-century influences beyond Europe usually stemmed from Walter Scott and Alexandre Dumas, as I have seen from my own historical studies, which have largely focused on Latin America. These, however, are not the subject of this present book, and have their own expanding literature.²

It is important to see these historical novels and their writers as part of a common European literary tradition. My aim is to provide an explanation for why this should be so. The development of this genre accompanied a deepening consciousness of the problems it presented for the writer and reader. This ongoing interchange between material, creator and reader—and authors were readers of each other's work—laid the basis for a European historical-novel tradition, the existence of which has received little attention.

As critical history developed during the eighteenth century, the problem of reconciling discourse and reality arose. This represented the distinction between history—what has happened in the past—and the writing of history—observing the vanished past from a different time. How could this process, taking place in the conditions of the present, remain faithful to the varying pasts researched, studied,

² John S. Brushwood, *Mexico in its Novel. A Nation's Search for Identity* (Austin and London 1966); Daniel Balderstone (ed.), *The Historical Novel and the Latin American Tradition* (New York 1986); Raymond D. Souza, *La historia de la novela hispanoamericana* (Bogotá 1988); Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions. The National Romances of Latin America* (California 1991); Seymour Menton, *La nueva novela histórica latinoamericana* (Mexico City 1992); Laura Suárez de la Torre (coordinator), *Constructores de un cambio cultural: impresores-editores y libreros en la ciudad de México, 1830–1855* (Mexico City 2003); José Ortiz Monasterio, *México eternamente. Vicente Riva Palacio ante la escritura de la historia* (Mexico City 2004); Magdalena Perkowska, *Historias híbridas. La nueva novela histórica latinoamericana (1985–2000)* (Madrid 2008). For United States' historical fiction, see: Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York 1966 edition); Wayne Franklin, *The New World of James Fenimore Cooper* (Chicago 1982); Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural World of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York and Oxford 1985); George Dekker, *The American Historical Romance* (Cambridge 1987); Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo (eds), *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism* (Philadelphia 1991); Mark C. Carnes, *Novel History, Novel History. Historians and Novelists Confront America's Past (and Each Other)* (New York and London 2001).

and interpreted? This question led directly to others. What was the purpose of selecting for study a specific issue and period in the past, and what relation did that have to outstanding issues in the present?

The historical novel exposed all the problems of attempting to enfold history and fiction into one another. This would prove all the greater when the historical period selected was no longer familiar and indigenous but in remoter times or places. One might even say that the successful historical novel resulted from a clear appreciation—and perhaps exploitation—of the tension between the two. By the 1850s, several commentators, rightly or wrongly, argued that the historical novel had run into crisis. The argument was that once too much historical content or lack of it overthrew the balance between fact and imagination, the historical novelist would fail in his or her purpose. The result would be either a treatise or a romance. Eliot and Flaubert sought, in their different ways, to break out of this perceived crisis.

For both historians and historical novelists, the choice of subject matter raised many questions. In the case of the historical novelist, we might ask what the choice of subject and period reveal about the writer and what it reveals about the object of choice. Why were some periods and issues preferred over others? What might this tell us about nineteenth-century preoccupations?

Before the professional teaching of history, the historical novel provided the main means of understanding history for the general reading public. In fact, the popularity of the historical novel responded to a public demand and need at that time. The relation of historical fiction to historiography became a serious issue. Works of history, for instance, were able to respond to a market already created by the novel. Much criticism arose concerning the feasibility of the historical novel—not least from historical novelists themselves. Nevertheless, the historical novel and history were both stimulated by the increasing demand for realism and by the impact of Romanticism. Although the two disciplines drew apart, they often maintained common or parallel themes and shared the narrative mode of expression.

The nineteenth century concern with right conduct and the basis of morality appears strikingly in the serious historical novel. The disintegration of the Judaeo-Christian ethic as a result of scientific knowledge, philosophical challenge, biblical criticism, and social and political change led to considerable preoccupation, if not alarm, at the time. To a large degree, both literature and history reflected this preoccupation with uncertainty and instability. Parallel to this was the attempt to establish due process of law, equality before the law, and the supremacy of the civil power. Fear of the consequences of tyranny, personal power, and revolutionary violence—three aspects of the reign of illegality—appeared in history and the historical novel, since both developed in the aftermath of revolution and war. For that reason, the theme of identity, whether of individuals, social groups, or peoples, appeared frequently in this early period of the historical novel.

Credibility in the historical novel depended on keeping a clear eye on both moral purpose and artistic demands. The historical novelist was, after all, susceptible to the temptation to exult in the turbulence of his material, whether for artistic or for sales purposes, while at the same time pointing to its wrongfulness and finishing, as

Scott would do, with the establishment of a just and moral order. The dilemma of fact and imagination can tell us a great deal about a medium through which moral and political issues were discussed in terms of the relationship between religion and culture, law and violence, and the individual and society.

III

One of the earliest works which critically examined the historical novel was Louis Maigron's study of the French historical novel in the Romantic era—specifically the 1820s—which was published in Paris in 1898. Although little known now, it raised many of the problems concerning the attempt to relate fiction and fact, which will appear in this present book. The English-language literature on the subject of the historical novel dates back at least to Herbert Butterfield's *The Historical Novel* [1924]. This work was a founding stone on which much subsequent literature has been built. I have also made use of several works by the literary critic, Georg Lukács. His work has been highly influential across a wide range of literary studies, and *The Historical Novel* [1937] was pioneering in its day and still deserves respect, as will be obvious in this present work.

On the other hand, Lukács is as much an obstacle as a guide. He is correct in emphasizing the historical importance of the period 1770–1850 in generating new forces and influences, requiring fresh interpretations of the human situation. Yet, the French Revolution—the mainspring of his thesis—formed part of this process, but was not its sole manifestation. For historians, the relation between the Enlightenment and the Revolution has always been unclear. In cultural terms, the German *Sturm und Drang* ('Storm and Stress'), from the 1770s, was as much a development from the Enlightenment as a reaction to essential aspects of it. Furthermore, historians have questioned the argument, central to Lukács and to the traditional Marxism of the 1930s, that the French Revolution was a 'bourgeois revolution'. Even so, the idea is uncritically repeated throughout works of historical and literary theory and criticism. The notion that the political and social changes in Spain after 1808, when the *antiguo régimen* collapsed, constituted a 'bourgeois revolution' similarly recurs in the literature. Lukács's analysis is predicated on the supposition of a 'bourgeois revolution' after 1789, and running out of steam after 1848. He ties the emergence and development of the historical novel to this premise.

My departure from Lukács should not be taken to mean that I reject the idea of relating literary works to historical contexts and social backgrounds. On the contrary, I cannot see that assessing them from within their text alone is an adequate approach. In any case, the study of the historical novel requires this relationship most of all. However, the explanation for the rise of the novel during the eighteenth century and the popularity of the nineteenth-century historical novel should not be sought uniquely in social and economic factors but also in cultural and intellectual responses to broad historical changes. The historical novel significantly contributed to the development of collective identities initially in Scotland, and more especially, going beyond England and France, to the Italian

and German territories, Spain, the Russian Empire, and also to Poland and Hungary. Scott's initial focus on Scottish history marked a serious attempt to define national identity in the aftermath of the Union of 1707. This soon found resonance in Italy, Germany, Spain, and Russia, where national identity became a central preoccupation during the century. By contrast, in England and France the need was less great, because a stronger political unity and clearer national identity already existed before the nineteenth century.

In locating the problem with Lukács, we can identify another obstacle at the outset. This consists of the role he assigns to Scott. Although he is correct in placing Scott's roots in the Enlightenment rather than in a later Romanticism, Scott's position in literary history has been subject to much discussion. While it is important to set him in his historical context, his contribution to the development of fiction raises questions—particularly on the subject of the relation to his predecessors. Did Scott advance the novel, or did he take it backwards by reinserting romance? Although he discoursed on the subject, Scott always remained ambiguous when attempting to differentiate between the 'novel' and the 'romance'. The Waverley Novels were also described by their author as 'romances'. Did the historical element in Scott's novels enable the display of romance? Was it, then, less an expression of the realism already developing in the eighteenth-century novel, than a distraction from it? Are we to conclude that Scott took the novel backwards rather than forwards?³

There is more to romance in Scott's shaping of history into his novels, as we shall see. The Scottish novels make a serious attempt thereby to understand and interpret the issues facing Scotland from the Covenanter war of 1679–80 to the Union of 1707 and the first and second Jacobite Rebellions of 1715 and 1745–6. Scott's purpose is to show his own generation what their significance really was and how they influenced the present. Galdós, writing his forty-six historical novels in Spain from 1871 to 1912 and departing considerably from Scott's approach, shared an identical purpose with regard to the peninsular conflicts of 1808–74. This objective lent a seriousness of intent to the historical novels of both authors, distinguishing them from 'romance'. David Daiches—a sympathetic critic of the Waverley Novels—argues, in fact, that Scott's best fiction 'might with justice be called "anti-romantic"'.⁴

Northrop Frye provides a stimulating discussion of these categories and hierarchies of qualification. Although, he points out, romance lies at the heart of all fiction, the eighteenth-century novel moved in the direction of realistic portrayal of

³ See Alexander Welsh, *The Hero of the Waverley Novels* (New Haven and London 1963), p. 8, distinguishing Scott from Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne: 'In Scott's lifetime, the novel reverted to the romance, which expresses, rather than criticises, the desires of the mind. In Scott's hands romance projected publicly acceptable desires—"the moral clichés of his time".' See also the important and detailed study, Richard Maxwell, 'Inundations of Time: A Definition of Scott's Originality,' *ELH*, 68 (2001), pp. 419–68.

⁴ David Daiches, *Literary Essays* (Edinburgh and London 1956), pp. 88, 90–1, referring to Waverley, Guy Mannering, The Antiquary, Rob Roy, The Heart of Midlothian, The Bride of Lammermoor, A Legend of Montrose, all written between 1814 and 1819, and Redgauntlet (1824).

ordinary life. This development increased the divide between 'serious' literature and pure entertainment, especially when the latter was 'popular' fiction. Going back to Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* [2 volumes, 1605 and 1615], the novel contained a strong element of parody of the romance. Yet, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, romance and fantasy flourished alongside the realist novel. Frye presents this helpful portrait of the romance:

The characterization of romance is really a feature of its mental landscape. Its heroes and villains exist primarily to symbolize a contrast between two worlds, the one above the levels of ordinary experience, the other below it... Because of the powerful polarizing tendency of romance, we are usually carried directly from one to the other.⁵

The historical novel of entertainment, not attempting any presentation or discussion of past issues in relation to contemporary preoccupations, is usually regarded as romance. The romance does not envisage an enlightening or uplifting process from which the reader might benefit in moral and educational terms. Although the explanation for its continuing popularity is certainly a subject for study, the historical romance is not the subject of this present work.

IV

In researching and writing this book, I have found it necessary to look at history both in relation to the historical novel and in how it moved away from it in order to stake out its own particular claim. The intrinsic value of the historical novel came to be questioned even in the early part of the nineteenth century, precisely at the time of the rise of critical history. Each genre sought to resolve the issue of its relation to the past in its distinct manner. The conscious identification of this difference pointed the way to the ensuing divergence between them. The divergence at an early stage has bearing on the discussion, frequent in critical and theoretical works from the 1970s, concerning whether or not history and fiction, both employing the medium of narrative, are qualitatively different.

This question lay at the heart of Hayden White's *Metahistory* (Baltimore 1973) and in his subsequent, clarifying works. White argued that history, as much as fiction, frequently acquired a 'plot'. While this gave coherence to the narrative, it also superimposed an interpretive scheme, or teleology, on the original data. White questioned the neutrality of narrative and argued that it contained much that was implicitly myth and ideology. Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (Chicago 1984–8 [Paris 1983–5]) addressed the problems resulting from White's original idea—particularly the apparent absence of any distinction between fiction and history. Examining each of them in terms of their relation to narrative, he sought to keep the distinction between them unblurred as different phenomena employing a common medium. As a French scholar familiar with intellectual developments in

⁵ Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture. A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Harvard 1976), pp. 4, 15, 21, 38–42, 53.

both France and the United States, he was able to bridge the two cultures in which the debate had its greatest impact. Ricoeur sought to find an equilibrium between fiction and history in the portrayal of human experience, reaffirming the validity of each in their distinct ways.

These issues originated in the much earlier discussion, from the 1820s, concerning the relationship of the historical novel to history and literature. Narrative lay at the centre of any discussion of the relationship between them. Nineteenth-century realist fiction and the type of history developing from the methods of Leopold von Ranke both sought to present observable reality in narrative form. The novel, the historical novel, and history were themselves historical phenomena with their own historiography. All three have been linguistic constructs, exhibiting an intertextuality, and representing a plurality of truths. Although each is different, history and fiction are 'notoriously porous genres'.⁶

Yet, it is astonishing to discover that the recent discussion of narrative has largely bypassed the subject of the historical novel. Historical theorists, discoursing one way or another concerning the nature of historiography, have simply not seen the obvious topic of the historical novel lying right in front of them. The explanation may lie in the frequent rejection of the historical novel in university departments of both history and literature—the former because the novel is simply fiction, and the latter because history strangles literature. Historical fiction—often identified with its most bizarre popular examples—has generally had a 'bad Press'.

History-writing aspires to maintain the equilibrium between authored text and source materials. Historians soon adopted the technique of using footnotes to explain to their readers (among whom would be other historians) the sources on which they were basing their evidence and developing their argument. This technique immediately differentiated history from fiction. Although the historical novelist sometimes fell into the trap of sporadically lacing text with footnotes, fiction and history from the mid-nineteenth century were clearly moving in different directions. The historical novelist had somehow to find a way of blending in this need for realism, for historical authenticity, without allowing his work to cease to be a work of fiction. The historian encountered the quite different problem of deciding the degree to which he or she would allow the source materials to determine the nature of the text. This issue necessarily involved the historian's interpretation of these materials.

This dilemma was radically different from the construction of a work of fiction, since history has already happened, and, unless we are to deny all capacity of human knowledge, we know that it has. It cannot, therefore, be artificially composed. For that reason, historical writing is distinct from fictional literature by nature and purpose. The problem for the historical novel, recognized since the 1810s, is that it falls between the two.

Early in his study of Modernism in literature, Michael Bell raises the question of the relationship between history and the historical novel. Both developed in the

⁶ Linda Hutcheon, 'Historiographic Metafiction', in Michael McKeon (ed.), *Theory of the Novel. A Historical Approach* (Baltimore and London 2000), pp. 830–50; pp. 830–1, 833, 838.

realist mode and in response to the pruning of legend and fantasy from historical writing.

The development of historical consciousness over the nineteenth century transformed the self-perception of humanity. The newly recognized scale of evolutionary and geological time relativised human ‘nature’ as radically subject to evolutionary change, and the same general truth had to apply in the more immediate domain of history. Historical process . . . came to supplant fixed essence in the understanding of humanity. The nineteenth-century novel was an obvious expression of that consciousness. Many of the great novelists of the period wrote at least one historical novel in the sense of the sub-genre generated by Walter Scott. More significantly, the historical novel was a formative principle within nineteenth-century realist fiction at large. Historical causality and change were central to its philosophical rationale and narrative method.⁷

This is really to state the essence of the relationship between the two historical methods of arriving, from different perspectives, at a realistic appreciation of the relationship of the individual to society in the course of time. The development of the study of history from the eighteenth century has transformed history into a ‘process’. If we toss the coin, we quickly discover the two sides of ‘process’. Can the conclusion be drawn that the historical process is leading somewhere—and somewhere that can humanly be ascertained? Or should we simply say that history is in constant movement, and leave it there?

The former is to enter the context of White’s *Metahistory*, which points, in effect, to how quickly the concept of process developed into purpose in the pens of leading nineteenth-century interpreters of history. The latter, however, suggests a different realm altogether: one of uncertainty. This provided the opening for the historical novel, with the focus on individual and group dilemmas concerning the nature of events often beyond their control. These themes, and the related problem of how to respond, might provide the historical novel with an equally valid approach to the examination of how humans behave in historical time. Men and women would wonder which way to turn, who to support, and how to survive, as the historical events take their course around or through them.

Much of this might be lost in the historical literature’s focus on the analysis of the broader trends—economic, demographic, social, cultural, political, or military. Little room would be left for individual cases or states of mind, except perhaps for the purpose of employing them as illustrations on that list of categories of investigation. In saying this, we point yet again to the different terrain which the historical novelist treads in relation to both the historian and the novelist not specifically addressing the historical past as understood by the historian. Outside the historical novel, this fictionalized past is usually set within the perspective of the imagined action which the novelist sets in motion. The turmoil of the half-century from c.1790 to c.1850, beginning with the French Revolution, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and finishing with the Revolutions of 1848, account for the

⁷ Michael Bell, *Literature, Modernism and Myth* (Cambridge 2006 [1997]), p. 30.

frequent preoccupation with political violence in these novels, and decisively distinguish them from their later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century predecessors.

V

The serious historical novel in much of Western Europe appeared to some contemporaries to run aground by the 1860s, as the novel and history moved further apart with the professionalization of the discipline. Scott's reputation had already plummeted, and thereafter both critics and novelists consigned him to inferior rank. While the historical romance never lost its popular appeal, the historical novel, as it had appeared in the first half-century, seemed to have lost momentum. This was so in the Western European countries where it had first become important. Nevertheless, the importance of history in the development of plot in the realist novel could readily be seen in a range of novels from Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* [1829–48] to Eliot's *Middlemarch* [1871–2], Flaubert's *L'Education Sentimentale* [1869], most of Galdós's 'contemporary' novels [1867–1905], and Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* [1901]. History, in this sense, had transferred from the historical novel to the novel itself.

From the 1860s, the initiative in the historical novel passed to Spain and Russia. Although historical novels had been published in both countries from the 1830s, the major works appeared during the latter part of the century. These Spanish and Russian historical novelists were not imitators, but took what they wanted, gave priority to indigenous themes and issues, and discarded the rest. Well aware of the problems inherent in the historical novel, they too struggled to overcome them in their different contexts. In this way, they formed part of a broadening cultural milieu, which cut across political, national, and ethnic boundaries. Tolstoy used the historical novel to develop a vision of history which transcended events and personalities. His attention to the wider significance of ordinary people's lives recalls the Eliot of *Middlemarch*, while his setting of historical figures amongst the fictional characters recalls Scott and Balzac, both of whom gave priority to the latter over the former. Galdós sought to weave completed history into the unpredictable lives of fictional characters. Unlike Scott, whose novels did not run according to chronology, Galdós wrote forty-six short historical novels running from the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 to the Restoration of the Bourbon Monarchy in 1874. Tolstoy took the whole Napoleonic experience in one large volume, from 1805 to 1820. Like Manzoni, after the first version of *The Betrothed* in 1827, Galdós, fifty years later, despaired of the historical novel and abandoned writing that form of fiction for twenty years. The success of Henryk Sienkiewicz and other Central and Eastern European writers in the 1880s and 1890s encouraged Galdós—who was short of cash—to write three more series of his 'episodes' after 1898 up to 1912.

The serious historical novel revived in Western and Central Europe from c.1930 in the later stages of Modernism, and has flowered in developing and post-colonial societies, and their *diaspora*, from the 1970s. I present a brief discussion of these

interesting and challenging phenomena in Part II, Chapter 13. They suggest the possibility of further developing the issues in this present book. The twentieth-century expression of the historical novel was a testament of its resilience.

The present work deals with what is *in* books. It does not deal specifically with the book trade—publishing, distribution, readership, impact. These are all important topics, but are covered elsewhere. My focus is two-fold: first, on what historical novelists said and, where I can so determine, why they said it; and, second, on explaining their historical context and choice of period. Hence there is much emphasis on text. The many quotations are intended to bring the reader closer to the novels concerned, distinguishing them in style, content, and intent, but also demonstrating the thematic relationship between them.

Taking the wider span of Europe, I do not provide an exhaustive investigation of each tradition or individual author. For the most part, an existing and growing literature, although not necessarily always in English, provides the means for the reader to go beyond what I have said here. Readers who may be familiar with one or more traditions and authors might wish to use this book as a means of gaining access to historical fiction with which they are not presently familiar. By so doing, they will discover a rich literature—fictional, historical, and critical—from which they can draw as much benefit and enjoyment as the present author—an historian and Hispanic specialist—in researching and writing this book.

VI

We can summarise in three words the focus of this book: tensions, dilemmas, boundaries. The writers discussed are chosen for the tension inherent in their historical fiction, whether resolved or unresolved, between known history and their invented worlds. Needless to say, I am aware that historians use their imagination in the reconstruction and reformulation of the past and, on occasion, show considerable literary skill. Yet they neither live in the world of the imagination, nor is the creation of a work of art their principal consideration. Nineteenth-century critics of the historical novel, such as Manzoni, focused on the issue of balance between fact and invention, and the problem of identifying which was which. In many respects this would prove to be an inadequate criterion for assessment. That form of argument was very much a product of its times, since it reflected the close relationship between the novel and history as parallel and interrelated which were in the process of a conscious separation. It would be useless, if not impossible, to ascertain what proportion of an historical novel was history (seen as factual) and what was invention (seen as fictitious). While it is certainly correct to say that the phenomenon of the historical novel did raise the question of the boundaries between history and fiction, the Manzonian idea of balance would provide only a rudimentary tool of analysis. Since the historical novel appeared to flourish in the indeterminate and fluctuating zone between history and fiction, it would be more constructive to view this as its natural terrain. These shifting sands gave the historical novel its appeal both in the nineteenth

century and thereafter. Furthermore, it should always be stressed that the historical novel, when liberated from historical study, did not set out to strike a balance between fact and imagination. Its overriding purpose was to discover truths concerning the human situation in time and to portray human consciousness of broader social movement through fictional techniques.

PART I

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL AS GENRE AND PROBLEM

An analytical and critical examination

1

An exploration of the categories: history, narrative, the novel, and romance

The debate concerning the relation between history and fiction was not unique to the latter part of the twentieth century. It did not arise from post-structuralist or post-modernist critique but has been virtually continuous since the eighteenth century. David Hume (1711–76) and Adam Smith (1723–90), for instance, raised this issue at the time of the Scottish Enlightenment. English novelists, such as Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) and Henry Fielding (1707–54), expressed awareness of the relation between their fiction and the methods adopted by writers of history. The blurred distinction between the two repeatedly aroused comment and preoccupied authors. This was a debate as much about boundaries as about intrinsic characteristics. The development of the historical novel during the early nineteenth century placed this issue in the foreground, but it did not throw more light on it. The historical novel, in fact, thrived on this ill-defined frontier. Even so, examination of the historical novel played virtually no role in the central debate among literary and historical theorists from the 1970s onwards.

HISTORY, FICTION, AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE NOVEL

As we shall see in the course of this chapter, early discussion of the relationship between history and fiction focused on the need to separate fact and fantasy in the writing of history. This distinction should be seen in the context of the Enlightenment's determination to remove fable, inherited notions, and invention from historical scholarship. The moral and educational role assigned thereby to history meant that fiction would not be regarded as another method of ascertaining the truth about human beings in society and time. Instead, it was in danger of being viewed as separate from such a goal.

Hume upheld the distinction between history and fiction, but saw the relation between them through their common use of narrative. Arguing that history depended upon verifiable evidence, Hume regarded it as superior to fiction, which, without that, he saw as limited in value. Yet, his emphasis on the imagination as a faculty through which reality was apprehended opened the way for fiction to be seen as an alternative portrayal of it. Hume argued that the imagination was rooted in context, by which he meant the time and space of the person imagining.

However much the mind may range apart from them, the senses and passions recall the imaginer back to the present. Even so, time constantly moved forward and, in Hume's judgement, this made interpretation of the past all the more difficult.¹

In his Glasgow University lectures of January 1763, Smith discussed the problem of narrative. The choice of subject must have sprung from contemporary discussion of the relation between fact and fiction, entertainment and instruction, in the narrative form. Smith sought to establish the difference between rhetoric and romance, on the one hand, and factual and didactic narrative, on the other hand. Rhetoric, defined by its partiality, pleaded a case; romance, set apart from serious literature, aimed at entertainment. Serious narrative, he continued, was concerned with facts, and might be purely factual, without need of proofs or propositions, or it might be didactic and instructional. Smith placed history in this latter category, because it set out the evidence behind its statements, seeking to establish the facts of the matter. History's purpose also extended to instruction:

It sets out before us the more interesting and important events of human life, points out the causes by which these events were brought about and by this means points out to us by what manner and method we may produce similar good effects or avoid similar bad ones.

Here we find the idea, deeply engrained in the Enlightenment and continuing through the nineteenth century, that the study of history had a moral purpose. This purpose carried into the historical novel rather than the romance.²

Ian Watt's now classic study of the origin of the novel argues that the English novel rose from around 1720, accompanying a rich tradition in France at that time. Watt relates the rise of the novel during the eighteenth century to the growth of a reading public, looking to that form of literature for the transmission of private experience. In this way, the novelist established a relationship between the reader, or listener, and his fictional characters, many of them drawn from ordinary life.

¹ David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (Oxford 1978), II, iii, vii, pp. 427–32. Zimmerman, pp. 236–46. Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow. The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton and Oxford 2007), pp. 29, 128–34, 137.

² Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (edited by J. C. Bryce, *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, Oxford 1983), vol. IV, Introduction, pp. 7–27. Born in Kirkaldy, Smith went from Balliol College, Oxford, to the University of Edinburgh in 1748 to lecture in rhetoric to students of theology and law, and thence to Glasgow's Chair of Logic and Rhetoric in 1751 and that of Moral Philosophy from 1752 to 1763. His *Theory of Moral Sentiments* went into six editions during his lifetime. He returned to Edinburgh in 1778 to become Commissioner of Customs. Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 296. Smith, *Lectures*, Lecture XVII, pp. 89–91. Smith's definition of Romance—'the sole view of which is to entertain'—may be taken as valid throughout this book: 'This being the end, it is of no consequence whether the incidents narrated be true or false. A well contrived story may be as interesting and entertaining as any real one: the causes which brought about the several incidents that are narrated may all be ingeniously contrived and well adapted to their several ends, but still as the facts are not such as they have really existed, the end proposed by history will not be answered. *The facts must be real, otherwise they will not assist us in our future conduct, by pointing out the means to avoid or produce any event. Feigned events and the causes contrived for them, as they did not exist, cannot inform us of what happened in former times, nor of consequence assist us in a plan of future conduct.*' (My italics) p. 91.

This would become a strong feature of the nineteenth-century novel.³ Watt's book first appeared in 1957, and since then his thesis has encountered criticism. In the first place, he clearly shows preference for realism, defining the modern novel in accordance with it. He relates this realism to the social and economic conditions of the time when, he argues, the novel first began to make its mark. The 'middle classes' are invoked as the primordial reading public. This thesis disregards the possibility of an earlier development of the novel elsewhere and in different circumstances from those which he highlights, which are the familiar cases of France and Britain. When viewed from a wider perspective, the novel appears to have had several beginnings, interruptions, and recoveries.⁴

The contemporary novelist Mario Vargas Llosa has argued that *Tirant lo Blanc*, first published in Valencian in 1490, might be considered a founding work of fictional literature. Vargas Llosa has even described it as an historical novel. Joanot Martorell began his work in 1460. It ranges through the Mediterranean world from North Africa (one-fifth of the book) to a Constantinople still under Byzantine control (the largest section), and even begins in England. Tirant is a Breton knight whose military and amatorial adventures form the subject of this entertaining novel. Martorell transposes events and figures from one century or place into another, changing or inventing names. He distorts time and place, and does not distinguish between the real, the fictional, or the dreamed. Yet, his military details and the social observations of differing strata can only be described as real. He is aware of social conflict, guild rivalries, court intrigues, and legal battles. Vivid portrayal of the supernatural and legendary in human experience differentiates this late fifteenth-century writer from eighteenth-century rationalists and nineteenth-century realists. Even so, the historical and the observed predominate over these other aspects, while personalities and sexual involvements are realistic in such ways that *Tirant lo Blanc* is altogether different from the earlier medieval romance.⁵

A case can be made for a successful integration of fact and fiction in the chronicles of the discovery and conquest of the Americas. Carlos Fuentes suggests

³ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (London 1957), pp. 14, 30, 196–7.

⁴ See, for instance, Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740* (Baltimore 2002 [1987]); Margaret A. Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick 1996); Jenny Mander (ed.), *Remapping the Rise of the European Novel* (Oxford 2007). Michael McKeon, 'Generic Transformation and Social Change: Rethinking the Rise of the Novel', in McKeon (ed.), *Theory of the Novel*, pp. 382–99; pp. 383, 397, criticizes Watt's lack of attention to romance and to the later seventeenth century, which he sees as a period of instability in generic and social categories due to the crisis of received authority and the aristocratic order.

⁵ Joanot Martorell and Martí Joan de Galba, *Tirant lo Blanc* (Baltimore and London 1996 [1984]), tr. with a forward by David H. Rosenthal, p. x, states that Martorell wrote about three-quarters of the book; pp. 391–2, 396–407. A Barcelona edition followed in 1499, a Castilian edition in Valladolid in 1511, and an Italian edition in 1538. Martorell would have had access to the *Crònica* of Ramón Muntaner, begun in 1325, about the exploits of Roger de Flor (1280–1305) and his Catalan Company, for which see the translation of Robert D. Hughes as *The Catalan Expedition to the East*, with an introduction by J. N. Hilgarth (Barcelona and Woodbridge 2006). Rafael Beltrán, *Tirant lo Blanc, de Joanot Martorell* (Valencia 2006), p. 53. Mario Vargas Llosa, 'Carta de batalla por "Tirant lo Blanc"', *Revista de Occidente*, no. 70 (1969), pp. 1–21, ranking the book with Fielding, Balzac, Dickens, Flaubert, Tolstoy, and Joyce.

that they might even be considered as prototypes of the novel. The expansion of geographical horizons stretched both the imagination and the narrative skills of those who tried to interpret what they had seen. The introduction of the printing press from Italy to Spain in 1473, followed by the publication of a Castilian grammar—the first of any European language—by the humanist Antonio de Nebrija in the significant year 1492, greatly facilitated the dissemination of the language of Court and the law courts. Castilian would shortly become the official language of the American empire as well.⁶

Castilian Spain developed the characteristic form of the picaresque novel from the second half of the sixteenth century. False autobiographies or false histories of young ‘heroes’ making their way through the low life of Spanish cities marked these novels. The genre also included portrayals of women, and cut across social station. The first known edition of *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades* appeared in 1553, its author unknown or concealed. The Inquisition placed this scandalous work on the prohibited Index in 1559, although it still continued to be read, and was later published in censored edition in 1579. A French version appeared in 1560, an English version in 1576, and a Dutch version in 1579.⁷

Lazarillo de Tormes appeared half a century before *Don Quijote* and became a success in Spain and beyond. The picaresque tradition, seen within the wider context of the Hispanic narrative, showed that Cervantes formed part of a vibrant culture. Mateo Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache* [1599] and Francisco de Quevedo’s *Historia de la vida del buscón Don Pablos* [1626] continued and deepened this genre, and both of them went through many translations from the original Spanish.⁸ Although Cervantes owed a considerable debt to the picaresque, *Don Quijote* extended the novel far beyond it.⁹

Throughout his two-part novel, *Don Quijote* [1605 and 1615], Miguel de Cervantes plays continuously and simultaneously with the ambiguous relationships between past and present, anachronism and contemporary perceptions, fiction and reliable history, and reality and fantasy. The shifting frontiers between all of these provided nineteenth-century novelists and historical novelists with rich source materials for the elaboration of their own stories. The skill with which Cervantes does this combined with a close observation of individual character and

⁶ B. W. Ife and R. T. C. Goodwin, “‘Many expert narrators’: history and fiction in the Spanish chronicles of the New World”, in Mander, *Remapping the Rise*, pp. 59–74; pp. 59–62, 70–1, 74.

⁷ *The Life of Young Lázaro from the Tormes—his Fortunes and his Adversities; Story of the Life of the Swindler Don Pablos*. For the English version of these two novels, see Michael Alpert, *Lazarillo de Tormes and The Swindler. Two Spanish Picaresque Novels* (London 2002 [1969]). There was also Francisco López de Ubeda, *La picara Justina* [1605], and Vicente Espinel, *Vida del escudero Marcos de Obregón* [1618], [*Life of the Pageboy*].

⁸ Anne J. Cruz, ‘The picaro meets Don Quixote: the Spanish picaresque and the origins of the modern novel’, in Mander, *Remapping the Rise*, pp. 127–37; p. 130—and some two hundred years before Moll Flanders [1722] and Tom Jones [1749].

⁹ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays* (Austin 2004 [Moscow 1975]), pp. 80, 244–6, points to the ‘road motif’—the theme of journey and encounter—in both the picaresque novel and *Don Quijote*.

self-perception. Irony prevails over burlesque in this novel, and from it the reader feels the poignancy of Don Quijote's story. On one level, Cervantes satirized the prevailing taste for romance and novels of chivalry set in vague pasts, with *Amadis of Gaul*, the fourteenth-century French romance reprinted many times during the sixteenth century, as his principal target. On another level, he drew from the Spanish picaresque literature already well-established in the second half of the sixteenth century. Yet his novel goes beyond these. The interplay of figures from different social classes, and their specific ways of speech, complements Shakespeare's portraits in a range of plays that span the period.¹⁰

The seventeenth century regarded *Don Quijote* as primarily a comic novel about the exploits of an aging madman, told in amusing episodes.¹¹ Around 1800, the book was adopted by the German Romantics as their model. The attraction for the Romantics was *Don Quijote*'s ironic portrayal of the gulf between the ideal and the real, and, hence, not as a comedy at all.

Since about 1800, there has been a fundamental shift in readers' conception of Don Quijote's mania, no longer seen as a ridiculous, albeit amiable, aberration, but as a paradigm of the human imagination's struggle to transcend the pull of base reality, and thus to achieve some form of salvation, religious, artistic, or other.¹²

This novel revolves around the relation between reality and imagination, and its greatness lies in the portrayal of a perception of the former through unhinged imagination. Frye puts it this way:

The Quixote who tries to actualize in his life the romances he has been reading is a psychotic, though a psychotic of unusual literary interest. I suppose psychosis, or a certain form of it at least, could almost be defined as an attempt to identify one's life 'literally' with an imaginative projection.¹³

'The interplay between prosaic reality and idealizing fantasy' in *Don Quijote* opened the way to the modern European novel.¹⁴

Given the Spanish political and religious context of the century after roughly 1570, there is little wonder that many of Cervantes' characters have contradictory features. He wrote within the context of the Counter-Reformation and under the vigilance of the Inquisition. The novel escaped suppression because the obvious irony and humour disguised an underlying subversive message, apparent after the

¹⁰ R. O. Jones, *A Literary History of Spain: The Golden Age: Prose and Poetry, The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London and New York 1971), pp. 50–5, 114.

¹¹ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton 1953 [Berne 1946]), pp. 334–58; pp. 348–9, contrasts the comic figure of the deluded knight with the tragedy of Hamlet.

¹² Anthony Close, *The Romantic Approach to 'Don Quijote': A Critical History of the Romantic Tradition in 'Quijote' Criticism* (Cambridge 1978), pp. 1–67, and the same author's, 'Miguel de Cervantes', in David T. Gies (ed.), *Cambridge History of Spanish Literature* (Cambridge 2004), pp. 201–21, see pp. 211–14, 219–20.

¹³ Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA 1976), pp. 178–9.

¹⁴ Bruce W. Wardropper, 'Don Quixote: Study or History?', *Modern Philology* [Chicago], 63, no. 1 (August 1965), pp. 1–11.

novel's rediscovery and reinterpretation from the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁵ If a thinking man or woman might become unhinged by the discrepancy between the reality of experience and the truth that cannot be believed, then, in parallel fashion, Don Quijote is unhinged by the chasm between what he wants to believe and what actually is. In both cases, perceptions of reality have become psychological trauma. His understanding of what he sees is transformed by his perception of it as something else.¹⁶

Cervantes tells his readers that his story is a history—the true account of the adventures of the well-known knight from La Mancha. This true account, however, turns out to be a false chronicle, in which a deranged old man convinces himself that he is defending the virtues of olden days, which have degenerated since then. He is unreconciled to modern times, and, in fact, cannot recognize them for what they are. For that reason, Don Quijote confronts imagined threats, often with disastrous results. This tale is set, nevertheless, against a realistic background, which at times includes real-life figures, such as the Catalan bandit, Roque Guinart, in Part II.¹⁷

This false chronicle about an imagined figure, who never existed in history, is accompanied by an array of historical-type source materials, as though to indicate that the story of Don Quijote can be verified in archives or in older accounts. Cervantes even invents an Arab historian to comment on the action. In such ways, he obscures the frontier between the real and the imagined. Don Quijote, needless to say, cannot distinguish between them. Bruce Wardropper's perceptive study highlights the dilemma in this novel, which he sees emerging from false history, and exposes thereby its essential characteristic.

Don Quijote does not disentangle the story from history, but points its telescope at the ill-defined frontier itself... This awareness of the ill-defined frontier between history and story, between truth and lie, between reality and fiction is what constitutes Cervantes's *Don Quijote*, is what constitutes the novel as distinct from the romance. The novel is the most self-conscious, the most introverted of literary genres... It is sensitive to its origins in historiography and aware of the need to handle its claim to historical accuracy with massive doses of irony.¹⁸

For a long time, the burlesque element in *Don Quijote* explained its increasing renown. Several English translations, for instance, existed between 1612 and 1742. When Tobias Smollett—already the author of a best-seller—translated the novel in

¹⁵ Harry Levin, 'The Example of Cervantes', in *Contexts of Criticism*, pp. 79–96; p. 79, Wardropper, 'Don Quixote', p. 11: 'Don Quijote is, among other things, a tremendous protest against the moralistic assertions of the Counter-Reformation.'

¹⁶ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 348–9, is wrong to see no psychological drama in the novel. Levin, 'Example of Cervantes', pp. 82–7.

¹⁷ Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, 2 Parts (Madrid 1991 [Madrid 1605 and 1615]), Part One, ch. xxiii, refers in its introductory text to 'this true history which is recounted'; Part Two, ch. ix.

¹⁸ Wardropper, 'Don Quixote', pp. 1–2, 5, for the 'story's' 'spurious historicity', deliberately giving the impression that primary sources may be found in the 'Annals of La Mancha' and manuscripts located in Toledo. This 'amounts to the creation of a vast historical apparatus which gives to each and every chapter the illusion of being historically verifiable'.

1755, he scored a resounding success. However, the problem of dealing with Cervantes' many different genres and popular types of speech tested his linguistic skills to the limit. Several English novels, such as Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* [1759], showed the influence of *Quijote*. Both Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote, or the Adventures of Arabella* [1752], influenced also by French romances, and Richard Graves, *The Spiritual Quixote* [1773], took Cervantes' novel as a model for satire. Others, later on, saw it as a convenient model for mockery of foreigners or English radicals at the time of conflict with Revolutionary France.¹⁹

The original *Don Quijote* blurred the frontiers between high and low narrative in a way that had not been done before. Scott and his successors would draw considerably from this.²⁰ As a pioneering work of fiction, *Don Quijote* looked strikingly forward. The roots of Emma Bovary's discontent with country life in Flaubert's early nineteenth-century Normandy stem from her transposition of chivalrous romances on to her own boring reality and assessing it in their light. *Don Quijote* succeeds as a work of fiction because it somehow manages to maintain a balance on the slippery terrain between realism and the imagination. The entire work is of the imagination, but it is related realistically. The characters' quirks and affectations can be recognized across time. Yet at the same time, this novel constitutes an essay on the dangers of the imagination, as epitomized by Don Quijote's psychological condition. The nineteenth-century historical novel would quickly recognize this genie once let out of the bottle and allowed to range freely.²¹

REALISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOVEL

Daniel Defoe (1660–1731), Richardson, and Fielding were conscious, as developers of a distinctive literary form, that they brought something new or 'novel' to their public. The success of this type of fiction depended upon maintaining the equilibrium between character and plot. An abundance of the latter would either destroy narrative cohesion or reduce the story to a superficial romance. Character presented challenges to the new medium, because the originality of the novel lay precisely in the portrayal of the inner human being, with the subtle invitation of

¹⁹ For these comments I am indebted to the two papers by Rosemary Hancock, 'Tobias Smollett. Unacknowledged ambassador for Don Quixote to the English-speaking World', and Miriam Borham Puyal, 'Reading Don Quixote as Political Agent', at the Conference 'Spain and the British Isles in the Long Eighteenth Century', held in Barcelona, 10–12 December 2009.

²⁰ Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 310, sees the eighteenth-century English comic novel permeated with the spirit of Cervantes. Scott refers to *Don Quijote* in the letters which form the first part of *Redgauntlet*. Dumas describes his young hero D'Artagnan as a latter-day Quijote, whose Quixotism lies in his essential innocence and struggle against betrayal and dishonour. Eliot read *Don Quijote* several times from 1840 onwards, and was learning Spanish in 1864 for the purpose of translating it. Alexandre Dumas, *Les trois Mousquetaires* (Paris 1995 [1844]), p. 61. John Rignall (ed.), *Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot* (Oxford 2000), p. 47. Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn. A Study of Five French Realists* (New York 1963), p. 46; Cervantes provided the original stimulus for both Stendhal and Flaubert, which both writers admitted.

²¹ Levin, 'Example of Cervantes', pp. 81–4. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 384, for an example of what this author calls 'heteroglossia'.

identification to the reader. In its representation of reality, the novel implicitly crossed the boundary to the everyday world in which the reader lived.²²

Realism involved as faithful a representation of society and the individual's role in it as would be possible in a work of fiction. This implied careful attention to the physical setting, the depth of characterization, and the clothing worn by the personalities taking part in the action of the book. In fact, as Harry Levin points out, novelists themselves proclaimed against the fictitious. As a literary-historical term in North-Western Europe, realism reflects the particular context of the decades from the 1810s to the 1860s, despite earlier roots, and in Spain and the Russian Empire, where it flourished in an outstanding manner, from the 1860s to the 1910s. Many commentators regard Tolstoy's *War and Peace* [1865–9] as the supreme achievement of literary realism in the nineteenth century.²³

Yet, fundamental as these elements undoubtedly were, the essential achievement of the realistic novel proved to be the tying together of plot. That, in turn, risked a considerable degree of artificiality. Even realism was an artistic technique, reconstructing reality from the factual basis into a drama sustainable at an artistic level and, therefore, always conscious of its audience response. As Alexander Welch suggests in his study of Scott's heroes,

No fiction corresponds exactly to fact because fiction organizes events into an enclosed pattern. Fictions are significant variants from life. Obviously something causes a fiction to be so organized: the organizing principle is projective—an emotion or an ideal that distorts reality to its own satisfaction.²⁴

During the eighteenth century, historical and fictional narrative interacted, to use Everett Zimmerman's term, to the extent that rivalries between the two helped shape the development of the novel. Eighteenth-century novelists, moreover, argued that the relation between their fictions and history should be taken seriously. Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Laurence Sterne (1713–68) called their fiction 'histories, and adopted a narrative stance similar to that of history'. Richardson and Sterne stressed their 'concern for documentary authenticity', even though novelists might parody historians' use of collections of letters as their source materials by organizing their fictions, as Fielding did on *Pamela* [1740–1] and *Clarissa* [1747–8], in the form of an exchange of letters. The eighteenth-century English fictional tradition greatly influenced Scott, as he freely acknowledged. Yet this was not so much historical fiction as historicized fiction.²⁵

Ann Rigney points to the various implications of the term 'fiction': constructed, invented, with imagined persons and events, make-believe ('fictitious'), novelistic—this latter a term used from the mid-eighteenth century. For these

²² Watt, *Rise of the Novel*, pp. 196–7.

²³ Harry Levin, 'What is Realism?', in Harry Levin, *Contexts of Criticism* (Cambridge, MA 1957), pp. 69–71. McKeon (ed.), *Theory of the Novel*, pp. 587–656, on realism, the central premise of which is probability (p. 588).

²⁴ Alexander Welch, *The Hero in the Waverley Novels* (New Haven and London 1963), p. 17.

²⁵ Everett Zimmerman, *The Boundaries of Fiction. History and the Eighteenth-Century British Novel* (Ithaca and London 1996), pp. 11, 26, 51, 78, 81, 139, 159–60, 216, 222.

reasons it was difficult to define exactly where the novel stood. Welch reminds us that the novel still stood in low repute by the time the anonymous author published *Waverley* in 1814. The anonymity was preserved into the 1820s, since Scott, who had made his first reputation as a poet, presumably did not want to sacrifice it by owning up to being the author of a novel. This suggests that the prestige earned for the new genre by the eighteenth-century writers and their successor, Jane Austen, had not completely gained for the novel the aura of seriousness. History, as we shall see later, was earning such a reputation during the same period through its attention to sources and verifiable evidence—a position described as ‘scientific’ by several of its early nineteenth-century practitioners, in imitation of the parallel developments in scientific method. This leads Zimmerman to conclude that the novel was caught in an ambiguous position between science and history.²⁶

EPIC, ROMANCE, AND THE NOVEL

A distinction between the romance and history had existed at least since the Renaissance humanists’ criticism of romance as shapeless, fantastic, and a corrupting influence, contrasting it with the Classical epic. Its excessive imagination accounted for the departure from reality.

Although the word ‘novel’ did not come consistently to mean what we now mean by it until well into the nineteenth century, the generic distinction between the novel and romance has remained current and relatively stable in its starkly dichotomous terms for a little over two centuries, i.e. since the beginning of a continuous tradition of novelistic fiction.

Yet despite this theoretical separation, romance and the novel considerably overlapped in practice.²⁷

M. M. Bakhtin sought to capture in general terms the characteristics of the novel by contrasting them with the epic. The novel is by nature fluid, innovative, and unpredictable—a developing genre within historical time. Unlike the epic, it does not date from the time before written language or the book, and represents the youngest literary expression. Experience, knowledge, and practice characterize the novel, whereas the epic derives from memory and has no consciousness of the relative nature of the past. Not only does the novel have no fixed form, but it also has the capacity to criticize itself. Bakhtin saw the novel rooted in the contemporary world, its ‘starting point or artistic ideation and evaluation’. Direct contact with everyday reality infuses the novel with humour and permeates it with popular speech and even crudity. None of this was possible in the ‘high’ art of the epic. Bakhtin is particularly strong on these points, singling out the subversive character

²⁶ Zimmerman, *Boundaries of Fiction*, p. 27. Ann Rigney, *Imperfect Histories. The Elusive Past and the Legacy of Romantic Historicism* (Ithaca and London 2001), pp. 5–6.

²⁷ George Dekker, *The American Historical Romance* (Cambridge 1987), pp. 15–16. Frye, *Secular Scripture*, p. 37.

of popular speech and laughter in undermining hierarchy, idealized heroics, and absolute truths. This demolition, he argues, enabled a clearing of the ground for scientific observation and realistic creativity—both fundamental to European civilization.²⁸

Bakhtin's contrast between the epic and the novel shows how the latter transformed the conceptualization of time by emphasizing the possibility of many realities, neither arbitrary nor inevitable. Accordingly, the individual became released from the formed and static pose of the epic past into the inconclusive present. In contrast to the already defined personality of the epic hero, the individual in the novel also became inconclusive, torn between the internal and the external man. This individual did not necessarily arise from the social and historical context of his time, but might have indeterminate characteristics. The historical novelist—not the subject of Bakhtin's reflections—might equally set his characters in this flux, even though the historical outcome in which they act out their drama would already be predetermined at the time of writing.²⁹

The novel, viewed again from the perspective of the English novel, reflected its time and place. Its focus was directed towards the changing shape of society and the altering views of knowledge.³⁰ This gave it a closer proximity to perceived reality than romance ever aspired to attain.

When the novel was established in the eighteenth century, it came to a reading public familiar with the formulas of prose romance. It is clear that the novel was a realistic displacement of romance, and had a few structural features peculiar to itself.

One of these was, as we have seen, its 'greater conformity to ordinary experience'.³¹

Richardson and Fielding differentiated their novels from romance. Even so, romance and the novel proved difficult to separate. The realistic novel provoked a reaction in its own day with the intensification of the elements of romance in the so-called Gothic novel, which became a popular form in the latter part of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. One of its main targets was the Neo-Classical literary orthodoxies, which prevailed in many parts of Europe at that time. The leading figure was Horace Walpole (1717–97) in *The Castle of Otranto* [1764]. Scott, in 1827, acknowledged his debt to Walpole, pointing out that thirty years earlier he had conceived of writing a 'tale of chivalry' in the same style set in the Scottish Borders, with 'plenty of Border characters and supernatural incidents'. He had not, however, actually done that.³²

²⁸ M. M. Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel. Towards a Methodology for the Study of the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 3–40; pp. 3–4, 13–15.

²⁹ Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', pp. 19, 22–3, 34–8.

³⁰ Zimmerman, *Boundaries of Fiction*, pp. 66, 72.

³¹ Frye, *Secular Scripture*, p. 38.

³² Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (London 2007), pp. 11–112. Dekker, *American Historical Romance*, pp. 17, 19. Robert Miles, 'The Effulgence of the Gothic', in Jerrold E. Hogle, *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge 2002), pp. 41–62: the peak of publication in Great Britain came in 1788–1800. See also, for novels of knights, robbers, and terror, Terry Hale, 'French and German Gothic: the Beginnings', in Hogle, *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, pp. 63–84. Sir Walter Scott, 'Introduction to the Chronicals of the Canongate', 1 October 1827, in Joan Williams (ed.), *Sir Walter Scott. On Novelists and Fiction* (London 1968), pp. 409–27: p. 412.

Even so, Walpole's novel was preceded by two years by Thomas Leland's now largely forgotten *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury. An Historical Romance*. Like Walpole, Leland was also an antiquary and historian, who published only one novel. *Longsword*—an engaging story of chivalry unravelling dissimulation and wrong-doing—takes place in the early years of the reign of Henry III (1216–72), when the young king was under the tutelage of Hubert de Burgh, described in the book as 'crafty, dark, and revengeful'. The setting is partly in Gascony and partly in England. Leland included clear historical details in his story. This was neither a fictionalising of historical events nor a fanciful and ghostly story of the Gothic type, and there is a strong case for not considering it a Gothic novel at all. *Longsword* stands out for its unsensational and fast-paced narrative. Yet, it makes no attempt to draw out themes which could give the story any contemporary relevance for its eighteenth-century readers.³³

The Gothic novel's cult of wildness created a market for the fanciful and exotic, which was there to tap. This type of fiction did not deal with social observation, psychological depth, or historical accuracy. Bizarre plots, lurid action, and settings in mountains, castles (ruined or haunted), prisons, or monasteries, and replete with legends and myths, featured in this branch of fiction. Clara Reeve (1729–1807) further developed the Gothic novel in *The Champion of Virtue: A Gothic Story* [1777], later revised as *The Old English Baron*. She would continue publishing over the years 1783–99, with five more novels. It was Reeve, who in 1785, published *The Progress of Romance*, in which she sought to establish a difference between the novel—new, and dealing with real life—and the romance—heroic and fabulous. This work prefigured Scott's *Essay on Romance* [1822].³⁴

The most celebrated Gothic novelist proved to be Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), who achieved great popularity in the 1790s and 1800s and beyond. *The Sicilian Romance* [1790] was followed by the even more successful *The Mysteries of Udolpho* [1794] and then *The Italian* [1797]. Between 1794 and 1806, as many as 3,600 copies of the *The Mysteries of Udolpho* were published in four volumes. This was the novel satirized by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey* [1818], which she had, in fact, begun back in 1798. Both Austen and Scott reacted strongly against the Gothic novel, although the latter did not shrink from adopting its imagery if he thought it would enhance the popularity of his plots.³⁵

The past loomed large in the plots of Gothic novels, but they were not historical novels in the sense that the latter sought their roots in real history and everyday experience, whereas the former exploited the popular taste for the fantastic.

³³ Thomas Leland, *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury. An Historical Romance*, 2 vols. (New York, facsimile edition, 1974 [London 1762]), vol. 1, pp. 133, 141. See also the important study by Anne H. Stevens, *British Historical Fiction before Scott* (Basingstoke and New York 2010), pp. 4, 7, 15–19, 25–27, 35, which regards this novel as a 'fairly clear starting-point' for the novel set in history, responding to current interest in medieval romance and giving attention to states of mind.

³⁴ Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron* (London 2007), pp. 113–255. Welch, *Hero of the Waverley Novels*, pp. 10, 13.

³⁵ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge 2004), Appendix 9, p. 631. Williams, *Scott. On Novelists and Fiction*, pp. 84–119 on the Gothic novelists.

This placed the historical novel, as developed by Scott, more in the tradition of the novels of Richardson, Fielding, and Sterne, despite the attractions of the Gothic and the pull of romance. 'Blind Willie's Tale' in *Redgauntlet* would show how strongly these elements drew Scott the novelist, delving into the supernatural in order to enhance the plot development of an historical novel. Frye suggests that Scott's novels signify the 'absorption' of the realist tradition into the romance, but I think it would be more appropriate to argue the other way round—that he absorbed the romance into the realist novel. Romance and fantasy continued to flourish alongside the realist or 'serious novel', as Frye puts it, during the nineteenth century. The English early Romantic poet, Robert Southey (1774–1842), in fact, published an English version of *Amadis of Gaul* in 1803.³⁶

Scott, however, would not have been able to develop the novel in the way he did without the pioneering realism of his eighteenth-century English predecessors. Attention to realism explained how the nineteenth-century view of history and the method and perspective adopted by the historical novel initially developed together. The influence of the historical novel, as conceived by Scott, helped take history away from just the study of politics and power, though it would never abandon that. In Maigron's view, 'for the first time, the crowd took its place in literature'. At the same time, attention to the oppressed elements in society contributed to a diminishing role for real historical characters in the novel. Popular life, pioneered by Scott's Scottish novels, became a mainstay of the realist novel. In continental Europe this formed a serious reaction to its exclusion in the Neo-Classical tradition, which had predominated especially in France.³⁷

A writer such as Balzac began his long career in fiction with an historical novel, and thereafter examined historical change and the impact of the passage of time on individuals and society. Issues such as these preoccupied his contemporaries in the historical field. Galdós, writing in the second half of the century and greatly influenced by Balzac, adopted a similar approach. Both authors were regarded as the prime representatives of the realist tradition in the literature of their countries. Rarely was the pace of social change or the lack of it absent from the pages of their novels.

The European-wide impact of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars can be seen in the pages of many of the leading novelists. Watt draws a diachronic comparison between the pre-Revolutionary English writers and the early French realists of the post-Napoleonic era, when the influence of Romanticism was already felt.

³⁶ Welch, *Hero*, pp. 8–10, in an abridged version, though still in four volumes. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York 1966), pp. 162, 164. James Kerr, *Fiction against History: Scott as Storyteller* (Cambridge 1989), pp. 118–20. Frye, *Secular Scripture*, pp. 40, 42.

³⁷ Louis Maigron, *Le roman historique à l'époque romantique* (Paris 1898), pp. 90–1, 304. Ina Ferris, *Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca, NY and London 1991), p. 164: Scott redefined history as experience rather than events; pp. 222–36, for an illuminating discussion of the above points, which also brings in Macaulay. Levin, 'What is Realism?', in *Contexts of Criticism*, pp. 67–75, p. 70.

And if Stendhal and Balzac are greater figures in the tradition of the European novel than any English novelists of the eighteenth century, it is surely in part due to the historical advantages which they enjoyed: not only because the social changes with which they were concerned had found much more dramatic expression than in England, but because, on the literary side, they were the beneficiaries, not only of their English predecessors, but of a critical climate which was much more favourable to the development of formal realism than was that of neo-classicism.³⁸

This perspective is particularly useful, because it not only provides a chronological linkage of theme and method, but also a geographical one. As I have said, the development of the historical novel was a European affair, not confined to any one country. Similarly, it should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon, occurring by chance in one country and then another, with no organic connection.

In this vein, Levin argues that realism and Romanticism grew together in parallel fashion during the same period, from the 1820s to the 1840s. They did not, of course, represent one and the same thing. On the contrary, in some cases they could be counterpoised against one another, as was evident when writers such as Tolstoy, Galdós, and Fontane parodied Romantic characteristics in the behaviour of their characters. In that context, lack of 'realism' could be used as a critique of Romantic idealism or naiveté. And yet the realist grounding of Romanticism—a movement so often associated with flights of the imagination or emphasis on emotional excess—should not be forgotten. Although there were many different strands of Romanticism, a common thrust joined together writers across several European countries. The main current of English literature in the mid-nineteenth century—the Brontës, Thackeray, Dickens, Eliot—arose from this intermingling of realism and Romanticism.³⁹

HISTORY AND LITERATURE MOVE APART

Imagination became the issue which, as eighteenth and early nineteenth-century authors saw it, separated fiction from history. The drawing apart of these two modes of viewing reality was a salient feature of those decades. Until that time, history had generally been regarded as a branch of literature, characterized by its use of narrative and demonstration of literary skills. When the term 'imaginative' began to be applied to literature, it signified the alignment of the novel with art, and the parallel consignment of history to a different sphere, whether of the social sciences or as a humanistic discipline.⁴⁰ Zimmerman puts it this way:

Baldly stated, in the late eighteenth century, literature becomes associated with poetry and the aesthetic and begins gradually to exclude history. The eighteenth-century novel, however, exploited its not yet fully stable boundaries and separated itself from poetry, defining itself instead as 'history-like'.

³⁸ Watt, *Rise of the Novel*, pp. 300–1.

³⁹ Levin, 'What is Realism?', pp. 71–4.

⁴⁰ Dekker, *American Historical Romance*, pp. 30–1.

In effect, the novel, in Zimmerman's view, filled the gap vacated by history.⁴¹

This separation was both the result and the cause of historians' growing self-differentiation from literature through the critical assessment of documentary evidence and testimony. The tendency was already perceptible in the works of the French Benedictine scholar Jean Mabillon (*b.* 1632) in the later seventeenth century. Most historians, however, still encountered obstacles from entrenched opinion in Church and State. Gregorio Mayans (1699–1781), the Valencian *ilustrado*, stirred up a storm when he criticized the fantasies reproduced by the sixteenth-century Jesuit historian Juan de Mariana.⁴² In Hayden White's view, the Enlightenment's particular contribution to the writing of history was the insistence on the distinction between fantasy and truth, although thinkers of the time regarded them less in opposition than as aspects of a whole. Lodovico Antonio Muratori (1672–1750), a leading figure of the Italian Enlightenment, stood for impartial historical criticism, publishing much in this vein after 1712. The strong rationalist strain in Enlightened thinking, directing the battle against ignorance, superstition, and tyranny, meant that in general, myths and legends—fruits of the imagination—were rejected as modes of explanation for the character and conduct of past cultures.⁴³

One exception was Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), whose *Principi di scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni* (Naples 1744), a product of the Neapolitan Enlightenment, considerably influenced philosophical circles throughout Italy in the eighteenth century. The *Scienza Nuova*—first published in 1725, revised during the following five years, and republished in 1730—set out to refute the arguments put forward by a range of earlier thinkers, from Descartes and Hobbes to Locke, Spinoza, and Bayle. In his discussion of history, Vico emphasized two elements which would prove to be vital to the development of continental European history and fiction in the early nineteenth century. The first of these was his argument that myth, legend, and the imaginative constituted authentic attempts by past societies to understand the human predicament in relation to nature, the divinities, and other humans. They also provided the basis for the establishment of institutions and practices. Vico thereby diverged from the general Enlightenment belief that the understanding of reality and the access to truth lay only through reason. Second, Vico pointed to the whole of society as the legitimate focus of study, arguing at the same time that all societies, in historical terms, were different in their values and customs.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Zimmerman, *Boundaries of Fiction*, pp. 11, 28–9.

⁴² Guy Bourdé and Hervé Martin, *Les écoles historiques* (Paris 1989 [1983]), pp. 130–40. Antonio Mestre Sanchis, *Infujo europeo y herencia hispánica. Mayans y la Ilustración valenciana* (Valencia 1989), pp. 87, 120, 299–350.

⁴³ Hayden White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore and London 1973), pp. 51–2.

⁴⁴ Giambattista Vico, *New Science. Principles of the New Science concerning the Common Nature of Nations* (London 1999), pp. 5–6, 22–7, 74, 100–1, 119–20, 395–6, 490–1. John Robertson, *The Case for Enlightenment. Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760* (Cambridge 2005), pp. 146, 202–2, 207–10, 214–27, 237–40, 252–53.

Vico's influence beyond Italy came in stages and in various forms. Nineteenth-century writers took what they could use from him and applied it through their differing media to their own needs. His social and cultural ideas found resonance in Augustin Thierry's historical studies from the 1820s. The novelist and dramatist Alessandro Manzoni engaged with Vico's Christian view of the action of Providence in history. Jules Michelet, who would become one of the most renowned historians of the French Revolution, sympathetic to the de-Christianization of 1792–94, translated passages from Vico in 1827 and 1835 in the aftermath of the first German translation in 1822. Michelet discovered in Vico's ideas on society an anticipation of his own. Above all, he took from Vico the view that ordinary people played a decisive part in the course of history, which for that reason should not be confined to the deeds of monarchs, nobles, and generals. Translations of Vico accounted for the dissemination and popularity of his ideas during the Romantic era.⁴⁵

The development of these ideas complemented the formation of new institutions of historical learning. Those, too, were raised on Enlightenment foundations. The historian of historiography G. P. Gooch traced the beginnings of advanced history teaching to the mid-eighteenth century at the University of Göttingen and the Collège de France. Even so, restricted access to sources, continued censorship by Church and State, and fear of punishment, constrained scholarship. History, as a university subject, rose to the status of distinct discipline with the establishment of Chairs at the University of Berlin and the Sorbonne in 1810 and 1812 respectively—half a century before those established in English universities. The German historical method, begun by B. G. Niebuhr at the University of Berlin during the 1810s and advanced by F. A. Wolf and August Böckh during the following decades, applied close criticism to source materials. The focus on Greek and Roman history placed on a more scholarly basis the Enlightenment's enthusiasm for the Classical world. The foundation of the École de Chartes in Paris in 1821 showed this increasing concern for primary materials. Several decades later, in 1854, the Vienna Institute for Historical Research was established in the capital of the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy.⁴⁶

The sharper delineation of history became associated with the perspective known as 'historicism'. This reacted to the universalism of the Enlightenment, which tended to judge distinct cultures and epochs in the past from a generalized perspective and one of hindsight. It put forward the opposing argument that all societies and cultures in the past were different from one another, and should be understood within their specific historical contexts. Historicism had its heyday between the 1820s and 1870s. Historians working under those assumptions sought to work out processes and patterns in past events, which might not have been

⁴⁵ Isaiah Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment. Vico, Hamann, Herder*, edited by Henry Hardy (Princeton 2000), pp. 115–16: Michelet 'declared that Vico had totally transformed his ideas—for the first time he understood that history was the account of the spiritual self-creation of peoples in the unending struggle of men against nature'. See also White, *Metahistory*, p. 149.

⁴⁶ G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston 1965 [London 1913]), pp. 10–12, 14–37.

visible to those involved in them. This laid historicism open to the charge that, despite the aim of 'getting inside' the past, historians, nonetheless, were imposing their own interpretation on those events and doing so from the perspective of their own era, thereby frustrating the endeavour to escape from the present. We shall discuss this further in Chapter 5, when we turn to historians' responses to the historical novel.⁴⁷

Between the 1810s and the 1870s, history became increasingly professionalized, and during the latter part of the century it would become more and more locked in academic departments and specialized journals. Historical craftsmanship went hand in hand with the development of a realistic approach to the subject. Two developments reflected this: the emergence of a recognized historical method, and the argument that history formed a branch of the sciences. Historical method centred on ready access to primary materials and the construction of an interpretation based upon evidence. The identification and discussion of agreed facts, it was argued, provided the discipline of history with its scientific basis. These sixty years represented the key period in the formation of a modern history.

None of this was plain sailing. The huge gap between historical research and 'writing it up' never ceased to present the greatest difficulty in conceptualizing a past that no longer existed and representing it in the present day. Rigney, in fact, centres her argument on 'the inbuilt tension between narrativity and representation as a structural feature in historical writing', and takes White to task for overlooking this problem. It should be stressed that this gap differentiates history from fictional literature, which does not have this representational difficulty in anything like the same way.⁴⁸

Despite reservations, the development of both history and the novel, as we shall see in the next chapters, was never closer than in the two decades after the publication of Scott's first novels. Yet, as Ina Ferris indicates, the tension between the two genres was evident then and thereafter:

History and fiction require each other because the identity of each depends on its difference from the other; but each seeks either independence... or dominance. The distinction between history and fiction, always uneasy and constantly renegotiated, is one of the most deeply entrenched in modern western cultures.⁴⁹

In effect, proximity was grounds for separation.

⁴⁷ The classic study of historicism was Friedrich Meinecke (1862–1954), *Die Entstehung des Historismus* [1934] (tr. *Historicism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook* (London 1972)). Paul Hamilton, *Historicism* (London 2002 [1996]), pp. 130–3, concerning Vico's advocacy of the study of primitive societies before later, civilized stages, in order to understand their development through time. Hamilton sees the roots of historicism in this approach.

⁴⁸ Rigney, *Imperfect Histories*, pp. 30, 61, 63; p. 7: 'I analyze the complex and fraught relation between historical writing and literature.'

⁴⁹ Ferris, *Achievement of Literary Authority*, p. 139.

2

History and fiction: the trials of separation and reunion

The historical novel was first and foremost a work of *fiction*. Early in the nineteenth century, Stendhal commented that imagination differentiated the novelist from the historian.¹ A leading Hispanist has written that

... one should not look in a historical novel for a documentary contribution to historical knowledge... It is not the novelist's function to provide information for the social historian... The novelist's purpose may or may not need any factual underpinning, so that his imagination has a free range without being exempt from intellectual restraint, a freedom which has been progressively more and more exploited since the decline of realism.²

Few historians, however, would deny imagination as one of their principal assets, despite the primacy of original sources. Mary Fulbrook, for instance, reaffirms the balance between imagination and fact by stating:

History involves creative leaps of the imagination; but it is at the same time a discipline characterized by collective discourses with a variety of concepts, questions, methods, procedures, and standards of evaluation. And as for the differences of approach across paradigms... we can at least attain some clarity about the issues in deciding for one approach over another. We are not, in short, left with history as fiction.³

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL: HOW MUCH HISTORY AND HOW MUCH INVENTION?

Historians do not, as the fiction writer does, *live* in the world of imagination. That is what Stendhal really meant. A novel has to be taken away from the analysis of facts and transformed into art. For the novelist the decision to use an historical context responds to the *fictional* benefit which might result. We should assess the historical novel in terms of why a writer takes the decision to set in the past the topic currently preoccupying him or her. Several major novelists from Scott to Tolstoy, and Thomas Mann, Marguerite Yourcenar, Carlos Fuentes, and

¹ Quoted in Geoffrey Strickland, *Stendhal. The Education of a Novelist* (Cambridge 1974), pp. 124–5.

² Geoffrey Ribbons, *History and Fiction in Galdós's Narratives* (Oxford 1993), p. 7.

³ Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (London and New York 2002), p. 185.

Pramoedya Ananta Toer to the present day, have at some point written fiction set in historical times. Evidently, writers who chose to give their novels an historical setting did not regard the historical novel as a genre lying in no man's land between history and literature. Nevertheless, the question arises of why they made this choice. A recent critic has proposed an acceptable explanation for this:

... one function of history (and indeed the historical novel) is not merely to explain the past but also to make it possible to rethink the present.⁴

This establishes a clear interpretive relationship between present and past in both disciplines. Authorial recognition of such a relationship explains why major novelists have chosen to tread the shifting sands and use the historical novel as a medium. Historical novelists have used historical situations as a comment on their contemporary issues. They have also sought to establish a dialogue between historical events and their fictional characters, in order to ascertain the degree of reality in each. As Rigney states,

what defines the historical novel as a genre is precisely the interplay between invented story elements and historical ones.⁵

By establishing the resilience of the fictional characters, the historical novelist might make a significant comment on the nature of human life. Accordingly, the greatness of the great events is often thrown into question and the historical novel takes on a subversive nature. The well-known passage at the end of *Middlemarch* [1872], where Eliot comments on Dorothea Brooke's life, points the way:

Her full nature . . . spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.⁶

Later twentieth-century novelists would exploit the subversive possibilities of extended imagination.

Three questions have been raised concerning the definition of an historical novel: (i) how far back should it go to qualify as history? (ii) what should be the proportion or extent of the mixture between real history and invention? (iii) does there need to be at least one historical character in the plot? George Dekker, responding to these questions, poses a rhetorical question:

For a fiction to qualify as 'historical', what more can be required than that the leading or (more to the point) determinate social and psychological traits it represents clearly belong to a period historically distinct from our own?⁷

⁴ Chris Ferns, 'Walter Scott, J. G. Farrell, and the Dialogics of Historical Fiction', in Ralph J. Crane, *J. G. Farrell. The Critical Grip* (London 1999), pp. 128–45, p. 134.

⁵ Rigney, *Imperfect Histories*, p. 19.

⁶ George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (London 1967), p. 795. Rigney, *Imperfect Histories*, p. 20.

⁷ Dekker, *American Historical Romance*, pp. 13–15.

While this certainly provides part of the answer, it does not address the question subsequently asked by Rigney: 'How is it possible for a narrative to be historical "in parts"?' This is an important part of the problem in the component ingredients in the historical novel, since it affects the nature of the genre. History, as we have examined its development so far, does not share with fiction the 'license to invent'.⁸ Scott, for his part, was acutely aware of the problem and discoursed on the subject in several of the prefaces to his novels. As Zimmerman comments:

Scott claims both historical and fictional elements and accepts their essential division even as he joins them.⁹

Yet there is more to it than this, as we shall shortly examine, since Scott not infrequently also invented his history.

Avrom Fleishman attempts an answer to the question of just how historical the historical novel has to be:

When life is seen in the context of history, we have a novel; when the novel's characters live in the same world with historical persons, we have a historical novel.

This 'imaginative portrayal of history' derives its precise significance from the relationship between historical events and individual lives. For Fleishman, an historical novel should be rooted in a specific epoch and have some intention of communicating not so much its 'atmosphere' but a truth or moral value, which that would facilitate. In other words, there had to be a serious reason for the novelist to set his fiction in a specific historical period. That choice would be determined by the issues at stake at that time and how they impinged upon those of the present or threw light on them.¹⁰

In Ferris's view, the issue at stake in the historical novel is factual accuracy. The blurred boundaries between the novel and history had already led to an uneven relation between the two. Scott had 'put history writing and the novel into a new relationship in the early decades of the century', but the implications for each still had to be clarified.¹¹ In his study of Galdós, Juan Ignacio Ferreras makes the valid point that the historical novelist must preserve his protagonists' freedom of action throughout the narrative, even though the outcome of the historical events is already known.¹²

Daiches raises the issue of categorization. The phrase 'historical novel' is, in general speech, a blanket term, covering a wide range of disparate elements—so

⁸ Rigney, *Imperfect Histories*, pp. 8–9.

⁹ Zimmerman, *Boundaries of Fiction*, p. 11.

¹⁰ Avrom Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Baltimore 1971), pp. 3–4, 5–15. Note Fleishman's assessment (pp. 212, 225, 230–1) of Joseph Conrad, who 'wrote more historical fiction than any other major novelist [writing in English] after Scott' without actually being, in the main, an historical novelist.

¹¹ Ferris, *Achievement of Literary Authority*, pp. 138, 195.

¹² José Ignacio Ferreras, *Benito Pérez Galdós y la invención de la novela histórica nacional* (Madrid 1998), pp. 98–9.

many that one quickly loses sight of whether there can really be any distinct entity at all. Daiches covers the possibilities and attempts differentiation:

A historical novel can be primarily an adventure story, in which the historical elements merely add interest and a sense of the importance of the actions described; or it can be essentially an attempt to illustrate those aspects of the life of a previous age which most sharply distinguish it from our own; or it can be an attempt to use a historical situation to illustrate some aspect of man's fate which has importance and meaning quite apart from that historical situation. [Robert Louis] Stevenson's *Kidnapped* [1880] comes into the first category, and here, too, are many of the novels of Dumas; the eighteenth-century 'gothic' romance comes into the second; and the best of Scott's novels into the third.¹³

This latter position is the one I adopt in the present work. In many respects, as Daiches has argued in several instances, this is where Scott's greatness as a writer lay and helped to account for his widespread influence. For this reason also, I have chosen the novels discussed in this book, and, as I stated in the Introduction, for the accompanying reason that they best illustrate the dilemma of the historical novelist in the attempt to balance history and invention.

This dilemma goes right back to Scott. The perennial problem at the core of the historical novel, from its inception onwards, was the relationship between accuracy and license. In the Introduction to *Ivanhoe*, for instance, Scott, writing in the guise of 'Lawrence Templeton', to the Rev. Dr. Jonas Dryasdust in York, hopes that his present work would not be classed with 'the idle novels and romances of the day'. Yet the historical novel was altogether a special category:

... the severer antiquary may think that, by thus intermingling fiction with truth, I am polluting the well of history with modern inventions, and impressing upon the rising generation false ideas of the age which I describe. I cannot but in some sense admit the force of this reasoning ...¹⁴

Scott sought to address this by taking a middle way between accuracy and license, and opting for accessibility on the part of the readership. Recognizing the impossibility of reproducing the costumes, customs, and modes of speech of past ages as they actually were, he opted for modern language to explain ancient manners, and relied on the common mainsprings of human passions across the ages and social classes. He warned that he might have mixed up several centuries in his attempt to portray the age of Richard I (1189–99), but pointed out that architects in the neo-Gothic style frequently did so, and in any case, few among his readers would actually notice. One reader who did notice several anachronisms was Victor Hugo. The French writer, while apologizing for his pedantry, picked up Scott's error in *Quentin Durward* [1823], where the Duke of Burgundy's fool makes a remark to Louis XI at Péronne, which was in fact made by Francis I's fool to the Emperor

¹³ David Daiches, *Literary Essays* (Edinburgh and London 1956), p. 90.

¹⁴ Sir Walter Scott, 'Dedicatory Epistle to the Rev. Dr. Dryasdust, F.A.S. Residing in the Castle-Gate, York, from Lawrence Templeton, Cumberland, 17 November 1817', in *Ivanhoe* [1819] (Edinburgh 1998), pp. 5–14.

Charles V in 1535, more than half a century later. Hugo, however, enthused about this novel, drawing French readers' attention to Scott's skill in weaving together history and the requirements of fiction.¹⁵

What happens, however, when the novelist also invents his history? Scott, in his last and little-known novel, *Count Robert of Paris* [1831], introduces a real-life historian, Anna Comnena, into the fictional plot. This plot has such historical figures as her father, the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenus, in a major fictional position in the novel, although not as one of its central characters. The principal character is fictional: Hereward, an exiled Anglo-Saxon serving in the historical Varangian Guard. We see Anna Comnena actually reading a passage of her *History* at Court, as the fictitious plot unfolds. She is recounting the course of a battle at Laodicea in Asia Minor against Muslim Arab enemies. The Varangian Guard plays the decisive role in the victory, but Anna focuses, as is her wont, on the role of the Emperor. This battle, although realistically described by Scott writing as Anna, is, however, fictitious. Anna Comnena, according to the novel, was present at the battle. Scott, the fictional author, explains to his readers that this account came from a hitherto unpublished and little-known fragment of her *History*. It does not appear in the published *Alexiad*. Anna dramatizes her reading with appropriate gestures, but the Varangian interrupts her when she comes to the incident involving the heroic death of his brother, and she is obliged to amend her history accordingly. The Emperor tactfully praises Hereward, but cannot remember his correct name.¹⁶

The above paragraph conveys all the dilemmas facing writers and readers of historical novels. When even the history is fictitious, the components are so intermingled that no dividing lines are perceptible. While it is well known that authors—Scott among them—enjoy playing games with readers, not all readers will be able to distinguish reality from invention.

Not infrequently, considerable discrepancy exists between real historical figures and their fictionalized portrayal in the historical novel. Several novelists have felt the need to explain this to their readers. Scott did so in his Introduction to *Rob Roy* [1818], who really existed as contrabandist and brigand active across the Highland–Lowland divide in the period between c.1710 and his death in 1738, survived by five sons. In the novel he appears at several crucial stages to determine the outcome of the action involving the fictional characters, even though he is not really the central figure in the book named after him. A crucial relationship is with the fictional Baillie Nicol Jarvie of Glasgow, Scott's representative of legality and commercial acumen. Similarly, Pushkin wrote an historical account of the Pugachev Rebellion of 1773–4, which formed the context of his novel *The Captain's Daughter* [1836]. The novel portrayed a much softer Pugachev to the relentlessly

¹⁵ Victor Hugo, 'Sur Walter Scott à propos de *Quentin Durward*' [June 1823], in *Littérature et Philosophie, mélées* (Paris c.1920), pp. 229–42.

¹⁶ Sir Walter Scott, *Count Robert of Paris* (Edinburgh 2006), pp. 36–7, 42, 44–5; chapter IV, pp. 45–62; pp. 133, 142–3, 355–6.

violent peasant leader of history. Both Rob Roy and Pugachev, in their respective novels, save the lives of the hapless heroes.¹⁷

The historical novel examines the dilemmas of its fictional protagonists within an historical universe. The historical universe in the novel must be real in social, cultural, and psychological terms. The author will need to clarify the issues which bind the present to the chosen past and develop them throughout the novel, since they will be major elements of structural integration in the narrative. The fictional characters need to be rooted in the past and not be contemporary surrogates, in order to establish their relationship to the issues prevailing at the chosen time. Accordingly, the novelist will have to research beforehand the mental outlook or collective psychology of the epoch in which the action is set. The fictional characters' thoughts and behaviour should reflect that. In the historical entertainment, history is just background—colour, costume, adventure, things designed to make the romance more romantic. Nothing more is attempted or desired, since this is to be a work of pure entertainment. The author of the romance does not need to establish any form of dialectic between the present and the past.

MANZONI QUESTIONS THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

Manzoni's *On the Historical Novel* [1850] resulted from long meditation on the subject from the time of the first appearance of his *I Promessi Sposi* [*The Betrothed*] in 1827. By mid-century he had reached the conclusion that fact and imagination, historical reality and artistic requirement, could not be successfully reconciled. He felt that the two types of narrative were so distinct that there would always be tension between them. His contemporaries and later readers concluded, however, that Manzoni had written one of the most successful historical novels, even though, as we shall see, the problems he identified in 1850 were apparent in his text.¹⁸

Strangely, *On the Historical Novel*—one of Manzoni's principal works—remains largely unknown. It played virtually no part in the later twentieth-century discussion of the relation between history and fiction in their common use of narrative. Yet Manzoni's points had major bearing on these issues, and might have altered the character and course of the later discussion had they been considered. Forming his views at the time of the first great period of the historical novel from the 1810s to the 1850s, Manzoni stressed the impact of developments in critical history, the legacy of the Enlightenment, on the transformation of the novel. Part One of this work explored the problematic relationship between the historical novel and history. From the

¹⁷ Sir Walter Scott, *Rob Roy* (London and Glasgow 1953), Author's Introduction, 1 December 1817, pp. 11–70. Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, pp. 102–15, highlights the primitiveness of Rob Roy, while linking him to the modernity of Glasgow in a novel which 'represents the Highlands as a colonial frontier' (p. 113). Jarvie has interests in tobacco and sugar, grown in West Indian slave economies. This recalls, in *War and Peace*, idealist Pierre Bezukhov's possession of serfs on his Ukrainian lands.

¹⁸ Alessandro Manzoni, *Dal romanzo storico, e, in genere, de' componimenti misti di storia e d'invenzione* (Milan 1850), translated by Sandra Bermann, *Alessandro Manzoni on the Historical Novel* (Lincoln and London 1984), pp. 63–75.

beginning, it had been difficult to define the essential form of the historical novel, especially when facts could not be distinguished from invention and too many of them ruined a work of art. Manzoni warned that even if a novel had historical characters, it was still fiction. The danger was that the historical novel might corrupt history, especially if the reader believed that the fiction was the truth. Fact and imagination were at odds in the historical novel, because history and fiction had a different ethos. Manzoni was correct to argue that history encourages doubt, because it questions falsehoods and is founded in criticism, whereas 'the historical novel encourages belief, while at the same time removing what is necessary to sustain belief'.¹⁹

The development of critical history undermined accepted notions, inherited interpretations, myths, and legends. Manzoni contrasted the reader of his time with later seventeenth-century predecessors by pointing to his contemporaries' impatience with excessive distortions of fact in historical novels. He attributed this to the impact of critical history. In his view, the combination of history and invention produced 'an extraordinary effect on the public of cultured nations'.²⁰ At the same time, he believed that critical history, with the accompanying professionalization of the discipline during his lifetime, left the door open for the novel, which could focus on the lives of ordinary people beyond the makers of history. Such lives did not appear in the archives increasingly preferred as source material by historians. Here the imagination could freely range. The historical novel might then rediscover lost lives—in effect, immortalizing them—and also provide a source of identity to peoples living under foreign rule.²¹

Sandra Berman's important introduction to the English version of Manzoni's study suggests a decline of the historical novel by 1850 (an issue I shall discuss in Part II, Chapter 8). She sees the flourishing of the historical novel in the first part of the century as 'a signpost, albeit a major one, on the way to the great realistic novel that dominated the literary scene more or less until the turn of the century'.²² Several authors responded to the dilemma of the historical novel at mid-century and attempted to break out of the realist mould. There was no need to be pessimistic about the historical novel, since, building on ground laid out in the first half of the century, Spanish and Russian writers took the genre in fresh directions in different contexts right into the 1910s.

HISTORIANS AND THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

Historians have always had difficulty in responding to the historical novel. Twentieth-century historians, no less than their predecessors, sought to assess the merits and disadvantages of the genre. C. H. Firth opened the cycle in 1922, arguing that

¹⁹ Manzoni, *Dal romanzo storico*, pp. 76–7, 84–5. Rigney, *Imperfect Histories*, pp. 16–18, p. 58, rejecting Manzoni's pessimism, with the example of Scott's, *Old Mortality*, on the grounds that hybridity had the purpose and function of presenting an alternative view of history.

²⁰ Manzoni, *Dal romanzo storico*, pp. 77, 80, 125–6.

²¹ Manzoni, *Dal romanzo storico*, p. 84.

²² Berman, *Introduction*, pp. 9, 44–9, 52–6.

... the historical novel proper was not possible till the accumulation of historical facts and the spread of knowledge of them had provided the novel writer with plenty of materials, and furnished the novel reader with the appetite and the modicum of knowledge necessarily for their enjoyment.

Firth—historian of seventeenth-century England—singled out *Waverley* as the pioneering novel, and drew attention to Scott's debt to Maria Edgeworth (1767–1849) for her descriptions of Irish localities and people, in his regional detail. Firth regarded *Old Mortality* as a successful historical novel, with close attention to time and place. Yet he was not slow to indicate the defects of historical fiction, many of which he saw in Scott's *Woodstock* [1826], a financially successful novel of the English Civil War. He warned also that both historical novelists and historians could be led astray by misleading authorities.²³ Butterfield, in 1924, believed that the genre was a legitimate subject of study for the historian. He agreed with Firth that Scott's role was fundamental. Butterfield attempted to establish distinctions of methodology and purpose between history and the historical novel. He saw the historian's craft as working more towards generalizations and formulae, whereas the novelist, by contrast, focused on the particular and examined human nature.²⁴

Harold Temperley remarked in 1929 that 'every school or college library should have at least two shelves devoted to historical fiction'. He saw the latter as a useful supplement to history:

... the novel, which supplies a freer medium of expression than history proper, enables the past to be picturesquely displayed. While a strict historian must quote an authority for every fact, a novelist can enliven his narrative with imaginary details. So popular is this method of reviving the past that some writers seem to have been beguiled by it into that perilous borderland between history and fiction, and to have forgotten where the one ends and the other begins.²⁵

Helen Cam sought to determine what could be regarded as an historically informed novel. She decided to leave aside 'the novel that is itself a historical source for the period in which it was written', such as Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* [1839]. To be counted an historical novel, the fictional work had to 'aim deliberately at re-creating the past', as Dickens attempted to do in *A Tale of Two Cities*, and William Makepeace Thackeray in *The History of Henry Esmond* [1852].²⁶ Taking Jane Austen as a dependable guide, she drew her readers' attention to the cultural significance of the novel, and cited Austen's defence of the novel's serious purpose. It required the greatest powers of mind; it sought to convey a thorough knowledge of human nature; it demanded mastery of language; it engaged the reader through

²³ Charles Firth, *Historical Novels* (Historical Association, 51, London 1922), pp. 3–7, 15.

²⁴ Herbert Butterfield, *The Historical Novel. An Essay* (Cambridge 1924), pp. 28–9, 73–4.

²⁵ Harold Temperley, *Foreign Historical Novels* (Historical Association, no. 76, London 1929), pp. 2, 4–5. Temperley discussed the writings of Hugo, Dumas, Johannes Jensen, Mór Jókai, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Dmitri Merezhkovski, and Tolstoy. He does not mention Galdós's *Episodios Nacionales*, mostly still unavailable in English.

²⁶ Helen Cam, *The Historical Novel* (Historical Association, London 1961), p. 6.

wit and humour. Regrettably, Cam did not attempt to ascertain for what purpose a fictional writer might want to set his or her fictional work in a particular historical epoch. She did establish, however, a kind of mandate:

The historical novelist with a proper respect for history has a very stiff task before him; not only must his facts and his concrete details be consistent with those established by research, but the atmosphere of belief, the attitudes and assumptions of society that he conveys, must be in accordance with what is known of the mental and emotional climate of the place and period.

This latter caveat is of the utmost importance, since it helps to define the difference between the serious historical novel, which does attempt to fulfil these requirements, and the simple entertainment, in which colour and adventure are the main attributes. The attempt to convey the mental world of a past age and the way in which individuals might have thought, characterizes the serious historical novel.²⁷

THE CATEGORIES VIEWED FROM THE LATER TWENTIETH CENTURY

We should remind ourselves of three compelling reasons for studying history. The first is that the present always has problems with the past—just as in fiction individuals frequently have problems with their own past. Can the past be accepted, or should events and issues be rearranged in order to make them more acceptable to the present? Nationalism, for instance, presents nation-forming as the ultimate goal of history. In reality, however, the past often shows a natural diversity and an instinct for plurality. The second reason has strong political and moral implications. If historians do not study history (and continue to disagree with one another about their findings), then its interpretation will be left to ideologists, populists, or partisans of one band or another. The danger would be the trivialization or manipulation of complex past events. Debate would become meaningless or dangerous. Finally, as is clear from the experience of every generation, those in power or with influence whose thoughts and actions have not been informed by history, frequently take disastrous decisions, often involving armed conflict, without reference to historical contexts.

This is not to argue that historians are exempt from either partiality or cultural influence. In fact, much of the debate from the second half of the twentieth century onwards hinged upon the factual or fictive character of history. However, it is one thing to argue that history lacks factual foundation, and quite another to say that if this is so then there can be no facts and no truths. To argue that would be to leave the definition of what is fact and what is true in the hands of unscrupulous absolutists. Historians will be influenced by the cultural assumptions of the society from which they come and by the issues of their day. On the other hand, they are not exclusively prisoners of those influences. Furthermore, they are individuals with

²⁷ Cam, *The Historical Novel*, pp. 3, 4, 8.

differing psychological make-up. Accordingly, they are likely to disagree and continue to argue about how the past should be understood. This continuous discussion makes for an open educational forum.

Since the late 1950s, much criticism from structuralist and, from the 1970s, Post-structuralist and Post-modernist viewpoints raised doubts concerning the nature of historical knowledge and the purpose of historical practice. The origins really go back to the critique of historicism at the end of the nineteenth century. Language, it would be argued, prevented the accurate representation of the past. From there the question developed into the more generalized discussion of whether there could be any accurate representation of the past at all.²⁸

In the English-speaking world, this debate opened with the publication of Hayden White's *Metahistory* in the United States in 1973. White's prime intent was to undermine dominant narratives, which had sought to provide human history with a meaning and purpose. These he described as 'metahistory'—a sort of secular parallel to metaphysics.²⁹ In effect, White was exploring, as Paul Ricoeur subsequently commented, the rhetorical resources of historical representation and the implications of the process of historical imagination.³⁰ White's choice of a group of nineteenth-century historical writers—among whom are Jules Michelet, Ranke, Jacob Burckhardt, and Karl Marx—associated with different, teleological views of history, ignored developments in the discipline since their demise. Such writers were taken as paradigms on the basis of which a critique of the whole basis of historical scholarship was constructed, in part founded on categories developed earlier by Northrop Frye, and accompanied by a display of recondite terminology. *Metahistory* sought to undermine the early nineteenth-century differentiation between history and fiction, stressed by Leopold von Ranke in the 1820s and onwards. Michelet, as the chief archivist of France, had been, for his part, at pains to emphasize the distinction, despite the presentation of his arguments in passionately literary form.³¹

²⁸ For critical comment of these positions, see Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London [1997] (second edition, 2000), pp. 94–100, 147, 231–2. For comments from a post-modernist viewpoint, see Alun Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* (London [2000] second edition, 2006). Callum G. Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians* (Harlow 2005)—a moderate defence of its contribution to history.

²⁹ White, *Metahistory*, pp. 2–21. The author described his book as 'a history of historical consciousness in nineteenth-century Europe, but it is also meant to contribute to the current discussion of the problem of historical knowledge' (p. 1). White affirms the priority of imagination in the construction of historical narrative. For a reasoned and essentially sympathetic critique, see Lionel Gossman, 'Towards a Rational Historiography,' *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 79, part 3 (Philadelphia 1989), pp. 11–68; but see also Evans, *In Defence*, pp. 100–2, 125–6, 148.

³⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (translated by Katherine Blamey and David Pellauer, Chicago and London 2006 [2004]), pp. 251–4.

³¹ White, *Metahistory*, pp. 428–32. The categories came from Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton 1957). See the critique of White in Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols. (Chicago and London 1984–8) [*Temps et Récit* (Paris 1983–85)], vol. 1, pp. 161–8, and Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 253, on *Metahistory*: 'the work of reconstructing historical discourse taken in terms of the complexity of its operative phases is totally absent in this work'.

Essential to White's argument was the idea that since history employed narrative as its principal mode of communication, it was no less creative than fiction, because historians sought to impose a meaning on their findings, which transcended particular events. In this sense, they gave history a 'story'. Such a view challenged the attempt to establish a distinction between history and fiction, which had been developing in Western Europe since the sixteenth century. Although White did not discourse on the subject of the *historical novel*, his view certainly impinges on our subject, since he threw the focus on the role of imagination in the production of both modes of narration. In this sense, it was very strange that the subject of the historical novel did not become a central point of debate. This is even more striking when both the vast number of historical novels published in the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, and the high quality of the most striking examples, are taken into consideration.³²

White's observation—which had a greater impact on literary criticism and historical theory than on academic history—raised the question of what exactly historians were supposed to be doing. Most academic historians, immersed in source materials, publications, conferences, assessments, and bureaucracy, had little time to raise their heads above the parapet, even if they had wanted. Nevertheless, the questions which arose did require examination, especially since they highlighted the fact that historians did not exist outside history. It could be argued that history was an investigative as well as an imaginative activity. As such, the historian's purpose would be different to that of the novelist. In White's view, the historian was engaged in writing another sort of imaginative literature, which similarly required 'emplotment'. History, then, was portrayed as an exercise in poetics.³³

This argument once more raised the question of how satisfactory the narrative form was in the representation of reality. The challenge was neither new nor unique to philosophers of history. Narrative had been challenged more than forty years previously by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch (1886–1944), the founders of the journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* [1927], which later became *Annales: Économie, Sociétés, Civilisations* [1946]. They saw narrative as the principal obstacle to the incorporation of history into the sciences. In this respect, they inherited much of the older positivist tradition, while at the same time rejecting aspects of it, along with the historicism which they identified with Ranke. The latter's historical method became one of their principal bugbears. The *Annales* historians regarded narrative form (except in the most basic sense of linking findings) as pertaining more to literature, and posited a science-versus-story dichotomy. They scathingly described the description of historical events in narrative form as

³² Lionel Gossman, 'History as Decipherment: Romantic Historiography and the Discovery of the Other', *New Literary History*, 18 (1986–7), pp. 23–57; see pp. 28–9 and p. 44, which draws attention to the German universities' systematic and philosophical grounding of history in that period, something which the French Romantic historians did not attempt.

³³ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form. Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore 1987), p. 73. Evans, *In Defence*, pp. 144–7, 150–2, stresses history's capacity for destroying myths and general theories.

'l'histoire évenementielle'. This, they argued, could not give an adequate meaning to the real world, and they used the term 'real' in opposition to the 'imaginary'.³⁴

The *Annales* historians rejected outright political history, traditionally supreme, as contrived narrative, and instead threw the focus on demography, the economy, and quantification of price and wage levels, rather than dramas, dynasties, and diplomats. The intention was to turn their backs on the Romantics' focus on the individual and the spectacular event. For Bloch, nevertheless, the practice of history began in the archives, as much as it had for Ranke.³⁵

As the *Annales* approach deepened and extended its breadth, several of its notable practitioners began to place the emphasis on how past societies had thought, not in terms of the traditional History of Ideas, but by relating culture and society. Out of this synthesis came the study of 'mentalités'—the mental outlook of past ages. It corresponded, as Ricoeur points out, to the German concept of *Weltanschauung*, for which no single word exists in English. It was not new, since Burckhardt had attempted such an approach in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* [1860], but the *Annales* historians gave it fresh prominence, if not priority, over other aspects of history. 'What the history of mentalities proposed to demonstrate . . . was what a person of the time could and could not think.'³⁶

This aspect of history required a good deal of imagination, alongside the critical scrutiny of the documentary evidence largely from archives. The relationship to the historical novel should be obvious. In fact, the best historical novelists had been attempting to demonstrate through the medium of fiction what people in the past could and could not think. If facts were the bones of the historical novel, then the mentalities of the period, expressed through fictional or factual characters, were its flesh and blood. Here, psychology—individual and collective—overlapped with sociology. The historical novel began with the relationships between individual and society, fictional and factual characters, and past and present. It would develop these basic themes through time and space, highlighting the different conception of the past and future held in the present and by characters in past ages.

From the 1970s the on-going discussion focused on the question of whether history could realistically be described as scientific at all. The issue raised was the nature of narrative. The self-conscious and increasing differentiation between history and fiction had sought to establish an unmistakable dividing line between

³⁴ There is a good discussion in Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, pp. 190–8, which sets out the development of the *Annales* school over time from Febvre and Bloch through Ernest Labrousse and Fernand Braudel to Jacques Le Goff, Robert Mandrou, and Pierre Chaunu. Hayden White, 'The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory', *History and Theory*, 23 (1984), pp. 1–33, discusses the critique of narrative by the *Annales* historians and (from different perspectives) by Structuralists, Post-structuralists, and Post-modernists. Gossman, 'Rational Historiography', pp. 15–17, 31–2, 34–5, 45: the *Annales* school specifically dissociated itself from Ranke.

³⁵ Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester 1954), [*Le métier de l'historien*, (Paris 1948)], pp. 23, 27. Ricoeur, *Memory, Time, Forgetting*, pp. 169–70, on Bloch. See Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, I, pp. 209–16, for the significance of 'employment' and 'events' in Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, 2 vols. (Paris 1949), a work dedicated to Lucien Febvre.

³⁶ Ricoeur, *Memory, Time, Forgetting*, p. 192.

the two. Historians increasingly preferred to come down on the side of science rather than poetry, rhetoric, or tale-telling. White's challenges led in stages to a clarification and reaffirmation by historians of the objectives and techniques of their discipline, as defined from the early nineteenth century onwards. On the other hand, we should not draw too sharp a line between supposedly 'non-scientific' history and knowledge commonly referred to as 'science'. The latter often gropes in the shadows as much as history does, in order to demonstrate the validity of its findings, despite the different objectives of the disciplines. Furthermore, science has also had to defend itself, as history always has to, against allegations of partiality or ideological assumptions. Both science and history are human constructions; and as such, they cannot escape the preconceptions and special emphases of which their respective practitioners may be largely unaware. In any case, both history and science are developing disciplines, with the aim of correcting their own mistakes and subjecting their findings to counter-hypothesis and critical reappraisal. For the range of disciplines concerned, this process might be described as one of a 'dis-confirming'.³⁷

White's focus on narrative as the point at issue opened, perhaps unintentionally, the floodgates to an on-going critique of historical narrative as such. Structuralists and post-structuralists such as Jacques Derrida questioned any veracity resulting from historical writing. Their argument that historical narrative represents another form of fiction suggested that rationality played no greater part in the discipline of history than the process of sentence-construction. History, as a discipline, served no rational purpose in this view, since the validity of an historical text lay only in the interpretation which its author presented of external events. The validity of one text was no greater nor less than that of any other. Terms employed by historians, such as 'truth' and 'science', thereby lost all significance. Many contemporary historians, however, would argue that history was rooted in critical analysis rather than narrative. White subsequently clarified his earlier statements by emphasizing that historical 'employment' was qualitatively distinct from the products of the imagination. In this sense, historians were justified in 'telling stories about the past', since their narrative represented a parallel to that of literature.³⁸ Increasingly under the influence of Ricoeur, who sought to systematize the whole issue and work out a new synthesis, White was arguing by the late 1980s that history and literature shared a single term of reference: human experience in time. Their difference—since they were not identical—lay in the fact that history referred to the real, and literature referred to the imagination.³⁹

Fulbrook takes issue with the structuralist argument that history lacks an intrinsic *raison d'être*, once rationalism is no longer seen as the basis of historical scholarship. She draws attention to the moral chasm which opens up if history returns to rhetoric, is subordinated to ideology, and is stripped of the critical apparatus constructed since the early nineteenth century. The technique of

³⁷ Evans, *In Defence*, pp. 115, 131, 256, 266–7.

³⁸ White, *Content of the Form*, p. 173. Gossman, 'Rational historiography', pp. 54, 56, 58, 63, 67–8.

³⁹ White, *Content of the Form*, p. 175.

historical analysis lies at the heart of the discipline of history, as Fulbrook reaffirms. In this process, criticism and scepticism, combined with a refusal to ride along with systems and philosophies, provide the historian's most powerful weapons. The author reaffirms the centrality of this questioning process:

... the practice of professional historians... is precisely to seek honest mechanisms for 'disconfirming' not only individual factual statements but also general explanatory frameworks concerned with relationships among elements in a wider historical picture.⁴⁰

This section of Fulbrook's work contains a detailed criticism of the ideas put forward by White. She argues that while seeking to free historical writing from these teleological interpretations, White made the mistake of going to the extreme of describing historical writing in general as a literary craft—another branch of fiction. In that sense, no reading of events had any intrinsic validity. White had failed to understand the essential purposes and methods, which had developed in the research and writing of history since the later eighteenth century. In fact, he had poured scorn on 'historical method' altogether, preferring to describe historians as superimposing their own narrative on events, described as 'emplotment', just as writers of fiction might do. As such, history could have no more claim to impart truth than fiction could. In Fulbrook's view, with which the present writer concurs:

Historical writing is neither purely literary and imaginative, nor inevitably mythologising and politically biased; it is about real issues and real questions (which are of course politically and morally informed); the ways in which the questions are phrased and the answers which historians give are nevertheless context- and theory-bound. These contexts and theories are, however, communal, social constructions which are open to debate, revision and advancement.⁴¹

This is to restore to history the context and structure within which it has developed during the previous two centuries. From these emerged its essential characteristics: the informed selection of materials, the distinction between primary and secondary sources, professional standards agreed and reassessed, a discipline with rules and procedures, refinement of analysis, criteria of verification and evaluation, and, finally, interpretations and methods open to criticism and attack. The history 'text', then, is not simply a created or constructed narrative indistinguishable from other forms of poetics, but depends for its claim to truth upon intellectual assessment through criticism and established processes of verification. Fiction seeks to portray human experience in time through different means, even though it is no less subject to criticism on grounds of accuracy and method.

Several years after Fulbrook's essay, Jörn Rügen criticized White for not recognizing the specificity of historical narrative. Rügen took more seriously than White the nineteenth-century endeavour to separate fiction from history. He argued that we should not start from the common use of the narrative mode, but from an examination of the function of historical narrative. Rügen defined this as:

⁴⁰ Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, pp. 55–9.

⁴¹ Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, p. 188.

... orienting practical life in time by mobilising the memory of temporal experience, by developing a concept of continuity and by stabilising identity.⁴²

His central thesis is that the turning point in historiographical development came with its separation from purely imaginative literature in the early decades of the nineteenth century. He identifies his key figure in this process as Ranke, inheritor of the later eighteenth-century development of historiography. In that period, the issue of the relationship between fact and imagination became clearly articulated.⁴³

Rügen reaffirms the distinct nature of history as an empirical science with its own rules and techniques of research. He argues that Ranke played a decisive role in establishing these: for instance, in his rejection of judgements in history—that historians should not judge the past in order to instruct the present. Most historians in the nineteenth century, however, did precisely that: they sought not just to inform but to instruct their public for the purpose of improvement. Ranke also rejected the intrusion of fictionalized speeches into history, arguing that the historian should present research findings without undue elaboration. This, however, required narrative exposition, in turn suggesting the use of literary skills. In fact, Ranke's own works showed 'an undeniable aesthetic quality: they belong to the great prose literature of realism'. For that reason, Rügen rightly draws attention to the continuing dilemma within historiography, as it transformed from the late Enlightenment into the era of Romanticism, of how to maintain the equilibrium between imagination and conceptualization.⁴⁴

Both content and intent, however, differed in the case of the historical novel, where the tension was between literary imagination and historical fact. If historiography might present itself henceforth as a science undertaken by professionals, then the historical novel decidedly stood or fell in relation to its degree of success as an art form. The historical novel should be understood in the light of Ricoeur's argument that history and literature are not rivals but share a common attempt to portray and understand human experience. It is a means of bridging the gap between the two different media, or, expressed in another way, of bringing the two forms of narrative into synthetic harmony. If we accept that this is the overriding ethos of the historical novel—as I argue that it is—then the problem involved in writing one lies in the equilibrium between them. Historical novelists and their critics recognized this problem at the very beginning, as the history of the historical novel demonstrates. The historical novelist repeatedly faced the dilemma of imbalance between historical grounding and artistic purpose, which so depressed Manzoni.

Ricoeur argues that history's strength lies specifically in its resemblance to literature. History and literature both portray human experience and seek to throw light on the problem of being human in society through the course of

⁴² Jörn Rügen, *Narration, Interpretation, Orientation* (New York 2005; Oxford 2006), p. 12.

⁴³ Rügen, *Narration, Interpretation, Orientation*, pp. 44–5. Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio. A Study in the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge 1984), pp. 10, 24.

⁴⁴ Rügen, *Narration, Interpretation, Orientation*, pp. 45–6.

time, regardless of whether the one derives its nature from imagination and the other from a study of facts. With regard to their mode of narrative, Ricoeur stresses that history and fiction borrow from one another.

I now prefer to talk of an interwoven refiguration to speak of the conjoint effects of history and fiction on the plane of human acting and suffering... These borrowings will lie in the fact that historical intentionality becomes effective by incorporating into its intended object the resources of fictionalization stemming from the narrative form of imagination, while the intentionality of fiction produces its effects of detecting and transforming acting and suffering only by symmetrically assuming the resources of historicism presented it by attempts to reconstruct the actual past. From these intimate exchanges between the historicization of fictional narrative and the fictionalization of the historical narrative is born what we call human time, which is nothing other than narrated time.⁴⁵

This statement marks, in reality, a type of balance drawn in the arguments over the nature of historical and fictional narrative. It reconciles the integrity of both disciplines and, while drawing attention to their profound mutual influence, establishes the distinction between them. Although Ricoeur, like White before him, does not identify the historical novel as a specific subject for study, his synthesis highlights the delicate path which this form of fiction treads between fact and imagination.

Both history as 'fact' and history as 'fiction' are writing about a past which is no longer a contemporary reality. The dead past cannot now be perceived as it actually was by those who lived in it. Men and women who lived in the past, however, left behind evidence of their existence—their 'traces', as Ricoeur describes it—though not necessarily in coherent or immediately decipherable form.⁴⁶ These materials become sources for both the historian and the historical novelist, although each may draw from different roots. Nevertheless, the present in which both the historian and the historical novelist live exercises its influence over the choices made—over the choice of data, period, and focus. What distinguishes historians from one another is the content provided for this form—the 'content of the form', as White expressed it.⁴⁷ Even so, that will not be the end of the matter, since the multiplicity of historians working from differing perspectives, in different traditions, and with often contradictory purposes, prevents the establishment of one absolute and incontrovertible interpretation. While political or religious systems might favour such a monolith, the capacity for questioning ingrained in the historical method as it evolved since the late Enlightenment works against that.

Despite the 'interweaving', to borrow Ricoeur's term, of history and fiction through common origins and a common use of narrative, fact and fiction are not the same thing.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, I, p. 226; III, pp. 100–2.

⁴⁶ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, III, pp. 185–91.

⁴⁷ White, *The Content of the Form*, pp. ix, 169, 180: the central problem is 'the relation between narrative discourse and historical representation'.

⁴⁸ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, III, pp. 116–26: archives, documents, eyewitness testimonies, and so on.

On the other hand, they are so close that we might still bring them closer together. They cannot be kept singlemindedly apart. It was precisely the proximity which had so alarmed Manzoni in 1850. He was preoccupied with what he saw as the issue of balance between fact and fiction, history and imagination. Although separation had been the trend throughout much of the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth century, the question of balance in historical fiction was misleading. Perhaps his preoccupation with it explains his disillusionment with the whole sub-genre. However, the essence of the problem with the historical novel was not that of the balance between fact and invention. This lay in the profounder issue of the historical novel's capacity for portraying through the medium of narrative reality or truth, understood in the sense of how humans behave in society through time. In many respects, this is the overriding purpose of both history and literature, although one is fact and other is fiction. Their common pursuit does not deny their methodological differences. History and fiction share conventions, contexts, and techniques, each incorporating elements of the other. The historical novel, to follow Linda Hutcheon's reasoning, is an uncertain category, since it is neither solely history nor solely fiction, but both.⁴⁹ It cannot be assessed simply in terms of the component elements of each which constitute it: what is fact and what is fiction, or how much of each? We can only assess it in terms of the final product: how it understands reality, how it relates past and present, and how it contributes to the elucidation of truths, contradictory though these may be.

⁴⁹ Linda Hutcheon, 'Historiographical Metafiction', in McKeon (ed.), *Theory of the Novel*, pp. 836–9, 844–5.

3

The German *Sturm und Drang*, historical drama, and early romantic fiction

Götz von Berlichingen [1773]—the first play by Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832), which the young Walter Scott translated into English in 1799—fired the opening shot in this new literary movement. Thomas Carlyle, writing in 1839, conceded that this play may have influenced Scott’s lays of the Scottish Borders, on which his early fame rested, but would not commit himself further.

How far *Götz von Berlichingen* actually influenced Scott’s literary destination, and whether without it the rhymed romances, and then the prose romances of the Author of *Waverley*, would not have followed as they did, must remain a very obscure question, obscure and not important.¹

Even if the German dramatists did not directly point the way to the historical novel, they certainly created receptivity across Europe for the type of themes, which the latter genre would develop. For the half century after *Götz*, historical drama continued to be written by leading authors, several of whom, such as Manzoni, Hugo, and Mariano José de Larra, also wrote historical novels, or like Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811), a novella. Discussion at the time focused on whether the portrayal of history in fiction would be better placed in drama or the novel. It would not seem to be the case that they were perceived as rival media; simply that the decision between the two required time. Inevitably, Scott’s influence in continental Europe, favouring the latter, would be profound. The theme of national identity—whether its preservation, as in the case of Scott’s view of Scotland, or its transformation into the political status of nation-state, which I shall discuss in the following chapter—is evident as much in historical drama as in the historical novel. These

¹ Thomas Carlyle, ‘Sir Walter Scott’, in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays: Collected and Republished*, 7 vols. (London 1888 [1839; 1869]), vol. 7, pp. 21–80, see pp. 45, 53–4. Goethe’s first novel, *Die Leidenschaft des jungen Werthers* [*The Sorrows of the Young Werther*, 1774] had a powerful impact and shaped Romantic tastes for the tragic hero. Roy Pascal, *The German Sturm und Drang* (Manchester 1953), pp. 87–132, 217, 302, 307, on the early influence of Pietism, then humanism, and on understanding reality from the inner man. F. J. Lampert, *German Classical Drama. Theatre, Humanity and Nation, 1780–1870* (Cambridge 1998), p. 44, states that ‘it was partly through reading “Götz von Berlichingen”’ (which he translated into English) that Scott was moved to explore the changing face of Scottish society’. Madame de Staël, *De l’Allemagne* (Paris 1968 [1813]), pp. 173–380, belatedly introduced the German poets and dramatists to the French, commenting on national differences (pp. 253–4) and on *Götz* in particular (pp. 322–4).

themes, magnified by the influence of Romanticism, as we shall see, would become predominant in the historical fictions of countries deeply influenced by Scott.

Lukács described this phase of historical theatre in his study of the historical novel as the 'second wave of historical drama'—the first being led by William Shakespeare. In terms of historical timing, Lukács saw this second phase as a product of the German Enlightenment, and considered it to be a reflection of the 'socio-historical conditions of the time', setting it within his historical scheme. Lukács portrayed this new flowering of drama as a reflection of the crisis of the *ancien régime* and the outbreak and course of the French Revolution. He argued:

As a result of the inner dialectics of this crisis, this drama is more markedly and more consciously historical than Shakespeare's. The factors which it reveals of the historical reality of a period are not simply those which are inseparably linked with the human-moral features of the characters and are wholly absorbed by them, they are also the very concrete social-historical features of a particular phase of development.²

Lukács, in fact, considered historical drama to have been more an anticipation of Scott's novels than a continuation of the tradition of Shakespeare. Even so, the historical novel had already made its appearance in Germany. The term 'historische Roman' had first appeared in a German-language book title in 1794. The Innsbruck Database, which went for quantity rather than quality, showed a total of 6,300 published historical novels in the German territories in the wider period from 1780 to 1945, with a preliminary period from 1780 to 1810, a first peak in the 1820s and 1830s, and a further peak from 1875 to 1913.³

Historical theatre brought to the stage the overriding problem of integrating historical characters with the dramatic requirements of a work of imagination, as the historical novel would also demonstrate. As we shall discover, this often meant readjusting the known history for artistic purposes. In *Egmont* [1775–87], for instance, Goethe transformed the eponymous Dutch nobleman and enemy of tyranny from a middle-aged married man with many children into a young bachelor. The objective was increased audience sympathy and greater harmony with the libertarian spirit of the time of writing. While this transformation did suggest that history by itself was not enough, the ulterior purpose was to convey an essential truth to the audience or reader through the medium of dramatic art. Yet it was still a play about Egmont and his time. In this respect, dramatic requirements were altogether different from outright falsification.⁴

² Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (London 1891 (1962) [Moscow 1937]), pp. 183–5; Lampert, *German Classical Drama*, p. 159; A. W. Schlegel (1767–1853) translated seventeen of Shakespeare's plays between 1797 and 1810, later revised under Ludwig Tieck's direction in 1825–33.

³ Lukács, *Historical Novel*, pp. 72–7. See Günter Mühlberger and Kurt Habitzel, 'The German Historical Novel from 1780 to 1945: Utilising the Innsbruck Database', in Osman Durrani and Julian Preece (eds), *Travellers in Time and Space. The German Historical Novel* (Amsterdam and New York 2001), pp. 5–23; pp. 6–10, 15–16, 18. There were two damning attacks on the historical novel in 1835 and 1847.

⁴ Herbert Lindenberger, *Historical Drama: the Relation of Literature and Reality* (Chicago 1975), pp. x, 2–3.

GERMAN HISTORICAL DRAMA

From the 1770s, *Sturm und Drang* marked a reaction to the enduring influence of French Neo-Classicism, with its formalism, insistence on the unities of time and place established in Greek Classical drama, and exclusion of vulgar dialogue and violence from the staging. Despite this French cultural influence in Germany, both English and Spanish drama—particularly Shakespeare and Calderón—also exercised a powerful hold. Late eighteenth-century dramatists, with Goethe in the forefront, were anxious to bring Shakespearian robustness—combining not only comedy and tragedy in a single play but also characters from all social stations, and at the same time allowing for violence on the stage—into the German theatre. But another problem lay behind that goal. This continued to be the absence of a German national theatre, since all theatres, whether or not called ‘national’, were built within the territories of the multiplicity of particular states across the German-speaking territories, which included Vienna, capital of the Habsburg Empire. The Weimar Opera House, founded in 1696, doubled as the Duchy’s principal theatre. Goethe arrived in the city when he was aged 26. The Mannheim theatre, where Schiller worked early in his career, was founded by the Elector Palatine in 1778. Both playwrights sought to apply their new ideas for the theatre in such provincial milieux.⁵

‘*Götz von Berlichingen*’ marked out Goethe, in his youth, as the leading figure in the *Sturm und Drang* movement, with which the younger Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) was also associated. The ‘Storm and Stress’ represented a prelude to European Romanticism, and it liberated German drama from the conventions of Neo-Classicism. Although both Goethe and Schiller soon moved back in the direction of Classical modes of drama, the influence of *Sturm und Drang* remained in their work and in that of other dramatists for much of the nineteenth century. Lampert’s comment illuminates the historical context:

... it is not surprising that this new movement should thus break out in backward, disunited, frustrated Germany, for it was a movement born of frustration: born of a generation of young men’s passionate desire for self-expression, and of their often angry impatience with the existing norms—literary, cultural, social and even, at least implicitly, political—which seemed to exist only to deny them what they desired.⁶

Goethe’s play *Götz von Berlichingen* rediscovered German history on the Shakespearean model. It violated all the Neo-Classical usages, and had contrasting social groups speaking in their own style, in prose not in verse, including songs, violent action on the stage, and coarse language. The story, set in the first half of the sixteenth century, focused on a well-loved popular hero, feared by the princes, who

⁵ Lesley Sharpe, *Schiller and the Historical Character. Presentation and Interpretation in the Historiographical Works and in the Historical Dramas* (Oxford 1982). Lampert, *German Classical Drama*, pp. 4–5, 7, 11–12, 28–9, 37, 87–8.

⁶ Lampert, *German Classical Drama*, pp. 33, 64.

fought for freedom and died in prison. The treatment of the historical theme provided the new departure, as Lampert sees it, because Goethe sought to dramatize the process of historical change, thereby making history a theme in its own right, as Eliot would later seek to do in *Romola*. The epoch-making nature of this play lay in its early presentation of the Romantic understanding of history as the struggle for liberty. This would reach its maximum expression in Michelet's history of the French Revolution. Goethe, like many other German writers of the time, was preoccupied with the idea that Germany once had liberties, which were later lost. A major problem consisted of when and how they were lost and how to recover them or assert new ones.⁷

Inevitably, disunity came to the forefront in any German presentation of history. The background of *Götz* was the exercise of imperial power by the Austrian Habsburgs, the German Reformation, and the Peasants' War. No united German state resulted from these earlier conflicts, which the outcome of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48)—the subject of Schiller's trilogy about Wallenstein—emphasized all the more. As Goethe had done in *Götz*, Schiller also employed the medium of drama for the purpose of giving life to the vanished historical past. The objective would be to enable the audience to identify with the issues and understand the contemporary world in their light. This was also the overall purpose of the serious historical novelists who followed them.⁸

The curious but persistent association of fictional and theatrical representations of history with illegality, clandestine activities, and rebellion appeared right from the start. In this respect, historical *drama* preceded the historical novel in the phase opened by Scott in 1814. Schiller's historical theatre anticipated a number of Scott's fundamental themes. These themes helped make the 'Gothic novel' popular in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, although their bizarre plots often gave the novel a bad name. Gothic though they might be called, however, few took place in the Germanic territories.⁹

The roots of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century German theatre lay in the two different sources of Shakespeare and Racine, who both wrote historical plays. Schiller, influenced more immediately by the themes and popularity of Goethe's earlier drama, found in the theatre his first vocation. Unconsciously, he prepared the way for the historical novelists' theme of the disinherited nobleman, cheated of his birthright and obliged to live with robber bands in forests. *Die Räuber* [*The Robbers*], his first play, premiered in Mannheim in 1782, with great success. By Act II, the central character, wrongfully exiled, has taken refuge with a robber band in the Bohemian Forest. Men of violence and

⁷ Lampert, *German Classical Drama*, pp. 39–42.

⁸ Sharpe, *Schiller and Historical Character*, pp. 5–6. Lampert, *German Classical Drama*, p. 42.

⁹ Charles E. Passage, *Friedrich Schiller* (New York, Frederick Ungar Publ. Co., 1995), pp. 33–9. For Schiller's aesthetic theory (with reference to the years 1794–5), see Leonard P. Wessell, Jr, 'Schiller and the Genesis of German Romanticism,' *Studies in Romanticism*, 10 (1971), pp. 176–98. Séan Allen, *The Stories of Heinrich von Kleist* (Rochester, NY, and Woodbridge, 2001), p. 34, draws attention to Kleist's repugnance for the popular and chivalric novels popular in Germany from the mid-eighteenth century.

passion rise to prominence in the play, and the forest motif becomes established and will provide a characteristic element in all forms of German Romanticism throughout the nineteenth century, whether beneficent or malignant.¹⁰

Don Carlos, dealing with the tension between Prince Carlos and his father, Philip II of Spain, was begun in 1783, finished in 1787, and given the definitive text in 1805. Schiller radically altered the personality of Don Carlos from the historical reality. The real Don Carlos was subnormal, ugly, and sadistic, whereas Schiller's figure is portrayed as a romantic hero in love with the queen and committed to political justice. Schiller transforms him into an heroic defender of liberty in opposition to the Duke of Alba, about to engage in the repression of the Netherlands Revolt in 1568.¹¹ The king's son falls under the benign influence of the Marquis of Posa—a fictional character and critic of Philip's policies and methods, and principal voice for the humanist sentiment which would have appealed to late eighteenth-century audiences. In their friendship lay the hope for a new dawn. Posa enjoins Philip II to adopt a new policy, thereby making himself loved and not feared:

Come back to your people—give us back our hope. A single word of yours could set the world upon its proper course. Give men the freedom to think and speak—unchain their tongues and they'll use them to rejoice. A million voices praying for their king's happiness. Isn't it better than grudging praise enforced by terror?

Although liberty is defeated in the play by tyranny and religious intolerance, Posa's vision wins the sympathies of the audience.¹²

The presentation of injustice and tyranny and the ideal of freedom in *Die Räuber* and *Don Carlos* had profound repercussions inside and outside the German territories. Between 1782 and 1792, for instance, these two plays were first performed in St Petersburg, Riga, and Moscow. Schiller would become idolized by the younger generation of Russian literary figures and critics, particularly at the University of Moscow from the late 1820s, as the influence of German Romanticism and philosophy spread among them. Literary discussion quickly led to the critique of autocracy, censorship, and police intervention. Russian writers, who looked to liberation and the brotherhood of man, from N. V. Stankevich to Fyodor

¹⁰ Friedrich Schiller, *Die Räuber*, translated by F. J. Lampert (London 1979). Judith Wilt, *Secret Leaves. The Novels of Sir Walter Scott*, pp. 37–9, 57.

¹¹ The main source was probably the Abbé de Saint-Réal's study, first published in Amsterdam in 1672, which portrayed Don Carlos as a sympathetic, passionate, and misunderstood figure trapped in a Court full of intrigue and ambition at the time of the Netherlands Revolt. This work, read by Schiller in 1792, was not exactly history and not entirely fiction, but somewhere between the two. *Oeuvres de Mr L'Abbé de Saint-Réal, Nouvelle Édition. Revue et augmentée*, 3 tomes in 4 vols. (The Hague 1726), tome II, pp. 319–412.

¹² Schiller, *Don Carlos* [new version by Mike Poulton (London 2005)], p. 79, Act 3, Scene 11. Deric Regin, *Freedom and Dignity. The Historical and Philosophical Thought of Schiller* (The Hague 1965), p. 40. Sharpe, *Schiller and Historical Character*, pp. 13–18, 22, 29. See also Mario Hamlet-Metz, 'The Full Circle: D. Carlos of Spain in History, Schiller, and Verdi', in Alexej Ugrinsky (ed.), *Friedrich von Schiller and the Drama of Human Existence* (New York 1988), pp. 29–35. Verdi's opera, first performed in 1867, shared Schiller's humanist ideal and transposed the Netherlands' question to nineteenth-century Italy.

Dostoyevsky and Maxim Gorki, ranked Schiller with Shakespeare, Goethe, and Pushkin as their mentors.¹³

Schiller's technical difficulties in writing *Don Carlos* led him back to the historical sources as the means of understanding the context he had chosen. His second vocation as a writer and teacher of history began with the Dutch Revolt of 1568. Carlyle argues that Schiller was 'growing tired of fictitious writing'. Imagination and intellect were complementary in him, though nonetheless the one vying for supremacy over the other at different times in his life.

Even when revelling, with unworn ardour, in the dreamt scenes of the imagination, he had often cast a longing look, and sometimes made a hurried inroad, into the calmer provinces of reason. The tendency of his mind was gradually changing; he was about to enter on a new field of enterprise, where new triumphs awaited him . . . at length, he began to think of History . . . As recording the past transactions, and indicating the prospects of nations, it could not fail to delight for one whom not only human nature was a matter of most fascinating speculation, but who looked on all mankind with the sentiment of a brother . . .¹⁴

Schiller dedicated five years of his life to history, from 1787 until 1791. In 1788 he published the first volume of *History of the Revolt of the United Netherlands*—a work which he would never complete, but which secured for him, in part through Goethe's influence, the Professorship in History at the University of Jena in the following year. This work appeared the year after Goethe's play *Egmont*, which further pursued the theme of loss of liberty, rebellion against tyranny, and the death of the champion of freedom on the scaffold. Coming shortly after *Don Carlos*, Goethe's play also focused on the destructive nature of tyranny in the persons of Philip II and the Duke of Alba—this time in the Spanish Netherlands, where it would provoke a long-lasting revolt. Schiller placed at the centre of his argument the desire for political freedom, which he saw related to the Protestant cause, and the need for enlightened government. He presented the Netherlands' struggle against Philip II of Spain as an example for his contemporaries to follow.¹⁵

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 affected both Goethe and Schiller, who initially saw it as a dawning of liberty in France, with possible European repercussions. However, the course taken by the Revolution—its descent into violence and barbarity—soon disillusioned many early sympathizers. The outbreak of war coincided with Schiller's completion of his study of the seventeenth-century conflict which had had such a destructive impact on Germany. Schiller published his *Geschichte des Dreissigjährigen Krieges* [*History of the Thirty Years' War, 1618–48*] in 1793–5, as another European war, which would

¹³ Edmund K. Kostka, *Schiller in Russian Literature* (Philadelphia 1965), pp. 13, 24–7, 49–2, 81–2, 137–46, 206, 214–21, 234, 284–5. Stankevich was skilled in the German language (better than French), and visited the country in 1837–8.

¹⁴ Thomas Carlyle, *The Life of Friedrich Schiller, comprehending an Examination of his Works* (London, second edition 1845 [1825]), p. 74. Sharpe, *Schiller and Historical Character*, pp. 40, 41–57.

¹⁵ Sharpe, *Schiller and Historical Character*, pp. 34, 44–5. Lamport, *German Classical Drama*, pp. 44–7. Schiller adapted *Egmont* (with alterations disliked by Goethe) for the Weimar stage in 1796. Beethoven wrote the *Egmont Overture* for the play in 1810.

continue until 1815, renewed the threat of large-scale destruction. Competing ideologies disguised political rivalries and ambitions, just as religious alignments had done so during the Thirty Years' War. Schiller's *Wallenstein* trilogy would elaborate on this theme, once he had returned to writing for the theatre. On completing the first part of this *History* in 1794, Schiller turned his attention, both as historian and dramatist, specifically to the problem of how to interpret Wallenstein's ambivalent conduct towards the Habsburg Emperor. The playwright composed half of the draft for *Wallenstein* in prose, because of the complex data he had accumulated, before finally turning it into verse.¹⁶

The experience of writing on the Thirty Years' War during the turbulent 1790s transformed Schiller's view of the nature of history in a dramatic work. Abandoning the freedom he had exercised in *Don Carlos*, he adhered more closely to the facts, as he had been discovering then as an historian. Nevertheless, he gave these events an interpretation which coincided with his belief that the course of history had a meaning, which consisted of the drive towards liberty and the bettering of the human condition. As in the case of his study of the Netherlands' Revolt, he saw the Protestant Reformation as part of this liberating process. Both Schiller's history and his drama confronted the indecipherable question of what Wallenstein's real aims were in 1634, the year of his assassination. The drama focuses on the great commander's fatal wavering, which opens him to the charge of treason.¹⁷

As we shall see later in Pushkin's case in the Russia of the mid-1830s, dramatists or novelists writing as historians tend to present their characters in a different light in these distinct media. Schiller's fictional Philip II is a good deal more ambiguous than the tyrant of the historical work. In *Wallenstein*, Schiller's play gives more attention to his central character's astrological readings than in his *History*. The explanation lay in the distinct requirements and expectations of history and drama or the novel. At the same time, these media were interrelated, as both Schiller and Pushkin realized. The former needed to resolve the problem of relating character to action, and came to reject the notion of predetermined character. The latter sought to relate character to events, and, focusing on the individual psyche, saw accident as a frequent determinant in their outcome. Schiller's drama forms part of his moral goal of reforming society, whereas Pushkin places the emphasis on local and specifically Russian issues.¹⁸

In writing and imagining history, Schiller rediscovered his vocation for historical drama. The work on the Thirty Years' War led him first to the character of Gustavus Adolphus, the Protestant King of Sweden killed at the Battle of Lützen

¹⁶ Kostka, *Schiller in Russian Literature*, pp. 284–5, points out Gorki's comparison in 1915 of Pushkin's historical study of the Pugachev Rebellion with Schiller's history of the Thirty Years' War—two authors who drew fiction out of history. Sharpe, *Schiller and Historical Character*, pp. 57–9. Lampert, *German Classical Drama*, pp. 98–9.

¹⁷ Elfriede A. Heyer, 'The Genesis of *Wallenstein*: From History to Drama', in Ugrinsky, *Schiller and the Drama*, pp. 71–88. Carlyle, *The Life of Friedrich Schiller*, p. 102.

¹⁸ Caryl Emerson, *Boris Godunov. Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (Bloomington 1986), pp. 89, 92. Sharpe, *Schiller and Historical Character*, pp. 49, 67–8. See also Ervin C. Brody, 'Schiller's Idealism and Pushkin's Realism: Two Aspects of Early Nineteenth-Century Historical Drama', in Ugrinsky, *Schiller and the Drama*, pp. 21–7. This essay compares Schiller's unfinished Russian tragedy of 1804, *Demetrius* (the false Dmitri), and Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* of 1824.

in 1632, but more especially to the complex personality of Wallenstein, the Imperial champion in the Danish and early Swedish phases of the war in Germany. Schiller had begun as an historian by examining the great conflicts of northern and central European history in the last phases of the Reformation, from 1568 to 1648. These conflicts had torn Europe apart, and definitively altered the power structure away from the Habsburgs of Spain and Austria. He studied those momentous events at precisely the time that *ancien régime* France was disintegrating and the royal government was being swept aside. A champion of liberty and the brotherhood of man, Schiller did not see either of these ideals represented in the chaos, bloodshed, and revolutionary tyranny in France after 1792. It might be tempting to think that Schiller had turned from drama to history under the impact of those events in Western Europe. However, the likelihood is that he moved from the one to the other and then back again in response to the requirements of his own intellectual development, without ever having truly left either one of them. This is not to argue that Schiller wrote in isolation from general events, but is to set his historical and dramatic priorities within the context of his own and his colleagues' perception of the Central Europe in which they lived.¹⁹

Goethe and Schiller lived at the crossroads of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, although neither was indisputably associated with the latter. The eighteenth-century British and French historians, Gibbon, Voltaire, Hume, and Robertson, greatly influenced Schiller's conception of history, but, at the same time, he drew from the German Enlightenment—notably Immanuel Kant—and from the new interpretations argued by J. G. Herder, who pointed the way to the historiography of the Romantic movement. In Carlyle's view, five years of writing history considerably affected Schiller's intellectual development.

History had furnished him with pictures of manners and events, of strange conjunctions and conditions of existence; it had given him more minute and truer conceptions of human nature in its many forms, new and more accurate opinions in the character and end of man. The domain of his mind was both enlarged and enlightened; a multitude of images and detailed facts and perceptions had been laid upon his memory; and his intellect was at once enriched by acquired thoughts and strengthened by increased exercise on a wider scale of knowledge.²⁰

Art, however, triumphed over historical research, and Schiller embarked upon the third phase of his career: the return to historical drama. The *History of the Thirty Years' War* formed the background for the Wallenstein dramatic trilogy.

For seven years, from 1792 until final publication in 1799, Schiller worked on the trilogy dedicated to the fall of Albrecht von Wallenstein. Shabbily murdered in 1634, with the complicity of the Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand II, Wallenstein rose through military skill to become principal commander in the Imperial and

¹⁹ Sharpe, *Schiller and Historical Character*, pp. 58, 61–4, 72: Schiller's history 'was a training ground in the examination of how human personality interacts with the world outside itself and how human activity is part of a complex causal chain'. He focuses on great figures such as Gustavus Adolphus and Wallenstein, but sees them as emerging from their circumstances.

²⁰ Regin, *Freedom and Dignity*, pp. 60–3. Carlyle, *The Life of Friedrich Schiller*, p. 91.

Catholic cause in the Thirty Years' War. He came from a long-established German-speaking Bohemian noble family and, in the form of a Central-European *condottiere*, hired himself and his 40,000–50,000 armed men to assist the Catholic Emperor in beating back the Protestant armies. His great estates in Bohemia and elsewhere made him an independent power, which military victories further enhanced. The Emperor suspected his loyalty, believing him, as Schiller has it, to be intriguing with the Protestants—notably the Swedish army commanders—contemplating a solution to the war founded upon religious tolerance, and aspiring to set himself up as independent ruler of Bohemia. On his important discussion of the play, Steffan Davies stresses Wallenstein's ambiguity both as an historical figure and as the subject of a drama. He argues that Schiller's *Wallenstein* 'operates not only in the grey area between literature and the historical record, but also in the complex nexus of art and contemporary reality'. The drama gave rise to further plays, several historical novels, and interpretive studies, many of which disagreed on Wallenstein's motives and objectives.²¹

The first play is a relatively short introduction to Wallenstein from the perspective of his ordinary followers, preparing the audience for the mystique of the great commander, and hinting at the factions forming around and against him. The next two plays are five-act dramas. The second play focuses on the conflict between the elder and younger Piccolomini over the matter of Wallenstein's true loyalties, in which the father, Lieutenant-General Octavio Piccolomini, an historical figure, takes the Emperor's side in opposition to Max, his son, who is a fictitious character in love with Wallenstein's daughter, Thekla. The Imperial emissary, Von Questenberg, challenges Wallenstein to submit to the Emperor, which he cannot do without compromising his own position. As a result, his principal officers, at first feeling bound to their commander, are torn between their oath to the Emperor and their loyalty to Wallenstein.

Wallenstein: I took command upon my own conditions;
 The first of them was that no mortal soul,
 No, not even the Emperor himself, should have
 A voice but I in what concerns the army.
 If I am to answer with my head
 And honour for the outcome, then I must
 Be master absolute. What was it made
 Gustavus seem invincible on earth?
 Why this: that in his army he was king!
 A king, I tell you, though this *is* a king
 Who was never beaten yet by his equal.
 Say on, though. Is the best but yet to come?²²

²¹ See the English translation of the three plays, *Wallenstein's Camp*, *The Piccolomini*, and *Wallenstein's Death*, by F. J. Lampert (London 1979). The play was performed in a shortened English version, omitting virtually all the first play, by Mike Poulton (London 2009) at the Chichester Theatre in June 2009. See also Lesley Sharpe, *Friedrich Schiller. Drama, Thought and Politics* (Cambridge 1991), pp. 217–50, and Steffan Davies, *The Wallenstein Figure in German Literature and Historiography, 1790–1920* (Leeds and London 2010), pp. 26–57: p. 44.

²² Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, pp. 262–3, Act 2, Scene 7.

Schiller presents a complex intrigue, conceived in Vienna, to bring down Wallenstein by trying to make it seem as though he refuses the Emperor's command to engage with the enemy.

Wallenstein was Schiller's historical play on a German theme. It touches many of the sensitive issues, most of all continued disunity, extending into the contemporary era of the French Revolution.²³ At the same time, *Wallenstein* deepened Schiller's study of power, already apparent in *Don Carlos*. Wallenstein succumbs to ambition, lust for power, and self-deception, and is brought down by jealousy, suspicion, and resentment. He is a highly ambiguous figure in Central-European history, whose conduct threatened the entire Imperial order, with its hierarchy of obedience and loyalties. It was a test of the dramatist's ability to have him win audience sympathies. Although little known in the English-speaking world, *Wallenstein* is Schiller's greatest drama—one deeply permeated with an historical sense. Lindenberger comments:

If Schiller is the greatest narrative historian among the major tragic dramatists, in his historical writings as much as his dramas he has succeeded in making the union of history and tragedy seem complete.²⁴

More lies within the three plays than the historical plot. Schiller conceived the trilogy as an allegory fixing on the conflicting principles of rulership and freedom, nature and convention. Furthermore, he sought to interweave his modern drama with the poetics of the Ancient Greeks—specifically Homer's *Iliad* and Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, which dealt with the period immediately before the siege of Troy began. In this sense, the Thirty Years' War became the modern parallel for Germany and Central Europe to the ten-year war between the Greeks and the Trojans. This parallel enabled Schiller to contrast modern and ancient drama and theory. He did not intend, however, to model his contemporary theatre on Greek models, but to use shifting parallels between his characters and those of the ancients to create an underlying symbolism, which would heighten the meaning of the former. He was not an imitator of the Greeks, but was deeply concerned to highlight the modern individuality and self-consciousness of his characters. This type of symbolism would later be attempted by Eliot in an historical novel in which there are profound Classical resonances.²⁵

²³ Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, [Lampert tr.] pp. 326–7, Act 1, Scene 3; p. 398, Act 3, Scene 15, 'Wallenstein: I have a heart which suffers with the pains of Germany'; pp. 400–5, Act 3, Scene 18. Thomas Mann and his wife attended a performance of *Wallenstein's Camp* and *The Piccolomini* in Zurich on 25 November 1937. The novelist commented: 'What brilliant historical sense!' Thomas Mann, *Diaries, 1918–1939* (London 1984 [1983] [Frankfurt 1977]), p. 284. His son Golo Mann's *Wallenstein* was published in Frankfurt in 1971, and in English translation in London in 1976.

²⁴ See Gordon A. Craig, 'Friedrich Schiller and the Problem of Power', in Leonard Krieger and Fritz Stern (eds), *The Responsibility of Power: Historical Essays in Honor of Hajo Holborn* (New York 1967), pp. 125–44; pp. 129–32, 138–9. Lindenberger, *Historical Drama*, p. 78. Sharpe, *Schiller: Drama*, p. 230, highlights the dilemma of Max Piccolomini, caught between his two 'fathers' Octavio and Wallenstein, both of whom underestimate him.

²⁵ Gisela N. Berns, *Greek Antiquity in Schiller's Wallenstein* (Chapel Hill and London 1985), pp. 13–16, 19, 24, 26, 30, 46–7, 56–7, 97–8. Sharpe, *Schiller: Drama*, pp. 248–9, states that Wilhelm von Humboldt, the great Prussian philosopher and educational reformer, regarded the

The question of the relationship between poetics and history, between poetical and historical truth, preoccupied Schiller and other figures of the *Sturm und Drang*. The Prologue to the Wallenstein trilogy discoursed on that very issue. Schiller linked together three distinct historical and cultural epochs: the present day (1798), the 1630s, and the Classical world. Eliot, incidentally, would attempt to do likewise, although not necessarily under Schiller's influence, by linking mid-nineteenth-century Britain to late fifteenth-century Florence, and beyond that to the world of Classical mythology.

The Prologue explains that Wallenstein himself will not appear in the first play, set among the soldiery of his camp. This play starts off the trilogy, then, with a modern innovation, among the lower-class riff-raff of an army camp, speaking in their ordinary language. To contemporaries living at the time of the French Revolutionary Wars such scenes might not be unfamiliar; and to Classicists it would recall the Greeks outside the walls of Troy. In the following two plays, however, the Classical resonance deepens. During the late 1790s, Goethe and Schiller were discussing Homer and Greek tragedy. The *Iliad* had been recently translated into German, and Schiller himself translated *Iphigenia in Aulis* in 1788. With his family and circle of friends he used to read Homer and tragedy every evening. The conflicts and personalities therein reappeared in the Wallenstein trilogy in the form of the modern-day action. The struggle between Wallenstein and the Emperor, for instance, recalled the hostility between Achilles and the overall commander of the Greeks, Agamemnon, while the love between Thekla and Max recalled that of the Trojans, Hector and Andromache. In such a way, Schiller the poet invested his historical sources with symbolic significance.²⁶

These plays, and others, such as *Maria Stuart* in 1800, focused largely on historical figures, although dramatic necessities often led to distortions and inventions. Mary Stuart, for example, never encountered Elizabeth of England in person as she does in the play. The confrontation in Fotheringay Park marks the first climax and reveals the depth of antagonism—political, religious, and personal—between the two women of different temperament. The encounter begins with Elizabeth asserting her supremacy over Mary, the fallen Queen of Scots and her prisoner in an English castle, but ends with the furious Tudor Queen humiliated in front of the Earl of Leicester, her admirer.

Mary (glowering with rage, yet with noble dignity):
 My sins were human failings,
 And I was young and power had confused me.
 But I have not denied them, I refused
 To hide the truth, I let the worst be known,
 So that I can say that what is said of me
 Is worse than what I am. But history
 Will not be kind to you when it tears down
 The finely decorated drapery

'Wallenstein' trilogy as on a par with Aeschylus' 'Oresteia' trilogy, with the common theme of retributive justice.

²⁶ Schiller, 'Prologue', pp. 165–9; see pp. 166–9. Berns, *Greek Antiquity*, pp. 5–8, 22, 26–7, 58, 60, 85, 97.

That veils your passions. You did not inherit
Much virtue from your mother. We all know
For what crime Anne Boleyn was killed.

The reference to Anne Boleyn was damning in personal and political terms. It threw into question Elizabeth's right to the English throne, and enabled Mary to demand that she should submit to her as legitimate Queen of England as well as Scotland. This encounter hastens Mary's execution. The dramatist has employed here a fictitious distortion of history not only to heighten dramatic tension but also to identify his themes of compassion and clemency vitiated by political calculation. This is to say that he sought by doing so to convey a different dimension of truth.²⁷

The requirements of drama again took, as in *Don Carlos*, precedence over historical accuracy. Artistic license was easier to justify in drama than in the historical novel, where the context had to be more specific and the contemporaneous developments in history required that it should be so.

Kleist's plays, written between 1803 and 1811, were never performed in Germany during his lifetime and took a long time to gain entry into the repertoire. The two most well-known, *Die Hermannschlacht* [*The Battle of Hermann*], dealing with the defeat of the Romans in 9 AD, and *Der Prinz von Homburg*, set at the time of the Great Elector's defeat of the Swedes in 1685, although not published until 1821, were written under the shadow of Prussia's defeat and occupation by the French. This topic, as we shall discuss subsequently, preoccupied Fontane's novel *Before the Storm*. The Prussian patriotism, which Kleist hoped to stimulate, represented a local form of 'national awakening, which Lindenberger also sees in Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*' [1831].²⁸

The influence of Goethe and Schiller continued into the nineteenth century. The poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge—who, with William Wordsworth, might be considered the co-founder of English Romanticism—visited Germany for the first time in September 1798. He was initially accompanied by the Wordsworths, but then went alone to Göttingen, where he became deeply impressed by Kant, Schiller, Schelling, and A. W. Schlegel, and transported the ideas of German Romanticism to England. There he translated a section of *Wallenstein* in 1800.²⁹ Eliot read Goethe and Schiller—the latter first in English translations by Carlyle—and then read *Maria Stuart* in the original German. In 1854 she visited Weimar in

²⁷ Schiller, *Mary Stuart* [new version by Peter Oswald, London 2005], pp. 59–65, Act 3. The film, *Mary, Queen of Scots* [1972], with Vanessa Redgrave as Mary Stuart and Glenda Jackson as Elizabeth, interestingly adopts the Schiller approach by allowing for a direct confrontation between the two women.

²⁸ Lindenberger, *Historical Drama*, pp. 5–7. Lamport, *German Classical Drama*, pp. 158–80.

²⁹ Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought, 1800–1860* (London 1980), pp. 3–5, 13. Coleridge met Friedrich Schlegel on a subsequent visit in 1828. Wessell, 'Schiller and the Genesis of German Romanticism', pp. 176–98, argues that German Romanticism was born with F. Schlegel. These early visits anticipated those of Madame de Staél, learning German from 1800, who brought A. W. Schlegel back to Switzerland and France with her. Her companion (from 1794), Benjamin Constant, the novelist and political writer, was fluent in German. See Maria Fairweather, *Madame de Staél* (London 2005), pp. 193, 292, 297, 306, 331–6, 471.

the company of her partner G. H. Lewes—also a strong admirer of German literature—and collaborated with him in his *Life and Works of Goethe* [1855].³⁰

The historian, Leopold von Ranke, published his own *Geschichte Wallensteins* in 1869. Davies sees Ranke stepping into an on-going debate on the subject of the Thirty Years' War and Wallenstein's role in it, particularly between 1630 and 1634. The historian viewed Wallenstein within the broader historical framework, since his prime interest lay in the formation and development of states. Even so, he still found that throughout his works he had to balance personality and process. In Davies' view, 'both Schiller and Ranke are suggestive but ultimately open-minded about Wallenstein's espousal of the national cause'.³¹

THE EARLY ROMANTIC NOVEL

German Romanticism originated in the latter decades of the eighteenth century, passing through two generations, and ending as a literary movement by 1830. In music, it reached its climax between 1840 and 1900. The roots lay in Goethe, who disclaimed association with it and denounced the movement as sick. Nevertheless, *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* [*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 1793–5] would become the quintessential text for the Romantic writer, with its focus on a young individual's self-discovery and journey through the first stages of his life—his 'apprenticeship'. Significantly enough, Wilhelm Meister pursues a career in the theatre and starts his life there in love with an actress. During the course of the novel he plays the part of Hamlet—an indication of the great impact which Shakespeare has on him—and there is much discussion of this play in the text. Goethe had originally intended the novel, begun in an earlier form in the later 1770s, to be a type of picaresque journey through the problems of the theatre, but he had put the project aside, resuming it during the charged political atmosphere of the 1790s.³²

Neither Goethe nor Schiller had any special regard for the novel as a medium, preferring poetry and drama to it as higher art forms. Nevertheless, German readers had begun to acquire a taste for novels, for the most part under the influence of the

³⁰ Ashton, *German Idea*, pp. 147–68. John Rignall (ed.), *Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot* (Oxford 2000), pp. 205–6. The *Life* was very well received, sold over 1,000 copies in the first three months, and was frequently reprinted. Lewes and Eliot defended Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* against English critics of its morality in 1855.

³¹ Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichte Wallensteins* (Leipzig 1869). Davies, *The Wallenstein Figure*, pp. 145–51. For Ranke, see Chapter 6 of this present work. Golo Mann, *Wallenstein* (Spanish tr., Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Mexico 1978), pp. 859–83, discusses the aftermath of the murder, and its use in Swedish and Protestant propaganda. See also Eberhard Lämmert, 'Three Versions of Wallenstein. Differences of Meaning Production between Historiography, Biography, and Novel', in Jörg Rüsen (ed.), *Meaning and Representation in History* (New York and Oxford 2008 [2006]), pp. 223–38.

³² *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (New York 1962; translated by Thomas Carlyle, Edinburgh 1824), pp. 210–11, 234, 242, 277–81. See Georg Lukács, *Goethe and his Age* (London and New York 1968, [Budapest 1947]), pp. 50–62; Hans Reiss, *Goethe's Novels* (London and New York 1969), pp. 68–144; Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe. The Poet and the Age*: vol. 2, *Revolution and Renunciation (1790–1803)* (Oxford 2000), pp. 233–52, 335–45, 367–92.

eighteenth-century English novelists, since the number of novels published in Germany rose from twenty to nearly a hundred between 1740 and 1780. The novel seemed to be, as Goethe began his literary career, a new and rising form, and it is also discussed in *Wilhelm Meister*.

One evening a dispute arose among our friends about the novel and the drama, and which of them deserved the preference. Serlo said it was a fruitless and misunderstood debate; both might be superior in their kinds, only each must keep within the limits proper to it. 'About their limits and their kinds,' said Wilhelm, 'I confess myself not altogether clear.' They conversed together long upon the matter; and in fine, the following was nearly the result of their discussion. 'In the novel, as well as in the drama, it is human nature and human action that we see . . .' 'But in the novel, it is chiefly *sentiments* and *events* that are exhibited; in the drama, it is *characters* and *deeds*.'

The discussion elaborates on this, with the pace of the drama seen as swifter than that of the novel, which needs time to unfold. A range of English novels are then brought into the picture: Richardson's *Pamela* [1740] and *Clarissa* [1747–8], Fielding's *Tom Jones* [1749], and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* [1766]. In these, the central character controls the pace of the narrative, which focuses on their sentiments. By contrast, 'In the drama the hero models nothing by himself; all things withstand him, and he clears or casts away the hindrances in his path, or else sinks under them.' Even though this discussion occurs against the background of a production of *Hamlet*, we are given no authorial indication here of which of the two modes is preferable.³³

Goethe published only four novels in the half-century before 1829, when *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre* [*Journeys*] appeared. Each of them had a different style.

Goethe's novels are novels of the period; they not only depict his own time, but also the attempt of an individual to come to terms with it. For the treatment of such questions Goethe considered the novel most suitable.

Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship deals primarily with the inner man, but Goethe sets his hero within society, which he sees as continuously changing, as the individual seeks to adapt to this. The novel ends with marriages breaking social barriers between the aristocracy, still politically dominant, and the middle class, from which, as the son of a prosperous merchant, the hero comes.³⁴

The theme of the young man's self-discovery became linked through Novalis (1772–1801) to the Romantics' rediscovery of the medieval past and the mysteries of the Christian religion. The spiritual life neglected by the Enlightenment, the enchantments of nature, the secrets of the forest, and so on, would recur in fiction, poetry, and music. The Romantics' young 'heroes', however, discovered themselves rather than society and communed with nature without the necessary intervention of outside and on-going realities. Yearning and lack of fulfilment accompanied

³³ Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister*, pp. 288–9.

³⁴ Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister*, pp. 274–5, on Wilhelm's earlier discussion of his class predicament. Reiss, *Goethe's Novels*, pp. 3–5, 87, 113, 269, 272–4.

these wanderings through the realms of wonder and fantasy, in which the imagination played without restraint.³⁵

In many respects, Novalis, as much as Schiller, acted as a bridge from the Enlightenment to Romanticism. He sprang from the German Protestant tradition, the child of a Pietist family, studied law at the universities of Jena, Leipzig, and Wittenberg, and fell under the influence of the philosophy of Kant and J. G. Fichte. By 1798 he was in contact with Romantic circles in Dresden, and in 1799–1800 in Jena. Yet he had also trained as a mining engineer in Freiberg (Saxony) and practised his skills in Weissenfels, very much in the eighteenth-century tradition of applying scientific knowledge to the public good. Nevertheless, Novalis's prime interest lay in literature. He became a leading figure in the movement towards the re-examination of the Christian Middle Ages, arguing that, for all its justification, the Protestant Reformation had destroyed the unity of Christendom. He believed that the revival of the Catholic Church could restore this unity and open the way for a new world, once the French Revolutionary Wars had been brought to an end. Even so, Novalis was as much a nature mystic as a neo-Christian influenced by the earlier German mystics Eckhart and Tauler in the fourteenth century, and Jacob Boehme in the sixteenth century.³⁶

Novalis's unfinished novel, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* [1802], is neither really a novel at all, nor, although set vaguely at the time of the Crusades, an historical novel in any sense of the term. Apart from an almost gratuitous allusion to knights who had returned from the Holy Land, Novalis makes no attempt to deal with historical issues nor to set his characters in relation to them. This historical setting represents little more than a background against which to develop the journey motif, which is both literal and symbolic. It represented, nevertheless, a conscious rejection of the rationalism of the Enlightenment. The novel traces the growing consciousness of a young man on a journey with his mother from their home in Eisenach (Thuringia) across Germany to her home city of Augsburg in the south. During the course of it he deepens his appreciation of nature, realizes that he wants to become a poet, and falls in love. The book is, in effect, a prose poem, interspersed with poems and songs, many of them long. Despite the large chapter five on mining, intended in part to reveal the mineral wealth of nature, Novalis's emphasis on sentiment takes him away from the Enlightenment and into older realms of the spirit, a 'high spirit', the soul, eternity, heaven, and God revealing Himself.³⁷ The climax of Book One comes when Heinrich encounters the poet

³⁵ G. P. Gooch, *Germany and the French Revolution* (London 1927), pp. 234–8. H. G. Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics. An Essay in Cultural History* (London 1966), pp. 88–90.

³⁶ Frederick Hiebel, *Novalis. German Poet—European Thinker—Christian Mystic* (Chapel Hill and London 1959 [1954]), pp. 87–92, 98–118. 'Novalis' was the literary name of Friedrich von Hardenberg. *Die Christentheit oder Europa* [*Christianity or Europe*, 1799], a fragment, was published thirty years later.

³⁷ Novalis, *Henry of Ofterdingen* (translated by Palmer Hilty, Prospect Hill, Illinois, 1992 [New York 1964]), p. 54 (from Hilty): 'The conversation turned to former adventures in war. He listened very attentively to these new stories. The knights talked about the Holy Land, about the marvels of the Holy Sepulchre, about the adventures on their crusade and their journeys at sea, about the Saracens into whose hands several of them had fallen, and about the jolly and wonderful life in the

Klingsohr, a friend of his grandfather, who becomes his mentor, as he falls in love with his daughter, Mathilda, identified with the mythical 'Blue Flower'.³⁸

This novel turns into allegory in the story narrated by Klingsohr. Here Novalis combines Christian and pagan myths in a complex interweaving of imaginary creatures, who represent the dialogue between Neo-Classicism and Romanticism, which Stendhal would subsequently develop in a different and more rational form. Here Novalis sets the poetic spirit, the imagination, and universal love against what he portrays as the dry intellectuality of Classicism. The allegory points to a new age of wisdom not dissimilar to the spirit of Schiller's *Ode to Joy*. The story takes the theme of the redemption of mankind, and identifies the three main powers of the world as beauty, love, and wisdom. Novalis's vision of the future looks to the unity of all three, with Sophia (wisdom) at the core. She is, in fact, the Eternal Feminine, drawing humanity upwards to the heavenly realm, and reappearing at the end of Goethe's *Faust, Part Two* [1832]. It is tempting to see in this symbolic figure the role envisaged by Eliot for Romola in her novel of 1862. The second part of Novalis's novel took Heinrich to Rome and Greece, and would have developed the mysticism of the 'Blue Flower', seen as the hidden power, latent in the depths of nature which would enable the transfiguration of humanity.³⁹

Novalis intended his novel to be a critique of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, which he regarded as a stolid work with a didactic purpose opposed to the poetic spirit. Whereas Novalis sought to dissolve reality into songs, poems, dreams, and mythical stories, the purpose of Goethe's novel had been to understand reality by means of education and experience, in the humanist tradition from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. Novalis had intended this book to be the first of a series of seven novels dealing with critical historical themes, such as the Crusades, the discovery of the Americas, and the Reformation. His premature death not only prevented the realization of the second book of *Heinrich*, but also these later projects. Interestingly, Schiller also had the unfulfilled project of an epic poem about the great Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II (1211–50)—one of the most controversial figures of the High Middle Ages.⁴⁰

More specifically historical in setting than Novalis's book was Kleist's novella *Michael Kohlhaas* [1810]—a work which preceded Scott's first historical novel by

field and in camp. With great passion they uttered their indignation that the heavenly birthplace of Christianity was still in the impious possession of infidels.'

³⁸ Regin, *Freedom and Dignity*, p. 37: this is an image recurring in Romantic poetry—blue symbolizing endlessness, and flower transient beauty—the transitory nature of life contrasted with the infinity beyond death. Penelope Fitzgerald, *The Blue Flower* (London 1995), examines this theme in her novel based on the young Novalis.

³⁹ Novalis, *Henry*, pp. 120–48. This beneficent Klingsohr of Book One should not be confused with Klingsor, the evil enchanter of Act Two of Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* [1882], also vaguely medieval. Lampert, *German Classical Drama*, pp. 71–3. Schiller composed the 'Ode to Joy' in 1786; 'An die Freude' brings the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony [1824] to a stirring climax.

⁴⁰ Hiebel, *Novalis*, pp. 34–5, 65–7, 100. Berns, *Greek Antiquity*, p. 17. Lukács, *Goethe*, pp. 64–5, ever the champion of realism, disliked Novalis's novel: '... a colourful maze of magical mysticism in which every trace of realist understanding of reality would have vanished; a road leading from a reality, already stylized, into a land of dreams without substance and without forms.'

four years. About a third of the way through this story, Martin Luther appears and exercises a decisive role in the development of the fictional plot. Yet there is no reason why Kleist should have set this story in the first part of the sixteenth century, since neither the Reformation nor the Peasants' War are its historical themes. The contrast with Schiller's specificity of time and theme is striking. In fact, this fictional story could have been set in any century where the same political terms of reference might be relevant. Again, the explanation may be similar. The focus on the corruption and inefficiency of government in the Electorate of Saxony, in contrast to Kohlhaas's and Kleist's native Brandenburg-Prussia, might still have proved sensitive, if put in a contemporary setting, despite the continued dominance of the Napoleonic system across Europe.⁴¹

As in the case of Manzoni's *The Betrothed*, begun in the following decade, the genesis of the action springs from the abuse of power. This time it is sixteenth-century Saxony (not under foreign rule), rather than early seventeenth-century Milan under Spanish rule. Kleist gives the figure of Michael Kohlhaas a much stronger portrayal than the rather shadowy Lucia of Manzoni's novel. The theme is striking: how a respectable, moderately prosperous, married man, aged thirty, with children, becomes transformed into a violent insurgent by a series of acts of injustice by the official power. This is, understandably, an issue which, if viewed in broader terms, reaches well beyond the behaviour patterns of the individual psyche, to the historical question of the social origins of rebellion. This gives Kleist's novella an urgency which contemporaries could not have missed, living as they were in the aftermath of the French Revolution.⁴²

Kohlhaas's reaction and the popular support he receives provide a warning to absolute rulers that they should accept their moral responsibilities to see that the law is observed even by their own servants and the privileged nobility, and live up to their claims to administer justice. Neither author nor principal character, however, are revolutionaries: they believe in the possibility of legality and justice within the existing system. The structural contrast in the story is between Kohlhaas, who is determined that legality shall be upheld, and the bandit, Nagelschmidt. This respect for order, even when he is violating it himself, explains Kohlhaas's appeal to Luther to accept the justice of his cause.⁴³

Luther's instinctive reaction to the appearance of an armed and disguised Kohlhaas in his study in Wittenberg is one of intense revulsion. The latter—who

⁴¹ Heinrich von Kleist, *The Marquise de O. and Other Stories*, translated with an Introduction by David Luke and Nigel Reeves (London 1978): *Michael Kohlhaas. (From an Old Chronicle)*, pp. 114–213. Kleist, born in Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, came from a Prussian military family and served in the army from 1792 to 1799. He was in Paris during the latter part of 1801 and disliked it even more than Berlin, preferring Baroque Dresden. His play, *Robert Guiskard*, about Norman rule in southern Italy, was written in 1801–2, destroyed in October 1803 in a fit of depression, and later published as a fragment. In it he struggled to reconcile thought and emotion, consciousness and the unconscious. Regin, *Freedom and Dignity*, p. 29. Lampert, *German Classical Drama*, p. 161. Kleist wrote *Michael Kohlhaas* in 1805, while working as a state domain administrator in Königsberg (East Prussia); it was published in 1810. The director Volker Schlöndorff filmed it in 1968.

⁴² Allen, *Stories of Kleist*, pp. 53–81.

⁴³ Allen, *Stories of Kleist*, pp. 52–9, 66–70.

had described himself just before as 'an emissary of the Archangel Michael', punishing with fire and sword those who had wronged him—regards Luther as 'the dearest and most venerable name known to him'. As Kohlhaas explains his case and tells him about his wife's death, Luther gradually sees him less as a dangerous madman who has taken the law into his own hands than as a wronged horse-dealer. He agrees to write a letter on his behalf to the Elector of Saxony, requesting a safe-conduct, so that he can appeal to the High Court in Dresden. This the Elector will later grant. Kohlhaas then asks Luther to hear his confession and give him the sacrament. Here we reach a moment in the story when again Kleist touches upon a theme central to the understanding of *The Betrothed*: the theme of forgiveness and redemption. Unlike Renzo in plague-stricken Milan, Kohlhaas cannot forgive the *junker* who opened the cycle of offenses against him. For that reason, Luther denies him Holy Communion. The scene in Dresden market-place, where dispute with the authorities over the condition of Kohlhaas's stolen horses provokes a riot, also recalls Renzo's earlier experience in the bread riots of Milan. Both scenes expose the precariousness of rule by absolute princes in collaboration with local nobilities.⁴⁴

This novella, however, is more than a realist portrayal of the consequences of thwarted justice. Kohlhaas exacts his revenge in extreme demonstrations of rage—a total contrast to his previous 'normality'. In the latter part of the story, the supernatural intervenes in the form of the gypsy woman and the mysterious locket she has given to Kohlhaas. This intervention is so decisive that it determines the outcome of the plot. The locket theme defies all rationality, as is the author's intention. In the presence of the incognito Elector, who is with a hunting party, Kohlhaas relates 'a strange story' about a crippled gypsy woman who in Jüterbock, on the day of his wife's funeral, when he is setting out to seize hold of the *junker*, presents him with a scribbled message in a lead locket. She knows his name, and tells him that 'one day it will save your life'. This is also the day when the Electors of Saxony and Brandenburg are meeting in that town. The former has just challenged the woman's reputation as a soothsayer, and this has led to her message in the locket, which concerns the fate of his dynasty. She withholds it from him, and instead gives this powerful weapon to Kohlhaas. When the Elector now hears this story from the latter's lips, he collapses, and his condition deteriorates when Kohlhaas refuses to sell it to him. The gypsy woman reappears on the day of Kohlhaas's execution in Berlin, and gains access to him through bribing the gaoler. The prisoner notes 'a strange resemblance between her and his deceased wife, Lisbeth, so much so that he almost asked her if she was her grandmother'. She urges him to keep the locket, but she will not reveal its contents. When he opens it he discovers a note signed by his dead wife—or, at least, someone called Elizabeth. On the scaffold, he refuses to hand over the locket to the Elector in return for his life, and swallows the paper.⁴⁵

We are clearly beyond the Enlightenment's assumptions concerning the rationality of the universe and of human capacity to comprehend it. Kleist, around

⁴⁴ Kleist, *Michael Kohlhaas*, pp. 148, 151–6, 163–71. Allen, *Stories of Kleist*, pp. 62–6.

⁴⁵ Kleist, *Michael Kohlhaas*, pp. 190–213. Allen, *Stories of Kleist*, pp. 71–2, 76–8.

1801, ceased to accept the inevitability of human progress. The story illustrated his belief that human beings were not capable even of understanding the consequences of their own actions. The experience of the French Revolution, moreover, has convinced him that reason alone, that is bereft of morality, could not bring about the improvement of society. At the same time, we have an engaging story which, as it appears to come to an end, opens a new dimension altogether, leaving the reader gripped. This extraordinary combination of realism, historical background, and fantasy, combined with the intervention of an historical figure such as Luther, anticipated in a novella what later historical novelists would do with their material in order to hold the attention of readers, while at the same time making significant political points.⁴⁶

PERCEPTIONS AND TIMING: HISTORICAL DRAMA AND THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

Historical drama and the fiction of Goethe, Novalis, and Kleist emerged at a time of changing perceptions and values, in which conflict and instability appeared to be the rule of the day. The impact of the twenty-three years of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793–1815) should not be underestimated, since it influenced the choice and treatment of themes, particularly in fiction. Dekker places Goethe in a central role in the perception of these events:

As a member of Herder's circle in the early 1770s, he was at once highly receptive to the new ideas about literature and history, which were streaming in from Britain, and yet far more sensitive than any English writer was then likely to be to the revolutionary pressures building up in Europe and her colonies. And so he became the first major literary artist to see that the truly great events in history were not changes in dynasty, but shifts in economic, social, religious, and political structures. He saw, moreover, that these structures were closely related to, dependent on each other.⁴⁷

Revolution and extended warfare terminated the optimism of the Enlightenment. The critique of excessive reliance on rationality in the *Sturm und Drang* already pointed to a more explicit portrayal of the emotions in European literature. Romanticism would make this one of its principal characteristics. This conscious movement into the uncharted waters of instinct, the subconscious, and the passions opened new fictional possibilities and enabled exploration of the darker side of human behaviour, as in Kohlhaas's transformation from respected husband and trader into murderous outlaw—in effect, two personalities within the same man. Much would later be made of such a theme. The historical novel would also explore these nether regions in terms of individual conduct, political allegiances, and religious fanaticism.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Allen, *Stories of Kleist*, pp. 5–10, 20–3, 30–1.

⁴⁷ George Dekker, *The American Historical Romance* (Cambridge 1987), p. 51.

⁴⁸ Lukács, *Goethe*, pp. 56, 60–1, 64, argues that Goethe, although opposing the methods of the Revolution, still supported its humanist objective. See also, Boyle, *Goethe*, II, p. 392, on the

German historical drama sought a realistic portrayal of psychology and the human dilemmas of love, loyalty, and the exercise of power. The historical novel would also strive for this, but, given the greater scope afforded by the novel, in contrast to the theatre, it was able to bring society as a whole into the picture. In such a way, individual concerns could be related to broader social issues and set in an identifiable historical time. German Romanticism opened the way for the novel of self-discovery and development, the *Bildungsroman*, anticipated by Goethe and Novalis. The Romantics' wandering path of self-discovery, however, often took place without regard to any specific social or historical context, just as communion with nature, which accompanied it, did not imply communion with society and history.

Lukács dedicated a long chapter to the relationship between historical drama and the historical novel. It is one of his most impressive critical achievements.

What matters in the novel is fidelity in the reproduction of the material foundations of the life of a given period, its manners, and the feelings and thoughts deriving from these. This means . . . that the novel is much more closely bound to the specifically historical, individual moments of a period, than is drama. But this never means being tied to any particular historical fact. On the contrary, the novelist must be at liberty to treat these as he likes, if he is to reproduce the much more complex and ramifying totality with historical faithfulness. From the standpoint of the historical novel, too, it is always a matter of chance whether an actual, historical fact, character or story will lend itself to the particular method by which a great novelist conveys his historical faithfulness.⁴⁹

This attempt to explain the methodological difference between historical drama and the novel suggests that the nature of theatre explains the facility with which the original historical facts giving rise to the drama might be altered for artistic objectives. We have seen this in the case of Schiller's portrayal of the character of Don Carlos and in the fictionalized meeting of Mary and Elizabeth. Scott, as historical novelist, also took liberties with facts, although these are rarely as blatant as in the two instances just mentioned. Scott, too, needed to respond to the artistic requirements of his work. The redating of the murder of the Bishop of Liège in *Quentin Durward* is a case in point. Vigny went even further than that, reshaping the story of the Cinq Mars conspiracy against Cardinal Richelieu in order to serve the contemporary political purpose of his novel. Lukács is correct, nevertheless, in arguing that the nature of the historical novel, rooted in social and historical realities, constrained the extent to which their author might respond to the artistic necessities perceived.

Lindenberger discusses at some length the different perspectives of historical drama and the novel, contrasting the heroic and historical elements in historical

transformation of the Wilhelm Meister project over the twenty years from c.1775 to c.1795: ' . . . what had been a cultural quest, winding through the complex social certainties of the German *ancien régime*, became an interrogation of all levels of existence in an epoch of world-wide revolution and nascent Romanticism.'

⁴⁹ Lukács, *Historical Novel*, p. 197.

drama with the prosaic and anti-heroic character of the novel. This latter feature perhaps helps to account for the heroes, often seen as unsure, if not nondescript, in Scott's early fiction. Yet this anti-heroic character, Lindenberger argues, went back through the evolution of the novel, from Cervantes through Fielding. By contrast, heroes of historical drama are frequently wielders of power, who command immediate attention. The novelist's skill lies in making his insignificant material seem significant and a reflection of real life.⁵⁰

While it is true that historical drama responded to contemporary issues, this medium, by contrast to the novel, had rich precedents going back, in different historical contexts, to Shakespeare and Racine. The power and popularity of historical drama constituted a challenge to the incipient novel and an alternative to it. At first, it could not be seen whether they were complementary or adversarial, especially since leading poets and playwrights sometimes experimented with novels as well. Perhaps the overriding disadvantage of historical drama, however, was its rooting in Neo-Classicism. The literary passions of the later 1810s to 1830s were, in fact, expended primarily (as we shall see in Chapter 5) in the struggle between the rival merits of Neo-Classical principles and the new Romanticism with regard to drama. It may well be the case that Scott and his immediate contemporaries enabled the breakthrough of the novel, rather than drama, as the prime medium for the expression of historical issues and conflicts. This would not have been an easy victory. The combination of social context, political foreground, military crisis, and psychological drama in Schiller's *Wallenstein* showed how hard the competition would be. Nevertheless, we should remember at the same time that Schiller's verse play arose out of his previous prose history, and that, because of the complex nature of the material, he sketched out the first drafts of the future play in prose, as though it might have been an historical novel.⁵¹

The historical novel—made possible in that era because of the increased concern for accuracy in historiography—adopted elements of the search for identity as one of its principal themes. Obviously, this would result in an uneasy combination of personal detail and historical fact. Nevertheless, the historical novel would bring further realism to the novel with its detailed social observation and its foundations in clearly identifiable historical contexts, without sacrificing the demand for romance, action, extremes of emotion, and mysterious happenings. Specific geographical and topographical locations took their place in the novel, but could be the context for these portrayals.

⁵⁰ Lindenberger, *Historical Drama*, pp. 69–70.

⁵¹ The subject of historical drama in this period, viewed comparatively and on a European level, is a subject awaiting its author.

4

Scottish flowering: turbulence or Enlightenment?

It was Louis Maigron, in 1899, who assigned the central role in the development of the historical novel to Scott before Lukács did so in the 1930s. Both saw Scott at the head of a new literary movement which would have a decisive impact throughout Europe (and beyond) in the course of the nineteenth century. They did not, however, set Scott fully into his literary and historical context. Recent research has raised many issues concerning the influences on Scott and the direction which his writing took. In the first place, it is essential to recognize that Scott came out of a Scottish context and initially addressed in fictional form a range of pressing issues which had historical roots and preoccupied his Scottish contemporaries. I shall examine these in the course of this chapter. He was by no means an isolated figure, since he had deep local roots in the Lowlands, travelled widely, met and corresponded with other writers, and was aware of the influence of his writings in other countries. Yet the influences which motivated him were frequently contradictory, and these contradictions are reflected in his writings. They help to explain both his subject matter and his limitations. Scott's impact on the development of historical fiction is undeniable, but at the same time, the reaction against his treatment of it was also profound. This could be seen not only in the British Isles but also among those continental European writers who recognized his influence on them, but who also drew from their own literary traditions.¹

My intention in the opening sections of this chapter is to set Scott, first, within his literary context, and second, to examine the Scottish political and intellectual context which shaped him. In this way, we can identify at the outset the contradictions which run through his fiction.

¹ Louis Maigron, *Le roman historique à l'époque romantique* (Paris 1898), pp. 46, 90–3. Lukács, *Historical Novel*, pp. 22–6, 32–4. Understandably, the literature on Scott is immense. I refer here, in particular, to Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority. Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca and London 1991). Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow. The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton and Oxford 2007). Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford 2008), and the two seminal articles by Kate Trumpler, 'National Character, Nationalist Plots: National Tale and Historical Novel in the Age of Waverley, 1806–1830', *ELH (A Journal of English Literary History)*, 60 (1993), pp. 685–731, and Richard Maxwell, 'Inundations of Time: A Definition of Scott's Originality', *ELH*, 68 (2001), pp. 419–68. For historical contexts, see T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700–2000* (London 1999), and *Scotland's Empire* (London 2003).

THE LITERARY CONTEXT

Scott built on the strong foundations left by the English writers of the eighteenth century—Richardson, Smollett, and Fielding, for whom he had a strong admiration. He ranked them, in 1808, at the top of the list for inclusion in a projected series on writers of novels and romances to be published by John Murray. They stayed at the top, when a similar series was considered in 1821.² I have already referred to the Gothic novels as a genre which profoundly influenced Scott's subject matter and method.

He also learned a considerable amount from Maria Edgeworth's treatment of the Irish context of her novels. Edgeworth (1767–1849), although born in England, was the daughter of an Irish MP and lived in Ireland for a considerable time. She was the leading exponent of the 'national tale', which was, in fact, locally based. In it the issues reflected provincial issues, often connected to wider themes, such as landlord exploitation, as in *Castle Rackrent* [1801] and *The Absentee* [1812], and the rhythm of Irish dialogue. Although Edgeworth shared the Enlightenment's hostility towards feudal leftovers in Ireland, her regional perspective conflicted with general Enlightenment universalism. It was precisely this regional basis of her novels which attracted Scott, and he adapted it to Scottish localities in his own historical fiction. This did not signify that the 'national tale' then disappeared: on the contrary, it continued to flourish alongside the Waverley Novels, as an alternative to them.³ From 1814, Maria Edgeworth became a correspondent of Scott, who admired her work, and she eventually visited him, politically a Tory, at Abbotsford in 1823. He noted that he found her loquacious, outspoken, and 'Whiggish' to boot.⁴

Several other writers preceded Scott with comparable themes: Charlotte Smith, a poet and later novelist from 1788, published *Desmond* in 1792, which had a leading character called Waverly; Lady Sydney (Owenon) Morgan (c.1783–1859), a Dubliner, became well known for her Irish settings, as in *The Wild Irish Girl* [1806]; Jane West, *The Loyalists: An Historical Novel* [1812], dealing with the English Civil War, may have been the first to use this generic term; Charles Maturin (1782–1824), another Dubliner who wrote plays and novels such as *The Milesian Chief* in 1811 and the successful Gothic novel *Melmoth the Wanderer*

² Sir Herbert J. C. Grierson, *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, 12 vols. (London 1932–37), II (1808–11), Scott to Murray, Ashestiel near Selkirk, 30 October 1808; VII (1821–3), pp. 13–12, Scott to Archibald Constable, Abbotsford, 30 September 1821. Fanny Burney (1752–1840), Charlotte Smith (1749–1806), and Ann Radcliffe were also named.

³ Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*, pp. 93, 166–83. Trumpener, 'National Character,' pp. 686–7, 693.

⁴ Grierson/Scott, *Letters*, VIII (1823–5), pp. 51–8, Scott to Joanna Baillie, Abbotsford, 18 July 1823. Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*, pp. 166–87, 206. Scott visited Ireland in 1825. Williams, *Scott. On Novelists and Fiction*, pp. 19–76, 146–83, on the English eighteenth-century novelists. Dekker, *American Historical Romance*, pp. 6, 12, 33, 100–4. Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, pp. 72–5, 136.

in 1820, also pointed to the influence of Irish writers on Scott. There can be no doubt that Scott knew all of these works and many more.⁵

The novels of Jane Porter (1776–1850), who seems to have largely vanished from the literary history of the period, provide a closer link in the chain which would eventually lead to Scott's long series of *Waverley Novels*. Porter's *Thaddeus of Warsaw* went into five editions, each in four volumes, between 1805 and 1809, and a total of 1,750 copies were printed in the fourth and fifth editions. The theme of Polish liberties and resistance made the book popular at the time of Napoleon's supposed revival of the Polish state. Scotland itself became the subject of her best known work, *The Scottish Chiefs. A Romance*, which first appeared in five volumes in 1810, when 2,000 copies were printed at 7 shillings (35p) each. This book focused on the resistance of William Wallace to the English king Edward I (1272–1307) between 1296 and his execution by the English in 1305. It continues to a climactic end with Robert the Bruce's victory over the English at Bannockburn in 1314. The scene then moves from Lanarkshire through other central southern Scottish locations, to the Cheviots, and finally to France. Once again, a medieval subject appeared before Scott dealt with the period in novel form with the publication of *Ivanhoe* in 1819.⁶

Although described as a Romance in the title, Porter's Preface of 1809 makes it clear that her work is an historical re-enactment rather than a novel. Her comments also reveal the type of constraint that, even before Scott's historical fiction, writers felt when it came to setting their work in past epochs.

I have spared no pains in consulting almost every writing extant, which treats of the sister kingdoms during the period of my narrative. It would be tedious to swell the page with a list of these authorities, but all who are intimate with our old British histories must perceive, on reading *The Scottish Chiefs*, that in the sketch which history would have laid down for the biography of my principal hero, I have made no addition, excepting where, time having made such an erasure, a stroke was necessary to fill the space, and unite the outline.

From the nature of my story, more agents have been used in its conduct than I should have adopted had it been a work of mere imagination. But very few persons wholly imaginary have been introduced; and, wishing to keep as near historical truth as could be consistent with my plan, no intentional injustice has been committed against the characters of the individuals who were real actors with the chief hero of the tale.⁷

The author makes a number of other points which have bearing on the later development of the historical novel. In the first place, she anticipates the perspective that Scott would adopt in *Waverley*, concerning the moral advantages of the Union between England and Scotland after 1707. Pride in ancestry and in the heroes of both kingdoms, she argues, should be a mirror to show their people 'what

⁵ Trumper, 'National Character,' pp. 689–91, 694, 698.

⁶ I have used the one-volume 1900 edition in Cambridge University Library. There were earlier editions in 1816, 1831, 1840 (revised and illustrated), 1862, 1879 and 1882. St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, pp. 630–1.

⁷ Jane Porter, *The Scottish Chiefs*, pp. v–vi.

they ought to be, and to kindle in their hearts the flame which burnt in their forefathers' (my italics). Now that the descendants of the Bruces and the Plantagenets sit only on one, united throne, Britain rests on firm foundations. Porter's Preface stated that few fictional characters appear in the book. Scott would adopt the opposite balance, generally placing the historical figures in the background and giving priority to the fictional ones, so that they would have a freedom of action to develop the plot in the way the novel was beginning to use it. This required a careful balance between public and private events and alignments.⁸

The sharp contrast between the civilized society in which Scott lived and the traditional ways of Highland folk, which reflected an earlier society, struck him as a potential subject for a romance, as he described it. By around 1803, he had already written a third of the novel which would become *Waverley*. The Highland experience of writing *The Lady of the Lake* [1810], when he had talked to many survivors of the 1745 Rebellion, suggested a prose fiction set partly there.

Until 1814 Scott had not been known for his prose fiction, and for years thereafter he would try to maintain the anonymity of his authorship, perhaps because of the adverse reputation which the novel had gained as a result of Gothic and purely romantic fiction. He had made his reputation in poetry, and this continued to hold strong, judging by the printing figures, through three decades to 1830. *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* [1802], *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* [1805], *Marmion. A Tale of Flodden Field* [1808], and *Lady of the Lake* came out as editions in their thousands. Ballads of the Scottish past, verse romances of the Border country, historical romance of the sixteenth-century, all contributed to putting not only their compiler and author on the literary map but also Scotland as a theme in its own right. In this latter respect, Porter had made a valuable contribution. Scott, as poet, built on the reputation scored by Robert Burns (1759–96), publishing from 1786, and on the popularity of the controversial Ossian poems supposedly resuscitated by James Macpherson during the 1760s but immediately attacked as largely his own invention.⁹

THE SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE UNION WITH ENGLAND

The Scottish Enlightenment's leading figures were highly critical of Scotland's unruly past, and preferred to bury it, if they could, beneath a heavy layer of British unionism. Scott embraced this past in his fiction, but used it to advocate a new and different world of legality, commerce, and sobriety. Scotland's Union with England and Wales in 1707 removed the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, and transferred the country's representation henceforth to the Union Parliament in Westminster.

⁸ Porter, Preface, p. vi.

⁹ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge 2004), pp. 633–4. Duncan, Scott's Shadow, pp. 20–1. *The Edinburgh Review* published the two-volume edition of the *Minstrelsy*. See Rigney, *Imperfect Histories*, pp. 124–30, on Scott's *Minstrelsy*.

Even though this meant the loss of the public sphere, Scotland enjoyed an intellectual flowering in the eighteenth century, especially after mid-century, when David Hume, in effect, introduced the Enlightenment from continental Europe. John Robertson explains the paradox in the following way:

...the intensity of the Scots' discussions of moral philosophy, political economy, and history may have reflected an attempt to come to terms with their new political situation, and even to contribute to the new, British political identity. If the Enlightenment in Scotland was only indirectly political, this was itself a function of its national setting.¹⁰

The thinkers, writers, and teachers of the Scottish Enlightenment left a deep impression on Scott, though this did not exclude the memory of older traditions—oral and musical—rooted in the culture of local communities. The political and economic changes in the course of the eighteenth century threatened to marginalize them. Nevertheless, curiosity about the Celtic past revived in the British Isles at the time the Enlightenment was at its height. It accounted for the initial reception of the supposedly rediscovered poems of Ossian, and provided a favourable climate for Scott's early poetic works.

Although Scotland and England came together to form one political entity under the Act of Union in 1707, their legal, educational, and monetary systems remained distinct. This was Union with distinctiveness. The extent of this distinction appeared at the very beginning, with Scottish and English judges' differing interpretations of the Copyright Act of 1710. The Scottish preference for a longer period of copyright enabled publishing to flourish in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen, to the extent that by the 1750s it challenged London's supremacy. Scottish houses exported not only to southern England but also to the North American colonies—often on better terms than those given by their counterparts in London. During the legal debates in both countries, which arose from this competition, in 1773 the Edinburgh Court of Session reaffirmed the earlier Scottish tradition that perpetual copyright had never existed in Scotland. In this way the Scottish supreme court championed the liberal principle of freedom of publication in opposition to the restricted practices of the London publishers. In the following year, the House of Lords—in effect the British supreme court of appeal—fell into line with the Scottish decision, although it took many decades for the London publishers to comply. These decisions led to increased book publication at lower prices. During the period 1800–26, Edinburgh became a major publishing centre and rival to London.¹¹

¹⁰ James Anderson, *Sir Walter Scott and History* (Edinburgh 1981), pp. 5–9, 11–36, 89–107. John MacQueen, *The Enlightenment and Scottish Literature*: vol. 2, *The Rise of the Historical Novel* (Edinburgh 1989), pp. 7–8, 11–12. Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity (1689–c.1830)* (Cambridge 1993), pp. 255–6. John Robertson, *The Case for Enlightenment. Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760* (Cambridge 2005), pp. 25, 47, 381.

¹¹ St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, pp. 105–18. Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, pp. 20–6.

Scotland in the latter half of the eighteenth century produced a wide range of literary and intellectual figures, principal among them being Hume and Smith, the playwright John Home (1722–1808), and the political thinker Adam Ferguson (1723–1816), both of whom trained for the Presbyterian ministry. Ian Duncan makes a strong case for David Hume, whom Tories dismissed as the Scottish Voltaire, as the principal influence behind Scott's historical fiction. Hume's stress on the imagination as a faculty through which reality was apprehended opened a way for fiction to be regarded as an alternative portrayal of reality, though different from fact and sharing the narrative mode with historiography. Hume's historical writings, moreover, provided shape for Scott's vision of his country's past.

Scott's novels are Humean in their history and politics: they share with Hume's *History* the ethos of a moderate or conservative scepticism, the combination of Whig narratology and Tory sentiment, the detachment from party faction, the critique of fanaticism and a recognition of the authority of custom.¹²

From these sources, further influences entered into Scott's fictional creativity. John Home's medieval tragedy, *Douglas* (1757), remained popular in both Scotland and England into the 1820s—an indication of interest in this contentious period of Scottish history long before the Romantics espoused medievalism half a century later. Home's play represented an attempt to grapple with the nature of Scotland in the aftermath of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 by looking back to the early fourteenth-century conflicts between England and Scotland. Several decades later, Home eventually published a history of the Jacobite rebellions in 1802. Ferguson, for his part, held three chairs successively at Edinburgh University, and published an *Essay on the History of Civil Society* in 1767 and a *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* in 1783. In the former, he discussed primitive literature, which, once collected, poets of his time would imitate. There would be much scope, later on, in Scott and in James Fenimore Cooper, for the transformation of the primitive into the heroic in a romantic natural setting. For Ferguson, Scotland's future model should not be its own past but the ideal of Classical republicanism, as presented by the Roman Republic in its heyday. He was writing ten years in advance of the French Revolution, which would take Roman Republicanism as its model in 1792–4. Ferguson, needless to say, had no such revolutionary objective in mind.¹³

Smith's lectures and published works formed the ideas of the generation which taught Scott, a student at Edinburgh University during the 1780s. They reveal a similar type of mingling of Ancient and Modern learning to that of Goethe and Schiller's Weimar and Jena. In both instances, the Ancient infuses the Modern, while at the same time the modern proponent emphasizes the difference between

¹² Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, pp. 29, 128–34, 137.

¹³ Grierson/Scott, *Letters*, vol. IX (1825–6), pp. 100–2, Scott to William Motherwell, Abbotsford, 2 May 1825. Yoon Sun Lee, 'Giants in the North: Douglas, the Scottish Enlightenment, and Scott's *Redgauntlet*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 40, i (Spring 2000), pp. 109–21; pp. 109–11, 115, 118. Dekker, *American Historical Romance*, pp. 76–7.

the two. Smith's study of ethics drew attention to the capacity of the imagination for entering the feelings of other people.¹⁴

Scott inherited the Enlightenment and Whig rejection of Scotland's turbulent past, despite an emotional attachment to much of it. He knew many of the important figures, including Smith, Home, Ferguson, and the historian William Robertson (1721–93), and was a pupil of Dugald Stewart (1753–1828), Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University in the fifteen years before 1810. Stewart warned of the excesses of religious enthusiasm and of crowd mobilization, which were key elements in Scott's fiction.¹⁵ Colin Kidd draws attention to the young Scott's attendance at Edinburgh University lectures on ethics, moral philosophy, and history, in which he heard the full historical critique. In his writings he set about demolishing traditional and accepted modes of interpreting the past. Sentimental Jacobinism, riddled with nostalgia, became a major target. Along with this went the Highland clan tradition's prime loyalties to kith, kin, and chieftain, rather than to law and civic culture. The third target was religious fanaticism, which, still in his own day, ran right through Presbyterian attachment to the Covenanters of the late seventeenth century—the subject of *Old Mortality*, perhaps the finest of the Waverley Novels. From these sources Scott developed his own particular brand of historical sociology.¹⁶

The *Edinburgh Review*, founded in 1802 by Sydney Smith, Henry Brougham, and others of their circle, and financed by the publisher Archibald Constable, became one of the most important journals of nineteenth-century Britain. It set out to disseminate ideas and literary criticism in the spirit of the Enlightenment but in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The *Review* acquired a general readership of some 80,000—large for its day—particularly among the 'middling' rather than the 'fashionable' type of reader. Organ of 'modern whiggism', it took a dim view of Scotland's past before the defeat of the second Jacobite Rebellion, favouring greater harmonization with English ways of living. This journal published Scott's first periodical article in 1803, a review of Robert Southey's English version of *Amadis of Gaul*, and later, in 1814, a critical review of Scott's first novel, regarding it as a serious and well-crafted piece of work, although the reviewer complained of its excessive use of incomprehensible Scottish dialect. For the reading public, however, Scotland as a subject had already become familiar through Scott's earlier poetry.¹⁷

The Enlightenment influences, which contradicted those of the national tale, patriotic hankерings, the romance, and Gothic fiction, and other profound influences help to explain not only Scott's early choice of fictional subject matter, but also, equally significant, what he chose not to write about. Where, for instance, is the great Scott novel about Wallace, arch-opponent of Edward I's projected

¹⁴ For Adam Smith, see Chapter 1, n. 2.

¹⁵ Grierson/Scott, *Letters*, V (1817–19), pp. 428–31, Scott to J. G. Lockhart, Abbotsford, 28 July 1819; VIII (1823–25), pp. 241–7, Scott to Lady Luisa Stuart, Abbotsford, 4 April 1824. Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, pp. 26, 270.

¹⁶ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, pp. 257–9.

¹⁷ Ferris, *Achievement of Literary Authority*, pp. 19, 24, 80–3. Welch, *Hero of the Waverley Novels*, p. 10.

conquest of the independent Kingdom of Scotland? Porter dealt with him in her way—but not Scott. Where, again, is the Scott novel about Robert the Bruce and the Battle of Bannockburn, in which the English are definitively defeated and the enforced union thwarted? And, finally, where in Scott is the Battle of Culloden, where in 1746 the last hopes of independence brutally died? The answer is that Scott's unionist ideology and Lowland sympathies, his loyalty to the Hanoverian dynasty, and his Protestant religion, all reinforced his Enlightenment education and placed a veil over these embarrassing uprisings of the past.

THEMES AND ISSUES IN THE WAVERLEY NOVELS

The arrival of the flamboyant Lord Byron on the poetry scene in the early 1810s may have explained Scott's late decision to turn to the novel. To a friend just returned from the new Paris of the Restoration, Scott sent a package with a newly published book. He made some comments on this

... small anonymous sort of a novel in three volumes, which you will receive by the mail of this day. It is a very old attempt of mine to embody some traits of those characters and manners peculiar to Scotland the last remnants of which vanished during my own youth, so that few or no traces now remain. I had written part of the first volume and sketched other passages, when I mislaid the manuscript and only found it by the merest accident as I was rummaging the drawers of an old cabinet, and I took the fancy of finishing it which I did so fast that the last two volumes were written in three weeks. I had a great deal of fun in the accomplishing of this task, though I do not expect it will be popular in the South as much of the humour, if there is any, is local and some of it even professional . . . It has made a very strong impression here, and the good people of Edinburgh are busied in tracing the author and in finding out the originals of the portraits it contains.¹⁸

This book was *Waverley; or 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, and 36,000 legitimate copies of it would sell between 1814 and 1836. *Waverley*, however, should not be regarded as the defining work of the series, since its successors develop well beyond this uneven first work. Many of the Waverley Novels are works of action and adventure, with flight to or through forests or into highlands, but they are not novels of *angst*. Characteristics are better drawn than character, and wry humour replaces irony, despite the professed admiration for Cervantes. The Waverley Novels—the generic title given to Scott's historical fiction and at first authored anonymously—had a rapid impact throughout Western Europe. This extended to North America and the rest of Europe and to Latin America and British-ruled India in subsequent decades.¹⁹

¹⁸ Grierson/Scott, *Letters*, III (1811–14), pp. 456–9, Scott to John B. S. Morritt, Edinburgh, 9 July 1814.

¹⁹ St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, Appendix 9, pp. 636–43; see p. 636. For print culture, editions, sales, and readership there is a growing literature; see, for example, Marino Berengo, *Intellettuali e librai nella Milano della Restaurazione* (Turin 1980). Dekker, *American Historical Romance*, pp. 38–42,

Scott's introduction of believable history as a theme between 1814 and 1819 significantly contributed to the transformation of both history and the novel. His fictional technique in tightening plot heightened the dramatic impact of the narrative. He made the historical novel a vehicle for the constant intertwining of present and past. In his Scottish novels, Scott made concrete reference to places, events, and times, weaving popular memory into his fiction. The overall purpose was to advocate reason over fanaticism, and legality over violence. In this respect he displayed as much concern with right conduct as Eliot would do at mid-century. Scott portrayed factionalism as the curse of Scottish history, as Galdós would later do in the Spanish historical novel.

In historical terms, the central issue of the purely Scottish novels is the fitness of the Stuart dynasty for the task of ruling the kingdoms of England and Scotland. This dynasty, which had ruled Scotland since the early fifteenth century, inherited the English crown on the death of Elizabeth I without heir in 1603. The Union of Crowns lasted until the merging of the parliaments of both countries under the Act of Union of 1707, when the 'Union Jack' became the combined flag of the two kingdoms. The Catholic Queen, Mary Stuart, had lost the Scottish throne in 1567 after defeat by Protestant forces, and had been executed twenty years later by Elizabeth's government. Roman Catholicism, however, once again became a political issue in both kingdoms under the Catholic James II (1685–8), who had been expelled in the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. The two Jacobite Rebellions of 1715 and 1745–6 intended to restore the Stuart dynasty to the throne, but this involved the religious issue of the status of Catholicism in the henceforth United Kingdom of Great Britain. These conflicts, viewed in individual as well as social and cultural terms, formed the mainspring of Scott's historical novels.

The Scott of the Waverley Novels remained above all a writer of fiction with an eye on the market and changing popular tastes. He was not, in his capacity as a novelist, a surrogate historian, and his novels illustrated the as yet ill-defined boundaries between history and fiction. They made a significant contribution to the development of both disciplines but, at the same time, raised problems for each of them. For instance, the question of the relationship between imaginary and historical characters became central in the historical novel. In his Scottish novels Scott sets real historical figures, such as Prince Charles Edward the Young Pretender in *Waverley*, at the margins. In the denouement of *Redgauntlet* [1824], the Pretender—older and deeply compromised—plays a decisive role, although he is by no means the main protagonist.²⁰

compares Scott and Cooper on the fiction of losing sides, and, pp. 47, 51–2, refers to the Argentinian gaucho world of Domingo Sarmiento, *Facundo* [1845]. Wilbur J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York 1991 [1929]), refers to the reading habits of Ante-Bellum Southerners. Priya Joshi, *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India* (New York 2002), pp. 154–9, comments on Scott's influence in nineteenth-century Indian writing.

²⁰ Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley* (Oxford 1998), vol. 11, chs. XVII and XX. Sir Walter Scott, *Redgauntlet* (Edinburgh and Columbia 1997), chaps. XXII–XXIII. See also David Daiches, *Charles Edward Stuart. The Life and Times of Bonnie Prince Charlie* (London 1973), and Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Cause* (Glasgow 1986).

The Waverley Novels appeared before the sharper definition of gender roles in the Victorian period. Considerable gender ambiguity appears in Scott. This is initially obscured by the prevailing masculine themes and activities in the novels—with the exception of *Heart of Midlothian* [1818], which has female leading characters. Scott displaced male–female courtship as the main preoccupation of the novel, and gave central attention to political issues, especially where these involved armed conflict. Although the domestic novel would soon revive in the reaction to Scott, the focus on wildness and violence presented the opportunity to portray a range of characters beyond the world of the drawing-room. A range of female characters in men's roles, such as Flora MacIvor in *Waverley* or Helen MacGregor in *Rob Roy*, live the life of arms beyond the law. The Waverley heroes, for their part, tend to be borne along by events or by stronger figures. We see Darsie Latimer writing to his intimate friend, the Edinburgh lawyer Alan Fairford, that 'my love for Alan Fairford surpasses the love of woman'. This occurs when Darsie is infatuated with the woman, Liliias, described as 'Green Mantle', who subsequently, when Darsie is disguised as a woman, reveals to him that she is his sister. Earlier, he tells Alan that their relationship resembles that of David and Jonathan, or Orestes and Pylades, or Damon and Pythias—'three proverbial examples of male bonding'.²¹

The hero of *Waverley* is an impressionable young man of unformed character and ambiguous Anglo-Scottish origin during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745–46. The fictional intention is to examine the origin and course of the personal crisis, its profound consequences and political implications, and the final retribution. The dialectic at the heart of the novel lies between the hero's self-doubt and his indignation as the victim of calumny. The psychological tricks performed by their interplay lead Edward Waverley into what he eventually recognizes as the wrong camp in a life-and-death struggle between the British army and Jacobite rebels for control of power first in Scotland and then in England.²² One commentator describes *Waverley* as a *Bildungsroman*, tracing the development of an immature young man carried away by a romantic vision of things until such fancies as the Jacobite cause are definitively put to one side. If it is in fact such a novel of 'growing up', then Edward Waverley does not go very far.²³

²¹ Scott, *Redgauntlet*, Letter 1, p. 6; Letter VIII, p. 72; Letter XII, p. 113. Volume One of the novel consists of thirteen letters (to p. 123) exchanged between Darlie Latimer and Alan Fairford. Note the comment of Judith Wilt, *Secret Leaves. The Novels of Walter Scott* (Chicago and London 1985), p. 4: '... young men and women fight for identity on the slippery interface between destiny and choice, history and desire, contrivance and spontaneity'; and see also pp. 117–18, 146–8. Fiedler, *Love and Death*, p. 174, sees Helen MacGregor as an extreme case of Gothic influence in Scott.

²² Scott, *Waverley* (Oxford 1998), vol. 11, chs. 2, 8, and 17. Ferris, *Achievement of Literary Authority*, pp. 98–104, 255–6. Edward Waverley is described as 'the Gothic heroine in male form'. Maxwell, 'Inundations', pp. 437–43, 459, discusses the question of how far back in time and this novel's relation to *Guy Mannering* [1815] set in the 1770s, and *The Antiquary* [1816], set in the 1790s. See also Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes. British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London 1994), pp. 66–74. The defeat of the 1798 rebellion in Ireland reaffirmed British military supremacy there. See the novel by Thomas Flanagan, *The Year of the French* (New York 1979).

²³ Saree Makdisi, 'Colonial Space and Colonization of Time in Scott's *Waverley*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 34, I (Summer 1995), pp. 155–87: p. 179.

The Jacobites 'storm into Waverley's Lowlands like a horde of ghosts issuing forth from the past'. They belong, thereby, to a different time and have invaded a different space. By the end of this novel, however, they have been thrust back into the Highlands, where the Duke of Cumberland's British army will crush them without mercy. This process, followed by the notorious 'Highland Clearances'—which might callously be described as 'modernization'—provided Scottish history in the later eighteenth century with certain parallels to the British 'pacification' of Ireland, which in turn formed part of the colonial construction of the British Empire. The Highland threat removed, the Anglicized Lowlands would henceforth dominate Scotland unchallenged. Scott's novel, however, does not discuss Culloden and the savage repression which followed it. The explanation lay in his dedication to the principle of reconciliation, which takes the form of the insipid romance between Edward and the daughter of the defeated Jacobite, Baron Bradwardine. Scott, thereby, distorts history by exclusion rather than falsification. The barbaric side of the new British state is left untouched.²⁴

Identity crises and contradictory attachments at times of social and political crisis form the basis of several of Scott's Scottish novels. The dilemmas of vulnerable young men at historical turning points became one of Scott's characteristic themes. At the same time, there is usually a violent conflict in progress in the broader arena, and a variety of ambiguous characters inhabit either side of the law. In *Rob Roy*, Frank Osbaldestone finds himself in a nest of Jacobite intrigue in 1715 in a staunchly Catholic country house in northern England, when he is neither a Catholic nor a Jacobite, but falls in love with Diana Vernon, who is both. Henry Morton in *Old Mortality* finds himself alternatively on both sides in the struggle between the Stuart government and the Covenanters during the 1670s.²⁵

Scott was arguing in favour of the wider polity of Great Britain rather than the reconstruction of the old Kingdom of Scotland. He did so through the medium of the historical novel. In effect, he promoted the idea that a residual Scottish nationalism should be superseded by a broader British nationalism. With the Jacobite dream killed off in 1746, Scotland, in his view, could henceforth play a vital role in the shaping of the United Kingdom—the British, rather than the English or Scottish, state.

In *Redgauntlet*, political intrigue and disguised identities—the life-blood of Scott's fiction—provide the web in which Darsie Latimer, not yet 21 years of age, tries to discover who he and everyone else really is.

My life is like the subterranean river in the Peak of Derby, visible only when it crosses the celebrated cavern. I am here, and this much I know; but where I have sprung from or whither my course of life is like to trend, who shall tell me?²⁶

²⁴ Makdisi, 'Colonial Space', pp. 165, 169, 182–3; Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 171.

²⁵ Ferris, *Achievement of Literary Authority*, pp. 1–2: '... the Waverley Novels moved the novel out of the sub-literary margins of the culture into the literary hierarchy.' MacQueen, *Rise of the Historical Novel*, pp. 33–7, 100–3, on the interaction of society, history, and psychology in Scott's fiction.

²⁶ Scott, *Redgauntlet*, Letter VII, p. 64. James Kerr, *Fiction against History: Scott as Storyteller* (Cambridge 1989), pp. 40–84, 102–7.

Through experiencing this agonizing journey of self-discovery, he realizes the extent to which he is politically compromised. This novel is particularly significant, because for the first time Scott invents his own history: a potential third Jacobite rebellion in the 1760s. A less appealing Prince Charles Edward arrives in Scotland for a second time, this time in the guise of Father Buonaventure, though with his mistress in tow. It turns out that Darsie's uncle is at the centre of the new conspiracy. With the context of fabricated history and a tale of the imagination, Scott conducts a continuous dialogue between romance and reality. Prosaic reality wins out in the end.²⁷

Despite the fictionalized violence, Scott's moral intention is to point the way to resolution of conflict through the law. *Redgauntlet* presents a spectrum of contradictory views in the latter part of the eighteenth century concerning the nation's inheritance and destiny. Darsie's uncle opposes the Union of 1707 with England, the Protestant succession, and the Hanoverian dynasty. He identifies the Jacobite cause with Robert the Bruce's struggle for Scottish independence against the English kings Edward I and Edward II. David Daiches argues thus:

In creating a story which runs this gamut and explores all the crucial points on it, Scott has written a kind of historical novel very different from what the historical novel is generally taken to be. He shows that attitudes toward history and attitudes toward the present depend on one another, and both depend on the character of the man who has the attitude, and that in turn depends in part on environment which in turn is the product of history.

This is an important statement, since it connects the writing of an historical novel in the present with the view of history both from the perspective of the present and by seeing that past as a vanished present, which had its own past. The real purpose behind the Scottish novels is to demonstrate how contemporary visions of the past affect the understanding of the present. The cultural formation of the writer, whether of fiction or history, is at the centre of this process. *Redgauntlet* resumes the theme of the construction of a 'Great Britain', the 'national identity', which was henceforth to be the object of prime loyalties. Taken as a whole, the Scottish novels held up a mirror to the Scottish people, in which they could contrast their past to a future of prosperity and stability under the leadership of lawyers and merchants and in union with England in a Protestant, constitutional monarchy.²⁸

A subtle historical parallel with the crisis years of the Roman Republic lies beneath the surface, the result of an educational system, which had the writer steeped in the Greek and Latin Classics.²⁹ The focus here is on Sallust (Caius Sallustius Crispus, 86–35 BC), author of *Catiline* and *Jugurtha*. Alan Fairford, on his way to rescue Darsie Latimer from Jacobite conspirators, produces as his reading matter a copy of Sallust's story of the notorious Catiline conspiracy of 63 BC to

²⁷ Scott, *Redgauntlet*, chaps. 15 and 16. Kerr, *Fiction Against History*, p. 48.

²⁸ David Daiches, 'Scott's *Redgauntlet*', in Martin Steinmann, Jr. and R. C. Rathburn (eds), *From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad. Essays Collected in Memory of J. L. Hillhouse* (Minneapolis 1958), pp. 46–60; pp. 52, 55–6, 58.

²⁹ See, for example, Smith, *Lectures*, XVII, pp. 91–5; XIX, pp. 104–8.

overthrow the Roman Republic and establish an autocracy. His reading is spied upon by Nanty Ewart, captain of the Solway Firth smuggling brig the *Jumping Jenny*, who, it turns out, is not only a 'good scholar' given to discoursing on Sallust, Juvenal, and the Old Testament, but also brought Father Buonaventure over to Scotland from Dunkirk, where his ship was known as the *Sainte Geneviève*. Scott's identification of the third Jacobite conspiracy to install a Stuart on the British throne with the Cataline conspiracy is to damn it with the vilest association of moral reprobation.³⁰

Scott opens this novel by adopting the earlier, eighteenth-century technique of an exchange of letters between the two central characters. He introduces the range of characters and the context of the plot early in the novel, largely through this medium. The characters and the environment form significant aspects of Darsie's discovery of Scotland and eventually of his particular place in it. Volume One consists of the thirteen letters exchanged between them. In the course of these letters, we find a series of references to Cervantes. This exchange of letters throws the focus instantly on two distinct personalities, with different backgrounds and prospects. It may be, however, that they are one personality, not divided against itself but possessing two natures, pointing in opposite directions—an *ego* and an *alter ego*. These could be Scott the adventurer and dreamer, and Scott the sensible lawyer and Protestant loyalist. Darsie describes himself in the first letter in the following way: 'I am a solitary individual, having only one kind heart to throb in unison with my own.'³¹

The staid Mr Fairford Senior, modelled on Scott's own father, has a jaundiced view of Darsie Latimer and repeatedly warns his upright son about his tendencies. Darsie is 'a good boy as times go'; he is 'a pleasant companion—but over waggish, over waggish, Alan, and somewhat scatter-brained'; he is 'an arch lad, and somewhat light in the upper storey'; and finally, 'he has little solidity, Alan, little solidity'. Mr Fairford is worried that Darsie's apparent sympathies for prelacy might incline him against the Protestant Succession. Alan recounts all this, with a certain glee, in his second letter to Darsie, sharing the joke with him.³²

Before we have even reached Letter Four, Scott has already woven into the exchange of letters several decisive moments in Scottish history: Robert the Bruce's murder of John 'the Red' Comyn on the altar of Dumfries Dominican church in 1306 and violent accession to the throne; the whole question of the Protestant Succession, fought over for generations; and the two Jacobite Rebellions of 1715 and 1745. Clearly, we are meant to understand that the action of the novel should be viewed in that developing context of violence and insurrection. We are soon thrown into the lawlessness of Scotland's south-westerly border with England, the contraband trades flourishing across the Solway Firth, and the impending armed conflict over control of the salmon fisheries. Rachel Geddes, sister of the Quaker

³⁰ Scott, *Redgauntlet*, pp. 249–50, 253, 270.

³¹ Scott, *Redgauntlet*, Letter I, p. 6; pp. 12–13, 29, 56, 71–2, 76. Welch, *Hero of the Waverley Novels*, pp. 8–11.

³² Scott, *Redgauntlet*, Letter II, pp. 8–13; Letter V, p. 35.

Joshua Geddes, who befriends Darsie on the Solway shore, warns him of the so-called 'Lord of the Lakes', who is earlier in the novel identified by another name, Herries of Birrenswork:

... a man of violence, and hath great influence over many, who, following the trade of sailors and fishermen, become as rude as the elements with which they contend.

Herries, it transpires, took part in the 1745 Rebellion, has papist tendencies, and perhaps knew Darsie's father. It is he who saves Darsie, the incompetent fisherman, from the quicksands of the Solway Firth and the approaching tide.³³

In the dénouement, further violence is thwarted by the unmasking and unravelling of the neo-Jacobite conspiracy and by the discreet avoidance of bloodshed by the army officer sent to apprehend the potential rebels. The novel's overall purpose is to demonstrate to readers—many of whom might have sentimental hankering for the old Scotland—that the age of chieftains, clans, rebellions, the Stuart dynasty, and the 'old religion' was finished forever. One part of Scott, which we can easily recognize in the pages of the Scottish novels, shared these hankерings, but the other part triumphed over them. On the other hand, Scott's nature as a novelist draws heavily on the undercurrents of Scottish life. 'Wandering Willie's Tale', which reveals to Darsie something about his ancestry, explores the supernatural. The blind fiddle-player is, in effect, a rural vagrant, earning his keep as he goes. He belongs, as do his legends, to the older society, vanishing in Scott's day, to which he was much drawn.³⁴

Old Mortality is the centrepiece of the Scottish novels. While *Waverley*, *Rob Roy*, and *Redgauntlet* make clear points concerning the Jacobite cause, which Scott's contemporaries would have appreciated, this novel deals with Presbyterian divisions. It makes clear Scott's belief that the seventeenth century had a more decisive impact on England and Scotland than its successor. (This will also be the view of Macaulay, as we shall see in Chapter 6.³⁵) *Old Mortality* is a much more serious work than *Waverley*. Views differed at its reception concerning the degree to which it portrayed Scottish Protestantism in an ugly light. The intimate connection between religious belief and violence is evident throughout.³⁶

Reason does not triumph at the end of the narrative, but only after a lapse of time. The leading figure, Henry Morton, like Waverley in 1745, is caught between two sides: the Stuart-government cause, supported locally by Lady Margaret Bellenden, and the cause of the Covenanters, opposed to any form of episcopacy

³³ Scott, *Redgauntlet*, pp. 12–18; Letter IV, pp. 20–2; Letter VII, pp. 60–1, 71. Comyn's murder also appeared in *Old Mortality*.

³⁴ Scott, *Redgauntlet*, pp. 87–102. Kerr, *Fiction against History*, pp. 116–19. Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 263.

³⁵ See also Maxwell, 'Inundations', p. 443.

³⁶ Scott, *Old Mortality* (Oxford 1999); see Jane Stevenson, Introduction, pp. xviii–ix. The Covenanter movement owed its origins to the Scottish rebellion of 1638 against Charles I's attempts to enforce episcopacy (prelacy) on the Presbyterian Church. Welch, *Hero of the Waverley Novels*, pp. 230–52, sees this novel as 'Scott's highest achievement in historical and political fiction'. Rigney, *Imperfect Histories*, p. 58, argues that the quality of *Old Mortality* as an historical novel disproves Manzoni's pessimistic conclusions of 1850 concerning the genre.

and making frequent appeals to the Old Testament as a guide to action. Morton reacts against the violence of both sides, favouring religious toleration and thereby risking a reputation for weak-minded indifference to the truth. His main antagonist, John Balfour of Burley, champions the Covenanters to the end. Led by Balfour, these rebels defeat government forces under John Graham of Claverhouse, at Drumclog on 1 June 1679; but are themselves defeated at the Battle of Bothwell Brigg, over the Clyde, on 22 June, by the Duke of Monmouth. The novel counterpoises Burley and Claverhouse—popularly known as ‘Bonnie Dundee’ or ‘Bloody Clavers’—at either end of the religious and political polarity. The ambiguities and ambitions of both are closely examined.³⁷

Wilt draws attention to the skilful use of different forms of language in this novel. Dialect, phraseology, and tone are used to deepen character, assert identity, and establish historical context. This ranges through official English to popular Scots and quotation from scripture.

The dramatic vehicle for this language-action are two wonderful women, Lady Margaret Bellenden, whose royalist English tends to break down into pithy Scots when she is angry or frightened, and Mause Headrigg, whose Scots rises to eloquent and Fury-like Scripture in her passion.³⁸

This is especially the case, when, as in chapter 7, they are battling against one another. The cause of this is old Mause’s decision to prevent her sharp-shooting son, the ploughman Cuddie, from competing in the revived feudal shooting contest known as the ‘wappen-schaw’, which opens the novel and introduces the reader to Morton. Lady Bellenden, adopting the local dialect, reminds her, a well-known opponent of prelates, of her duty as a vassal and subject of the king, to observe the law. Soon the subject of ‘unlawful’ religion arises.

‘Ay, my leddy, nae doubt; but not to displeasure your leddyship, ye’ll mind that there was ance a king in Scripture they called Nebuchadnezzar, and he set up a golden image in the plain o’ Dura, as it might be in the haugh yonder by the water-side, where the array were warned to meet yesterday; and the princes, and the governors, and the captains, and the judges themsells, forby the treasurers, the counselors, and the sheriffs, were warned to the dedication thereof, and commanded to fall down and worship at the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music.’ ‘And what o’ a’ this, ye fule wife? Or what had Nebuchadnezzar to do with the wappen-schaw of the Upper Ward of Clydesdale?’ ‘Only just thus far, my leddy,’ continued Mause, firmly, ‘that prelacy is like the golden image in the plain of Dura, and that as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were borne out in refusing to bow down and worship, so neither shall Cuddy Headrigg, your leddy’s poor ploughman, at least, wi’ his auld mither’s consent, make murgeons or Jenny-flections, as they ca’ them, in the house of prelates and curates, not gird him wi’ armour to fight in their cause, either at the sound of kettle-drums, organs, bagpipes, or any other kind of music whatever.’³⁹

³⁷ Kerr, *Fiction against History*, pp. 40–61, see pp. 40–1, 60–1.

³⁸ Wilt, *Secret Leaves*, pp. 80, 83, 100–1.

³⁹ Scott, *Old Mortality*, ch. 7, pp. 87–8. Kerr, *Fiction and History*, pp. 46–7.

The element of social differentiation cannot be missed here. It conditions each of the women's reading of the past, as when, for instance, Lady Bellenden detects the insurrectionary spirit of 1642, the beginning of the Civil War, in Mause's rhetoric, and when she affirms that she will tolerate no 'whiggery' on her estates.⁴⁰

Language and Biblical texts are used by the Covenanter preachers, who stood for the absolute supremacy of the Kirk with no interference from any civil body, to present a view of history and provide a justification for violence. The scene in chapter 22, where Covenanter preachers, driven from their parishes by Stuart laws and refusing government indulgence, gather their followers in an open-air meeting, resembles the later description in Balzac's *Les Chouans*, where the Breton Catholic clergy, rejecting the revolutionary government's official Constitutional Church, preach in favour of violent rebellion. Scott provides us with a sense of who composed the meeting: '...such gentlemen of small fortune and substantial families, as a sense of intolerable oppression had induced them to take arms and join the insurgents.'⁴¹

Morton is revolted by the call for no quarter and 'horror-struck' by the ghastly appearance of Habakkuk Mucklewrath, one of the preachers. He firmly rejects the idea of slaughter put to the service of religion:

But to no bloody executions after quarter asked or slaughters without trial, will I lend countenance or sanction; and you may depend on my opposing them, with both heart and hand, as constantly and resolutely, if attempted by our followers, as when they are the work of the enemy.

Burley, who believes that religion should be backed by the sword, talks down to the younger man:

Thou art yet but a youth—and hast not learned how light in the balance are a few drops of blood in comparison to the weight and importance of this great national testimony.⁴²

Scott sought to root his imagined drama in historical reality, emphasizing that several figures, beyond those in the history books, such as Claverhouse and Monmouth, were also real.

Burley is a real person and appears in the melancholy history of the period as the Leader of the party who killed Archbishop Sharpe on Magus Moor, near St. Andrews ... Old Mortality was a living person—I have myself seen him about 20 years ago repairing the Covenanters' tombs as far north as Dunnothar. It was his sole occupation and only business on earth. I have an indistinct recollection that he was from the parish of Closeburn in Nithsdale and that his name was Paterson.⁴³

⁴⁰ Scott, *Old Mortality*, p. 89.

⁴¹ Scott, *Old Mortality*, chap. 22, p. 239; see also the note on p. 524 concerning historical accuracy.

⁴² Scott, *Old Mortality*, pp. 245–6.

⁴³ Grierson/Scott, *Letters IV* (1815–17), pp. 340–4, Scott to Lady Abercorn, Abbotsford, 28 December 1816.

Again, the message behind the novel is that Scotland's violent history must become a closed book. Scott's problem as author and, in effect, political moralist, was how to end this novel in a way that demonstrated the possibility of successful outcome on all levels, public and private. The last eight chapters have given rise to considerable criticism for that reason.⁴⁴

JOHN GALT'S COVENANTERS: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

Galt (1779–1834), born in Irvine on the Ayrshire coast, travelled in the Mediterranean, met and wrote about Byron, but centred his fiction mainly in south-west Scotland, where the Covenanters were strongest. This location placed him at the fringe of the Edinburgh-based Enlightenment, but still gave him access to ideas stemming from the rising commercial city of Glasgow. Galt belonged to the modern wing of Presbyterianism and, with Tory sympathies, wrote for *Blackwood's Magazine*. He spent the years 1826–9 in Canada, involved in settlement and development. Familiar with the writings of the English Romantics, he had also read Goethe and Schiller, and knew Alfieri's dramas.

Ringan Gilhaize (pron. 'Gillies') first appeared in three volumes in 1823, to a poor reception. Reprinted only in 1881, 1883, and 1936, the novel remained neglected until the Canongate edition of 1995. One problem immediately arose: did the first-person narrator, Ringan Gilhaize, speak for the author? The strident self-righteousness of four generations of the Gilhaize males from 1558 to 1689 led to the suspicion that it did. This accounted for the book's diminished sales. Galt, however, intended the opposite. His novel sought to expose the reasons for religious extremism and the violent actions which accompanied it. At the same time, he intended to counter Scott's mocking portrayal of the Covenanters in *Old Mortality* by drawing attention to their sufferings under Stuart persecution. He sets the novel within the context of a century and a half of religious and political violence in Scotland from the time of the Regent Mary of Guise until the capture of the English and Scottish thrones by William of Orange. Galt's sympathetic portrayal of the Covenanters lent credence to the belief that he identified himself with them. His account is an alternative version to Scott's. This suggests that, just as in conflicting historical interpretations, one historical novel could also challenge the perspective of another. In practice, though, such conflictive potential seems only rarely to have developed in the history of the historical novel.⁴⁵

Violence determines the action from the beginning of the novel to its climax in Ringan Gilhaize's assassination of Claverhouse after the latter's triumph at the

⁴⁴ Scott, *Old Mortality*, Conclusion, pp. 454–8.

⁴⁵ John Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize* (Edinburgh 1995 [1823]). John MacQueen, 'Ringan Gilhaize and particular providence', in Christopher A. Whatley (ed.), *John Galt (1779–1979)* (Edinburgh 1979), pp. 107–19, and Patricia J. Wilson, 'Ringam Gilhaize. A Neglected Masterpiece?' in Whatley, *John Galt*, pp. 120–50. See also, Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, pp. 249–58.

Battle of Killiekrankie Pass on 27 July 1689. This may also have explained potential readers' rejection of the book. Yet the violence is never gratuitous. There is no direct description of the rape and murder of Ringan's wife and two daughters by billeted Stuart dragoons while he is incarcerated in the Ayr Tollbooth. The novel—only recently 'rediscovered'—is, in many respects, riveting, and broad-ranging through differing historical times.

Ringan Gilhaize is the narrator first of his grandfather's exploits, then of his father's, and finally of his own—a technique enabling Galt to span such a broad stretch of time. In this earlier period, Lord James Stuart, Mary Queen of Scots, John Knox, and other such figures appear, though they are never prime actors in the novel, despite their clear historical importance. Whenever historical events become too complex or remote from daily experience, Ringan states his preference for leaving such things to the historians to recount.⁴⁶

Oaths to the Covenant of 1638, when the Glasgow Assembly abolished episcopacy, transform armed men into the earthly agents of Providence. It becomes clear that Ringan regards himself as God's avenger, predestined for the historical role he is to play. He habitually opens the Bible at random—'I consulted the oracle of God'—in order to discover the right course of action. Unlike Scott's Henry Morton, no Gilhaize waivers in his allegiance to the cause. Each religious group persecutes the other in the name of Christ, gaining or seeking absolute control of the state. The damage they inflict on one another is frequently lethal. The impact of Stuart persecution on local families under Charles II and James II breaks any remaining loyalty to the dynasty.⁴⁷

The grandfather always acts as the subordinate of noblemen. By the Scots Wars of 1639–40, the nobles have dropped out of the picture. Instead, we have a picture of 'simple country folk' guided by their revered ministers. In the rebellion against Charles I, 'many of the cotters and neighbouring farmer lads' take up weapons dating from the Reformation era. Driven from their churches, the ministers lead open-air prayer meetings with hymn-singing. Repression against these meetings opens a new phase of resistance in the reign of Charles II.⁴⁸

Through its characters, the novel explores the prevailing question of the legitimacy of rebellion against a reigning monarch claiming divine institution. In the days of Ringan's father, the old minister, Ebenezer Muir, explains:

... neither king, nor priest, nor any human authority, has the right to interfere between you and your God; and allegiance ends, where persecution begins. Never, therefore, in the trials awaiting you, forget that the right to resist in matters of conscience is the foundation stone of religious liberty. O see, therefore, that you guard it weel!⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize*, pp. 88–9, 108, 140–67, deals with the arrival and fall of Mary Stuart, 182–9.

⁴⁷ Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize*, pp. 224, 262, 330, 334–8, 385, 439. Duncan, *Scot's Shadow*, pp. 256–8.

⁴⁸ Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize*, pp. 201, 208, 212–13, 257.

⁴⁹ Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize*, pp. 192–6, 323–5, 340.

For this reason there are striking differences between what makes Ringan Gilhaize a rebel and the causes of Michael Kohlhaas's transformation. The striking difference is the Scottish religious context and the fact that Ringan is a third-generation dissident. Both cases, however, reveal the overriding loyalty to a religious authority and a belief that the monarch should govern in accordance with specific rules acknowledged by his subjects. Galt's text emphasizes that the Covenanters, who have withdrawn their allegiance to the Stuarts, are not republicans like the English Cromwellians, but loyal to the idea of the monarch as God's ordained.⁵⁰

'The implacable nature of the persecution' and 'the number of honest and pious men' forced into martyrdom drives Ringan to extremes. The destruction of his home and family leaves him, already worn out, mentally unbalanced. In the 1680s he joins the fanatical Cameronians, sworn to bring down the dynasty, and at the end of the decade, now aged around 60, his story ends with the lone journey to Killiekrankie. Claverhouse's apparent victory draws from his depths a momentary denial of the existence of God, until he completes his predestined mission of killing his enemy. Thereupon, Ringan Gilhaize attributes to himself the achievement of changing the course of history:

Never again in this land shall any king, of his own caprice and prerogative, dare to violate the conscience of his people.⁵¹

Duncan argues that Galt rejected Scott's belief, reiterated in *Redgauntlet* as a reaction to *Ringan Gilhaize*, that the fundamental divide in modern Scottish history was between Jacobitism and the Hanoverian succession; that is, between nostalgia for the 'old religion' and tribalism, on the one hand, and stability and moderated monarchy, on the other. Galt's novel suggests that the essential divide was between state repression and popular grievances.⁵²

AUTHENTICITY OF LANGUAGE

The historical novel could stretch a writer's skills to the limit, as the problem of dialogue illustrated. Dialogue raised the problem of how the range of social and ethnic groups expressed themselves in the past. This would become a test of authenticity in the historical novel. Galt's frequent use of Ayrshire dialect and vocabulary enables his characters to speak authoritatively. On the other hand, this may well have restricted his readership.⁵³

In pursuit of both artistic and commercial success, the novelist had to communicate directly to contemporary readers by avoiding obscure language even at the cost of anachronism. Scott had roamed the Highlands and Lowlands in his youth, listening to everyday speech and collecting old tales, and later fed this dialect, as best

⁵⁰ Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize*, pp. 218, 262–81.

⁵¹ Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize*, pp. 341–50, 355, 367–71, 439–47.

⁵² Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 251.

⁵³ The Canongate edition provides a glossary.

he could, into his Scottish novels. Burns' use of Scots was his literary precedent. In his novels, Scott largely confined this Scottish usage of English to dialogue rather than actual narrative. In *Old Mortality*, dialect, expression, and tone deepened character and exposed cultural divisions and religious conflict in late seventeenth-century Scotland.⁵⁴

One contemporary, however, pulled up Scott very severely for what she perceived to be a major anachronism. He had sent an advance copy of *Old Mortality* to Lady Louisa Stuart, daughter of the Earl of Bute, which she had read with approval. She noticed, however, that Scott had made Claverhouse say that he had no time to hear *sentimental* speeches. She declared that he could never have uttered those four syllables, the contemporary sense of which would have been completely unknown to him.

We are used to them, but *sentiment* and *sentimental* were, I believe, first introduced into the language by Sterne, and are hardly as old as I am, let alone the Covenanters' days. I am persuaded you would look in vain for them in the works of Richardson and Fielding, authors of George II's reign. Nay, the French, from whom they were borrowed, did not talk of *le sentiment* in that sense till long after Louis XIV's age. No such thing is to be found in Mme. De Sévigné, La Bruyère, &c. At home or abroad, I defy Lord Dundee ever to have met with the expression.⁵⁵

Scott addressed the question of historical dialogue in the Dedicatory Epistle to *Ivanhoe*, his first novel set outside Scotland and before 1660, and another one replete with dissidents. The solution lay, in his view, in authorial balance:

His [sic] language must not be exclusively obsolete and unintelligible; but he should admit, if possible, no word or turn of phraseology betraying an origin directly modern. It is one thing to make use of the language and sentiments which are common to ourselves and our forefathers, and it is another to invest them with the sentiments and dialect exclusively proper to their descendants.⁵⁶

MONARCHY AND THE MOB

The eighteenth-century 'mob' enters the historical novel with *The Heart of Midlothian*. Scott's sketches of the turbulence of the Edinburgh crowd do have a precise date—7 and 8 September 1736—but the author dwells on the Porteous Riots for no more than twenty pages in two short chapters. These are, nevertheless, evocative

⁵⁴ Sir Walter Scott, *Rob Roy* (London and Glasgow 1953), for Bailie Nichol Jarvie of Glasgow, see from chap. 22. For *Old Mortality*, see Kerr, *Fiction against History*, pp. 40–61, and Wilt, *Secret Leaves*, pp. 22–3, 83, 95–105. Graham Tulloch, *The Language of Sir Walter Scott. A Study of his Scottish and Period Language* (London 1980), pp. 167–71.

⁵⁵ Grierson/Scott, *Letters IV*, pp. 291–5, Scott to Lady Louisa Stuart, Edinburgh 14 November 1816; Lady Louisa Stuart to Scott, London 5 December 1816.

⁵⁶ Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (ed. Graham Tulloch, based on the Edinburgh edition of the same year, London 2000), *Dedicatory Epistle*, p. 11. See also Tulloch, *Language of Scott*, pp. 15, 27–51, 129–66.

passages. The execution of the contrabandist and burglar Andrew Wilson, at the Grassmarket Tolbooth, brings out a huge crowd, with many people also leaning out of upstairs windows. The magistrates fear trouble. Very soon in the narrative, Scott develops a water simile—flow, surge, tide, swell:

The area of the Grassmarket resembled a huge, dark lake or sea of human heads, in the centre of which arose the fatal tree, tall, black and ominous, from which dangled the deadly halter.

The following day, when the execution of Captain Porteous is delayed, the same simile is further developed:

While these arguments were stated and replied to, and canvassed and supported, 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. The crowded populace, as if their motions had corresponded with the unsettled state of their minds, fluctuated to and fro without any visible cause of impulse, like the agitation of the waters, called by sailors the ground-swell.⁵⁷

As it turns out, there are no more disturbances that day and the crowd duly disperses. All this mass expectation, confusion, and discontent has been narrated economically and without undue historical references, even though the historical context is precise and the relation to the rest of the book clear. Nevertheless, the writer's eye here is definitely not on the crowd violence of the French Revolution, about which he would have heard a great deal in his lifetime and from which he would have recoiled. The essential link through the plot is the pardon granted to Porteous by Queen Caroline—a reflection of the London government's different perception of events north of the border. This provides a symbolic parallel with the central character Jeanie Deans's appeal to the queen for a pardon for her wrongly convicted sister, accused of murdering her child.⁵⁸

Jeanie arrives in the London revealed in the paintings of Hogarth, shocking in its corruption. She has walked from Edinburgh, a girl of no means or position, only faith and good breeding, the daughter of the devout Douce Davie Deans. Her refusal to perjure herself has resulted in her younger sister's conviction. She has come to seek in person a royal pardon in order to override the conviction.⁵⁹

The novel is set near the beginning of the reign of George II (1727–60). Significantly, the Hanoverian monarchy—principally in the form of Queen Caroline of Ansbach, who exercised considerable influence over the king—plays a major role in the novel at the climactic point, when Jeanie pleads for a pardon for her innocent sister. This interview is arranged by the Scottish nobleman, resident at the British Court in London, the Duke of Argyle, one of the Campbells, opponents of the Old Pretender in 1715. Argyle is presented as benefactor, a symbol of the type

⁵⁷ Sir Walter Scott, *The Heart of Midlothian* (Oxford 1999 [1982]), edited by Claire Lamont, pp. 27–48.

⁵⁸ Scott, *Heart of Midlothian*, pp. 40, 42, 362–70. See Chapter 4 of this present work for Dickens' view of the crowd in the London of 1780 and the Paris of the 1790s.

⁵⁹ Kerr, *Fiction against History*, pp. 62–84.

of role beneficent nobility might play under a benign monarch. Here, Scott's Toryism comes into play, but it is a Toryism bereft of the High Church or Jacobite sympathies, which two generations earlier had divided and weakened it. Scott's political stance opposed revolution, mob rule, Jacobite rebellions, and religious extremism. No longer the Presbyterian of his upbringing, Scott had adopted a moderate Episcopalianism, akin to the widely held latitudinarian position in the Church of England at that time. The novel is stating that monarchy, nobility, and clergy justify their privileged positions only by their right conduct towards those who are their social inferiors.⁶⁰

Scott's two treatments of the Presbyterian religion in *The Heart of Midlothian* and *Old Mortality* revealed his understanding of the moral purpose of the serious historical novel. Religion permeates both novels. The first novel concerned right conduct; in the second, the focus was on intolerance and violence incited by religious extremes. Yet the roots of the religious faith in *Heart of Midlothian* lay in the Scotland of *Old Mortality*, and only fifty years separated the periods of the two novels.

All Scott's main novels, regardless of claims that he romanticised Jacobinism with its Catholic associations, were permeated with unequivocal Protestant allegiance. His earnest belief was that common adherence to, and willingness to defend, the Protestant religion bound Scotland and England together in the Union. Jeanie Deans epitomizes the simple virtues of truth-telling and clean-living at the heart of both Scottish and English Protestantism.

The Waverley Novels gained their immediate appeal through the continuing relevance of these issues to the Scottish reading public of Scott's time and subsequent generations. The author is telling his public what shaped the modern Scottish nation, what distinguishes it from the English experience, and where the roots of its future survival or, indeed, regeneration, may lie. Dekker points forward to the profound influence this examination of national characteristics would have in continental Europe and beyond:

...the Waverley model taught writers like Cooper, Pushkin, and Balzac to search their own national histories for poignant transitional moments parallel to those in Scottish history. Romantic fictions which revolved around those important moments could satisfy nationalist cravings for American, Russian, or French epics while also claiming universal interest and importance as variations on the great themes discovered for fiction by Scott.⁶¹

This point is developed in the context of the search through older history for the roots of contemporary national identity by Murray Pittock in his study of Scottish and Irish Romanticism. It is an important point to make, because we see other European expressions of it in Italy, Spain, and Russia (as we shall discuss later). While bearing in mind, for instance, later nineteenth-century Catalan rediscovery and re-elaboration of the Principality's medieval experience for the purpose of

⁶⁰ Scott, *Heart of Midlothian*, ch. 37, pp. 359–70.

⁶¹ Dekker, *American Historical Romance*, p. 44.

constructing a modern nationalism, Pittock's principle examples are from Central Europe. Within the Habsburg and Russian Empires, Poland, Hungary, Czech Bohemia and other comparable territories were reconstructing their languages, literature, and histories from the later eighteenth century, with a view to eventually challenging the imperial straightjacket in which early nationalists saw their people constrained.⁶² We can see immediately how translated readings of Scott's fictional material would have contributed to this process. On the other hand, Scott's ulterior political purpose was completely contrary to theirs: union rather than fragmentation.

SCOTT AND THE PROBLEM OF ENGLAND

Issues close to home conditioned Scott's poetic and early fictional themes. When he turned his attention away from Scotland to England, he focused on the aftermath of the Norman Conquest. The time of writing—the later 1810s and the 1820s—followed twenty-three years of almost constant European warfare, during which, first, French Revolutionary forces, and then the Napoleonic armies, imposed political change beyond the borders of France by means of military might. At the core of this long conflict lay the struggle for supremacy between Great Britain and France. In 1805, Napoleon I contemplated an invasion of England, which, by contrast to the successful Norman invasion of 1066, never materialized. William the Conqueror's invasion had come from northern France and had imposed upon England a far-reaching social and political transformation, which largely removed the indigenous governing and landholding classes from their hitherto predominant positions. The shock of the destruction of the old order in France and many other parts of Western Europe in the 1790s and 1800s led historians and historical novelists to examine how earlier societies had coped with such events. (I discuss, for instance, Augustin Thierry's *Norman Conquest of England* [Paris 1824] in Chapter 5.)

Scott broached the question of the impact of the Conquest on the Anglo-Saxons in fictional form in *Ivanhoe*—the novel which would influence Thierry—and developed the conflicting-ethnicities theme further in *Count Robert of Paris* [1831]. I shall take this later work first, because it refers to a period earlier than the aftermath of the Third Crusade in *Ivanhoe*. This little-known last completed novel, altered by his son-in-law and editor during the last year of his life, has recently been restored to the original text. It dealt with the immediate background to the First Crusade in 1097–99. The Anglo-Saxon dimension of this novel becomes apparent from the beginning, where the significantly named Hereward, an exiled and impoverished member of an Old English noble family, is reduced to

⁶² Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*, pp. 190, 201, 204, 208. See especially Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (Cambridge 1985) for the historical examination of these issues.

selling his services as a Byzantine mercenary in the Varangian Guard (as we saw earlier).⁶³

The novel takes place mainly in Constantinople and deals with the arrival of the brutish miscellany of Western European forces—‘the Franks’—at the capital of the Roman Empire in the East. The presence of Norman chieftains in their leadership raises the young Hereward’s easily provoked hackles. The subject arises in no uncertain terms in the course of an interview with the Emperor:

‘What dreadful feud is this, my soldier,’ said the Emperor, ‘that after so many years still drives thee to such extremities when the very name of Normandy is mentioned?’

Hereward thereupon explains the Norman Conquest of England, the death of King Harold, and the Saxon defeat.:

Oppression has driven her wheel over us. All that was valiant amongst us have left the land, and of Englishmen—for such is our proper designation—no one remains in England save as the thrall of the invaders . . . All was laid desolate by the command of the victors. My father’s home lies now an undistinguished ruin, amid an extensive forest, composed out of what were formerly fair fields and domestic pastures, where a manly race derived nourishment by cultivating a friendly soil. The fire had destroyed the church where sleep the fathers of my race; and I, the last of their line, a wanderer in other climates—a fighter of the battles of others—the servant of a foreign, though kind master; in a word, one of the banished—a Varangian.⁶⁴

Duke William of Normandy’s claim of legitimacy did not prevent concerted and protracted resistance in England. Scott’s *Ivanhoe* came after a series of novels examining the impact of the Anglo-Scottish Treaty of Union of 1707 on the formerly independent, though never conquered, Scottish nation. *Ivanhoe* takes place in Norman England with a very different type of union: the enforced union of the formerly Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of England with the Franco-Norman Duchy of Normandy and the imposition of an alien dynasty on the English throne. Scott makes great play there and in *Count Robert* of the sensitivities of the English nobility, which has lost its political and social base. Ivanhoe’s father, Cedric, and betrothed, Rowena, who has royal blood, represent this in *Ivanhoe*.

That novel raises many questions. In the first place, determining events have already occurred before the novel opens. I am not referring here to the historical background in England, but to what we might regard as the ‘pre-*Ivanhoe*’ sequence of events, as though a novel preceding it might have existed. The setting is the Holy Land during the Third Crusade. This is where three central characters of *Ivanhoe*—the Templar Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, King Richard, and Wilfred of Ivanhoe—have acquired the experience which they reveal, often casually, in the text of this novel. The themes of the novel relate directly to what has happened before, although we do not know explicitly what that was. All three are now back in a divided England, two of them in disguise. Whatever happened to them in the Holy

⁶³ Sir Walter Scott, *Count Robert of Paris* (Edinburgh edition, Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

⁶⁴ Scott, *Count Robert of Paris*, pp. 72–3.

Land influences their conduct towards each other when they meet, as it does towards the misrule of Prince John and his rapacious Norman barons, and towards society's outlaws and outcasts. On Crusade, they would have been in close contact with a range of fellow Christian Europeans—the subject of *The Talisman*—Eastern Christians, Jews, and Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims.

Ivanhoe's relationship with his father, Cedric, is a theme running through the novel. The latter still refuses to accept the Conquest, although the action is set in the mid-1190s. He regards the useless Athelstan as rightful king. He has disowned his son for adopting Norman ways, and, without denying his Saxon origins, rallying to King Richard, whom he had accompanied on Crusade. Most of those who knew Ivanhoe would have approved of this, because its aim was the recovery of Jerusalem from the Muslims. In individual terms, this represented a 'coming together' of the conquered Saxons and the conquering dynasty. In the aftermath of the defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden, the point of this 'coming together' would not have been lost on readers.⁶⁵

Ivanhoe's decision to go on Crusade raises the question of whether defence of the Christian religion was more important to him than rivalries at home. We are not told how he reacts to ethnic differences on Crusade. Yet when we encounter him in the novel, his disposition towards Jews—namely Isaac of York and his beautiful daughter Rebecca, who finance and cure him—is entirely favourable. While maintaining his distance on religious grounds, we suspect that Ivanhoe has had prior dealings with the Jews. Possibly rash and intemperate as a young man departing for the Crusade with a monarch of similar character, he arrives back in England, around 25 years of age, a man of discernment. Scott describes him to us: he is sun-burnt, well-formed with a profusion of short, fair hair. Rebecca, kept veiled, who has healed his wounds after the tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche, will have seen his body. The attraction between the two of them is implicit in the text. On both sides of the religious divide, this is forbidden.⁶⁶

In the novel, Isaac and Rebecca are, in a real sense, heroes in the book. Behind them, apparent in the text, is a small Jewish community, which, despite some wealthy members, is struggling to survive in a hostile environment. Calamities could occur at short notice, as in the case of the London and York pogroms of 1189 at the time of Richard's coronation. It is possible that the well-read Scott would have known of these riots. In the novel, Isaac faces torture while a prisoner in Reginald Front-de-Boeuf's unlawfully acquired castle, and Rebecca, also imprisoned, threatens to throw herself from the window rather than submit to Bois-Guilbert's importuning. He, it is clear, desires her to the point of frenzy, and only her threat of suicide prevents him from taking her. This powerful scene demonstrates what she can expect as a woman without protection. She will be accused of witchcraft for casting a spell on Bois-Guilbert to make him fall in love with her, and the sentence will be death by burning. She has only to renege on her faith,

⁶⁵ Scott, *Ivanhoe*, pp. 30–9, 115–16, 171–8.

⁶⁶ Scott, *Ivanhoe*, pp. 230–51.

community, and identity to be saved, except that Bois-Guilbert, who as a Templar has taken monastic vows, must secure release if he is to marry her.⁶⁷

Although Scott's medievalism was fictitious, he further stimulated the awakening interest in the Middle Ages first in Britain and soon across the rest of Europe. Adopting many of the techniques of the earlier Gothic novels and with a keen eye on popular tastes, his medieval novels formed part of a generalized European process of reassessment of the Middle Ages in the aftermath of dismissal during the Enlightenment. Despite *Ivanhoe*'s obvious similarity to contemporary romance, it should not necessarily be regarded as wholly a Romantic novel. For instance, after the combined excitement and intrigue of the Ashby tournament, designed to appeal to the readership, there follows a laconic comment on the useless bloodshed:

Thus ended the memorable field of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, one of the most gallantly contested tournaments of that age: for although only four knights, including one who was smothered by the heat of his armour, had died on the field, yet upwards thirty were desperately wounded, four or five of whom never recovered. Several more were disabled for life; and those who escaped best carried the marks of the conflict to the grave with them.⁶⁸

The marshals of the lists pass 'through a field slippery with blood, and encumbered with broken armour and the bodies of slain and wounded horses' on their way to Prince John's throne.⁶⁹

THE CRUSADES: WESTERN PERCEPTIONS OF TWO MANIFESTATIONS OF THE 'EAST'

Madame de Staël seems, around 1809–10, to have been the first nineteenth-century writer to conceive of a fictional work concerning the three monarchs—Richard I, Philip Augustus, and Frederick Barbarossa of the German Empire—who took part in the Third Crusade. The focus of her historical poem was to be Richard. Saladin, the principal Muslim leader and ruler of Syria, was also to have featured therein. Although she considered travelling in the Near East for the purpose of researching it in authentic surroundings, the poem was never written.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Scott, *Ivanhoe*, pp. 179–86, 193–202. Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*. Vol. III, *The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades* (Cambridge 1987 [1954]), p. 7.

⁶⁸ Scott, *Ivanhoe*, p. 115. Joseph E. Duncan, 'The Anti-Romantic "Ivanhoe"', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 9 (1955), pp. 193–300.

⁶⁹ Scott, *Ivanhoe*, p. 116.

⁷⁰ Fairweather, *Madame de Staël*, p. 385. George Payne Rainsford James (1799–1860), *Philip Augustus*, came out in the same year as *Count Robert*. It was Philip who seized Normandy from King John in 1204, and the novel deals with the conflict between the two monarchs. James wrote more than a hundred historical novels mainly for the popular market, such as *Richelieu* [1829] and *The Huguenots* [1838], as well as historical biographies, one of which was *Life of the Black Prince* [1836]—a further testament to the popularity of medieval themes at that time. Scott entertained the James's at Abbotsford in June 1831: see W. E. K. Anderson (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (Oxford 1972), pp. 625–6.

Ivanhoe is only implicitly a novel of the Third Crusade. Scott's *The Talisman* [1825] contained powerful themes which have transcendent relevance. The focus is on two dimensions at the same time: relations between Muslims and Christians, and between the Christian leaders. The rivalries between the latter seem often to be more lethal than those between the former. Amin Maalouf's study of Muslim rulers before and during the Crusades dispels any suggestion that intra-Muslim hostilities were less than those among Christians.⁷¹ The three monarchs, Leopold of Austria, and a variety of Christian princes and dignitaries, some already resident in the Holy Land, struggle with each other, while trying to wrest from the Muslims territory regained in the First Crusade. The great prize is Jerusalem, holy city of the three religions of Abraham. Saladin, principal ruler of Syria and Egypt, has routed the resident Crusading princes at Hattin in 1187 and seized back Jerusalem, which had fallen to the Western Christians nearly a century earlier. This great victory of Islam provokes the Third Crusade. The real hero of this book is not the blustering Richard I but Saladin, a subtle intellect and master of disguises in the Scott tradition. Another hero, it is true, Kenneth of Scotland, turns out to be the heir to the Scottish throne, but, although a Romantic figure, his personality and portrayal is inferior to that of Saladin. Just as Rebecca healed Ivanhoe, so Saladin, disguised as a doctor, heals Richard.⁷² It may be the case that Scott's version of Saladin initiated the fascination of the 'West' for this 'Eastern' figure, with many pilgrimages to his tomb in Damascus.⁷³

Count Robert of Paris continued to develop in fictional form the on-going question of the relation between 'East' and 'West'. This time, however, the focus was on a different 'East', the Byzantine and Orthodox East, at the time of the First Crusade. Already, in the novel, we see this East squeezed between the Franks—the 'barbarians'—on the one side, and the Muslims—the 'infidels'—on the other side. The danger already apparent in southern Italy and Sicily, with the Norman seizure of Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily, now appears in Greece itself when the Crusaders arrive there, several of their leaders being recent enemies of the Emperor. All this is clear from the dialogue in the novel, which is put in the mouths of contrasting characters, most of whom have veiled motives. Scott's choice of this theme would probably have been determined by contemporary events, although the author does

⁷¹ Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes* (London 1984: [Les croisades vues par les Arabes (Paris 1983)], *passim*.

⁷² Scott, *Letters*, IX (1825–6), pp. 88–9, Scott to James Ballantyne [printer, Herriot Row, Edinburgh], Abbotsford, 22 April 1825, pp. 271–2, Archibald Constable to Charles Mills, London, 1 November 1825, for the dispute over fact and fiction in this novel between Scott and Mills, author of *History of the Crusades*, 2 vols., [1820]. For Richard in the Holy Land, see Runciman, *Crusades*, III, pp. 47–75.

⁷³ Welch, *Hero of the Waverley Novels*, pp. 63–5, views Saladin as 'the one romantic character in the Waverley Novels about whom Scott has no reservations at all', in contrast to Rob Roy or George Staunton in *Heart of Midlothian*. Runciman, *Crusades*, III, pp. 76–8. Maalouf, *Crusades through Arab Eyes*, pp. 170–217. Malcolm Cameron Lyons and D. E. P. Jackson, *Saladin. The Politics of Holy War* (Cambridge 1995 [1982]), pp. 255–77. Warwick Ball, *Syria. A Historical and Architectural Guide* (Buckhurst Hill, Essex, 1994), pp. 59–60.

not allude to them either in his Journal or his Letters.⁷⁴ The Greek uprising against Ottoman rule began in earnest ten years previously, and the struggle had already cost Byron his life in the Turkish siege of Missolonghi in 1824. The loss of the Romantic poet, whom Scott admired, affected him profoundly, and this probably brought about an immersion in Greek historical literature. While it was well known that incidents mentioned in Gibbon initially suggested the subject of a new novel, Scott also read Anna Comnena's *History* (as we saw earlier).⁷⁵

FACT AND INVENTION

Scott's novels exposed, right from the beginning, the tension between fact and invention—a dilemma which the author himself openly discussed in several of his Introductions. The Waverley Novels introduced their readership to history as a living reality. At least, that was how it often seemed, but romance frequently took over. This exposed Scott to charges of vitiating his own credibility and compromising his portrayal of history. Kerr outlines this problem in the following way:

Scott challenges the validity of literary forms for representing the past by appealing to a reality beyond the boundaries of fiction. But he undermines his own essays in accurate historical representation by submitting the past and its textual records to the transforming power of romance. Despite Scott's studied manipulations, the novels are marked by a disjunction between imaginative play and realistic perception . . . While Scott knew he was concocting stories about history, he still held to a notion of historical truth and intelligibility.⁷⁶

The success of the historical novel challenged history, urging it towards realism and broader social contexts. Two issues arose out of the early experience of the historical novel: the demands of fiction, and the need for authenticity. They exposed the dilemma at the heart of the historical novel, despite its powerful influence on both fiction and history. Rigney draws attention to the problem of interplay:

[Scott was] a pivotal figure whose work is rooted in antiquarianism and whose influence stretches out into novelistic and historiographical experiments in the nineteenth century . . . From Walter Scott to Umberto Eco and José Saramago, by way of Tolstoy and Virginia Woolf, what defines the historical novel as a genre is precisely the interplay between invented story elements and historical ones . . . [or] in which the novelists do not so much use historical particulars to compose their narratives as

⁷⁴ Anderson, *Journal*, the entry for 19 April 1829 gives the first mention of such a book, which acquires greater seriousness after April 1830. The contract of 4 March 1830 with the publisher provided for the sum of 2,300 guineas for the author and for a total of 5,000 published copies of the book. Around that time, Scott had been asking for Byzantine historical sources. In the autumn he had the titles, and in December he began writing seriously.

⁷⁵ For a modern edition, see Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*, London 2003 [1969]), translated by E. R. A. Sewter, and written in the 1140s. See chapter XI, pp. 333–68, for the First Crusade.

⁷⁶ Kerr, *Fiction and History*, pp. 16–17.

overtly supplant or subvert existing histories by focusing on aspects of the past that are off centre with respect to the well-known events in history.⁷⁷

Publishers' attention to the potential market, and authors' inclination towards romance and adventure in order to appeal to the public, threatened to vitiate artistic concerns. When it came to authenticity in the historical novel, a range of problems arose—not least of which was the role of the author and the nature of authorship. The question of sources became as important for the historical novel as for history, at that time experiencing growing preoccupation with them, and for the novel itself. The long-established authorial technique of attributing the story to the rediscovery of a lost manuscript, for example, was designed to provide authenticity—although completely fictional. It also suggested that there might be more than one author for the final work. As we saw in Chapter 1, Cervantes had adopted this technique in *Don Quijote*. Paradoxically, the time of publication of that novel coincided with the even more pronounced visibility of the author on the title-page of books, which reflected the author's entry into the market place. One author has described Scott, in line with his predecessors, as among the 'entrepreneurs of fiction'.⁷⁸

The Scottish novels established a national—that is, a Scottish—distinctiveness in harmony with the new sentiment of nationalism arising in Europe at the time of writing. This was the case, despite Scott's commitment to the Act of Union of 1707. This national element gave Scott's novels their particular resonance in continental Europe. Clearly, these tendencies were open to further exploitation. Duncan tells us that Scott broke with the *Edinburgh Review* in 1809, and draws attention to the eclipse of this journal after 1817 by the new *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, which rejected the ideas of Hume and the Enlightenment in favour of F. Schlegel's theory of national literature, promoted by Scott's future son-in-law, J. G. Lockhart. The new monthly propounded a type of Tory Romanticism. Scott's novels became co-opted into this version of literary history, when they had not really belonged to that orientation when they were conceived and written. This version of Scott would be disseminated across the European continent.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Rigney, *Imperfect Histories*, pp. 8–9.

⁷⁸ Roger Chartier, *El orden de los libros. Lectores, autores, bibliotecas en Europa entre los siglos XIV–XVIII* (Barcelona 1994), pp. 55–7, 66. Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, pp. 275–7. There is a good discussion of these issues in Jenkin, 'Factional Pasts', pp. 32–43. Fiedler, *Love and Death*, p. 163.

⁷⁹ Ferris, *Achievement of Literary Authority*, p. 106. Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, pp. 21–2, 47–9, 57–8, 147–82, 215–45. Lockhart in 1818 translated Schlegel's *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur* [1812]. Trumper, 'National Character', pp. 708–12. Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*, pp. 218–26, 226–34. See also Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism. A Cultural History, 1740–1830* (London 1987), pp. 63, 69–70, 73, 75–9. (The author undoubtedly means British nationalism.) Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven and London 1991), pp. 110–20, 367–9.

5

Romanticism and the historical novel

Romanticism had many strands, a varying significance, and a differing impact according to place and time. The experience of the *Sturm und Drang* enabled Novalis, J. G. Herder, F. and A. W. Schlegel, and Joseph Eichendorff and others to move from the Enlightenment into the deeper waters of Romanticism. Practically all over Europe, a debate raged in literary circles between the rival merits and techniques of Classicism and Romanticism, in which the young protagonists of the latter portrayed themselves as innovators and iconoclasts. At the heart lay the question of whether the theatre or the novel took prior place in the vanguard of the new literary modes. Much depended on their assessment of Shakespeare and Schiller, on the one hand, and Corneille and Racine, on the other. It was no coincidence that both Manzoni and Hugo, both future novelists of renown, began their careers as respected poets and dramatists. The historical novel in its new form helped strengthen the case for realism and seriousness of purpose in fiction, revealing also the innovative capacity and flexibility of the novel. The leading protagonists of Romanticism influenced one another, developed several common themes, and promoted or translated each other's works. That proved to be the case across literature, music, and painting. French Romantics reacted in varying ways to Scott, and French translations of his works appeared from 1816 onwards.

This and the following two chapters look at fiction and history in France, England, Germany, and Italy. In Part II, Chapters 10, 11, and 12 discuss the impact of Romanticism in Spain, Russia, and Germany, and the development of the historical novel there.

SOURCES, MANIFESTATIONS, AND PREFERENCES

Madame de Staël played a significant role in the cultural transfer from the German territories to France. *De l'Allemagne*, finished in 1810 but first published in England (in French) in 1813, made the philosophical and literary ideas of the German Romantics familiar in France and exercised a huge influence across Europe. Born in Paris of Swiss origin and always loyal to her Protestant roots, she became a lifelong champion of liberal constitutionalism, whether in monarchical or republican form. From the later 1780s and at periods through the 1790s, Madame de Staël presided over one of the most important literary salons in Paris, providing the link between the French Enlightenment and German Romanticism. Napoleon, who disliked her intelligence, volubility, and constant criticism, exiled

her from Paris between 1803 and 1813. Her salon reopened after the Restoration, where it became the centre of attraction for European leading literary and political figures. Stendhal, who thought she was superficial, attributed the German book mainly to her follower, A. W. Schlegel. It was Madame de Staël who introduced Manzoni to Romanticism during his period in Paris from 1805 to 1810, when he also returned to the Catholic Church.¹

Stendhal, in his ironical definition of the difference between Romanticism and Classicism, stated that the former was the art of presenting to the people works of literature which, in their actual state of mind, would give them the greatest enjoyment. Classicism had done the same, but for their great-grandparents.² Some twenty articles in the Paris journal *Le Globe*, published from 24 September 1824 until its final demise on 17 January 1831, sought with varying success to define what Romanticism meant. This influential paper disseminated the works of foreign writers, such as Scott and Manzoni, and young French writers, as well as literary criticism. Several future celebrities, such as Hugo (1802–85) and the critic Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804–69), had their apprenticeship on *Le Globe*. They would meet their fellow contributors in the Wednesday salon of Philippe-Auguste Stapfer, or at the salon of Charles Nodier, Director of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. By 1826, writers vied for attention by the paper. French interpretations of Romanticism argued for moderation, an avoidance of obscurantism, unintelligibility and pretension, a rejection of 'Germanisms' and 'Anglicisms', and strict adherence to the rules of the French language. Everything else was permitted, though 'tempered with wisdom'.³

Definitions, however, remained elusive. Madame de Staël, Stendhal, Hugo, and writers of *Le Globe* all had varying perspectives. The 23-year-old Ludovic Vitet, for instance, described Romanticism, in April 1825, as the 'Protestantism of Letters and the Arts'—'a coalition fired by different interests but with a common goal—war on rules and conventions'. In his view, Romantics were the contemporary equivalent of the Encyclopaedists or *philosophes*, and the liberation of literature and taste awaited its 14 July 1789. Nevertheless, he recognized the Germanic origin of the term and its twenty-year vintage, but stressed that for Germans, Romanticism had meant not just a break with Classical mythology but a return to Christian mysteries and the world of the Middle Ages. Against the background of the

¹ Germaine Necker de Staël (1766–1817) was the daughter of Jacques Necker, Finance Minister of Louis XVI (1774–92). The Necker Château of Coppet, on the shore of Lake Geneva, became a pole of attraction during periods of absence from Paris. See *De l'Allemagne* (Paris 1968), pp. 159–63, 173–95. Maria Fairweather, *Madame de Staël* (London 2005), pp. 64, 81, 98, 104, 210, 239, 249, 279, 292–309, 331–6, 367–89, 425, 437–8, 455–6.

² Stendhal [Henri Beyle], *Racine et Shakespeare* [Paris 1823], ch. 3, *Ce que c'est que le Romanticisme?* Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (London 1999, edited by Henry Hardy, [1965]), pp. 1–2.

³ Pierre Trahard, *Le Romantisme défini par le 'Globe'* (Paris 1924), pp. xi–xiv, 2–8, 9–18, 19–30, 41–53, 61–71, 83–6. The paper faced the opposition of most of the pro-government press and the Académie Française. J.-J. Goblot, *Le Globe (1824–1830). Documents pour servir de l'histoire de la presse littéraire* (Paris and Geneva 1993), pp. 101, 129–31, 167, 283, 286–7, 291. *Le Globe* published excerpts from the 'Edinburgh Review' and Scott's *Chronicles of the Canongate*. St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, pp. 296, 386, for Paris editions of Scott (in English), and Berengo, *Intelletuali e librai*, pp. 120–3, for editorial competition to publish Scott in Milan in the 1820s.

veritable war between the two literary factions, Hugo, in 1827, argued that the Romantics sought to re-establish art on a new foundation. In December 1825 and January 1826 the 25-year-old Duverger de Haurannes rejected the Classical unities in theatre, and showed how Manzoni's two dramas, *Il Conte de Carmagnola* [1819] and *Adelchi* [1821], translated into French in 1823 by Claude Fauriel, the medievalist and author's host in Paris, had made them redundant. Hauranne saw theatre as the last bastion of pedantic Classicism, and called for its storming after two centuries of tyranny. Hugo obliged shortly afterwards with *Hernani* [1829], introducing Romanticism to the French theatre, albeit still in verse, as Stendhal complained, and later *Ruy Blas* [1838]—both historical dramas providing audiences with a French portrayal of Spanish political life.⁴

For Lukács, Romanticism represented a rejection of the French Revolution and showed a regrettable fixation with the past, which he viewed as essentially reactionary. Frye reminds us, however, that Romanticism, its historical centre of gravity from 1780 to 1830, was not primarily an ideological or philosophical position, but 'really belongs to the history of imagery'. Despite German origins and English diffusion through poetry, the French Revolution accounted for its timing and impact. This does not imply that Romanticism was principally reactionary. M. H. Abrams draws our attention to the Romantic writers' preoccupation with violence and change—a reflection of the age in which they lived.⁵ Dekker suggests that Romantic forms were

...readily exported to countries which, like Russia and the United States, had recently waged wars of national liberation and imperial expansion.⁶

Frye sees a central characteristic of Romanticism as 'the internalizing of reality'.

Its contribution to fiction is rather, appropriately enough, a form of romance. In romance, the characters tend to become psychological projections and the setting and period in the past just remote enough to be recreated rather than empirical studies.⁷

In Dekker's view, Romanticism polarizes characters, causes, and themes, as was already apparent in the Waverley Novels and prefigured in Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*. Scott mixed these contradictory characteristics in single individuals. However, a preoccupation with morality and legality distinguished Scott's heroes from Romantic heroes not bound by morality.⁸

⁴ Victor Hugo, *Odes et Ballades. Préface de 1824*, in *Oeuvres Poétiques*, I (Paris 1964), pp. 269–78, and 'Cromwell'. *Préface de 1827*, in *Théâtre Complet* (Paris 1963), pp. 409–54. Trahard, 'Le Globe', pp. 10–11, 14, 87–93, 102–26. Maigron, *Le roman historique*, pp. 146, 152–3, 156–62, 243, 330–1. Hermann/Manzoni, *Historical Novel*, pp. 13–20, 26.

⁵ Northrup Frye, *Romanticism Reconsidered* (New York 1963), pp. vi, viii–ix, 1. M. H. Abrams, 'English Romanticism: the Spirit of the Age', in Frye, *Romanticism*, pp. 26–72; pp. 42–3. The first generation of poets were Blake, Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge in the 1790s, to which may be added Hölderlin, under the influence of *Sturm und Drang*.

⁶ Dekker, *American Historical Romance*, p. 48.

⁷ Frye, *Romanticism*, pp. 11–12.

⁸ Dekker, *American Historical Romance*, pp. 47–50. Welch, *Hero of the Waverley Novels*, pp. 230–1.

For H. G. Schenk, Classicisms's spiritual emptiness opened the way for the revival of Christianity. The young John Henry Newman enthused over *Ivanhoe* immediately on publication, but found in Manzoni's *The Betrothed* a greater depth of spirituality than found in Scott. Nevertheless, in 1839 he wrote that the influence of Scott had prepared the way for the reception of Catholicism in mid-century England. Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth had, in his view, also played their part.⁹

Although the rejection of Classicism encouraged a preference for medieval models over Greek and Roman Antiquity, no sharp division should be understood. Many strands of the Enlightenment still remained strong throughout the nineteenth century and gave shape to Romanticism. Peter Gay points to the German Romantics' battle to restore mysticism—the appeal to powers above the natural laws—but cautions that their rejection of the Enlightenment was incomplete.

The same unhistorical amnesia that made the German Romantics overlook the remnants of religion in the Enlightenment also made them neglect the roots of their movement in the eighteenth century.¹⁰

Although many European Romantics adopted medieval or Christian themes, their innovative subjects, notably individual emotions, and defiance of convention, usually transcended nostalgia. In this way, Romanticism, which contained many contradictory strands, often looked radically forward, even though the mythology or setting lay in some past epoch.¹¹

Historical novelists henceforth had to know history if they wanted their work to be taken seriously. They needed to understand different human experience in different epochs, rather than assume that the whole of humanity behaved in the same way. Maigron argued that the historical novel provided a solid apprenticeship for French Romantic writers, and that the development of both the historical novel and Romanticism were interconnected phenomena. He pointed to the influence of René de Chateaubriand, the Breton nobleman who had sought exile in the United States during the Revolution. Chateaubriand had breathed fresh life into the French novel with his descriptions of scenery and his vivid prose, and was the first French writer with a sense of history. The historical novel, with its emphasis on wild scenery and rebels, was ripe for further development by the Romantics. Yet the Romantic influence lay not only in colour and adventure, but also in psychological depth and social inclusiveness. Both of these were major elements in explaining the diffusion of the historical novel at that time. On the other hand, the opportunity for tapping the market for entertainment by developing the passion and violence associated with the historical novel lay open.¹²

⁹ H. G. Schenck, *The Mind of the European Romantics* (London 1966), pp. 37–9. Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman. A Biography* (Oxford 1989 [1988]), pp. 11, 147–8, 173–4.

¹⁰ Peter Gay, *Schnitzler's Century. The Making of Middle-Class Culture, 1815–1914* (New York 2002), pp. 169–70.

¹¹ See Wagner's opera plots: in particular *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Tristan und Isolde*.

¹² Maigron, *Le roman historique*, p. vii, 28–9, 49–51, p. 133 n. 1 and 4, 191, 201, 304, 353–4, 389. By the late 1810s, Chateaubriand, closely associated with the politics of the government of Louis XVIII (1814–24), had passed out of vogue.

The impact of Scott was immediate and dramatic in France. The first of his novels to be translated into French was *Old Mortality*, which received its own French title as *Les Puritains d'Écosse*. *The Heart of Midlothian* followed, as *La Prison d'Edimbourg*. The principal translator, Jean-Baptiste Defauconpret, however, suppressed passages of description and retrospection, put local dialect into Classical French, and gave the novels a Catholic and Legitimist hue. Scott's attempt to portray the Covenanters faithfully in *Old Mortality*, and his insistence on the division between moderates and extremists, were entirely lost. The translation altered the character of the leading protagonists.¹³

Vigny, Mérimée, Stendhal and Dumas all read English. Even Stendhal, who generally disliked Scott, admired *Old Mortality*, which continued to be regarded in France as his finest novel. Rather than the Scottish novels, however, French writers preferred as their models Scott's medieval novels, *Ivanhoe* and *Quentin Durward* [1823]. The latter contained controversial portrayals of Louis XI and the Duke of Burgundy in conflict during the later fifteenth century.¹⁴ The different strands in Scott appeared in the works of his continental admirers. While the young composer Hector Berlioz based his first two significant works on *Waverley* (1828) and *Rob Roy* (1833), Eugene Delacroix painted the 'Assassination of the Bishop of Liège' (1829) from *Quentin Durward*. The French Neo-Classical tradition, which had sunk deep roots since the Renaissance, survived alongside the new Romanticism.¹⁵

Medievalism flourished for a long time in Western Europe. Its influence stretched through literature to music, painting, and architecture. The reading public could also enjoy the restoration of ruined medieval buildings and the collection of relics from the past in newly appointed museums. The French writer, Mérimée, became Louis Philippe's *Inspecteur des monuments historiques et antiquités nationales* from 1834 until 1853. Neither a trained archaeologist nor architect, Mérimée applied himself to the task with skill and a keen eye for the total artistic conception of individual buildings and the original date of construction. Together with his younger, close collaborator, Eugène Viollet le-Duc (1814–79), who had studied architecture, Mérimée oversaw the rescue of numerous buildings across France. Deeply immersed in the sources for the history of these buildings, he developed a wide-ranging interest in history long after he had published his historical novel in 1829. The overriding principle was generally maintained that

¹³ See Richard Maxwell, 'Scott in France', in Murray Pittock (ed.), *The Reception of Sir Walter Scott in Europe* (London and New York 2006), pp. 11–30, and Paul Barnaby, 'Another tale of Old Mortality: The Translations of Auguste-Jean-Baptiste Defauconpret in the French Reception of Scott', in Pittock, *Scott in Europe*, pp. 31–44.

¹⁴ Victor Hugo, 'Sur Walter Scott à propos de "Quentin Durward"' [June 1823], in *Littérature et Philosophie, mélées* (Paris c.1920), pp. 229–42. Hugo saw the theme of the novel as loyalty versus perfidy, and praised Scott's portraits of the king and the duke (prudence versus audacity), and the 'Wild Boar of the Ardennes' and the gypsy Hayraddin, about whom he thought there should have been more. For Hugo's version of Louis XI, significantly seen in the fortress-prison of the Bastille: *Notre-Dame de Paris. 1482*, [Paris 1831], livre 10, ch. 5. Maigron, *Le roman historique*, pp. iv–xii, 1–72, 99–105, 123–4, 235–52, 252–77, 310.

¹⁵ Neo-Classicism survived in architectural styles and the portrayals of Classical events by Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867).

restoration meant not reconstruction but a return to the original spirit of the builders and decorators.¹⁶

In this way, Medieval Europe, which the Enlightenment thought had vanished for good, came back to life in the European cities and countryside—alongside the railways and factories of the nineteenth century. French neo-medievalism accompanied the revival of Catholicism from the first decade of the nineteenth century onwards. Although faced at first with public indifference, the Romantics' medievalism soon acquired a popular following. In 1844, for instance, 12,000 persons attended the opening of the Musée de Cluny in Paris. This museum, on the site of a ruined monastery at the corner of what would become the mid-nineteenth-century Boulevards of St-Michel and St-Germain, had originally been conceived by Alexandre de Sommerard in the early 1830s and became the responsibility of the French State in 1843. It revealed the Middle Ages through display of material objects in thematic, spatial, and chronological order. The Museum formed part of the general imagining of the medieval age in which novelists, composers, painters, and historians were simultaneously engaged.¹⁷

THE EARLY FRENCH ROMANTIC NOVEL

The first two modern French historical novels, Vigny's *Cinq-Mars* and Mérimée's *Chronicle of the Reign of Charles IX*, consciously departed from Scott by emphasizing high politics in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century France. Although Vigny drew from such sources as the contemporary *Mémoires* of the Cardinal de Retz, he fictionalized many of the encounters between the leading competitors for power at the core of the French state, altered dates, time-scales and locations, and linked issues which were not historically connected. Neither novel was strong on psychology. Stendhal, by contrast, admitted that his first completed novel, *Armance* [1827], had been influenced by Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* [1678], in which this had been the strong point. Writing in 1830, Stendhal suggested that a comparison of any ten pages of *La Princesse de Clèves* with any ten of *Ivanhoe* or *Quentin Durward* would reveal Lafayette to be a worthier model for the modern novelist than Scott, despite the latter's popularity at the time.¹⁸

Lafayette's novel was essentially a disquisition on love—and particularly of passion. While it is true that the love element appears to an extent in *Cinq-Mars*, it is not a determinant of the action. Although it is more significant in Mérimée's

¹⁶ See *Oeuvres Complètes de Prosper Mérimée*, publiées sous la direction de Pierre Trahard et Édouard Champion: *Lettres à Viollet-Le-Duc* (Paris 1927), pp. iii-vii, Appendices with Correspondence between them: pp. 196–9, 199–202, 202–8. Pierre Trahard, *Prosper Mérimée de 1834 à 1853* (Paris 1928), pp. 2–7, 16, 22–4, 29–31, 34, 37, 44–6, 74. Mérimée—always culturally and politically well connected—attended Viollet-le-Duc's mother's Friday salon for Romantic writers and artists from 1825. Their professional collaboration began in 1839 and lasted thirty years. Maigron, *Le roman historique*, pp. 308–9.

¹⁷ Bann, *The Clothing of Clio*, pp. 78–9, 92–3.

¹⁸ Geoffrey Strickland, Standhal. *The Education of a Novelist* (Cambridge 1974), pp. 126–8, 189. Jonathan Keates, *Stendhal* (London 1995 [1994]), pp. 303–4.

Chronicle, the thrust of the book is the religious conflict and the violence which ensues from this. Both these novels are essentially political in content and intent, and in this sense they come straight from the line developed by Scott, despite their conscious divergence from his methods.

The time difference in Lafayette is considerably less than in Vigny or Mérimée, since it is set in the 1550s, one-hundred-and-twenty years before the time of writing, or double the span of Scott's 'sixty years since'. The two Romantics followed the later Scott rather than the earlier novels of more familiar times. Even the longer time-span of *Old Mortality* presented little problem to readers of the day, since the issues remained very much alive in Scotland. And yet Vigny and Mérimée had their eyes fixed on the impact of the French Revolution, despite their choice of an earlier period. Balzac's *Les Chouans* is, as we shall see, actually set in the Revolutionary era, only three decades before the time of writing. The issue of whether Lafayette's novel was a progenitor of the historical novel will always be a subject of debate. In my view, the historical setting has little or no bearing on the course of the mostly internalized plot. The action could take place in any period, despite the deftly drawn and recognizable historical account of the later years of the reign of Henri II (1547–59), with no vagueness about dates, historical characters, and events. It is conceivable that the decision to locate the novel in the past resulted from wariness of supposed coded identities at the time of writing.¹⁹

Like Stendhal, Balzac criticized Scott's inability to portray passion between men and women. Balzac's *Les Chouans* is really the only French historical novel of this early period which reflects the interplay of intense emotion in the way that Lafayette did. In both novels, passion becomes a destructive force, uncontrollable in Balzac but under strict moral and cultural restraints in Lafayette. The mutual passion between the married Princess and the Duc de Nemours destroys her husband's marital love and their own love as well. The moral order, which transcends court intrigue and monarchical or nobiliar splendor, wins out in the end. In the tragedies of Corneille and Racine, writing in the Neo-Classical tradition, human passions, rather than external events, account for the undoing of their central characters.²⁰

The problem at the heart of Vigny's novel is the character of Cinq-Mars, which remains open to contradictory interpretations and does not, in any case, correspond to historical reality. Vigny's ideological critique of Richelieu's reduction of nobiliar power in the early seventeenth century rests on these weak shoulders. The author's aim is to explain the collapse of the monarchy and *ancien régime* during 1789–93.

¹⁹ Madame de Lafayette (Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne), *La Princesse de Clèves*, published anonymously (Paris 1972 [1678]), pp. 9–27. Historical figures, such as Mary of Scotland ('la reine dauphine'), sometimes determine the course of the fictional action, as in the episode of the mislaid letter written by an unidentified mistress. See also Richard Maxwell, *The Historical Novel in Europe, 1650–1950* (Cambridge 2009), pp. 27–30.

²⁰ Lafayette, *Princesse de Clèves*, pp. 60–5, 241–2. J. W. Scott, *Madame de Lafayette, La Princesse de Clèves* (London 1997 [1983]), pp. 13–15, 32–3. Odette de Mourgues, *Racine or, The Triumph of Relevance* (Cambridge 1967), pp. 4–5, 30–1, 34, 92, 112. Pierre Corneille, 'Horace' (London (the French text), 1985 [1963]), pp. 9–63; pp. 10–12, 14, 18–21, 49–50, 52–3.

Vigny wrote at the time when Charles X (1824–30) was attempting to reverse the consequences of the Revolution. The host of historical figures includes the playwright Pierre Corneille and the poet John Milton. These two pertinently sum up the point of the whole exercise. After the public decapitation of the two young conspirators in the Place des Terreaux in Lyon, Corneille comments to Milton:

‘Their last wish was to see the old monarchy flourish. Henceforth, only ministerial writ will rule. The great nobles and senates have been reduced to nothing.’ ‘So, take a good look at this supposedly great man, Richelieu!’ Milton said. ‘What had he intended to accomplish? To create republics of the future, since he destroyed the bases of your monarchy.’ [Corneille comments] ‘...he continued Louis XI’s work, and neither that king nor Richelieu understood the consequences of their actions.²¹

The mention of Louis XI is significant because *Quentin Durward* had also been published in Paris in 1823. In the following year, Vigny sketched out a plan for a novel on Cinq-Mars and, after basic research, wrote it early in 1826 in Paris. He saw as the essential polarities the scheming and ambitious Richelieu, dedicated to the power of the state, and the self-effacing friendship of De Thou for Cinq-Mars, which leads to the scaffold. De Thou’s idea of monarchy is exalted: a passion, sanctified by religion and beyond reason. Vigny, at the opposite end of the spectrum to Thierry, wished to place this ideal before his reading public. He had intended to write a series of historical novels on the theme of nobility, ending with its destruction in 1789; but he never did so—perhaps as a result of criticism of *Cinq-Mars*.²²

The strength of the novel lies in the ongoing tension between Louis XIII and Richelieu, rising to a brutal climax, when Louis surrenders everything to the Cardinal and thereby hands over Cinq-Mars and de Thou to him for condemnation and punishment. Without Vigny’s interplay of rivalries and hatreds at the French court, however, there probably would have been no Dumas, *Les Trois Mousquetaires* [1844], which was so clearly modelled on the former’s portrayal of Richelieu and founded in the idea that the king was his unwilling prisoner.²³ Its greatest weakness lay in Vigny’s portrayal of Cinq-Mars. Chapter XVIII, entitled ‘The Secret’, exposes the flawed nature of this central consciousness. In a passionate scene between Cinq-Mars and De Thou, the former explains the motives and objectives of his conspiracy. The grandiose objective includes bringing in Spain—France’s enemy—as the decisive element in the overthrow of the Cardinal. De Thou, although shocked, stands by his friend out of loyalty. This will cost him his life. Cinq-Mars as a character cannot hold the novel together, because the author

²¹ Vigny, *Cinq-Mars*, pp. 485–6 (my translation). Vigny met Scott in Paris in 1826. Given his political orientation, Vigny deliberately ignored *Le Globe*.

²² Vigny, *Cinq-Mars*, pp. 542, 546. The novel was published in April 1826. An estimated total of fourteen editions appeared in Paris during the author’s lifetime. For Vigny on the relationship between fact and imagination, see *Réflexions sur la vérité dans l’art*, designed unsuccessfully as a kind of preface to the novel after the 1829 edition, to disarm critics.

²³ Vigny, *Cinq-Mars*, pp. 418–31, for the dramatic confrontation between Louis XIII and Richelieu, see pp. 429–31.

has not been able to draw enough out of him to provide the reader with a convincing conspirator. The ease with which Richelieu breaks him makes Cinq-Mars an unworthy opponent of the skilled politician. Vigny places the final blame on Louis XIII, whom he accuses of having betrayed the nobility to Richelieu, their executioner, thereby paving the way for future republics after 1793.²⁴

Mérimée focused on a notorious crime: the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, in which the monarch, Charles IX, had been implicated. *Chronique du règne de Charles IX* [1829] introduced the two Mergy brothers divided along confessional lines. Although historical figures such as the king, the Queen Mother Catherine de Medici, and Admiral Coligny, the Protestant leader, play significant roles in the novel, the focus of the action remains on the brothers, for whom matters of honour and love play a greater part than religion in daily life. As in Vigny's novel, a hunting scene portrays the earlier concept of honour among noblemen, regarded as more precious than material possessions. Nevertheless, the three historical characters are among the most complicated and controversial in French history during the period of the Wars of Religion, in which the prominence of the Catholic House of Guise was the overriding issue both for the monarchy and the Protestants. Assassination became an instrument of politics, beginning with the murder of Duke Francis of Guise in 1563, and ending with the assassination of Henri IV in 1610.²⁵

Mérimée speaks for neither side in the novel and condemns the extremism of both, lamenting, as a protagonist of medieval art, the iconoclasm of the Protestants. Although Mérimée, like Vigny, never attempted another historical novel, his interest in the later sixteenth century turned to history. *Henri de Guise (1550–1588)*. *Le Plutarque français*, published in January 1836, also dealt with the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. As with Schiller and the parallel experience of Manzoni, historical study emerged out of a prior work of historical fiction.²⁶

Travels in Italy, in part, like those in England, in search of architectural models and comparisons for the French process of restoration, led Mérimée back to Ancient History, and he read widely in the Classical and contemporary texts and commentaries. He planned a study of Julius Caesar, but decided to research beforehand the social and political background to his rise. This entailed an examination of the civil wars of the late Roman Republic. Out of this research, begun in 1838–39, came the *Essai sur la Guerre Sociale* in May 1841. *La conjuration de Catalina* appeared in March 1844, going beyond Sallust, Cicero, and other Roman writers, by examining the legality of the Senate's action in the case against Cataline. No work on Caesar, however, followed—presumably because of Mérimée's commitments in other fields. Nevertheless, his achievements secured him election to the *Académie Française* in that same year, along with Sainte-Beuve, an admirer of

²⁴ Vigny, *Cinq-Mars*, pp. 302–9, 485.

²⁵ Prosper Mérimée, *Chronique du règne de Charles IX* (Paris, Gallimard 1969), *Préface de Prosper Mérimée*, pp. 34–46, see pp. 38–46; for Charles IX, see p. 137, and for Coligny, pp. 121–30. This novel made possible Dumas' *La Reine Margot* [1845], with its climax as the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Maigron, *Le roman historique*, pp. 310–12. Vigny, *Cinq-Mars*, chapter XIX, pp. 310–39, for the hunting scene.

²⁶ Trahard, *Mérimée*, p. 163. Pierre Josserand, *Préface*, pp. 7–32, p. 31.

his work. In the tradition of Vico and Thierry, Mérimée believed that societies and political conduct in historical times should be judged in accordance with the values prevailing then, rather than by mid-nineteenth century assumptions. For that reason, he avoided moral judgements, interpreting his findings from critical reading of different sources. Abundant footnotes showed his awareness of the increasingly stringent requirements of contemporary historians.²⁷

Mérimée quickly became drawn towards Spain, journeying there for the first time in 1830 and through the 1840s. Out of these travels came *Carmen*, his most celebrated fictional work, published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1845. Familiarity with Seville drew him to the legends surrounding the Castilian king, Pedro the Cruel (1350–70). An obvious subject for Romantic treatment, Pedro ascended the throne at the age of fifteen, already traumatized by violence, and ruled with a paradoxical combination of bloodshed and charity until assassinated by his bastard brother. Instead of writing a novel about this, however, Mérimée chose to do historical research, which the *Revue des Deux Mondes* published between October 1847 and January 1848 as *Histoire de Don Pèdre 1er, roi de Castille*. Spanish writing on the subject generally drew its source material from popular legends without attention to historical facts. Although the writer in Mérimée was drawn to these fables, which included tales of sorcery, he intended to let contemporary sources reveal realities. Further visits to Spain in 1853, 1859, and 1864 contributed to *La vie et l'œuvre de Cervantes*, written late in 1869 and published in 1877.²⁸

BALZAC AND THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY REBELS

Honoré de Balzac in many ways saw fiction not exactly through the eyes of the historian but through the historical perspective. It was, therefore, by no coincidence that an historical novel, *Le Dernier Chouan ou la Bretagne de 1800* [1829], set within the context of counter-revolutionary rebellion at the end of the 1790s, was the first novel to appear under his own name. The original novel had a narrator, who, according to the author's 'Avertissement' (preliminary remarks), had access to a rich library, where he was captivated by Scott's *Ivanhoe* and *Quentin Durward*. Aware of the dangers in writing historical fiction, this narrator nevertheless regarded Scott as 'a man of genius, who knows the human heart'. Revision of the book in 1834 gave it the definitive title *Les Chouans*, and set the novel after the accession to power of Napoleon Bonaparte as First Consul in November 1799. In the tradition of *Waverley*, Balzac dealt with the generation immediately before his own, demonstrated a sympathetic understanding of provincial rebels, and set the fictional

²⁷ Trahard, *Mérimée*, pp. 164–8, 237, sees him as a good disciple of Thierry in this respect. Trahard comments that Mérimée's work had more critical substance than Michelet's *Histoire romaine*, 2 vols [Paris 1831], or the work of Thomas Carlyle.

²⁸ Trahard, *Mérimée*, pp. 229–38, 295–9. Mérimée was in contact with Turgenev from 1857, and sporadically studied Russian from the late 1840s.

characters in the foreground. Balzac had learned a great deal from Scott in his attention to topography, customs, clothing, and religious attitudes, and from Chateaubriand in his description of places such as Fougères, which is the focus of the action. The description of the fighting across the rough Breton border country certainly recalls the Scottish novels. Balzac's portrayal of ordinary folk was far more successful than Vigny's inadequate attempts. Although he scoured the libraries of Normandy for his source material, Balzac seems to have been reading James Fenimore Cooper's Scott-inspired tales of the Mohicans, and early in the text Balzac acknowledges the influence of this American writer.²⁹

Balzac was always interested in the long-term consequences of the French Revolution, particularly with respect to social changes and moral values (or their absence). Scott's exploration of how political alignments arose out of popular life pointed the way in terms of technique. Maigron suggests that 'the crowd' appears for the first time in French literature in this book. In *Les Chouans*, the Bretons fulfilled the role of the oppressed, played by the Saxons in *Ivanhoe*. At the same time, Balzac's novel gives the impression of falling midway between *Old Mortality* and Galdós's later portrayal of the Carlist rebels in the third series of his *Episodios Nacionales*. All three authors took as their subject matter rebellions—which had a religious dimension—against an existing regime. These rebellions posed the question, directly relevant to the time of writing, of whether the new order could be reversed. As in the case of the Jacobites, the regular army of Republican France or Liberal Spain fought to put down rebels, who were just as much ordinary folk as the soldiers themselves. In Balzac's novel, the revolutionaries took on the aspect of oppressors or conquerors in the rebel provinces of Britanny and Normandy. This novel, written at the end of the Restoration era, looked back to the antagonism between Breton and Norman peasants, steeped in traditional Catholicism, and the Paris revolutionary government. The issues of reconciliation, relations between centre and province, and tradition and progress, remained very much alive at the time of writing, in the France of the 1820s.³⁰

Balzac looked back to the moral values of the *ancien régime*, while recognizing that it could not be brought back to life. Like the historian Michelet, he came from a specifically French literary culture, and similar currents influenced both men, despite their different perspectives. Michelet's work on the French Revolution negatively portrays the counter-revolutionary rebels of the Vendée, active from 1793 to the late 1790s, denouncing the local clergy's influence. Balzac remained ambivalent about local and popular resistance to the dominance of Paris politicians, instinctively preferring defence of local tradition to post-revolutionary materialism. Although continuing his exploration of the consequences of the Revolution, he never again attempted a specifically historical novel. *Les Chouans*,

²⁹ Honoré de Balzac, *Les Chouans*, p. 66; pp. 413–28, *Avertissement du Gars* (Paris 1988). Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists* (New York 1963), pp. 158–9. Maigron, *Le roman historique*, pp. 301–2, 304.

³⁰ Balzac, *Les Chouans*: see *Introduction*, pp. 7–41. D. R. Haggis, 'Scott, Balzac, and the Historical Novel as Social and Political Analysis: *Waverley* and *Les Chouans*', *Modern Language Review*, 68 (1973), pp. 51–68, see pp. 53–5, 59–60, 68. Lukács, *Historical Novel*, pp. 93–4.

despite remarkable passages, was not, in any case, one of his principal novels. Any reader can be captivated by the passionate language of the encounters between the two lovers, but at the same time be puzzled by the frequency of movement between the two hostile camps. So much happens in the novel that it is easy to forget that it takes place during only five days.³¹

At the centre of this novel is the intriguing figure of Marie de Verneuil. In fact, Mademoiselle de Verneuil is an agent sent into the combat zone by the Minister of Police, the notorious Joseph Fouché (1759–1820), to root out the Royalist leader known as ‘Le Gars’ and invested with sufficient authority to give commands to local troops. Her portrayal in the novel strikingly foreshadows that of Milady de Winter, Richelieu’s agent, in *Les Trois Mousquetaires*. Early in chapter 2, entitled ‘Une Idée de Fouché’, Marie de Verneuil’s personality is revealed in a remarkable piece of writing. Balzac enfolds the leading characters, momentarily together for lunch at an inn in Alençon (western Normandy), in a complex interchange between reality and illusion, personal rivalries, and political purposes. An unforeseen sexual passion has ignited between Marie and the young officer, who pretends to be a Republican naval graduate but is, in reality, the Marquis de Montauran—an entirely fictional character known as ‘Le Gars’, sent from England to take the leadership of the rebellion. Again, as in Scott, the theme of concealed identities reappears in this novel, as each tries to discover who the other really is. The marquis, we are told, is around seventeen years of age, and the text makes the reader aware that he is powerfully attracted to the slightly older woman.³²

This section is carefully crafted to convey barely suppressed sexual passion in both of these characters. Marie even admits to her maid—the local girl Francine—that she has fallen in love with the stranger, although she is careful not to admit it to him. Neither of them has any business falling in love with the other, since they are mortal political enemies. Marie goes as far as to protect the disguised marquis from Colonel Hulot, the Republican military commander in Alençon, who is suspicious enough to try to unmask him. We have gone beyond the Scottish novels into the typical terrain of the Romantics—the forbidden or impossible love, in which the female protagonist is described in detail in both physical and psychological terms. Given the realistic attention to geographical setting, inherited from Scott, though often portrayed in the language of Chateaubriand, we have an archetypal Romantic novel. The action takes place late in September, and meticulous attention is given to the unpredictable Breton weather—penetrating cold, frosts, mists, and so on. After a few preliminaries on the road, we are first introduced to Marie de Verneuil as she makes her entrance into the dining room of the inn at Alençon, as the young sailor offers his arm:

Assisted by Francine, Mademoiselle de Verneuil had equipped herself from her travelling bag to greater effect than perhaps even she might have even for an

³¹ Maigron, *Le roman historique*, pp. 306–8. Butler, *Balzac*, pp. 108–10, 257, 259. See D. N. G. Sutherland, *The Chouans: the Social Origins of Popular Counter-Revolution in Upper Brittany, 1770–1796* (Oxford 1982).

³² Balzac, *Les Chouans*, pp. 128–70; for identities, see pp. 87, 107, 164–9.

appearance at a ball. Its simplicity had that attraction which comes from the art with which a woman, beautiful enough to dispense with adornment, knows how to reduce her embellishment to merely a secondary consideration. She was wearing a green dress, smartly cut and with a bodice decorated with lace loops, which outlined her figure in a way more distinctive than for a young girl and showed up her lithe waist, her elegant corsage, and her graceful movements. She came in smiling with the ease of a woman whose rosy mouth revealed her excellent teeth as translucent as porcelain, and with dimpled cheeks as fresh as a child's . . . The coquetry of her dress, evidently designed to please, should inspire hope in the young man, but Mademoiselle de Verneuil only greeted him with a slight inclination of the head, without looking at him, and appeared to abandon him with a playful indifference which disconcerted him.³³

Historical characters do not appear in this novel. The realism is supplied, instead, first, by careful portrayal of the setting, and second, by making the love plot dependent upon the overriding political conflict in that particular period. The themes of sexual passion and intense political struggle are inextricably intertwined in the novel. Although the historical context naturally existed without any relation to a fictional plot, the latter cannot exist, in the form in which it is presented in this novel, without the former. It heightens the dramatic character of the book, and the universality of its fictional theme enables the historical work to rise above simply the treatment of a French region in turmoil under the impact of revolutionary change imposed from Paris. Important as a purely historical work on that subject might be, its appeal would largely be confined to specialist historians. The fictional theme, however, opens this historical conflict to an altogether broader audience, enabling large numbers of readers to appreciate the depth and seriousness of the issues which arose from their own recent history. This was Balzac's achievement in writing an historical novel.³⁴

Les Chouans contains a number of themes which transcend the time and place of the setting. Balzac pays considerable attention to the principles and practice of guerrilla warfare—particularly the strategy of holding the countryside, from which to besiege the enemy in the towns. This interest may have stemmed also from an understanding of the French experience in Spain during the Peninsular War, as well as from his researches on the Vendée and Chouan rebellions in western France. In Brittany, hedgerows and trees and the separate delineation of each field provided positions for ambush, which impeded swift response. The difficulties of warfare under such circumstances, and the persistence of peasant opposition, prompt comment in the novel that political guile and astute diplomacy—Fouché's *métier*—rather than force alone, would be required to resolve the issue. Fouché's ambitious agent, Corentin, accompanies Mademoiselle de Verneuil not only to reinforce her but also to spy on her. At the same time, Hulot has formed mobile

³³ Balzac, *Les Chouans*, pp. 134–5 (my translation).

³⁴ Herbert J. Hunt, *Balzac's Comédie Humaine* (London 1964 [1959], pp. 19–20, raises the question that Balzac was suggesting in this novel the possibility of sexual passion to alter the course of history.

battalions and a band of counter-guerrillas—the ‘Contre-Chouans’—who adopt the same tactics as their enemy.³⁵

The religious dimension further complicates the problem. Balzac describes an open-air Mass, officiated by Abbé Grudin, who harangues the overawed congregation with bloody calls for violence against the Republicans, and then proceeds to bless the weapons to be used. As we shall see in the third series of Galdós’s *Episodios Nacionales*, dealing with the Carlist Wars of the 1830s, the intimate association of widespread violence with defence of traditional religion is made a focus of attention.³⁶

Both Balzac and Galdós point to the social discrepancy between the leadership of such movements and the generality of the following. In *Les Chouans*, the local notables who have survived the Revolution have their eyes on the exiled court and their minds on past etiquette and caste status. Marie de Verneuil cannot fail to notice the contrast between the nobles and their following, when she is trapped in the Chouan stronghold at La Vivetière. Montauran has such difficulty in imposing his authority over them that he is reduced to producing Louis XVIII’s Letters Patent, appointing him Governor of Britanny, Normandy, Maine, and Anjou. Madame du Gua, who had posed initially as his mother and hates Marie enough to try to kill her, describes the Breton peasant following who provide the manpower for the savage rebellion as ‘clod hoppers’. Balzac, as narrator, tells us that they made war like the Mohicans.³⁷

Yet this is still a work of fiction, in which the *dénouement* is determined by the passions and actions of individuals who never existed in historical time. Real political conflicts of the period engage these individuals and condition their responses both to events and to one another. Nothing, however, is predetermined, and the reader does not know until the end what will finally happen to the two lovers.³⁸

Clearly and strikingly, a woman is the central character in an historical novel, in a way which had not been so before. Marie de Verneuil, however, is not a heroine, but at the same time not a villain like Milady de Winter. However, one heroic figure does stand out in the book: Hulot—frequently referred to as ‘the old soldier’ and consistently portrayed as a man of the people and a loyal Republican. Opposed to monarchy, nobles, and privilege, he feels, at the same time, nothing but contempt for the sinister, clandestine methods of Fouché’s agent, Corentin. At the very end of the novel, after the death of the (now married) lovers, Hulot expresses his dislike for ‘the spy’:

Hulot took the spy by the arm in such a way that he left the imprint of his fingernails on his flesh, and told him, ‘Now that your task is accomplished, make yourself scarce. Take a good look at the face of Commander Hulot, so that you never cross his path again, unless you want your stomach to become the scabbard for his sabre.’ At that

³⁵ Balzac, *Les Chouans*, pp. 65, 103–4, 107, 109, 184, 232, 260–3, 286–7.

³⁶ Balzac, *Les Chouans*, pp. 288–93 (my translation).

³⁷ Balzac, *Les Chouans*, pp. 188–225 (see pp. 193, 198), 303, 355–6.

³⁸ Balzac, *Les Chouans*, pp. 358–94.

point, the old soldier began to draw his sabre. Corentin said to himself once he was far away from the guard post, 'So, there's still an honest man who'll never become rich.'³⁹

Even though the French Press mourned Scott's death in 1832, the historical novel in France lost momentum. Scott's prestige, which had risen so high, plummeted quickly in literary circles in France and Britain. Maigron explains this by the French historical novel's rapid loss of connection with fact. In his view, Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas, for instance, paid scant attention to historical accuracy, and not even Flaubert's *Salammbô*, thirty years later, could succeed in restoring the genre's reputation. The decline had already set in with Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* [1831], in which the picturesque and the grotesque supplanted the analytical. Hugo had not written the book in order to reanimate a bygone society and age, and had not studied its customs and personalities, essential for any novel to be considered an historical novel. On the contrary, he had written hurriedly under contract, with no pretence to writing history. Successful as it turned out to be, Maigron considered this novel to be weak and full of excess, and neither a worthy successor to Scott nor its French predecessors.⁴⁰ Earlier successes created a popular market for fictional history, which Hugo, Dumas, and many lesser authors exploited to the full. Moral and didactic purposes in the historical novel receded before the primacy of entertainment. This oriented the popular novel towards a lucrative, expanding market. Dumas secured lasting triumph. And yet this tended to diminish further the prestige which the historical novel had formerly enjoyed as a serious branch of literature.

DUMAS AND THE THREE MUSKETEERS

The influence of Scott, Thierry, and Vigny was fundamental in Dumas's key production period from 1844 to 1849. Dumas's popularity and the many subsequent versions of his novels—especially *Les Trois Mousquetaires* and *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* [1844–5], including film and television versions—have obscured the fact that Dumas was a technically accomplished writer, who makes it difficult to keep the eye off the page. Whether or not *Les Trois Mousquetaires* is an historical novel is another matter. It does not have an overriding political or moral purpose, but responded to market demand for an exciting and colourful work set in an earlier and, because of Vigny, familiar historical context. The portrayal of Richelieu is derived from Vigny, almost to grotesque proportions. Dumas might have had in mind the sort of police chief found in any one of the absolutist states of the Restoration era, such as the Parma of Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme* [1839].⁴¹

The title also presents a problem. The king's musketeers seem always to be engaged in fencing rather than in musketry, and their subsequent, popular

³⁹ Balzac, *Les Chouans*, p. 394 (my translation).

⁴⁰ Maigron, *Le roman historique*, pp. iv, 322–9, 353–4, 386. Jenkin, 'Factional Pasts,' pp. 157–9, for the British case in the 1840s and 1850s.

⁴¹ Alexandre Dumas, *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (Paris 1995), pp. 570–6, for the chilling interview between Richelieu and D'Artagnan, combining threats with a job offer.

depictions also follow this. Then, as soon as we enter the novel, we see how tedious the three musketeers really are, and that the real focus of the story is their fourth addition, the nineteen-year-old D'Artagnan—a character who has a great deal of Quentin Durward in him, despite his Gascon panache. Looking further backwards to the source materials of the character, as Dumas himself does in the text, we can see that D'Artagnan is also a younger version of Cervantes' Don Quijote. Wayward, proud, and easily provoked, D'Artagnan is not only far more interesting than all of the other three musketeers combined, but also far more real than Vigny's rather dreamy Cinq-Mars—in terms of age, little more than a juvenile. Before long we become aware that Milady de Winter is the focus of the plot. Once our eyes are fixed on her, Dumas ensures that they stay there right to the end. D'Artagnan's fate is quickly made inseparable from hers.⁴²

Just over half way through the novel, Lord de Winter introduces D'Artagnan to the mysterious woman known as Milady, his half-sister, who speaks perfect French and has a house on the (present-day) Place des Vosges. D'Artagnan, however, has already become aware of this woman—and she of him—and accidentally perceives her half-concealed reaction to him by catching her expression in the mirror. This is a brilliantly constructed scene, worthy of any great novelist:

Milady lightly knit her brow; a cloud, scarcely visible, passed over her face, a truly strange smile appeared on her lips, which sent a chill through the young man, who saw the shades of meaning. Her brother noticed nothing.⁴³

Milady, the (slightly) older woman, the *femme fatale* of the novel, is not averse to having the nineteen-year-old Gascon as a lover, however briefly and however tactically. D'Artagnan, who is in love with Madame Bonacieux, does not appear, for his part, to be a sexual novice. *Les Trois Mousquetaires* is generally seen now as a children's book, rather as some Scott novels mistakenly are, but in chapters xxxiii and xxxiv the play between sexual desire, ambiguous personal motive, and political objective point to a narrative which has travelled far beyond infantile innocence. The jealousy of Ketty—Milady's maid—who also has D'Artagnan in her sights, as Milady lures the Gascon into her bed-chamber and bed, heightens the eroticism of this particular scene. As regards the two protagonists:

[D'Artagnan] surrendered himself entirely to the sensations of the moment. For him, Milady was no longer that woman whose fatal intentions had for a time frightened him, but had become an ardent and passionate mistress, losing herself entirely to a love which she seemed herself to feel. Around two hours were passed in this way.

D'Artagnan, even if he wanted to, is incapable at that point of preventing himself from being sexually fixated on Milady, even though, as he finds out, she is a branded thief and the disgraced former wife of his musketeer companion, Athos.⁴⁴

⁴² Dumas, *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, p. 61.

⁴³ Dumas, *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, pp. 484–5 (my translation).

⁴⁴ Dumas, *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, pp. 532–47 (my translation.) Subsequently, after failing to stab him to death on the spot, Milady (see pp. 589–91) sends two men to kill him during the siege of La Rochelle.

The three musketeers, D'Artagnan, and Milady were principally characters of the imagination. Leaving aside Louis XIII (as pathetic as in Vigny), Anne of Austria, and Richelieu, the other historical character in the novel is the Duke of Buckingham, favourite of the English kings James I and Charles I, and reputed lover of the French queen. This capacity brings him, for a time, into the mainstream of the plot, where, needless to say, Milady and D'Artagnan are also involved. While it is an historical fact that Felton—a naval officer and Puritan—murdered the duke in 1628, Milady's role—notably her seduction of him while imprisoned in Portsmouth—is entirely fictitious. Milady's journey to England was the result of a terrible interview with Richelieu, overheard by D'Artagnan while in hiding. Its purpose aimed to undermine the Duke's attempt to aid the Protestants of La Rochelle, and expose his relationship with Anne of Austria, thereby discrediting both of them. An ulterior motive, should it prove realizable, was to strike him dead by a knife attack similar to Ravaillac's assassination of the king's father, Henri IV. The Cardinal and Milady chillingly discuss the idea of such a 'coup de couteau'. While the depth of evil is portrayed in this way for the reader's excitement, Dumas seems to have no particular moral purpose in exposing it as such.⁴⁵

Similarly, the novel has nothing to say concerning the relation between the past and the present time. The fictitious action takes place against a fictionalized historical background, involving real historical figures, but does not have anything to say, whether in moral or political terms, concerning the relationship between the two. Accordingly, the novel is not an historical novel in the sense that the Waverley Novels were or *I Promessi Sposi* was, but a grand entertainment sustained over 876 pages of text. As such, *Les Trois Mousquetaires* became the forerunner of an entire tradition of historical entertainment, which has continued to be universally popular, through one medium or another, right up to the present day. The author's concern with history as a process is minimal.

Dumas may not have been aware of the glowing future awaiting a novel which skilfully transformed history into entertainment. Whatever the case, the consequences for the historical novel proved to be disastrous, since it rapidly became associated primarily with that. In fact, the history of the historical novel could now be read backwards, as Scott henceforth came to be seen at the root of this fashion for chivalrous romance. His complex Scottish novels pushed to one side, especially as the issues on which they dwelt became less pressing, the reading public preferred the more accessible novels—especially those without large sections of Scottish dialogue. Scott became, in retrospect, a typical Romantic, who spun entertaining yarns set in various periods of history. Interestingly, *Quentin Durward*—the most tightly organized but also the most complex of the non-Scottish novels—also fell by the wayside. An entire swash-buckling tradition thereby passed from Scott through Dumas to the present day.

⁴⁵ *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, p. 619. The clear parallel is with Mérimée's scene in which Charles IX hints to Georges Mergy at the prospect of assassinating Coligny in *Règne de Charles IX*, chapter xvii, pp. 221–9.

ENGLISH AND FRENCH MOB HORROR

Dickens—already one of England's leading novelists—made two attempts at an historical novel: *Barnaby Rudge* [1841], and *A Tale of Two Cities* [1859]. The former still remains one of Dickens's least-known novels, reconstituting the riots of 1780 in London as a disturbing warning to the present. This novel is remarkable for its study of crowd behaviour—viewed by the author from a negative perspective—and its foreboding concerning the fate of the central characters. Both novels relate the past to the present, though in differing ways, through the issues they raise, the atmosphere the writer conjures up, and the interrelation of character and plot.

Barnaby Rudge opens like an early Scott novel, with a group of men at the Maypole Inn on the edge of Epping Forest, north-east of London, broaching an eerie subject with a mysterious stranger on a stormy night. This leads to an intricate description of physical characteristics and clothing, and then to details of London. Dickens, however, had already departed from the tradition of the Waverley Novels in the priority given to domesticity. However, behind this sheltered home life lay the world of grime and the life of crime. From the start of *Barnaby Rudge*, the relationship to Scott is as evident as the departure from him.

The first problem with *Barnaby Rudge*, however, is its central character. It raises the problem of why Dickens chose to focus on this mental defective. Chapter three introduces the garish young man—the exact opposite of the mild, mostly rational, Scott hero—who will ultimately represent the triumph of reasonableness over extremism and violence. Barnaby, by contrast, is easily drawn into it.

He was about three-and-twenty years old, and though rather spare, of a fair height and strong make. His hair, of which he had a great profusion, was red, and hanging in disorder about his face and shoulders, gave to his restless looks an expression quite unearthly—enhanced by the paleness of his complexion and the glassy lustre of large, protruding eyes. Startling as his aspect was, the features were good, and there was something even plaintiff in his wan and haggard aspect. But the absence of the soul is far more terrible in a living man than in a dead one, and in this unfortunate being its noblest powers were wanting... The fluttered and confused disposition of all the motley scraps that formed his dress, bespoke, in a scarcely less degree than his eager and unsettled manner, the disorder of his mind, and by a grotesque contrast set off and heightened the more impressive wildness of his face.⁴⁶

Barnaby's favourite companion and conversation partner is not an Alan Fairford or a Diana Vernon, but his pet raven, Grip. Dickens's motive for placing at the centre of his novel a deranged youth, described by one character as 'stark, staring, raving mad', is at first unclear. However, by mid-narrative the overriding theme of the novel—the Gordon Riots of 1780 against London Catholics—has become evident, when another 'madman', Lord George Gordon, enters the scene. From then on, we are in the terrain of *Old Mortality*, with violence stirred up by religious fanaticism.

⁴⁶ Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge* (Oxford 2003), pp. 37–8.

The difference between Barnaby and Gordon is that the former cannot rationalize, whereas the latter uses rhetoric to stir up hatred. The question, however, arises concerning Dickens's motive in choosing this theme and period, and treating them in the way he does.⁴⁷

The strongest explanation is that Barnaby is a symbol of the sweeping power of irrationality—the blind passion of the crowd or ‘mob’. His intimate—the black, predatory bird squawking ‘I’m a devil, I’m a devil, I’m a devil’—represents the dark forces urging the ‘mob’ onward in its destructive path. This symbolism operates within a narrative which is realistic and rises to a climax in the violence of the mob rampaging through the streets of central London. After the violence dies down, the raven no longer speaks.⁴⁸ In his study of Dickens, Chris Brooks adopts the term ‘symbolic realism’ to describe the author’s technique of infusing reality with symbolic significance. He does not refer specifically to *Barnaby Rudge* but, as we shall see, he interprets *A Tale of Two Cities* in this way, arguing that the symbolism provides the reality with its meaning.⁴⁹

Dickens’s preoccupation with crowd mobilization, which he associates with criminality, recurs throughout *Barnaby Rudge*. The cunning criminal, Maypole Hugh, co-opts Barnaby into the rioting crowd marching on Parliament to protest against laws mitigating restrictions on Catholics. According to the author, this crowd is

... comprised for the most part of the very scum and refuse of London, whose growth was fostered by bad criminal laws, bad prison regulations, and the worst conceivable police... The air was filled with execrations, hoots and howlings. The crowd raged and roared, like a mad monster as it was, unceasingly, and each new outrage served to swell its fury.⁵⁰

Mr Varden, who represents domestic virtue and religious moderation in the novel, comments to his wife with regard to the distortion of religion, ‘that all good things perverted to evil purposes are worse than those which are naturally evil’.⁵¹

Dickens published this book twelve years after the passage of the bitterly contested Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 and during the Chartist Movement’s popular mobilization for political and social reform. A combination of contemporary influences such as these explained his choice of subject matter.⁵² As a Christian, Dickens favoured a liberal Protestantism, which allowed for a wide span of toleration. Dennis Walder argues that *Barnaby Rudge* should be understood in this light, and that the novel looked

⁴⁷ Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, chapters 3 and 33; pp. 280, 294–5, 297–8, 324, 457.

⁴⁸ Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 62. I have adopted this view as a result of a conversation with Trevor Byford, one of the readers of my text.

⁴⁹ Chris Brooks, *Signs for the Times: Symbolic Realism in the Mid-Victorian World* (London 1984), p. 3. I am grateful to Oliver Jenkins for drawing my attention to this work.

⁵⁰ Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, pp. 393, 398.

⁵¹ Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 412.

⁵² See for Catholic Emancipation, E. I. Watkin, *Roman Catholicism in England from the Reformation to 1950* (Oxford 1957), pp. 152–88, and Edward Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford 1984), pp. 57, 63–8.

. . . towards an ideal of toleration and reasonableness in religion, derived from the tradition of Milton and Locke, champions of the free religious conscience. [Dickens' view of religion] sprang from a Romantic sense of Christianity as the religion of the heart, a religion based on deep feelings about man, nature and God.⁵³

The purpose of this novel, in Walder's view, was to warn his contemporaries of the dangers present when religion is put by irreligious people to stirring up hatred. Dickens reminded his fellow Protestants that their beliefs obliged them to oppose this. Since the novel conflicted with the general readers' prejudices against Catholicism, it did not prove as popular as its predecessors. Dickens conceived his novel as a moral lesson for his own time.⁵⁴

The reappearance of a popular anti-popery during the 1830s and 1840s explained the timing of the novel. Through his characters—such as the fastidious Mrs Varden and her repellent servant, Miggs—Dickens traces the growth of ignorant prejudice into fuel for inflaming mass violence towards a small and defenceless minority. He uses his literary tools of satire and sarcasm to expose this. The Riots of June 1780 had stemmed from extreme Protestant dismay at the Catholic Relief Act of 1778, which had been passed to facilitate the recruitment of Scottish Catholic Highlanders for the British army's struggle against American rebels.⁵⁵

Fear of mass mobilization, with the French Revolution as the prime example, lay at the heart of the novel, in which perversion of religion becomes the mainspring for mass psychosis, leaving a large part of central London between Tyburn and Whitechapel gutted after eight days of rioting.

. . . the worst passions of the worst men were . . . working in the dark, and the mantle of religion, assumed to cover the ugliest of deformities, threatened to become the shroud of all that was peaceful and good in society.⁵⁶

The graphic descriptions of mob violence, crafted with a supremely talented writer's care, are designed to encourage reform through fear of the consequences of inaction. In short, *Barnaby Rudge* is the careful portrayal of a nightmare scenario of criminals, fanatics, and desperate men and women of every description marauding through the streets of central London, selecting victims as might be their wont, and destroying livelihoods and property. The influence of Carlyle's *French Revolution*, which emphasized the blind and self-destructive force of anarchy, would have

⁵³ Dennis Walder, *Dickens and Religion* (London 1981), p. 91.

⁵⁴ Walder, *Dickens and Religion*, pp. 94, 96. See also E. R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London 1968).

⁵⁵ Walder, *Dickens and Religion*, pp. 94, 99–100, 104–5. Norman, *English Catholic Church*, pp. 97–104.

⁵⁶ Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, chapters 48–72, pp. 381–580, deal directly with the riots. See George Rudé, *The Crowd in History. A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730–1815* (New York, London, Sydney 1964), pp. 57–63, 198–9, 208–9, 260, 262–4. See also the same author's 'The Gordon Riots: A Study of the Rioters and their Victims', in *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century. Studies in Popular Protest* (London and New York 1970), pp. 268–92. Rudé plays down the religious element in the riots, and instead emphasizes class conflict.

been decisive. Dickens the novelist, however, does not adopt Carlyle's historical theories.⁵⁷

Was *Barnaby Rudge* really an historical novel, or was it a political allegory? Did Dickens change the orientation of the novel, during the course of its long gestation from 1834 onwards, from historical to political? These questions are raised by T. J. Rice, who presents a case for the political allegory, and argues that Dickens was an acute observer of the contemporary political scene, opposing both radical agitation and High Tory appeals to anti-Catholic prejudice. In Rice's view, Dickens used the Gordon Riots of 1780 as a paradigm.⁵⁸ *Barnaby Rudge* makes little attempt to establish the context and conditions of the 1780s, by comparison to the careful reconstruction of the past in Scott's novels. Dickens' description of the London of the 1780s is sketchy. The vivid descriptions of the riots do not hang together with it. In S. J. Newman's view, *Barnaby Rudge* can only be considered an historical novel in the sense that historical events are portrayed. The departure from Scott's integration of society, characters, and events in the past and their relation to the present is evident throughout the book.⁵⁹

The novel reveals a dire moral vision of the world turned into inferno through the machinations of eccentrics and social oddities. The London of the 1840s is invited to look backwards at its own image in the 1780s and thence to see a present time threatened by anarchy. In this sense, the Gordon Riots are not explained sociologically, but are used by Dickens—the believer in just laws, moderated religion, and pacific reforms—as an allegory to warn the present. Newman identifies the basic incongruity in the novel as the author's failure to integrate his two predominant themes of anarchy, on the one hand, and the oppressiveness of the state, on the other hand. A range of scenes and accompanying vocabulary describe the state: squirearchy, soldiers, guns, prison (especially Newgate), horrible conditions in jail, ropes, handcuffs, the gallows, and so on. When the apprehended rioters become victims of this state and the issue is whether the state should hang the hangman who has served it so well, the discrepancy between themes is fully exposed. Yet at the same time there is another factor lying behind the violence of the state: the wilful ineffectiveness of its representatives in face of mob behaviour. The paradox of a state equipped with the tools of oppression, yet reduced to paralysis, is one which Dickens might have exploited further in his novel. Perhaps greater attention to the historical context might have facilitated this.⁶⁰

Notre-Dame de Paris, set in 1482, also focuses on crowd behaviour, with an eye as much on the French Revolution as on the late fifteenth-century background. At the centre of the novel is the great medieval structure, the cathedral of Notre-Dame, seen literally and metaphorically as a fortress. Its defender, however, is not a Scott

⁵⁷ Brooks, *Signs for the Times*, p. 22, on Dickens' debt to Carlyle, which 'may well have been on a level of creative consciousness deeper than that of ideas'.

⁵⁸ Thomas J. Rice, 'The Politics of *Barnaby Rudge*', in Robert Giddings (ed.), *The Changing World of Charles Dickens* (London and New Jersey 1983), pp. 51–74, pp. 51–2, 55, 58–60, 62–7.

⁵⁹ S. J. Newman, 'Barnaby Rudge: Dickens and Scott', in R. T. Davies and B. G. Beatty (eds), *Literature of the Romantic Period, 1750–1850* (New York 1970), pp. 171–88; see pp. 172–4.

⁶⁰ Newman, 'Barnaby Rudge', pp. 181–4, 187–8. Rudé, *The Crowd in History*, p. 263.

hero such as Quentin Durward, but the repulsive hunchback, Quasimodo, with whom, it soon becomes clear, the author invests considerable sympathy. Hugo draws as much from the Gothic novel's hideous scenes as Dickens would do in *Barnaby Rudge*. The grotesque and perverse elements with which this book proliferates also show Hugo's Rabelaisian view of the human race. In this respect, the novel points forward to Flaubert's *Salammbô*. If the latter may be viewed as Flaubert's explosion of the nineteenth century's preferred myth of the Ancient World as a moral guide to the present, then Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* explodes the other preferred myth of the moral authority of the Christian Middle Ages. On the contrary, Hugo expressly states in an authorial intervention half way through the book that the Middle Ages, so revered by Christian Romantics, represented nothing but the pitiless childhood of humanity.⁶¹

As everyone knows, whether or not they have read the novel or seen Charles Laughton's defining performance in the film *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* [1939], Quasimodo is the 'hero' of the book. He first appears dressed in full ecclesiastical regalia as the 'Pope of fools', or even of the mad, leading a trail of vagabonds, thieves, and layabouts, to the jeers of the populace, through the streets of Paris to the Place de Grève. Next we see the gypsy girl, Esmeralda, dancing in the street on a Persian carpet, to the accompaniment of a tambourine, in front of an entranced audience. The author lets us know that the Archdeacon, Claude Frollo, had adopted Quasimodo—an abandoned child—out of pity, and had given him that name. Through Frollo, the adult hunchback had become the bell-ringer of Notre Dame—the bells his true voice, and the heights of the cathedral his vantage point over the city.⁶²

Ringing the bells had made Quasimodo deaf. After apprehension by the King's Archers for supposed unruly conduct, he is tried by a deaf judge. Neither of them understands anything the other says, to constant public ridicule. The arrival of the city provost compounds the problem: to Quasimodo's sentence of two hours in the pillory is added a whipping. Further jeering by the crowd accompanies the execution of the brutal sentence, relieved only by Esmeralda's appearance with water for the persecuted innocent. Suspicion of sorcery has already fallen on her, given as she is to including a performing goat in her street appearances. In this way, Hugo singles out two social 'marginals'—objects of disdain and persecution—as his central figures, whose fate will be determined by those 'normal' figures who control Church and State, intent upon instilling conformity and obedience.⁶³

⁶¹ Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, 1482 (Paris c.1922), Book III, ch. 1, pp. 100–8, Bk. VI, ch. vi, p. 213. Flaubert frequently expressed his admiration for Hugo as a writer and as an opponent of the Second Empire (1852–70). He regarded him as the equal of the dramatists, Racine, Calderón, and Lope de Vega. Flaubert to Ernest Chevalier, Rouen 13 September 1838. Francis Steegmuller (ed.), *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert* (London 2001 edition), pp. 22–3.

⁶² Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Bk. I, chs. v and vi, pp. 49–52; Bk. II, chs. ii, iii and iv, 57–9, 64–71; Bk. IV, ch. 11, pp. 134–40, 147.

⁶³ Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Bk. VI, ch. i, pp. 185–8; ch. iv, pp. 213–19.

Flaubert regarded Hugo as

... the man who ever since I was born has done more than any other to make my heart throb; the man whom I have loved best, perhaps, of all those whom I do not know.⁶⁴

After rereading parts of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, he commented to Louise Colet:

What a beautiful thing *Notre-Dame* is! I lately reread three chapters in it, including the sack of the church by the beggars. That is the sort of thing that's *strong*: I think the greatest characteristic of genius is, above all, *power*. Hence, what I detest most of all in the arts, what sets me on edge, is the *ingenious*, the clever!⁶⁵

This novel uses an historical time as a back-drop to a drama of persecution and mass hysteria. It establishes no dialogue between past and present, except perhaps to compare mob violence in the French Revolution to medieval excesses. It does not deal with any one specific historical issue, moment, or process, as Scott has done, and apart from the brief scene with Louis XI and his barber, does not introduce historical characters as determinants of the course of action. Hugo, in fact, discourses across a range of history in a number of digressions—particularly about places in Paris, much of which would be familiar to metropolitan readers. The accent is on the drama in all its intensity and repugnance. This is what, to be sure, Flaubert especially liked about the book. Like *The Three Musketeers* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, this novel, known in English as *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, is one of a short list of historical novels which are remembered well beyond the reading public, and continue to generate new versions as popular entertainments in which the history is less important in the book's development than the drama portrayed against its background.

A Tale of Two Cities has become familiar more through film or television versions, or simply though general knowledge of its plot, than *Barnaby Rudge* and many other of Dickens's major novels. The 1859 novel, however, is from the very beginning dogged by inconsistencies, inadequate characterization, and implausible plot. Dr Manette, the Defarges, and Sidney Carton are cases in point. Charles Darnay and his Evrémond aristocratic connections are hardly more convincing. Walder, for instance, draws attention to the artificiality of Carton's death invocation as he prepares to face the guillotine. The well-known self-sacrifice, dressed up in a pseudo-Christian vocabulary, lacks conviction as a New Testament parallel.⁶⁶

The plot is contrived, designed to portray the French *ancien régime* in the worst possible light, while at the same time recoiling at the violence of the Revolution which removed it. The end result is reliance on a vague Anglo-Saxon sense of superiority and patriotic hostility towards the French, in the forms of Miss Pross and Mr Lorry. All of this would have been popular in the England of the decade of the Great Exhibition.

⁶⁴ Flaubert, *Letters*, pp. 37–8, Flaubert to Caroline (his sister), Paris, 3 December 1843.

⁶⁵ Flaubert, *Letters*, pp. 264–6, Flaubert to Louise Colet, Croisset, 15 July 1853. Pittock, *Reception of Scott*, pp. 16–22, comments on the parallel to *Ivanhoe*; but there is no chivalry in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, and the mob is unrestrained.

⁶⁶ Walder, *Dickens and Religion*, pp. 198–9. Brooks, *Signs of the Times*, pp. 84–95, but the character of Sidney Carton is not drawn with sufficient depth to support a Christian-based sacrificial motif.

A Tale of Two Cities is again a novel dealing with events which occurred some sixty years previously. In the 1850s, the France of the early 1790s would still have filled many British and continental hearts with fear, especially in the aftermath of the Revolutionary movements of 1848, and with the spectre of urbanization and industrialization before them. Fear of the mob, which plays such a prominent role in *Barnaby Rudge*, reappears in *A Tale of Two Cities*, although to a less effective degree, despite the greater seriousness of the events portrayed. The stage for summoning up this fear is set in London, as crowd trouble brews at a funeral procession in Fleet Street:

... the tradesmen hurriedly shut up their shops; for a crowd in those times stopped at nothing, and was a monster much dreaded... Thus, with beer-drinking, pipe-smoking, song-roaring, and infinite caricaturing of woe, the disorderly procession went its way, recruiting at every step, and all the shops shutting up before it.⁶⁷

The mobilization of the revolutionary suburb of Saint-Antoine in the Paris of the 1790s is, however, far more chilling—especially since Madame Defarge, armed with a knife, and the terrifying woman known as ‘The Vengeance’ lead the way.

The men were terrible, in the bloody-minded anger with which they looked from windows, caught up what arms they had, and came pouring down into the streets; but the women were a sight to chill the boldest. From such household occupations as their bare poverty yielded, from their children, from their aged and their sick, crouching on the bare ground famished and naked, they ran out with streaming hair, urging one another, and themselves, to madness with their wildest cries and actions.⁶⁸

Social historians might prefer to describe this type of action as popular mobilization. Dickens, however, shows yet again the fear sensed by the mid-nineteenth-century liberal towards it. Flaubert and Tolstoy, as we shall see in later chapters, shared this fear, which they expressed in their fiction or in their letters. It is as though the liberal thinker and writer, caught between reaction and social revolution, has seen an abyss open up, into which all the political gains of constitutional liberty irredeemably collapse. This raises the question of the social significance of the resurrection motif in the novel. As Brooks points out, Carton does not die in order to save ‘Darnay’, since that is not Évremond’s real name but a feint, designed to protect him from his own past. His death symbolizes the extinction of a whole order, which enables the emergence of a new world, untarnished by the excesses of the Revolution. This new world, in Dickens’s eyes, is clearly not the Revolution’s ideal of ‘Liberty, Equality and Fraternity’, but the hearth-and-home domesticity of the Darnay and Lucie liberated from the past by Carton’s death.⁶⁹

Dickens knew Paris well, due to frequent visits during the 1840s and 1850s, and wrote this novel in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1848 and the experience of

⁶⁷ Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Oxford 1998), pp. 188–9. See also Colin Jones, ‘Presidential Address: French Crossings: I. Tales of Two Cities’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, sixth series, XX (2010), pp.1–26, for a perceptive discussion of this novel and its context.

⁶⁸ Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 272.

⁶⁹ Brooks, *Signs of the Times*, pp. 86, 88, 90.

the Second Republic (1848–52)—a period of upheaval, but considerably less violent than in 1789–95. Yet the difference of time-scale and image raises the question of whether Dickens regarded the violence of the French Revolution as a portent for events in his own time. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the rioters have become less a blind mob and more the products of a social context, which might be explained by the author's proximity to the issues of 1848–52. The political objective in the novel—the overthrow of the *ancien régime*—is more sharply delineated than in *Barnaby Rudge*, but little attempt is made to portray individual or family experiences, which might evoke the readers' sympathy. Dickens's whole narrative is permeated with a sense of fear of the crowd, regardless of what social motivations its components might have or in what epoch.⁷⁰

Yet, on analysis, the crowd or mob did not turn out to be as clear cut as Dickens portrayed it. After the Gordon Riots, for instance, 160 individuals were brought to trial, but only a small number of them were found to have had previous convictions. They could not then be correctly described as belonging to a criminal element. Rudé's mid-twentieth-century study rectifies the impression given in Dickens's fictional work of a hundred years earlier:

...it is remarkable how many of these prisoners received testimonials of good character from their neighbours or employers, a fact all the more striking as it contrasts sharply with the bad records of many of those who informed against them. These prisoners, besides, were almost without exception men and young lads of settled abode and occupation; only fifteen of them were specifically charged with theft, and in eight of these cases, the charges remained unproven.⁷¹

In a similar vein, most of the twentieth-century historiography of the French Revolution does not see a blind surging mob but attempts to delineate the component social groups taking part in different forms of popular action at varying stages of the complicated political changes.

The original moral purpose behind *A Tale of Two Cities* has vanished with time. Little is now left of it. Instead, the novel is viewed as a story about the French Revolution, which has bizarre French characters and decent English ones, with a turbulent and bloody Paris but a London disturbed only by sporadic eruptions of violence. This contrast may account for its continuing popularity in England, but the novel has contributed little to the fictional literature on the French Revolution. One has only to compare it with Balzac's *Les Chouans* to see its deficiencies at all levels. Although couched in serious terms—not least the celebrated sacrifice motif—this novel became the forerunner of further entertainments, such as Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* [1905], which is very much a tale of two cities but has lost the anti-aristocratic flavour of Dickens' book.

⁷⁰ See David Craig, 'The Crowd in Dickens', in Giddings, *The Changing World*, pp. 75–90, pp. 77–80. Craig argues (pp. 82, 84, 86–8) that Dickens could not see any organization and clear purpose in mass movements, whether in the 1780s, in the 1790s, or in his own time.

⁷¹ Rudé, *The Crowd in History*, p. 199.

6

The historians' response to the historical novel

Historical fiction provided history with weapons to seize the initiative from the novel. In many cases, these weapons—style, colour, character, passion—were identical to those which were providing the historical novel with its appeal. Despite the later eighteenth-century drawing apart of history and the novel, and despite historians' continuing insistence on the benefits of separation, history and the historical novel in fact drew closer together during the age of Romanticism. As history sought to apply these newfound characteristics, a certain ambiguity appeared between them. Clearly, at some stage, later in the century and beyond, the influence of Romanticism in historiography would have to be pruned, if not jettisoned altogether.

Eighteenth-century developments continued to shape the writing and soon the teaching of history. They counterbalanced the influences coming from the Romantic movement, although they did not neutralize them.

Augustin Thierry (1795–1856) was by no means the first to immerse himself in medieval history. A number of leading figures in the Italian and Spanish Enlightenments, such as Muratori and the Valencian Mayans, had independently begun to write on early medieval subjects. Muratori's principal historical publications, from the 1710s to 1740s, focused on the Italian Middle Ages. His series of collected documents provided source materials for nineteenth-century historians looking to the medieval era for the origins of Italian nationhood in their own day. Mayans's attention focused on the Visigothic monarchy in the peninsula on the eve of the Islamic invasions of 711. Spanish constitutionalists in the first decades of the nineteenth century sought differing ways out of ministerial absolutism through revivals of medieval practice. This process entailed the resuscitation of those earlier sources and a wide-ranging debate on the relationship of them to the idea of a Spanish nation. Similarly, historical and literary interest in Italian medieval history flourished in the Romantic era, where the Middle Ages would be seen as the source of the lost liberties to be championed anew in the nineteenth century.¹

¹ Mayans published *Defensa del Rei Witiza* (Valencia 1772). Antoni Capmany, F. J. Borrull, G. M. Jovellanos, and F. Martínez Marina all published such studies between 1808 and 1814. Stuart Woolf, *A History of Italy, 1700–1860. The Social Constraints of Political Change* (London and New York 1970), pp. 76–7.

Stephen Bann's study of the French historians of the Romantic era—Barante, Thierry, and Michelet—argues that 'these three historians, taken in relation to each other, offer an invaluable insight into the way in which the rhetoric of historiography was developed during the early nineteenth century'. He points to the 'strategies used to recreate the past'.² All were greatly influenced by Scott, as was the English historian Macaulay. By contrast, the Prussian historian, Ranke, rejected what he believed to be Scott's deleterious influence on history, while at the same time forming part of the second generation of the German Romantic movement. Carlyle similarly rejected Scott, but infused his prose with startling imagery and high-flying rhetoric—especially in the case of his history of the French Revolution.

AUGUSTIN THIERRY: ETHNICITY AND SPECIFICITY AS HISTORICAL MOTORS

Thierry presented a theory of history motivated by the primacy of ethnic differentiation, especially with regard to the Norman Conquest of England. He was severely reprimanded for this, and then dismissed by Gooch, writing ninety years later, for presenting a 'false' view of English history. However, Thierry had been influential in his day, as Gooch was prepared to admit.³ The principal thrust of this work was the relationship between conquerors and conquered peoples—a subject which had considerable repercussions in early nineteenth-century Italy. Both Thierry and the older scholar, Claude Fauriel (1772–1844), were interested in what happened to European peoples after the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West and the invasions by the Germanic tribes. This topic also preoccupied the young Manzoni in his history of the Lombards and the historical drama *Adelchi*, set in seventh-century Italy.⁴

The roots of Thierry's ideas lay in Vico, but, more directly, he admitted his debt to Chateaubriand in showing historians a new way of writing history. The influence of Scott, however, proved to be decisive, especially since his characters and dialogue were livelier than those of Chateaubriand. Thierry acknowledged Scott as his mentor. The fact that a leading historian of the early Romantic era should draw attention to Scott in this way indicated the continuing overlap and mutual influence of historical study and the historical novel. Thierry argued for a recreation of the past with imaginative flair and colour, taking into view all perceivable factors, not simply the top layer of politics. He saw each century as distinct, and sought to portray in his use of language the differences between ethnic groups. In many

² Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio. A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge 1984), pp. 29, 31. See also Ceri Crossley, *French Historians and Romanticism. Thierry, Guizot, the Saint-Simonians, Quinet, Michelet* (London 1993), pp. 45–70, deals with Thierry.

³ Gooch, *History and Historians*, pp. 162–8.

⁴ Jean Baptiste Galley, *Claude Fauriel. Membre de l'Institut 1772–1843* (Saint-Étienne 1909), pp. v–xxiv. For Fauriel's relationship with Manzoni, see Chapter 7 of this present work.

respects, this testified to the continuing perception of history as a work of literature and of the historical novel as a genre with a serious didactic purpose.⁵

In *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* [1825], Thierry made three overriding points: that the Norman Conquest had not been accomplished in one blow in 1066 but was prolonged by continuing resistance of one kind or another thereafter; that the British Isles were characterized by rival ethnicities, which determined political life, and were compounded by the presence of the Normans; that conflicts deriving from these factors explained divisions in those societies for centuries after. Gooch, for his part, did not find any of that convincing—least of all this last point. Historians of the later twentieth century, however, rediscovered ethnicity as a factor explaining social conflict and political action, while not recognizing Thierry as one of their sources.⁶

Thierry argued that his emphasis on documentation (of various types) as the basis of historical research had enabled him to lay bare the continuing struggles of Saxon peoples *after* the Norman Conquest. In this respect, the historian demonstrated his thematic coincidence with the novelists of his time in a common fascination for bands of partisans and political brigands, generally located in forests or mountains. Resistance to William the Conqueror became centred in the seemingly impenetrable Fenlands of Eastern England. In a clear reference to *Ivanhoe*, Thierry remarked that 'it took a novelist of the present day, a man of genius, to reveal to the English that their ancestors had not succumbed totally as a result of one sole battle'.⁷

According to Gooch, Thierry was 'a child of the romanticists, he was stronger in imagination than in criticism'. Thierry, however, had insisted that his work rested on firm documentary foundations, and he took pains to distinguish his new kind of history from that of his eighteenth-century predecessors. Here, the influence of Vico became evident in the belief that history could not be seen as deriving from one general principle but that each epoch and society should be understood in terms of its specificity. He adopts the perspective of nations as collective entities and argues for the creative energies of the people as a whole, much as Michelet would later do to great effect.⁸

Thierry was evidently interested in 'peoples' and 'races', their relation to one another, their migrations and conquests, and their intermingling to form mixed ethno-cultural groups. He is open to criticism for attaching too much attention to racial characteristics in determining social conflict. Thierry also takes on board

⁵ Augustin Thierry, *Histoire de la Conquête d'Angleterre par les Normands, de ses causes et ses suites jusqu'à nos jours* (3 tomes, Paris 1825). Subsequent editions appeared in 1830, 1835, 1836, 1856, 1859, and 1883. English-language versions were published in London in 1861, 1880, and 1907. See also chapter 4 of Lionel Gossman, *Between History and Literature* (Cambridge, MA 1990), pp. 83–151, 'Augustin Thierry and Liberal Historiography', [originally published in 1976], stressing (pp. 132–47) that both he and Benjamin Constant were concerned with the problem of violence.

⁶ Thierry, *Histoire de la Conquête d'Angleterre*, pp. xi–xv. Current Latin-American historiography, for instance, is replete with studies of defence of ethnicity, language, and community.

⁷ Thierry, *Conquête*, p. xx. R. N. Smithson, *Augustin Thierry* (Geneva 1973), pp. 276–87.

⁸ Thierry, *Conquête*, pp. vii–ix. Gooch, *History and Historians*, p. 164. Crossley, *French Historians*, pp. 47–8, 55–6.

resistance to domination, from which he derives his idea of strategies of resistance. This theme frequently recurs in contemporary studies of colonialism. In Thierry's view, the study of man's capacity for resistance revealed the extent of his moral qualities. He is, in short, concerned to discover, through the study of history, something of the moral dimension of humanity. Like his contemporaries, Guizot, Quinet, and Michelet, among the post-Revolutionary historians, Thierry belonged to the liberal opposition in Restoration France, rejecting Counter-Revolutionary Catholics' defence of absolutism and the *ancien régime*.⁹

In a dramatic statement, which could equally apply to any other subjugated and colonized people, Thierry states that the Anglo-Saxons (or 'the English') lost control of the land in their own country and of their former political and religious organization between 1066 and 1206. They lost their national name and their role in political life; their history no longer belonged to them, and they descended into an 'inferior class'. Controversially, he saw the conflict between Henry II (1154–89) and Archbishop Thomas Beckett in these terms. Gooch, however, did not see the conflict between king and archbishop in ethnic terms, but as part of a general European struggle between Church and State; that is, in a completely different context.¹⁰

Thierry's other principal contribution as an historian was to rescue the Merovingians from obscurity. His aim was to examine the sixth century—a period ignored by other historians as too confused and barbaric. The evident contrast was with Anglo-Saxon England, where the immigrant or invading groups had supplanted the pre-existing Romano-Celtic population and imposed their dominant Germanic cultures. In Gaul, different processes had been at work. Equally as popular as the 1825 volumes on the Norman Conquest, *Récits des temps Mérovingiens* [1840], foreshadowed by two articles in 1835 and 1836, went into an eighth edition in 1864. Although not reaching far into the sixth century and couched largely in personalized and anecdotal terms, this work opened the way to later serious study of the centuries between the collapse of the Roman Empire in Gaul and the establishment of Carolingian rule after 768 and the formation of a new Teutonic Roman Empire in 800.¹¹

This work placed Thierry among the nineteenth-century historians—including Ranke, as we shall see—who identified the origins of modern European nations in the 'Gothic' transformation or revivification of the territories which had composed the Western Roman Empire.

One English historical novelist, however, did adopt a point of view similar to Thierry's, though he had either not read the French historian or chose not to mention him. Charles Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake* [1866], replete with historical references and arguments, opens by contrasting the Eastern English lowlands with

⁹ Thierry, *Conquête*, pp. xi, xvi. Crossley, *French Historians*, pp. 56, 62–3, 96.

¹⁰ Thierry, *Conquête*, pp. xvii, xxiii–xxiv.

¹¹ Augustin Thierry, *Récits des temps de Mérovingiens, précédé de considérations sur l'histoire de France* (2 tomes, Paris 1840). Further editions were published in 1887, 1913, 1929, and 1937, and an English-language version appeared in 1845. Smithson, Thierry, pp. 221–7. Rigney, *Imperfect Histories*, pp. 82–8. For a modern history, see Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450–751* (London 1993).

Scott's Highland resistance, and throws the focus on this continued English—or Anglo-Danish, as he prefers to call it—resistance to the Norman Conquest. Although an Anglican vicar and canon, novelist and polemicist, it should be recalled that Kingsley was Cambridge University's first Professor of Modern History during 1860–69, but few now remember him in that capacity. In Kingsley's saga, ethnicity finds pride of place, although it is soon convoluted into a British identity, the ancestor of Victorian patriotism. The Northmen, intermarrying with the Angles and Saxons, showed

... that proud spirit of personal liberty which they brought with them from the moors of Denmark and the dales of Norway; and they kept alive, too, though in abeyance for a while, those free institutions which were without doubt the germs of our British liberty.

Kingsley belongs to the school of Teutonic vigour with a taste for the primitive. In his view, the men of the Danelaw invigorated the English resistance over a seven-year period until crushed by William the Conqueror. In Kingsley's view, Wessex had grown weak under servitude and priestly dominance. He sees English speech and customs superseded by a 'Norman-French language' and 'Norman customs and manners'. Echoing Scott's Hereward, he portrays 'French-speaking knights' and 'French-chanting monks' who expelled the English from their homes and convents. They had been sent by the Pope 'to destroy the liberties of England'. This view also develops, in part, from Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–73), *Harold: The Last of the Saxon Kings* (London 1848). Both he and Kingsley welcomed Norman discipline and chivalry in shaping the future British character.¹²

Later in the century, the study of the Anglo-Saxon period in English history similarly involved discussion of the nature of the English nation and the origins of its specific institutions and laws, particularly in the writings of Stubbs and Maitland. Thomas Arnold, in his inaugural lecture as Professor of Modern History at Oxford in 1840, argued that Modern History should begin with the Anglo-Saxon era, because of its defining importance for the future. William Stubbs (1825–1901), who held the Chair of Medieval History at Oxford University from 1866, upheld the idea of Teutonic liberties in an Anglo-Saxon England, where custom prevailed over law. He saw the roots of medieval constitutionalism in these earlier practices. F. W. Maitland (1850–1906) developed the idea of a free peasantry already in the process of subjection to manorial jurisdiction in the pre-Conquest period. This development prepared the way for feudalism. 'Anglo-Saxonism' had its heyday in the 1860s. Even so, exploration of the cultural

¹² Charles Kingsley, *Hereward the Wake* (London and New York 1889 [1866]), pp. 1–8, 161–2. See Jenkin, 'Factional Pasts', pp. 83–4, 97–8, 146, 204–9, for valuable observations on these issues. Maike Oergel, *The Return of King Arthur and the Nibelungen. National Myth in Nineteenth-Century English and German Literature* (Berlin and New York 1998), p. 90, describes Kingsley as 'an ardent Germanophile'. A contemporary study, which does not cite Thierry as a source, argues convincingly for a Norman Conquest in stages, superimposing alien rule, and facing concerted challenges, including insurrection: see Peter Rex, *The English Resistance. The Underground War against the Normans* (Stroud 2004).

relationship of Germanic (including Anglo-Saxon), Scandinavian, and Celtic peoples went back to the turn of the past century. Herder, Fichte, A. W. Schlegel, Walter Scott, and Hegel all made contributions to this. Infused with Christianity (often seen in its post-Reformation form), these Nordic peoples were bestowed with a redeeming mission, which extended to their North American branch.¹³

Kingsley's novel represents the death throes of the Victorian historical novel, which sought to borrow the techniques of history and compete with it for a truthful interpretation of the past.

LEOPOLD VON RANKE, ROMANTICISM, AND 'SCIENTIFIC' HISTORY

Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), born in the north-central German province of Thuringia, sought especially to emancipate history from the influence of the novel, and, thereby, to establish clear lines of demarcation between history and literature. Ranke, however, could not escape the influence of the Romantic movement flourishing around him in the Germanic territories. From 1824 until his death in 1884, he built on the work of his immediate predecessors, who, from the 1780s, argued for the primacy of original sources in the attempt to determine what happened in history, separating it from legend and inherited opinions. His debt to the Classicists of the Enlightenment could be seen in the doctoral thesis on Thucydides presented to the University of Leipzig. Ranke formulated his general ideas during his time as editor, from 1832 to 1836, of the Berlin-based *Historisch-Politische Zeitung*, which the Prussian Government freed from censorship. Therein, he took apart the abstract principles of the French Revolution and early liberalism.¹⁴

Ranke argued that history should be an empirical science, founded upon research, with its own specific rules and practices. This, he hoped, would take history away from fiction. The literary content of history, moreover, was to be secondary to the presentation of research results. Thierry, Ranke and, as we shall see, Michelet too, all sought to establish the priority of source materials for historical writing. Yet they pursued their goal in different ways. The literary content was never absent. The quality of writing continued to distinguish history from the natural sciences, in which the reportage of findings had no literary place. As Rügen astutely points out, this left unresolved the question of what role imagination might play.¹⁵

¹³ F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond. Three Essays in the Early History of England* (Cambridge 1897). Joanne Parker, 'England's Darling.' *The Victorian Cult of Alfred the Great* (Manchester 2007), p. 40. Oergel, *The Return of King Arthur*, pp. 148, 159, 165–6.

¹⁴ George G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History. The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, CT 1968), pp. 63–89; see pp. 70–1. Peter Gay, *Style in History* (London 1975 [1974]), p. 69. Bann, *The Clothing of Clio*, pp. 10, 24.

¹⁵ Rügen, *Narrative, Interpretation, Orientation*, pp. 45–6, who also points out that Theodore Mommsen won the Nobel Prize for Literature for his *Römische Geschichte* [*History of Rome*, 1854, Vols. 1–4]—as, later, would Winston Churchill as an historian.

Ranke claimed to eschew romance. Style, however, played as great a role in Ranke as it did in his British and French contemporaries. The description of personalities rises considerably above the prosaic and betrays the influence of Romanticism. Ranke's portrayal of Cardinal Ximenes, Archbishop of Toledo and chief adviser of Isabella and Ferdinand in the 1490s and 1500, illustrates this perfectly.

Ximenes, the son of an advocate, well versed in both theological and juristic knowledge . . . had already received appointments from two of Isabella's adherents . . . when he bade adieu to his brilliant career and retired into a Franciscan convent not far from Toledo. Here he went about barefoot, dressed in sackcloth, slept on a scanty layer of straw, and scourged himself frequently . . . The Queen chose him for her father confessor; and then this man, tall of stature, pale and thin, with deep-set piercing eyes, an aquiline nose and a forehead which even in his old age remained free from wrinkles, appeared now and again at court in his cowl, heard the Queen's confession, and then returned to his convent.¹⁶

Such passages lend a distinctively aesthetic quality to Ranke's writing, which, protest as he might, identified him as a product of the Romantic era's reluctance to abandon literary quality—and imagination—in a work of scientifically conceived historiography.

Hayden White points to the Romantic elements in Ranke's work:

They are present in his interest in the individual event in its uniqueness and concreteness, in his concept of historical explanation as narration, and in his concern to enter into the interior of the consciousness of the actors of the historical drama, to see them as they saw themselves and to reconstruct the worlds which they faced in their time and places.¹⁷

Peter Gay's essay on the subject of style in Ranke is one of the most incisive commentaries on his writings.

Ranke displayed the gifts we normally associate with storytellers or playwrights: speed, colour, variety, freshness of diction, and superb control. He cunningly uses absences; he takes care never to spoil climaxes with elaborate explanations; he established his characters with the precision of a novelist.¹⁸

Gay draws attention to Ranke's literary skills, which were never far from his objectives as an historian. Yet his conception of the historian's task differed widely from that of the writer of fiction. Ranke's literary talents were put to the service of transmitting his findings to the reading public. The thrust of his investigation was the turning points in the political history of the preceding three centuries.

¹⁶ Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichte der lateinischen und germanischen Völker (1494–1514)* (Berlin 1824). Quoted from Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations (1494 to 1514)*, revised translation by G. R. Dennis (London 1909), pp. 245–8. 'Ximenes', as he was generally called in nineteenth-century British history texts, was Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (1436–1517), known in Spanish historiography as Cisneros.

¹⁷ White, *Metahistory*, p. 167.

¹⁸ Gay, *Style in History*, pp. 62–3.

Accordingly, the formation of the great dynastic states of the European continent, and the relations between them, became his prime concern. He did not find the wider world particularly interesting. Ranke saw political power as the principal agent in history. For this he has been widely criticized as a worshipper of state power and the existing order.¹⁹

From his earliest writings, Ranke focused on the period of transition from the later Middle Ages to the seventeenth century, when he saw the modern state as taking shape. He first established his reputation with the study of the interrelation of the Germanic and Latin races (from which I quoted above), published in October 1824 when he was aged twenty-eight. This work anticipated much that was to come, and earned for the young historian promotion from a schoolmaster's post in Frankfurt-on-the-Oder to a professorship at the University of Berlin in 1825, which gained him access to the Prussian State Archives. Although Ranke wrote this book from published rather than from archival sources, his range was comprehensive. Similarly, the focus on the struggle for control of Italy remained clear throughout.²⁰

There are three important comments to make concerning this early work. In the first place, Ranke opens with a preliminary discussion of the Visigothic era, in which he sees the Latin and Germanic elements fused into a common post-Roman culture, which laid the basis for later Western and Central European civilization. He described this process as 'gothicising the Roman world', and understood it in a positive sense. This recovery and reassessment of a neglected epoch anticipated Thierry's later examination of the Merovingian kings. Second, the choice of period, 1494 to 1514, at the very beginning of what would shortly become known as 'Modern Europe', came at a crisis point of the 'Italian Renaissance', although this term was not actually in use at the time of publication. Ranke's stress on political history led him to disdain what would later become known as 'Cultural History'. Nevertheless, the patrons of the Arts are all in this work—the Sforza, the Farnese, the Borgia, the Medici, and the popes—contending for political supremacy. This cultural world would become the subject of Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* [1860]. Although a former pupil, Ranke had little time for Burckhardt's view of history. If Ranke and Burckhardt are taken together, however, we have a diverse historical background for the subsequent adoption of 'Renaissance Italy' by European humanists, and a context for George Eliot's historical novel *Romola*.²¹

During 1834–36 Ranke published his reconsideration of the papacy, after immersing himself in most of the relevant archives and gaining access to private collections. Historical novelists, with artistic criteria foremost, could not compete on such a scale. Ranke maintained that his intention was to separate the study of the

¹⁹ Gay, *Style in History*, pp. 73, 87, 90, 92.

²⁰ The immersion in primary sources would begin with his second work—a study of the structures of government in the Ottoman and Spanish Empires, published in 1827, and drawn largely from the correspondence of Venetian Ambassadors.

²¹ Ranke, *Latin and Teutonic Nations*, pp. 1–6.

past from contemporary passions, and to banish Romantic literary preferences for heroes and villains from his writing. His long concentration, between the late 1830s and late 1860s, on the history of the Reformation, however, revealed the central role played in his work by Martin Luther, whom Ranke greatly admired, and whom Gay considers to have been a particular 'hero' of Ranke's, whose entry in the work he prepares with great dramatic care.²²

The German historian had read Scott and rejected his influence in favour of strict adherence to the documentary evidence, but gave writing a structure and style worthy of a novelist. Ranke objected to the imaginary treatment of these issues through the medium of the novel, which, even at its most realistic, often preferred invention to the representation of actuality as understood from the primary data found in archives. He took issue with the way Scott, for example, had used Philippe de Comines' *Mémoires* [1524–8] as his main source for *Quentin Durward*. Ranke believed—as did Macaulay, his English contemporary—that history could beat fiction on literary grounds and still maintain accuracy.²³

Ranke placed emphasis on the historical method and insisted that it should be 'scientific'—that is, above any suggestion of subjectivity—if it were to carry any authority. He was concerned with the specific causes and contexts of particular events, rather than the discerning of universal causes and laws in history. These latter would have been the goals of a quite different branch of inquiry, known as the philosophy of history, with which practising historians, from that time onwards, felt increasingly out of sympathy.²⁴

Religion played a major role in Ranke's interpretation of the development of history. In this respect, he is not that far from Vico, who wrote a century before him. It marked him off from the materialist strain within the Enlightenment, and brought him closer to Herder and Hegel, although his view of history was different from theirs. Ranke had been brought up in a devout Lutheran family and retained a Christian belief throughout his life. Protestant Christianity shaped his historical interpretation, although permeated by the German metaphysics current in his time, which pointed to an interrelation between philosophy and history. He saw a metaphysical reality behind the phenomena studied by the historian. However, he did not accept Hegel's thesis that historical development could be explained in rational terms, with 'God' or 'the Spirit' representing the historical process itself. He believed that the purpose in history lay in manifesting the political forms emerging to define the modern world: states, nations, institutions, individuals. The divine power worked through these in order to achieve its purpose, which was the just ordering of society.²⁵

²² Die Römischen Päpste in den letzten vier Jahrhundertern [1834–8] (*The Roman Papacy in the past Four hundred years*). Macaulay praised the work and welcomed the English translation of 1840. See Gay, *Style in History*, pp. 63–4, 77–9.

²³ Gooch, *History and Historians*, Chapters VI, VII, and VIII, on Ranke, his pupils, and influence: see pp. 73–84, 96–7, and as 'the Goethe of History'. Jacques Le Goff, *Histoire et mémoire* (Paris 1977: 1988 edition), pp. 159–61, 322–35.

²⁴ Iggers, *German Conception of History*, pp. 66, 69, 79–80. Gay, *Style in History*, pp. 69, 79, 82–5.

²⁵ White, *Metahistory*, pp. 163–4, 187–8. See also Ferris, *Achievement of Literary Authority*, p. 224.

In White's view, Ranke's principal contribution to the establishment of history as an autonomous discipline during the second quarter of the nineteenth century was his 'Organicist doctrine'. This identified a human community in different historical forms, times, and places. Ranke argued that each historical epoch and society should be assessed within its own terms of reference—a view resembling that of Vico's, although it seems unlikely that Vico was his source. As White correctly points out, Ranke saw in the idea of the 'nation' a moral entity and a principle of divine origin. The thesis put forward by the German historian was that nations superseded the supranational bodies such as the Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire, which sought to predominate during the Middle Ages. Ranke's interest in the Middle Ages did not derive, then, from a Romantic attempt to glorify or revive universalism, in contrast to such predecessors as F. Schlegel, but in preparing the ground for the new development of the nation in the modern age. This is the overriding message embedded in Ranke's narrative.²⁶ Eschewing systems, Ranke nevertheless sought to identify trends and processes. White argues that Ranke's method required narrative treatment with a 'plot structure' like any other story, although this did not signify that everything that he wrote had, as a work of imagination, little factual value.²⁷

MACAULAY AND THE CHALLENGE OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

As much as the novelists themselves, Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–59)—Whig politician and popular historian—became aware of the ambiguous relationship between the novel and history, especially when the subject of the former became the latter. Writing in 1828, early in his career, he saw history in an unenviable position.

This province of literature is a debatable land. It lies on the confines of two distinct territories. It is under the jurisdiction of two hostile powers; and, like other districts similarly situated, it is ill-defined, ill-cultivated, and ill-regulated. Instead of being equally shared between the two rulers, the Reason and the Imagination, it falls alternatively under the sole and absolute dominion of each. It is sometimes fiction. It is sometimes theory.²⁸

Macaulay, as a Cambridge undergraduate, had waited eagerly for the appearance of the latest Scott novels, which inspired him to write history.²⁹

²⁶ White, *Metahistory*, pp. 167–8, 172–4, 188.

²⁷ White, *Metahistory*, pp. 167, 181, 187–9.

²⁸ Thomas Babington Macaulay, 'Review of Henry Neele, *The Romance of History. England (London 1828)*', *Edinburgh Review*, 47 (1828), pp. 331–67: see p. 331.

²⁹ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge 2004), p. 246. Macaulay, essayist, historian, and Whig politician, was the son of an Evangelical anti-slavery campaigner. Elected a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge in 1824, he rose to fame through his eloquent defence of parliamentary reform in 1831–2. MP for Edinburgh from 1839 to 1847, he later returned to Parliament in 1852–6.

Historical fiction, in Macaulay's view, made the relationship between fact and invention in the writing of history a pressing problem. While recognizing the value of imagination, he advocated strict control and dependence on factual material without invention. Praising the dramatic qualities and narrative craft of the ancient historians from Herodotus to Tacitus, Macaulay nevertheless regarded them as morally deficient in comparison to the 'moderns'. He rejected the Ancient World as deficient in morality in the Christian sense of the term, and described the Middle Ages as a 'thousand years of barbarism', just as Gibbon and Voltaire before him had done. An English Protestant nationalist, Macaulay put forward the notion that greater progress took place in England in every fifty years since the reign of Elizabeth I than in all the Ancient World. Nevertheless, he saw the Middle Ages as an era of 'terrible purification'. A combination of the overthrow of ancient morals and metaphysics by Christianity with the invasions of the Germanic tribes, he argued, saved Western Europe from 'stupefaction', as the Roman Empire disintegrated. In this way, he also prepared the way for the later Victorian debate about the relative merits of the Germanic and Roman contributions to Western civilization.³⁰

Macaulay believed that historians should be writing about this dynamic, modern, 'Anglo-Saxon' world. He would not be writing nostalgically, as so many contemporaries and later Victorians would be, about the virtues of the Middle Ages. Post-Elizabethan Protestant nationalism went hand in hand, he argued, with the idea of progress, derived from the Enlightenment, to produce 'the second civilization of mankind' following that of the 'ancients'.

... the second civilization of mankind commenced under circumstances which afforded a strong security that it would never retrograde and never pause. Europe was now a great federal community. Her numerous states were united by easy ties of international law and common religion.

The almost predestined supremacy of Europe, though not its southern swathe, is never doubted. In a similar vein to Ranke, Macaulay pointed to Europe's unity in diversity, but with the historian's eye to be kept on 'the nation'.³¹

Having determined where the historian should nail his colours, Macaulay went on to insist that he should reclaim from fiction the portrayal of history. Historical fiction, from Scott onwards, had 'usurped' the task of the historian. The historical novelist

... has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them, in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their

³⁰ Macaulay, 'Review', pp. 339, 341, 348–50, 252–3, 357–8. Jenkin, 'Factional Pasts', pp. 188–98, 203, 208–9, is particularly good on the mid-Victorian treatment of the relationship between Protestantism and the rise of British power, in his discussion of Macaulay, Kingsley and J. A. Froude (1818–94). The latter fell under the influence of Carlyle and was the author of the 12-volume *History of England from the Death of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth* [1858–70], which combined narrative skill and polemic with research. He became Regius Professor of History at Oxford University in 1892.

³¹ Macaulay, 'Review', pp. 358, 364.

gleanings works which, even considered as histories are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials, which the novelist has appropriated.

Nevertheless, Macaulay, like Thierry, showed how much he had learned from Scott's inclusion of the entire spectrum of society in his historical novels. He recommended that in this fresh approach to history,

... society would be shown from the highest to the lowest—from the royal cloth of state to the den of the outlaw, from the throne of the Legate, to the chimney-corner where the begging friar regaled himself.³²

Chapter Three of the *History of England from the Accession of James II*, which came out in 1848, by applying in this perspective to a wide-ranging survey of the condition of England in 1688, showed how innovative Macaulay could be.

Macaulay, as Ranke was also doing, threw down a challenge to the historical novelists and invited historians to reclaim the territory lost to them. As these challenges from historians, accompanied as they would be by the increasing professionalization of the discipline, became clearly stronger, the historical novel, already precariously balanced between fact and imagination, wavered to the point of crisis.

Imagination was the issue which both divided and united history and the novel. Each embraced its potential. Historians, however, needed to tread carefully, lest their imagination ran away with them. Macaulay took up the challenge, as he saw it, which Scott's historical novels had laid down for historiography by incorporating in his own narrative the potential of imaginative description and introspection. Mark Phillips points to Macaulay's 'focus on evocation as a central purpose of all historical writing', and his belief that historians should recover this capacity from the novelists.

Macaulay's desire that history appeal to the imagination appears ambivalently new and old. It is a defence of the traditional literary character of historical narrative and at the same time an intimation of a new sense of history in which the imagination would take a central place. To understand Macaulay's uneasy ambition to meet the challenge of Walter Scott . . . requires a framework wider than Whig tradition alone will supply. It will be important to take account of changes in poetic theory that had placed the faculty of the imagination at the centre of the arts and to pay attention to the parallel revolution by which the novel had rapidly pushed its way to dominance among prose genres.³³

Macaulay, despite his glittering prose, asked few penetrating questions about the relation between past and present, romance and realism, secularizing trends and religious perspectives, or tradition and change. In George Levine's view, he was

³² Macaulay, 'Review', p. 365.

³³ Mark Phillips, 'Macaulay, Scott, and the Literary Challenge to Historiography', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50 (1989), pp. 117–33: see pp. 117–20.

. . . neither an original nor influential thinker: but he found a way to turn the reigning attitudes of middle class culture . . . into art. His style became the central mode of journalism and his collected essays remained one of the most popular books of the century.³⁴

His works gained an eager readership from the mid-nineteenth century, which continued over the following hundred years, but thereafter declined into relative obscurity. The first edition of his wide-ranging *Critical and Historical Essays* appeared in 1843, and became a favourite with the Victorian reading public. When the two first volumes of the *History of England* appeared, they sold as many as 13,000 copies within four months. Victorians found a literary work, which eschewed the fictional dimensions of Scott, and with which they could identify, because they discovered familiar ideas presented in a grand manner. Through this literary mirror they could see themselves as children of the Reformation, the Elizabethan era, the Glorious Revolution of 1688–9, and the Protestant Hanoverian Succession of 1714. Macaulay gave his readers a sense of the superiority of English political practice over that of continental Europe, and an understanding of how British institutions (after the Union of 1707) explained the rise of Great Britain to imperial power, which Victorians saw around them. This optimistic vision, which assumed a propensity for natural improvement, derived from Enlightenment ideas and assumptions, which were facing severe criticism on the continent of Europe, as we have seen, from the different tendencies within the Romantic movement. Macaulay's vision, in this respect, reflected a general lack of awareness in Great Britain, beyond the cosmopolitan minority, of the mainstream of European ideas or an unwillingness to absorb them. This might be explained by the material success and accompanying triumphalism of Victorian Britain.³⁵

THE IMPACT OF JULES MICHELET: DEIFICATION OF 'THE PEOPLE'

François Furet argues that in France the July Monarchy (1830–48) was the decisive period in pushing forward the teaching of history. The Orléans dynasty's need for legitimacy explained this, since it depended incongruously on both the monarchy of the *ancien régime* and the early phase of the Revolution of 1789 for its claim to the legal exercise of power in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1830. It could not have the one without the other, and henceforth needed to portray 1789 as a constructive point of transition from absolutism to limited monarchy. Furet sees a combination of the nobiliar constitutionalism of the period before 1789 and the later liberalism of the bourgeoisie as the sources of Louis Philippe's legitimacy. Such

³⁴ George Levine, *The Boundaries of Fiction. Carlyle, Macaulay, Newman* (Princeton 1968), pp. 16–17. See also, Gay, *Style in History*, pp. 97–138.

³⁵ The third and fourth volumes of the *History* appeared in 1855 and the fifth posthumously in 1861. The final work ran from 1685 until 1702, the death of William III. The original intention had been to continue through the eighteenth century to the first Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832.

a view ties the development of history, which responded to other factors as well, too closely to the political régime. As we have seen, the impact of intellectual developments outside France, which included the influence of the historical novel, also stimulated historical writing.³⁶

Nevertheless, government influence was powerful in France. One of the country's leading historians, François-Pierre-Guillaume Guizot (1787–1874), was also the predominant influence in government from 1840 to the collapse of the monarchy in February 1848. As Minister of Public Education, Guizot founded the *Société de l'Histoire de France* for the selection and publication of historical documents. Thierry was one of his collaborators in this enterprise. Guizot, in the tradition of Montesquieu, greatly admired the British political system's balance of limited monarchy and representation, nobility and liberty, and identified 1789 with the English Revolution of 1688. Michelet, however, adopted a different view, seeing 1830 as a lightning flash, which revealed the true nature of 1789 and exposed to view the national soul of the French people. Eschewing the power of great men in shaping national destinies, Michelet portrayed the French people themselves as the principal actors in this process. Personalities did not predominate in Michelet's understanding of the French Revolution.³⁷

Before he began to publish as an historian, Michelet immersed himself in the historical novels of Scott. His list of reading from April 1822 to May 1827 included *Waverley*, *Rob Roy*, *Old Mortality*, *Ivanhoe*, *Quentin Durward*, and *Kenilworth*.³⁸ Although this list apparently did not include *The Heart of Midlothian*, with its description of the Porteous Riots, Michelet's portrayal of mass violence in the September Massacres of 1792 suggests the influence of his fictional predecessor.³⁹

Throughout his career as an historian, Michelet struggled to balance his vision of human destiny, the product of his imagination, with strict attention to archival sources. Hippolyte Taine, who severely criticized Michelet's overall interpretation and technique, regarded him simply as a poet. Yet in his Prefaces, such as those of 1855 and 1869, Michelet asserted the primacy of his detachment over imagination. However, any reading of Michelet's text—taking into consideration at the same time the overriding purpose of his historical writing—points to the power of creativity. Bann's comment that Michelet 'raised in its most acute form the problem of the boundary between history and literature' strikes home.⁴⁰

³⁶ François Furet, *In the Workshop of History* (Chicago and London 1984) [translation of *L'Atelier de l'histoire* (Paris 1982)], p. 89.

³⁷ H. A. C. Collingham, *The July Monarchy. A Political History of France, 1830–1848* (London and New York 1988), pp. 258–61. Guizot and Thierry saw 1830 as the culminating point of the Revolution begun in 1789. See also Douglas Johnson, *Michelet and the French Revolution*. The Zaharoff Lecture for 1989–90 (Oxford 1990), pp. 1, 11. Crossley, *French Historians*, pp. 71–104, for Guizot, and pp. 183–250.

³⁸ Maigron, *Le roman historique*, pp. 395, 413 n.1.

³⁹ Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 7 vols. (Paris 1847–53), vol. [1792 massacres]. See J. M. Thompson, *The French Revolution* (Oxford 1966 [1943]), pp. 303–4. Gossman, *Between History and Literature*, chapter 5, 'Michelet and Romantic Historiography', pp. 152–224 [1989].

⁴⁰ Edward K. Kaplan, *Michelet's Poetic Vision. A Romantic Philosophy of Nature, Man, and Woman* (Amherst 1977), p. 134. Bann, *Clothing of Clio*, p. 30.

Michelet placed his literary skill at the service of a new historical narrative, which argued for the centrality of popular action. His first major work, however, was the *Histoire romaine*, a natural successor to the earlier European focus on the Classical world. As we shall see in Part Two, Chapter 9, this early work considerably influenced Flaubert in researching the background for his North African novel of 1863. In 1831 Michelet became Head of the Historical Section of the National Archives, which placed him in a key position for researching his *Histoire de France*. As discussed earlier, he founded his ideas in an interpretation of the historical aspects of the philosophy of Vico. He argued that history could not be understood uniquely in political terms, but only by taking into consideration social and cultural developments. The social interpretation of history marked his most significant difference from Ranke's approach, which stressed the process of 'state-formation' and dealt principally with 'high politics' and the personalities competing in it. Michelet's emphasis on the significance of art and architecture, as well as institutions, pointed to the beginnings of a branch of history which, after the publication of Burckhardt's *The Renaissance in Italy*, would increasingly become known as 'cultural history'.⁴¹

Michelet rejected the Christian idea of human nature. His life's work strove to displace Christianity from its founding position in Western civilization. As a youth, he had been accustomed to hear stories of the Revolutionary years from members of his own family. In his writing, he argued that the Revolution had liberated France from the two scourges of Privilege and Original Sin, and, despite violence and excess, opened the way for France and all of humanity to progress to a higher stage of freedom. With this overriding goal in mind, he was even prepared to justify the Terror of 1793–4.⁴²

Although not the first French historian to take the Revolution as his subject, Michelet crafted with dexterity the idea that the French Revolution occupied a defining role in human history, in his seven volumes published between 1847 and 1853. Despite military defeat in 1814–15 and subsequent eclipse as a dominant European power, France, it turned out, had after all occupied the prime role in the history of mankind's development by being the first country in which the people had seized the leadership and molded society into a new form. It should not pass unnoticed that Michelet conceived this process as a moral struggle between the evils of the old world and the virtues of the new, which entailed an upsurge of violence emanating from below. Essentially, Michelet's view of history was defined by violent conflict.⁴³

⁴¹ Jules Michelet, *Histoire romaine*, 2 vols. (Paris 1831). Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France (Xe–XVe siècle)* (Paris 1833–34); (*Renaissance à Révolution*) (Paris 1855–67). Michelet, *Révolution française*, vol. II, p. 389; III, p. 186. Kaplan, *Poetic Vision*, pp. 131–2. See also White, *Metahistory*, p. 150.

⁴² Michelet, *Révolution française*, Preface, 31 January 1847, pp. 11–19. White, *Metahistory*, p. 160, underscore's Michelet's debt to Vico.

⁴³ François Auguste Mignet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 2 vols (Paris 1824), anticipated Michelet, though supporting the revolution from a moderate liberal perspective. Mignet (1796–1884) joined Thiers as co-founder of the Orleanist 'Le National' in 1830, and became director of the Archive of Foreign Affairs until 1848. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [1790] marks the beginning of the critique of the revolution's principles.

The revolutionary struggle had for Michelet a moral dimension. Religion—historically represented in France by the Christian Church—was one of the institutions and practices of the old order to be overthrown. This left open the question of what thereafter would define the basis of morality. Michelet's answer was that it would be the will of the people, conceived in universal terms. If such a view may be defined as 'Romantic', then it was Romanticism with roots in the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment. It certainly reflected an optimistic belief in the human capacity for collective improvement and a belief in the idea of progress. Liberty became the new religion of the nineteenth century—a faith which aligned Michelet with the Liberal cause.⁴⁴

White sees this metaphysical portrayal of Liberty's struggle to free itself through the course of history from its chains as Michelet's narrative 'plot' in which 'the people' are the actors. Yet, overriding as Michelet's theory was, the historian himself remained grounded in the archival sources, and was engaged—contrary to what White implies—in a different project to that of the novelists. Michelet's argument provided the course of history with an all-embracing purpose—its teleology—a 'master-narrative'. He portrayed France as the harbinger of this liberty. In that sense a 'providentialism' ran through his work, which placed it firmly in its epoch, despite the elements in Michelet's approach which pointed to later developments in the scope of historical studies.⁴⁵

Despite the implied general application of his theory of liberty, Michelet's prime concern was France. The deepest trait in his writing is nationalism. In this respect, the Revolution of 1789 became the decisive element in the formation of the French nation, because it eliminated provincial distinctions in its endeavour to promote political homogeneity and a common fatherland. Accordingly, Michelet saw French history as consisting of the stages taken towards the realization of this goal, from the time of Charlemagne through Joan of Arc to the age in which he lived.⁴⁶

Romanticism, Michelet claimed, was a phenomenon which took place around him: he was too busy in the archives to notice it. Nonetheless, his was a central presence in the movement, as Seznec points out:

If Romanticism is defined in its simplest terms, that is, as the predominance of feeling and imagination over objective reason, what could be more romantic than the *Histoire de France*? . . . What we find in Michelet's *Histoire* is a sort of rhapsody, a sequence of pictures, of apostrophes, of diatribes, or lyrical outbursts, of songs, of laments. We

⁴⁴ See Pieter Geyl, 'French Historians For and Against the Revolution', in *Encounters in History* (London 1963) [an essay of 1956], pp. 115–87. For later twentieth-century French historians' views of Michelet, the essay by Pierre Nora, 'Michelet', *La Nouvelle Histoire, sous la direction de Jacques Le Goff et Roger Chartier* (Paris 1978), pp. 424–8, where Fernand Braudel and Georges Duby praise Michelet, hitherto rejected as a nineteenth-century throwback. This accompanies the statement that for Lucien Febvre he played the role of a Vico.

⁴⁵ White, *Metahistory*, pp. 152, 154–5. The concept of master-narrative or 'metanarrative' is discussed in Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (London and New York 2002), pp. 58–9. See my remarks in Chapter 1.

⁴⁶ See Bourdé and Martin, *Les écoles historiques*, pp. 159–80, p. 168. Bann, *The Clothing of Clio*, pp. 32–53.

listen to a voice by turns angry and caressing, always feverish and passionate, as we would listen to a violin; and indeed we are hearing one of the supreme instrumentalists of French prose.⁴⁷

Yet Michelet's profession as an archivist ensured dedication to primary sources and consistent application to detail. Discrepancies between fact and imagination arose from the interpretation and from the overall purpose of his work. From the 1860s, criticism of his view, for instance, of the role of an indiscriminate 'people', arose in France—especially among socialists, who stressed a class differentiation. Catholics and positivists also formed different spheres of opposition to the Michelet interpretation of the Revolution. Nevertheless, Michelet's work formed part of a general historical attempt to comprehend the upheavals which had led to a revolutionary capture of power and the turmoil during the 1790s. These events, which inevitably led to differing interpretations, gave rise to a new terminology.

The Revolution was a great talking machine which had to create a new language in order to describe and sustain the new world. To seize a stylistic initiative could be the means whereby one could seize a political initiative.⁴⁸

Michelet, looking back from 1869, near the end of his career, had his own criticisms of contemporary historians. In the first instance, he reaffirmed his departure from those of the pre-1830 era for their concentration primarily on political history, which he always believed to be insufficient for a proper understanding of any epoch. He restated his view that religion, culture, and the economy formed essential parts of a society and character and development. Just as had Ranke, he stressed the historians' need to examine the archives, rather than rely on published sources. When it came to naming names, Michelet set himself in opposition to the single-minded approaches of different historians such as Guizot, Thiers, or Thierry, who had concentrated either on institutions or on conflicts between races. He criticized them for not understanding the interrelation of factors. Institutions, for instance, could not be studied without reference to ideas and developments within society as a whole. Such factors had to be assessed in relation to one another, in order to understand how human life had been shaped. Nevertheless, Michelet defended himself from criticism that he had put too much of himself in his work.

The historian who is absent from his work, who undertakes to remove himself when he writes, and just to follow behind his source material . . . is no real historian.⁴⁹

In Michelet's view, history makes the historian, and not the other way round. 'My book had created me.'⁵⁰

⁴⁷ J. Seznec, 'Michelet in Germany: A Journey in Self-Discovery', *History and Theory*, 16 (1977), pp. 1–10: p. 1.

⁴⁸ Johnson, *Michelet*, pp. 3, 5, 15.

⁴⁹ Jules Michelet, 'Préface à l'*Histoire de France pour l'édition de 1869*', reprinted from the 1965 edition in Bourdé and Martin, *Les écoles historiques*, pp. 75–80, p. 79.

⁵⁰ Bourdé and Martin, *Les écoles historiques*, p. 180.

There is much to recommend in Kaplan's assessment of Michelet's method and achievement:

Michelet's language is dramatic and metaphorical, but his thinking is sharp. The historical art requires both love of the objects of inquiry and a reflective awareness of the perceiving subject. Michelet relives the feelings and ideals of historical figures while attempting to do so with a self-consciousness approaching objectivity. He insists time and time again that his original contribution was to have exploited unpublished documents previously buried in archives. He counterbalances his admitted partiality for certain historical figures by his respect for evidence.⁵¹

Michelet's history represented one of the most significant nineteenth-century contributions to the post-Christian 'religion of humanity' which novelists such as George Eliot would further refine.

The myth or mystique of the Revolution derives in great part from Michelet. This historian, gifted with literary skill, transformed the various popular movements, professional-class manoeuvrings, and the political collapse of the monarchical system into an organism with a life of its own. This certainly was a magnificent achievement of creative literature. In many respects, Michelet's anthropomorphic monster perversely resembles Vico's Providence, transformed from the mind of God working through human history into a purely human, collective instrument sweeping aside everything in its gargantuan path. He turned Vico upside down, rather as Marx would do with Hegel. Michelet's Revolution had a will and destiny of its own, determining the fate of the human race. Through devastation, the Revolution, as Michelet saw it, created a new universe. The crowd, as presented in Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* and in Dickens' two novels of mob violence, represents a complete negation of the view presented in Michelet. Hugo's monster-hero, Quasimodo, is a victim of the mob. In Dickens, the mob outshines the individual characters as the real 'star' of the fictional work, but creates nothing. In both history and historical fiction, the nineteenth century presents a contradictory view of itself, alternatively horrified and mesmerized by the Revolution of the 1790s, at one time seen as harbinger of liberty and equality, at another of death and destruction. This contradiction lay at the heart of Carlyle's view of his age, which he saw as one of monumental struggle.

THOMAS CARLYLE: PORTRAYER OF HIS AGE

Curiously, White omitted Carlyle (1795–1881) from his pantheon of narrative historians with an ulterior motive. Certainly, Carlyle slipped into virtual obscurity for many decades, but his writings do merit reconsideration, though less for his ideology than for his commentaries on literature and history. Carlyle had major importance in the nineteenth century, because he excelled in interpreting the century to itself. He saw his age as one of crisis and revolution, in which nothing

⁵¹ Kaplan, *Poetic Vision*, p. 134.

could be taken for granted. In consequence, he interpreted his role as the provider of doctrines which could save Great Britain from the type of violent revolution which had earlier convulsed France. Unlike those Romantics who saw a return to Christianity as the answer, Carlyle considered the Christian religion to be inadequate for the needs of his scientifically advancing century. Yet he offered a religious vision, while adopting the position that God was real but unknowable, and that humanity could have only a partial understanding of the universe. He placed prime emphasis on reform of self as the starting point for any broader comprehension, as he indicated in *Sartor Resartus*, which originally appeared in 1833–34 in periodical form.⁵²

Carlyle came from Dumfriesshire in south-west Scotland and, like Scott, studied at the University of Edinburgh, where, late in life, he became Rector in 1866. He published in *The Edinburgh Review*, notably *Signs of the Times* [1829], criticizing Jeremy Bentham's economic liberalism, wrote on Goethe's life and translated several of his works, and, as we have seen, published a life of Schiller. From this earlier immersion in German literature, Carlyle, moving to London in 1834, concentrated on the French Revolution—a phenomenon which influenced much of his subsequent writing. The bulk of this was produced in the 1840s and 1850s, when he made his reputation.⁵³

Carlyle saw the present age—the early nineteenth century—as the 'Mechanical Age', in which religion, philosophy, and morality were no longer foremost considerations. He considered reform of self to be a greater priority than reform of society, which he consistently denounced. Christianity, he argued, had originally spread not through institutions but in individual souls.

It arose in the mystic depth of man's soul; and was spread abroad by the 'preaching of the word', by simple, altogether natural and individual efforts; and flew, like hallowed fire, from heart to heart, till all were purified and illuminated by it; and its heavenly light shone, as it still shines, and (as sun or star) will ever shine, through the whole dark destinies of man.⁵⁴

The French Revolution had also been fired by a dynamic spark and had represented much more than just the desire for cheap bread and judicial reform. However, it was essentially a blind struggle for a deified liberty, which in the process ultimately became insane. If the current age were one of 'mechanism', then, Carlyle argued, it signified a perversion of the true nature of man, since the 'finest and highest spirits of the world' could not be contained within outward circumstances. Increasing constitutional liberty had sacrificed, in his view, moral responsibility.⁵⁵

In historical terms, Carlyle saw humanity living between the two eternities of Past and Future, and struggling against oblivion. He believed that the study of

⁵² Levine, *Boundaries of Fiction*, pp. 17, 28, 53–4, 57, 59, 84.

⁵³ David Daiches, 'Carlyle and the Victorian Dilemma', in *More Literary Essays* (Edinburgh and London 1968), pp. 115–32; pp. 116–17.

⁵⁴ Thomas Carlyle, 'Signs of the Times' [June 1829], *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. 2, pp. 230–52; pp. 233–4, 239.

⁵⁵ Carlyle, 'Signs of the Times', pp. 242–4, 250, 252.

history had never stood higher in prestige than in his own age, because it had become 'more a strict teacher than an entertainment'. Carlyle saw the attempt to understand history at the core of human existence:

History, as it lies at the root of all sciences, is also the first distinct product of man's spiritual nature: his earliest expression of what can be called Thought. It is looking both before and after; as, indeed, the coming Time already waits, unseen, yet definitely shaped, predetermined and inevitable, in the Time to come; And only by the combination of both is the meaning of either completed.⁵⁶

This view of humanity's plight was compounded by Carlyle's identification of the philosophical problem which lay at the heart of the study of history: its failure to throw any light on the dilemma of man's origin and destiny on earth. At the same time, while he accepted that narrative was the principal mode of communication, he saw 'a fatal discrepancy between our manner of observing [events] and their manner of occurring'. This was precisely the dilemma highlighted in the theoretical discussion of narrative in history and literature during the latter part of the twentieth century. The difficulty of ascertaining relationships in events as they occurred gave rise to his much-quoted phrase, the 'ever-living, ever-working Chaos of Being', of which the historian inadequately tries to make sense. Since 'the whole is a broad, deep immensity', all the historian should hope for is an understanding of the smaller picture. The danger in that, however, would be that the historian would see nothing but that.⁵⁷

Despite the development of 'scientific' history during Carlyle's lifetime, many mysteries still remained concerning the nature of human history. Ann Rigney highlights this aspect of his thought: '... more than any other writer, Carlyle seems to have been fascinated by the "silences of history".' Principally, these consisted of the boundlessness of the past, its inaccessibility, and its unintelligibility—three overriding obstacles to the writing of history.⁵⁸

Carlyle's view of mass action differed substantially, to say the least, from that of Michelet. Aware, nevertheless, of the social condition of the working classes in the new industries and expanding cities, Carlyle shared with many contemporaries a sense of danger at any incitement of the masses to violence. This he described as a 'madness, incoherence, and ruin' beyond any possibility of coercion. He regarded the French Revolution, with its 'horrors and crimes', as a warning for Britain. That convulsion had brought with it twenty-three years of warfare in Europe. The Declaration of the Rights of Man had been followed not by universal liberty but by the bloodshed of the Convention and the tyranny of Napoleon. At the same time, he argued that since *laissez-faire* economics was detrimental to the working classes, state action would be required for amelioration of conditions. Hence, Carlyle asserted that the right to government was also a right of man.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Carlyle, 'On History' [1830], *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. 2, pp. 253–63: p. 253.

⁵⁷ Carlyle, 'On History', pp. 254–5, 257–8, 263.

⁵⁸ Rigney, *Imperfect Histories*, pp. 10, 103–20.

⁵⁹ Carlyle, 'Chartism', [1839], *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. 6 (London 1888), pp. 109–88: pp. 111, 113–14, 137–40, 144, 173, 175. The comments on pp. 125–35 and pp. 157–8 show the

Although *Sartor Resartus*—first published in book form in the USA in 1836 and in London in 1838—purported to be a type of fiction, Carlyle eschewed the novel in preference for historical works with dense philosophical argument and essays on contemporary issues seen in a transcendent light. *The French Revolution* appeared in 1837—a work concentrating on the disintegration of the old régime, followed by the chaos and bloodshed of the Revolution during the first half of the 1790s. Although Carlyle regarded the Revolution in a negative light and wrote his work as a warning to the British aristocracy, he shared with Michelet the view that it was the central event of the age. He employed his full literary skills in this work, which contained passages of considerable rhetorical power as well as detailed portrayals of individuals and events such as the Flight to Varennes in 1791—this latter also described vividly by Michelet. Like Macaulay, Carlyle, though not a professional historian in the new sense of the term, contributed significantly to the infusion of history with the literary skills displayed by novelists. The French Revolution, given heroic treatment in Michelet and viewed as mob hysteria by Carlyle, became thereafter as much a subject of historical debate as of literary embellishment through the same narrative medium. As we saw in the previous chapter, this work considerably influenced Dickens' view of the French Revolution, which formed the context for *A Tale of Two Cities*, published twenty-two years later. Carlyle and his wife—an early supporter of George Eliot's fiction—remained on good terms with Eliot and her partner, G. H. Lewes, throughout their creative lives, and the novelist (the subject of Part Two, Chapter 9) was both influenced and repelled by Carlyle's ideas.⁶⁰

History and the historical novel together contributed to a consciousness of modernity stimulated by the political, social, and economic changes of the decades from the 1780s to the 1840s. In the way that it had developed through and after the Enlightenment, historiography was itself one aspect of this modernity. Furthermore, dynastic or republican, absolutist or constitutional, traditionalist or revolutionary systems all made use of history in order to legitimize or justify their existence. History became a field of contention. It might even be said that where dynastic monarchies controlled ethnically different provinces or kingdoms—as the Habsburg monarchy did, for instance, in Italy—history as much as territory was an occupied country.

Scientific history, as the nineteenth century increasingly came to define source-based research, might be criticized for its capacity for scientific objectivity, but it still shared with the sciences a common desire to establish control over the universe. This, in the case of history, implied control over the past by attempting to impose order on it. For that reason, it could not be said that the past was dead. On the

influence of Thierry's theories of the determining influence of ethnicity on social and political history in the British Isles.

⁶⁰ Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution. A History* (London 1837). According to Gooch, *History and Historians*, pp. 302–3, this great work of literature—‘a book brimful of passion and poetry’—revealed the French Revolution to the English-speaking reader, despite the author’s insufficient knowledge.

contrary, the nineteenth century saw intense struggles for control of it. Possession meant interpretation, which in turn meant identity. When this past, or these pasts, were held up as a mirror, the century sought to understand itself in the reflection. As national self-definition, rather than religion, became the yardstick of human sociability as the century advanced, control of history—whether the fact or the fiction of history—became as urgent as the political shaping of institutions and borders designed to assert this new national identity.

The French Revolution influenced perceptions of both the future and of the past. However, most historians chose to place their particular emphasis on certain phases and aspects of it, generally avoiding the excesses of the Jacobin period and the Terror. Michelet was the principal dissenting figure in the latter respect. Regardless of which country they came from, historians of the Romantic era saw in medieval constitutionalism the origins of their own contemporary championship of political liberty and national integration. Historical novelists of the time, several of whom also wrote history, shared their view. History, as interpreted by both historians and novelists, entered the arena of debate. In that sense, it became as fluid after the event as it had been at the time the events had occurred. This was a highly significant development for two reasons. Constant reinterpretation undermined faiths, traditions, and thrones. History, furthermore, seemed to offer a source of values, especially as Christian faith eroded in many, though not all, intellectual quarters. This is to say, that values might no longer be drawn from revealed religion but from human experience in society through time.

History and invention in the Italian question

Milan—the Lombard capital and Manzoni's native city—shared with Tuscany and Naples the distinction of having been a centre of Enlightenment before the French Revolution. The Lombard *Illuminati* had pioneered enlightened ideas and policies in the north. Cesare Beccaria (1738–94), the renowned jurist and perhaps their most celebrated figure, also wrote for the periodical *Il Caffè*, which appeared in 1764–66, and was founded by Pietro Verri (1728–97), another member of the city's intellectual vanguard. Its contributors argued for the application of rational thought to agriculture and industry. Application to political and social institutions would not lag far behind. Milan became a breeding ground for Jacobin sympathisers during the 1790s, especially after the French invasion of the peninsula in 1796, and Stendhal, resident in Milan from 1815–21, painted a vivid picture of this in the opening chapters of *La Charreuse de Parme*. The city was the centre for the reception of French and German culture and ideas into the peninsula. It would become the centre of Italian Romanticism, intellectually vibrant during the years 1816–21, despite Austrian censorship. Even so, one of its leading figures, the poet Ugo Foscolo (1778–1827), who had a Jacobin past, left Milan for Switzerland in order to avoid Austrian rule, and became a guest of Madame de Staël at Coppet before transferring to England.¹

EARLY ITALIAN ROMANTICISM

In 1818–19 *Il Conciliatore*—a two-weekly periodical published in Milan—became the principal outlet for Romantic ideas. Modelled on the *Edinburgh Review*, it also looked back to the tradition of *Il Caffè*. One of the prime objectives of Milanese Romanticism was to put Italy back into the mainstream of European culture. With

¹ Giulio Bollati, 'L'italiano', in the Einaudi, *Storia d'Italia* (Turin 1972), vol. 1, *I caratteri originali*, pp. 946–1022; pp. 980–7. Ezio Raimondi, *Romanticismo italiano e romanticismo europeo* (Milan 1997), pp. 40–57. Gianluca Albergoni, *I Mestieri delle Lettere tra Istituzioni e Mercato. Vivere e scrivere a Milano nella prima metà dell'Ottocento* (Milan 2006), pp. 26–36. Andrea Ciccarelli, 'Dante and the Culture of Risorgimento: Literary, Political or Ideological Icon?' in Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (eds), *Making and Remaking Italy. The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento* (Oxford and New York 2001), pp. 77–102; pp. 82–4. 'Stendhal' [Henri Beyle], *La Charreuse de Parme* (Paris 1961 [1839]), pp. 3–34. For Stendhal's activities and contacts in the Milan of 1816, see his *Rome, Naples et Florence* (Paris 1987 [1826]), pp. 28–238. Foscolo originated from Zante in the Ionian Islands, then under Venetian rule, and died in exile in London.

this in mind, the periodical encouraged the translation of foreign-language works and sought to inspire Italians to read in other European literatures. Mme. De Staël, who had first visited Italy in 1804 with A. W. Schlegel and her fellow Swiss scholar, J.-C. L. Sismondi (1773–1842), strongly promoted such a view in a subsequent visit during the Restoration. Her essay ‘On the Method and Value of Translations’ appeared in 1816, urging Italians to transcend their limited concerns, involve themselves with the leading European ideas of the time, and construct a national literature. For this, she was much criticized. Even so, this essay contributed to the Italian version of the debate there between Classicism and Romanticism. Romantics claimed to be immersing themselves in the ideas of the present day, rather than in those of Ancient Greece and Rome.²

Italian Romanticism began to take shape in the latter part of the 1810s—partly in reaction to the French occupation, and partly in response to the challenge presented by Romantic literature in Germany and England, from which the influence of Byron’s poetry was already being felt in the peninsula. In fact, the editor of *Il Conciliatore*, Silvio Pellico (1789–1854), one of Italy’s leading poets and author of the historical tragedy *Francesca da Rimini* [1815], translated the Introduction of *Childe Harold* in 1818. The periodical similarly presented German literature to its readers, both through the medium of the Schlegel brothers and Mme. De Staël, but also in translations of Schiller’s drama, including *Wallenstein’s Camp* in 1820. The presence of Sismondi’s works was very much in evidence in the pages of *Il Conciliatore* from late 1818 and the greater part of 1819. All these authors were taken up with zeal by the Milanese Romantics, and put to their own purposes.³

The first native contribution to the polemic between Classicism and Romanticism came with Ermes Visconti’s *Idee elementari sulla poesia romantica* [Basic Ideas concerning Romantic Poetry], arguing against Classical models, in autumn 1818. Visconti—a member of the circle of literary friends around Manzoni—raised two important questions: how could the indigenous literary tradition which had flourished in a medieval Christian culture be recovered, and what of the Italian language should be used in the present day? Manzoni found himself largely in agreement with Visconti’s position, and in 1820 dispatched a copy of the *Idee* to his friend and mentor Fauriel, the distinguished medieval historian and philologist in Paris, enclosing a bundle of polemical works both in favour of and opposed to Romanticism.⁴

² For this journal, see Gennaro Barbarisi and Alberto Cadioli (compilers), *Idee e Figure del ‘Conciliatore’* (Milano 2004), pp. 480–3. There are numerous important essays in this work. *Le Globe* welcomed Camillo Ugoni, an associate of *Il Conciliatore*’s editors, as a contributor in 1824. Ugoni published an Italian edition of Manzoni’s tragedies in Paris in 1826, of which *Le Globe* published a French translation of his Preface. In Milan, Staël met the classical poet Vincenzo Monti, and travelled on to Rome and Naples, arriving home in the following summer. She returned to Italy—mainly to Florence and Pisa—in the winter of 1815–16. See Fairweather, *Madame de Staël*, pp. 318–22, 324–5, 376, 453–5.

³ Barbarisi and Cadioli, *Idee e figure*, pp. 266–7, 442–3, 457–62, 469, 500–1.

⁴ Carteggio. Alessandro Manzoni—Claude Fauriel, *Edizione Nazionale ed Europea delle Opere di Alessandro Manzoni*, Centro Nazionale dei Studi Manzoniani, vol. 27 (Milan 2000), letter no. 63,

Sismondi's work on medieval Italian history became one of the profoundest influences on Romantic literature in Italy. This provides yet another instance of new developments in history opening the way for historical drama and fiction to develop their themes and issues. The Swiss historian and economist had been a young protégé of Mme. De Staël's father, Jacques Necker, formerly Finance Minister of Louis XVI. His *History of the Medieval Italian Republics* appeared in Zurich in 1807, and finally in Italian in 1817–19. Sismondi praised the Italian city communes of the High Middle Ages as champions of liberty against the tyranny of the Popes and Emperors, regarding them as the paragons to follow in the present age. The Lombard League, formed to resist the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, between 1168 and 1183, seemed to him to have been an earlier indication of a possible future role of federalism for the nineteenth century. In other words, the only way to resist both foreign domination and autocratic rule was for the disparate Italian states to unite.⁵

This view not only corresponded to the contemporary search for the origin of liberties since lost—as we saw in the case of Germany, and shall see again in the case of Spain—but stirred an already receptive audience among Italian intellectuals into developing the present-day implications of these historical arguments. Italy's medieval past, however, had also been one of division, the legacy of which it would be exceptionally difficult to overcome in the present.

Just as Spanish and Russian Romantics did, Italian Romantics—virtually all of them political liberals—faced state repression, and for that reason cultural paradigms often acted as a semi-clandestine mask for political statements. Austrian repression in Lombardy, Bourbon reaction in Naples, and fears of destabilization in Piedmont and the Papal States, increased as a result of the revolutionary movements of 1820–21, triggered by the recapture of power by the liberals in Spain. The small Romantic circle in Milan had to contend with the Austrian police, which suppressed *Il Conciliatore*. The police arrested Pellico, believing him to be associated with the conspiratorial group the *Carbonari*, and confined him in the Moravian fortress of Spielberg for ten years until 1830. Federico Confalonieri (1785–1846), whom Stendhal also knew, went to the same prison.⁶

pp. 263–83, Manzoni to Fauriel, Milan, 17 October 1820. Mario Puppo, *Romanticismo italiano e Romanticismo europeo* (Milan 1985), pp. 7–24, 35–52, 79–104, 137, pointing to the superficial and partial knowledge which Italian Romantics at first had of their German forebears and contemporaries. Adrian Lyttelton, 'Creating a National Past: History, Myth and Image in the Risorgimento', in Ascoli and Henneberg, *Making and Remaking Italy*, pp. 22–74; p. 32. Raimondi, *Romanticismo italiano*, pp. 40, 42, 120–3.

⁵ Jean-Charles Léonard Simonde [Sismondi], *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*, 4 vols (Zürich 1807), II, pp. 159, 179–85, 300–1, 349–53; III, chapter 16. At the Geneva Academy in 1811–12 he began a course of lectures on European comparative literature. Schenk, *Mind of the European Romantics*, p. 41. Fairweather, *Madame de Staël*, pp. 184, 310–21, 332. Lyttelton, 'Creating a National Past', pp. 42–3, 50–1, discusses the implication of the early nineteenth-century emphasis on the Lombard League and of the Sicilian Vespers of 1282, which overthrew Angevin rule in Sicily. For this latter, see Sismondi, *Histoire des républiques italiennes*, III, chapter 21.

⁶ Stendhal praised Pellico in *Le Globe*, 3 November 1824, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, XIV, *Mélanges*, III, pp. 329–35. Puppo, *Romanticismo*, pp. 19, 30, 92, 95, 156–61. Barricelli, *Manzoni*, pp. 29–30. Raimondi, *Romanticismo italiano*, pp. 115–24. Pellico was a friend of Manzoni, Foscolo, Monti, and

Stendhal fell under the Austrian authorities' suspicion of *Carbonari* sentiments, and found it politic to return to Paris. While in Italy, he had had ample opportunity to study the incipient Italian Romantic movement. Stendhal believed that the Austrian authorities were far more repressive than those of Restoration France. He saw it crippled, though not extinguished, by the political authorities. Italian Romanticism's firm roots in the Enlightenment may have explained its survival. Yet Stendhal regretted that it still seemed incapable of awakening the nation. Nevertheless, the impact of repression across the peninsula by the diverse régimes in power there, made Italian liberals conscious of the connection between political liberty and national independence.⁷

YOUNG MANZONI AND HIS FRENCH CONNECTIONS

Alessandro Manzoni's mother was Beccaria's daughter, Giulia (1762–1841). Strong, beautiful, and intelligent, she had fallen in love with Verri but entered into a loveless marriage with a nobleman from Lecco, Pietro Manzoni. When Alessandro was almost seven years old, in 1792 the Signora di Manzoni separated from her husband, whose family and house in Milan she hated. She had already met the handsome, rich, and well-connected nobleman, Carlo Imbonati, with whom in August 1796 she went to live in Paris, since the earlier revolutionary fervour had calmed down. They stayed together in his house on the elegant Place Vendôme until his death in 1805. In Paris, her partner's intellectual interests brought her into contact with those remnants of the Enlightenment which had managed to survive the Reign of Terror. These were *les idéologues*. Among them were Imbonati's close friends, Sophie de Condorcet, widow of the Girondin leader who in 1794 had taken poison while under arrest during the Terror, and her partner, Fauriel, one of the best-looking men in Paris. They lived together in 'La Maisonnnette', just outside the city at Meulan. During this period, Monti, who had been in contact with the young Alessandro—himself an aspiring poet—visited Imbonati and Giulia in Paris, and mentioned the young Manzoni to his mother's partner. The latter, perhaps sensing the imminence of his own death and the inevitable solitude of Giulia, wrote to Alessandro, inviting him to Paris. The elder Manzoni, only too eager to be rid of the encumbrance of his son, willingly paid the fare for the journey. Alessandro arrived just after Imbonati had died, finding his mother, who was a complete stranger to him, distraught.⁸

other leading Romantics. His reviews included works by Byron and Schiller. His *Le miei prigioni* [Prison Memoirs, 1832], with its Christian sentiment of forgiveness, became a key text of the Italian Romantic movement. For an assessment of the qualities of Austrian rule in Northern Italy, see Alan Sked, *Metternich and Austria. An Evaluation* (London 2008), pp. 170–6.

⁷ H-F. Imbert, *Les Métamorphoses de la liberté ou Stendhal devant la Restauration et le Risorgimento* (Paris 1967), pp. 271–2, 275, 315.

⁸ S. B. Chandler, *Manzoni. The Story of a Spiritual Quest* (Edinburgh 1974), pp. 1–2, 5, 7, 14, 17, 20. For much absorbing detail, see Natalia Ginzburg, *La famiglia Manzoni* (Turin 1983), pp. 7–17. Constant, Chateaubriand, and later Stendhal, met Wilhelm von Humboldt and the two Schlegels

In Paris, the young Alessandro soon found himself part of the circle around Sophie and Fauriel. The latter would become a mentor and one of Manzoni's two most intimate friends. The other, encountered somewhat later, would be the liberal Catholic priest Antonio Rosmini (1797–1855), founder of the Rosminian Order and twelve years his junior. Rosmini, whom Manzoni frequently visited in Stresa, was said to be the person he admired the most in Italy. The Paris circle discussed literary and historical topics, as well as moral and philosophical issues such as the relation between free will and determinism. Writing poetry in the Neo-Classical mode by this time, Manzoni began thereafter to focus on human behaviour seen from a moral and psychological perspective. Immensely stimulated by the intellectual life of Paris as he was, Manzoni turned away from the sceptical traditional of Enlightened thinking and towards a reconsideration of Christianity. Two years after his marriage to Henriette in 1808, in accordance with the Calvinist rite, Manzoni, accompanied by his wife and his mother, were all received into the Catholic Church. However, he inclined towards a Jansenist form of Catholicism, whose most celebrated exponent had been Blaise Pascal in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Although influential in the previous century, Jansenism faced powerful opposition within the Church—especially from the Papacy. Manzoni, retaining the best of the Enlightenment and Revolution, held the view that their ideas were compatible with Catholicism, despite widespread popular and official Catholic hostility to both. In many respects, Manzoni's subsequent writings represented his attempt to work out the implications of Christian beliefs—principally the Incarnation and Resurrection—in relation to history and society, with the focus on contemporary Italy. His writings of this early period brought Catholic spirituality into the mainstream of the Italian Romantic movement.⁹

In the summer of 1810, Manzoni and his wife returned to Milan. They became the centre of a circle of literary friends, who spoke either the Milanese dialect or a regional form of Italian. The Jansenist strain of Catholicism continued in the form of Manzoni's spiritual adviser, Fr Luigi Tosi, canon of Sant'Ambrogio, until he became bishop of Pavia in 1823. After the collapse of the French-sponsored states of 1795–1814, the Austrian Habsburgs recovered control of Lombardy, which they would retain until 1859. Manzoni, when he returned to Milan, encountered not

when they visited Paris. Fauriel became professor of Foreign Literature at the Sorbonne in 1831, lecturing, among other topics, on Dante (1832–3) and Provençal poetry. His *Histoire de la Gaul méridionale sous la domination des conquérants germains* appeared in four volumes in 1836, and the *Histoire de la poésie provençale* in three volumes in 1846. *Dante et les origines de la langue et la littérature italienne* appeared in 1854, ten years after his death. Cesare De Lollis, *Alessandro Manzoni e gli storici liberali francesi della restaurazione* (Rome 1987 [Bari 1962]), 74, 84–9.

⁹ Eighteenth-century Jansenism stressed discipline and piety, simplicity of worship, and scriptural knowledge, arguing against popular religiosity, fanaticism, and superstition; it had always opposed and been opposed by the Jesuits (dissolved in 1773), was critical of the Roman Curia and papal power, and tended to favour (at least in France and Spain) the national episcopates. See the essays on France, Italy, and Spain in William J. Callahan and David Higgs (eds), *Church and Society in Catholic Europe of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge 1978), pp. 18–19, 47–8, 71–2. Gian Piero Barricelli, *Alessandro Manzoni* (Boston 1976), pp. 19–24. Ginzburg, *Famiglia Manzoni*, pp. 26–39. The Abbé Degola, who received them, was a good friend of the former Constitutional Bishop Henri Grégoire, loyal to the revolution and hostile to monarchy.

just Austrian rule but also the alignment of the Church hierarchy with the Counter-revolutionary monarchies, both of which he opposed.¹⁰

Manzoni took his family back to Paris in 1819–20 with the vague intention of remaining there permanently, but his wife's aversion to the city finally dissuaded him. The family stayed for a month at 'La Maisonnette' before moving into a rented apartment in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, until they left for Milan in July 1820. During this time Manzoni became friendly with Thierry, another associate of Fauriel. Both Fauriel and Thierry were examining the problem of what happened to the Romanized populations of the Western Empire after the barbarian incursions. Fauriel was concerned with tracing the origins of Latin languages and attesting the resilience of the Roman inheritance when faced with the superimposition of Germanic rule. Thierry was already moving towards his later study of how conquered peoples reacted to conquest by outside powers, with his focus on William of Normandy and the conquest of England.¹¹

After the repression of 1821, Manzoni, whose house in Milan had been the centre of literary activity, found himself with a diminished number of friends and withdrew to his country estate at Brusuglio on Lake Como, inherited from Imbonati.

Manzoni's contribution to the interest in the Middle Ages, as a guide to the present, was his verse drama of 1822, *Adelchi*, set in the last years of the Lombard predominance in Italy. Since this period raised innumerable historical problems both for Manzoni and for his prospective readers, he published an historical work to accompany it, *Discorso sur alcuni punti della storia lombardica in Italia* [A Discussion of Some Points concerning the history of the Lombards in Italy]. The *Discorso* showed the influence of Fauriel and Thierry in his account of the two centuries of Lombard dominance over the Romanized population before Charlemagne brought it to an end in 773–4. Fauriel and Manzoni discussed these issues and the contribution of Thierry to historiography in their correspondence.¹²

When Sophie de Condorcet died in September 1822, Fauriel, shunned and despised by her noble family for his modest origins, left 'La Maisonnette', unable to

¹⁰ Chandler, *Manzoni*, pp. 20–1, 27, 36–8. See especially Manzoni's *Inni sacri* (1815 and 1822) and *Osservazioni sulla morale cattolica* (1819; English version 1836), which argued against Sismondi's view that the Catholic Church was responsible for the deplorable state of Italy. Stendhal, despite reservations concerning Manzoni's religious belief, shared his hostility to the Restoration, both in France and Italy: see 'Le Parnasse Italien', in *Le Temps*, 3 March 1830, *Oeuvres Complètes*, XIV, 3 tomes, *Mélanges de Littérature*, III, pp. 337–49. According to Stendhal, Metternich liked the *Hymns* so much that he allowed *I Promessi Sposi* to pass through the censorship. Gian Franco Grechi, *Stendhal e Manzoni* (Palermo 1987), pp. 20–42.

¹¹ Ginzburg, *Famiglia Manzoni*, pp. 49–57. De Lollis, *Alessandro Manzoni*, pp. 15, 30, 32, 44–6, 79–80. Manzoni and Thierry saw a great deal of each other during this Paris stay, to the extent that, according to Sainte-Beuve, the former was referring to the latter as 'son frère'. Their discussions focused on the relationship of conquerors and conquered, oppressors and the oppressed—a theme which Thierry developed in *Censeur Européen* in November 1817.

¹² *Carteggio Manzoni*—Fauriel, no. 63, pp. 267, 278–9, asking Fauriel to suggest works which could throw more light on the Lombard question; no. 67, pp. 307–30, Manzoni to Fauriel, Milan, 3 November 1821, pp. 313–14. Fauriel published a French translation of *Adelchi* and its predecessor, *Il Conte di Carmagnola* [1820], which Manzoni had dedicated to him, in 1823. The Lombard invasions took place in 568–603, and contributed to the further fragmentation and weakening of Italy.

afford its upkeep, and took a small apartment in Paris. Realizing his grief, Manzoni invited him to stay with the family in Milan, especially since he was planning a trip to Tuscany and would have appreciated Fauriel's company, in view of their common interest in the language question. For Manzoni, who had given up the idea of another dramatic poem—this time about Spartacus' struggle for liberty—language was already becoming a stumbling block. He had begun a preliminary historical novel in April 1821.¹³

Fauriel, however, postponed the journey to Milan until late in 1823, having become in the meantime romantically involved with Mary Clarke, a 29-year-old English painter living in France with her widowed mother. Fauriel eventually arrived in Milan with the two British women. Mary Clarke—formerly Thierry's lover—now entered the Manzoni family circle, before departing with her mother for Venice, Rome, and Naples. Fauriel, in the meantime, went on to Trieste with a Greek friend to talk to the large Greek community there and prepare material for his book on Modern Greek songs. He spent the summer of 1825 with the Manzoni's at Brusuglio, but decided on a sudden return to Paris in October, never to return to Italy or see the Manzoni's again, although they remained good friends, as their continuing correspondence testified.¹⁴

Manzoni, as we have seen, had begun his literary career by writing poetry, which in any case automatically went into formal language. Thereafter he moved into historical drama, in vogue since the time of Schiller, whose plays he was reading in French translation, along with Shakespeare. Through his historical drama *Adelchi*, performed in Florence in 1823, Manzoni contributed to the ideas and language in which future patriotic sentiment would be expressed. He gained recognition as a leading figure of the Italian Romantic movement. Manzoni had begun the decade, nevertheless, by immersing himself in early medieval history. At that time, he read *Ivanhoe*, discovered in Paris through contact with Thierry. The impact of Scott, first in France and later in Italy, encouraged Manzoni to turn from drama to the historical novel, which offered a way to discuss Italian conditions across the social classes. The requirements of the novel, however, obliged him to pay further attention to the problem of language, especially in view of the difficulty of deciding which dialect to apply to an Italian equivalent to Scott's portrayals of ordinary life and speech. The decision to write a novel set in early seventeenth-century Lombardy threw him into a programme of detailed historical research beforehand. *Fermo e Lucia* was completed in September 1823.¹⁵

¹³ Ginzburg, *Famiglia Manzoni*, pp. 59, 68.

¹⁴ Ginzburg, *Famiglia Manzoni*, pp. 70–1, 74, 78–9.

¹⁵ *Carteggio Manzoni*—Fauriel, no. 52, pp. 196–215, Manzoni to Fauriel, Milan, 25 March 1816: p. 199. This would be from the poor French translation of Shakespeare, dating from 1776–82. The Romantics' interest in the dramatist led to attempts to put right these inadequacies. An Italian translation of the complete works appeared in 1820, while in Paris, Guizot and the translator of Byron collaborated on the correction of the earlier version in French, publishing a thirteen-volume re-edition in 1821 with an introductory essay by Guizot. Manzoni—who did not know English—would have been familiar with it. This would have been the version studied in Russia by Pushkin (see Part Two, Chapter 11). Chandler, *Manzoni*, pp. 28–30, 36, 79, 81. Note *Del dramma storico* (1830).

FICTION, LANGUAGE, AND LITERACY

Whereas in Spain the first generation of liberal constitutionalists looked to the parliamentary institutions and corporate privileges within the medieval Iberian kingdoms as precedents in their struggle against absolutism, in Italy the focus became the libertarian spirit of the separate urban republics. This emphasis raised two important historical issues: how the Romanized population survived under barbarian rule and managed to preserve the civil life and municipal institutions of the late Roman era, and how this contributed to the revival of the Italian cities after the eleventh century when they began to reclaim their liberties. Although the invocation of medieval communes responded to the repressive atmosphere of the Restoration, associated with despotism and foreign rule, it did not resolve either the problem of Italian particularism or the lack of a common language.¹⁶

In contrast to Britain, Spain, and France, the Italian states had not experienced the development of the novel to any comparable degree until the end of the eighteenth century, when Italian writers began to respond to the impact of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. Foscolo's *Last Letters of Jacopo Ortis*, published in Milan in 1802, really began the nineteenth-century novel in Italy. This book appeared at a time when, in the aftermath of the Jacobin republic of 1796–99, the character of an Italian nation was preoccupying several leading intellectuals. Political censorship, however, cramped discussion, and many writers turned to poetry as a less potentially controversial medium.¹⁷

Although Foscolo and others exalted the literary tradition of Dante, Petrarch, and Machiavelli, in Italy—unlike Spain, where, since the sixteenth century, Castilian had predominated—no form of Italian had as yet won supremacy. In 1806 Manzoni wrote to Fauriel, regretting the lack of audience for the Italian language—‘which one might even describe as a dead language’—as opposed to French. There the speech of the Île-de-France had been imposed on the rest of the country by the centralizing absolute monarchy since the seventeenth century. In Spain, the language of Cervantes became predominant, even before a unitary state had been imposed by the Bourbons after 1705–11.¹⁸

Many educated Italians shared the experience of Massimo D'Azeglio—painter, novelist, and politician—who would become Manzoni's son-in-law. Born in Turin, he received early schooling in Florence, but his roots lay in his native Piedmont:

... he was virtually trilingual, using Piedmontese in familiar speech and, like most of his social class, French in formal social occasions and in much of his correspondence:

¹⁶ Clare Mar-Molinero, ‘The Role of Language in Spanish Nation-Building’, in Clare Mar-Molinero and Angel Smith (eds), *Nationalism and Nation-Building in the Iberian Peninsula: Competing and Conflicting Identities* (Oxford 1996), pp. 69–87; p. 73, ‘Spanish nationalism and Castilian linguistic supremacy go hand in hand, but nonetheless, they do not succeed in entirely eliminating non-Castilian communities.’ De Lollis, *Alessandro Manzoni*, pp. 84, 87.

¹⁷ Alberto M. Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Turin 2000), pp. 27–9.

¹⁸ *Carteggio Manzoni*—Fauriel, letter no. 1, pp. 3–5, Manzoni to Fauriel, Paris, 9 February 1806.

he wrote and spoke better Italian than most Piedmontese . . . even though he used Roman and Milanese locutions regarded as provincial in Tuscany.¹⁹

For prospective Italian novelists the difficulty remained of how to transpose popular speech into a literary text alongside the phraseology and vocabulary of the educated or socially superior. Late in 1821, Manzoni wrote to Fauriel on this subject, referring to 'the poverty of the Italian language'. A writer who wished to follow in the paths trodden by Scott would be hard pressed to portray his characters and their speech in Italian. A French writer, by contrast, had everyday expressions on which to draw. French was used to discuss all measure of technical subjects, and books were published in that language. If a writer in Italy wished to broach this range of subjects, he would have to do so in a language he had almost never spoken. This, Manzoni decried, was pitiful.²⁰

David Laven has highlighted the gap between the 'real Italy' of the illiterate, dialect-speaking masses and the 'legal Italy' of courts (royal, ducal, or papal), public officials, army officers, and the judiciary. Lack of mass education and the absence of a common language and literature prevented any realization of the idea of a 'nation'. These obstacles lay behind the more obvious political impediments to Italian unification and nationhood. Unless they were overcome, the nationalist ideas vaunted by such leading radical republicans as Giuseppe Mazzini would never be transformed into reality. For that reason, education and language became pressing issues as the century unfolded. Everywhere, however, there were problems. If the dialect spoken in Tuscany were to be regarded as 'Italian', how was the mass of the population to be persuaded to use it, when less than ten per cent of the peninsula's inhabitants actually spoke it? Furthermore, the majority of those who did speak it considered it to be their local dialect. The other dialects were often mutually incomprehensible, and some regions, such as Piedmont-Savoy, preferred forms of French to 'Italian'. It was true that great literary texts, such as the works of Dante in the fourteenth century, had used Tuscan. For that reason the dialect had acquired the reputation of being the formal language of 'Italy', although in political terms no such entity existed. Most Italians could not read this language, even if they were able to read at all.²¹

This issue continued to preoccupy Manzoni into the 1830s.

If we Milanese, or all those other Italians who speak a regional dialect were to throw away our local idiom and use what language we all have in common, we would find ourselves without a large number of lovely, subtle, and appropriate expressions. We

¹⁹ Tomaso Grossi's dramatic poem *Prina*, Stendhal commented, had been written in Milanese, a dialect spoken by only half-a-million people, but when he wrote the tragedy on Gustavus Adolphus in Italian, no one could read it: 'Le Parnasse Italien', *Oeuvres*, XIV, tome III, p. 343. Ronald Marshall, *Massimo D'Azeglio. An Artist in Politics, 1798–1866* (London 1966), pp. 1, 10.

²⁰ *Carteggio Manzoni—Fauriel*, no. 67, pp. 307–30, Manzoni to Fauriel, Milan, 3 November 1821, pp. 310–12. See also James Stergios, 'Language and Nationalism in Italy', *Nations and Nationalism*, 12, I (2006), pp. 15–33.

²¹ David Laven, 'Italy. The Idea of the Nation in the Risorgimento and Liberal Era', in T. Baycroft and M. Hewitson (eds), *What is a Nation? Europe, 1789–1914* (Oxford 2006), pp. 255–71; see pp. 256, 258, 262–5.

would lack many terms employed for some of the most frequent and essential actions of ordinary living—for things we see every day, that we have in the house or on our own persons, or which serve the most basic uses of life. Existing habits will not change except in so far as we can find a common language which could serve the same purposes, a language which would alter our manner of speech but not lessen our powers of expression. This language will have to be acquired by those who are ignorant of it, but first of all it will have to be identified, and we must secure general agreement on what it is.²²

The prospect of some day working out the basis for a common Italian language was a high ideal, but there would be many obstacles on the way to its realization. It had certainly not been resolved by the time Italian unification was completed in 1860–70. Even so, there is much to recommend in Alberto Banti's argument that a small group of poets, dramatists, philosophers and moralists, historians and novelists, writing in Italian rather than dialect during the first half of the century, tapped a growing market across the peninsula by their successful up-dating of traditional themes and historical incidents. Appealing to the legacy of Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, and the writers of the later Renaissance, they sought to stir up a patriotic consciousness transcending particular states. Banti calls their common themes 'the Risorgimento canon': soldier-heroes, love of 'patria' extending to all of Italy, traitors and intriguers dragging the country down (even more than foreign invaders), and rescued women as symbols of 'Italia'. Manzoni's themes, he points out, do not fall into this category.²³

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL IN ITALY

The birth of the historical novel in Italy effectively took place when Manzoni published his first version of *The Betrothed* in 1827 and Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi (1804–73) published *The Battle of Benevento, a story of the Thirteenth Century*. This latter novel went into forty editions by 1915, and Guerrazzi's subsequent novel, *The Siege of Florence* [1836], went into thirty editions by 1915. Both novels aimed to recover traditional values and hold them up as valid for the present time. The latter used archaic words and sentence construction in the dialect of Livorno [Leghorn]. D'Azeglio's *Ettore Fieramosca, or the Challenge of Barletta* [1833] adopted a similar vein in its treatment of foreign domination. This work brought the Borgias into the historical novel. Perhaps because it dealt with an early sixteenth-century war between Spain and France, the erratic Austrian censors let this book through. *Niccolò de' Lapi* [1841]—D'Azeglio's second novel—dealt, as Guerrazzi had done, with the siege of Florence by Imperial forces, in alliance with the Medici, in 1530. Lapi—a republican defender of the city commune—had been

²² The quotation is taken from Denis Mack Smith, *The Making of Italy, 1796–1866* (London 1988 [1968]), pp. 71–3.

²³ Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento*, pp. 3–55; p. 24, estimates of between 2.5 and 9.5 per cent of the total population used Italian as their first language; pp. 32, 37, 39, 44–5, 53; pp. 75–7, 93–4.

a former supporter of Savonarola. The author, however, never finished *The Lombard League*, begun in 1843. These works, appearing in the period 1827–41, showed a broad production in response to a receptive market for historical fiction, confirming, in this way, that the genre was a European phenomenon at that time. This was also the period in which Manzoni moved from the first to the definitive version of *The Betrothed*. We should now consider Manzoni's position as an historical novelist in relation to that of his fellow writers. This will provide us with a clearer idea of the nature of the historical novel in Italy and reveal the central preoccupations of its authors.²⁴

I propose to take D'Azeglio's *Ettore Fieramosca* as a representative example. It is clear from the outset that this and the other novels of its type set out to use history in order to promote a political objective in the present day. Set in 1503, at the time of the French intervention in Italy, a band of Italian soldiers are fighting with the Spanish 'Gran Capitán', under siege in the southern port of Barletta. One of their French prisoners, Guy de La Motte, insults their fighting prowess, whereupon Fieramosca, a young, proud, and physically attractive soldier, challenges the French to armed combat, thirteen against thirteen, in order to vindicate Italian honour. This is the essence of the novel's plot, around which many other elements revolve. In the first place, the author conjures up the image of 'Italians'—a national entity which in 1503 would not have been recognized as such. Using Fieramosca as his mouthpiece, he describes the 'patria's' 'ten centuries of misfortune and darkness'. D'Azeglio—a Piedmontese, as we have seen—draws attention in the novel to the ambiguous position of his countrymen, caught between French and Italian identities. Claudio Grajano d'Asti, for example, fights with the French. Fieramosca taunts him—does he not know that the French treat Italians as poltroons and that Piedmont is in Italy?—and accuses him of treason. These hot passions are accentuated by the fact that Ettore and Grajano's wife, Ginevra, are in love, and that she has taken refuge in the Ursuline convent on the rocky island opposite Barletta harbour, so that she can be closer to him. Ettore had originally served Lodovico il Moro in Florence, and had later been recruited by Prospero Colonna to fight with the Spanish against the French invaders. The Colonna family has lost the power struggle in Rome to the Borgias, one of whom, Alexander VI, holds the papacy. Cesare Borgia manages, through intrigue, to seize hold of Ginevra, and rapes her. She is then returned to the convent in the company of Victoria Colonna.²⁵

This exciting story contains the vital elements of Banti's 'Risorgimento canon': selfless young heroes, ready to defend their country's honour and that of its women; treacherous Italians, who betray their country and violate women; foreign armies contending for supremacy on Italian soil. Other elements, Gothic and otherwise, connect this novel to fiction and drama appearing in the first half of the century: the mysterious Saracen girl flung into the sea from Venetian ships, the brigand called

²⁴ Sergio Romagnoli, *Manzoni e i suoi colleghi* (Florence 1984), pp. 205, 230–1. Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento*, pp. 78–81, 95–8, 102, 110–11.

²⁵ I have used the French edition, *Hector Fieramosca, ou le défi de Barletta* (Paris 1914), in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. See chapters iv–vi, viii, xii, xiv–xvii, xix.

Pietraccio (fierce, muscular, red-haired, his bare arms stained with his victim's blood), the old hunch-backed woman sorcerer, a spectre in the night, and so on. A spectacular bullfight scene, with heralds, champions, and horsemen, and La Motte's insult of the Spanish, is followed by a banquet and ball, described in detail. The Italian victory in the combat, in which Grajano is killed, provides the climax of the book, but it is followed by a tragic ending, when Ettore learns of Ginevra's death and furiously rides in full armour off the cliffs and into the sea, perceived by peasants in the fields as a vision of the Archangel Michael, whose shrine is the nearby Monte Gargano.²⁶

Although the historical characters—the 'Gran Capitán', a major figure in Spanish history, the French commander, the Duc de Nemours (perhaps an ancestor of the eponymous duke in *La Princesse de Clèves*), the Colonna, and the Borgias—contribute to the course of the action, the accent is on the fictional characters. Both Guerrazzi and D'Azeglio, in their historical novels, chose well-known episodes of Italian history and invested them with a new symbolism redolent of nineteenth-century issues and objectives. The history of the period selected is not really their prime concern, and it is principally drawn in terms of costume and passions, because their aim is to tap a ready market and to propagate a new reading of history, mobilized on behalf of the project of Italian vindication.

Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* came out of a French as well as an Italian context, and behind them lay the Scott tradition mediated through French translation. As we shall see in the following sections, this novel is substantially different from those of its time. In the first place, it does not have the patriotic modes associated with the *Risorgimento* identified by Banti, except by general implication. Manzoni's novel follows the lessons and encounters the problems of the broader European historical novel emerging in the decades between the 1810s and the 1840s, rather than the preoccupations of Italian contemporaries. Comparison with the other novels reveals this and suggests that *I Promessi Sposi* was, in fact, atypical of its time. This may well have passed largely unnoticed by the general reader or listener then and after, because of the arresting themes of the book and the religious motifs, with which Catholic Italians would have identified themselves. The abuses of foreign rule are there too—as in *Ettore Fieramosca*, in which the Spanish set off the drama by abusing an innocent young woman, and German soldiers bring the wartime plague to Milan. However, the use of history in Manzoni is very different from its exploitation by his contemporaries, with the patriotic objective first and foremost.

MANZONI'S *I PROMESSI SPOSI*

As we learn from his correspondence with Fauriel, Manzoni had serious reservations about Scott's method. These, it should be understood, were based on the 'French Scott'; that is, not on the Scottish novels but on the French translation of

²⁶ D'Azeglio, *Hector Fieramosca*, chs. viii–x.

Ivanhoe. Manzoni's idea of the historical novel was that it should represent society in the past by means of characters and acts similar to what happened in real life, so much so that it would be possible to regard them as though they were in fact historical events. His view was that when historical characters and events were mixed with fictional ones, they should both be portrayed in the most strictly historical manner. For that reason, Manzoni argued that Scott's portrayal of Richard the Lion-Heart in *Ivanhoe* was at fault. We can see here that Manzoni's view was more critical than that of Thierry. The latter, however, was looking at it from the vantage point of historical themes, rather than from the literary perspective of constructing a balanced and credible historical novel.²⁷

Once Manzoni had read the seventeenth-century *History of Milan* by Giuseppe Ripamonti and an early nineteenth-century work on Milanese food prices, *Fermo e Lucia* became transformed into a different novel. Chapters 12 and 13 of the new novel revealed the extent of his research on this subject. There, Manzoni the historian outlines the causes of the bread riots in the city into which Renzo, one of his principal characters, stumbles. For a time, then, the historian triumphs over the novelist, delineating weather conditions, the impact of war in the countryside, along with taxation and billeting, and the absence of the Governor at the fighting.²⁸

I Promessi Sposi, begun by the spring of 1822, first appeared in 1827, and the three-volume edition became an immediate success, which led to unauthorized printings in several Italian states.

Its audience consisted not only of the reading public, but of the many illiterates, both among the peasants and the middle classes, to whom it was read.²⁹

This novel did not focus on the central political stage, as Vigny and Mérimée had done. Instead, it dealt with the whole of Milanese society at a time of political and social upheaval in 1628–31, during the long Spanish period of dominance in Lombardy from 1559 until 1748. The novel was set towards the end of the first phase of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), in which the Spanish Habsburgs, in alliance with their Austrian counterparts, fought against the Dutch, German, and Danish Protestants. In northern Italy, the Spanish Governor of the Duchy of Milan sought to increase control over territory by besieging Casale. Manzoni is very much concerned with the impact of war on society. He makes it clear that this does not only consist of loss of life on the battlefield, but results in the dislocation of society and the abandonment of all morality. As if increased taxation and bread shortages were not enough to bear, the arrival of German mercenaries in Lombardy brings the

²⁷ *Carteggio Manzoni—Fauriel*, no. 67, pp. 310, 319–21.

²⁸ Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed. I Promessi Sposi. A Tale of XVII Century Milan* (translated by Archibald Colquhoun, London [1951], 1956 edition) pp. 164–88. Chandler, *Manzoni*, pp. 69, 73–6, 78–9. De Lollis, *Alessandro Manzoni*, p. 128: Thierry wrote to Fauriel (then at Brusuglio) in November 1824, commenting on his desire to see Manzoni's novel, since he was tempted by the idea of writing an historical novel himself.

²⁹ Olga Ragusa, 'Alessandro Manzoni and developments in the historical novel', in Peter Bondanella and Andrea Ciccarelli (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel* (Cambridge 2003), pp. 42–60: p. 43.

plague. This forms the context of the last section of the novel. Chapters 29 and 30 open this part of the book, and lead once again to a detailed historical exposition on the course of the plague in the following two chapters, before Manzoni resumes the story in chapter 33. Although there is considerable imbalance in the novel at this point between the fictional plot and the historical context, it is evident that Manzoni is intent upon making the latter explain crucial developments in the former. It will explain why, for instance, three principal characters all find themselves together (in one form or another) in the plague-containment area of Milan (as we shall see shortly).³⁰

A review of this first edition appeared in a prominent German cultural journal. Manzoni erroneously believed that Goethe, who had earlier commented favourably on his *Carmagnola*, had written it and was preparing a reply. The review criticized his alternation of chapters focusing on historical figures with those referring to invented characters. It conveyed a dislike of the mixture of the real and the imaginary in the novel. In the end, Manzoni did not write the letter, but instead set about composing his general ideas on the problems of writing an historical novel. This would become his weighty study on the subject (to which I have referred several times in this book).³¹

Scott's influence is apparent, although the book operates on a different level to the Scottish novels. It does not highlight one decisive moment in the history of a country, as Scott had often done, but provided nineteenth-century readers with a view of seventeenth-century conditions as a paradigm of their own circumstances. Lukács argued that they would see this as their own 'pre-history' and mobilize their responses thereby to present conditions, when Lombardy and Venetia were under Austrian rule. Censorship inhibited potential Italian novelists from broaching contemporary themes, except through the mirror of the past.³²

Renewed Austrian domination after 1814–15 also made possession of the past an occupied territory. Access to archival sources in Milan or Venice was severely restricted. This raised the question of Manzoni's source materials for *I Promessi Sposi*. Povolo's hypothesis is that contacts in the Venetian archives—some documents from which had been moved by the French to Milan or Paris—brought to his attention a series of cases of abduction and assault. These crimes had been committed in the early 1600s, in the district of Vicenza, by a real historical figure, Paolo Orgiano, and his associates, all of whom were sentenced in 1607. The testimonies of aggrieved local people gave the author his insight into peasant life. Manzoni transferred the action from the Veneto to Lombardy, which he knew intimately, and added digressions and historical episodes of Milanese history, which obscured the original source. Thierry's view of history as a movement of the whole of society helped shape the social dimension of the novel. In the tradition of Vico,

³⁰ Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, pp. 394–447.

³¹ *Carteggio. Alessandro Manzoni—Antonio Rosmini*. vol. 28, Introduzione di Luciano Malusa (Milano 2003), p. 9, Rosmini to Manzoni, Domodossola 1 March 1828. The review was written by a friend of Goethe. See volume 14 for the new edition of *Del Romazo Storico* in this series.

³² Ragusa, 'Alessandro Manzoni', p. 49. Lukács, *Historical Novel*, pp. 78–9. Bermann/Manzoni, *Historical Novel*, Introduction, pp. 29–30. Manzoni met Scott in Milan in 1828.

Manzoni added to this his own Christian world-view—his focus on the relation of the temporal to the eternal and on individual responsibility for actions.³³

A central theme of this novel is the abuse of private power backed by armed retainers. In fact, the entire action is sparked by the arbitrary conduct of Don Rodrigo—supposedly the representative of Spanish power—towards the two villagers about to be married, Lucia and Renzo, the latter not a peasant but a qualified silk weaver. Don Rodrigo's retainers have intercepted the cowardly parish priest, Don Abbondio, and warned him not to conduct the expected marriage, else he will face dire consequences. In many respects, private power had greater impact on local people than the formal authority of Church and State—at least initially. It certainly existed alongside institutional authority, as chapter 23 vividly indicates. This emphasis on private power gives the book significance beyond its time and place. Fragmented authority meant weak authority and an incapacity to deal root and branch with armed private power.³⁴

In opposition to the abuses of power, Manzoni also portrays benign clerics dedicated to transforming the teachings of Jesus Christ into reality. This provides a quite different perspective from the southern European Liberal assault on the Church as legacy of the *ancien régime* and reactionary instrument. Two of Manzoni's strongest characters in the novel are the historical figures Cardinal Federigo Borromeo (1564–1631), Archbishop of Milan, introduced in chapter 22, and the Capuchin friar Fra Cristoforo, who, from his first appearance early in the novel, has difficulty controlling his moral indignation at the abuse of power. At different moments, their actions prove decisive in the novel's advance towards a *dénouement*. Even so, neither of them are the 'heroes' of the book. This absence of individual dominance in the novel means that the context is given greater play than the personalities. We see once again the dilemma of the historical novel in adjusting the balance of fact and fiction, research and imagination, society and individual, and form and passion.³⁵

The latter part of the novel attempts to resolve the dilemma by making religion the active agent of psychological change and human actions. Borromeo's conversion of 'The Unnamed' ('l'Innominato')—a notoriously cruel bandit with his own castle and retainers—is an outstanding instance of this. Lukács has missed that element in the novel altogether. It is important, however, to emphasize this, since it reflects Manzoni's vision of Italian society in the early seventeenth century and in his own epoch. Manzoni's place in Romanticism could have been assured alone by the passages describing this bandit's hideaway.

³³ Claudio Povolo, *Il romanziere e l'archivista. Da un processo veneziano del '600 all' anonimo manoscritto dei Promessi Sposi* (Venice 1993), pp. 30–2, 63–71, 116–23. Chandler, *Manzoni*, pp. 40, 44.

³⁴ For a recent study of conflicting powers, see Lucy Riall, 'Elites in Search of Authority: Political Power and Social Order in Nineteenth-century Sicily', *History Workshop Journal*, 55 (2003), pp. 25–46.

³⁵ Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, pp. 41–53. Fra Cristoforo, aged around sixty, first appears in chapter 4 as the moral challenger of Don Rodrigo. Povolo, *Il romanziere e l'archivista*, p. 32, n. 43: the original friar, a missionary from Cremona, worked in the Milan *lazzaretto*.

The castle of The Unnamed was perched above a dark and narrow valley, on top of a bluff jutting from a rugged chain of mountains, and joined to them or separated from them—it is difficult to say which—by a mass of crags and precipices, and by a labyrinth of caverns and chasms also extending down both sides of it... From the castle heights, like the eagle from its blood-stained nest, the savage nobleman dominated every spot around where the foot of man could tread, and never saw anyone higher or above him... no one dared set foot there, or in the valley, even to pass through, unless he was on good terms with the master of the castle.

This fortress is manned by the many armed retainers ('bravi') of 'The Unnamed', who scour the countryside. Don Rodrigo, finally in possession of Lucia, takes her there and places her in the custody of 'The Unnamed', who evidently exercises a superior power over him.³⁶

The chapters which concern 'The Unnamed' might even be regarded as the core of the novel, since they highlight Manzoni's preoccupation with the theme of redemption. A life of evil-doing has finally wrought its effect on this character's view of himself, and therein lie the seeds of his conversion, which Borromeo brings to fruition. This entails a rejection of his own past and the putting on of a new identity, which will enable him to have a different relationship to his fellow men. With all the abuses described in the novel, beginning with Don Rodrigo's attempt to importune Lucia, these passages show the triumph of goodness over evil conduct, which was to be the underlying theme and purpose of the book.³⁷

The type of Christianity portrayed is austere, and makes moral demands on individual believers. Fra Cristoforo, tending to the afflicted in the quarantined *lazzaretto* or 'plague-house' of Milan at great risk to himself, binds Renzo, burning with the desire for revenge, to forgive Don Rodrigo, dying of the plague there. Fra Cristoforo is concerned with each person's, and his own, relationship with God. Without forgiveness, Don Rodrigo cannot be saved, and without expunging his desire for revenge, neither can Renzo.

Perhaps the Lord is ready to grant him an hour of consciousness, but He wanted to be asked for it by you. Perhaps He wants you and that innocent girl to pray to Him. Perhaps He is reserving His grace for your prayer alone—the prayer of a heart that is afflicted but resigned. Perhaps the salvation of this man now depends on you, on your feelings of forgiveness, of pity... and of love.³⁸

Andrea Ciccarelli identifies another important dimension in this scene: the conscious parallel with Dante's *Inferno*, even down to Manzoni's choice of language. The *lazzaretto* is seen as a representation of Purgatory, and Fra Cristoforo as

³⁶ Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, pp. 265–7. The strong religious theme of the novel caused Stendhal, schooled in the ideas of Voltaire and Diderot, to have reservations about the book, which he saw as essentially looking backwards rather than to the future. Imbert, *Les Métamorphoses de la liberté*, pp. 300, 314, 469, 602. Stendhal saw this same fault in Scott and Vigny, though for different reasons.

³⁷ Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, chapters 20–23, pp. 267–317. Chandler, *Manzoni*, pp. 87, 98–9, 106, 108–10, sees this section as the turning point in the novel.

³⁸ For Fra Cristoforo on penance and forgiveness, see Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, chapter 35, pp. 491–3.

Renzo's guide through it. Here the parallel is with Dante's meeting with Virgil, the Roman poet who becomes his guide through Hell. Fra Cristoforo, however, represents the Christian hope of redemption. Renzo and Lucia's story represents, as Manzoni portrays it, the conjunction of the lives of two ordinary people with the workings of Divine Providence through human history. This is the powerful force, to which Vico, as we saw in Chapter 2, attached such great importance.³⁹

The author presents us with a strong Christianity, devoid of sentimentality, yet not harsh. Manzoni wrote the novel in the aftermath of the French Revolution's de-Christianization, and this aspect of the novel reflects the early nineteenth-century revival of Catholicism, a widespread European phenomenon. At the same time, the novel does not reject the inheritance of the Enlightenment, upholding its humanism in a Christian form. It is concerned especially to uphold a moral basis of political organization rooted in religion. This was Manzoni's response both to unbridled personal abuse of power and to revolutionary tyranny.

The Betrothed has generally been associated with the Italian *Risorgimento*—the movement for independence from foreign rule and national resurgence, which became a Liberal project increasingly in conflict with the Catholic hierarchy. Yet this novel, meticulously historical in its social and political treatment, points less to the past than to a future in which Liberal and Catholic precepts in Italy would either be reconciled or would struggle inexorably for supremacy. That, in turn, throws into relief the contemporary reality of mid-nineteenth-century Catholic Europe between the 1830s and Pius IX's publication of the *Syllabus of Errors* in 1864. Manzoni, whose Catholicism went deeper than his papalism, ignored Pius IX's instruction to Italian Catholics to boycott the newly established Kingdom of Italy, and instead became a senator in the Italian Parliament. He had never been, in any case, a defender of papal temporal power, and did not regret the loss of the Papal States by the Holy See.⁴⁰

Manzoni continued refining *I Promessi Sposi* from the time of first publication until the definitive version appeared in 1840. During the interval, the question of language came to the forefront of the *Risorgimento*. If a united Italy were to come into existence at some stage in the future, it would be essential to resolve the perennial issue of what its language was to be. The influence of the Romantic movement, with its rejection of Neo-Classical aloofness and its urge to bring popular speech into literary works, further pressed home the need for a literary language common to all of the Italian territories, once they should be united as one political unit. For the 1827 edition of *I Promessi Sposi*, Manzoni, a native Milanese, used a fusion of the Tuscan and Milanese dialects. Thereafter, Manzoni began 'Tuscanizing' the language of his novel, since this dialect was the only version of Italian known beyond the boundaries of its own region. However, the problem of

³⁹ Ciccarelli, 'Dante and the Culture of Risorgimento', pp. 84–5.

⁴⁰ Schenk, *European Romantics*, pp. 81–102, 115–21. E. E. Y. Hales, *Pio Nono. A Study in European Politics and Religion in the Nineteenth Century* (London 1954). Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge 1975), pp. 21–47, 189–22.

which form of Tuscan thereupon came to the forefront, and Manzoni decided to adopt the Florentine version as the most elegant and expressive. Accordingly, he stayed in Florence with his family during the late summer and early autumn of 1827, so that he could study it for the purpose of revising his novel, set, it should be remembered, in Lombardy.⁴¹

When the 1840 edition of the novel appeared, Manzoni sent a copy to Rosmini in Stresa by way of a Milanese cleric. Rosmini was fascinated by the problem of the common language for all Italians. He had read the drafts of the 1827 edition, but this time would have a published work in his hands. Rosmini was also engaged in reading Manzoni's *Della lingua italiana*, which would eventually be published after the author's death. Manzoni appears to have sent him the fourth or fifth version of the first chapter of a work which was still causing him a great deal of effort. Rosmini had much to comment on Manzoni's discussion, since the options for the common language seemed to be based on whether the Florentine, Milanese, or Venetian dialect was to be preferred. Rosmini warned that all languages were in constant evolution, including the Florentine dialect. The common language would have to be drawn from a version of Florentine, which would be acceptable to all the provinces as well as to the Florentines themselves, rather than the dialect which they actually spoke at the present time. This presented problems of pronunciation, since the Florentine dialect appeared too guttural to be accepted by most other Italians; and besides, there were divergences of grammar in Florentine speech which were perceived as incorrect elsewhere in Italy. The problem, then, was how to transform the Florentine dialect into an acceptable common language for the whole peninsula.⁴²

Manzoni continued to uphold the view that Florentine Tuscan should be the language of united Italy, as private correspondence in 1847 indicated. When an official in the Italian Ministry of Education in 1867, he was in a position to promote this policy. In the meantime, the philologist and literary critic Niccolò Tommaseo (1802–74), who had met Manzoni in 1824 and 1855, was engaged with a colleague in compiling the *Dictionary of the Italian Language*, published in Turin between 1858 and 1879.⁴³

⁴¹ Chandler, *Manzoni*, pp. 84–5, 125. As he had done in the case of the Lombard context of '*Adelchi*', Manzoni attached as an appendix to the revised edition of *The Betrothed* an historical disquisition on the plague described in the novel. This was *Storia della Colonna Infame* [1840]; for the English version, *The Column of Infamy* (translated by Kenelm Foster and Jane Grigson, Oxford 1964).

⁴² *Carteggio Manzoni—Rosmini*, pp. 67–70, Rosmini to Manzoni, Stresa 25 February 1843; pp. 77–84, Rosmini to Manzoni, Stresa 14 October 1843. Alessandro Manzoni, *Della lingua italiana*, a cura di Rita Librandi (Naples 1986 [vol. IV, *Opere inedite o rare*, 1883–98.]). There were five versions written between 1830 and 1859.

⁴³ Tommaseo, a fervent catholic and federal republican, was also a friend of Rosmini and Fauriel, whom he had first met in Paris after exile from Florence in 1832. He regularly attended Fauriel's Sorbonne lectures on Dante in 1833–4. In 1848–49 he became Minister of Public Education in the revolutionary Venetian Republic. See *Carteggio Manzoni—Fauriel*, pp. 525–6, note 2. Laven, 'Italy. The Idea of the Nation', p. 266.

HISTORY AND IMAGINATION IN THE BETROTHED

In his study of the historical novel—a medium already regarded as problematic—Manzoni gave free rein to his doubts about the possibilities and techniques of this type of fiction. On the whole, his view was pessimistic. In any case, by the time this study was published in 1850 enthusiasm for the historical novel among writers and critics had begun to run its course. But this did not thwart Manzoni's labour of revising the text of 1827. Similarly, it did not stop the huge acclaim of the final version in 1840. Although *The Betrothed* proved to be the only Italian historical novel which achieved international success, Manzoni, unlike Balzac, never wrote another novel, still less an historical novel.⁴⁴

Manzoni developed and refined his style and language for his historical novel over two decades. He dispensed with florid prose, and curbed the Milanese usages and French expressions evident in *Fermo e Lucia*. The final expression was lucid and easy to read. Manzoni laid the foundation for the modern Italian language—the first stones for which had been set out by Dante in the fourteenth century. Dialogue in the Italian of this final version catches tone of voice, and often implies accompanying gestures. Barricelli draws our attention to how dialogue in the novel changes with each leading personality, enabling speech to reveal character. Scott successfully employed this technique in his Scottish novels, although the use of presumed local dialect frequently obscures these passages for present-day readers. In *The Betrothed*, contrasting modes of speech reveal the differences of character, sometimes in deliberate juxtapositions—such as Lucia, shy, unused to the world's ways, innocent, and her all-knowing mother, Agnese, opposed to all authority of whatever shape. The often strident Agnese concentrates on survival strategy in a world in which alien powers control all wealth and authority. She asserts a private, as opposed to a public, liberty, which is inconceivable under the prevailing circumstances, and struggles to get round all the obstacles without having to confront any of them outright, which could prove fatal. The contrast between the dominant Perpetua, housekeeper of the plaint Don Abbondio, sets up another of these 'dialogues'. They present alternative visions of the world, such as Cervantes presented in *Don Quixote*. Ward, in fact, goes as far as to describe Don Abbondio as 'an ecclesiastical Sancho Panza'.⁴⁵

Manzoni's dialogue alternates with monologue—what goes on in Renzo's mind, for instance, when he finds himself mixed up in the Milan bread riots—and

⁴⁴ Marshall, *D'Azeglio*, pp. 60–6; p. 63: 'Ettore Fieramosca is admittedly a second-rank novel: by comparison with English [sic] historical novels one might count it as well below the Scott level, but a very long way above Harrison Ainsworth: by Italian standards, though it falls short of *I Promessi Sposi*, as would seem inevitable, it is still much more readable than the works of Guerrazzi.' What, then, accounted for the many editions of Guerrazzi? This requires an answer.

⁴⁵ Andrea Ciccarelli, *Manzoni. La coscienza della letteratura* (Rome 1996), pp. 99–131, on what he describes as the 'polyphonic realism' of this novel, tracing the source of his view to Bakhtin (p. 102). Barricelli, *Alessandro Manzoni*, pp. 141–7. Ward, *Manzoni*, pp. 23, 27, 37. De Lollis, *Alessandro Manzoni*, p. 135: Sancho Panza/Don Abondio 'are the incarnation of rejection of the highest values in life.'

description. This latter often deepens the symbolism of contrasts—convent versus mansion—and enclosures—mountains, walls.⁴⁶

Although Manzoni had given considerable thought to the literary problem of how historical events of a collective nature, such as bread riots and plague, affected the lives of ordinary individuals, the problem still remained of how to make the relationship seamless in the writing of fiction. Most historical novelists immersing themselves in history, whether acting in part as historians or researching background for their fiction, encountered this same problem. Even in a novel such as *The Betrothed*, in which the fictional characters open the book, set the theme, and carry the story through to its conclusion, this same problem occurred. By 1850 Manzoni had concluded, rightly or wrongly, that he had not resolved it, and that, most probably, it could not be resolved.

When Scott wrote *The Heart of Midlothian*, published in 1818, the development of historical research from primary sources had been less advanced than in the period in which Manzoni wrote the versions of *The Betrothed*. Scott, although he had attended lectures in history at Edinburgh University in his youth, only wrote history in later life with his *Life of Napoleon* in 1827. Even then it was a biography rather than a sweeping social or cultural study such as Manzoni had written concerning the Lombards. Manzoni's comparison of the French and Italian Revolutions of 1789 and 1859 remained incomplete, but what he had written would be published posthumously.⁴⁷

Manzoni's treatment of the Milan bread riots of 1628—again a precise date—is much more complex. The impact of historical research in the Europe of his time of writing and his own perception of the need for historical detail take over from the story of Renzo for a good deal of space. Whether or not one feels overwhelmed by the factual detail ultimately depends on the individual reader's reaction to the incorporation of history into the body of a work of fiction. It is true that we never entirely lose sight of Renzo, and that the author does skilfully insert him into the course of the riots and then involves him in politically dangerous situations. Finally, we see Renzo escaping from custody and fleeing from Spanish Lombardy into the safety of the Venetian Republic's territory at Bergamo. This section, however, covers the nearly eighty pages of chapters 12 to 17, where, as we have seen, the historical causes of the bread riots are outlined. Manzoni moves on to the economic consequences in the countryside—the abandonment of farms—and thence to the social consequences of the shortages in the city. Milan seethes with hatred of

⁴⁶ Barricelli, *Manzoni*, p. 149. See, however, Romagnoli, *Manzoni*, pp. 35–64, on language and society in *I Promessi Sposi*: pp. 37–42, commenting on the linguistic consequences of making the language uniform and in a Florentine mode in the novel. This means that the original innovation of making a silk-spinner from Lecco the 'hero' presents the new problems of expression, communication, and understanding. In the final edition, Renzo, although he is only partially able to read, speaks good Tuscan, as do the other humble characters from Lombardy. Renzo, furthermore, never fails to understand the language spoken to him: no linguistic barrier seems to exist. This has puzzled critics from the time of Tommaseo.

⁴⁷ Alessandro Manzoni, *Edizione Nazionale ed Europea*, Vol. 15, *La Rivoluzione Francese de 1789 e la Rivoluzione Italiana del 1859. Dell'Indipendenza dell'Italia* (Milan 2000).

landowners and bakers, all of whom are suspected of hoarding, and the failure of government price limits.⁴⁸

At this point, Renzo reappears in the book:

The evening before the day of Renzo's arrival in Milan the streets and squares were swarming with men in the grip of a common rage, and dominated by a common idea; friends and strangers fell into groups, without any pre-arrangement, almost without realizing it, like drops of water scattered over the same slope. Every conversation strengthened the convictions and fanned the passions of the listeners, as it did those of the speakers. Among all those excited people there were also a few with cooler heads, who were observing this troubling of the waters with pleasure, and doing their best to trouble them still more, by means of arguments and stories which the cunning know how to invent and overwrought minds are apt to believe; and they determined not to let the waters settle without doing a little fishing in them.⁴⁹

This passage provides a formidable description of the building up of crowd passions, and interestingly Manzoni also employs a water simile, though of a type different from Scott's use of it. With the historical and fictional passages concerning the bread riots read in their entirety, Manzoni has given us a remarkable portrait of the urban tensions which break out into recrimination and violence. Similarly, his description of the plague of 1630 is harrowing, especially as we quickly realize how the fate of the central characters has become involved with its intensity. As in the case of the bread riots, the narrative is never overstated, principally because Manzoni pulls back by introducing notes of irony and even humour into its development. In that sense, the fictional events dramatize in personal terms a vast social drama, which might otherwise be difficult to comprehend, located as it was in historical times. The historian and novelist in the author come together by showing how initially the appearance of the plague went unnoticed, was then denied, and finally spread rapidly until no possibility existed of controlling it. Panic and recrimination ensued, leading to superstition, accusations of conspiracy, and complicity to do harm, leaving the empty streets to the violent and irrational.⁵⁰

These disasters are not portrayed as meaningless occurrences in a grim human history but as the consequences of war, which was the result of human decision. Similarly, they are not conjured up as horrible manifestations of human behaviour at a time of extreme suffering, in order to discredit Enlightenment belief in the betterment of mankind. They are not, then, part of a polemic stemming from counter-revolutionary hostility to the Enlightenment perceived as the root cause of the Revolution and de-Christianization. While it is true that human beings have not decided to cause a bread shortage, provoke riots, and then create conditions for the spread of plague, these are the consequence of their decision to opt for war. For a Christian such as Manzoni, this raises the question of where God is in all of this. If He represents goodness, why does he not prevent this from happening or stop it when it does? Manzoni is wrestling with this problem in the novel—particularly in

⁴⁸ Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, pp. 164–242.

⁴⁹ Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, p. 167.

⁵⁰ Barricelli, *Alessandro Manzoni*, pp. 149–50, 153.

the plague section. Much depends on the perception of the nature of God and, as Creator of the universe and mankind, how He interacts with the creatures He has made in His image. Their freedom of choice has infinite possibilities: the tension between malice and good will, between hatred and love, show this. Manzoni's view of God does not derive from a concept of the Creator as regulator from the outside, but as participant in this conflict through His actions within the individuals involved. Both Vico and Manzoni would have agreed in calling this action 'Providence'.⁵¹

Barricelli's comments on the novel provide us with one of the best interpretations of Manzoni's understanding of how Providence works in human history. In fact, this critic sees it as the 'ubiquitous theme' of the novel. *The Betrothed* is a novel full of contradictions, starting from its opening passages, which symbolically set the scene for the action. Right from the beginning, goodness is thwarted or crushed by evil: Don Rodrigo's lust and abuse of power; the parish priest Don Abbondio's cowering acceptance of them. Symbolic contrasts of light and dark infuse the conflicting characters. In the conversion of The Unnamed, light overcomes darkness. Clearly, Manzoni is presenting the powers of light counteracting darkness. These powers, however, work inside individuals and are not external to them. It is they, then, who have the responsibility to respond and act accordingly. This makes sense of Fra Cristoforo's actions throughout the book and especially in the plague scenes. In Manzoni's view of reality, the contradictions in human nature and human experience do not signify absurdity, but are part of an ongoing dialectic. As a result, human decision or failure to act results in the triumph of one force or another. This is why Fra Cristoforo urges Renzo to forgive Don Rodrigo, so that the course of action which his abuses set in motion can now be reversed. Manzoni's skills as a novelist are set to the purpose of constructing this moral framework.⁵²

Manzoni had struggled for the better part of two decades not only to balance fact and imagination in his historical novel but also to shape the language in which it should be expressed. At the same time, he was developing and refining the argument in his *Del romanzo storico*; but by 1850 he had concluded that the attempt to reconcile fact and imagination in the historical novel had been a failure. Although immediately popular on publication, *I Promessi Sposi* still left him with grave doubts. Powerfully drawn to history, drama, poetry, and the novel, Manzoni

⁵¹ De Lollis, *Manzoni*, pp. 137–8, attributes the emphasis on Providence to Jansenism, compares it to Rousseau's vision of the golden age before the enslavement of man, and wonders why it did not act on behalf of Gertrude, the nun of Monza, incarcerated by her oppressive father.

⁵² Barricelli, *Alessandro Manzoni*, p. 149. De Lollis, *Manzoni*, pp. 139–43, points to Lucia as Manzoni's ideal human being, in company with Fra Cristoforo and Cardinal Borromeo. He sees Manzoni's view of Providence working through history as an interpretive means of purifying the basic principles of the French Revolution—without the bloody horrors which in reality ensued—through the medium of a return to primitive Christianity. Bollati, *L'italiano*, pp. 994–7, comments on the contradictions between Manzoni's patriotic defence of Italian independence and unity, on the one hand, and the absolute values of Catholic morality, as expressed in the 1819 criticism of Sismondi's views, on the other hand. I am grateful to Maurizio Isabella for drawing my attention to an older, Marxist interpretation of this novel, different from my own, which portrays it as negative and reactionary, pointing to Lucia and Renzo's passivity before Providence and their incapacity to shape a new order of things.

understood the limitations and frontiers of each medium, identifying the precarious balance between history and fiction. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the historical novel in Italy declined from its high level of prestige and popularity earlier in the century. Although such novels came to be written, as elsewhere in Western Europe, in Italy they did not soar back to popular and critical esteem until the publication of Giuseppe di Lampedusa's *Il Gattopardo* [The Leopard] in 1958.⁵³

The *Dizionario della lingua italiana* by the critic Niccolò Tommaseo in collaboration with B. Bellini, published in Turin from 1858 to 1879, moved closer towards official standardization of language. The task identified by the earlier nineteenth-century patriots would fall to the politicians who ruled the united Kingdom of Italy after 1860–70. Much would depend on their educational policies. The new Italian elite still faced huge obstacles. In France, despite the continued existence of regional dialects and languages, the elite, whether under the old régime or the new, had always been national. This was also the case in Spain, whether absolutist or liberal, in a country with educational levels comparable to those of Italy. In the new Imperial Germany after 1871, the pre-existing Prussian monarchy, bureaucracy, officer corps, and educated elite moved into the governing position in the new Empire in the same capital city as that of the old Prussian state. The difference between united Italy and united Germany could not be more striking. Manzoni, from his position as chairman of the committee for the Unification of the Language, saw this clearly.⁵⁴

In many respects, nationalism had not created an Italian nation, which still remained very much a concept. Italy, despite its advanced culture and richly diverse history, had to create a national identity in the post-1870 era, dominated, as it would be, by a Piedmontese elite which had hardly any knowledge of the south. A towering literary figure such as Manzoni, who died three years later in 1873, became of immediate use to the new powers. His struggle to assert a national language was co-opted, as it were, into state policy. In this process of creating a real nation after the nation had been only formally established led to Manzoni's transformation into an icon for the powers that be. Yet, as I have stressed, this novel, from start to finish, attacks the abuse of power. Its two titular protagonists, Renzo and Lucia, do not come from any of the elites of their time. On the contrary, they are in conflict with most of them. The two principal Christian figures are also in conflict with those who abuse power. Manzoni's novel has subversive undercurrents, besides the more obvious implied critique of Austrian domination.

⁵³ Manzoni, *Del romanzo storico*, pp. 3, 63–70, 77. Olga Ragusa, 'Alessandro Manzoni and developments in the historical novel', in Peter Bondanella and Andrea Ciccarelli (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel* (Cambridge 2003), pp. 42–60; pp. 46, 53, 55.

⁵⁴ See Ciccarelli, 'Dante and the Culture of Risorgimento', pp. 84–5. See the introductory remarks by the two editors of this volume, Ascoli and von Kenneberg, *Making and Remaking Italy*, pp. 4–5, 12, 14, who argue that Italy's nineteenth-century historical experience should no longer be viewed exclusively within a Western European context, but comparatively.



PART II

INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS AND UNSTABLE FORM

A comparative study of the historical novel's dilemma

8

Was the historical novel at mid-century in crisis?

The historical novel had risen with the tide of realism in fiction from the 1810s into the 1850s. Historical scholarship and the realist novel developed together, both using the narrative technique and developing complex themes. This tendency continued and flourished specifically in the novel not set in historical times, remote or recent, as the nineteenth century advanced.

THE IDENTIFICATION OF A DILEMMA

Serious doubts concerning the aims and methods of the historical novel had been expressed by authors and readers since the 1820s. Manzoni's *Del romanzo storico* encapsulated these by exploring the relationship between the historical novel and history. The dilemma of imagination and fact was, however, a legacy of Scott.¹ Manzoni had struggled for the better part of two decades not only to balance fact and imagination in his historical novel but also to shape the language in which it should be expressed. Although immediately popular on publication, *I Promessi Sposi* still left him with grave doubts about his success in blending the two elements together. Manzoni's criticism of the historical novel, and by implication of his own, resulted from awareness of the broad-ranging scepticism in his day of the attempt to combine seamlessly these two representations of reality. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the historical novel in Britain, France, and Italy declined from its high level of prestige earlier in the century. Although such novels came to be written in Western Europe, and still gained a wide readership, the era of the historical novel had already passed its prime.²

In Germany, however, with a less rich field of historical fiction than Britain or France before 1850, Theodore Fontane, in 1879, published his novel set in Berlin and on the Oder at the end of the Napoleonic era, during the second phase of the

¹ Manzoni, *Del romanzo storico*, pp. 3, 63–70, 77. These issues are discussed in Claudio Povolo, *Il romanziere e l'archivista. Da un processo veneziano del '600 all'anonimo manoscritto dei Promessi Sposi* (Venice 1993), pp. 124–8. Ferris, *Achievement of Literary Authority*, pp. 5–6, 13–14.

² Olga Ragusa, 'Alessandro Manzoni and developments in the historical novel', in Peter Bondanella and Andrea Ciccarelli (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel* (Cambridge 2003), pp. 46, 53, 55. Victor Hugo's *Quatre-Vingt Treize* [*The Year 1793*]—his last novel—appeared in 1874.

European historical novel corresponding to the novels published in Spain, Russia, and Poland. These latter frequently used the historical novel as a means of searching for national identities.³

Historical fiction in both Britain and France during the first part of the century often supplied the reading public with the main means of understanding events and learning lessons for the present and future. Both Christians and post-Christians—who rejected the theology and spirituality of the religion but not the ethics derived from it—sought guidelines for moral improvement through the examination of history.⁴ Beyond mid-century, Scott still remained the author who had sold the largest number of copies throughout the English-speaking world, as the ‘reading nation’ expanded. St. Clair makes the following point.

During the Victorian era, Scott was almost universally regarded by the leading critics of all classes of society as one of the greatest writers the world had ever known, his achievement compared with that of Homer... Ruskin... frequently proclaimed that reading the Waverley Novels would encourage correct moral judgement and therefore virtuous conduct, in their readers.⁵

British preferences for an author who had died in 1832, however, could not disguise the dilemma facing the historical novel which he had pioneered.

In fact, Scott himself, writing in his Journal in 1826, had already seen the writing on the wall for the historical novel. Impelled to write down his private thoughts by repeated questions concerning his imitators, Scott believed that they were queering the pitch. Their methods disturbed him, bringing to mind also his own earlier difficulties with the problem of reconciling historical fact and invention. He saw the essence of the problem in his imitators’ habit of

... dragging in historical details by head and shoulders, so that the interest of the main piece is lost in minute descriptions of events which do not affect its progress... In my better efforts, while I conducted my story through the agency of historical personages and by connecting it with historical incidents, I have endeavoured to weave them pretty closely together and in future I will study this more—must not let the background eclipse the principal figures—the frame overpower the picture.⁶

The Italian critic, Tommaseo, had given the historical novel twenty-four years’ lease of life, while Manzoni had given it thirty, from 1815, when Scott’s fiction became known in continental Europe, until 1845. Imitations of Scott proliferated

³ Before his internationally famous *Quo Vadis?* [1896], set in Nero’s Rome, Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846–1916) gained national fame through a trilogy of novels: *With Fire and Sword* [1884], *The Deluge* [1886], and *A Polish Hero* [1888], dealing with Polish struggles in the seventeenth century against the Cossacks, Swedes, and Turks, respectively.

⁴ Orel, *The Historical Novel*, pp. 13, 28.

⁵ St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, pp. 419–20. Sales of Scott’s novels reached two million copies within two years, when the price of a volume was cut to sixpence in 1866. John Ruskin (1819–1900), celebrated art and architecture critic, graduated from Christ Church, Oxford, began to publish in the 1840s, and became first Slade Professor of Fine Arts at Oxford in 1870. He championed Romantic neo-Gothicism in architecture, and criticized the social impact of industrialization.

⁶ W. E. K. Anderson (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (Oxford 1972), pp. 214–15.

in Italy in the 1820s and 1830s, debasing, in Tommaseo's view, this type of novel. He saw the climax year as 1827, when both Manzoni and Guerrazzi published their historical novels.⁷

For Lukács, the moral validity of the historical novel came to an end around 1850. He attributed its rise to the triumph of the bourgeoisie, as he saw it, in the French Revolution, and its decline to the bourgeoisie's loss of revolutionary fervour in the aftermath of the 1848 Revolutions. Lukács presents the view that the historical novel had become a spoiled vessel, reviving only in the early twentieth century in a new realist mode.⁸

Other critics have also argued for the 1850s as a turning point, although for different reasons. In Harold Orel's view, the historical novel ran into crisis between 1850 and 1880 over the issue of the relation of the novel to historical source materials. The growth of scientific history led to a withering of the historical novel in England between the 1850s and the 1880s. Orel draws attention to *Romola*—though omits *Salammbo*—as examples of the historical novel at crisis point. Both novels presented their authors, who had never written a novel set in remoter times, with serious methodological problems. In the early 1860s, Eliot and Flaubert sought to transcend the uneasy relationship between fact and imagination by taking the historical novel to a new plane beyond realism in the direction of symbolism and the creation of new myths for the nineteenth century.⁹

The formula for the historical novel had become predictable. Tommaseo, writing as early as 1830, found it easy to work out the typical recipe for the plot. There would be the buffoon figure(s), who would follow the hero around like a cur. The distant models for this would be Shakespeare and Cervantes. This character might be central to the plot, as Don Abbondio was to *The Betrothed*, or churls like Wamba and Gurth in *Ivanhoe*. Then there would the mysterious character(s) or the demonic figure, inherited from the Gothic novel of the later eighteenth century. Scott's passion for disguised identity, evident in so many of his novels, came into play here. Manzoni went one step further and never revealed the identity of 'The Unnamed' in his novel, unlike Scott's 'Disinherited Knight' (Wilfred of Ivanhoe) or the 'Black Knight' (King Richard), also in *Ivanhoe*. The propensity for brigands, rebels, bands of outlaws, and the clandestine life in general, usually lived in forests or mountains, anticipated in Schiller's play *The Robbers*, was there for all readers to see, from the Jacobites of *Waverley* and *Rob Roy* to the *bravi* of Don Rodrigo and 'The Unnamed' in Manzoni, and the Chouans of Balzac. The outlaw, beloved of popular legend, such as Robin Hood—Robin of Locksley in *Ivanhoe*—came alive in the pages of these novels, further accounting for their long-lasting popularity among the reading public. We might also add the problem of the hero—usually very young, unjustly slighted, and aggrieved—with a foot in both rival camps in the

⁷ Romagnoli, *Manzoni*, pp. 187–9.

⁸ Lukács, *Historical Novel*, pp. 79–80, 84–90.

⁹ Gustave Flaubert, 'Voyage à Carthage,' in *Voyages* (Paris 1998), pp. 667–702. Orel, *Historical Novel*, pp. 2–5, 22–5, 29, 42–3.

novel's action. His life will usually be further complicated by falling in love across the political or religious divide.¹⁰

Tommaseo drew attention to the difficulty encountered by historical novelists in harmonizing their diverse narrative levels. This problem was compounded by the habit of inserting extracts from historical documents into the fictional text. This interrupted the flow and contributed nothing to the development of the plot.¹¹

This practice revealed more than anything how the historical novel and history grew in parallel fashion in this early period. We have seen several examples of novelists writing history—and historians writing novels, a practice common across Europe from the British Isles to the Russian Empire. Protracted historical research by novelists, however, raised the question of how the historical novel could compete with source-based history in its treatment of human experience. The opening of archives, the establishment of more museums, the creation of specialist institutes and chairs, and the foundation of long-lasting journals compounded the impact of history as a 'scientific' discipline. Henceforth, novelists used different sources and often adopted the lighter touch of the historical romance, which was essentially designed for entertainment. Popular as such novels became, few readers would look to the entertainment, romance, or adventure story either for insights into historical truth or moral guidance.

By mid-century the extent of the divergence between history and the historical novel was plain to see. Oliver Jenkin similarly sees the 1850s and 1860s as a turning point in the relationship between history and historical fiction within the English context. He argues that Charles Kingsley became the last of the historical novelists in nineteenth-century Britain to attempt a challenge, in his fictional works, to the scholarship regarded as necessary in historical works. Jenkin suggests that Froude, author of the *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the defeat of the Spanish Armada* [1856–70], was the last of the nineteenth-century literary historians. He concludes that from the 1870s, in Britain at any rate, the hitherto fruitful interaction between the two forms of narrative became harder to sustain. The historical novel lost its moral authority, at least for several decades.¹²

The widespread foundation of professional journals and university chairs after mid-century accentuated the increasingly academic nature of the historical discipline, further distancing the novel from the historical work. In 1859, for instance, the first edition of *Historische Zeitschrift* appeared in Germany, pioneering the way. Oxford and Cambridge Universities established Chairs in History in 1864 and 1866, respectively, following earlier development on the European continent. In England, from 1875 it became possible to take a degree in history. The *Révue Historique* in 1876, the *Rivista Storica Italiana* in 1884, and the *English Historical Review* in 1886, began publication. These journals—often described as 'scientific' in the nomenclature of the time—sought to demarcate clearly the blurred frontier between the two types of narrative, historical and fictional. Their purpose and

¹⁰ Romagnoli, *Manzoni*, pp. 195, 271–307.

¹¹ Romagnoli, *Manzoni*, pp. 192–4.

¹² Jenkin, 'Factional Pasts', pp. 208–9, 218.

content amounted to a declaration that 'literature' lay in a different compartment of knowledge to history, which claimed a scientific basis because of its distinct method. The historical novel was consigned to the no-man's land between them.

NEW TECHNIQUES IN THE NOVEL

The emphasis on realism in the serious historical novel led to greater attention to the portrayal of the functioning of the human mind. Psychology frequently required refinements in style and content, as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* demonstrated. Flaubert's attention to the narrowness of the Norman village mentality and the romantic fantasies of Emma Bovary perfectly illustrate this point. Indeed, they are directly responsible for her malaise, and form the mainsprings of her actions.¹³ Although Goethe and Austen had used the method, Flaubert was the first writer to employ the 'style indirect libre' ('free indirect style') systematically in order to resolve the problem of how the writer could gain access to the mental processes of his characters. Scott, Stendhal, and Balzac rarely used this technique, and Dickens only occasionally. The explanation may lie in the breadth of action and the diversity of characters in their novels, all of which required a firm narrative control. Characters certainly reflected in their novels, although they usually did so in direct spoken form.¹⁴

The role of the all-pervading, all-knowing narrator raised perhaps the most serious problem of all for the realist novel. This question certainly affected the historical novel as well, where the thought processes of the fictitious characters in the foreground were crucial factors in the outcome of the action. Balzac's *Les Chouans* provides an excellent illustration of this. In this novel, a young man and a young woman, who are on opposite sides in the political struggle bitterly dividing France in the later 1790s, have fallen in love, without either wishing to or being able to control their passion for one another. This compromises everything they stand for and everyone with whom they are allied, and places their lives in jeopardy. What is more, they cannot allow themselves to trust one another. How is the author to convey this from inside these characters' minds without the obvious intrusion of a narrator's omniscience? For Flaubert, the answer was a stylistic innovation designed to remove the narrator and at the same time allow the character's mental processes to act freely. That, too, posed a problem of the use of grammar.¹⁵

¹³ George Levine, *The Boundaries of Fiction. Carlyle, Macaulay, Newman* (Princeton 1968), pp. 7–8. Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists* (New York 1963), p. 72.

¹⁴ Roy Pascal, *The Dual Voice. Free Indirect Speech and its Function in the Nineteenth-Century European Novel* (Manchester 1977), pp. 34–6, 98. Pascal gives a simple English-language example of free, indirect speech: 'He stopped: was that the car he had seen yesterday?' French would use the preterite for the first part and the imperfect tense for the second part of the sentence. Since there is no conjunction, it is difficult to speak of a main clause and a subordinate clause. There is no apparent sequence of tenses. See also Rosemary Lloyd, *Madame Bovary* (London 1990) for further discussion of the 'free, indirect style'.

¹⁵ Pascal, *Dual Voice*, pp. 3–6, 8–9, 11, 25, 43, 45.

Roy Pascal explains these problems in the following way:

... the growing and extended use of free indirect speech is an instrument and symptom of the evolution of the novel towards the depiction of states of mind, temperament, moods, other than external actions. But we can also observe a technical evolution of the device... There is also an extension of its range that accompanies its growing familiarity, and provokes or assumes an astonishing imaginative agility in the reader.¹⁶

This development in the realist novel raised the question of whether, or how far, the historical novel, as it had taken shape since the 1810s, could adapt to and utilize new stylistic techniques. Developments in the novel—such as the attempt to deal with the problem of the omniscient narrator and get inside the characters' minds by the use of a new technique—contributed considerably to the difficulties facing the historical novel. If, for instance, the future of the novel was to lie in the emphasis on psychology, then what future had the historical novel of action and outdoor life?¹⁷

It is relevant to pose the question of why the historical novel could not, at this turning point in the development of the novel, simply adjust to this new approach rather than be left behind. There can be no easy answer to this. Perhaps the explanation may lie in the historical character of the historical novel. Given the fact that this element in it had already run into crisis because of the changing emphasis on accuracy and precise source materials, it may have been the case that novelists no longer regarded the historical novel as sufficiently flexible to undergo the scale of innovation broached in the novel unencumbered by history. Although major novelists still wrote historical novels, these rarely came to be regarded as their best works.

THE IMPACT OF ROMANTICISM

We have seen how the development of the historical novel has frequently been associated with the impact of Romanticism. However, we need to tread carefully. The two phenomena were not identical, as the subsequent history of the historical novel would show. While Maigron concluded that the triumph of Romanticism and the July Revolution of 1830 made the historical novel in France redundant, this was not the whole story. In the following chapter we shall see to what extent Eliot and Flaubert, with perceptions different from their Romantic forebears, succeeded in reviving the historical novel through departures from both realism and Romanticism. Similarly, Chapter 10 will explore the diversity and success of the Spanish historical novel of the decades after 1870—a time when its separation from earlier Romanticism was clear. That is not to say, understandably, that Romantic elements did not influence specific passages in Galdós's historical novels, when he was striving for atmosphere and effect.

¹⁶ Pascal, *Dual Voice*, p. 34.

¹⁷ See Chapter 13 for a brief discussion of Modernism.

The assessment of the influence of Romanticism on the historical novel in Western Europe is a complex process. We have seen how diverse the Romantic movement was—often contradictory, reacting against the extensive rationalism of the Enlightenment, yet preserving and developing several of its principal achievements. Not least of these proved to be critical history. At the same time, the realist novel grew with the Romanticism of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, Romanticism held the historical novel in a dangerous embrace, which ultimately threatened to destroy it altogether. Romanticism contained powerful strains of fantasy and romance. Romance took the historical novel away from realistic history and serious issues into the realm of popular entertainment. A successful writer might tap the market for enjoyable escapism from the external world of drudge, money-making, or sheer domesticity, and make a fortune out of popular novels of romance or adventure, or both combined, especially where these had splashes of vivid colour and the swirling costumes of the past.

This was not, however, where the historical novel had begun. True, early historical novels had included large elements of romance and had not excluded fantasy. In fact, Wandering Willie's Tale in *Redgauntlet*—an uncanny tale of the supernatural focused on the canny reality of money—formed an essential part of the revelation of Darsie Latimer's real identity and historical context.¹⁸ The historical novels discussed so far in this book had neither lost their moral purpose nor abandoned their crafted balance between realism and imagination in so doing. On the contrary, they had contributed substantially to the elevation of the novel—hitherto a less credited form of literature—to a leading position where it might henceforth hold its own alongside drama, poetry, history, and philosophy. The novel, as it had so far developed, contributed to a deeper comprehension of humanity, and was continuing to do so. The novel of character set within real social contexts, as developed by Jane Austen, the fiction of political frustration and thwarted personality, as treated by Stendhal in his two great novels of the Restoration, Balzac's social and psychological examining of post-Revolutionary France, and Dickens' keen portrayal of individuals caught up in an urban society divided by wealth and station, all took the novel to new heights. Yet the proliferation of imitations of Scott—often of diminishing quality—and the market for romance, threatened to push at least the historical novel back into the limbo from which it had arisen. This type of fiction still faced the problem of how to transcend the deleterious aspects of the influence of Romanticism.

The view of Romanticism held by Lukács, as we have seen, remained ambivalent and sceptical. He was in no doubt, however, about its impact.

The central problem of the nineteenth-century world-view and style is the attitude to romanticism.¹⁹

One section of his *Historical Novel* is entitled 'The Classical Historical Novel's Struggle with Romanticism'. Throughout the first half of his book, Lukács attempts

¹⁸ Scott, *Redgauntlet*, Letter Eleven, pp. 87–101.

¹⁹ Georg Lukács, *Studies in European Realism* (London 1978 [1950; 1972]), pp. 67–8.

to disentangle Enlightenment values from those of Romanticism, while at the same time allowing for influences from the former to the latter and for the existence of different strands of Romanticism. In general terms, he views the Enlightenment as 'progressive' and sees a significant part of the Romantic movement as 'reactionary'—particularly those elements of it opposed, according to his pattern of thought, to the rise of capitalism. It is important to recall his identification of Scott with the Enlightenment. This is important—and it is a position with which I concur—especially in view of that writer's influence on the Romantics and the casual way in which it is sometimes assumed that Scott was one of them himself. Lukács went as far as to state that 'the historical conception of Romanticism is diametrically opposed to that of Scott'.²⁰

Lukács identifies two strands of progressive Romanticism: first, Goethe and Schiller's humanism and Stendhal's foundations in the Enlightenment, associating Mérimée with him as an opponent of reaction; and second, the liberalism which assumed some of the ideas of the French Revolution but evolved a moderate formula for change. Lukács throws much light on the struggle within Romanticism between these reactionary and progressive elements, seeing it parallel to the struggle for control of the interpretation of the past. The thrust of his argument is that the historical novel needed to emancipate itself from Romanticism without losing its basis in realism and by discovering a new method of portraying reality. The writers of the age would have to retain what they saw as beneficial in Romanticism, while discarding its backward-looking elements, and, at the same time, 'raise it to a higher level'. Few, Lukács thought, were able to do this with complete success.²¹

Correct as these observations may be—stripped, that is, of the Marxist class-orientation which accompanies them—they concerned the serious historical novel rather than popular stories. The historical novel would have to grapple not only with the artistic problems identified earlier in this chapter, but also with the Romantic frame of mind. This would be especially so in the case of novels set in the remoter past rather than a generation or two before the writer's time. Galdós, for example, took on board the inheritance of Romanticism and wove it into his text—sometimes in the form of arguments between his characters, and at other times as caricatures of typical Romantic scenery with, say, medieval ruins in the background of a dramatic scene. As we shall see, he was not a Romantic himself, and, in fact, wrote several decades after the main impact of the movement in Spain. His position (discussed in Chapter 10) was that of a moderate Liberal and anti-clerical, opposed to royal absolutism and sceptical of the medieval hankings of some of his European contemporaries. Romantic modes and imagery, however, did not cease to influence the widespread popular literature, which flourished alongside the serious historical novel at its time of crisis and for a long time after.

²⁰ Lukács, *Historical Novel*, pp. 69–100; p. 70. St. Clair, *The Reading Public*, p. 420.

²¹ Lukács, *European Realism*, pp. 65–84: pp. 67–8.

MORAL PURPOSE VERSUS ENTERTAINING ROMANCE

The development of source-based history and its incumbent methods of research threw the historical novel into a quandary, because it exposed the contradictions between fact and imagination, which lay at its heart. If the historical novel were to continue in the vanguard of fiction writing, then it would need to resolve the problem of the tension between these two elements.

The central objective of the serious historical novel's moral purpose was improvement—an idea firmly rooted in the Enlightenment, and which continued into the first half of the nineteenth century. The reader went to a serious novel with the intention of being improved by it. Improvement might take several forms, but two lay in the forefront: moral and intellectual improvement. Historical romance, in contrast to the serious novel, dispensed with this objective, since entertainment—pure, simple enjoyment—was its goal. Romanticism, which certainly contained high moral purposes among its many strains, opened the way at the same time for colour, costume, adventure, and passion to become fictional ends in themselves. No one needed either historical accuracy or laboured linkages between present and past in such literature as this. Hugo and then Dumas had shown the way forward in this type of novel.

The strong emphasis within Romanticism on the emotions and the imagination contributed to the flourishing of the novel of entertainment and tapped the market for it. The serious historical novel could not take advantage of this without compromising its original purpose. This, in turn, widened the breach between the serious and the unserious application of history to fiction.

By the 1860s, Scott had fallen out of favour with writers and critics in much of continental Europe, and his work became increasingly but wrongly confused with popular romance. For a long time, the Scottish novels fell by the wayside, ignored in preference to the medieval fictions such as *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman*. In the twentieth century, Scott's 'adventure' novels would become schoolboy literature, and little was discussed about his very real innovations and achievements. Robert Louis Stevenson, for instance, would use history as a backdrop for entertainments such as *Treasure Island* (1883), *Kidnapped* (1886), *The Black Arrow* (1888), and *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889). These novels—immensely popular not only in their day but for a long time after—did not attempt to relate past and present or to use the past to comment on human life and morality in the present. It appeared that the serious historical novel had become redundant. The widely differing attempts by Eliot and Flaubert to revive it failed during their own time. Their failure, despite superhuman efforts, stood as a warning to future aspirants in countries where the historical novel had developed from the mid-1810s.

Elsewhere in Europe, from the Germanic territories eastwards to the Russian Empire, this was not the case. The explanation for this lay in different cultural patterns and chronology. The same might also be said for Spain, which, although part of Western Europe, had not fully participated in the emergence of the historical novel. The emergence of the serious Spanish historical novel after 1870

demonstrated that. Despite the crisis in the genre in the 'older' countries, the historical novel itself was by no means dead even in Western Europe, and still fulfilled a major cultural purpose (as we shall see later in this section).

It might be helpful at this stage to remind ourselves what we mean by the historical novel's moral purpose. Scott argued through the medium of his Scottish novels that the way out of tribal violence, religious fanaticism, and general disorder lay in respect for the law in a stable constitutional monarchy. Scotland might then climb out of its poverty and backwardness to find prosperity and a new role in the world through union with England. His moral purpose, thereby, had several dimensions, with an underlying political commitment to unionism. Galdós would be writing in a different historical context, in a Spain which had already lost its vast, three-hundred-year-old empire on the American continent, but was still trying to come to terms with the idea of itself as a national entity. Like Scott, he identified civil war, brutality, ignorance, and fanaticism (political and religious) as the overriding obstacles to the construction of a law-abiding society, which could work in unison towards the goal of peace and prosperity. Balzac identified the moral breakdown resulting from revolutionary and counter-revolutionary violence in the Breton countryside. He warned of the new centralism, which, with little concern for the consequences, destroyed traditional ways of life. In this way the revolutionary promise of a new dawn led only to frustration and despair.

THE END OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL?

Eliot's *Romola* and Flaubert's *Salammbô* perplexed contemporaries and continue to present problems of interpretation. Thematically their historical novels shared a number of features, despite their distance in setting. Both caused their writers hardship. The two female protagonists have an uneasy father-daughter relationship and a dubious lover or husband. Both women find themselves compromised in their loyalty to philosophical position or religion. Each struggles to understand the nature of the universe and her role in it. Most important of all, neither novel corresponded to the prevailing realist mode, and could not be understood from solely that standpoint. These two innovative works have often been put to one side as failures. They sought, with varying degrees of success, to interpret conflicts of theme and character in terms of the revived interest in mythology at their time of writing.

Romola, in particular, aspired to formulate a new myth, which would supersede the inherited mythologies of the Classical World and the Christian era without dispensing with the moral legacies of either. Significantly, Eliot gave the moral leadership to a woman: the fictional Romola. *Salammbô* presented a more negative perception of humanity. It abandoned both these inheritances in favour of a view that mankind could never change and that much about the universe remained unknowable. In Flaubert's view, the line between civilization and barbarism

remained tenuous. Both authors grappled with their subjects during turning points in their writing careers.²²

Romola and *Salammbô* exposed the historical novelist's problems. Criticism, often focusing on their excess of erudition, has fallen heavily upon them. This, however, makes them particularly important for the present study.

The theme of myth and mythology enabled the historical novelist to transcend the problem of factual accuracy at a time of strict attention to primary sources through exploring archives. In such a way, writers responded to the challenge presented by factual, accurate, and scientific history. Myth constituted, in effect, a later nineteenth-century substitute for a Christianity withering under scientific criticism. Romantic critique of Enlightenment rationalism, furthermore, helped create a climate responsive to a new metaphysics concerned with the origins of humanity and civilization. Vico, Herder, and F. Schlegel came together as sources for this. The displacement of Scripture opened the way for the investment of literature with mythic significance.²³

Symbolism—not universally followed at the time—opened a new dimension and offered the historical novel a fresh purpose. The move towards symbolism responded to the problem of historical accuracy as experienced by the novelist at mid-century. Eliot and Flaubert, ground down by their historical research, must have felt deep disillusionment as they came to recognize that the solution of their methodological problem lay not in further research but in the transcendence of it. The sense of imminent failure at the prospect of novels over-laden with detail, yet still unconvincing, might have preceded the revelation that a way out of the dilemma lay in pursuit of the idea of myth. The problem then became one of integrating the data with the new symbolist intent. If successful, this approach could potentially give fresh impetus to the historical novel, which had already in the previous decades degenerated into romance and colourful adventure stories set in the past.

The essential problem in both *Romola* and *Salammbô* lay in their departure from the earlier tradition, established in Scott's Scottish novels, of setting the theme in recent times or, at least, in the not too distant past, in which the issues in the novel still remained relevant. Both Eliot and Flaubert opted for past epochs—Flaubert the more radical in his choice of setting. This raised the problem of conceptualizing and recreating such epochs. Immersion in libraries and visits to the sites seemed part of the solution, but the problem still remained. The Scott of *Ivanhoe* was the source of this authorial difficulty. Certainly, novels set in distant times had preceded Scott, but the popularity of this novel augmented the dichotomy at the heart of the historical novel in the nineteenth century between those set in more

²² Jim Reilly, *Shadowtime: History and Representation in Hardy, Conrad, and George Eliot* (London 1996), p. 102, comments on *Romola*: '...the novel is tainted with the corrosive suspicion that in the very era of realist prose—the world is proving illegible.' Thompson, *George Eliot and Italy*, pp. 21, 26–7, 30, 32, 46: '...the rebirth of Italy was also the occasion of an imaginative rebirth for George Eliot.' Bennett, *Eliot*, pp. 142–4. Rosemary Ashton, *George Eliot. A Life* (London 1996), p. 254, 263–4.

²³ Oergel, *The Return of King Arthur*, pp. 11–14, 18–24, 33–4, 38, 43–51, 239, 292–4.

recent times ('sixty years since') and in familiar settings, and those set in remote times and unfamiliar places, with the problem of language that this entailed.

While this is crucial to our understanding of the dilemma of the historical novel in this period, authorial motivation must come to the forefront. The decision to opt for remoter times and distant places was generally influenced by issues prevalent at the time of writing. In this respect, the past setting was neither gratuitous nor an attempt to tap a ready market for the exotic, to which, in any case, the popular romance could more effectively respond. Eliot's choice of late fifteenth-century Florence was motivated by her perception of England at mid-century as the scene of great debates between religion and science, humanism and Christianity. The nineteenth-century English Liberal fascination for liberation movements similarly influenced her choice of setting. Flaubert's novel also had several dimensions: a critique of French Imperial policy in North Africa, a rejection of the Ancient World as a guide to the present, and a rebuttal of Romanticism's glorification of warfare, insurrection, violence, and heroism. These two novelists' different views of where their century and civilization was heading would not strike a harmonious chord with the reading public, still less their method of conveying their vision.

HISTORY IN THE NOVEL WHICH IS NOT SPECIFICALLY AN HISTORICAL NOVEL

Despite the difficulties encountered in the historical novel, and perceived by both readers and writers, history did not vanish from the novel. Far from it, the historicism interwoven with Scott's fiction—notably the Scottish novels—reappeared in novels set more or less in the present but within a recent historical context. These novels may not have been conceived by their authors as historical novels in the sense we associate with Scott, the French Romantics discussed earlier, or Manzoni, but the lessons learned from them had been absorbed into the novel as such. In that sense, there no longer seemed to be a need for specifically historical novels, except perhaps in the decorative sense. There was always a strong historical element in the eighteenth-century novel, as we have seen in Chapter 1. In many respects, it could be argued, that most novels are historical.

... all novels from *Moll Flanders* onwards are implicitly or potentially historical. From *Waverley* onwards, they became more fully and explicitly historical in as much as, whether a historical novel-romance like Balzac's *The Chouans* or a novel of contemporary manners like *Père Goriot*, they acknowledge and demonstrate the shaping power of historical creativity over character, attitude, event. For, once the focus of community and relation are admitted within a fictional world, it begins to stand in intelligible relation to the forces of historical causality—economic, religious, political—to which we are all subject.²⁴

Whether Flaubert's *L'Éducation Sentimentale* [1869] is an historical novel may be a matter of debate, but it is certainly a novel of memory. Historical events eventually

²⁴ Dekker, *American Historical Romance*, pp. 24–5.

impinge upon the narrative, although without historical figures in them. Friends, lovers, rivals, and hangers-on find themselves caught, in the last stages of the novel, in the February Revolution of 1848, which brings down Louis Philippe's Orleans Monarchy established in 1830. While momentous in historical terms, the revolution is tangential to the fictional characters' priorities. Frédéric Moreau, the central figure, has been, from the beginning of the book, infatuated with Madame Arnoux, the wife of an older, unreliable friend, and they have finally made an arrangement for a clandestine meeting in a hotel, but her younger son falls ill and no doctor is in sight. Frédéric—out on the street, perplexed—is overtaken by demonstrations against the government. They fill him with sudden enthusiasm, though not necessarily for politics, and, seeing a light in the window of his paramour, Roseannette, known as 'La Maréchale', he decides to call on her. She is delighted to see him, since she fears that the crowd will burst in and pillage her apartment. They laugh and kiss and roll on to the divan, as the revolution moves forward in the streets below. There, they pass the afternoon, looking from time to time at the crowds from the window, before dining at an expensive restaurant in the Palais-Royal Gallery, where they spend a long time. The evening finishes as they walk—no carriages are available that night—through the elated crowds to the hotel room, which Frédéric had reserved for his assignation with Madame Arnoux.²⁵

Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* [1901] is much more consciously historical in its attention to the passage of time through the long narrative, but the historical sense becomes increasingly subsumed into the deeply embedded symbolic purpose of the book. Ostensibly, the account focuses on the supersession of a traditional mercantile family in the autonomous city of Lübeck, virtually on the Baltic coast and with a Hanseatic past, by a more aggressive, philistine bourgeoisie. This time the 1848 Revolution appears at the beginning of the narrative. As the German reader of 1901 would have known, the old ways would be swept away by the nationalist and militarist German Empire of 1871—an unforeseen, long-term consequence of 1848. We can see in this, Mann's first novel, where the achievements of Fontane have taken German fiction.

The family, uncomprehending and aghast, hears of the upheavals not only in Berlin but in the centre of their own city. After the cook has been insolent (in the local dialect) to Frau Consul Buddenbrook, threatening a new order in the city, the Consul decides that the milling crowd in the central streets will not thwart his expected attendance at the local council meeting. The Senate has already voted for universal suffrage and the council has now to take a decision, an excited crowd beneath the windows. Lebrecht Kröger, the Consul's father-in-law, who is to chair the meeting, mutters 'Rabble!' The Consul, to calm the crowd, goes outside to cajole them in Plattdeutsch, but he becomes so angry at their insubordinate behaviour that he forgets his popular dialect and addresses them in High German, telling them to behave themselves and go back home. They agree to do this, remembering to light the lamps in the square—a daily task forgotten in the

²⁵ Gustave Flaubert, *L'Education Sentimentale* (Paris 2001 [1869]), pp. 380–524: see pp. 380–3 and 387, 394.

imbroglio. Everything is over very soon, and hardly anyone is affected in the short term. Afterwards, Kröger dies of heart failure.²⁶

In both these novels, the authors shed light on a major event in European history, leading to social and political transformation, although that is not their central purpose. Instead, their focus falls on states of mind, individual and collective—a technique developed in the novel since the eighteenth century and exploited by the historical novel in the period from the 1810s to the 1840s. These are two very different novels. In the first, the personal concerns of a rather flighty group of individuals, unconcerned about society as a whole, have priority in the narrative. They have little sense of the historical significance of the 1848 Revolution, only of its novelty. In the second novel, the city elite remains determined to preserve its now challenged position, regardless of the ideas and forces arising around it. Lübeck lay out on a tangent, since Berlin was the focal point of the revolution in northern Germany, and, unlike France, the monarchy was certainly not overthrown.

Much in Eliot's *Middlemarch* [1872] illustrates her view of the intrinsic significance of ordinary, quiet, often forgotten human lives. This is a vision also shared by Tolstoy, who went further, arguing that simple conformity to social and religious conventions represented a form of sanctity. Eliot, with her own life as an example and her skill at portraying rebels or unusual or outstanding figures in her novels, never thought that.²⁷

At first sight, *Middlemarch* might seem to be an historical novel. Ashton, for instance, comments:

This is that very rare thing: a successful historical novel. In fact, it is so successful that we scarcely think of it in terms of that sub-genre of fiction.²⁸

It seems, however, to be more one of Zimmerman's category of novels steeped in history. Caroline Steedman, though, assumes that *Middlemarch* is an historical novel because it studies a precise location and time—Warwickshire, during September 1829–May 1832, forty years before the time of publication—and focuses on the debates surrounding the first Parliamentary Reform Bill. As both Steedman and Michael Mason York point out, the novel is set between this first Reform Act and the Second Reform Act of 1867, the time of writing. They see the author looking back to c.1830 from the perspective of the late 1860s and early 1870s, a later epoch sharing the concern for reform. Mason York suggests that Eliot's choice of the former period gives the novel, otherwise static, a sense of advancing progress, and that progress in knowledge is a basic theme of the novel.²⁹

²⁶ Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks* (London 1994 [Berlin 1901]), pp. 175–94; see pp. 184–9.

²⁷ Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (London 2001), pp. 105–7, questions the ordinariness which Eliot claims for her provincial portrait of *Middlemarch*, since it focuses on agitation for reform—an event not in the slightest bit ordinary.

²⁸ Ashton, *A Life*, p. 139.

²⁹ Steedman, *Dust*, pp. 90–1, 105–7. Michael Mason York, 'Middlemarch and History', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 25 (1970–71), pp. 417–31; pp. 428–9.

Both critics raise a number of doubts about *Middlemarch*. In Mason York's view, forty years is insufficient to justify the description of historical, and in any case, the author would need to express why use of the past was significant in relation to the time of writing:

... such a novel must in some way be about the past for its own sake . . . [we need] the feeling that the pen of the novel, or at least the features of that period which are given prominence, are important by virtue of being a bit of the past. In effect, we require that the juxtaposition of this period and the author's present, in the consciousness that they are separated in time, be made significant.³⁰

The suggestion of progress by pointing to Tertius Lydgate's medical researches and to his classless and pragmatic type of education, in contrast to the preparation of gentlemen and ladies, is insufficient. Steedman questions the technique of transposing existing political movements on to a dubious fictional alternative, portraying Will Ladislaw, for example, as representative of English radicalism rather than dispossessed handloom weavers. This, she argues, distorts the historical vision by employing surrogates. Mason York expresses unease at Ladislaw's transformation from long-haired Romantic to mature campaigner for reform. Eliot may suggest a small Midlands town caught between provincial philistinism and a world growing more interdependent, but expresses reservations concerning aspects of progress. It is unlikely, furthermore, that after the difficulty with *Romola* and its mixed reception, Eliot would have wished to commit herself to writing another historical novel.³¹

On the other hand, she did not divest herself of the tendency towards symbolism which, by contrast, permeated *Romola*. There are implicit references to the earlier period of convulsion and reform, the seventeenth century, in English history throughout *Middlemarch*. In this respect, early reading of Scott—namely *Old Mortality* and *Woodstock*—may have influenced the decision. Dorothea's presentation as a Puritan and Ladislaw's as a Cavalier illustrated this. Eliot, furthermore, was reading Macaulay's *History of England* during the writing of this novel.³²

Finally, we come to a novel also steeped in history throughout, but hardly mentioning any historical events. When it does, they are simply brief external contexts for leading characters. This is D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* [1915]—a novel which, despite its clear roots in Eliot, George Meredith, and Thomas Hardy, represents one of the peaks of modernist writing. Although historical fiction held no appeal for Lawrence, this novel develops historically in three generations from the named date of c.1840 to the 1900s. It portrays the passage of time through the changing seasons and the rhythm of birth and death in nature, animals, and humans. The latter, self-consciously civilized, nineteenth-century individuals, are submerged back into nature, almost as primitives, where the subconscious determines their real perspective. Actions and interactions develop less from rational

³⁰ Mason, 'Middlemarch and History', pp. 417–18.

³¹ Steedman, *Dust*, pp. 105–7. Mason, 'Middlemarch and History', pp. 421–2, 428–9.

³² Joseph Nicholes, 'Vertical Context in Middlemarch: George Eliot's Civil War of the Soul', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 45 (1990), pp. 144–75.

decisions than from subterranean feelings and instincts. They provide a different, untheatrical function for dialogue. Only two historical events gain mention: the Polish Rebellion of 1863, and the Boer War of 1899–1901. Yet the novel springs as much from the foundations laid by the eighteenth-century British novelists as does *Middlemarch*, despite their different themes and approach. In *The Rainbow*'s Nottinghamshire locality, the characters are as historically rooted as are those in Eliot's Midlands novels, with a similar attention to local speech. Repeated arguments in the text, concerning the nature of the Christian religion, clearly spring from the nineteenth-century context recognizable in Eliot's writings.³³

³³ D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, edited by Mark Kinkead-Weekes (Cambridge 1989).

9

Is there a way out? Two experiments in myth and history

In their historical novels of the early 1860s, Eliot and Flaubert sought in different ways to elaborate a new myth for the forthcoming century.¹ Eliot's fictitious study of Florence in the mid-1490s came thirty-five years after the first publication of Manzoni's novel set in early seventeenth-century Milan. In that sense, the timing of Eliot's novel in 1862–3 coincided with an Italian unification almost achieved. Only Austrian-controlled Venetia, and Rome, still under French occupation after the extinction of the Roman Republic in 1849, lay outside the new national state. By this time any hopes of the Papacy playing a significant, if not, determining role, in the formation of the Italian national state had vanished. Historians have paid little attention to Eliot's *Romola*, despite the general attraction of English readers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the Italian Renaissance. An unbridled enthusiasm for the Renaissance usually accompanied passionate identification with the Risorgimento. The English belief, commonly held in the nineteenth century, that the Risorgimento was a liberal humanist struggle carried into the early twentieth century in the form of G. M. Trevelyan's historical studies of the period. However, Eliot's implicit identification of mid-Victorian England with the Florence of the 1490s as two comparable 'renaissance' societies, torn by conflict between secular humanism and revived spirituality, might raise eyebrows in the present day.

Flaubert wrote *Salammbô* in the aftermath of the notoriety and success of *Madame Bovary*. Disgusted with the French bourgeoisie in general and the narrow environment of provincial Normandy, which had been the setting of that first novel, Flaubert chose for his second novel an epic theme of armed conflict between the city of Carthage and its rebellious mercenaries. He wanted to choose a colourful and spectacular successor to *Madame Bovary*:

Now I am going to live, perhaps for several years, in a splendid subject, far from the modern world I am fed up with. What I am undertaking to do is insane, and will have

¹ J. W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason. European Thought, 1848–1914* (New Haven and London 2000), pp. 87–9, where the German view of myth, also derived from Vico, is discussed: 'Myth was not simply invention or falsehood; it was an alternative and deeper way of seeing life than that which science could offer; a concrete, poetic way natural to early man, which had been lost rather than overcome.'

no success with the public. No matter! One must write for oneself first and foremost. Only that way does one stand a chance of producing something good.²

He declared his intention to apply ‘the techniques of the modern novel’ to a study of the Ancient World. Flaubert spent five years (from March 1857) conceiving and writing his Carthaginian novel, and travelled to Tunisia for greater authenticity for the North African locations. By 1861, however, he was commenting that:

Carthage will make me die of fury yet. I am now full of doubts about the ensemble and about the general plan. I think there are too many military men about. That is historical, I know. But, if a novel is as boring as a scientific book, *bon soir!* Good-bye Art! In short, I pass my time telling myself I am an idiot, and my heart is full of sadness and bitterness.³

Despite the historical research for the background of the subject, the religious and mythological dimension occupies the overriding position in the book, and is the key to its interpretation. Lukács missed these elements, embedded in this novel as much as in *Romola*—a novel which he does not even mention.

Both Eliot and Flaubert returned to the Classical age—perhaps a symptom of the exhaustion of the neo-medievalism of the early Romantics. Eliot used Hellenic myths, such as Bacchus and Ariadne, or Pasiphae, Minos, and the Minotaur, to highlight characters and issues in her novel of late fifteenth-century Florence. Flaubert adopted Semitic mythology by transposing the female divinity of Astarte (from Phoenicia) and Tanit (from Carthage) onto the personality of Salammbo, an invented character, and that of Moloch onto the historical figure, Mathus, or Mathô in the novel.⁴

Anne Green has argued that mid-nineteenth-century French interest in mythology formed part of an attempt to identify the cultural features of past societies. Flaubert’s *Salammbô*, accordingly, sought to express ‘fundamental truths about man and his relation to the natural world’. Flaubert, deeply interested in history, wanted at the same time to explore the problem of the relation between history and fiction. Like *Romola*, this was a work of transition in the novelist’s development. *Salammbô* is one of the most fascinating novels for examining the bare bones of the historical novelist’s craft, if only because its study highlights the contradictions of the genre and the difficulties of realizing the stated objectives.

² Gustave Flaubert to Mlle. Leroyer de Chantequie, Croisset, 11 July 1858, in Francis Steegmuller (ed.), *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert*, vol. 2 (1857–70), (Cambridge, MA 1984), pp. 11–12.

³ Flaubert to Ernest Feydeau, Croisset, 15 July 1861, in Steegmuller, *Letters*, p. 28.

⁴ George Levine, “*Romola*” as Fable’, in Barbara Hardy (ed.), *Critical Essays on George Eliot* (London 1970), pp. 78–98, see pp. 81–2. Felicia Bonaparte, *The Triptych and the Cross. The Central Myths of George Eliot’s Poetic Imagination* (New York 1979), p. 6. Anne Green, *Flaubert and the Historical Novel. Salammbo Reassessed* (Cambridge 1982), pp. 11–13, 30–2. Frederick Karl, *George Eliot* (London 1995), p. 372. Rosemary Ashton, *George Eliot. A Life* (London 1996), pp. 253–4. Bergmann/Manzoni, *Historical Novel*, pp. 44, 77, 80, 84, 125–6.

RENAISSANCE, RISORGIMENTO, AND RELIGION
IN ELIOT'S FLORENTINE NOVEL

To many Europeans of the mid-nineteenth century—Eliot and her partner, G. H. Lewes, among them—the political ‘rebirth’ of Italy represented a contemporary parallel to earlier struggles for intellectual freedom.

George Eliot was strongly stirred by Italy, by her contact with Italian life and culture, and by the Risorgimento and its heroes. The letters and journals of both Eliot and Lewes reveal strong sympathy and emotional engagement with the country and convey a sense of excitement at witnessing what they realised was a great moment in the country’s history.

Eliot fed these enthusiasms into her novel. She began to study Italian in May 1840, and then paid her first visit to the country in 1849, shortly after her father’s death. She visited Genoa and Milan, not venturing as yet to Florence or to Rome, which was still in the throes of the Revolution of 1848–9. Her second visit came in 1860, after she had already published three novels and was attempting to finish *Romola*. This time she reached Rome. On the third visit, encompassing Florence for research purposes, she stayed in Italy for several weeks throughout April and June 1861.⁵ In *Romola*, the Papacy’s only contribution to the action is to assist the powerful families of the time to destroy the Popular Party in Florence and bring down its Dominican protagonist, Fra Girolamo Savonarola.⁶

Mazzini, in exile in England in 1837 and 1851, believed that the liberation of Italy would prefigure the liberation of the whole of humanity through revolution, republicanism, and the rejection of the Church. While upholding the principle of nationality as ‘the ruling principle of the future’, Mazzini warned, at the same time, that nationalism amounted to a perversion of patriotism, defended individual liberties in relation to the nation, and subordinated national claims to the wider claims of humanity. Eliot sympathized greatly with Mazzini’s position and regarded the Risorgimento as the triumph of human virtue in opposition to the rising powers of militarism and imperialism after 1870. At the end of *Daniel Deronda* [1876], another controversial novel, Eliot has her hero invoke the spirit of Mazzini in believing that a nation could be reborn.⁷

⁵ Andrew Thompson, *George Eliot and Italy. Literary, Cultural and Political Influences from Dante to the Risorgimento* (London 1998), pp. 21, 26–7, 30, 32, 41–7, 49, 68. Cannadine, G. M. Trevelyan, pp. 59–86, discusses the Garibaldi trilogy of 1907–11 in historical context. See also Denis Mack Smith, *Mazzini* (Yale 1994), pp. 154–5, 192–3, 220. The correct type of language for use in the historical novel posed problems. Eliot struggled in vain to find a convincing popular speech (in English) for her Florentines of the 1490s, and inserted many Italian expressions believed to have been contemporary, but which required a glossary at the end of the book.

⁶ George Eliot, *Romola* (Oxford 1998), chapters LXIII, LXIV, LXXII. For the response of her peers to this novel, see Gordon S. Haight (ed.), *The George Eliot Letters* (New Haven 1954–78), 9 vols., vol. IV (1862–68), pp. 96–7; vol. VIII (1840–70) (New Haven 1978), pp. 303–4. Hilary Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (Oxford 1992), pp. 210–11, argues that Eliot wanted to contrast Savonarola’s Catholic populism with the reactionary Catholics of her day.

⁷ Thompson, *George Eliot and Italy*, pp. 10, 34, 172–7. Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, pp. 154, 220.

When Eliot chose the Renaissance as the setting for her novel, the concept of 'Renaissance' still remained new, despite earlier Enlightenment categorization of history in terms of a juxtaposed 'Ancient', 'Medieval', and 'Modern'. The notion of 'rebirth' in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries—mainly of Classical learning—became the Enlightenment's way of identifying its own favoured predecessor, and signified the overthrow of the medieval, Christian order. Michelet had first used the term in 1834 in *Histoire de France*, with reference to the sixteenth-century French *Renaissance*, although this fell considerably later in time than its Italian progenitor. The French term, nevertheless, soon became applied to the whole phenomenon. Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, published in 1860, a few years before *Romola*, would be the defining exposition. This work separated the 'Renaissance' from the Middle Ages, and would later be criticized for this. Eliot regarded the *Italian Renaissance* as the dawning of a new era of free thought and artistic experiment.⁸ The religious and philosophical conflicts of her own day explained why she decided to set her fictional theme within the context of what she saw as parallel debates in Renaissance Florence. She was not alone in focusing on moral conflict in the latter. Burckhardt, for instance, commented that

... it cannot be denied that Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century found itself in the midst of a grave moral crisis, out of which the best men saw hardly any escape.⁹

While portraying Savonarola as a potential forerunner of Luther, Burckhardt recoiled, as Eliot would do, at the fanaticism and destruction. Both had difficulty coming to grips with this complicated personality. Burckhardt drew attention to Savonarola's denunciation of the great philosophers and writers of the Classical world—Plato, Aristotle, Ovid, Catullus, Terence, and Tibullus, leaving only Homer, Cicero, and Virgil as fit for instruction. With preference for St. Jerome and St. Augustine, control of education would fall to the regular orders. Such a position denied everything the Renaissance stood for in its revival of Classical learning.¹⁰

Part of the success or failure of *Romola* depends on Eliot's portrayal of Savonarola. It remains unclear from the novel whether or not Eliot regards him as an heroic figure. She seems to regard Savonarola as a political liberal and populist in his opposition to the urban oligarchy, the Medici, and the dynasties ruling in rival cities such as Milan. Romola, for a time, follows Savonarola, even though her godfather, the humanist Bernardo del Nero, opposes him and supports the Medici. Romola's break with Savonarola comes over his refusal to prevent the execution of

⁸ Burckhardt identified 'the Renaissance' as an historical period for the first time, and saw it as the precursor of the nineteenth century. I have used the New York edition, 2002, with an Introduction by Peter Gay. See Fraser, *Victorians*, pp. 1–3. Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (London 1873) was an imaginative reconstruction of personalities. Pater, who had read Fauriel and Michelet, identified an earlier Renaissance in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. John J. Conlon, *Walter Pater and the French Tradition* (Lewisburg, NJ., 1982), pp. 34, 50, 56.

⁹ Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York 2002 [1860]), p. 301.

¹⁰ Burckhardt, *Civilization*, pp. 335–6.

Bernardo. As a moralist, Romola could not fail to be in favour of a cleansing of society and the Church, but Eliot's description of Savonarola's bonfire of vanities exposed all the petty tyranny and philistinism of a religious assault on art and conscience.¹¹

Having earlier described the Dominicans as 'that spiritual police' which 'never excited any other feeling than secret hatred and contempt', Burckhardt moves on to describe this frightening '*auto da fé*' in the Piazza della Signoria at Carnival time in 1497, which also preoccupied Eliot in *Romola*.

In the centre of it rose a high pyramid of several tiers... On the lowest tier were arranged the false beards, masks and carnival disguises; above came volumes of the Latin and Italian poets, among others Boccaccio, the 'Morgante' of Pulci, and Petrarch, partly in the form of valuable printed parchments and illuminated manuscripts; then women's ornaments and toilet articles, scents, mirrors, veils and false hair; higher up, lutes, harps, chessboards, playing-cards; and finally, on the two uppermost tiers, painting only, especially of female beauties.¹²

Embedded in Eliot's text are references to Dante, who might be considered as an opposite pole to Savonarola. Interest in the fourteenth-century poet and political thinker had revived at the end of the eighteenth century—particularly in Italy, where his defence of civic liberties became associated with the contemporary struggle against the dynasties. Taken out of historical context, Dante was exhumed to become an essential part of Italian nationalist ideology, along with references to the Classical Roman Republic and the medieval city communes. With a fresh English translation in 1814, Romantic poets took up Dante with fervour, praising his use of the vernacular and applying his political thought to contemporary issues such as Italian unification. For Mazzini, he became a father of the Risorgimento. Thompson's thesis is that Eliot's character, Romola, was her equivalent of Virgil's Aeneas and Dante's Virgil for a journey through the shaping of the modern world. Through Romola, Eliot is speaking to her generation.¹³

Eliot's preoccupation with religion (as a non-believer) determined the focus on Savonarola. She regarded the intellectual debate in England between liberal, agnostic, and non-Christian ideas, on one side, and revived Christianity, represented by such figures as John Henry Newman, on the other, as fundamental to the understanding of her own times. Eliot saw the humanists, sympathetic to Antiquity, who interpreted the meaning of human existence from within man alone, pitted against the spiritualists, who took the Early and Medieval Church as their models, and for whom God remained the determining entity. This conflict provides the central explanation for the setting of this novel.¹⁴

¹¹ Eliot, *Romola*, pp. 468–71. Joseph Wiesenfarth, *George Eliot's Mythmaking* (Heidelberg 1977), pp. 148–9, 161–2.

¹² Burckhardt, *Civilization*, pp. 322, 337. Eliot, *Romola*, pp. 394–9, 410–14.

¹³ Thompson, *George Eliot and Italy*, pp. 1–3, 8, 16–17, 21–9, 69, 84–8.

¹⁴ David Carroll, *George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretations. A Reading of the Novels* (Cambridge 1992), pp. 168–71. Felicia Bonaparte, *The Triptych and the Cross. The Central Myths of George Eliot's Poetic Imagination* (New York 1979), pp. 28, 127–32. Ashton, *George Eliot*, p. 149.

ELIOT, CHRISTIANITY, AND THE MORAL VALUE OF THE PAST

As the biographies of Eliot attest, she abandoned the Christianity of her father and adopted an atheism founded in contemporary German Biblical criticism, particularly David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet* (1835–6), which, as Marian Evans, she translated as her first published work in 1846. This work, which set out to separate myth from fact, had a profound impact by the middle of the century. Strauss argued that no historical authority existed for believing that the teachings of the Gospels constituted truth. On the contrary, he developed the view that they represented another mythology, which revealed much about humanity. In 1851, Eliot became the partner of G. H. Lewes, writer and freethinker, who accompanied her on the second and third visits to Italy. Throughout this period of transformation in her life, which shocked many mid-Victorians, the trail-blazing Eliot still retained a profound interest in religion, though separating spirituality and belief from morality and right conduct.¹⁵

Both Lewes and Eliot were German speakers and great admirers of German literature and culture. They saw Germany as in the intellectual vanguard of Europe at the time, were well versed in German Romanticism, and also paid several visits to that country, where they became well known. In 1854, Eliot, following her success with Strauss, published her translation of Ludwig Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1853), which argued that fundamental Christian doctrines such as the Incarnation should be understood symbolically and as a myth. The influence of Feuerbach so pervaded *Romola* that critics commented ironically that Romola's final rejection of Savonarola's theology (though not the ethics) was the result of reading the German author. At the same time, Auguste Comte's ideas of the three linear stages of cultural development, influenced by Vico, permeated the novel. These culminated in the final stage of scientific religion, which eliminated the spirituality inherited from the preceding Christian era but sought to preserve a basis for morality.¹⁶

The scale and pace of change during the second half of the nineteenth century threw into question the value of the past—at a time of revived interest in it. Discussion focused not only on the nature of history but on its moral worth. Eliot saw her age left with the dilemma of how to reconsider the past in terms of its moral value for the present. She sought to resolve the problem of 'God is dead' with

¹⁵ Suzy Anger, 'George Eliot and Philosophy', in George Levine (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot* (Cambridge 2001), pp. 76–97. Levine, "'Romola' as Fable', pp. 81, 86–7.

¹⁶ See Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought, 1800–69* (Cambridge 1980), pp. 147–73. Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (1990 [1975]), pp. 54, 70, 169, points to the shattering effect of Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, critically examined on Friedrich Engels. For the impact of Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* on Richard Wagner, see Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London 2001), pp. 48–55. Ashton, *German Idea*, pp. 2–5, 24, 147–73, see pp. 170–1. Hao Li, *Memory and History in George Eliot. Transfiguring the Past* (London 2000), pp. 77, 95. John Stuart Mill introduced Comte into England.

an appeal to the moral inheritance of Europe's Classical and Christian pasts. In such a way, she aspired to fill the vacuum left by the subversion of spirituality and avoid the descent into nihilism. Eliot did not see rejection of Christianity as leading to a *tabula rasa*. On the contrary, she regarded human history as the underlying source for right conduct. Aware of the danger of the collapse of the moral order, she argued in *Romola* that human experience through time had value in shaping a morality independent of religious sanction or compulsion. Nevertheless, further scientific discoveries, technological developments, and the influence of Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics* (1850) and Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859)—both authors friends of the Lewes household—complicated the liberal humanist view of humanity. The absence of any moral order in the state of war in nature or the process of natural selection greatly troubled Eliot. She had one foot in the Romantic Movement and the other foot in the scientific movements of her time. Similarly, she had one foot in the Enlightenment's Classicism and the other in post-Christianity. These tensions surfaced in *Romola*. They provided, in fact, the motivation for writing it.¹⁷

CLASSICAL ALLUSIONS

The relation of this novel, however, is not simply between the nineteenth century and the fifteenth century, but also between both and the Classical world. This accounts for the deeply embedded Classical references in *Romola*. Allusions to Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, and Ovid, and the Cretan myth of the Labyrinth, gave the participants in the action a symbolic dimension, made clearer still by reference to Florentine painters such as Piero di Cosimo (1462–1521). Romola's Greek husband, Tito Melema, takes on the form of Bacchus and represents the Dionysian forces in the action, whereas Romola herself is sometimes Sophocles' Antigone and sometimes the mythical Ariadne, who threads the way through the Cretan labyrinth. At Tito's request, Piero paints a Bacchus and Ariadne triptych at the opening of the book—a pictorial statement of the novel's themes. It is Tito who wants Romola to be his adoring Ariadne, but the incongruity of their marriage and the unfolding action reveal Romola to be far more a Florentine Antigone. Romola also becomes the female equivalent of Virgil's invented Trojan and Roman hero, Aeneas, the discoverer and founder of a new land. The Christian themes of the reality of human suffering and the teachings of Christ are represented in Romola's brother, Dino. This young Dominican had repudiated his father's secular humanism and aligned with Savonarola's efforts at a reform not just of Florence but of the Church as a whole. Unfortunately, the references to Classical and Biblical sources,

¹⁷ See Bonaparte, *Triptych and the Cross*, pp. 15, 84, 117–18, 141–2; 'Although Eliot offered a very different solution, she anticipated Nietzsche in predicting that the death of God in the nineteenth century threatened to usher in the age of nihilism.' See also Peter Gay, *Schnitzler's Century. The Making of Middle-Class Culture, 1815–1914* (New York 2002), pp. 167–8, who suggests that 'obituaries to God' might have been premature, given religion's capacity for fresh recruitment. Frederick Karl, *George Eliot* (London 1995), p. 375. Li, *Memory and History*, pp. 8, 83–4, 92.

which make *Romola* so rich and rewarding a novel, are virtually lost in the present day's ignorance of both.¹⁸

Eliot had begun to react against the consequences of empiricism, since it implied moral neutrality in respect to the human race. Felicia Bonaparte argues that Eliot feared that empiricism threatened the loss of the allegorical and transcendent, and that this sense generated the symbolism so evident in *Romola*. The perceived need for a moral vision again provided Eliot's mainspring. In her alarmed glance at the future, she saw the dangers of science, secularism, utilitarianism, and materialism when stripped of moral restraint. *Romola* was her response to the dilemma. An experimental novel, which did not entirely succeed in its *fictional* intent, *Romola* was designed to be an analysis of the past and a guide for the future.¹⁹

IDEOLOGY AND SEXUALITY IN *ROMOLA*

The novel raises many questions about Eliot's perception of the nature of men and women and relations between the sexes. *Romola* is hemmed in throughout the book by males who strive to exert pressure on her, beginning with her father and ending with Savonarola. In most respects, she succumbs to them, although never absolutely and never definitively. The male, however, to whom she does not subject herself in the final instance, is her husband, Tito Melema. Their relationship is characterized by deception on the male side and conflict on the female side. Karl is correct in pointing out the elements in *Romola*'s psychology, which impel her to repress herself in sexual and intellectual terms, and attempt to transform herself into some other being who is utterly dedicated to humanitarian causes.²⁰ In this, she resembles the early Dorothea Brooke of *Middlemarch* and her choice of the dry Casaubon as a husband.

The personality of Tito presents further problems. In fact, Tito is a mystery man throughout the novel, and it remains unclear exactly what Eliot thought she was doing in portraying him in the way she does. He is, without doubt, the most interesting and the most real character in the book. There is also a strong element of

¹⁸ Greek references provide the underlying current. Eliot immersed herself in Greek, and read and discussed Homer and the dramatists. Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford 1980), pp. 112–32. Wiesenfarth, *Mythmaking*, pp. 149–51, 161. Bacchus symbolizes chaos, the irrational, the passions, and, in the novel, every degeneration from those, in contrast to civilization and moral uprightness. Eliot sees Bacchus and Tito as demons, destroyers of humanity. Carroll, *Conflict of Interpretations*, pp. 174–5. Bonaparte, *Triptych*, pp. 21, 62–4, 73, 141–2, 151, 244. Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 187. Li, *Memory and History*, p. 82. Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean* (Kansas City 2008 [2 vols., London 1885]) also combines and compares distinct periods: Classical Greece, the Rome of the Antonines, the Renaissance, and nineteenth-century England. Thompson, *George Eliot and Italy*, pp. 3–4, 82, points to the name 'Romola' as the feminine form of Romulus, the legendary founder of the city of Rome. In Eliot, the founder of the new Rome is no longer a man but a woman, compounded with 'Italia', the icon of the Risorgimento.

¹⁹ Bonaparte, *Triptych*, pp. 15, 50, 118. George Levine, "'Romola' as Fable', in Barbara Hardy (ed.), *Critical Essays on George Eliot* (London 1970), pp. 78–98; see pp. 81, 94. Ashton, *George Eliot*, p. 269: only 1,700 copies sold in the first year.

²⁰ Karl, *George Eliot*, pp. 361–4.

myth about him. He arrives from the sea and in disguise—in classic, historical-novel form—and apparently has no context at all. Tito in Florence, conscious of the power of his own beauty and charm, has chosen who he wants to be, leaving behind him his unknown and unspoken past. We then learn of his relationship with an older man, Baldassarre Calvo, who has discovered him (in several senses of the word), educated him, and prepared him for the world. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that the key to Tito lies in this relationship with Baldassarre. The nature of their relationship, however, remains tantalizingly undefined. In view of Tito's unscrupulous and public rejection of him as a young man on the rise in his twenties, this lack of definition is unsatisfactory, especially since the rejection forms part of the drama of the novel and points to its *dénouement*. In order to throw some light on this issue, we might inquire whether, at some stage, the relationship of Tito and Baldassarre had been homosexual, involving youthful dependency on Tito's part, while receiving protection and education, and intense love on Baldassarre's part. It certainly could look like that to a late twentieth or early twenty-first-century reader of the novel. Whether Eliot herself saw that, intended that but could not say it outright or drew back from the notion, are questions which can have no answer. Nevertheless, it is worth exploring this possibility as a means of gaining access to the novel's real intention.²¹

The explanation of Baldassarre's violent transformation from Greek scholar to raving avenger in the novel is unsatisfactory. Tito rejects and disowns him, as though he has never had any association with him whatever. If Baldassarre is in love with Tito (and has come to claim him back), then his madness and fearful dedication to revenge make sense. Without this, it does not, and hangs very strangely in the novel. In fact, as it stands, the accounts of Baldassarre's behaviour and reaction to Tito are just bizarre. The reader loses sympathy with him altogether, and the story of the relationship between the older and the younger man becomes an irritant. We might, however, speculate that an authorial failure has taken place on the level of psychology, where Eliot was normally strong. If not this, then the author may have taken the decision to downgrade this part of the story in favour of highlighting Romola.²²

Tito is a sexual being, who has persuaded Romola to fall for him, while he is in the process of seducing Tessa. The novel provides no exploration of the sexual

²¹ Eliot, *Romola*, p. 91, the author informs us, as though further to discredit Tito: 'Tito had an innate love of reticence—let us say a talent for it—which acted as other impulses do, without any conscious motive, and, like all people to whom concealment is easy, he would now and then conceal something which has little the nature of a secret as the fact that he had seen a flight of crows.' Wiesenfarth, *Mythmaking*, p. 151, identifies the crucial nature of the Baldassarre–Tito relationship for the development of the plot, but goes no further than to point to the former's indignation at being jettisoned by the latter. He does, however, draw attention to Tito's beauty, which disguises his cruelty.

²² Eliot, *Romola*, p. 209, as in the scene in the Piazza del Duomo, when the French prisoners escape, among them Baldassarre, who stumbles into Tito, and they recognize one another. 'The two men looked at each other, silent as death, Baldassarre, with dark fierceness and a tightening grip of the soiled worn hands on the velvet-clad arm; Tito, with cheeks and lips all bloodless, fascinated by terror. It seemed a long time to them—it was but a moment . . . "This is another escaped prisoner", said Lorenzo Tornabuoni. "Who is he, I wonder?" "Some madman surely", said Tito.' (Italics original.)

dimension of Tito's marriage to Romola, whose beauty—especially her fair hair, to which a Greek might be particularly attracted—Eliot repeatedly describes at this stage of the book. Is there no sexual relationship between this husband and wife? Is this why there are no children? Is Romola somehow non-sexual? Must the sex be left to Tessa, who does bear Tito a child?

Let us pursue this line of argument and see where it leads us. The novel begins strikingly with the discovery of the young stranger's sleeping body under a Loggia in central Florence. He is unshaven and dishevelled, with faded clothes, but on his finger he wears a valuable onyx ring, such as no vagabond would carry. The ring—the traditional symbol of binding together—is the motif which metaphorically opens this book. In a casual reading, it is easy to overlook this. But we should not, because this was the ring which Baldassarre gave in trust to Tito, who is this stranger, introduced in the novel before Romola, her father, her brother, and any of the other personalities in her particular world. The passer-by who discovers Tito's reclining figure and wakes him is the scrap dealer, Bratti, who has an eye for a bargain and rarely misses a good opportunity. He sees the ring, and decides to take Tito, who has been shipwrecked, under his care. The latter, anxious for a meal, asks about the possibility of pawning the ring—the first intimation that he might part with it in return for a sum of money. The author still has not told us how the stranger came upon the ring. Bratti takes him to the market, where he runs into his friends, the goldsmith in the company of a painter, and then Nello, the barber. While they are engaged in a tedious discussion about the recent death of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Medici ruler of Florence, Tito slips among the stalls in search of someone sufficiently amenable to provide him with a free breakfast, and discovers the responsive Tessa. Playing up to her, he is chased off by her mother, just as the other three in search of the stranger arrive on the scene, though not before Tito has stolen a kiss. Bratti, in the meantime, has described Tito as 'a pretty parrot', realized that he has knowledge of Greek, discovered that he is not 'a Hebrew from Spain or Naples', and surmised from the cut of his clothing that he must be Venetian. Nello, ever perceptive and as articulate as any erudite scholar, corrects him that the stranger is undoubtedly a Greek, and that this '*bello giovane*' has probably descended from Mount Olympus. Tito confirms that he is of Greek descent and was born in Bari, though brought up by an Italian.²³

Leaving Bratti to go about his business; Nello—a mine of information on Florence and Florentines—takes charge of Tito, and on the way to the barber's shop, draws his attention to the fine architecture of Florence, such as the Cathedral, Brunelleschi's dome, Giotto's tower, and the Baptistry. These, however, leave Tito indifferent, because of their Christian purpose.

I venture to tell you that your buildings smack too much of Christian barbarism for my taste. I have a shuddering sense of what there is inside—hideous smoked Madonnas; fleshless saints in mosaic, staring down idiotic astonishment and rebuke from the apse, skin-clad skeletons hanging on crosses, or stuck all over with arrows, or stretched on

²³ Eliot, *Romola*, pp. 9–31, 37.

gridirons; women and monks with heads aside in perpetual lamentation. I have seen enough of those wry-necked favourites of heaven at Constantinople.²⁴

When they enter the shop, we find Sandro—‘a solemn-looking, dark-eyed youth’—who appears to be the barber’s assistant. Nello’s shop, we then see, has a back room, separated by a latticed screen, and then another, walled enclosure with a stone statue of Hermes in it. The stranger seems instinctively to understand what all this means, and comments that it must be the meeting place for ‘eruditi’. Nello, describing him to his face as a ‘pretty youngster’, explains that even Christian Greeks have a reputation in Italy for deviousness. He duly shows him around, having announced his intention to transform him into a ‘courtier’ and polished scholar like the beautiful Pico de Mirandola. After Tito has been shaved, leaving a fashionable small beard, and treated in the meantime to a discussion on philosophy in which he affirms his support for ‘the wise philosophy of Epicurus’, Nello hands him the mirror. Tito, studying himself, comments:

‘It seems to me . . . that you have taken away some of my capital with your razor—I mean a year or two of age, which might have won me more credit for my learning. Under the inspection of a patron whose vision has grown somewhat dim, I shall have a perilous resemblance to a maiden of eighteen in the disguise of hose and jerkin.’ ‘Not at all,’ said Nello, proceeding to clip the two extravagant curls, ‘your proportions are not those of a maiden.’

Nello is looking at Tito, leaning against the chair, with ‘contemplative admiration’. Tito takes this opportunity to raise the matter of the ring again.²⁵

At that point a goldsmith and a painter—old friends of Nello—enter the shop. The latter, who turns out to be Piero di Cosimo, is immediately struck by Tito’s features and, before he can stop himself, asks him:

‘Young man, I am painting a picture of Sinon deceiving old Priam, and I should be glad of your face for my Sinon, if you’d give me a sitting.’ Tito Melema started and looked round with a pale astonishment in his face, as if at a sudden accusation; but Nello left him no time to feel at a loss for answer: ‘Piero,’ said the barber, ‘thou art the most extraordinary compound of humours and fancies ever packed into a human skin. What trick wilt thou play with the fine visage of this young scholar to make it suit thy traitor? Ask him rather to turn his eyes upward, and thou may’st make a St. Sebastian of him that would draw troops of devout women, or, if thou art in a classical vein, put myrtle about his curls and make him a young Bacchus, or say rather a Phoebus Apollo, or his face is as warm and bright as a summer morning; it made me his friend in the space of a “Credo”²⁶

The author, however, has lain her poison and, thereby, destroyed Tito’s credibility for the rest of the novel—and we are only at page 40 out of a total of 548 pages. What was her purpose in this? In the first place, some explanation is needed. Her intended Victorian readers, steeped in Homer and Virgil, would have known what Sinon did, and duly been appalled that Eliot’s handsome potential hero should inadvertently be revealed as the lowest of the low. The insinuation that Tito

²⁴ Eliot, *Romola*, pp. 31–2.

²⁵ Eliot, *Romola*, pp. 35–6.

²⁶ Eliot, *Romola*, pp. 39–41.

resembled the Sinon, who posing as a Greek friend of the Trojans, persuaded them to open the gates of Troy after the ten-year siege and bring in the departed Greeks' humble gift of the Trojan Horse, is particularly vicious. Eliot would have known this. It loads everything against Tito for the rest of the novel. Instead of a freely roving character in a drama, she transforms him into a paper symbol of creeping evil, fit only for moral and physical destruction at the end of the book. Why has she done this, when, by so doing, she undermines the credibility of her own story? There can be only one explanation: because she wants to use him as the yardstick against which Romola should be judged.

Romola, however, as we quickly see, is uninteresting, stilted, and high-minded. She is never as convincing a character as Tito, even though his author has placed him under such a handicap. The suspicion arises that Eliot realized to her consternation that Tito was the liveliest character in her book, its pole of attraction. Romola was, after all, supposed to be Eliot's beacon for the future of civilization as the personification of her new religion of humanity, the female saviour leading to the foundation of a new Rome. Eliot's intention in placing Tito in close proximity to her is evidently to contrast the emptiness and vileness of human beings without a moral sense to those invested with a high moral purpose. The same contrast applied metaphorically to Florence, after it rejected Savonarola's cleansing reforms. It will sink into oblivion and moral turpitude.²⁷

Let us imagine the novel Eliot might have written instead of the laborious *Romola*. It might have been entitled, *Tito Melema*, in the vein of Eliot's earlier novels, *Adam Bede* and *Silas Marner*, named after individual men. This would have been a far more interesting, controversial, and successful book than the turgid *Romola*. Without the ideological superstructure of the Redemptrix, Romola de' Bardi, the novel would have been set free. It is, in fact, the ideology which weighs the story down and prevents it from being a success as an historical novel. The ideology entails the long section of Romola's association with Savonarola, about whom Eliot cannot make up her mind whether to regard him as good or bad. In the Tito novel, Savonarola might have become the contrast to the spirit of the Renaissance, to free inquiry and intellectual progress, the representative of grim and narrow fundamentalism, brought alive, however, by his own weaknesses and ambitions.

The impression on reading through *Romola* several times—and we should never forget that this was the novel which Eliot considered to be her best—is that its author was horrified at her ability to paint an exciting picture of Tito and at her failure to spring Romola into life. After all, the character and experience of Romola was designed to signify the purpose of this extraordinary literary labour. Instead of scrapping the focus on Romola, which her literary skills might have suggested to her, Eliot drove on with her uninteresting heroine, because she saw her personality and sufferings as the means of human salvation. Accordingly, Romola as character

²⁷ Wiesenfarth, *Mythmaking*, pp. 151, 166–8. Thompson, *George Eliot and Italy*, p. 75, Romola's 'religion of humanity becomes the underlying civilizing force'.

and symbol carried a great deal of weight on her shoulders. In so doing, she becomes the deadweight of the novel, which sinks as a literary work.²⁸

It is not the history which sinks *Romola* but what the author has done to her book. *Tito Melema*, in fact, might have become a very successful historical novel, infused with an innovative psychological and sexual depth. The objection that Eliot could not have written this, since we are not yet in the age of D. H. Lawrence, cannot have foundation. She it was who had chosen to live publicly with a man to whom she was not married; she had rejected Christianity; she was familiar with the Classics; both she and Lewes knew German literature intimately from the time of Goethe. Furthermore, she had friends in the British community in Florence who might not have found the sexual climate of mid-Victorian England congenial. Eliot, in her own life, had already defied English puritanism.

Eliot herself ruins the novel *Romola* by a type of ideological mutilation. Had she listened to her literary instincts, as she should have done, rather than her ideological intentions, she would have seen clearly the fictional potential of *Tito Melema* in her historical novel. The possibility exists, however, that in her capacity as a perceptive writer she did see this, but recoiled from it, horrified at where her literary talents were leading her. *Tito Melema* was definitely not the novel she was intending to write. Such a work would have conflicted with her moral purpose. I suspect that the crux of the problem with *Romola*—the novel she actually did write—lies exactly there. Eliot would not allow her literary instincts to override her ideological objective. For that reason, she repressed them. Accordingly, she expends her energies playing up the tedious *Romola* and stacks as many cards as she can against Tito. Instead, she might still have used Florentine issues as the context for a pleasurable examination of Tito's ambiguities and equivocations, as a literary craftsman, exploring at the same time as much of his sexuality, particularly in respect of Baldassarre, as she felt at that time she could.

The portrayal of the death of Tito and Baldassarre in the Arno, drowned while fighting but locked in each other's arms, makes an ironic comment on what might once have been a homosexual love. If this is so, then it raises another issue, perhaps borne out by Tito's behaviour in Florence, that, before he arrives in the book, he had been either feigning love for a Baldassarre, who genuinely loved him, or waiting for the moment to escape from it. Whatever the case, Tito would have been an opportunist, who marries Romola in order to promote his own interest, and allows himself to become the father of Tessa's child, because she is beautiful, gullible, and, in effect, happens to be available at the time. Eliot makes a point in the novel of showing, in symbolic terms, that Tito was opposed to both Dante and Savonarola.²⁹ Thompson argues that both Tito's moral descent into deception and adultery and the river symbolism of his death in the Arno with Baldassarre were prefigured

²⁸ Eliot, *Romola*, pp. 365–7; and pp. 471–5, 518–30, Romola's meditation portrayed by her author.

²⁹ Thompson, *George Eliot and Italy*, p. 76.

in Dante's *Inferno*. In such a way, Eliot sought to transpose Dante into her novel without frequently referring to him.³⁰

WAR AND RELIGION IN FLAUBERT'S CARTHAGINIAN NOVEL

From the opening pages, it becomes obvious that this novel is as much about religion as it is about war. The erotic theme, which underlies the action, links both these subjects, and gives the novel its plot. The three central figures—Salammbo, Mâtho and Hamilcar—are invested with the attributes of the gods, or 'Baals', using the Phoenician and Syrian term, which recurs in the book. Five of the Baals are mentioned by name. Two are principal antagonists in the novel. Tanit, the goddess of the moon, rain, and running water, is a variant of the Syriac Astarte or the Hellenic Aphrodite. Flaubert's Moloch, god of the sun, war, and fire, represents the opposite moral pole. They struggle, through their fictionalized representatives on earth, for supremacy, and, thereby, control of human destinies. The fate of Carthage hangs between them. The initial encounter between Salammbo and Mâtho takes place in the first chapter and sets the course of their relationship throughout the novel. Salammbo appears on the terrace of the temple of Tanit in torchlight, with her entourage of chanting priests to take part in the evening ritual of honouring the Moon Goddess, to whom, as a virgin, she has dedicated herself. This scene is set against the unruly banquet offered to the mercenaries by the Council in the absent Hamilcar's gardens. It soon degenerates into drunkenness and destruction, which foreshadows the impending violence. Mâtho sees her and is instantly possessed, as though by the goddess. However, she is Hamilcar's daughter, a priestess, and, like Marie, when she sets eyes on 'Le Gars' for the first time, in Balzac's *Les Chouans*, she is on the opposite side of the political divide. The classic love theme of the historical novel again enters here, and right at the beginning.³¹

From this first moment until the last page of the book, these two reluctant lovers are irrevocably bound to one another, just as in Balzac, and in a radically different context. Doom hangs over them, much as it will over Tristan and Isolde in

³⁰ Thompson, *George Eliot and Italy*, pp. 90–3, 98.

³¹ Gustave Flaubert, *Salammbo* (Paris, Flammarion, 2001), ch. 1, pp. 68–74. She is chanting in an old Canaanite language, which the 'barbarians' cannot understand. See Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess. Evolution of an Image* (London 1993 [1991]), pp. 44, 359, 458–60. In Babylon in the second century BC, Astarte was portrayed with a crescent moon on her head. She was also widely venerated in Canaan, as shown by evidence from Ugarit in the fifteenth century BC, and Sidon, on the Phoenician coast, a thousand years later. She was also identified with the Babylonian Ishtar. For the transference of Phoenician gods to Carthage and the west, see Maria Eugenia Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West. Politics, Colonies and Trade* (Cambridge 1996 [Barcelona 1987]), pp. 126–32, 273, where Tanit is described as 'the principal deity of the Carthaginian pantheon'. This suggests that in Flaubert, the cult of Moloch challenged the supremacy of Tanit. Twentieth-century historical evidence, however, has demonstrated that no such god existed in Carthage. The earlier error derived from a misapplication of the term 'molk', which, before the first century AD, meant the child-sacrifice itself. See Jérôme Carcopano, *Les bonnes leçons* (Paris 1968), pp. 200–6.

Wagner's opera first performed two years later in Munich. Salammbô has observed the almost naked Mâtho, a powerfully-built Libyan with short, curly hair, and, involuntarily, she approaches him and offers him a cup, from which he drinks. An impudent Gaul, watching this, comments to him that she has just offered him her bed. This scene, however, has also been observed by Narr'Havas, who had been kept as a princely hostage in Hamilcar's house:

Six months of his stay there had passed without his ever having seen Salammbô; and now, seated on his heels, his beard lowered toward the ends of his javelins, he studied her, his nostrils flared like those of a leopard crouching among the bamboos.

Incensed by the behaviour of Mâtho, he hurls a javelin at him, which pierces his arm, and then he disappears in the ensuing commotion.³²

Thereafter, Salammbô is torn between her unquenchable desire for Mâtho and her duty as a priestess of Tanit. In chapter two, the effect she has on Mâtho is equally devastating. She unwittingly transforms this dedicated soldier into a weeping child. Neither of them can throw off their desire for one another; appeals to the gods prove to be of no avail. Mâtho goes into the desert to beg them to cure the sickness thrust upon him by love. They are each left to deal with the problem themselves and with the consequences of the gods' indifference to their pleas. Mâtho is lying in his tent naked, face downwards on a lion skin, when the escaped slave, Spendius, enters, concerned at the paralysis of the great commander. He tries to explain to him what he feels after seeing her:

I want her. I need her. I die with desire for her. At the thought of clasping her, the fury of my joy carries me away, and, yet, I hate her, Spendius. I want to strike her! What can I do? I want to sell myself so that I can become her slave. You yourself were there! You were able to see. Speak to me about her! Isn't it true that every night she goes up to the terrace of her palace? Oh, the stones must tremble beneath her sandals and the stars lean forward to look at her!

He tosses about like a wounded bull, imitates her voice, plucking at an imaginary lyre, and then makes himself even worse by drinking too much wine.³³

The action develops against the background of rising indignation among the mercenaries towards the Carthaginian élite, which has no intention of paying them what they have earned. At the same time, the Libyan villages had been ruined by Carthaginian taxation, and even the border zone of Hellenized Cyrene is in revolt. Unpaid wine and olive merchants are also joining the rebellion. Deciding to take Carthage by siege, the mercenaries march on the city—Mâtho seeing this as the means of breaking down the wall which separates him from Salammbô, as though it were a rival lover. At this point, Spendius proposes the daring scheme of the two of them slipping into the city in the night by means of the aqueduct which supplies it. When they are in the temple area of Megara and in sight of the black temple of

³² Dexter Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty. Power and Politics in the Western Mediterranean, 247–183 BC* (London 2003), pp. 72–4.

³³ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, pp. 89–91 (my translation). Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty*, pp. 90–1.

Tanit, Spendius tells a shocked Mâtho that the plan is to steal 'the mysterious veil which fell from heaven and covers the goddess'. He explains that the Carthaginians believe that their strength derives from its possession and that the gods reside where their attributes are to be found. When Mâtho refuses to be party to 'this execrable crime', Spendius manages to convince him that this is the way to avenge himself on the goddess who has possessed him. Once the veil is stolen, however, Mâtho cannot resist the desire to break into Hamilcar's palace, where Salammbô will be sleeping. They see each other in a tense scene and he tells her that he loves her. Then, the two mercenaries escape with the veil of Tanit back to the rebel camp, leaving Salammbô in a state of intense religious crisis and in danger. The populace blames her for depriving the city of the goddess's power. They howl beneath her window like dogs at the moon, as Flaubert puts it, and call for her to be sacrificed to the Baals.³⁴

THE RECOVERY OF THE SACRED VEIL

The theft of the veil of Tanit conveys violation of the inner sanctum of a feminine divinity. Inevitably, Hamilcar has heard about this action, including the lurid stories of a handsome mercenary in his daughter's bedroom. In religious terms, Salammbô knows that she will be required to subject herself to a reciprocal violation, in order to retrieve it. The will of the gods, explained by the eunuch priest, Schahabirim, dictates her every action in these two chapters. Her ritual purification requires consulting the mood of the temple python as an augury for the future. This involves a naked embrace with the black reptile in the moonlight, after it has shed its old skin and appears upright like a shining sword out of its scabbard. In an evocative passage, the night she decides to go to the mercenaries' camp, the sacred doves of Tanit take flight from her gardens on their migration to the shrine of Venus at Eryx (Érice) in north-western Sicily. As they gather momentum across the waves, they fly into a blood-red sunset until they disappear from sight. Salammbô, despondent, reads her own fate in those symbols.³⁵

She chooses the day after the full moon for her journey, travelling across an apocalyptic landscape of burned villages and carcasses, the work of Moloch. When she arrives at the camp the next night, the moon is shining behind her. The sight of the flickering firebrands and camp fires tells her that she has entered the territory of Moloch, and she is afraid.³⁶ Salammbô enters Mâtho's tent, dressed as if for a wedding. We know that she is frightened of both Mâtho and Moloch, whom at this point he appears to represent, approaching her in a red cloak. When she enters Mâtho's tent, she first sees his sword out of its scabbard shining in the light, and

³⁴ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, ch. 5, pp. 132–47; ch. 9, pp. 242–3. Green, *Salammbô*, p. 55, points out that the penetration of the city and the theft of the veil are fictions inserted within historical facts.

³⁵ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, ch. 10, p. 252. See Baring and Cashford, *Myth of the Goddess*, p. 359, for Aphrodite, to whom the dove was sacred. Arthur Hamilton, *Sources of the Religious Element in Flaubert's Salammbô* (Baltimore and Paris 1917), vii.

³⁶ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, ch. 11, pp. 259–62.

then his bed. As she strips the veils from her face and he breathes in her perfume, her beauty overcomes him and he compares her to Tanit, as though he has submitted to the goddess in her guise. Thunder rumbles in the distance. Sweat runs over his chest.

Salammbô, used to eunuchs, let herself sink back under the power of this man . . . she saw only Mâtho's eyeballs, like two burning coals in the night . . . she fully sensed a fatality enfold her, touching her at a supreme moment . . . Salammbô was overcome by a softness in which she lost all consciousness of herself. Something at the same time intimate and superior, a command of the Gods forcing her to abandon herself there; clouds lifted her; swooning, she lay back on the lion's skin on the bed.

She saw Mâtho's figure over her breast. 'Moloch, you're burning me up!'—and the soldier's kisses, more devouring than flames, leapt through her: she felt as though a storm carried her away, captured by the force of the sun.³⁷

This is a moment of highly charged eroticism, to which Flaubert gives less attention than to the descriptions of the city of Carthage. An explanation may lie in the author's intention to transcend realism, as Eliot also sought to do in *Romola*. Flaubert saw the Salammbô–Mâtho relationship in terms of symbolism rather than romance. Religious constraints and motifs dominate this scene in the tent, often conveyed through the use of colour: white for Tanit, and red for Moloch.³⁸

At that point in historical terms, the defection of the Numidian ruler from the rebel side to the Carthaginian tipped the scales. The defeat of Spendius's forces, however, did not bring the rebellion to an end. The historical narrative then falls on Mathos (or other variants of the name), who had moved to Tunis and was blockading Hippou Acra, to the west of Carthage. When the rebels tortured to death Carthaginian prisoners, Hamilcar abandoned his policy of clemency towards them and unleashed a war of ferocious vengeance. That, in turn, refuelled the revolt through the year, 239. Hamilcar, whose election by the army to supreme command was ratified by the Senate, operated against Mâtho's supply lines. In the novel, this enables Hamilcar to pin him down in Tunis. After trapping the forces of Antharitus and Spendius in a narrow pass, known as the Defile of the Axe, Hamilcar, in concert with Narr'Havas's cavalry, slaughters many of them, leaving the rest to die trapped in the defile, and finally crucifies ten of the leaders, who had surrendered to him. Moving back to the historical events, this violence stimulated the rebels to make a last stand under Mathos, forcing Hamilcar on to the defensive in 238. Mathos, however, was captured in Libya and taken to Carthage to face ritual execution. According to the Greek historian Polybius, the revolt lasted three

³⁷ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, pp. 265–8 (my translation). For an Art Nouveau representation of the python embrace, see the decorated mosaic by Victor Prouvé, Camille Martin, and René Wiener, 'Reliure *Salammbô*' [1893], which also shows Moloch as a ram amid the flames, in the Musée de l'École de Nancy.

³⁸ Diana Knight, *Flaubert's Characters. The Language of Illusion* (Cambridge 1985), pp. 21–3, emphasizes Flaubert's intention that the reader should see the action in the novel as in a dream or mirage. Everything, including the main characters are 'rendered opaque', making the novel 'dense and impenetrable'. Raymond Dugan, 'La couleur et le faux dynamisme dans *Salammbô*', in Charles Carlut, *Essais sur Flaubert. En l'honneur du professeur Don Demorest* (Paris 1979), pp. 331–44.

years and four months, into early 237. Most of these events form parts of Flaubert's novel, although the invented story of Salammbô and 'Mâtho' is interwoven with them.³⁹

The use of history in the novel has given rise to much discussion. Flaubert insisted that he created an *image* of Carthage, not an historical reconstruction. He still relied on Polybius, who was writing about the rise of Rome to the status of prime power in the Mediterranean, for most of his historical information. Polybius was sympathetic to Hamilcar, and this reappears to a certain extent in the novel. Nevertheless, Flaubert gave the priority to artistic imagination. Salammbô does not appear in Polybius at all. She is Flaubert's feminine principle (modelled on a dancing-girl encountered in Upper Egypt), in what Levin describes as 'the ambiance of brawling masculinity', which characterizes this novel.⁴⁰

Why did Flaubert decide to write a Carthaginian novel, when he had little taste for the French historical novel of the first half of the century, and why did he expend such great energy in so doing? Carthage—effectively obliterated and discredited by the vengeful Romans in 146 BC, at the end of the Third Punic War—represented the third part of the triangle of influences, including Greece and Rome, which contributed to the formation of the western Mediterranean world. In historical studies, the process of recovering the story of Carthage, the 'missing link', began in the 1850s. If Carthage was to be the subject, why not some familiar episode in the Punic Wars, all three won by Rome? Why should it have been a revolt by mercenaries after the end of the First Punic War (264–41 BC)? Hamilcar Barca, who becomes the principal Carthaginian commander, is not even the central character, even though he brutally extinguishes the revolt. It could even be argued that, despite the book's title, there is no central character. The focus is, at first reading, the conflict between the armies.

Sainte-Beuve, France's leading critic, highlighted the narrative difficulty of having individual experiences submerged beneath group conflicts. In his view the novel's two central problems were the overwhelming description of historical place and conflict, and the tenuous nature of the love theme—and, indeed, of all the individual characters in the book. When he addressed Sainte-Beuve's criticism that the novel was far too long, Flaubert responded that 'there should have been a hundred pages more devoted to Salammbô alone'. In the published text, the author fails to treat the two 'lovers' with any dramatic centrality or psychological depth. In these extra pages, the author might have explored Salammbô's religious identity

³⁹ Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Punic Wars* (London 2000), pp. 133–6, referring to '20,000 well-equipped veteran soldiers' from the Sicilian campaign, later swollen by the peasant rebels of Libya, ground down by wartime taxation and conscription.

⁴⁰ Gustave Flaubert, 'Voyage en Orient (1849–51)', in *Voyages* (Paris 1998), pp. 305–665, see pp. 359–63, for the visit to the house of Ruchiouk-Hâinem in Esneh, not far from Aswan. Francis Steegmuller, *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert. Selected, Edited and Translated by Francis Steegmuller*, Vols. 1 and 2 (1830–1880) (London 2001), pp. 378–88. Timothy E. Duff, *The Greek and Roman Historians* (London/Bristol 2003), pp. 56–60. Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists* (New York 1963), pp. 279–80.

in subjective terms and developed her sexual attraction, in conflict with religious duty and political station, to the powerfully built mercenary commander.⁴¹

POWER POLITICS IN *SALAMMBÔ*

Flaubert felt the influence of the two historians, Michelet and Thierry. He learned about Carthage from Michelet's early study of Roman history, where he found an account of the mercenaries' rebellion of 241–37 BC. 'Qart-hadasht' (the New City) had been a Phoenician foundation from Tyre, but had grown so independent of its original base that by the fifth century BC Carthage took over many earlier Phoenician foundations and had subordinate foundations of its own along the North African coast and beyond the Pillars of Hercules. Many Phoenician positions on the west Sicilian, Libyan, and Tunisian coasts became major Carthaginian commercial cities. The Carthaginians waged repeated wars in Sicily against Greek states, particularly Syracuse, in the eastern sector of the island. In the western Mediterranean, Rome and Carthage, before the outbreak of war, had each demarcated their respective spheres of interest.⁴²

As becomes clear in Flaubert's novel, Carthaginian power rested not only on its commerce and fleet, but on unstable alliances with North African Berber peoples either side of the city—particularly the Numidians in the west and the Libyans in the east. These peoples were brought into the Punic orbit and, in turn, modified the original Semitic component. The powerful and rich coastal city's neighbours and subordinates remained constantly resentful, and their cooperation often proved tenuous. The ethno-linguistic problems of the Carthaginian orbit receive prominence in the novel. In the case of the mercenaries, neither the Libyans, who form their majority, nor the Greeks and Gauls, also significant components, understand Punic. When Hanno, one of two *suffets* or elected leaders of the city, goes out to explain to the mercenaries' Captains of the Phalanx why Carthage cannot pay them, almost no one understands him, because he speaks in Punic, even though the language of command in the army was Greek.⁴³

Flaubert emphasizes in the novel the opportunism of the Numidians, who were allies of Carthage when it suited them, and opponents if they thought they could gain from hostility. Their ruler, the historical Nava-Havas (or Narr'Havas, to use Flaubert's name for him) plays an ambivalent role with the mercenary rebels in *Salammbô*. A prince who becomes king in the course of the novel, he is portrayed as

⁴¹ Steegmuller, *Letters*, Flaubert to Charles Sainte-Beuve, 23–24 December 1862, pp. 378–88, see p. 387. Sainte-Beuve, a defender of *Madame Bovary*, was a personal friend.

⁴² Jules Michelet, *Histoire romaine* [Paris 1831], in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris 1972), vol. II (1828–31), pp. 315–665: chapter iv, pp. 449–57, reads like a précis for the future novel, though without any mention of Salammbô. François Decret, *Carthage ou l'Empire de la mer* (Paris 1977). J. E. Lazenby, *The First Punic War* (London 1996), pp. 11–36, 143–59. Adrian Goldsworthy, *Punic Wars*, pp. 65–133. Richard Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed. The Rise and Fall of an Ancient Civilization* (London 2010), pp. 69–72, 193–217.

⁴³ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, ch. 2, pp. 94–5.

divided between suspicion that the Carthaginians intend to eat up his kingdom and a desire to ingratiate himself with them by contributing to the defeat of the mercenaries he has been assisting. Narr'Havas finally and decisively throws in his lot with Hamilcar, as the tide turns against the mercenaries, with the promised reward of marriage to Salammbô.⁴⁴

As in most historical novels, *Salammbô* contains a complex mixture of invented and real characters. Hamilcar did offer a daughter, some time around the year 240 BC, to a Numidian prince, whom Dexter Hoyos names Naravas and Claire Addison Nar-el-haouah. Hamilcar may have been born by 275 BC and came from a wealthy landed family, since wealth was the criterion for public office in Carthage. From 247 until 241 he was commander in Sicily during the First Punic War. In the novel his enemy is Hanno, whom he blames for deliberately costing him the war. In fact, the novel places great emphasis on the political struggles in Carthage between the mercantile oligarchy, which dominates the Senate and the Grand Council, and the Barca family, whose main representative, Hamilcar, is an ambitious and capable but frustrated and angry soldier. The vicious Hanno, who had a strong base in domestic politics, suspects him of monarchist tendencies. Flaubert, in his novel, paints an atrocious picture of Hanno, slowly eaten away by leprosy.⁴⁵

Defeat in Sicily by 241 obliged the Carthaginians, burdened by a heavy indemnity to Rome, to evacuate 20,000 mercenaries, whom they could not pay, back to the mainland. Under the leadership of Spendius—a Greek from Campania, son of a prostitute, escaped slave of the Romans, and a major character in the novel—and the red-haired Autharitus—a Gaul—the unpaid mercenaries besiege the strongly fortified city. Carthage soon finds itself, after naval and military defeat by Rome, fighting for its existence on the home ground and without its commander, Hamilcar, the naval *suffete* and man-god figure.⁴⁶

In historical terms, Hanno's rout by the mercenaries at Utica left the Senate and Council no other recourse but to recall their enemy, Hamilcar, in 240, after a period of eclipse following the loss of Sicily.⁴⁷ Flaubert describes in ritualistic terms the return of Hamilcar to Carthage in a long chapter which ends the first part of the novel. As the sun is rising, his trireme is sighted by the observer of the movements of the stars on the roof of the temple of Eshmun, skimming like a bird above the

⁴⁴ Note also the ambivalent relationship of Jugurtha, King of Numidia, with the Romans fifty years after the fall of Carthage, as portrayed in Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum* [c.44–40 B.C.], *The Jugurthine War* (London 1963).

⁴⁵ Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty*, pp. 21–8, 34.

⁴⁶ Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty*, pp. 36–44.

⁴⁷ Polybius, *The Histories* [orig. 40 books], vol. I of six volumes (Cambridge, MA and London 2005 [1922]), Book I, pp. 175–239. Polybius opens this section by singling out Hamilcar Barca's leading role in the First Punic War. It finishes with the death of Mathos, the Carthaginian recovery of Libya, and the cession of Sardinia to Rome, in order to avoid a resumption of the previous war. P. B. Fay and A. Coleman, *Sources and Structure of Flaubert's Salammbô* (Baltimore and Paris 1914), pp. 1–3, 11–35, conclude that Flaubert, who had not read Polybius in the original Greek, did follow closely his text, while making significant changes and elaborations for artistic reasons. For the mercenaries, see Lazenby, *First Punic War*, pp. 171–6.

water and with a horse sculpted at the prow. The trumpet announces this news to the city, and the inhabitants come out of their homes to watch. Hamilcar is seen wearing a red robe over his armour, his thick, black beard over his chest. He is a priest of Moloch, and red is the god's colour. The people also call him 'the eye of Khamon'—another of the gods—and their deliverer from the follies of the rich, who only want to see him killed. The trireme passes under the high vault which separates the naval base, a circular expanse of water with mooring bays, from the rest of the city. At the centre of this lagoon stands the palace of the *Suffete* of the Sea. The base is infused with the spirit of the god, Ammon, and his ram's-horn symbol is everywhere.⁴⁸

Hamilcar finds everything in decay, defence neglected by the oligarchs. He goes to the temple of Moloch, its walls like a 'monstrous tomb'. Inside, the walls are painted red. Hamilcar's red cloak also has Spartan connotations, since this was the cloak the Spartan phalanxes wore in battle. His return to Carthage symbolizes the installation of a Spartan-type régime in the city, following the laxity of the oligarchs. They are contemptuously described by the author as eating and laughing as they recline on their terraces above the city roofs like huge sharks sporting themselves in the sea.⁴⁹

Hamilcar's first achievement is the reconquest of the Libyan hinterland. Rome, meanwhile, seeks to profit from the difficulties of Carthage by obliging the latter to cede Sardinia in 238 under threat of war. Yet, although Rome and Syracuse are rivals of Carthage, neither is anxious to witness the victory of mercenaries and the overthrow of the balance of power. Accordingly, in both history and the novel, both powers indirectly assist the Carthaginians by reciprocating Hamilcar's exchange of prisoners from the First Punic War. The return of these soldiers increases his forces in the campaign against the mercenaries, heavily outnumbered as the Carthaginians are.⁵⁰

INTERPRETATIONS OF A DIFFICULT NOVEL

Anne Green argues that

Flaubert's treatment of social, political and mythical elements reveals that he chose a distant period and an alien civilization to examine fundamental problems about the relationship between history and fiction, and about the even more basic problem of the way in which we perceive and make sense of the past, distant or not.⁵¹

Beneath the structure of this symbolism, Green argues that *Salammbô* was 'a novel that consistently touched upon problems affecting the society in which [Flaubert]

⁴⁸ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, ch. 7, pp. 169–71.

⁴⁹ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, ch. 7, pp. 171–2. D. L. Demorest, *L'Expression figurée et symbolique dans l'œuvre de Gustave Flaubert* (Geneva 1977 [Paris 1931]), pp. 500–1.

⁵⁰ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, ch. 14, p. 336.

⁵¹ Green, *Salammbô*, pp. 3, 24–5, 96.

was writing'. She draws attention to Flaubert's preoccupation with mass political behaviour as a result of the 1848 Revolutions.

The Carthaginian novel was written at a time when his imagination was working within the context of 1848.

Flaubert's attitude to the Revolution in France was ambiguous, unable to decide whether it represented the upsurge of barbarism or a catharsis. Partly for this reason and partly for preoccupation with personal affairs, Flaubert's digestion of the implications of 1848 was delayed.⁵²

The novel has presented immense difficulties for its interpreters. Edward Said draws attention to Flaubert's fascination with legendary female figures—Isis, Salammbô, Cleopatra, and Salome. His story 'Herodias' [1877] included this latter figure. Flaubert repeatedly worked into his fiction mythologies derived from the Ancient World, but used them to serve his own literary purpose. For that reason, Said regards him as independent from what he refers to as the official project of Orientalism—in his view, a Western European construction of an 'East', misrepresented as inferior through association with eroticism and violence. Said describes Flaubert's travels in the Near East as 'eminently corporeal', and argues that, like so many other Europeans, he associated the Orient with sex. Flaubert's project, however, was subversive, directed against the encumbrance of sex in the bourgeois society of his time.⁵³ Lisa Lowe approaches the novel in part from the context of a 'French tradition of orientalism', which included North Africa. Lowe argues, however, that gender and class should be given a more distinctive prominence in exposing the multifarious levels of attribution and domination than they are in Said's *Orientalism*.⁵⁴

Green and Claire Addison emphasize the coded nature of the novel, arguing that it has implicit references to the France of the Revolutions of 1789 and 1848 and the regimes of Napoleon I and Napoleon III. This aspect tends to make the book even more opaque.⁵⁵ Myra Jehlen's study focuses largely on the language used by Flaubert in this novel—particularly in its detailed descriptions of atrocities and sadistic actions. There is no suggestion that this was sensationalist: in fact, their length and depth and the perfection of expression elongate and elaborate the actions to the extent of merging them into parallel descriptions of landscape,

⁵² Green, *Salammbô*, pp. 23, 58–9, 61, 73–5.

⁵³ Edward Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London 1995: [1978]), pp. 180–1, 184–5, 187–8, 190. Gustave Flaubert, *Trois Contes* (Paris 1973), pp. 131–86. Although Flaubert in *Salammbô* used material from his travels to Egypt and Palestine, third-century BC Carthage was western rather than eastern, the main challenger to Rome.

⁵⁴ Lisa Lowe, 'Nationalism and Exoticism: Nineteenth-Century Others in Flaubert's *Salammbô* and *L'Éducation Sentimentale*', in Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo (eds), *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature. Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism* (Philadelphia 1991), pp. 213–42; pp. 214–16, 220–8.

⁵⁵ Claire Addison, *Where Flaubert Lies. Chronology, Mythology and History* (Cambridge 2006 [1996]), pp. 88–129.

structures, garments, and jewellery. The atrocities become stylized, and the effect is less a numbing in terms of shock than of impotent acceptance.⁵⁶

Most readers find the horrible nature of the violence in the book disturbing, and, again, this raises the question of what Flaubert thought he was doing when he wrote it. Its exaggerated nature, given artistic shape by the author's technique, takes this novel well beyond realism. This is not a realistic war novel at all. It is something else altogether. In my view, Flaubert has a moral intent in describing vileness in the way he does. First, it is to show that war is not romantic or heroic or regenerating, but arbitrary, filthy, and devoid of any morality; and second, it is to demonstrate that war is the work of human beings and thereby a reflection of their degenerate instincts. The world of *Salammbô* is a world without salvation, and the absent Romans are as much a part of that undiscriminating barbarity as the Carthaginians and their mercenaries in revolt.

For both Green and Addison, the personality of Napoleon I becomes central to the interpretation of the novel. Since it was conceived, written, and published in the middle part of the reign of Napoleon III, they view the novel as a product of its time, despite the epic treatment and the Carthaginian theme. The characters in the novel, both historical and fictional, suggest political figures of the Orleans Monarchy and Second Republic, in Green, and to the Consulate and First Empire, in Addison. The latter argues that the mercenary theme attracted Flaubert, because of the possibilities it presented for writing about the Napoleonic experience in Europe.⁵⁷ In my own understanding of the novel, developed so far in this chapter, I have not given preference to this perspective and do not find this particular approach rewarding. Even so, that it should be advanced indicates the depth of the problems involved in interpreting Flaubert's novel.

I find more helpful than these supposed parallels, the use which Flaubert makes of the North African background. This enables him to comment indirectly on French military and colonizing activity there. At the time of writing, forms of ancient and modern colonization were being compared in France, accompanied by discussion of racial inequalities and national character, which originated partly from the theme of ethnicity given prominence in the historiography of Thierry. Flaubert points to the barbarism lying below the surface in civilized cultures. The Carthaginians quickly turn to barbarism in order to defeat 'the barbarians', as they describe the mercenaries, who were technically their former employees. In the novel, the mercenaries also descend into barbarity, each reciprocating the other. Reports of rival atrocities committed in North Africa in Flaubert's own lifetime exposed a similar collapse of moral sensibilities. When *Salammbô* was published, Napoleon III's France had begun another imperial venture, this time in Mexico, revealing further barbarity behind the civilized façade. In Flaubert's view, France proved to be morally little different from the extra-European peoples it purported

⁵⁶ Myra Jehlen, *Five Fictions in Search of Truth* (Princeton and Oxford 2008), pp. 13–46.

⁵⁷ Green, *Salammbô*, pp. 61–70, 75–8, 81–3. Addison, *Where Flaubert Lies*, pp. 98–9, 102–4, 121–2.

to civilize. Galdós would draw similar conclusions with regard to the Peninsular War and the Carlist Wars in Spain.⁵⁸

Strange as *Salammbô* may seem to readers at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the novel did not stand out as a peculiarity in its day. Hector Berlioz's epic opera, *Les Troyens* (1856–63), was composed at the same time. In fact, Berlioz corresponded with Flaubert and consulted him on significant points concerning the Carthaginian context. Berlioz's opera might be described as 'historical music'. The relationship between the two pieces of work—Flaubert's novel and Berlioz's opera—is striking, especially since Berlioz, who greatly admired Flaubert's book, at one time considered setting *Salammbô* to music. Similarly, Delacroix's North African paintings would have been familiar to contemporaries.⁵⁹

Berlioz's opera, however, was primarily concerned not with the Carthaginians and their problems in North Africa but with the Italian destiny of Aeneas and his band of Trojan fugitives. The two decisive events in the opera are the destruction of Troy by European-based Greeks, and the rejection of Carthage by the Italian-bound fugitives. Rome is the unequivocal projection. This might fancifully be described as 'une nouvelle Troie', but Rome was a European city. Flaubert hardly refers to the Romans, even though he belonged to the same cultural tradition as Berlioz, in which nineteenth-century France identified itself with either the Roman Republic or the Roman Empire.⁶⁰

Flaubert adopts a cyclical view of history, common among the Classical historians and philosophers. As Sainte-Beuve objected, the characters in the novel are not individuals in the nineteenth-century sense but representative figures who recur in age after age to enact the same things. They are 'types', who reappear with every generation and perform their pre-ordained role according to the different circumstances prevailing in each epoch. This is the sense in which we have to understand *Salammbô*, Mâtho, Hamilcar, and Narr'Havas. Public and private aspects of their lives become inextricably bound together in the course of their enactment of their destinies.⁶¹

This view of the novel carries conviction, especially if we bear in mind the ritualistic manner in which it is written. Flaubert, however, is such an observant writer that even his formalistic portrayal of the characters in this novel leaves the reader with a strong desire to know more about them as human beings, even though this humanity is not the entire explanation of their nature. The author's

⁵⁸ Green, *Salammbô*, pp. 26–7, 41, 66–71, 78, 84, 90–3. See also, Galdós, *Zumalacárregui* (Madrid 2002 [1898]), p. 113, on the savage beneath the civilized man.

⁵⁹ Steegmuller, *Letters*, pp. 377–8; Berlioz to Flaubert, Paris 4 November 1862; Berlioz to Flaubert, Paris 6 July 1862. *Delacroix in Morocco*: Exhibition (Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris), September 1994–January 1995 (Paris–New York 1994). Beth S. Wright (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* (Cambridge 2001), pp. 73–87.

⁶⁰ The editor's first sentence in the preamble to Michelet, *Histoire romaine*, p. 317, is 'Rome est, pour Michelet, une seconde patrie.' H. Mainwaring Dunstan, *Life and Letters of Berlioz*, 2 vols. (London 1882), II, *Private Letters to M. Humbert Ferrand*: Berlioz to Ferrand, Paris, 19 November 1858, pp. 221–4; pp. 260–2, Berlioz to Ferrand, Paris, 8 July 1863, he went to consult Flaubert about Carthaginian costumes.

⁶¹ Addison, *Where Flaubert Lies*, pp. 105, 129.

imagery, however, goes a long way to explaining the character and function of his characters in the narrative. Demorest, for instance, points to the frequency of animal comparisons. Spendius is like a jackal; Mâtho resembles a lion; Narr'Havas is a leopard; Autharitus, searching for some way out of the Defile of the Axe, is like a bear leaving his cave in the springtime to see whether the snows have melted. War elephants crush soldiers in armour as though they are snails inside their shells. Tunis, mired at the edge of the water, jealously watches Carthage like a venomous beast. Then there are the counterparts: the crows circling over the dead form the counterpart to the doves of Tanit. The images not only give an impression of form or denote movement, but also suggest emotional reactions or historical situations.⁶²

ANOTHER HUNDRED PAGES?

We can understand Sainte-Beuve's sense of frustration. What more could Flaubert have told us about Salammbô? She is almost lost as a human person among the monumentality. Green argues that he transposed the Cretan legend of Minos, which in a different way had also attracted Eliot, on to Carthage by turning Salammbô into a version of Pasiphae, daughter of Helios, the sun god and parallel to Hamilcar, who under Neptune's spell falls in love with a bull. Pasiphae was also a moon goddess. The Cretan legend had, in fact, Phoenician origins. Pasiphae, like Salammbô, by her allure alone, is able to subdue wild beasts. Mâtho is captured in a net like an animal and then ritually slaughtered by the Carthaginians. In this way, real historical events are subsumed into myth. All of this was lost on Lukács, who was wedded to the idea of the realist novel and saw Flaubert's novel as artificial—a fictional manifestation of the decline of the revolutionary bourgeoisie of the pre-1848 era.⁶³

Yet Flaubert cannot help failing to show Salammbô's vulnerability and sensitivity. She is not, even given the novel as it stands, a shadow or just a symbol, but a real woman torn by an impossible love. She is obliged by religious belief to do things which she does not want to do. She senses that, if she acts according to religious mandate, she will destroy herself. Her passionate desire for Mâtho compounds this awful dilemma. She loves him so much that she cannot even bring herself to kill him after he had taken her in his tent, and is lying, himself now vulnerable, asleep after giving her back the sacred veil. Salammbô has sacrificed herself as a priestess and virgin for the honour of her city and people, knowing that she has no future in either religion or in womanhood, since the man she loves will almost inevitably be killed.⁶⁴

⁶² Demorest, *L'Expression figurée*, pp. 484–6, 501, 508, 515.

⁶³ Green, *Salammbô*, pp. 102–4, 108. Baring and Cashford, *Myth of the Goddess*, pp. 137–44, for the myth of the Labyrinth of Knossos and the terrible Minotaur who dwelt in it. This section discusses the bull motif and the ritual of bull sacrifice.

⁶⁴ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, p. 101.

We should also like to know a great deal more about Narr'Havas, who is potentially one of most interesting figures in the novel, but who is presented to the reader only in sketches and suggestions. From what we know of Flaubert as a man and as a writer, it is unlikely that he would have recoiled from Narr'Havas in the way that I have argued Eliot did from Tito. If the novel had, in fact, been a hundred pages longer, as he discussed in his reply to Sainte-Beuve, then perhaps Narr'Havas would have been drawn more fully. From the text we have, we do know definitely that Salammbô does not regard him to be the right man for her. She has, in any case, seen and experienced the man who is. Yet Narr'Havas clearly possesses a power to attract, which Flaubert also leaves in no doubt. He attracts the attention of both Hamilcar and Mâtho, and the writer has without doubt seen the attraction of his creation as well. For Salammbô, however, these qualities appear to be negative attributes, when he visits her, as his future bride, in Carthage after the annihilation of the mercenaries at the Defile of the Axe. She receives him in the gardens and listens to his news of the victory:

Narr'Havas remained silent and Salammbô watched him without replying. He was wearing a linen robe with flowers painted on it and a gold fringe at the bottom. Two silver arrows held his braided hair in place at the side of his ears. His right hand rested on a pike staff decorated with a mixture of silver and gold and clusters of down.

As she studied him, a multitude of vague thoughts absorbed her. This young man with the soft voice and feminine waist captivated her eyes by the grace of his person and seemed to her like an elder sister sent to her by the Baals for her protection. The memory of Mâtho gripped her: she could not resist the desire to know what had become of him.

Narr'Havas replied that the Carthaginians were advancing towards Tunis, with the object of seizing him. While he was weighing up their chances of success and Mâtho's weakness, an extraordinary hope seemed to gladden her. Her lips were trembling and she was gasping for breath. When Narr'Havas swore to her that he would kill Mâtho with his own hand, she cried out, 'Yes, kill him! He deserves to die!'

The Numidian expressed his earnest desire to bring about this death, because, once the war was over, she would become his wife. Salammbô shuddered and hung her head.⁶⁵

Narr'Havas, who without doubt knows about her visit to Mâtho's tent and what was likely to have happened there, does not seem in the least bothered by the fact that his future wife has been stripped of her virginity by his enemy (and formerly). While the first scene of their encounter in chapter one tells us that he regards her as a beautiful and desirable woman, the text nowhere indicates that he is in love with her. This suggests that his main reason for wanting her as his wife is political: the tactical alliance with Hamilcar. Addison, in pursuit of her diachronic and fictional/factual interchanges of personality, goes even further than this. In her transposition of Hamilcar as Napoleon and Narr'Havas as Tsar Alexander, she reminds us of Napoleon's comment that if the charming Alexander, who seems as pliant as a Byzantine Greek, were a woman, he would take him as his mistress.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, p. 353 (my translation).

⁶⁶ Addison, *Where Flaubert Lies*, p. 106.

In this crucial meeting between Salammbô and Narr'Havas, there is almost no direct speech. It is as though they are not speaking to each other at all; rather, that their thoughts are juxtaposed by the author and mediated to us by that method. This is even more so in the case of the relationship between Salammbô and Mâtho. They have no intimate conversations about themselves or their love or hatred of one another in the entire book. We know something of what they think about each other and about their specific roles in life, because the writer has access to their minds and can transfer this knowledge to us through his text. All of this reinforces their remoteness not only from each other but also from the reader. Whether this presents a serious problem of communication and comprehension ultimately depends on who is reading the book and for what purpose. It needs to be repeated that Flaubert conceives of his principal characters as human actors of a divine struggle on a cosmological level. Gods presumably do not speak to each other intimately, or, if they do, it is not scriptural to reveal it to mortals.⁶⁷

Two remaining problems emerge from the novel. In the first place, it does not seem as though the mercenaries have any alternative ideology to that of the Carthaginian state. Mâtho, the Libyan, subscribes to the same theology as the Punic masters, even though both he and the mercenaries are of different ethnic and cultural origins to them. No alternative or rival myth sustains them, even though none of their leaders come from what might be called the officer caste. On the contrary, Mâtho becomes in the novel another manifestation of Moloch, overpowered by Tanit through his infatuation for Salammbô. The second problem concerns the human personality of Salammbô. Is she pregnant with Mâtho's child? The matter of time lapse is also significant here. Several military campaigns have been taking place since the tent scene, which would lead to the supposition that she is either carrying his child (and knows it) or has already given birth to it. If there was a child, had she hidden it, as Hamilcar concealed the existence of his son, Hannibal? How would all of this be hidden from Narr'Havas? These imponderables understandably lead to a different kind of novel, in which the human predicament takes precedence over cosmology. Salammbô dies, when Mâtho is killed, rather as Isolde will expire over the dead body of Tristan in the opera. Her death comes abruptly in the novel: there is no time for an emotional *Liebestod*, such as Isolde sings. This abruptness almost conceals the problems I have identified above, and it prevents the subsequent appearance of Salammbô as the Mother-Goddess.

The expiration of the leading female figure, the victory of the Carthaginians, the destruction of the mercenaries, and the ritual death of Mâtho might suggest that the feminine principle, represented in the novel by Tanit/Salammbô, is finally defeated. This seems to be Levin's conclusion when he puts forward the view that Flaubert, witnessing the collapse of moral authority during the period in which he

⁶⁷ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, pp. 352–3. Levin, *Gates of Horn*, p. 277: '...sentiments tend to be externalized into gestures, rites or feats of prowess'; 'the subordination of human feelings to the larger pictorial composition' has priority.

lived, portrays in his novel the world of murderous nihilism to come.⁶⁸ This ignores the significance of the storm which follows the horrifying scene of child sacrifices to Moloch, designed to assuage the god's anger with Carthage and persuade him to grant the city victory over all its enemies. The burning temple is drenched in rain, which can only come from Tanit. In other words, the old conflict between the two forces continues and will go on after the death of Salammbô, because it is in the nature of the cosmos for this to be so. However, neither the victory of the one nor the other is assured. This, it seems to me, is Flaubert's point of view on the subject.⁶⁹

Even though we may accept that the shadow of Napoleon I still hung over France and Europe in mid-century, and also that Flaubert's mind was on the more recent 1848 Revolution when he conceived *Salammbô*, the novel is less a code for recent and contemporary politics than a reflection of the mid-century's renewed interest in myth and mythology. This, in turn, may have been another symptom of the recession of Christianity from leading intellectual and literary circles across Europe. It may well reflect the delayed influence of Vico's distinction between cultures and of his belief that myths and rituals were valid means of gaining access to their character. In that sense, revived interest in ancient religion and cosmology pointed to disillusion with both the scientific explanations of man and the universe provided by reason and the providential explanation provided by revealed religion.⁷⁰

Romola presents as many problems to the contemporary reader—perhaps more—as it did to Victorian readers. It highlights all the pitfalls of the historical novel as a genre. Eliot sought to transform the historical novel into a medium for the elaboration of a new myth capable of providing guidance for a post-Classical and post-Christian world. Her vision was no longer of the humanity of the divine but of the divinity of humanity. Despite its literary drawbacks, this purpose of the novel is perfectly clear. Wiesenfarth's assessment explains this very well:

[The] conflict between responsible and irresponsible is articulated in an organized moral structure in *Romola*. Though the novel has many weaknesses, a weakness in moral vision is not one of them.⁷¹

For this reason, the novel deserves to occupy a major place in nineteenth-century European fiction, and it is a pity that its neglect has vitiated a complete view of Eliot's intellectual, as well as fictional, dilemmas in this book. *Romola*, moreover, forms part of a philosophical and literary context, as its use of history and employment of mythology demonstrated. Understandably, none of this necessarily contributes to its success as a work of fiction. For that reason, Eliot's greatest accomplishment in that field will continue to be seen as *Middlemarch*, in which the

⁶⁸ By the end of *Salammbô*, Tanit has been pushed aside by Moloch, and the novel 'subsides into nihilistic defeat'. Levin, *Gates of Horn*, pp. 280–1.

⁶⁹ Flaubert, *Salammbô*, chs. 13–14, pp. 328–34.

⁷⁰ Burrow, *Crisis of Reason*, pp. 136–43, 208–13.

⁷¹ Wiesenfarth, *Mythmaking*, p. 159.

environment, characters, and speech will be more familiar to English readers. *Romola*, furthermore, demonstrated the serious purpose to which the historical novel could be put. If Eliot did not succeed in her aim, there was no reason to suppose that other writers, choosing this genre as a medium and unleashing their literary capabilities, might not succeed thereafter.

Eliot in *Romola* had taken on board the course of human experience through historical time, in order to derive from it the ethical principles in accordance with which life should be shaped in the future. That is why she regarded *Romola* as her most important book. Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, set in the reign of the philosopher Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161–80), by contrast, focused less on society than on the progress of the anti-hero's soul towards the vision of the celestial city. This Marius sees in the early Christian community, though without necessarily being a Christian himself. Pater's influences go back to Goethe, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*, Madame de Staël's writings on literature, and to Carlyle. Evidently, Pater intended to write a trilogy of historical novels set in different periods of cultural transformation, but abandoned the second one, set in late sixteenth-century France. *Marius* sought to give narrative expression to a myth for the later nineteenth century drawn from the experience of the most vibrant cultures of the past and expressed in a prose style reminiscent of the Roman Classics. Pater's focus on the idea of regeneration through art led him to examine the reasons for cultural birth and rebirth.⁷²

Flaubert offered the public a novel with an ugly rejection of any romanticizing of the past. He did not set this book among the Greek Philosophers or Roman jurists beloved of the Enlightenment. The focus was on neither Greece nor Rome, but on Carthage—a mercantile state with a Phoenician religious tradition. The subversive nature of Flaubert's work could not have been lost on either the heirs of the Enlightenment or the protagonists of the Romantic Movement.

This novel portrays the hopelessness of taking the Ancient World as a guide to conduct for the contemporary and future world. Flaubert's vision of humanity allows no possibility of Eliot's collective memory as a basis for morality. On the contrary, humanity's ingrained (and unredeemed) violence and the insecurity of all knowledge, as portrayed in this novel, frustrate the establishment of a new moral order.

⁷² Gerald C. Monsman, *Pater's Portraits. Mythic Pattern in the Fiction of Walter Pater* (Baltimore 1967), pp. 26, 66–74, 82, 139–40, 160. William F. Shuter, *Rereading Walter Pater* (Cambridge 1997), p. 2. Conlon, *French Tradition*, pp. 48–9, 62, 77, 84, 90, 98.

Benito Pérez Galdós and the novel of Spanish national identity

Before the 1820s, Spain had not been self-consciously a nation but an imperial monarchy. The kingdoms of the Spanish peninsula, which had only been institutionally united under Philip V (1700–46), formed part of this broader Hispanic Monarchy. When Liberals in the first constitutional period of 1810–14 attempted to transform the Monarchy into a representative system under the Cádiz Constitution of 1812, the deputies in the Cortes described the entire Monarchy as ‘the nation’. By 1826, however, this Monarchy had already lost its American continental territories, leaving only Cuba and Puerto Rico, the Philippines, a series of Pacific islands, and a few positions in Africa as its remaining overseas possessions. The Spain of the later years of Ferdinand VII (1808–33) was a metropolis, which no longer possessed a large empire. Henceforth, Spain, building on what the eighteenth-century Bourbons had begun, had to view itself as a distinct nation.¹

I have already commented on the predominance of Castilian in both the peninsula and the empire. The Bourbons sought to accentuate this and complement administrative centralization with cultural harmonization. They intended the *Real Academia Española* (1713) and the *Real Academia de la Historia* (1738) to contribute to this goal. The latter institution developed a periodization of peninsular history which placed the origins of ‘Spain’ in the Visigothic Kingdom of c.480–711, bypassed the Moorish occupation after 711, and saw in the small Christian kingdoms of the north, beginning with Asturias, the development of ‘Spanish’ identity. The Catholic religion was seen as inseparable from this. In a similar vein, the *Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* (1752), named after the Castilian king St. Ferdinand III, who took Seville from the Moors in 1246, encouraged historical themes dating back to times of the Visigoths and the *Reconquista* from the Moors. Both the Enlightenment and the Liberal régime shared this concept of history, and both regarded the entire Monarchy as the ‘nation’.²

The decades of internal strife from 1808 to 1840, which accompanied and followed the collapse of the idea of the Greater Nation, delayed the process of

¹ For a discussion of prevailing themes in Spanish history, see J. N. Hillgarth, ‘Spanish Historiography and Iberian Reality’, *History and Theory*, 24, no. i (1985), pp. 22–43.

² E. Inman Fox, *La invención de España: nacionalismo liberal e identidad nacional* (Madrid 1997), pp. 11–13. José Álvarez Junco, *Mater dolorosa: la idea de España en el siglo XIX* (Madrid 2001), pp. 77–85, 93, 249.

Spanish national self-definition. A literature and historiography comparable to those of the rest of Western Europe developed slowly in Spain. When the country did catch up, after mid-century, the achievements were outstanding. They proved to be worthy successors to the achievements of the Golden Age. Despite early beginnings, the historical novel, dealing with moral and political questions relating to contemporary issues, did not emerge in Spain until Galdós first approached the genre in the early 1870s.³

HISTORICAL DRAMA AND THE SLOW DECLINE OF CLASSICISM

As in the rest of Europe, historical drama in Spain provided the bridge between the Enlightenment and Romanticism in the years from, roughly, 1765 to 1825. In Spain, however, the adoption of medieval themes and the search for the origin of perceived loss of liberties came earlier than elsewhere. The explanation may lie in growing criticism of the reassertion of royal power from the 1760s, followed by the breakdown of the old régime during the 1790s and 1800s, under the pressure of warfare and financial crisis. Spanish writers and political figures sought to found a new legitimacy in the perception of the medieval liberties lost to royal power. From the 1840s, the new Liberal historiography would play a leading role in rooting constitutional government in 'medieval liberties'.⁴

Four authors who would play great significance in Spanish political and intellectual life wrote plays on medieval themes in this period, although generally in the Neo-Classical vein. Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744–1811)—a key figure of the later Enlightenment and a minister of Charles IV—wrote 'Pelayo' between 1789 and 1792, as Bourbon France crumbled beneath the impact of revolution. This play dealt with the resistance to the advancing Moors, symbols of tyranny, and the foundation of the Christian Kingdom of Asturias in the early eighth century by the heir to the last Visigothic king. Jovellanos was not alone among contemporary thinkers in seeing the origin of modern liberties in the Visigothic era and the early Christian kingdoms. Manuel Josef Quintana (1772–1857)—already an established poet and playwright before 1808, as well as leading Liberal in the 1810s and 1820s—continued to write in the classical vein into the early 1820s. Quintana also wrote a 'Pelayo'—a play performed during the second constitutional period of 1820–23. An historical tragedy about Roger de Flor was lost in the Peninsular War (1808–14). Alberto Lista's (1775–1848) 'Roger de Flor' remained incomplete.

³ See Mónica Bolufer, 'Poisonous plants or schools of virtue? The second "rise" of the novel in eighteenth-century Spain', in Mander, *Remapping the Rise*, pp. 199–214. Josep Fontana, *De en medio del tiempo. La segunda restauración española, 1823–1834* (Barcelona 2006), presents new insights on the grim post-imperial period.

⁴ E. Allison Peers, *A History of the Romantic Movement in Spain*, 2 vols. (New York and London 1964 [Cambridge 1940]), Appendix II, pp. 382–4, lists the plays: for example, *La conquista de Valencia por el Rey D. Jaime* [Valencia 1762], and *Las Vísperas sicilianas* [Valencia 1767]. The First Crusade became the subject of a play in Madrid in 1791.

Lista, an early sceptic of Romantic influences from abroad, remained an exponent of classical values through most of the 1820s. Francisco Martínez de la Rosa (1787–1862), a leading Liberal of the early 1820s and chief minister in the mid-1830s, focused on the defeat of the revolt of the Castilian towns against the first Habsburg monarch in 1521 in *The Widow of Padilla*, performed during the 1820–3 period. This play reinforced the view, already common in Enlightened circles in the previous century, that Spain's moral and political decline began with the loss of its traditional liberties to the foreign dynasty. When these writers spoke of 'Spain' they took Castile to represent the whole. They searched in these medieval conflicts for a legal alternative both to the absolutism of their own past monarchs and to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire in their own time.⁵

This neo-medievalism, however, was not shared by all the dramatists of the era. Leandro Fernández Moratín (1760–1828), the most successful in the period before 1808, always adopted a lighter tone, and, while still a Neo-Classical in form, introduced love themes more consonant with changing tastes. Nor was the medievalism single-minded. Renewed reverence for the Golden Age complemented it. The championship of Calderón by Antonio Alcalá Galiano (1789–1865) was not only an example of this, but also in tune with the spirit of the times. Spanish Golden Age drama, like Shakespeare, had not adhered to the classical unities as prescribed in seventeenth-century France.⁶

Many Spanish writers shared a revulsion to what they felt were the excesses of French historical drama as penned by Hugo or Dumas Senior—Lista foremost among them during the 1830s. This coincided with a widespread desire to throw off both French influences and Neo-Classical rigidities.⁷

ROMANTICISM IN SPAIN

Although the researches of Spanish intellectuals into medieval constitutional antecedents preceded the Romantic era, Romanticism helped stimulate further interest in medieval Spain, and disseminated this to a wider audience. Historical fiction appeared relatively early in Spain. The first novel seems to have been Rafael Humara's *Ramiro, Conde de Lucena* [1823]—a romance set in thirteenth-century Seville, though with scant historical content. Valentín de Llanos, another pioneer, wrote two historical novels in London in 1825 and 1826—neither of them set in the Middle Ages but in recent times. Anticipating Galdós fifty years later, Llanos

⁵ Manuel Moreno Alonso, *Historiografía romántica española. Introducción al estudio de la Historia en el siglo XIX* (Seville 1979), pp. 24–7, 79, 83–5. Moreno includes the satirist José de Cadalso (1741–82) among these precursors. Diego Martínez Torró, *El alba del romanticismo español* (Seville 1993), pp. 15, 59, 86–8, 92–5, 130, 173–232, sees the role of the people in such plays as indicative of the more democratic tone of the period. See also José Luis Cano, *Heterodoxos y prerrrománticos* (Madrid 2007 [1974]), pp. 11–48, 111–25, 138–42, 151–63. Derek Flitter, *Spanish Romantic literary theory and criticism* (Cambridge 2006 [1992]), pp. 23–4, 42.

⁶ Flitter, *Spanish Romantic Theory*, p. 51.

⁷ Flitter, *Spanish Romantic Theory*, pp. 77, 79.

glorified the heroic popular resistance to the French in 1808 and expressed distrust of the upper classes. The medieval theme reappeared with Estanislao de Cosca Vayo, whose *La conquista de Valencia por el Cid* [1831] was intended to be the first novel of a series portraying customs through the ages. These novels, however, did not initiate a new tradition. *Los bandos de Castilla, o el Caballero del Cisne* [1830], (*The Factions of Castile, or The Knight of the Swan*), by Ramón López Soler (1806–36), followed Scott's model but inserted a Byronic introspection and contradiction in the youthful hero. This novel took place within the context of rivalries between noble factions at the court of John II (1406–54) during the supremacy of Álvaro de Luna. Both López Soler and Mariano José de Larra (1809–37), the early Romantic poet who was also a dramatist and journalist, saw love as a destructive passion. Larra's historical novel, *El doncel de don Enrique el Doliente*, sub-titled 'A Knightly Tale set in the Fifteenth Century', in 1834, was also the subject matter of his play, *Macías*. Larra's transposition shows once again the close relation between historical drama and historical novel. In Paris in the following year, Larra met Dumas and Hugo, favourably reviewing *Notre-Dame de Paris* in 1837. Although Larra had grown up in France, he also sought to break with French classical models, and increasingly identified with Romantic ideas from the late 1820s.⁸

Alcalá Galiano, one of the leading Liberals, pointed in 1834 to a similar division into rival bands of 'Classicists' and 'Romantics' to that of France in the 1820s, each disputing the leadership of the literary world. The Romantics similarly proclaimed themselves to be a new phenomenon. Even so, the 'pre-Romantics' of the later eighteenth century and first years of the nineteenth century, as in other countries, had prepared the ground. Romanticism had already arrived in Spain before the return of the Liberal exiles in 1833–4. In any case, it had deep roots in the Spanish Enlightenment and in the works of Jovellanos in particular. The influence of Herder and the Schlegels was already apparent in the 1820s in the writings of López Soler, who, from 1833, edited the Barcelona newspaper, *El Vapor*. Derek Flitter argues for the resurgence of this historicist or organicist strain from the 1840s, arguing that it overcame the alternative liberal strain and became the dominant one in Spain. Spanish Romanticism, particularly in the 1840s, stressed the relation between literature and society, expressing the need for moral improvement from a Christian standpoint. Vico exercised a strong influence on this generation.⁹

⁸ Russell P. Sebold, *La novela romántica en España. Entre libros de caballería y novela moderna* (Salamanca 2002), pp. 71–88, 117–39. For Larra's two works, see the Editorial Porrúa edition (Mexico City 1984), and for his other writings as 'Fígaro' see Editorial Porrúa (Mexico City 2004 [1968]). Flitter, *Spanish Romantic Theory*, pp. 57–9.

⁹ Ricardo Navas-Ruiz, *El romanticismo español. Historia y crítica* (Salamanca 1970), pp. 14–15, sees a thematic link between Romanticism and the Baroque in their common pessimism, consciousness of the passage of time, emphasis on contrasts, predilection for landscapes with ruins, religiosity, and rupture with Classical rules. Philip W. Silver, *Ruin and Restitution. Reinterpreting Romanticism in Spain* (Liverpool/Vanderbilt 1997), pp. xii–xviii, 3–4, 8, 11–13, 17–24, 49–50, 52, 70–1, points to the Romantics' common veneration for the writers of the Golden Age and the persistence of eighteenth-century aesthetics in their works. Larra was a good example of this. Flitter, *Spanish Romantic Theory*,

The novelist and diplomat Juan Valera (1824–1905), looking backward from 1854, described Romanticism as a ‘happy literary revolution’, which had emancipated Spanish culture from the influence of French Neo-Classicism and enabled the renewal of its former vigour and originality in the tradition of the Golden Age. He commented, however, that German Romanticism had brought the Middle Ages out of the tomb and rearmed Catholic warriors in their struggle against what they saw as pagan France. Nevertheless, Valera attributed the new optimism in Spain to the reopening of the country to outside ideas, following the ten years of isolation and repression under Ferdinand VII. After the king’s death, Valera saw a new liberty in the country, despite the outbreak of the seven-year long Carlist War. His was essentially a liberal interpretation of the origins of Romanticism in Spain, and while not entirely incorrect, laid stress on the contribution of the émigrés—a point of contention among contemporary literary historians. Even so, the high points of Spanish Romanticism in both literature and historiography did lie in the period 1840–70.¹⁰

Valera thought that ‘Classicists’ had reason to mock the puerility and exaggerated sentiments of early Romantic writers, who, often leading extravagant lives, dressed in distinctive clothes and waited for inspiration to guide them. They saw themselves as literary apostles, speaking only of their own emotions (‘this autobiographical mania’) and their passion for life. At the same time, he criticized their glorification of criminals and their claim that society stifled heroism.¹¹

Spanish Romanticism excelled in poetry. Valera identified three great Romantic poets—the Duque de Rivas (1791–1865), José Zorilla (1817–93), and José de Espronceda (1808–42)—in this early period. Rivas pushed aside French Classicism in favour of a return to the later medieval Spanish *romances* or ballads, which had been a form of popular entertainment in the fifteenth century and then flourished at court in the following two centuries. Rivas’s *Romances históricos* [1841] presented episodes from the stories of controversial figures in Spanish history, such as Philip II, in verse form, seizing upon their sinister characteristics. These ballads, however, made no attempt to give any interpretation to the course of history, even though they kept historical themes before the reading public.¹²

pp. 60–4, 74–5, 115–16. Derek Flitter, *Spanish Romanticism and the Use of History. Ideology and the Historical Imagination* (London and Leiden 2006), pp. 4–6, 22, 27–8, 32, 134–7, 146. The argument for the triumph of a neo-Catholic conservative Romanticism—which also criticizes the position of a variety of Spanish literary historians such as Martínez Torró, Moreno Alonso, and Navas Ruiz—seems to be overstated.

¹⁰ Juan Valera, ‘Del Romanticismo en España y de Espronceda, [Madrid, 1854]’ in *Obras Completas*, 3 vols. (Madrid 1958–61), Tomo II (1961), pp. 7–19. Juan Luis Alborg, *Historia de la literatura española*, tomo IV, *El Romanticismo* (Madrid 1980), pp. 11–71.

¹¹ Valera, ‘Del Romanticismo’. Silver, *Ruin and Restitution*, pp. 13, 18, 52–3, 71, 73–98, comments on early German influences, particularly in poetry, and on differentiation from French Romantics. Spanish Romantics understandably drew deeply from Iberian sources.

¹² Navas-Ruiz, *El romanticismo español*, p. 64. Moreno Alonso, *Historiografía romántica*, p. 75. The work of Gustavo Aldolfo Bécquer (1836–70), in the second generation, should be added to this group of Romantic poets and prose-writers.

Scott's *Ivanhoe* had been translated into Spanish in 1825 by a London liberal exile, J. J. de Mora, rather than in Spain. *The Talisman*, however, came out in the following year in Spanish in Barcelona. The vogue for Scott in Spain started almost at the point it began to wane in France. The Spanish novel, however, had been in decay since the later seventeenth century. Time would tell whether Romanticism or the reaction to it would stimulate a revival. Nevertheless, further Spanish historical novels began to appear during the 1830s, more or less in imitation of Scott's literary medievalism, though taken from episodes in Spanish history. This cannot be explained simply by the novelty of an unexpected form of fiction arriving in a Spain only recently freed from tyranny. Popular demand for the historical novel responded to a need among the educated classes to rediscover history, in order to explain how Spain had become as it was. In the short run, the early historical novel would not be capable of supplying the answers to this question. It did, however, contribute to the resumption of the later eighteenth-century attempts to assert the necessity of critical history founded in original sources. In mid-nineteenth-century Spain, as elsewhere, the development of a modern historiography prepared the foundations for the serious historical novel comparable to those which had appeared elsewhere in Western Europe from the mid-1810s.¹³

After c.1840, then, the process of constructing a national literature began in earnest. Legends gathered in Rivas's *Romances históricos* provided some of the source materials. This work was soon followed by the first publications in the series known as *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles* in 1846 (and still in existence), which brought Spain's older literature to the notice of the reading public. The *Biblioteca* made Golden Age writers available to a relatively wide audience. As such, it became 'one of the most significant cultural institutions of the century'. Eamonn Rodgers makes the important point that

... the bulk of this rediscovered and revitalised national literature was, in one sense or another, historical fiction. That is to say that the view of history was mediated through a literary process of stylization and idealization. This was arguably true even of chronicles, and still more so of ballads, *leyendas* and plays.¹⁴

Although Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* [1827] appeared in Spanish translation in 1833, it does not seem to have inspired followers, perhaps because of the different political and religious issues in Spain. In 1834, Martínez de la Rosa commented that in terms of historical fiction, Spain remained a European backwater. The future of the historical novel would depend on the parallel development of

¹³ Moreno Alonso, *Historiografía romántica*, pp. 107–8. Silver, *Ruin and Restitution*, pp. 11–13, 16, 30, 70–1 sees two phases: an 'historical Romanticism' (1830s to 1844)—conservative, Catholic, looking to the Hispanic past—and a 'national Romanticism' (1844–68)—closely tied to the moderate Liberal project of a centralized state with restricted liberties and fear of Carlism, radical movements, and popular revolution. Both had a Castilian–Andalusian character, inclined to diminish the contribution of the Catalan–Valencian side of the peninsula.

¹⁴ Eamonn Rodgers, 'Nationalism and the Vogue of the Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Spain,' in Paul S. N. Russell-Gebbett (ed.), *Belfast Spanish and Portuguese Papers* (Belfast 1979), pp. 203–25, see pp. 208–9.

historiography, interest in which it significantly stimulated. The mature historical novel had to wait until the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁵

Although there is much to disagree with in Allison Peers' earlier assessment of Spanish Romanticism, he does make the important point that

... the early historical novel in Spain was an almost complete failure. It is an interesting fact that the renaissance of prose fiction in Spain, which began somewhat hesitatingly about half way through the nineteenth century and has given us three-quarters of a century of brilliance, should for about twenty years have left the historical severely alone. Not until Spanish fiction was clearly set once more upon the road to success did the historical element re-invade it.¹⁶

The choice of this word 're-invade'—which might easily be overlooked—raises questions. It suggests that history has no rightful place in the heart of literature, and that the two might be considered as qualitatively apart. The argument of this present book has been the contrary: that the two, almost inextricably developed together as parallel examinations of humanity in society over time, influenced one another, and sought to differentiate themselves, as disciplines, one from the other. The differences of method and objective were substantial, but there could not be an historical novel without there first being credible history. The absence of this latter explained the delay in formulating an historical novel in the Spanish context until the 1870s. When it came, the prime concern was not the romancing of the Middle Ages. On the contrary, the aim was to make sense of the violent and confused recent past, the virtual present.

HISTORIOGRAPHY IN SPAIN

After 1834, Spain came out of imposed isolation and rejoined the mainstream of European thought. This was very much the view of contemporaries. Liberal and Romantic strains joined together in the new historiography, in which the struggle for liberty became a principal theme. The new historians sought to open the study of history to a wider public and portray not a story of dynasties but of the formation of laws and institutions guaranteeing liberty.¹⁷

¹⁵ Llanos had met the poet John Keats in Rome, and married his sister. They returned to Spain, where from the mid-1830s he became Mayor of Valladolid and a deputy in the Cortes. Juan Ignacio Ferreras, *Los orígenes de la novela decimonónica (1800–1830)* (Madrid 1973), p. 291. Juan Ignacio Ferreras, *El triunfo del liberalismo y de la novela histórica 1820–1870* (Madrid 1976). Salvador García Castañeda, *Valentín de Llanos (1795–1885) y los orígenes de la novela histórica* (Valladolid 1991), pp. 33–6, 51–2, 54–5, considers Llanos's *Don Esteban* [1825] to have been the first truly Romantic historical novel written by a Spanish writer, even though he wrote it in English. Navas-Ruiz, *El romanticismo español*, pp. 69, 95–7. Alborg, *Romanticismo*, pp. 272–9, for Larra, Moreno Alonso, *Historiografía romántica*, pp. 107–14.

¹⁶ Allison Peers, *Romanticism*, I, pp. 128–9; see also II, pp. 259–328.

¹⁷ Paloma Cirujano Marín et al., *Historiografía y nacionalismo, 1834–1868* (Madrid 1985), pp. 4–11. Moreno Alonso, *Historiografía romántica*, p. 175.

In this respect, the Spanish historians were not working in isolation. They built on the achievements of their Enlightened precursors, who had stressed the importance of critical method and primary sources. Researching the roots of peninsular constitutionalism and laws went back to these *ilustrados*. The experience of the collapse of the *ancien régime* in 1808, the popular uprisings against the French, the Peninsular War, the two constitutional periods of 1810–14 and 1820–3, and restored absolutism under Ferdinand VII, made this examination all the more urgent. The historiographical problem focused on the issue, familiar to the writers of the German *Aufklärung* and early Romanticism, of how and when liberty was lost. Spanish historians of the Romantic era made this question their central concern.¹⁸

Romanticism contributed much to the flowering of history, but it also brought fresh problems. In the first place, Spanish historiography became for the first time literary. Historians placed great attention on narrative style, personality and colour, sentiment and intuition. They had no hesitation in adding this to the rationalism and humanism inherited from the Enlightenment. At the same time, their new interpretation tended to define the nature of historiography thereafter, leaving to future generations the task of unravelling the running thread of liberal ideology. The ‘people’ became the leading protagonist in this struggle for liberty, a return to earlier traditions. In Lope de Vega’s well-known play *Fuenteovejuna* [1619], for instance, a beneficent monarch upholds the people’s case in a village uprising against an abusive nobleman. This older tradition reappeared in the historical dramas of the late Enlightenment. Popular action had been witnessed, furthermore, in the uprisings of 1808 against the Napoleonic intervention. Spanish historians did not need Michelet to tell them about ‘the people’.¹⁹

Liberal and Romantic sentiment combined to portray Spain as a ‘nation’; that is, as an entity which originated deep in the past, grew to maturity against adversity, and took its clear shape in the present era. The defining works of the period almost always dealt with the History of ‘Spain’. In this sense, contemporary issues conditioned the manner in which the past was treated. Liberal historians saw the Middle Ages as the period in which this ‘nation’ was born. In that sense, the medieval era was very much the creation of mid-nineteenth century historians. Yet the problem of the Islamic invasions and the long duration of Moorish power and influence made it difficult to idealize the Middle Ages, especially since rival Christian kingdoms and principalities struggled with each other for supremacy, while struggling sporadically against the Muslim states. Somehow, the process of conceiving a Spanish ‘nation’ had to overcome these problems.²⁰

Several of the institutions through which the new historians operated had eighteenth-century pedigrees. On election to the Royal Academy of History in 1780, Jovellanos discoursed concerning the study of laws and institutions—the ‘traditional constitution’, originating in the Middle Ages. Fifteen years later, the question of how this

¹⁸ Cirujano Marín, *Historiografía y nacionalismo*, pp. 16–18, 30–1. Moreno Alonso, *Historiografía romántica*, pp. 12, 26.

¹⁹ Martínez Torrón, *El alba del romanticismo*, p. 175.

²⁰ Cirujano Marín, *Historiografía y nacionalismo*, pp. 16–18.

'constitution' declined preoccupied him, as he saw the monarchy deeper in crisis. The Academy, receiving new statutes in 1856, flourished in the decades from 1840 to 1870, when several of its members published their works. Modesto Lafuente (1806–66), for instance, published the thirty volumes of his *Historia general de España* in 1850–9. Antonio Cánovas del Castillo (1828–97), who became a member in 1860, saw his first main work, *Historia de la decadencia de España*, appear in 1854. Four years later, another important institution was established: the *Cuerpo de archiveros, bibliotecarios y anticuarios*—an indication of the significance of both primary materials and the proper organization of libraries.²¹

Both Lafuente and Cánovas addressed themselves to the central problems of the emergence of the 'constitution', the loss of liberties, and the decline of Spain, but they viewed them from different perspectives. Lafuente, following eighteenth-century predecessors, saw the origin of the modern Spanish nation in the Visigothic Monarchy, once it had adopted Catholicism in the seventh century. This nation represented an amalgamation of Hispano-Romans and Goths, and produced as its founding law the *Fuero Juzgo*. After the Islamic invasions wiped out that state, the various Christian kingdoms developed from this legal base to establish constitutional practice and fundamental liberties. The process came to a climax with the dynastic union of Castile and Aragon under Ferdinand and Isabella, 'the Catholic Monarchs'. The loss of liberty set in with the transfer of the Crown to the Austrian Habsburgs in 1516. Liberal historians argued that Spain's decline went hand in hand with loss of liberty. For Lafuente, Spain's regeneration began in the reign of Charles III (1759–88), which he associated with the Enlightenment. The recovery of liberty began in stages after 1810, to be completed after 1834. Lafuente interpreted the destiny of Spain to be that of a unitary monarchy, rather than an agglomeration of the distinct kingdoms or regions dating from before the Union of Crowns. The principles of monarchy and a unitary state lay at the heart of his view of Spanish history, and they corresponded to the political platform of the dominant moderate Liberals of his day.²²

Cánovas, who would become the architect of the restoration of the Bourbons in 1874 after the failure of the First Republic, agreed with Lafuente on the two principles of unitarism and monarchy. He replaced what he saw as discredited Liberalism with a new Conservative synthesis, stressing national unity by criticizing the Catholic Monarchs' failure to complement the work of dynastic union with political unification. As a result, provincialism, as he described it, had impeded Spanish political development and still continued to play a negative role in his own time. Cánovas identified with the ideals and objectives of the Spain of the Habsburgs, but not with the methods, the abuses, or the interventionist foreign policy of those two centuries. Spain's decline, he was to write later, resulted not from

²¹ Cirujano Marín, *Historiografía y nacionalismo*, pp. 19, 30, 40–1, 78, 118. The Museo Arqueológico Nacional and the Comisión de Monumentos Artísticos e Históricos followed in 1867.

²² Cirujano Marín, *Historiografía y nacionalismo*, pp. 81, 85–7, 92, 101–4, 126. Navas-Ruiz, *El romanticismo español*, p. 276. In 1856 Antonio Ferrer del Río (1814–72) published his *Historia del reinado de Carlos III*—an indication of increased interest in that period.

absolutism or the Inquisition, but from the lack of proportion between its aspirations and its resources. He would come to see the nineteenth century as an even worse period of crisis than the seventeenth century, with Liberalism as part of the problem.²³

These developments in historiography, and the arguments presented in it, formed the background to the reformulation of the Spanish historical novel by Galdós in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1868, which removed Isabella II from the throne. Galdós, however, did not follow in his fiction the historiographical exploration of the Middle Ages. On the contrary, he concentrated exclusively on coming to grips with the Spanish nineteenth century. Galdós had no interest whatever in looking back nostalgically on past times as a supposed ideal from which the present day had degenerated. His intention was to try and make sense of recent Spanish history, a period of virtually constant upheaval, from the Battle of Trafalgar (1805) onwards, through the medium of individual experience. Although in literary terms Galdos's prime model was Cervantes and his contemporary models, Balzac and Dickens, he looked to Scott as precursor for the historical novel. Along with that came the influence of the historians, Michelet, Carlyle, Lamartine, and Taine, especially in their differing treatment of popular or mass movements. The historical writings and political stance of Cánovas, however, became a prime motivator, if not parallel, to Galdós's historical novels, in their common understanding of the 'nation' and defence of a unitary state. Among Spanish Romantics, Scott still remained in vogue as late as the 1870s, as the number of imitators testified. Galdós, however, was neither a Romantic nor an imitator.²⁴

THE CHANGING FACE OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

From 1870, Spanish fiction experienced a major revival by authors such as Galdós, Valera, Emilia Pardo Bazán, and Leopoldo Alas "Clarín". At the same time, the themes of patriotism, national identity, and liberty in Galdós's *Episodios Nacionales* should be viewed in the context of a reviving of Spanish historiography.

Although the romances set in the Middle Ages and subsequent centuries had already appeared in their hundreds, the '*novela de tema contemporánea*' (to use Juan Ignacio Ferreras's term), only came to its maturity with Galdós. Until that time, drama, rather than the novel, had dealt more with historical themes than serious novels.²⁵ The impact of Romanticism in Spain ultimately influenced the adoption of the novel as the chosen medium of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The approach to time and the direct involvement of the author in the events he was

²³ Cirujano Marín, *Historiografía y nacionalismo*, pp. 118. See José Luis Comellas, *Cánovas del Castillo* (Barcelona 2001 [1997]), pp. 58–9, 62–3.

²⁴ Antonio Regalado García, *Benito Pérez Galdós y la novela histórica española* (Madrid 1966), pp. 21, 70–1, 75–6, 78–9, 150–1.

²⁵ Juan Ignacio Ferreras, *Benito Pérez Galdós y la invención de la novela histórica nacional* (Madrid 1997), pp. 11–14.

relating accounted for the uniqueness of this new type of 'historical novel with a contemporary theme'. Galdós's historical vision reflected his contemporary political perspective. This made his historical novels distinct from those of romance or adventure. He built on the foundations laid by Scott in the realist mode. Harriet Turner describes Galdós as 'Spain's preeminent Realist novelist'.²⁶

Yet, at the same time, Galdós significantly departed from the Waverley Novels in three ways. First, he followed a continuous historical narrative, which ran from the Battle of Trafalgar to the Bourbon Restoration of 1874. In the second place, he wrote exclusively about events which took place only a generation or two before his own time. In the final series, the distance between the historical events and the time of writing became hardly more than thirty years. Third, Galdós, for the most part, adopted a national perspective, in preference to concentrating on specifically local contexts, which Scott had usually done in the Scottish novels. The principal exception is the third series, in which the local dimension appears in the detailed descriptions of conflicts in the Carlist Wars, in which his leading characters find themselves caught. Ferreras puts forward the interesting view that this type of national historical novel, which, he argues, Galdós invented, represents not simply a development of the genre but a separate branch of it.²⁷

The historical novel as developed by Galdós abandoned the experiments in symbolism attempted by Eliot and Flaubert, and returned to the realist mode dominated by Dickens and Balzac earlier in the century. Over a forty-year period, Galdós revived a genre already flagging in the rest of Western Europe. The Spanish historical novel forms a parallel to the emergence of the genre in Central and Eastern Europe, including Russia, during the last third of the nineteenth century, but Galdós persevered with the genre over a much longer period.²⁸

Between 1873 and 1912 Galdós published forty-six historical novels in five cycles, collectively known as *Episodios Nacionales*. The first two series appeared between 1873 and 1879, and the last three between 1898 and 1912. They dealt directly with the political problems of the previous generations. Galdós complemented these with a series of thirty-two novels, published between 1867 and 1905, which he described as 'contemporary' fiction. Although imaginary characters dominate the action, these latter novels refer repeatedly to issues in Spanish history during the nineteenth century. For that reason, it can be argued that they form, together with the *Episodios*, different approaches to common themes in an integrated literary accomplishment. Yet, for several decades after the author's death in 1920, the *Episodios* tended to be dismissed as works of lesser

²⁶ Regalado García, *Benito Pérez Galdós*, pp. 125–6, 129, 134, 146–8, 150, 267. 'Galdós's relationship to Scott was deep and multifaceted, and of such transcendence that, without the Scottish author, his own historical novels would be inexplicable' (p. 157). Lieve Behiels, *La cuarta serie de los Episodios Nacionales de Benito Pérez Galdós: una aproximación temática y narratológica* (Madrid 2001), pp. 19–42, pp. 24–5. Harriet S. Turner, 'Benito Pérez Galdós', in David T. Gies (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature* (Cambridge 2004), pp. 392–409, p. 392, and p. 394: 'From Balzac he conceived the idea of writing a series of interrelated historical and social novels, adapting the technique of using recurring characters.'

²⁷ Ferreras, *Galdós y la invención*, pp. 14, 44, 66.

²⁸ Regalado García, *Benito Pérez Galdós*, p. 267.

significance than the contemporary novels. Despite a few studies during the 1930s and 1950s, attention revived in the 1960s, and by 1989 one critic argued that the historical and the contemporary novels should be assessed on an equal footing. This view has not always been held thereafter, but the quality and significance of the historical fiction have generally been recognized by literary critics, although there have been few studies of them by historians.²⁹

For the *Episodios*, Galdós drew greatly on contemporary popular novels, usually distributed in pamphlet form, and on the *costumbrista* literature, such as that of Ramón Mesonero Romanos (1803–82), whose *Escenas matritenses* [1862] painted colourful pictures of popular life in Spain. Galdós's correspondence with the older writer, steeped in knowledge of Madrid and its traditions, reveals the extent of the debt during the writing of the first two series of the *Episodios*. The difficulty of shaping an historical novel out of diffuse material and portraying historical figures accurately in the context of their time greatly challenged Galdós, as he frequently complained to this early mentor. He would send him long lists of characters, asking what information Mesonero Romanos might have on them, inquiring also about the location of buildings and even the type of uniform worn by militiamen in 1821–2, during the second constitutional period.³⁰

The latter gave Galdós his strong support, commenting favourably but critically on the completed novels sent by him. He had the following to say with regard to *El terror de 1824*:

With all of these, you have placed yourself on a high level as a philosopher, as creator of fine characters, as a dramatist and novelist, and as a clear, restrained and pleasing narrator. It is surprising, above all, and more to me than to anyone else, what intuition you have of ages, scenes and personalities you have never known, but yet capture faithfully like a true photographer. I have told you on a previous occasion that, in this respect, you have no rival, and that your novels have more life in them and teach more than many works of history.

Mesonero Romanos followed these remarks, excusing himself for his pedantry, as he put it, with a list of factual errors which he had discovered in the novel, and warned Galdós that its absence of amatorial intrigue, new fictional characters, or drama, all of which the reading public liked, would account for diminished sales.³¹

From the beginning, a strongly didactic element characterized Galdós's historical novels. In his first historical novel, *La Fontana de Oro* (1870), for instance, Galdós examined why the Spanish Liberals had failed to establish lasting constitutional government in 1820–3. He saw radicalism, associated with masonic lodges, as a

²⁹ Stephen Gilman, *Galdós and the Art of the European Novel, 1867–1887* (Princeton 1981), p. 8. Peter A. Bly, *Galdós's Novel of the Historical Imagination. A Study of the Contemporary Novels* (Liverpool 1983), p. 185. Diane Faye Urey, *The Novel Histories of Galdós* (Princeton 1989), p. 132. Geoffrey Ribbons, *History and Fiction in Galdós's Narratives* (Oxford 1993), pp. 38, 114.

³⁰ Eulogio Varela Hervías, *Cartas de Pérez Galdós a Mesonero Romanos* (Madrid 1943), no. 5, pp. 21–2, Benito Pérez Galdós a Ramón Mesonero Romanos, Madrid, 7 June 1876. Regalado García, *Benito Pérez Galdós*, p. 151.

³¹ Varela Hervías, *Cartas*, pp. 27–8, no number, Mesonero Romanos to Galdós (fragment), Madrid, 6 December 1877 (my translation).

prime cause of liberal failure at that time. This novel illustrated how historical fiction could be used to explain to the generation of the 1870s, engaged anew in the same process, what had gone wrong fifty years earlier. Galdós's apprenticeship had been as a journalist for the progressive Liberal newspaper *La Nación* in 1865–8, and *Revista de España*, 1870–3—a journal sympathetic to British constitutionalism and opposed to the Paris Commune. This tempered liberalism Galdós brought to his early historical novels.³²

Not one of Galdós's most important works, *La Fontana de Oro* became the prelude to the *Episodios Nacionales*. The first two series, of ten novels in each, covered the period from Trafalgar—the naval defeat experienced from a Spanish perspective—to the return of constitutional monarchy in 1834. Of these, the first ten, completed between February 1873 and March 1875, dealt with the collapse of the Spanish *ancien régime* under Charles IV in 1808, the Peninsular War to the defeat of the French at the Battle of Salamanca (Arapiles) in 1813, and the first constitutional experiment associated with the Cortes of Cádiz and the Constitution of 1812.³³ The second series deal with the two restorations of absolutism by Ferdinand VII in 1814 and 1823, and the second Liberal experiment of 1820–3, which, as we have seen, had been the subject of *La Fontana de Oro* (1870).³⁴

Despite an estimated thirty per cent literacy level in Spain, Galdós sold two million copies over thirty-five years, making a considerable contribution to the discussion of national identity and forms of government.³⁵

GALDÓS AND THE NATIONAL EPIC

The attempt to legitimize a new political order in Spain over the period 1810–40 required a reformulation of history in response to contemporary issues. It was by no means clear, however, on what basis this 're-created' history should rest. Foreign influences might not correspond to distinct peninsular experience. Hispanic traditions might have lapsed, been forgotten, or been abolished, according to régime or region. Hence, the attempt to reformulate history would present problems comparable to those encountered in the reshaping of institutions.

Galdós's purpose in the *Episodios Nacionales* was to portray Spain's struggle to break free of the *ancien régime* and absolutism, and assert a modern identity as a national and a constitutional state. Dynastic unity from the time of Ferdinand and Isabella differentiated the course of Spanish history from that of Germany and Italy. However, imperial collapse, political divisions, and social conflict in the nineteenth century left a demoralized country at a time when national states were

³² Madeleine de Gogorza Fletcher, *The Spanish Historical Novel, 1870–1970. A Study of the Spanish Novelists and their Treatment of the 'Episodio Nacional'* (London 1973), pp. 11–18.

³³ Brian J. Dendale, *Galdós. The Early Historical Novels* (Columbia, MO 1986), p. 6. Urey, *Novel Histories*, p. 10.

³⁴ Dendale, *Galdós*, pp. 44, 128–57, discusses Galdós's moral intent.

³⁵ Regaldo García, *Benito Pérez Galdós*, pp. 264–8.

established in those other two countries. Galdós believed that moderate liberal constitutionalism—centralist, and opposed to both radicalism and regionalism—offered the best means for the construction of a nation state.³⁶

European study of nineteenth-century nationalism has regrettably omitted Spain, which had to discover a national, as opposed to imperial, identity. Spanish nationalism, in contrast to Catalan or Basque nationalism, has received little or no attention in the historical literature. In many respects, the political stance of Cánovas, with whose ideas Galdós became closely associated during the Restoration, could be described as Spanish nationalist. According to Regalado García,

... if Cánovas is the great political centralizer deciding everything from Madrid ... then Galdós is the literary centralizer, who views everything from a national perspective.

Cánovas held the view that the nation was immutable and rooted in history as a Catholic and Castilian-led monarchy. Galdós, however, placed less emphasis on the Catholic nature of the Spanish state and nation.³⁷

Galdos's *national* historical novels addressed an existing historical entity, which Manzoni could not do in the case of Italy. Nevertheless, the unfolding of events during the century exposed bitter conflict between the 'Two Spains'—traditional and Catholic or liberal and secular—and a growing antagonism between centre and regions. Failure of consensus opened the prospect of repeated armed conflict. This explained Galdós's preoccupation with showing his compatriots in fictional form the dangers of violence. In this respect he resembled Scott, who exposed the violence in Scottish history, and pointed to a brighter future in a land ruled over by merchants and lawyers.³⁸

FIRST-PERSON PERSPECTIVES AND NATIONAL STRUGGLES

In *Trafalgar* and *La Corte de Carlos IV* (both in 1873) Galdós portrayed a crumbling *ancien régime*, in which government and society drifted further apart. Gabriel Araceli is the ever-present narrator in this first series. As Galdós worked himself into the chosen medium, his technique moved towards a counterbalancing and interweaving of history and fiction, with some characters appearing in both spheres. Ferreras identifies the beginning of this innovation with *La Corte de Carlos IV*. The two spheres, however, are never themselves joined together,

³⁶ Regalado García, *Benito Pérez Galdós*, pp. 21, 25, 68, 70–2, 75.

³⁷ Carolyn Boyd, *Historia Patria: History and National Identity in Spain, 1875–1975* (Berkeley 1997), pp. 69–74, 130–1. See José Luis Comellas, *Cánovas del Castillo* (Barcelona 2001 [1997]), pp. 169–71. Stephen Jacobson, 'Spain. The Iberian Mosaic', in Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson, *What is a Nation? Europe, 1789–1914* (Oxford 2006), pp. 210–27; see pp. 225–6. Regalado García, *Benito Pérez Galdós*, pp. 73–6, 119, 123 n. 71. In several addresses to the Madrid Athenaeum in 1882 and 1884, Cánovas rejected the thesis of Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce que c'est une Nation?* [Paris 1882], as voluntarist.

³⁸ H. Chonon Berkowitz, *Pérez Galdós, Spanish Liberal Crusader* (Madison, 1948), pp. 180–6.

whether literally or symbolically. This technique appears graphically in *Bailén* (1873), in which Gabriel and other fictional characters involved with him take part in the defeat of the French army at the entrance to Andalusia in July 1808. It appears splendidly in *Cádiz* (1874), where Gabriel and his circle of friends witness the crowd of spectators cry out in the newly opened Cortes in 1810, 'Viva la Nación!' rather than 'Viva el Rey!' Gabriel notes that, as the Cortes proclaims that sovereignty resides in the 'nation' and the programme of the new liberal leadership is read out, the eighteenth century has finally come to an end and another era has opened. In these novels, however, the fictional world always has the greater significance for the development of the narrative.³⁹

The *Corte de Carlos IV*—seminal in the sense that it starts off the author's method of relating fiction to history in a common narrative—is an entertaining work geared not just to a receptive audience but also to a profitable market. It opens in 1806 with the first performance of the pre-Romantic comedy *El sí de las niñas* by Moratín, regarded in its day as a great literary event. It closes with a Spanish representation of Shakespeare's *Othello*, in which the main fictional characters take part. Galdós sets the performance against the background of the (highly theatrical) Escorial Conspiracy of 1807, in which the heir to the throne, Prince Ferdinand, tries to overthrow the first minister, Manuel de Godoy, and force his father, Charles IV, to abdicate. The characters have already divided into partisans of the king and queen or those of Ferdinand.⁴⁰

This is the second of Galdós's stories of Gabriel's youthful experience, as he moves from the service of a popular Madrid actress to that of the beautiful and adept Countess Amaranta, aged in her early thirties and a friend of Queen María Luisa. The author has already introduced Gabriel's love for Inés and dwelt extensively on his low birth, the son of Cádiz fisherfolk. Although ambitious, the youth had little prospect of rising without exceptional patronage in the Spain of the old régime. Apart from several references to Godoy, the first part of the novel makes few direct references to historical events. Then come severe warnings of the impending catastrophe about to befall the country. Even so, personal rivalries and intrigues still predominate in the narrative, and we eventually become aware that Inés is Amaranta's illegitimate daughter. The connection of the historical and personal themes are only made in chapter 12, when Gabriel arrives in the Escorial, and catches a sight of the king, Ferdinand, and other members of the royal family, and gives us his impression of them. By chapters 17–19, Amaranta has turned

³⁹ Benito Pérez Galdós, *Bailén* (Madrid 2001), and *Cádiz* (Madrid 2001), pp. 123–33, 140, 154–5, 176–7. Dendle, *Galdós*, pp. 30–2, 38, 45–51, 72–3, 78–80. Regalado García, *Benito Pérez Galdós*, pp. 27–32, 43–4. Ferreras, *Galdós y la invención*, pp. 75–7, 97, 101–3.

⁴⁰ Benito Pérez Galdós, *La Corte de Carlos IV* (Madrid 2006 [1973]), chapters 15–21, pp. 182–3 for a description of the playwright. For Moratín, see Luis Sánchez Agesta, 'Moratín y el pensamiento político del despotismo ilustrado', *Revista de la Universidad de Madrid*, IX, no. 35 (1960), pp. 567–89, who points to the contribution of poetry and drama to the cause of reform in Spain in this period. Moratín was a protégé of Godoy. Germán Gullón, 'Narrativación de la Historia: La Cortes de Carlos IV', *Anales Galdosianos*, Año XIX (1984), pp. 45–52.

Gabriel into her spy, mediating between the factual and fictional characters. Affronted by this, Gabriel decides to flee from the palace and reassert his dignity.⁴¹

Gabriel as protagonist and narrator marked a novelistic innovation in Spain. Throughout *Cádiz*, for example, both he and other characters repeatedly remark upon his lower social origins. Yet he has a capacity for fraternizing with members of the nobility and passing from one type of *salón* or *tertulia* to another, where he encounters historical and fictional characters with opposing political views and social values. In fact, he frequents noble houses with the same ease that he visits low taverns. He finds himself amidst the historical events, but tells the reader mainly about his own life. Regalado sees him first in the tradition of the lower-class 'heroes' of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century picaresque novels, but ultimately as a symbol of the progressive bourgeoisie finally in power after 1874. While the first assessment carries conviction, the second idea belongs to an ideological view of Spanish history during the nineteenth century, which connects fictional themes too closely to interpretations of national developments. Gabriel—whatever symbolic significance might be attributed to him—is decidedly not a Romantic hero.⁴²

The first-person narrative reappears, though in a different form in the second series, in which the continuity represented by Gabriel's perspective has been dispensed with. The sixth novel of the second series, *Los Cien mil Hombres de San Luis* [1877], is in many ways a remarkable work. The historical story has three levels: Ferdinand VII's intrigues with provincial Royalists and foreign governments in 1821–3 against the Liberal government in power in Madrid; preparations for the French Royalist Intervention in Spain in 1823, and its course; and the Liberal failure to stave off this two-fold opposition and the final collapse of the second constitutional régime. These are still highly controversial themes in Spanish historiography. They are portrayed in a style which combines economy with vivid brushstrokes. The book has no heavy passages of pure history, although the dramatic importance of the course of historical events is never lost in the fictional narrative.⁴³

This novel's special significance lies in the adoption of a female first-person narrator, whose two fragments of memoirs the author claims to be using for the greater part of the book. This narrator is looking back from 1848 on events in which she participated during 1822 and 1823. Doña Jenara de Barahona, however, is no passive witness, and, in fact, spends the entire book covering large distances. This action-filled novel follows her journeys and their accompanying events from Bayonne to Madrid and thence to the mountains of Aragon and Catalonia, where Royalist bands have been organised to fight against the Liberal régime. Doña Jenara, at this stage, is a king's special agent entrusted with messages to the Royalist 'Regency' of Seo de Urgel. When the famous Liberal General Francisco Espoz y Mina begins the siege of Seo, she flees with the 'Regents' across the Pyrenees to Toulouse. By this time she has lost faith in all of the Royalist leaders, whom she has

⁴¹ Galdós, *La Corte de Carlos IV*, pp. 27, 33, 46–7, 52–3, 58–64, 92, 105–6, 151, 189.

⁴² Regalado García, *Benito Pérez Galdós*, pp. 146–8.

⁴³ Benito Pérez Galdós, *Los Cien mil Hombres de San Luis* (Madrid 2003).

come to regard as incompetent, corrupt, and fanatical. In Paris, she witnesses Louis XVIII's declaration of the impending French Intervention in Spain and has an interview with Chateaubriand, then Foreign Minister.⁴⁴

Although historical figures almost never become actors in the fictional narrative, the description of them in the fictional Memoirs is astute. Jenara's reaction to Chateaubriand, for instance, not only reveals a great deal about him but traces her change of attitude during the short time she is with him. Anxious to make the acquaintance of the author of *Atala* and *René*, she describes the early pillar of French Romanticism in the following way:

He was dressed in an imposing uniform. His pale and beautiful face had no other defect than the studied disarray of his hair, which made his head resemble one of those village crops, through whose forest density no comb has ever been passed. A lively and penetrating look shone from his eyes, which made me lower mine. He seemed to me rather decayed, even though he was then no older than fifty-two. His exquisite urbanity felt somewhat conceited and cold. He smiled rarely and only slightly, tightening the almost imperceptible folds of his marble mouth, but his brow frequently frowned, as though he were accustomed to believe that what he saw was inferior to the majesty of his person.⁴⁵

When the French Army—the 'Hundred-Thousand Sons of St. Louis' of the book's title—cross the Pyrenees, Liberal forces disintegrate, leaving the government in Madrid, where Jenara has since returned, in an untenable position. The Cortes, the administration, and leading supporters flee to Seville, taking the king and royal family with them as captives. The Liberals finally seek refuge in Cádiz, where, as the first series showed us, the Cortes, Constitution, and first Liberal constitutional experiment began. The irony that Cádiz should be both the birthplace and graveyard of the 1812 Constitution is not lost on Galdós.⁴⁶

Not only historical intrigues and conflicts but also Jenara's personal drama of frustrated love dictate this wide-ranging geographical disparity. Galdós deals with his protagonist's emotional life with skill. Since, again, these are 'episodes' rather than detailed expositions, we learn nothing of her background except that she is 27 years of age, comes from the inland Basque Province of Álava, and has separated from her husband after an unhappy marriage. She describes herself as beautiful. From the narrative we see that she is impetuous, egotistical, and obsessive, capable of deceiving other women and leading on men who are attracted to her, such as the charming and obliging Comte de Montguyon, who is with the French Intervention army. As the book develops, Jenara becomes more and more determined to catch hold of the elusive Salvador Monsalud, the childhood friend and former fiancé, who is now a Liberal supporter. This begins while she is working as a king's agent—a situation highly compromising for both of them.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Galdós, *Los Cien mil Hijos*, pp. 8–29 (first fragment), 30–51 (author's narrative), 51–187 (second fragment); pp. 54–5 for Louis XVIII.

⁴⁵ Galdós, *Los Cien mil Hijos*, pp. 55–6 (my translation).

⁴⁶ Galdós, *Los Cien mil Hijos*, pp. 98–105.

⁴⁷ Galdós, *Los Cien mil Hijos*, pp. 16–24. They are first separated when the Royalist rebels arrest Monsalud.

The relationship of the portrayal of Jenara's story and the deteriorating condition of Spain during the course of 1823 is complex. I think they are meant to be parallel but interwoven stories, though the former is not conceived as a symbolic representation of the latter. The reason I argue this is that I believe the frequency with which Galdós uses the words 'mad' and 'madness' provides the clue. Jenara is represented in alternation as either 'mad' with love or 'mad' with rage. Whichever it happens to be at the time, she loses all sense of decorum. Reality sinks from her consciousness. Spain, at exactly the same time, is not going 'mad', either literally or metaphorically, but passing through a particularly grim political transformation from a divided and contested Liberalism to an absolute monarchy restored by intrigue and foreign intervention. The consequences will be vengeance by the absolutists. This may seem like 'madness' to the defeated Liberals facing exile or reprisals, but the country itself is not in the grip of 'madness'. True, Royalist bands rove the streets of Madrid and Seville as the Liberal system collapses, but unbridled killings do not result. True also, that a group of Liberal deputies in the Cortes proclaimed their captive king to be 'mad' because of his refusal to cooperate with them, and voted to dethrone him on grounds of mental incapacity. And yet Ferdinand VII was not, in any sense of the term, mad. Deceitful, cowardly and ambitious to recover full power he certainly was, but he was not insane.⁴⁸

The purpose of the juxtaposition and interweaving of the fictional and historical narratives in this way is not symbolism but psychology. It is to demonstrate how public events impinge on private lives, destroying their logic and undermining their peaceful conduct. These events explain the heightening of Jenara's sense of helplessness and the collapse of her hopes for happiness with the man she loves. Her unexpected arrest by the Spanish police, at the moment she expects to join him, both under French protection, on the way to exile on a British corvette about to sail from Cádiz to Gibraltar, brings home this authorial point about the destructive absurdity of public affairs. Galdós intricately follows the state of his female protagonist's mind, more concerned with her pursuit than the political events around her, as Royalist mobs shout 'Long Live the Chains! Death to the Nation!'⁴⁹

PARTISANS, PARTIES, AND ESCALATING VIOLENCE AS ESSENTIAL THEMES

The Spanish novelist developed several themes already apparent in Scott. In his novels of the Peninsular War, and particularly in *Zumalacárregui* [1898] and *La Campaña del Maestrazgo* [1899]—both of which dealt in the third series with the Carlist War—Galdós takes up the theme of irregular warfare. This, as we have discussed, was strongly in evidence in Scott, and Balzac made it the subject of *Les Chouans*. The Carlist background also gave Galdós the opportunity to deal

⁴⁸ Galdós, *Los Cien mil Hijos*, pp. 123–87, from her spotting him among the public in the session of the Cortes in Seville, to their final separation in Cádiz.

⁴⁹ Galdós, *Los Cien mil Hijos*, pp. 182–3 juxtapose the catastrophe of Spanish Liberals and Jenara's love pursuit.

with the subject of identity crisis, which Scott had first introduced in *Waverley*. The reluctant priest, José Fago, is caught in the brutal conflict between Carlist rebel bands led by Zumalacárregui, in the highlands of Navarra, and the Spanish army in 1834–5. Religious and dynastic issues were as much confused in the Carlist cause as they had been among the Jacobites. Like Waverley, Fago finds himself first on one side and then on the other, but he is eventually broken by the conflict. Fascinating as this novel is, the fine line between invention and history snapped altogether, because the author failed in his ambitious intent to make the mental processes of his imaginary hero and the eponymous historical figure interchangeable.⁵⁰

Popular violence and wartime barbarities—already much in evidence in the Peninsular War—lead Galdós to conclude that civilized values were on the brink of collapse, and this view becomes abundantly evident in the third series dealing with armed conflicts of the 1830s. In the third series, Mendizábal comments, for instance:

This unhappy native-land, devoured by evil passions, by so much hatred... poor and submerged in ignorance... The sad inheritance of a monarch such as Ferdinand VII! If that gentleman had acted otherwise, how much better off would we be now!⁵¹

Authorial revulsion at civil-war atrocities appears graphically in *La Campaña del Maestrazgo*. The Carlist commander in Valencia, the feared Rafael Cabrera, justifies the execution of Liberal prisoners—many of them innocent cadets or recruits—on the grounds that government troops, the ‘*Cristinos*’, who had exceeded civil decency by executing his mother, had adopted the policy first. The dignified Liberal veteran Beltrán de Urdaneta—the fictional chief protagonist, accidentally caught up in the Carlist campaign—rails at the extent of this practice. He recoils at the Carlist practice of having prisoners confess their sins before they are shot, on the pretext of saving their souls after the destruction of their bodies.

With these evil wars between brothers it seems that every human law has been thrown to the ground, even the sacred bonds of family... Spain is bleeding, Spain is destroying itself. I am taking part in the suicide of a nation. Let us bury her in her own soil.⁵²

⁵⁰ Benito Pérez Galdós, *Zumalacárregui* (Madrid 2002), pp. 54–5, 88, 113, 162, 171. See Jordi Canal, *El carlismo. Dos siglos de contrarrevolución en España* (Madrid 2000), pp. 28–119. Regaldo García, *Benito Pérez Galdós*, p. 123 n. 71, where it is argued that Galdós failed to understand either Carlism or federalism, because of their regional roots. Galdós seems, however, to have understood the moral basis of Carlism very well, including the ambiguities stemming from this, as the third series of the *Episodios Nacionales* shows.

⁵¹ Benito Pérez Galdós, *Mendizábal* (Madrid 2003), pp. 234–5; and p. 250, the authorial comment, ‘the dissensions between the descendants of Charles IV had converted Spain into an immense cage of wild beasts.’ See also Peter Bush, ‘The Craftsmanship and Literary Values of the Third Series of *Episodios Nacionales*’, *Anales Galdosianos*, Año XVI (1981), pp. 33–56. Dendle, *Galdós*, pp. 41, 44, 138, 147. Regaldo, *Benito Pérez Galdós*, pp. 124, 127–8, 131–2, 269, 280, 431.

⁵² Benito Pérez Galdós, *La campaña del Maestrazgo* (Madrid 2006), pp. 12, 84, 89–97.

Urdaneta, adversely reflecting contemporary romanticizing of the Middle Ages, cries out in desperation against this horrible replay of medieval savagery: 'Cursed be the wretched Middle Ages and the dog who invented them'⁵³

In these two novels and also *De Oñate a La Granja* [1898], the balance between fiction and history is very capably maintained—action in the fictional story interweaving with the historical action, which influences its outcome. In this latter sense, the historical dimension prevails over the fictional, while the fictional story is still held in the foreground. Similarly, the characters, whether principal or subsidiary, are drawn subtly and in detail. Galdós provides many revealing descriptions of both the historical and fictional characters. Cabrera, for instance, first appears in the following way, his reputation having preceded him:

Very soon they saw a great tumult, many horsemen who flew through the air rather than rode, their speedy chargers leaping over ditches and fences, uncontrollable and furious. At their head, on a white horse, rode a man dressed in bright colours. When this horseman sped past the baggage, those standing there caught sight of his face, very much like a cat's, the eyes flaming, their colour green, his nose swelling out, as though the nostrils wanted to tear themselves open to draw in more air. His white cloak, with a red turn-up round the neck, rippled like a flag. In his hand, he brandished a sword, and he could be heard crying out [in Valencian], 'This way, my sons . . . follow me . . . we'll destroy them . . . Long live Charles V! Death to those villainous cowards!'⁵⁴

In such a way, a work of fiction vividly brought to life an historical figure of legendary dimensions, about whom readers interested in the history of their own country could find out in few other places.

GALDÓS AND THE RESUMPTION OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL IN 1898

At the end of the second series of the *Episodios Nacionales*, which concluded with events taking place in 1834, after the moderate Liberals had taken power during the minority of Isabella II, Galdós announced his intention to cease writing any more historical novels. This was in the year 1879, when he complained of being tired of the genre altogether. At the same time, he believed that events after 1834 were too close to the present time to be regarded as history, and wanted to concentrate on his 'contemporary' fiction. In the meantime, an illustrated edition of the first two series of the *Episodios* appeared in 1885, and the popularity of these historical novels continued to provide him with a better income than the rest of his fiction. Asked by a Russian visitor whether his books sold well in Spain, Galdós was reported to have replied:

Alas, no. Our public loves to read, but they do not buy books. A book which will be read by 30,000 persons will sell 800 or 1,000 copies. Furthermore, we have no

⁵³ Galdós, *Maestrazgo*, p. 78.

⁵⁴ Galdós, *Maestrazgo*, p. 86 (my translation).

publishers; an author publishes his books himself at his own risk and peril. It is rarely that you will find a man who cultivates literature as a profession.⁵⁵

Galdós returned to the historical novel in 1898. This year, moreover, marked a decisive turning-point in Spanish history with the outbreak of the war with the United States and the consequent loss of the remaining imperial possessions, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and the Marianas and Carolinas in the Pacific. The loss of Cuba in particular—the prize possession in the Caribbean—shook Spanish confidence to the foundations, and led to a literary and political questioning of the country's character and structure. This may have accounted for Galdós's decision to return to the historical novel as a medium for exposing the roots of the moral crisis. On the other hand, he also needed the money which these novels could bring in, since he faced high costs after a successful lawsuit with his former publisher. His new publisher, furthermore, offered to publish twice as many copies of the historical novels than of the 'contemporary' fiction. The success of Eastern European historical novels from the 1870s onwards may also have encouraged him to begin afresh with a genre he had abandoned almost two decades previously.⁵⁶

A certain ambiguity towards the Romantics appears in the *Episodios*. In the second series, Galdós had praised in *Los Apostólicos* [1879]—set in 1829–32, at the end of Ferdinand VII's reign—the younger generation which had opposed absolutism and initiated thereafter the literary revival in Spain. The third series, which dealt with events between 1834 and 1846, uses more historical sources than the first two series, but scarcely attempts a distinct historical vision. Rather, the emphasis here is more on the social context than any specific hero figure. Even though the action in them may have Romantic elements, the authorial ambiguity concerning Romanticism reappeared with greater vigour in this series. In *Mendizábal*, for instance, the second novel of the series, a leading character, the priest Pedro Hillo, rails against the Romantics such as Espronceda, and denounces the influence of Hugo and Dumas for their disruptive influence on Spanish literature and politics. The focus here is on the young nobleman Fernando Calpina, who arrives back in Spain from France at the outbreak of the First Carlist War in 1833, but, like Darsie Latimer, does not know his own origins. Hillo warns him against embarking on dangerous adventures, which, needless to say, he promptly does. Once Calpina has himself become the embodiment of Romanticism, he goes downhill all the way. He mixes with writers such as Espronceda and Larra—the 'turbulent youth' of the time—who lead him astray. He abandons a safe bureaucratic post to go on a wild chase after Aurora, the girl with whom he has fallen in

⁵⁵ Quoted in Vernon A. Chamberlain and Jack Weiner, 'A Russian View in 1884–85 of three Spanish Novelists: Galdós, Pardo Bazán and Pereda', *Anales Galdosianos*, Año XIX (1984), p. 114. For the reception of Tolstoy in Spain, see Vera Colin, 'A Note on Tolstoy and Galdós', *Anales Galdosianos*, Año II (1967), pp. 155–68. Tolstoy arrived in Spain first through French translations, which appeared in 1877. Emilia Pardo Bazán's 1887 lecture on Russian literature to the Madrid Athenaeum stimulated interest among intellectuals. Spanish translation followed in 1889. Tolstoy appears not to have influenced the *Episodios* but non-historical novels such as *Nazarín* [1895].

⁵⁶ Behiels, *La cuarta serie*, pp. 20–1. In 1898, Galdós expected to sell 20,000 copies of the first volume of his fourth series. Dickens counted on one and a half million readers.

love. Since she is in Carlist-controlled territory, the depth of his folly becomes apparent. On the other hand, Calpena—an attractive character whom Galdós might profitably have developed with greater intensity—shows courage and compassion on his adventure.⁵⁷

Regalado considers the fourth series, covering the years from 1847 to 1868, to be the best of all in terms of the portrayal of Spanish history and political movements. In Behiels's view, the fourth series constituted, in effect, one novel in ten parts. Ribbans comments on the difference in the following way:

From the earliest novels, Galdós had shown an insistent preoccupation with the relation between history and the fictional form he had adopted... Nor had he ever been entirely satisfied with the balance he was establishing between fact and fiction. By the fourth series this dissatisfaction had become intense... Up to and including the fourth series, Galdós, while very aware of the inherent difficulties of integrating historical concerns into his fiction, none the less regards historical facts as essential components of the genre to be conveyed to his readers for their own sake... It is clear that Galdós... from the fourth series onwards, harbours very serious doubts about how to cope with the two heterogeneous elements which make up the narrative.⁵⁸

The fourth series portrays a mid-nineteenth-century Spain still struggling with its identity four decades after the loss of the American half of the Monarchy. *Aita Tettauen* [1904–5] deals with the Spanish invasion of Morocco in 1859–60. Inevitably, the renewed proximity of Spanish Christians and North African Moors raises the question of Spain's historical identity, given the presence of a Muslim and Moorish population in the peninsula from 711 until 1610. Although tribal Moors from the Riff Mountains are firing at Spanish soldiers forcing their way up to Tetuan, the problem emerges of who is really whom. The author does not miss a chance to see the complications in the nationalist appeal of war, stirred up by the administration of General Leopoldo O'Donnell and his Liberal Union. The monarch is Isabella II—which recalls the heroic age of the first Isabella, when the Moors were expelled from Granada in 1492.⁵⁹

Well into the first section of the novel, Pedro Alarcón—one of the principal fictional characters—describes Spain as ‘baptised Barbary’. This ambiguity flies in the face of the government's attempt to invoke the image of the medieval struggles against the Moors and apply them to mid-nineteenth-century imperial expansion. Spain is anxious to follow the example of France in Algeria in securing a foothold in ‘Barbary’. Juan Santiuste—another fictional character, described in the novel as ‘the military poet’—summons up several other historical images, all of them hyperbolic, to set the current war in context, comparing it with the actions of El Cid at the end

⁵⁷ Galdós, *Mendizábal*, p. 8 describes his arrival in Madrid by stage coach, with no one to meet him, 34, 57, 59–60, 65, 69, 72, 202–8. Benito Pérez Galdós, *De Oñate a La Granja* (Madrid 2006), p. 106, where the poetry of the 1830s is compared to the knighthood tales of Cervantes' time; 88, 106, 110, 128, 163, 166–221. Emily Letemendía, ‘Galdós and the Spanish Romantics: *Los Apostólicos*’, *Anales Galdosianos*, Año XVI (1981), pp. 15–32; pp. 15–17.

⁵⁸ Geoffrey Ribbans, *History and Fiction in Galdós's Narratives* (Oxford 1993), p. 70. Ribbans suggests that ‘the desolate post-1898 perspective’ influenced this desire to change narrative course.

⁵⁹ Benito Pérez Galdós, *Aita Tettauen* (Madrid 1989 [1979]), p. 24.

of the eleventh century, the great Christian victory of 1212 at Las Navas de Tolosa, the campaigns of 'El Gran Capitán' Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba in Renaissance Italy, Francisco Pizarro's conquest of Peru, and Charles V's campaigns against Tunis and Oran in the sixteenth century. Fanciful as these images seem in the novel, they had already taken shape, at the time of writing, in the litany of heroic deeds accomplished throughout history by Spaniards (that is, Castilians) when Spain was great. The exalted aim is to found a new empire in North Africa, which, instead of the peninsula, becomes the invaded territory, and thereby to tear down the Crescent banner of Islam.⁶⁰

The discussion in this 'tiny civil war' soon hinges upon the difference, if any, between Spaniards and Moors. There seems to be a greater difference between Basques and Andalusians than between Moors and *Malagueños*. In fact, Gonzalo Ansúrez—the uncle of one of the young soldiers—lives in Tetuan alongside the Moors, as a merchant in wool and almonds, and is known as 'el moro' and is said to have been to Mecca. Whose side will he be on, the soldiers ask? Then comes the issue of why the war was started in the first place. The conclusion reached is that the government intended to stir up patriotism in order to replace the civil wars, seizures of power, and general turbulence which had characterized peninsular Spain since the 1810s. O'Donnell was copying Napoleon III, with the comment that Spain copies everything from France—even its imperialism.⁶¹

For Galdós and his generation, the September Revolution of 1868, which removed Isabella II, was Spain's 1848. The fourth novel of the last series, *La Primera República* (1911), sees Spain's first attempt at republican government disintegrate before factionalism and extreme regionalism. With contemporary upheavals in mind, Galdós brought to the Spanish novel the mass participation and unyielding warfare of the years between 1808 and the Restoration of the Bourbons in 1874. In Bourbon Spain from the mid-1870s, private power and regional identities remained deeply rooted, while the promise of liberty gave way to corruption and repression.⁶²

TECHNIQUES AND BALANCES

Each of the five series was considerably different in approach and content. The balance of history and imagination shifted during the length of production. In the first series, an overriding problem was the use of the first-person narrative. This presented more problems than it resolved, since Gabriel was supposed to be relating events which had happened decades earlier. Furthermore, the relationship between Gabriel's personal experience and the historical events of considerable magnitude in which he was involved, although well-handled in *La Corte de Carlos IV* and *Cádiz*,

⁶⁰ Galdós, *Aita Tettauen*, pp. 24, 48, 65 'esa Berbería bautizada que llamamos España'.

⁶¹ Galdós, *Aita Tettauen*, pp. 11, 13–18, 23, 32.

⁶² Benito Pérez Galdós, *La Primera República* (Madrid 2002), pp. 70–1, 86–7, 100. Álvarez Junco, *Mater dolorosa*, pp. 572–3.

always remained uneasy. Essentially, the historical events seemed to have little impact on the process of his growth to maturity. For that reason, history and personal experience hung apart, rather than the former influencing the development of Gabriel's character and affecting his outlook on life. Important as the author recognizes the historical events to be, he nevertheless comes down primarily on the side of Gabriel's personal development as the rationale of his first series of novels. This gives the books an unresolved feeling.⁶³

The second series deals with events which occurred between 1813 and 1834. The heroic age of the first series has passed, but a deepening sense of frustration and failure takes hold of the country. Religious conflict and civil war expose the inability of liberal administrations to resolve Spain's problems. The author then begins to question whether, in fact, Spain is capable of governing itself at all. This is where, in the *Episodios*, the heroic people of the first series, challenging the French occupation of Madrid and resisting the Napoleonic armies in the sieges of Gerona and Zaragoza, has become the uncontrollable mob we have seen in Scott, Manzoni, and Dickens.⁶⁴

Even so, the historical events are not in the foreground for most of these novels. On the contrary, the technique continued to be that of the 'episode'—an existential cutting-in to a continuing drama involving fictional characters. Peter Bush explains this clearly in his study of the third series:

Fictional characters are given an importance at least equal to that of historical figures. The reader's interest is maintained by developments in the lives of fictional characters as well as by the course of Spanish history. Their personal crises reflect on the crisis of Spain. This aspect of the *Episodios* is itself an expression of Galdós's view that history is not simply dates, big events and the activities of the nobility or politicians, but these things as experienced by ordinary people.⁶⁵

There is little in this view with which the George Eliot of *Middlemarch* could disagree.

In Ribbons's view, the balance changed strikingly, though unsuccessfully, in the final four volumes of the fifth series, from *Amadeo I* onwards, in which Galdós sought to develop new techniques without altering the historical approach too radically.⁶⁶

Three outstanding problems can be seen in the *Episodios*. The first is the question of the relationship between the moral or psychological function of the characters and their position within historical time. Second is the relation between the fictional and the didactic elements in the author's project. Finally, the position of ideology—where the novelist is taking his readers, and why—is never fully resolved. Nevertheless, Ferreras is correct in arguing that the interweaving of history and fiction is largely successful until the final series, since the two spheres are never

⁶³ Dendle, *Galdós*, pp. 41, 44–5, 130–2, 141, 181–2.

⁶⁴ Dendle, *Galdós*, pp. 32–3.

⁶⁵ Bush, 'The Craftsmanship and Literary Value', pp. 33–4.

⁶⁶ Ribbons, *History and Fiction*, p. 228. Behiels, *La cuarta serie*, pp. 43–55.

confused. While developments in the historical sphere are already known, the outcome of those in the fictional sphere cannot be predicted.⁶⁷

The historical novel as interpreted by Galdós had little room for regional sentiment. The Catalan cultural revival from the 1850s, known as the *Renaixença*, played no part in his work—still less when the Catalan search for a distinct identity became overtly political and nationalist after c.1900. This was a nationalism looking back to the language, literature, and achievements of medieval Catalonia as its basis, incompatible with the Spanish national identity Galdós sought to foster in his *Episodios*. Nor was there a place in Galdós for the idea of a Catholic Spain developed by Juan Donoso Cortés (1809–53), Jaime Balmes (1810–48), or Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo (1856–1912) in opposition to the Liberal Spain which had first manifested itself in 1810 and 1820.⁶⁸

The *Episodios* took the serious historical novel into the early twentieth century. They initially adopted some of the techniques of the popular novel and the vogue for colourful Hispanic customs, which also drew foreigners, such as Merimée or the composer Bizet, to Spanish themes. Galdós shared with other nineteenth-century writers a concern for ‘national character’. The *Episodios* identified the national vices—egoism, indiscipline, fanaticism, empty rhetoric, and ostentation—which, in his view, had dragged Spain down.⁶⁹

The 46 *Episodes* scarcely mention Spanish America—and Spanish Cuba does not feature in any of them. Only one *Episode* actually ‘arrives’ in America: volume 38, the eighth title of the fourth series; and even then the political background is the brief attempt to reassert Spanish naval power along the Pacific coast in 1866.⁷⁰ None of the earlier volumes deal directly with the impact of the loss of continental America on the Spain of the 1820s. This signifies that for the author of the *Episodes*, the imperial history of the previous three centuries has already been put aside by the 1870s. Henceforth, the single-minded objective is to ascertain the nature of peninsular Spain through the medium of historical fiction. This endeavour took place as liberal historiography developed alongside it. These novels do not stand on the brink of a new technique, and the symbolism in them is scarcely developed. They did, however, demonstrate that in the decades after 1870 the historical novel was by no means dead.⁷¹

In Spain, furthermore, Galdós’s success with the historical novel influenced both Miguel de Unamuno and Pío Baroja; each of them employed this genre, from 1897–1932 and 1912–34 respectively, to throw light on contemporary issues. Perhaps the closest in theme to Galdós’s later series is Ramón J. Sender’s *Mr. Witt*

⁶⁷ Ferreras, *Galdós y la invención*, p. 98. The intrigues and love-life of Tito Liviano prevail over the dramatic and decisive events of the early 1870s, as in *La Primera Republica* and *De Cartago a Sagunto* (Madrid 2009) [1911].

⁶⁸ See Martínez Torró, *El alba del romanticismo*, p. 184, and Henry Kamen, *Imagining Spain. Historical Myth and National Identity* (New Haven and London 2008), pp. 83–5.

⁶⁹ Dendle, *Galdós*, pp. 129–33.

⁷⁰ Benito Pérez Galdós, *La vuelta al mundo en la 'Numancia'* (Madrid 1987 [1906]). The Cuban insurrection of 1868–70 is mentioned in *De Cartago a Sagunto*, p. 85.

⁷¹ Behiels, *La cuarta serie*, p. 27.

en el Cantón (Madrid 1936; not reprinted until 1968). This novel focuses on the relations between husband and wife—British and Spanish respectively—at the time of the regionalist movements known as ‘cantonalism’, which was particularly strong in the port of Cartagena in 1873.

VALERA'S LATE ADDITION: *MORSAMOR* [1899]

Morsamor—the name given to the central character by a gypsy palmist—combined death and love—essentially the central theme of the novel. Fray Miguel de Zuheros, the bored and frustrated Franciscan of Seville, who becomes Morsamor, is of the same age as Valera when the novel opens. His learned colleague, Fray Ambrosio de Utrera, an expert in the magical arts, transforms him into a young man around 25 years of age, who with his amanuensis, Tiburcio, proceeds on his adventures through the world of Iberian expansion, beginning in Lisbon in 1521. This, then, is also a novel of travels, encounters, and investigations by two young men. Fray Miguel becomes ‘el aventurero castellano’ in this the largest section of the book.⁷²

Valera has broken free of Spanish realism and moved into the realms of fantasy as developed in other European countries. A successful novelist with *Pepita Jiménez* [1874], which is still widely read today, Valera had also been a poet, a liberal journalist of renown in the Madrid of the 1860s, a member of both the Cortes and Senate at various times, and a distinguished diplomat with broadly ranging knowledge of European and American countries. His Letters, particularly from Russia, where he was posted in 1857, are among the richest in the Castilian language. Valera began his diplomatic career in Naples in 1848, Lisbon in 1850, and Rio de Janeiro in 1851–3, acquiring a deep affection for the culture of the Portuguese-speaking world. Throughout his life he advocated close relations between the two Iberian countries. The adventures of Morsamor begin at the court of Lisbon in 1521, at the height of Portuguese prestige. The novel repeatedly extols Iberian achievements in the sixteenth century, when, at the time of publication, the Spain of 1898–99 was in the process of losing its remaining overseas possessions to the United States. While contemporaries in the novel make their claims for the spread of Iberian culture and the defence of the unity of Christendom, a very practical Portuguese sea-captain argues that expansion increased knowledge of the natural world.⁷³

The author's identification with the Renaissance—Italian and Iberian—as both historical influence and symbol of regeneration, permeates the novel. This Renaissance humanism not only encompasses neo-Platonism but also the esoteric arts, in both of which Valera had a special interest throughout his career. He combines this with explorations of Asiatic religions—particularly Hinduism and Buddhism.

⁷² Juan Valera, *Morsamor* (Seville 2003 [1899]), pp. 41–6, 65–267 for the adventures: see pp. 65–9, 71, 98.

⁷³ Valera, *Morsamor*, pp. 53–4, 73–5, 82–3, 119–20.

Morsamor will sail to India and engage in dialogue with their exponents. Valera had read Hindu scriptures in German translation. These authorial investigations should be seen as explorations of alternative perceptions of human existence to those which had hitherto prevailed in Iberian cultures.⁷⁴

This novel—which may in time prove to be Valera’s *magnum opus*—is scarcely known, even in Spain, and it is rarely, if ever, included in contemporary discussions of Spanish literature.⁷⁵ At the time of publication it was largely dismissed as the ramblings of an old man. The striking departure from realism, however, marks it out for inclusion in the Modernist movement already in evidence elsewhere in Europe (as we shall discuss in Chapter 13). At first, *Morsamor* appears to stand out as an exception to the main thrust of Spanish letters at the time, but it was the work of an author deeply embedded in all the Hispanic literary traditions. While the realist mode had been abandoned, the themes which preoccupied realist writers certainly remained in the forefront of this book. Furthermore, Valera’s close attention to psychology—already evident in *Pepita Jiménez*—should not be overlooked here. This places *Morsamor* in the mainstream of developments in the novel from the time of Clarín’s *La Regenta* [1884–5] and Galdós’s *Fortunata y Jacinta* [1886–7]. As an historical novel, *Morsamor* is nothing like any of the *Episodios Nacionales*, but it still asks profound questions concerning Iberia’s role in the worlds of the sixteenth and early twentieth centuries, implicitly juxtaposing them.

⁷⁴ Valera, *Morsamor*, pp. 207–27.

⁷⁵ For an English version of this novel see Robert G. Trimble, *Morsamor. A Novel by Don Juan Valera* (Lewiston, NY 2007). See also the same author’s *Juan Valera en sus novelas* (Madrid 1998), pp. 171–88.

The struggle for identity and purpose in the Russian historical novel: from Pushkin to Tolstoy

Imperial considerations affected Russia's self-perception as a nation. The nineteenth-century debate revolved around three basic issues. Was Russia primarily European and determined to define itself as such with Peter the Great's new capital of St. Petersburg? Was it partly Asiatic in character, given its Mongol and Tatar experience and the eastward expansion through Siberia? Or was it the mediator between Europe and Asia? None of these questions had easy answers, and a strong case could be made for all of them. Yet, the ethnic heartland of the Russians was still Europe, and this posed the perennial problem of the position of the acquired territories in relation to the Russian nation.¹

As elsewhere in Europe, the study of history and the appearance of the historical novel shaped Russia's exploration of identity during the nineteenth century, and raised national consciousness. Although history in Russia remained a branch of literature during the eighteenth century, and historians did not write for a general public at that time, changes came at the turn of the century. Russia's consciousness of its role as a European power during the reign of Catherine the Great (1762–96) increased with the victory over Napoleon in 1812. Yet the country's core lay far in the east of Europe, and expansion through Siberia gave it a further Asiatic dimension. Orthodoxy had drawn Russia southwards to Byzantium, providing it with a religious identity, different from the Latin west and the Islamic south-east. French and then Russian translations of Scott novels in the 1820s threw into question the relationship of Russian history to the rest of Europe.

ELITES, EDUCATION, AND HISTORY

In Russia, censorship and police control posed continual obstacles. Orthodoxy—the religion of state—reinforced imperial authority. Despite the foundation of

¹ Vera Tolz, *Russia. Inventing the Nation* (London 2001), pp. 155–90, for Russia's ambiguous position between East and West. Dominic Lieven, 'Russian Imperial and Soviet Identities', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, VIII (1998), pp. 253–69, and 'Dilemmas of Empire, 1850–1918. Power, Territory, Identity', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34, no. 2 (April 1999), pp. 163–200.

Moscow University in 1755 and the St Petersburg Lycée in 1811, where Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) was educated, secular education was still in its early stages. The dichotomy between St Petersburg and Moscow remained a *leitmotiv* until the collapse of the imperial system in 1917. In the former—centre of Court and officialdom—censorship tended to be more severe than in Moscow, providing a somewhat freer atmosphere at Moscow University.²

Tsar Alexander I (1801–25) sponsored the establishment of the Moscow Society of History and Russian Antiquities in 1804 at the city's university, which was followed by other universities, such as Kazan in the following year. Publication of historical documents followed later: in 1817, the Collection of State Charters and Treaties of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs appeared, with documents which ran from 1229 to 1696. The archivist P. M. Stroyev embarked upon two expeditions, in 1817–23 and 1828–34, inside the country to search for historical records, for instance, in the old monasteries, and discovered documents dating back to the later eleventh century. The first publications of the Archaeological Commission appeared in 1834. In historical writing the real turning point came with the publication of the first eight volumes of the *History of the Russian State* by Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826), a product of Moscow University. This 'major cultural event' opened the way for the reading public's access to a literary and accessible history; 3,000 copies were published—more than three times the standard quantity at that time. The *History* would reach twelve volumes by 1829. Pushkin read this work at the age of 19, as would Tolstoy, at the age of 25, in 1853. Karamzin's influence led to the formation of the first generation of professional historians, whose prime concern was the creation of a modern national identity.³

Karamzin was a writer before he became a historian. Two historical tales, framed against a medieval background, had appeared in 1792 and 1802, and travel writing about the Caucasus also during the 1790s. He had been in Paris in 1789–90 at the time of the outbreak of the Revolution, but had never become a revolutionary, believing in steady reform of the existing system rather than mass movements for political transformation. The Ancient historians and Gibbon and Hume were his principal influences. Having little respect for French and German historical writings about Russia, Karamzin turned to history because of the absence of any readable general history of his own country. A secular conservative, he was critical of the policies of Peter the Great (1689–1725), which in his view weakened the nobility, the Church, and traditional customs. The narrative in Karamzin's *History* was complemented by documentary evidence, as part of the apparatus of research,

² Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801–1917* (Oxford 1967), pp. 36–7. The St. Petersburg Academy, planned by Peter the Great, opened in 1726. The University of Moscow had two state secondary schools under it. Catherine II expanded secular elementary and secondary education and teachers' training.

³ Anatole G. Mazour, *Modern Russian Historiography: a Revised Edition* (Westport, Conn. and London 1975 [1939]), pp. 67–78. Caryl Emerson, *Boris Godunov. Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (Bloomington 1986), p. 10. Lieven, 'Russian Identities', pp. 254–7.

but the two sections were never successfully integrated. Nevertheless, Karamzin's work enabled Russia to join the general European debate on the nature and purpose of history, and provided the language in which succeeding historians could express themselves.⁴

Russia, then, shared in the general European perception of the nineteenth century through the study of a past, which frequently went back to remoter times. The century invested past events with significance and purposes that belonged to the present. But was Russia an empire or a nation—or could it be both at the same time? Dominic Lieven points to the three elements of unity in the imperial state—the dynasty, the army, and the Orthodox Church—but cautions, at the same time, that, as it drew on, the nineteenth century exposed both their fragility and the widening gap between state and people.⁵

The Empire, superficially modern, was essentially backward and unwieldy. The gap between the educated few and the mass of the Russian population—overwhelmingly rural and whose terms of reference were derived from Orthodoxy—seemed unbridgeable. The central issue for nineteenth-century Russia was mass illiteracy, sustained by the imperial government's fear of popular education. At the same time, the Empire faced competition from rival powers but also absorbed foreign influences, coming generally from France and the German territories. Court nobles in St. Petersburg, the imperial capital, habitually spoke French and drew from French culture whatever seemed relevant to Russia. Admiration for France, so evident among the fictional characters in *War and Peace*, such as Prince Andrei Bolkonsky and the quintessential liberal, Pierre Bezukhov, gave way in 1812 to patriotic defence of the invaded mother country. Alexander I, in the latter part of his reign one of the principal architects of the Counter-Revolutionary settlement in Europe after 1814–15, and his successor, Nicholas I (1825–55), preferred to orient young intellectuals towards the German states, rather than a tainted France, for their education abroad. Yet, by the 1820s, a third influence could be felt in Russian literature in the forms of Scott's historical novels, Byron's poetry, and Shakespeare's theatre. These provided different and sometimes contradictory elements from which Russian intellectuals might draw.⁶

⁴ J. L. Black, *Nicholas Karamzin and Russian Society in the Nineteenth Century: A Study of Russian Political and Historical Thought* (Toronto 1975), pp. xiv–xvi, 95–155. Gary Marker, *Publishing, Printing and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700–1800* (Princeton 1985). Andrew Kahn, 'The rise of the Russian novel and the problem of romance', in Mander, *Remapping the Rise*, pp. 185–98. Emerson, *Boris Godunov*, pp. 30–40, 57–8.

⁵ Lieven, 'Dilemmas of Empire', pp. 196–7.

⁶ Donald Fanger, 'Gogol and his Reader', in William Mills Todd III, *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800–1914* (Stanford 1978), pp. 61–95; pp. 71–4, for the authorities' fear of the printed word and their belief that the public should be protected from it. Seton-Watson, *Russian Empire*, pp. 224–6, 253–4. Mark G. Atchutter (tr. Neil Stewart), 'The Rise and Fall of Walter Scott's Popularity in Russia', in Pittock, Murray (ed.), *The Reception of Scott in Europe* (London and New York 2006), pp. 204–40. Isaiah Berlin, 'A Remarkable Decade, I, The Birth of the Russian Intelligentsia', in *Russian Thinkers*, edited by Henry Hardy and Alison Kelly (Harmondsworth 1984 [London and New York 1978]), pp. 114–35: pp. 119–20, 123–4.

THE IMPACT OF ROMANTICISM IN RUSSIA

Russian Romanticism, which began with Pushkin's poetry, initially under the influence of Byron, originated in a stark period of reaction much as Spanish Romanticism had under Ferdinand VII. Both mostly ran counter to it, sought to respond to other Western and Central European currents, discover ways of circumventing censorship, and, despite outside influences, still drew much from native roots. As in the eighteenth century, the small circle of educated Russians in the two principal cities drew from the western countries what suited them. Russian Romantics, for instance, drew from Shakespearean theatre whatever ammunition they could use in their battle against Neo-Classicism, much as their French and German counterparts had been doing. In this way, Shakespeare became part of an internal Russian polemic as the model for rule-breaking and the mixing of styles. Pushkin took what he needed from Shakespeare, but developed the character of Boris Godunov in a different way to the English dramatist in his play.⁷

Russian intellectuals likewise applied the propositions of German philosophers, such as Herder, Fichte, Schelling, F. Schlegel, and Hegel, to Russian circumstances. German metaphysics filled the open space between Orthodox dogma and ritual, on the one hand, and the legacy of eighteenth-century rationalism with its emphasis on the primacy of the natural sciences, on the other. Like their counterparts, Russian Romantics exalted the imagination and sought to identify a characteristic spirit of the nation. This led them to view the peasant as the bearer of national tradition, and threw into question the situation of the majority of the population. Several Romantics questioned the legacy of Peter the Great, whose reforms had widened the gap between the elite and the majority, portraying the Tsar at times as Anti-Christ. The issue of Russian identity highlighted the Empire's multinational character, while historical literature identified the age-old enemies: the Poles and the Turks. Writers such as Mikhail Lermontov and Nikolai Gogol drew from the Russian environment, whether contemporary or historical, rather than from foreign sources of Romanticism. Everyone, however, experienced the effects of an often ignorant and inefficient bureaucracy—the object of Gogol's satirical novel, *Dead Souls* [1842].⁸

⁷ Seton-Watson, *Russian Empire*, p. 225: 'the Russian intellectual élite belonged to the contemporary European culture. They were equals to the graduates of Paris or Oxford.' He points to the emergence of 'an unofficial cultural élite' during the reign of Catherine the Great, with members also from the lesser nobility and small middle class. By the 1830s, 'a new social group emerged who lived by ideas', and earned their living as teachers or writers, such as the non-noble Vessiarion Belinsky. Yet, it also included young men from rich noble families, such as Alexander Herzen and Mikhail Bakunin. This group came to be known in the 1860s by the Russian-originating term, 'the intelligentsia'. Emerson, *Boris Godunov*, pp. 110–12.

⁸ German works, avidly consumed in the 1840's Moscow circle of intellectuals, presented problems of Russian translation. See Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts: Memoirs*, vol 2 (London 2008, tr. 1924, [written 1857]), pp. 113–19. Dan Ungurianu, *Plotting History. The Russian Historical Novel in the Imperial Age* (Madison 2007), pp. 51–2, 65, 74. Isaiah Berlin, 'II. German Romanticism in Petersburg and Moscow', in *Russian Thinkers*, pp. 136–49; pp. 136–7, 140–4: repression drove social and political ideas into the relatively safe realm of literature, as already occurred to a lesser degree in Germany.

Pushkin first came to celebrity for his poetry and his outspoken views. The latter caused him two periods of internal exile—in the south from 1820 to 1824, and to the family estate south-east of Pskov from 1824 to 1826. Pushkin turned to the theatre during this latter exile, making historical issues the subject of his poetic drama *Boris Godunov*, written in 1825 but delayed until 1831, because the censor was publishing a historical novel on the same subject. The choice of this medium recalled the earlier presentation of historical issues in theatrical form by Goethe and Schiller, but Pushkin's play had influences and purposes different from those of his Weimar predecessors. In the first place, its overall concern was Russian national identity. Pushkin went back to the Time of Troubles in the early seventeenth century; that is, the period of disputed succession following the expanding absolutism of Ivan III and IV before the establishment of the Romanov dynasty on the throne. The controversy surrounding the personality and role of Boris Godunov, who dominated Russia from 1584 to 1605, became one of the first historical stories to capture the imagination of Russia's nineteenth-century reading public. This, then, would be Pushkin's first attempt to examine a period of national turbulence in fictional form, albeit in poetic drama.⁹

The publication, in 1821–4, of volumes 9–11 of Karamzin's *History* specifically dealt with this violent period and the theme of abuse of power. Although this work viewed history more as the interaction of individuals at the top levels of society, it provided Pushkin with the personalities and historical context for his drama. Furthermore, it again raised the question which had preoccupied Schiller: the relation between character and events.¹⁰ Pushkin did not necessarily adopt Karamzin's view of history. Russian intellectual circles during the 1820s were receiving the works of the new French historians, such as Thierry and Guizot. These historians—liberal in their political orientation—pointed to the great leap in human progress which they saw resulting from Enlightenment and Revolution. Where, however, did Russia, already one of the Great Powers of Europe, stand in relation to this? The Russian Enlightenment had been limited and then aborted; there had been no subsequent triumph of the Third Estate or of limited constitutional monarchy. The repression of the Decembrist Revolt in 1825 suggested that Russia had moved backwards rather than forwards to progress. This would not have been the first time in its history that Russia had gone backwards. Pushkin, viewing history from a Russian perspective, found himself struggling with both Karamzin's view and the inappropriateness of the Western model, which seemed to have no

⁹ Paul Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin: a Study of Alexander Pushkin's Prose Fiction* (Stanford 1976), pp. 5–7, 12, 14, 17, 118, 162. Pushkin came from an old noble family marginalized under Catherine II. Svetlana Evdokimova, *Pushkin's Historical Imagination* (New Haven and London 1999), pp. x, xii–xiii, 23, 42. Caryl Emerson, 'Pushkin's Drama', in Andrew Kahn (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pushkin* (Cambridge 2006), pp. 57–74; pp. 60–5. Emerson, *Boris Godunov*, pp. 9, 22–3, 53, 89, 174–82. Schiller attempted a play on this theme, the fragment *Demetrius*, in 1804–5.

¹⁰ Emerson, *Boris Godunov*, pp. 61–3, 73, 81. Evdokimova, *Historical Imagination*, pp. 42–3, 53, 66. François Guizot, *Histoire Générale de la civilisation en Europe* (Paris 1828).

validity in the Russian Empire. There seemed no likelihood that there would be any such thing as progress in Russia.¹¹

In *Boris Godunov*, Pushkin departed from the earlier poetic influences of Byron and immersed himself in Shakespeare, mediated through the French translation of the plays in 1821, preceded by a long essay by Guizot on the playwright. The influences of A. W. Schlegel and Mme de Staël's theories of literature could also be traced. From Shakespeare and Karamzin, Pushkin developed the priority of character in the play, while still retaining the tightness of form, though not the unities of time and space, recommended by the French Classical dramatists. The plurality of viewpoints and styles came from Shakespeare, but were put to the service of a distinctly Russian theme, with the focus on the nature of power, the crisis of identity suffered by Boris, the role of accident in history, and the problem of narrating past events. Although posing difficulties of production, the play used flexible dialogue at a time when Russian dramatic language had not caught up with prose fiction. Pushkin was writing in the aftermath of Schiller and at a time when little of note appeared on the Russian stage during the 1820s—at least not in the view of Romantics, who continued to abhor anything that smacked of Neo-Classicism.¹²

Pushkin had already been working on an historical novel set at the time of Peter the Great and on a fictionalized version of his own great-grandfather, who as a child had been brought to Russia from Africa. This was *The Blackamoor of Peter the Great*, begun in the summer of 1827. He wrote six chapters and part of a seventh, and then abandoned this first attempt at an historical novel. The novel did not focus primarily on the Tsar, but sought to reveal his character through the impact of his reforms on different social groups. In 1830 Pushkin explained that he intended to portray a particular historical epoch through the medium of a fictional narrative. At that time he was beginning to understand the problems involved in historical fiction, which he believed could reveal the distinct atmosphere of a past age, especially by drawing attention to the cultural assumptions which had then flourished. *The Blackamoor*, however, departed from the Scott model in that it did not focus on any particular historical event. Instead the object seems to have been to throw the light on character, even though the novel was not conceived as predominantly psychological. In this way, Pushkin hoped to distinguish the

¹¹ Alexander Pushkin, *Boris Godunov and other Dramatic Works* (translated by James E. Falen, Oxford 2007), scene 7, pp. 27–8, and scene 20, pp. 82–5, for Boris in Shakespearean mode on power and conscience. As we shall see later, in Gogol's novel, the Poles are the enemy. David M. Bethea, 'Pushkin: From Byron to Shakespeare', in Neil Cornwell (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature* (London and New York 2001), pp. 74–88; pp. 76–7, 80–1, 83–4. Pushkin had a French translation of A. W. Schlegel, *Versuchung über dramatische Kunst und Literatur, [1809–11]* in his library. Another influence was Madame de Staël, *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (1800). Emerson, *Boris Godunov*, pp. 89–91, 107–8.

¹² Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin*, pp. 5, 24–5, 28–9, 90. Evdokimova, *Historical Imagination*, pp. 139–72. Simon Dixon, 'Pushkin and History', in *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 118–29; p. 119. Pushkin was familiar with Horace Walpole and Scott through French translations. It is possible that he believed writing historical novels, so much in vogue across Europe at that time, a better source of income than poetry. Readership in Russia was only expanding slowly from the 1820s.

historical novel from both the novel and history. The character of Ibragim, the Moor who had been educated in France before arrival in Russia, also played the symbolic role as cultural mediator between the rough-speaking nobles (*boyars*) and the different values of Western Europe. Tsar Peter occupied the role of defining ‘moderniser’ determined to pull Russia from its past and impose a Westernized mentality on it by using the power of the state. Pushkin was never able to finish his *Blackamoor*, because he had trouble with the problem of the narrator.¹³

The first completed historical novel of the Scott type was Mikhail Zagorsky’s *Yuri Miloslavsky, or the Russians of 1612* [1829], in which the young hero is caught between two sides during the Time of Troubles. Pushkin admired this highly successful book by the author of six such novels. Ivan Lazhechnikov then published three historical novels between 1831 and 1836, of which *The Ice Palace* [1835] portrayed St. Petersburg as a city of illusion, intrigue, and despair. Again the hero is caught between conflicting loyalties. Better known, however, is Gogol’s portrayal of the Zaporozhe Cossacks’ confrontation with the Poles in his *Taras Bulba* [1834]. In historical terms, the Cossacks of the Southern Ukrainian steppes had been struggling with the Polish–Lithuanian Kingdom from 1648, which sought to clip their independence and subordinate these free-ranging tribesmen to an alien monarchical and religious system. Russia—much weaker then than the powerful monarchy it would become in the eighteenth century—seemed to them to be a potential ally. Several confusions of identity appear in the novel—Orthodox, Russian, and Cossack—although the prime enemies are clearly the Catholic Poles. The Jews, caught in the middle, are despised by the Cossacks as money-lenders and estate-managers, and ranked along with the Muslims as ‘unbelievers’. Although the leading characters are fictional, Gogol, born in the steppes and with Cossack blood, knew the region and the people well, providing authenticity not through historical detail but by costume, behaviour, and dialogue. As a boy, he had listened to his grandfather’s stories of the Cossack war-like bands between the Don and the Dnieper. The novel deals with the ending of the Cossacks’ liberties. Again, the lost-liberties theme, which we have seen so often as the subject of historical drama and fiction, recurs.¹⁴

The great difference from Michelet’s almost contemporaneous *History of the French Revolution* is that Gogol’s ‘people’ have the tribal existence of an ethnic group in the seventeenth century and are not involved in shaping nineteenth-century nationhood. They defend the past rather than shape the future. They have more in common with *Les Chouans* than with the vision of Michelet. The violence in the novel is both primeval and political, and both sides—‘barbarian’ and ‘civilized’—have no compunction in committing it. Gogol departs from the Scott model by having no historical characters at all, and his portrayal of barbarities recalls

¹³ For Pushkin’s *Blackamoor* fragment of 1828, see Paul Debreczeny, *The Complete Works of Alexander Pushkin*, vol. 9 (Downham Market 2001), pp. 27–66.

¹⁴ Nikolai V. Gogol, *Taras Bulba* (translated by Peter Constantine, New York 2004), pp. 8, 19, 23, 25, 30, 42, 45, 77, 89–92, 131–3. Atshutter, ‘Rise and Fall’, pp. 213, 215. Ungurianu, *Plotting History*, pp. 16–17, 22–3, 28–9, 32, 37–8. In the 1842 edition, Gogol removed many Ukrainian phrases in order to stress the Russianness of the Cossacks.

Hugo. Religion and ethnicity drive on the compulsion to violence, which Taras Bulba regards as an inherent and necessary characteristic of the whole Cossack race.¹⁵

Occasional descriptive passages convey the open spaces, the communal spirit, and, at the same time, the impact of war. The Cossack force is camped outside the Polish city of Dubno:

Countless stars flickered in the sky with their sharp delicate shimmer. Carts bearing grimy tar buckets and heaped with all the goods and provisions seized from the enemy were strewn over the field. Everywhere, next to the carts, under them, near them, Zaporozhians were stretched out on the grass. They were all sleeping in striking positions, their heads resting on sacks, on lambskin hats, or on a comrade's hips. A sabre, a pistol, a short-tipped pipe with brass trim, and a flint lay beside every Cossack. Heavy oxen, their legs tucked under them, lay in large, whitish clumps and from a distance looked like grey stones scattered over the rises and dips of the fields. The thick snoring of the sleeping army rose from the grass and was echoed by the light neighing of stallions in the fields indignant over their tethered legs. And yet a majestic but threatening element seeped into the beauty of this July night. It was the glow of settlements burning in the distance.¹⁶

Throughout the book, Russia—presented more as an ideal than as a reality—becomes an overwhelming, if perhaps anachronistic, presence. A sense of nineteenth-century Russian nationalism permeates the narrative, even though Cossacks are the protagonists. Russia, in Gogol's short novel, represents the Holy Faith of Orthodoxy, and the repeated Cossack appeal to it stems from inherited memories of the first Russian state of Kievan Rus long before the Mongol invasions.¹⁷

This is not a simple conflict between peasant or tribe and central power, or between right and wrong. The complications are manifold. The tribal patriarch's sons have been studying at the University of Kiev, which might be described as the local pole of European culture, mediated mainly in a Polish and Catholic form. There is a love story, which cuts across the Cossack–Polish divide. The younger son, Andri, becomes infatuated with the daughter of the Polish Governor of Dubno, takes the Polish side, and is denounced and killed by his father as a traitor to his people. Here once more is the theme of love across religious and ethnic boundaries by two people on opposite sides, although this time only Andri is destroyed by it. Taras Bulba later witnesses the execution of his elder son, Ostap, by the Poles.¹⁸

One of the most astute readers of Gogol was the Spanish novelist and short-story writer Emilia Pardo Bazán, who was deeply rooted in Galicia—its interior one of Spain's most backward regions during her lifetime. Writing in the second half of the century, she argued that Homer and the Greek epic tradition influenced Gogol's historical novel, that he opens it in a similar way to the medieval Spanish epic of *El Cid*, and that Cervantes' influence permeates his novels—especially his

¹⁵ Gogol, *Taras Bulba*, pp. 10–11, 32–3, 49–52. Ungarianu, *Plotting History*, p. 36.

¹⁶ Gogol, *Taras Bulba*, p. 54.

¹⁷ Gogol, *Taras Bulba*, pp. 8–9, 97, 100, 135–6, 141.

¹⁸ Gogol, *Taras Bulba*, pp. 19–21, 65–72, 78–80, 109–10.

masterwork, *Dead Souls*. Gogol, she points out, went to Spain and studied Spanish literature in depth, with particular attention to Cervantes. It is especially interesting that a Spanish writer should in this way seek to interest her compatriots in Russian literature, since both countries developed a powerful fictional tradition during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁹

PUSHKIN: THE HISTORICAL NOVELIST AND HIS WORLD

After the two periods of internal exile, the new Tsar, Nicholas I, allowed Pushkin to return to the capital in order to pursue his declared interest in writing about Peter the Great by researching in the state archives. This subject understandably concerned the Romanov dynasty's view of itself. For his part, Pushkin regarded the age of Peter the Great as the equivalent of a revolution in Russian life and perceptions. This was an even greater and more long-lasting preoccupation of his than the Time of Troubles. The subject still remained controversial in Pushkin's time and would remain so for long afterwards, since Peter's brutal modernization challenged Russia's nature and identity. Pushkin's attempts to reveal the essence of the Petrine age appeared in different artistic forms: the historical novel, the historical narrative, and epic poetry. In 1831, Nicholas appointed him Court historiographer. Pushkin hoped to write a complete history of the Petrine era. In 1828–9 he had already published *Poltava*, an epic poem celebrating Russia's defeat of Charles XII of Sweden in 1709, and in 1833, a powerful portrayal of Peter as the great leader.²⁰

Once let loose in the state archive, however, Pushkin abandoned Peter the Great for a time, and instead concentrated on the Pugachev Rebellion in both historical study and the historical novel. This time he completed them. The Pugachev Rebellion of 1773–4 in southern and eastern (European) Russia forms the context of Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*. In dimension and duration, nothing in Western Europe had been comparable to this insurrection between the German Peasants' War of the 1520s and the French Revolutionary *Grande Peur* of 1789. Pugachev was a Cossack claiming to be the murdered Tsar Peter III, dethroned by his wife, Catherine the Great, in a palace coup in 1762. Pushkin discovered the sources for the rebellion in the archive, and travelled in the districts of Kazan and Orenburg—on the upper Volga and Ural, respectively—for the purpose of studying the geographical context and interviewing what survivors he could find still alive.²¹

¹⁹ Emilia Pardo Bazán, 'La revolución y la novela en Rusia', Lecture given to the Madrid Athenaeum, autumn 1887. This forms the prologue to the Editorial Porrúa edition of the shorter works of Gogol (Mexico City 2000).

²⁰ Debreczeny, *Complete Works of Alexander Pushkin*, vol. 5, *The Bronze Horseman and other Narrative Verse* (Downham Market, Norfolk 2000), pp. 217–66, 'Poltava'; pp. 297–310, 'The Bronze Horseman. (A Petersburg Tale)'. Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin*, p. 20. Evdokimova, *Historical Imagination*, pp. x–xi, 17–18, 44–7, 50–1, 173–208, 209–31.

²¹ Paul Avrich, *Russian Rebels, 1600–1800* (New York 1972), pp. 179–254, for the Pugachev Rebellion. Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin*, p. 20.

This moment of crisis in Russian history clearly fired Pushkin's imagination. Yet he wrote his history of the rebellion in language without embellishment. It is an attempt to explain why, how, and where the Pugachev rebellion broke out and spread so widely, identifying the ethnic and social groups involved. The historical work was financed by the government and published with the Tsar's approval in December 1834, after Pushkin agreed to drop the word 'Rebellion' from the title. Funds did not extend far enough to allow further exploration into the source materials for the wider extent of the rebellion. Even so, little had been published on that subject before then. The novel followed two years later. In chapter 6 of the novel, some of this factual explanation is introduced but does not overshadow the fictional story. Both the historical work and the novel are relatively short narratives. It would be incorrect to state that neither can be read without the other, although each is enriched by reading the other. We see in both works the dependence of Pugachev upon the Yaik Cossacks, whose military strategist he has become. He is aware, well before the end, that he will be dispensed with as soon as he becomes an inconvenience to them.

The imposter paused for thought, then said in a low voice, 'God knows. My path is narrow. I have little room for manoeuvre. My boys are bandits and they're getting above themselves. I have to keep my wits about me. One slip on my part and all they'll be thinking about is how to save their own skins. They'll be offering up my head on a platter to save their necks from the noose.'

Even in the last stage of the rebellion, the rebels could count on a fighting force of some 20,000 men over the districts of Nizhni Novgorod, Voronezh, and Astrakhan, from the east of Moscow to the Caspian Sea.²²

The rebel capture of Fort Belogorsk—where the young hero of the novel, Pyotr Grinyov, is stationed (as we shall see in a moment)—is a very pregnable fence inside which are a scattering of buildings.

Fort Belogorsk lay about twenty-five miles from Orenburg. The road ran along the steep bank of the Yaik. The river had not yet frozen over and, between monotonous banks covered in white snow, its leaden waters looked black and dismal. Beyond the river stretched the Kirghiz steppe. I was sunk in my thoughts, which were for the main part gloomy . . . Meanwhile, it was growing dark. We were going quite fast. 'Is it much further to the fortress?' I asked my [sleigh] driver. 'No,' he replied. 'Look—there it is!' I looked all around, expecting to see menacing bastions, towers and a rampart—but there was only a small village encircled by a log palisade. On one side, stood three or four hayricks half buried under snow; on the other, a crooked windmill, its vast sails sagging idly. 'But where is the fortress?' I asked in surprise. 'Here!' said the driver, pointing in front of him as we entered the village.

²² Alexander Pushkin, *History of the Pugachev Rebellion* [1834], translated and edited by Paul Debreczeny, *Complete Works*, vol. 14 (2000), in a 137 pp. text with notes: pp. 29–31, 56. See also Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin*, pp. 244–8. Compare with Alexander Pushkin, *The Captain's Daughter* [1836], translated by Robert and Elizabeth Chandler (London 2007), p. 81, where the prospect of Pugachev's marching on Moscow is raised. The novel is also in *Complete Works*, vol. 7 (1999).

Although the fort's name is fictitious, Belogorsk was based on the real Fort Tatishchev. The rebels' siege of Orenburg, a town on the Yaik (now Ural) River at the farthest extent of European Russia, shortly afterwards, reveals the disastrous miscalculations of government officials in both the texts.²³

The rapid extension of the rebellion, we should remember, takes place at the same time as the St. Petersburg government is conducting a complicated, expansionist foreign policy on the Polish and Ottoman frontiers. In this respect, the Pugachev rebellion places the ruling powers in the difficult position of facing a large-scale popular uprising in the Russian heartlands. The initial shock and the realization of the rebellion's implications for the regime will explain the violent government response. This, then, is another of those moments of decision for the country which drew Pushkin's attention and influenced his decision to approach it, as he had done in the case of Peter the Great, through different literary media.²⁴

Pushkin is careful to tell us in the historical narrative how the rebels alter their tactics as winter approaches: he tells us precisely that the first frost arrived on 14 October and the first snow on 16 October. The intensifying cold explains their decision to winter in the village of Berda. In Pushkin's case we see once again the different literary modes of an author, who like Schiller, Manzoni, and Mérimée wrote both history and fiction, but whose fame lay more with the arts than with the archives.²⁵

Pushkin already had the precedent of several historical novels by Scott and Balzac on the subject of tribal, peasant, and rural rebellions. Pushkin makes the combination of religious and dynastic issues explicit in his brief novel. Historical issues had been preoccupying Pushkin during the last decade of his life, although he did not see any contradiction between their expression through the medium of either fiction or history. On the subject of the Pugachev Rebellion he wrote in both. The novel, *The Captain's Daughter*, came from the same sources. These two works of the mid-1830s coincidentally corresponded to the "Tis Sixty Years Later" subtitle of Scott's *Waverley*, as a suitable lapse of time for an historical novel to be constructed around historical events.²⁶

The novel, following the pattern of the time, sets its hero in both camps: imperial service as a soldier, and then appearance in the rebel camp and apparent cooperation with them. In this way he experiences, as Edward Waverley did, two sides to the question, and the author is able to bring us close to Pugachev, allowing us to see the human as well as the political side of him. The hero, in the similar mould to Waverley, Darcy Latimer, and, later, D'Artagnan, is very young, inexperienced, and

²³ Pushkin, *Pugachev*, p. 50. Pushkin, *Captain's Daughter*, p. 19. The Orenburg area fell under government control after 1734, with the object of mining exploration and trading through Central Asia.

²⁴ Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Catherine the Great and Potemkin. The Imperial Love Affair* (London 2007 [2001]), pp. 88–111, 142–9. Philip Longworth, *Russia's Empires. Their Rise and Fall: From Prehistory to Putin* (London 2005), pp. 173–82). The first Partition of Poland took place in 1772. The Treaty of Küchük-Kainarji with the Ottoman Empire in 1774 gave Russia direct access to the Black Sea for the first time, and neutralized the Crimean Khanate.

²⁵ Pushkin, *Pugachev*, pp. 53, 119.

²⁶ Debrezeny, *The Other Pushkin*, pp. 5, 29.

impressionable—all too liable to make mistakes which have significant consequences. Petrushka Grinyov, aged sixteen, leaves home and paternal domination for a life in the army. This, his mother supposes, will be a pleasant time with the Semyonov regiment in St. Petersburg, but his father has different ideas.

The Semyonov regiment! What do I care about the Semyonov regiment? I'm not having our Petrushka going to Petersburg. What's he going to learn from service in Petersburg? To be a rake and a spendthrift! No, let him serve in the real army. Let him toil and sweat and smell gunpowder. Let him be a true soldier—not some fop of a turncoat in the Guards!

The father–son relationship is crucial to the plot. The father is a retired lieutenant-colonel, living in genteel poverty with his wife, the daughter of an impoverished nobleman, on their country estate. Pyotr (Petrushka) is the only surviving child among nine others. His reaction to the news that he is to proceed to Orenburg, accompanied by Savelich, an aged family servant and father substitute, is bleak:

All my brilliant hopes were dashed. What awaited me was not the gaiety of Petersburg but the tedium of life in a godforsaken backwater. Army service, which only a moment ago I had been looking forward to with such glee, now seemed a heavy burden. But it was no use protesting. Next morning a hooded sleigh was brought round to the main door. In it were loaded my trunk, a wooden chest with cups, plates and a teapot, and some parcels containing pies and white bread rolls – the last tokens of the pampered life I had led at home.²⁷

Very shortly afterwards, everything goes wrong for Pyotr, who loses money at billiards, is lost in a blizzard, wounded in a duel, caught up in the fighting with the rebels who kill his commanding officer, Captain Mironov, and his wife, and falls in love with the captain's daughter, Masha (Maria Ivanovna), of whom his father will certainly not approve.

As the disasters mount up, the mysterious stranger who rescues Pyotr from the blizzard turns out to be Pugachev, whom he has inadvertently befriended by giving him his hare-skin coat. This turn of the plot brings him into direct contact with the rebel commander and army, and in return for the friendly gesture, Pugachev saves Pyotr from execution. The plot finally hinges on whether Pyotr can persuade his parents to accept Masha as his wife and whether she can persuade Catherine the Great to pardon Pyotr, sentenced to penal servitude in Siberia for alleged collaboration with the rebels. Many commentators have seen echoes of Scott's *Heart of Midlothian* in the scene between Masha, newly arrived from the country, and the Empress one early autumn morning in the park at Tsarskoe Selo. They meet by chance—another example of Pushkin's belief in the significance of chance in history, albeit fictional history—and Masha does not know the identity of the lady, aged around forty, to whom she is speaking. This appeal had the desired effect. Pyotr is reunited with Masha, and both are accepted by his parents.²⁸

²⁷ Pushkin, *The Captain's Daughter*, pp. 6–7. Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin*, p. 255.

²⁸ Pushkin, *The Captain's Daughter*, pp. 100–4. See Evdokimova, *Historical Imagination*, p. 74, for the role of chance in the novel.

Lukács makes the significant point that:

Pushkin, like Scott, wished to depict in his historical novel, important, critical turning-points in popular life and puts his 'hero' into this situation... For him, too, the material and moral disturbance of popular life was not only the point of departure but also the central task of artistic portrayal.²⁹

At the time, however, this novel was virtually lost among the vast number of imitations of either Scott or Vigny and Hugo. In the case of *The Captain's Daughter*, Pushkin resolved the problem of the narrator, which had thwarted his attempt to finish *The Blackamoor*. Pyotr is the narrator but as a much older man, looking back on this incident in his youth, when he is gullible and easily moulded but in full rebellion against all authority. Therein lies his bond with the rebel, Pugachev, despite the resemblance of the chieftain to yet another surrogate father figure. If Pugachev's character seems milder in the novel than in the historical work, this is because he is mediated to the reader through the perception of Pyotr Grinyov, whose life has been spared by him. In that sense, there is a bond between them, although Pyotr does not sympathize with rebellion against the monarch. The distance in time gives a certain irony and humour to the narration, which shows us villains as well as unexpected benefactors. The violence of the rebellion is very much present but represents only part of the novel, the focus of which is on the 'progress' of its youthful hero. The fictional portrayal of Pugachev gave the novel an impartial character lacking in Russian historical novels in general.³⁰

The *History of Peter I* was to have been Pushkin's magnum opus, but he was killed in a duel in January 1837 before he could revise and complete the enterprise. The intention was to write an impartial historical narrative with critical comment on sources. The focus appears to have been on Peter's contradictory character, which he had not dealt with directly in his three previous Petrine works of differing genre. Pushkin had already begun research on this project in 1834, before the publication of the two Pugachev projects, but once they were out of his system he set down to researching in earnest and putting together the material for this grand historical work.³¹

Despite the extraordinary literary achievements of the early phase of Russian Romanticism, a sense of desperation and disillusion pervaded Russian intellectual circles. Romanticism, given its precepts and characteristics, lent a certain aura of heroic struggle, despite the futility, and writers did not hesitate to draw on this as a major theme. Gambling, indebtedness, internal exile, heavy drinking, and duelling—leading to the early death of writers such as Pushkin and Lermontov, and fictional characters such as Lensky in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* [1826–33]—became realities

²⁹ Lukács, *Historical Novel*, p. 81.

³⁰ Pushkin, *The Captain's Daughter*, pp. 40–61, 65, 75–82. In this respect, Pyotr resembles Gabriel Araceli in the first series of Galdós's *Episodios Nacionales*, although the latter became the narrator of ten novels rather than Pyotr's position in just one. The distance of perspective accounts for the ironic and humorous tone, despite the barbarities described in Pushkin's account of the fall of the fortress. Debrezeny, *The Other Pushkin*, 258, 261. Ungurianu, *Plotting History*, pp. 34–9.

³¹ For *History of Peter the Great and other Historical Prose*, see vol. 15, *Complete Works* (2003), pp. 127–420.

and themes. This phenomenon gave rise to the concept of the ‘superfluous man’. Among the Russian Romantics and their public, the intellectual, whether as author or as fictional character, acquired a particular kind of nobility. When, however, they were Westernized, they stood out in Russia as extraneous, but in the West they stood out as deeply Russian. At home in neither the one nor the other, restlessness and discontent, accompanying at the same time great passions, were their characteristics. The appeal of Byron was obvious.³²

This type of individual makes a striking appearance in *War and Peace* in the form of Pierre Bezukhov, the westernizing liberal affiliated to a Masonic lodge in St. Petersburg, who occupies a central place throughout the novel. Dissatisfied with the Russian form of masonry, he had gone abroad ‘to be initiated into the highest mysteries of the order’, returning in the summer of 1809. His wife, Princess Hélène, is just back from Erfurt, where she had been present during the meeting of Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I. She is one of the most beautiful women in the capital, admired by all, but, although her salon attracts distinguished men, she herself is superficial. Their marriage quickly ran on to the rocks.

Pierre was precisely the husband necessary for this brilliant society woman. He was that absent-minded eccentric. A *grand seigneur* of a husband, who got in nobody’s way and not only did not spoil the general impression of high tone in the drawing room, but, by way of contrast to his wife’s gracefulness and tact, served as an advantageous backdrop for her. As a result of his constant, concentrated occupation with non-material interests over those two years, and his severe scorn of everything else, Pierre adopted in his wife’s society, which did not interest him, that tone of indifference, negligence and benevolence towards everyone, which cannot be acquired artificially and, for that reason, inspires an involuntary respect.³³

By 1850 the historical novel in Russia waned, and Scott’s reputation declined with it, particularly among the radical intelligentsia, despite the publication in 1845 of his complete works in Russian directly translated from the English.³⁴ The genre’s flourishing in the previous decades revealed an early integration of the Russian fictional tradition into the mainstream of European writing.

CURRENTS OF HISTORY AND CULTURAL TENSIONS

The historical novel in Russia revived after 1870, partly because *War and Peace* gave it new prestige, and partly through broader developments in historiography. Karamzin’s *History of the Russian State* had linked the history of Muscovy to the Russian Empire of the Romanov dynasty and pointed to the connection between Russian prestige in Europe and territorial expansion following military successes.

³² See Ellen Chances, ‘The Superfluous Man in Russian literature’, in *Routledge Companion*, pp. 111–22; pp. 112–13.

³³ Count Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, translated, annotated, and introduced by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volkhonsky (London 2007), Volume Two, Part Three, chapter ix, p. 440.

³⁴ Attshutter, ‘Rise and Fall’, pp. 204–8, 223.

The Great Northern War of 1700–21 altered the balance of power in the Baltic in favour of Russia at the expense of Sweden and Poland. Catherine the Great's expulsion of the Ottomans from the northern shore of the Black Sea, followed by repulsion of the Napoleonic invasion of 1812, confirmed Russia's status among the European Great Powers.³⁵

After Karamzin, a new generation of historians emerged. One of them, Timofei N. Granovsky (1813–55), had trained in Berlin in 1836–39 under Ranke and, influenced by Hegel's ideas, saw history as the development of freedom through time. He held a commanding position from his Chair of World History at Moscow University from 1839 until 1855, but wrote essays rather than a substantial work, and his reputation lay more in the spoken than the written word. Granovsky and his generation had consumed the novels of Scott in Russian translation. Clearly influenced by Thierry's researches into the post-Roman era, Granovsky concentrated on the Merovingian and Carolingian periods. This specialization on the Western European Middle Ages made him a controversial figure in cultural circles. A leading liberal among the 'westernizers', he opposed Court and Church emphasis on the Byzantine roots of Russian culture—a view with which the rival 'Slavophiles' sympathized. The Slavophiles pointed to the Slavonic roots of the Russian people and to Kievan Rus, the first major Russian state. The liberal group fell under the protection of Count S. G. Stroganov from 1835–47. Other nobles with country estates also had town houses in the city, which acted as centres for reunion and discussion. In fact, ideas spread more from the overlapping networks of friends and the houses of patrons than from university institutions. Nineteenth-century Russia, however, could not escape the dichotomy of a Byzantine-derived autocracy operating from a westernized capital city with the architectural styles of the Age of Enlightenment.³⁶

Granovsky and his colleague M. P. Pogodin had a great influence of the leading historians and statesmen of the 1860s and 1870s. It fell to Sergei M. Soloviev (1820–79) to take up the mantle of Karamzin. As tutor with the Stroganov family, he went abroad and heard the lectures of Ranke, Michelet, and Quinet, and fell under the influence of Vico, Hegel, and Guizot. Soloviev inherited Granovsky's Chair in 1854. The first volume of his *History of Russia from Earliest Times* appeared in 1851, until the 29 volumes were completed by 1870, taking the story up to 1774. He argued for Russia's formation as an organic process, and saw the country caught between Asiatic invaders from the east and a hostile Poland–Lithuania on the west. Although nature and geography delayed Russian development, the Russians managed to hold their position on the central rivers from the Dnieper to the Urals, enabling Muscovy to emerge as the core of the state later developed

³⁵ Ewa M. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge. Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport, Conn., and London 2000), pp. 55–6, describing the work as 'the first step in the direction of what might be called the textual empire'. Longworth, *Russia's Empires*, pp. 153–7.

³⁶ Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, pp. 113–14, 128–36, 144–51, 238–42, 246, 252–75 (for Herzen's opposition to the Slavophiles and denial that any essential Russian culture had ever existed in the pre-St Petersburg era). Priscilla Reynolds Roosevelt, *Apostle of Russian Liberalism: Timofei Granovsky* (Newtonville, Mass. 1986), pp. xi–xiii, 24–44, 160. Seton-Watson, *Imperial Russia*, pp. 253–55, 261, 264. Berlin, 'German Romanticism', p. 146. Dixon, 'Pushkin and History', p. 122.

under Peter the Great. Although Orthodox, Soloviev remained opposed to the Slavophiles. Not a great thinker, writer or speaker, Soloviev, in turn, influenced his younger successors, V. O. Klyuchevsky (1841–1911), a skilful writer who took over the Chair in 1879, and Pavel Milyukov (1859–1943), who became the leader of the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) from the time of the Duma of 1906.³⁷

The characteristic themes of Russian historical novels in the first half of the century—the Time of Troubles, Peter the Great, and the War of 1812—continued during the second phase, though in the 1890s and 1900s non-Russian topics began to appear. Like Tolstoy, later authors moved away from earlier Romanticism, preferring to adopt a realist approach, but without Tolstoy's reflections on the philosophy of history. Soloviev's *History* was eagerly read by educated Russians, but the readership of historical novels outstripped that of history, providing the literate public with a knowledge and interpretation of the country's past.³⁸

TOLSTOY'S HANDLING OF CHARACTER

Tolstoy owed more to Hugo than to Scott in his pursuit of the historical novel. Furthermore, his intellectual 'heroes' were more complex than Scott's, even though the latter's portrayal of popular characters was more successful than Tolstoy's. In *War and Peace*, the historical figures have little direct influence on the lives of the fictional characters. Tolstoy believed that although both fiction and history contributed explanations for the cause of events and their effect on character, historiography often failed to give the complete picture.³⁹

The handling of character has proved to be one of the hardest tasks facing the historical novelist. The need to infuse historical figures with the same vigour and credibility given to the imaginary personalities compounds the difficulty. Historical novelists adopt a varying balance between the real and the imaginary characters in their books. The historical biographer encounters parallel difficulties, particularly when he or she hovers on the brink of fiction. What personal details to include and how to manage dialogue, real or concocted, test the biographer's skills. In essence, though, the core of the problem lies in how to present the relationship between the private and public spheres of the subject's life. Ascertaining particularly how the former influences the latter exposes unsuspected dangers. The historical novelist's temptations are considerable, because the historical personalities and contexts are set within a work of fiction with an artistic purpose.

³⁷ Mazour, *Russian Historiography*, pp. 113–19, 129–39, 146–9. Robert F. Byrnes, *V. O. Klyuchevski. Historian of Russia* (Bloomington and Indianapolis 1995), pp. 39–53. Ungurianu, *Plotting History*, pp. 138–41, 154.

³⁸ Lukács, *European Realism*, pp. 126–205 for Tolstoy [1936]. Ungurianu, *Plotting History*, pp. 125–6, 138–41. For historical novelists in the period from the 1870s to the 1910s, such as Count Evgeny Salias, Vsevolod Soloviev (son of the historian), Daniil Mordovstev, Dmitri Merezhkovsky, and Valery Bryusov, see Ungurianu, *Plotting History*, pp. 160–90, where the departure from realism in the direction of symbolism from the 1890s is discussed.

³⁹ Lukács, *Historical Novel*, p. 98. Attshutter, 'Rise and Fall', pp. 225–7. Ungurianu, *Plotting History*, p. 121.

Tolstoy has several vignettes concerning Tsar Alexander I's chief ministers, Count Alexei Arakcheev, Minister of War, and Mikhail Speransky, Secretary of State (1808–12). His fictional character, Prince Andrei, a serving officer until 1805, has arrived in St. Petersburg in August 1809, and waits for an audience in Arakcheev's anteroom. He has already formed a mental picture of the minister—‘everything he knew about him inspired little respect in him for this man’. The scene is designed to reveal as much about Arakcheev as it does about how Russian government functioned at that time:

During his service, mostly as an adjutant, Prince Andrei had seen many anterooms of significant persons, and the differing characters of these anterooms were very clear to him. Count Arakcheev's anteroom had a completely special character . . . as soon as the door opened, all the faces instantly expressed only one thing—fear. Prince Andrei asked the officer on duty to announce him once more, but he was looked at with mockery and told that his turn would come in due time. After several persons were led into and out of the minister's office by the adjutant, the fearsome door received an officer who had struck Prince Andrei with his humiliated and frightened look. The officer's audience lasted a long time. Suddenly the thunder of an unpleasant voice was heard from behind the door, and the officer emerged pale, his lips trembling, and, clutching his head, passed through the anteroom. After that, Prince Andrei was led to the door, and the officer on duty said in a whisper, ‘To the right, by the window.’⁴⁰

The number of times the word ‘anteroom’ is repeated cannot fail to impress the reader. The author, at the same time, never fails to remind us that this is ‘Prince’ Andrei who is kept waiting, and that the Tsar has instructed him to see the minister. The passage reeks with abuse of power. The Prince’s object was to secure approval of new military instructions, apparently on the French model. Arakcheev dismisses them as unworkable, and hands the memorandum back to him. He has scrawled this verdict over the paper in pencil, without punctuation, capital letters, or correct orthography. Hardly bothering with any politeness, the minister calls for the next suppliant to be admitted.⁴¹

Tolstoy’s portrayal of the minister is one of an uncouth and obtrusive holder of government office. It is misleading, and shows up Tolstoy’s intention to discredit the minister. The historical General Count Alexei Arakcheev (1769–1834) had risen through the army as an artillery officer who became Inspector General in 1803 and Minister of War from 1805. He sprang from the gentry and belonged to no political faction in St Petersburg, and was generally disliked by the Court aristocracy. Tolstoy seems to have picked up this aristocratic disdain. Austere and dedicated, Arakcheev made the Russian artillery, by 1813, superior to that of Austria and Prussia. As well as paying attention to the education of artillery officers, he oversaw discipline and equipment, and attended to the training and conditions of recruits.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Volume Two, Part Three, chapter iv, pp. 425–6.

⁴¹ Dominic Lieven, *Russia against Napoleon. The Battle for Europe, 1807 to 1814* (London 2009), pp. 103–10. Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, p. 201, also had a negative view of the minister.

In Tolstoy's portrayal of Count Mikhail Speransky (1772–1839), we encounter another of Tolstoy's distortions. Later in the novel, Prince Andrei goes to dinner for the first time at the private residence of Speransky, a minister whose reforms he had admired. The house is small, neat, and unpretentious. Only a small group of intimates, of whom the Prince is not one, are there. When he arrives, they are standing around a table laden with *zakouski*—the snacks which accompany vodka, the normal aperitif, although we are not specifically told what they are drinking. The Prince is instantly shocked by the vulgarity of their laughter, and loses the sense of fascination he had felt previously for Speransky. The tedious anecdotes, accompanied by more laughter, confirm this impression. After dinner, Prince Andrei, clearly peeved, ventures to disagree with his host on the major topic of the day, Napoleon's intervention in Spain, of which the minister disapproves. Finding a pretext, he leaves shortly afterwards.

'Leaving so early?' said Speransky. 'I promised to be at a soirée...' They fell silent. Prince Andrei looked closely into those mirror-like eyes which did not let anything in, and felt how ridiculous it was that he could have expected anything from Speransky.⁴²

Again the novelist's purpose is malicious. Speransky was the central figure in Russian internal affairs from 1808 to 1812—the period before the Napoleonic invasion. He was, however, the son of an impoverished parish priest from Vladimir. He rose because of his intelligence, which explained his education in the St. Petersburg ecclesiastical academy where he later taught mathematics. Recommended by the Metropolitan, Speransky began his career in the state bureaucracy under the patronage of Prince Kurakin. Like Arakcheev, he had no connections with the Petersburg aristocracy, which also despised him. Their positions depended entirely on the favour of the Tsar. Speransky joined the Ministry of the Interior in 1802. Alexander I took him to Erfurt with him in 1808 for the meeting with Napoleon. He became, in effect, the overall supervisor of the Tsar's government. Seton-Watson describes him as 'perhaps the most brilliant bureaucrat who ever served a Tsar. During his years of supremacy, he stood at the centre of the Tsar's intelligence network.'⁴³

While these portraits are highly suggestive, the two most striking are of Napoleon and Pierre Bezukhov. The former figure is set within the military context and does not appear as a leading character in the fictional plot, even though his personality dominates the whole book. Pierre—more Tolstoy's alter ego than any other character in the novel—always holds a central place in the ongoing narrative, whether of personal and family details or when the author is linking his story to the historical events.

⁴² Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Volume Two, Part Three, chapter xviii, pp. 463–5.

⁴³ Lieven, *Russia against Napoleon*, pp. 65–6. Seton-Watson, *Russian Empire*, pp. 101–6, adding that he '... did not enjoy the company of men of intelligence. His few intimates were men of mediocre talents, who formed a circle of admirers in whose society he could relax, enjoying their flattery and crude humour.'

Napoleon receives the Tsar's personal message from General Balashov, and complains that he had not wanted war.

He had just finished dressing for his ride. He was in a dark blue uniform, open over a white waistcoat which went down over his round stomach, white buckskins stretched tight over the fat haunches of his short legs, and jackboots. His short hair had obviously just been brushed, but one strand hung loose over the middle of his wide forehead. His plump white neck stood out sharply against the black collar of his uniform; he smelled of cologne. His full youthful face with its protruding chin bore an expression of gracious and majestic imperial greeting.

He came out, springing briskly at every step, his head slightly thrown back. The whole of his stout, short figure, with its broad, fat shoulders and involuntarily thrust-out stomach and chest, had the imposing, stately look which pampered forty-year old men have. Besides, it was clear that he was in very good spirits that day.

He nodded in response to Balashov's low and respectful bow and, going up to him, began speaking at once, like a man who values every minute of his time and who does not condescend to prepare his speeches, but is certain that he will always speak well and say what needs to be said.⁴⁴

Contrary to Balashov's first impression, Napoleon has no intention of negotiating or withdrawing across the Nieman, as the Tsar requests. He blames the Tsar for starting the war, 'growing more and more flushed, pacing the room . . .', and for surrounding himself with the enemies of France. As a result, the Russians have lost Vilno (Vilnius) and been driven out of Poland. Balashov can hardly get a word in, as Napoleon reminds him that the size of the Russian Army is one third of his own.

'What do I care for your allies?' said Napoleon. 'I have the Poles for allies: There are eighty thousand of them, they fight like lions. And there will be two hundred thousand of them.'

And, probably becoming still more aroused because, in saying that, he had said an obvious untruth, and because Balashov, in the same pose of submission to his fate, stood silently before him, he turned round sharply, went up very close to Balashov's face, and, making energetic and rapid gestures with his white hands, nearly shouted:

'Know that if you stir up Prussia against me, know that I will wipe her off the map of Europe,' he said with a pale face distorted by anger, beating one small hand against the other with an energetic gesture. 'Yes, I'll hurl you back beyond the Dvina, beyond the Dnieper, and rebuild that barrier against you which Europe was criminal and blind to have allowed to be destroyed. Yes, that's what will happen to you, that's what you've gained by distancing yourselves from me,' he said, and silently paced the room several times, his fat shoulders twitching.⁴⁵

Tolstoy manages to convey, beneath the imperial surface, an over-confident general, rude and insinuating, vulgar and, at the same time, menacing. Neither historic states and agreed borders, nor even human life, mean anything to the Corsican warlord. This view, central to the novel's purpose, conflicts with historiographical portrayals of Napoleon as a legal and educational reformer.

⁴⁴ Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Volume Three, Part One, chapter vi, p. 619.

⁴⁵ Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Volume Three, Part One, chapter vi, pp. 622–3.

War and Peace covers, as we have said, a specific period of time, within which the leading fictional personalities' perspectives, and even their characters, change. This is evident if we compare the passage in which Pierre appears in the section towards the end of the novel, where we find him in a burning building during the conflagration of Moscow in 1812, armed with a pistol and dagger and contemplating the assassination of Napoleon. At the beginning of the novel, back in 1805, he was a young Romantic intellectual from a well-established family, who has just returned to St Petersburg from abroad, where he has been educated. We first meet him after he has just arrived at the soirée of the well-known hostess, Anna Pavlovna Scherer, who will be one of the central figures in the book. A French exiled nobleman is also there.

'The Revolution was a great thing,' M'sieur Pierre went on, showing by this desperate and provocative parenthetical phrase his great youth and desire to speak everything out all the sooner . . . 'I'm not talking about regicide. I'm talking about ideas.' 'Yes, the ideas of pillage, murder, and regicide,' an ironic voice interrupted again.

'Those were extremes, to be sure, but the whole meaning wasn't in them, the meaning was in the rights of man, emancipation from prejudice, the equality of citizens; and Napoleon kept all these ideas in all their force.' [They all disagree with him.]

M'sieur Pierre did not know whom to answer, looked around at them all, and smiled. His smile was not that of other people, blending into a non-smile. With him, on the contrary, when a smile came, his serious and even somewhat sullen face vanished suddenly, instantly, and another appeared—childish, kind, even slightly stupid, and as if apologetic. To the viscount, who was meeting him for the first time, it was clear that this Jacobin was not at all as frightening as his words. Everyone fell silent.⁴⁶

Turning to the description of an abandoned Moscow, occupied and burning, we see a Pierre who has seen his ideas turn to nothing. Disillusioned and ill fed, he is on the brink of serious illness.

. . . convinced that Moscow would not be defended, he suddenly felt that what formerly had been only a possibility had now turned into a necessity and an inevitability. He had to remain in Moscow, concealing his name, meet Napoleon and kill him, so as either to perish, or put an end to the misfortunes of all Europe, which proceeded, in Pierre's opinion, solely from Napoleon.

. . . Pierre's physical state, as always happens, coincided with his moral state. The unaccustomed coarse food, the vodka he had been drinking during those days, the absence of wine and cigars, dirty, unchanged linen, two half-sleepless nights spent on a short sofa without bedding—all this kept Pierre in a state of irritation close to insanity.⁴⁷

The process of characterization has been applied to four personalities—only one of them fictitious. The portrayal of Napoleon would have derived from writings contemporary with the events described, which were abundant. The use to which it is put in the novel singles out Tolstoy's literary purpose. He has set the French Emperor in a broader human context than the biographer or historian, while, at the

⁴⁶ Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Volume One, Part One, chapter iv, pp. 20–1.

⁴⁷ Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Volume Three, Part Three, chapter xxvii, pp. 898–900.

same time, respecting the historical process of which Napoleon formed a part. It does not end there, however, because Tolstoy's central preoccupation is the relationship between the will of individual human beings, whether or not they are powerful rulers, and what happens in reality. This has a bearing on the nature of history and of man's place within it. The course of the novel makes it plain that the result of Napoleon's invasion of Russia will be the opposite of what he intended. The explanation for that is seen not simply in character flaws but in the nature of events. In other words, objective conditions frustrate the human will and force men to bend before them. At the same time, another level of events operates beneath the great moments of history, and the two are seen as not only influencing each other but as intertwined. The lives of ordinary people—their material and family concerns, their day-to-day ailments and afflictions or joys and passions—occupy the other central role in the outplaying of this vast novel. Pierre's marriage, the love between Natasha Rostov and Prince Andrei, the fortunes of the elder Rostovs and their young son in the Army—all of these smaller events matter to the development of this fictional work, just as much as the burning of Moscow and the harassed retreat through the winter snow.

Tolstoy's most contentious characterization was that of Count Mikhail Kutusov, the aged and one-eyed Russian General who harassed the French at Borodino on the way to Moscow but had then withdrawn, and who refrained from attacking them during their retreat from the capital. This apparently unaccountable behaviour aroused much debate, which provided Tolstoy with the opportunity to discuss the issue, in his capacity as historian rather than novelist, towards the end of *War and Peace*. Kutusov had become, in effect, the hero of the entire book, which is a work of fiction. Accordingly, he has become Tolstoy's creation rather than the actual historical figure which was considerably different.⁴⁸ Ewa Thompson goes further, arguing for a deliberate distortion of history on Tolstoy's part, when he suppressed the information that, as commander-in chief of the allied armies at the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805, Kutusov, rather than the Austrian generals, was responsible for the catastrophic defeat of an army superior in numbers and in tactical position.⁴⁹ It is this battle which nearly costs Prince Andrei his life.

Some elements of the real Kutuzov do survive in the final version. In the argument over the fitness of Russia's oldest general to take command of the St. Petersburg militia, which is to oppose the invading French, Prince Vassily Kuragin reminds his listeners at the Rostov house on 24 July 1812, that Kutuzov is blind, has no morals, cannot even ride on a horse, and falls asleep at council meetings. No one dissented. Five days later, however, the Tsar, even though ill-disposed towards Kutusov, raised him to the status of Prince, and then on 8 August appointed him commander-in-chief of the Army.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Lukács, *Historical Novel*, pp. 99, 252–3. Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (London 1994 [1953]), p. 30, draws attention to this transformation from 'the sly, elderly, feeble voluptuary, the corrupt, somewhat sycophantic courtier', which is how he appears in early drafts of the novel, into 'the unforgettable symbol of the Russian people in all its simplicity and intuitive wisdom'.

⁴⁹ Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge*, p. 100.

⁵⁰ Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Volume Three, Part Two, chapter vi, pp. 706–8; Volume Four, Part Four, chapters x and xi, pp. 1096–102.

Bakhtin saw Tolstoy as the real heir of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas formulated in the latter part of the eighteenth-century. Right from his early intellectual development in St. Petersburg, Tolstoy had read Goethe, Schiller, Hegel, Hugo, Dickens, and Dumas, and his compatriots, Gogol and Pushkin, but his preference had been for Montesquieu and Rousseau. In this sense, he formulated his ideas with his mind more in the mid-eighteenth century than in his own century. Berlin adds to this list the importance of Joseph de Maistre's ideas, which grew from a rejection of both the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, holding the former morally responsible for the latter. Tolstoy hated the idea of progress, believing, instead, in an unchanging human nature. Similarly, he hated St. Petersburg as the centre of Court and bureaucracy, preferring in the novel the Rostov family of Moscow for its simplicity.⁵¹

Tolstoy was at his strongest in the intermingling of fictional lives with the great historical events of the Napoleonic era. Plot and character development also intertwined here—the one never losing sight of the other as they move through time. The fictional Prince Andrei's reactions to the behaviour of two historical characters, the ministers of Alexander I, illustrates how fact and imagination are woven together and contribute to the development of the plot.

WAR, PERSONALITY, AND BELIEF

War takes a toll on Prince Andrei's personality. Two years after Austerlitz we find him with Pierre, who, on his way back from the south, has decided to pay an impromptu visit to the friend he has not seen for some time. In two remarkable chapters we witness the change of character wrought by war, an argument between two noblemen taken to extremes by Prince Andrei's distorting irony, and finally a contemplation of life, death, and eternity. The two friends at first cannot strike a rapport. Pierre finds Andrei changed, not only aged by war but also caustic in his disposition. Andrei chides Pierre for setting about to improve the lot of the peasants on his lands near Kiev, and scoffs when Pierre insists that peasants and noblemen are equally part of the human race and as such he wants to provide them with schools, a doctor, and hospital.

'Schools, you say . . . instruction and so on—that is, you want to lead them from their animal condition,' he said, pointing to the *muzhik* [peasant] who took off his hat as he passed by, 'and give him moral needs. But it seems to me that the only possible happiness is animal happiness, and you want to deprive him of it. I envy him and you want to make him into me, but without giving him my intelligence or my feeling or my means. Second, you say that you lighten his work. But in my opinion physical labour is

⁵¹ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 283. Joe Andrew, *Russian Writers in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century* (London 1982), pp. 100–1. Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, pp. 44–5, 49–81; both reacted against 'liberal optimism concerning human goodness, human reason, and the value and inevitability of material progress' (p. 57). Ungurianu, *Plotting History*, p. 140.

as much a necessity for him, as much a condition of his existence, as mental labour is for you and me . . . Ah, yes, hospitals, medicines . . . It's far more simple and easy for him to die. Others will be born, there are lots of them as it is. You might be sorry to lose an extra worker—that's how I look at him—but no, you want to cure him out of love for him. And he doesn't need that. Besides, what is this fantasy that medicines ever cured anybody . . . Killed, yes? . . . 'Ah, that's terrible, terrible!' Pierre said.⁵²

The sardonic humour worsens when they broach the subject of the emancipation of the serfs—a measure brought into effect by Alexander II in 1861, a few years before Tolstoy was writing *War and Peace* in earnest. War injuries, military defeat, and the death of his first wife have inflicted deep wounds on Andrei. His sense of despair at the human lot comes out in his remarks about the peasants:

'Well, here you want to emancipate the peasants,' he went on. 'That's very good, but not for you (I suppose you've never whipped anyone to death or sent them to Siberia), and still less for the peasants. If they're beaten, whipped, and sent to Siberia, I don't think that makes it any worse for them. In Siberia, he'll go on with his brutish life, and the welts on his body will heal, and he'll be as happy as he was before.' . . . 'No, no, a thousand times no! I'll never agree with you,' said Pierre.⁵³

The episode finishes in the following chapter in a scene pregnant with the symbolism of the rite of passage across darkening water, such as the passage over Lethe on the way into Hades.

In the same evening, Pierre and Andrei are travelling by carriage to the latter's country house at Bald Hills, near Smolensk. Pierre is worrying about his friend's views, and as they talk about life's purpose he decides to tell him about his association with freemasonry. Andrei listens attentively. They approach a swollen river, leave the carriage to unload and unfasten the horses, and board the ferry waiting to take them over. Andrei leans against the rail, looking down in silence as the flood water sparkles in the setting sun. Pierre asks him, as they cross, whether he believes in life after death, and affirms his own belief in God. Andrei can see nothing of the realm of goodness and sees only the false and evil earth, saying that only life and death convince him, since he had known the anguish of someone who has lost the one he loved. He has stood at the edge of the abyss and seen another person vanish into nowhere. The ferry reaches the opposite bank. When the coach and horses are unloaded and then buckled up, the two friends, oblivious, remain on the ferry, still talking 'to the astonishment of the lackeys, coachmen and ferrymen'. Pierre ventures to say that if there is God and a future life, then truth and virtue exist, and man's greatest happiness will be to strive for them.

Prince Andrei stood with his elbow resting on the rail of the ferry, and, listening to Pierre, did not take his eyes off the red gleam of the sun on the blue floodwaters. Pierre fell silent. It was completely still. The ferry had long been moored, and only the waves of the current lapped with a faint sound against the ferry's bottom. It seemed to Prince Andrei that this splash of waves made it a refrain to Pierre's words, saying, 'It's true,

⁵² Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Volume Two, Part Two, chapter xi, pp. 384–5.

⁵³ Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Volume Two, Part Two, chapter xi, pp. 386–7.

believe it.' . . . 'Yes, if only it were so!' he said. 'Anyhow, let's go and get in,' Prince Andrei added and, stepping off the ferry, he looked at the sky Pierre had pointed to, and for the first time since Austerlitz saw that high, eternal sky he had seen as he lay on the battlefield, and something long asleep, something that was best in him, suddenly awakened joyful and young in his soul. This feeling disappeared, as soon as Prince Andrei re-entered the habitual conditions of life, but he knew that this feeling, which he did not know how to develop, lived in him. The meeting with Pierre marked an epoch for Prince Andrei, from which began what, while outwardly the same, was in his inner world a new life.⁵⁴

This authorial concern with peasants, while it is not the prime subject of the novel, exposes the vast social stratum beneath the members of the nobility who are its real subject. Thomson highlights the marked difference between the Western European realist novels, focusing for the most part on the middle classes of town and country and the chain of servants and workers who entered their daily lives, and Tolstoy's novel. It is true that Tolstoy dwells a great deal on the domestic aspects of noble life, but in Western novels of the nineteenth century, monarchs and aristocrats are rarely the central characters.⁵⁵

War and Peace bears the hallmarks of Tolstoy's unresolved conflict between history, understood in terms of cause and effect, and a metahistorical view of it as an unknowable ulterior purpose. The hiatus between Tolstoy, narrator and analyst of character, and this seeker of profounder meaning is unbridgeable. His perception of the universe is irrational, relying on sentiment and instinct—a view reflected in his idealizing of a communal, peasant world of unnoticed lives. Similarly, his Christianity, later abandoned, rejected the institutional superstructure of the Orthodox Church, integrated as it was with the Tsarist state, in favour of the enduring morality of the Sermon on the Mount. The novel, which is intensely political, offers little practical guide to how the subjection of the vast majority of the population is to be transcended.

TOLSTOY AND GALDÓS IN THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

Spain and Russia both had an ambiguous relationship with Napoleonic France; both were invaded by the French, and both contributed to Napoleon's downfall. Tolstoy wrote *War and Peace* in the aftermath of the Crimean War (1854–6), in which he fought against the Anglo-French forces which landed in the Crimean peninsula. Galdós, who began his first series of *Episodios Nacionales* just as Tolstoy's last volume was published, could not claim any similar experience of combating invasion. Yet in Spain, the memory and impact of the struggle to expel the French between 1808 and 1814 remained alive in his own day. Although French forces occupied both Moscow and Madrid—the latter for some five years—the political outcome of the war proved to be radically different in the two Monarchies. Both novelists emphasize this difference in their specific treatment. The Russian Empire

⁵⁴ Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Volume Two, Part Two, chapter xii, pp. 387–9.

⁵⁵ Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge*, pp. 95–6.

increased its status as a European power after 1814–15, while the Spanish Empire in continental America collapsed leaving a divided and weakened metropolis. This was Galdós's starting point. By contrast, Tolstoy finished on a high note of military and political triumph.

Although Tolstoy originally planned to write an historical novel about the Decembrist conspirators of 1825, who modelled themselves on the Spanish Liberals in their struggle against Tsarist autocracy, he became quickly diverted backwards in time to the invasion of Russia in 1812. Galdós succeeded in writing about most of the many conspiracies which took place in Spain and usually involved some aspect of the relationship between the different Liberal fictions, army politicians, and the Monarchy. I have commented in the previous chapter on the importance of seeing these *Episodios* exactly as 'episodes'—direct, unpremeditated entries into individual lives at historical turning-points. They do not form one long novel in forty-six parts. Yet they do have underlying unities, and sometimes the same characters reappear as they do in Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*. Galdós discovered this format in the course of writing the first series, and developed it throughout. It gave variety to his characters and diversity to their contexts, without sacrificing depth in the attempts he made to link the fictional stories to the historical events, and the invented to the factual personalities.⁵⁶

It is particularly interesting, therefore, to find Lukács describing *War and Peace* as episodic:

What he does is, every now and then, to take an episode from the war, which is of particular importance and significance for the human development of his main characters. And Tolstoy's genius as an historical novelist lies in his ability to select and portray these episodes so that the entire mood of the Russian army, and through them of the Russian people gains vivid expression.⁵⁷

Galdós attempts to reveal the essential meaning in each of his 'episodes', thereby showing up the nature of the historical events in all their moral ambiguity, through the behaviour and interaction of his fictional personalities.

Tolstoy's handling of period is much broader than that found in Scott's individual novels, which concentrate the fictional action within relatively short time spans. *War and Peace* runs from 1805 to the years after 1812. The book has a long Epilogue, interweaving the narrative of what happens to the surviving characters with reflexions on the nature of history.⁵⁸ Yet Lukács was right to use the term 'episodic', although the sense is different from in Galdós. In Tolstoy, the episodes are coherent and form an integrated part of one long novel, which presents the dilemmas of the fictional and historical characters in parallel form, while at the same time interweaving the two. This technique is apparent right from the opening of the book. It also establishes in the reader a consciousness of the passage of time at an

⁵⁶ Vera Colin, 'A Note on Tolstoy and Galdós', *Anales Galdosianos*, Año II (1967), pp. 155–68; pp. 155, 158–64. A copy of the French version of *War and Peace* (1882) stood on the shelves of his library in Santander, where he spent the summers. Lukács, *Historical Novel*, p. 100.

⁵⁷ Lukács, *Historical Novel*, p. 45. Lukács, *European Realism*, p. 149.

⁵⁸ Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Epilogue, pp. 1178–215: p. 1182 asks 'what force moves peoples?'

urgent moment in European and Russian history. One of the novel's particular strengths is its delineation of period. I do not mean this in the sense of the author's ability to capture a specific period in the past. This capacity is evident here. I am referring to the sense of the passage of time both through individual lives and the public sphere, where the political and military decisions are taken. Both private and public lives change through this interweaving over time.

RUSSIA, EMPIRE, AND RESISTANCE

History and fiction combined in the nineteenth century to conceptualise a Russian nation and a Russian Empire with a civilizing mission, extending Orthodox Christianity and European values to subjected and less privileged peoples. Thompson, drawing attention to the key role played by literature in articulating the national myth, sees Tolstoy implicated in this process in *War and Peace*. In her view, Tolstoy presents a favourable view of the Russian people and state for internal and foreign readers, thereby legitimizing the dynastic autocracy, Russian nationhood, and imperial expansion. By so doing, he turns history into mythology through skilful writing and presentation. The Tolstoy of *War and Peace* becomes thereby the 'spokesman of the imperial nation'.⁵⁹

Whether or not we go that far, this point does suggest that Russian identity was sufficiently fluid to be regarded as a contested area. Superficially, Russia appeared to share with Great Britain and France—the two great Western empires—a common imperial destiny. The overriding difference, however, was that Russia's dependent territories were not overseas but on her borders. Military campaign, resistance, and rebellion gave these imperial borders an instability all of their own. This was especially so since the territory corresponding to Russian ethnicity was not identical to that of the Russian Empire, despite the autocracy's portrayal of the whole as a unitary state. Territorial expansion beyond the core of Russian ethnicity from the later sixteenth century onwards, beginning eastward through Siberia, transformed the Russian Empire into a multi-national state. By the accession of Nicholas I, this empire included large areas of Poland and western Ukraine (1793, 1795), Finland (1808–9), the Caucasus territories of Baku (1722, in largely Shi'a Muslim Azerbaijan), Crimea (1783, Tatar Khanate), Christian Georgia (1801), and Muslim Dagestan (1813), and had led to repeated conflicts with the two Muslim Powers of Sunni Turkey and Shi'a Persia. In 1826–9, the Russian Empire was at war with both these powers.⁶⁰

From the beginning of the southward expansion, a strong element of historical reference gave these brutal conflicts an ideological and religious character in the

⁵⁹ Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge*, pp. 8–9, 86–9, 95, 99, 104–5.

⁶⁰ Vera Tolz, *Russia. Inventing the Nation* (London 2001), pp. 155–90, discusses the question of whether the Russian Empire could be regarded as a Russian national state. See also David Saunders, 'Regional Diversity in the later Russian Empire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series X (2000), pp. 143–63.

tradition of earlier Byzantine wars against Islam and in defence of the Orthodox Church. Local Muslim responses among the Turkic peoples of the Caucasus equally became framed in religious terms as Holy War (*jihad*) against the infidel invader. News of these conflicts, however, remained largely hidden. Censorship and rules of secrecy generally kept much of the eastward and southern expansion from the reading public. Russia shared no tradition of flourishing journalism with the main western states of Europe, and information filtered from soldiers' conversations or from literary rather than factual works. Karamzin's travel writings of 1791–2 contributed to the small pool of information on the Caucasus at that time. Pushkin's internal exile in the south in 1820–3, during which he briefly visited the Caucasus, stimulated two popular poems romanticizing the mountainous landscape and wild peoples. Nineteenth-century Russians perceived the Caucasus as the 'East'. In literary terms, Russian penetration of the region coincided with the impact of Romanticism. Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of our Time* [1840] dealt with the experiences of an exiled young officer there, and represented, as much as Pushkin's early poems did, the Russian Romantic perception—and literary exploitation—of the region.⁶¹

The Russian army first entered Chechnia in the 1780s in response to a *jihad*—although nothing appeared in the press, and the incident did not become public knowledge until Pushkin wrote about it in the 1820s. The major campaign in the Caucasus against the Avars and Chechens began under General Alexei Ermolov in 1816–27, during the course of which villages were razed and large numbers of local people killed. This intervention provoked another *jihad* under the Imam Ghazi Muhammad among the tribes of Chechnia and Dagestan, which dragged on until the surrender of its final leader, the Imam Shamil, in 1859. No regular, uncensored newspaper reports appeared during the length of this campaign. Tolstoy was in the Caucasus in 1851, visiting his brother serving in the army, subsequently joining him and serving until the siege of Sebastopol in the Crimean War in 1855. His historical novel, *Hadjı Murat*, came out of his experience of the Caucasus.⁶²

Until the posthumous publication of this novel in 1912, literary sources had been silent concerning the lives of the indigenous inhabitants of the Caucasus. Most works had taken the perspective of serving officers as their starting point, and focused principally on the small number of members of the Russian elite who administered the area. Hadji Murat, the central figure in Tolstoy's last novel, was a real historical figure, who defected to the Russian side from the Shamil rebellion and died a bloody death in 1851. Even though he cannot speak Russian, Hadji Murat's voice speaks clearly in its pages in his own language. Tolstoy's aim is to expose the brutalities behind the façade of civilizing mission. By doing so, he also

⁶¹ Pushkin, *Complete Works*, vol. 5, pp. 101–22, 'The Captive in the Caucasus' [1820–21], pp. 57–74; 'The Fountain of Bakhchisaray' [1822–3] was set in the Crimea. Mikhail Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time*, translated by Paul Foote (Harmondsworth 1966). Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire. Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge 1994), pp. 1–2, 4, 24–30, 42–3, 73, 85–8. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge*, p. 58.

⁶² Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire. Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge 1994), pp. 32, 34, 73. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge*, pp. 60–1, 64.

attacks the insensitivity and untrustworthiness of the Russian elite. At the same time, he makes a not altogether successful attempt to link the fate of the Muslim tribesmen to the abject condition of the Russian peasantry, emphasizing inability to read and write. Tolstoy's concern is to portray Hadji Murat as a wronged leader, caught between the violent and deceitful Shamil and a mendacious and inhuman Tsar Nicholas I.⁶³

Tolstoy began the novel in 1896, but it passed through ten drafts before he finished it in 1906. In the 1902 draft he included the negative portrayal of Nicholas I as licentious and arbitrary, which was bound to get him into trouble with the censors. The readership was to be the educated elite, whom Tolstoy held responsible for complicity in the colonial abuses. When the novel was published in 1912 it was only in truncated form, and thereby lost its impact. In the meantime, two other authors had published historical novels set in the Caucasus. Vasily Nemirovich-Danchenko's *The Forgotten Fortress* appeared in 1897, portraying the tsar as head of the whole Russian family and Shamil as a noble savage. It also had a love theme across the religious divide. Daniel Mordovstev's *The Caucasian Hero* appeared as part of the author's 50-volume collected works in 1901–02, and also took the Russian point of view. Tolstoy challenged this in *Hadji Murat*, and sought to use a real historical situation to convey an anti-colonial message.⁶⁴

Crafted hero or not, Hadji Murat's own violence and ambivalence rise through the pages of the novel, contributing in the end to his death and decapitation. At the centre of the story, Tolstoy places Hadji Murat's concern for his family, whom Shamil has imprisoned on the news of the defection, threatening to blind his son. The motive for the defection is clear: Shamil's ruthless leadership of the Holy War, inspired by messengers of a Sufi sect who had travelled through the Avar and Chechen villages. Local khans, however, had been too afraid of the Russians to join, with the result that the jihadist leaders had them killed. Hadji Murat swore revenge for that, and killed Shamil's co-leader, Gamzat, at a mosque festival. Authorial recognition of these hatreds among the Caucasian rebels strengthens the realism of the plot and moves the novel away from the older Romantic approach to the region. The Russians, for their part, suspect that Hadji Murat's defection is a ruse designed to spy out their position and strategy. When Hadji Murat breaks out of their camp with the intention of freeing his family by force or dying in the process, they pursue him, and he and his close associates are killed.⁶⁵

Tolstoy paid great attention to the historical sources—memoirs, oral accounts, and archival material—but they are neither listed in the text nor take the form of a factual account like Pushkin's study of the Pugachev Rebellion. Fact and

⁶³ Leo Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat*, translated by Hugh Aplin (London 2003), pp. 48–50, at his first meeting with Prince Mikhail Vorontsov, the 70-year-old Governor of the Caucasus, with his capital in Tiflis [Tbilisi], who had been educated in England; pp. 51–5, when he dictates his life story to the interpreter. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge*, p. 58.

⁶⁴ Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat*, chapter 15, pp. 67–79, where the Tsar reads the despatch from Vorontsov to the Minister of War, concerning Hadji Murat's defection to the Russians. Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*, pp. 14, 234–7, 257–9, 264, 273.

⁶⁵ Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat*, pp. 52, 59–60, 105–12, 117–25.

imagination are grafted together seamlessly, but this is still a fictional work, although founded in fact, and has its own artistic criteria. This governs the overall portrayal of Hadji Murat as the victim of incomprehension, conflicting cultures, and devious manoeuvring on both sides. The author moves him on to higher moral ground than he would have occupied in reality, presenting thereby a darker portrait of Nicholas and Shamil. Susan Layton compares this to Pushkin's differing, double portrayal of Pugachev in his history and in his novel. The forty years which intervened between the writing of *War and Peace* and *Hadji Murat* saw profound changes in Tolstoy's view of the Russian state, Church, institutions, and social divisions. He was excommunicated by the Orthodox Church in 1901. The favourable view of the monarchy and nobility which we see in *War and Peace* receded by the end of his life, until we see the critique of both expressed in *Hadji Murat*. The sense of alienation hangs over this novel—the last fictional word of Tolstoy on the subject of his country.⁶⁶

The Caucasus question, present throughout the first half of the century, became the cauldron in which the conflicting suppositions about Russia were tested. Tolstoy's *Hadji Murat*, only published in full in Soviet times, marked a clear statement of the view that imperial Russia was a colonial power as culpable as the other European powers in their dealings overseas. The issue of the moral basis of empire would carry through into the anti-colonial, historical novels of the latter part of the twentieth century.

While this issue looks forward through the twentieth century, the theme of Christian contact with the Muslim world had been approached in the historical novel right at the outset—in the case of Scott's medieval novels relating to the Holy Land, for example, and in Galdós's *Aita Tettauen*, dealing with events in Morocco in 1859, halfway through the fourth series of the *Episodios Nacionales*, in 1905. In their different ways, each author threw the focus on incomprehension, mistrust, betrayal, or ambiguity. This was the case whether their action took place in the twelfth century or in the nineteenth century.

Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is, in contrast to *Hadji Murad*, a well-known work both in Russia and throughout the world, through many editions and translations and two notable film versions. The same cannot be said for the *Episodios*, which are only relatively well-known in the Hispanic world and are virtually unknown outside it. Few of Galdós's works, let alone of the forty-six novels of the *Episodios*, have been translated, with the result that his work is virtually inaccessible to the wider reading public. An English (or French) version of the ten books of the first series, treated as one 'episodic' novel, might help to resolve this. In the meantime, readers depend on foreign (that is, non-Spanish) authors, many of whom have been hugely popular, for their image of Spain's political crisis and its struggle to bring down Napoleon.

The Spanish 'ulcer' persisted, as war broke out between the Russian and Napoleonic Empires. Each conflict, although of different dimensions, greatly contributed to the French Emperor's fall in the years 1813–14, when the focus

⁶⁶ Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*, pp. 285–6.

of the conflict moved to Germany and France.⁶⁷ The dilemma of Prussia—still technically an ally of France—in the aftermath of the retreat from Moscow was the subject of Theodore Fontane's *Before the Storm*, published a decade after *War and Peace*, which I shall deal with in the following chapter.

Fictional portraits of great historical events have their own intrinsic purposes, as I have stressed throughout this study. White's thesis of overriding and motivational interpretations in leading nineteenth-century historical works can also apply to their fictional parallels. Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is an outstanding example. Lieven highlights this problem in the following way:

War and Peace has had more influence on popular perceptions of Napoleon's defeat by Russia than all the history books ever written. By denying any rational direction of events in 1812 by human actors and implying that military professionalism was a German disease Tolstoy feeds rather easily into Western interpretations of 1812 which blame the snow and chance for French defeats. By ending his novel in Vilna in December 1812 he also contributes greatly to the fact that both Russians and foreigners largely forgot the huge Russian achievement in 1813–14 even in getting their army across Europe to Paris, let alone defeating Napoleon en route. One problem with this is that marginalizing or misunderstanding as crucial an actor as Russia results in serious errors in interpreting why and how Napoleon's empire fell.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ For an assessment of relative importance, see Charles Esdaile, *The Peninsular War. A New History* (London 2002), pp. 499–505.

⁶⁸ Lieven, *Russia against Napoleon*, pp. 535–6.

12

The German historical novel

Despite the importance of German historical drama, renovated by Georg Büchner (1814–37) in *Dantons Tod* [1835], which dealt with the fall and execution of the French Revolutionary leader in 1794, German historical fiction did not attain European significance until Theodore Fontane well after mid-century.¹ A substantial number of historical novels did gain popularity in the German territories and the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy. Caroline Pichler, who presided over a salon in Vienna, had, in 1808, published her first historical novel, which became one of the most popular novels of the first half of the century, antedating the period of the impact of the Waverley Novels in the German-language area. Her three-volume *Die Schweden in Prag* [*The Swedes in Prague*, Vienna 1827], a study of the Thirty Years' War, was reviewed in a French version by *Le Globe* on 19 March 1828. The most productive historical novelist in the years from 1847 to 1874 appears to have been Louise Mülbach, who published thirty-three titles, several of which went into English versions in New York in the late 1860s and may be consulted in the British Library.²

These and other publications demonstrate how the Germanic territories fully participated in the general European interest in the historical novel. The themes developed from the crucial moments of German and Austrian history, not least of which was the lasting impact of the Thirty Years' War. The experience of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, also fought across these territories, highlighted all the more both foreign involvement and the continued absence of German unity. The interpretation of such historical figures as Wallenstein became, as in the historiography, engaged with this latter question. The absence of a German historical novel comparable in stature to those of Western and Southern

¹ There is nothing on the historical novel in Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *Building a National Literature. (The Case of Germany, 1830–1870)* (Cornell 1989). See, however, Mühlberger and Habitzel, 'The German Historical Novel from 1780 to 1945', in Durrani and Preece (eds), *Travellers in Time and Space*, pp. 6–10, 15–16, and Davies, *The Wallenstein Figure*, pp. 65, 115–17. Lamport, *German Classical Drama*, pp. 214–15, only *Danton's Death* was published in Büchner's short lifetime. Victor Price, in the Introduction to the English translation, points out that the author's sources included the Revolutionary histories of Thiers and Mignet. In a letter of July 1835, Büchner explained that 'the dramatic poet is no more than a writer of history, but he stands above the latter in that he re-creates history and instead of giving a bald narrative transplants us directly into the life of another age ... his highest task is to get as close to history as it actually happened'. Victor Price (tr.), *Danton's Death, Leonce and Lena, and Woyzeck* (Oxford 2008 [1971]), pp. xiv–xv.

² Mühlberger and Preece, *Travellers in Time and Space*, p. 15. Davies, *The Wallenstein Figure*, pp. 61–5, 115.

Europe, and lately the Russian Empire, remained a perplexing issue. German writers earlier had been setting the pace, particularly in the case of historical drama. Perhaps it was that Goethe and Schiller had played down the novel as an artistic medium, considering it to be 'low', in contrast to drama and poetry, which they regarded as 'high' literature. Goethe is remembered more for his two *Faust* plays and his poetry rather than for his novels. Even Kleist considered prose fiction to be inferior to drama and poetry. Drama, however, went into decline from the 1850s. Again, it might have been the case that Romanticism in the Germanic territories soon found its greatest expression in music—a medium of expression which became so powerful that it lasted through Brahms, Wagner, and Bruckner to Mahler and Richard Strauss into the 1900s. Perhaps Wagner's historical, mythical, and musical drama, his *Gesamtkunstwerk* or 'complete artistic work', queered the pitch. Where at the time, we might ask, are the German-language equivalents to Balzac, Dickens, Flaubert, or Galdós, Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, and Tolstoy?³

WILLIBALD ALEXIS

The Prussian jurist G. W. H. Häring (1798–1871), writing under the pseudonym Willibald Alexis, published a variety of historical novels between 1827 and 1875, but they are not well-known today, least of all outside Germany, where he is best known for his 'patriotic' [vaterländisch] novels, published between 1832 and 1856, dealing with incidents in the history of Brandenburg–Prussia. At first he imitated Scott, and even published, in German, a pseudo-Scott novel which purported to have been written by the Scottish author. Alexis's first historical novel, *Schloss Avalon* [1827], was set in Britain. *Der Roland von Berlin* [1840] had at its late-medieval theme the conflict and final submission of the free cities of Berlin and Cologne to the Elector Frederick II in 1440. This work gained sufficient recognition to have an English translation as *The Burgomaster of Berlin*, published in 1843. Alexis's work contributed to the development of German fiction during the Romantic era, but it did not make new strides, which would distinguish it with major works of historical fiction comparable to the novels published during the same period in France or Britain or to Manzoni's *Betrothed* in Italy during the first half of the century. Alexis did prepare the way for Fontane, who took German fiction to a new level. Alexis also wrote travel literature, as would Fontane, on his visits to Scandinavia and Vienna. The *Wiener Bilder* [1833], however, was banned by the Prussian government, because the author, in his last chapter, defended the Paris July Revolution of 1830.⁴

³ Wagner's musical dramas—several of them set in vaguely medieval contexts or, like *Der Ring des Nibelung*, in the Teutonic mythical past—were the work of a composer who also regarded himself as a poet and dramatist.

⁴ See Norbert Bachleitner, 'The Reception of Walter Scott in Nineteenth-Century Austria', in Pittock, *Reception of Scott*, pp. 80–94, which stresses censorship and control of ideas, including the interpretation of history, in Metternich's Austria in the first half of the century; and Frauke Reitemeier, 'The Reception of Sir Walter Scott in German Literary Histories, 1820–1945', in Pittock, *Scott in*

Häring, born in Breslau (Silesia) but resident in Berlin for much of his adult life, descended from a Huguenot family which had sought refuge in Brandenburg-Prussia. His father was a Prussian civil servant, and his own principal contribution was not in the novel but in Prussian criminal law. His liberal-conservative political stance encouraged him to hope for the transformation of the Prussian monarchy and the rest of Germany into a constitutional state on the lines of Great Britain and the United States, where he believed that true Germanic values were expressed. A believing Protestant, he was also known for his loyalty to the Hohenzollern dynasty.⁵ Lukács commended Alexis's realism in his treatment of the Middle Ages, but complained about the narrowness of his Brandenburger themes, though at least he did not rank him among the reactionary Romantics he so much deplored. Lukács felt that Alexis lacked universality and, for that reason, had not lived up to Scott's achievement. Fontane, however, would place his first historical novel, which did have universal implications, firmly on these same Brandenburger foundations.⁶

FONTANE AND *BEFORE THE STORM*

Not until Theodor Fontane's *Vor dem Sturm* [*Before the Storm*, 1878], set in the Kingdom of Prussia in 1812–13, is there a major novel comparable to those already published in Western Europe and begun in Russia by Gogol and Pushkin in the 1830s. In fact, Tolstoy's *War and Peace* had overtaken Fontane by a decade in their respective, but very different, studies of life in their countries during the Napoleonic Wars. Fontane focused not on the invasion of Prussia by French armies, as Tolstoy had done in the case of Russia, but on the long-term implications of Prussia's defeat in 1806 and enforced alliance with the French, and, more immediately, of Napoleon's retreat from Russia at the end of 1812.⁷

Much dispute surrounds the nature and structure of *Before the Storm*, as it has since its first publication. A. R. Robinson, for instance, is particularly harsh, considering it to have been a 'structural failure' and 'fragmentary and episodic, despite its many positive features'. The love element seems to him unconvincing, and real action takes place only at the very end of the book. The predominance of

Europe, pp. 95–116. Guy Mannering [1815] was the first complete Scott novel to be translated into German, as *Der Astrolog* [1817], but Ivanhoe [1820] really started the vogue.

⁵ Thierry Carpent, *Willibald Alexis, intellectuel du juste milieu: histoire, droit et politique dans l'Allemagne du XIXe siècle* (Berlin and Oxford 2003), pp. xiii, 4, 19–191, 241–304, 328–9.

⁶ Lionel Thomas, *Willibald Alexis. A German Writer of the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford 1964), pp. 15–17, 23–9, 38, 47, 80, 92. H. C. Thomas, 'The Literary Reputation of Willibald Alexis as an Historical Novelist', *Modern Language Review*, 45 (1950), pp. 195–214.

⁷ Peter Demetz, *Formen des Realismus: Theodor Fontane. Kritische Untersuchungen* (Munich 1964), pp. 51–76, deals with this novel, setting it in its literary historical context and contrasting Fontane's approach with Scott's. Gordon A. Craig, *Theodor Fontane (1819–1898). Literature and History in the Bismarck Reich* (New York and Oxford 1999), pp. 146–71: p. 148, sees Lewin as a 'Scott-like hero', but he is more Romantic than that. Craig points to Fontane's anti-nationalism, and argues (p. 161) that *Before the Storm* 'was a model of what a historical novel should be. It created a credible world filled with credible characters.' Lukács, *Historical Novel*, pp. 76–7.

description and character, rather than political involvement and action, places Fontane, in his view, closer to Dickens and Thackeray than to Scott. He contrasts Fontane's treatment of the subject with that of Alexis in *Isegrimm* [1854], which set the politics at the forefront to the detriment of character and colour. As we shall see later, I do not agree with Robinson's assessment of this book.⁸

It is correct to say, however, that the themes of the novel do predominate over plot development, which does not appear to have been the author's primary concern. Plot was one of the prime characteristics of many of the realist novels, but, as we have said, was one of its most artificial features. This, Fontane's first novel—and an historical novel, to boot—reacted precisely against that artificiality. The end result was an immense and disparate novel, full of anecdotes and digressions, humour, and irony, and long discussions of literature—Schiller, Novalis, Kleist, and Hölderlin, to name the most prominent. Fontane had been a journalist in London in 1855–9 and a travel writer of distinction, beginning with an account of London and later of Scotland during his years in Great Britain, and culminating in his descriptive invocation of Brandenburg.⁹

Before the Storm revolves around the theme of authority versus rebellion. This issue provides the overriding theme of the book, but the purpose of writing the novel was to paint the complex picture of a living society, particularly at the provincial level. Through the narrative runs the question of whether rebellion can be legitimized by patriotic sentiment, if obedience meant subservience to a foreign power and the king were unwilling to sanction it. Major Berndt von Vitzewitz, lord of Hohen-Vietz on the western bank of the Oder, and father of the young 'hero' of the novel, Lewin von Vitzewitz, poses the dilemma, especially acute for an army officer. Fontane sets this issue of universal dimension in the Prussian context of the winter of 1812–13. At that time, the Berlin government is still technically in alliance with Napoleon after the humiliating rout at Jena and as news filters in of the retreat from Moscow and the disintegration of the Grande Armée.¹⁰

Berndt and Prince Ferdinand, elderly brother of Frederick the Great, whom he has come to visit in Berlin, discuss these sensitive matters in the privacy of the latter's study overlooking the Wilhelmstrasse. It reads almost like the scene from a play:

⁸ A. R. Robinson, *Theodore Fontane: an Introduction to the Man and His Work* (Cardiff 1978), pp. 60–9. Henry Garland, *The Berlin Novels of Theodor Fontane* (Oxford 1980), pp. 5–28. This novel was, in fact, begun in 1863–4 and then abandoned for twelve years.

⁹ *Ein Sommer in London* [1854] began the cycle. *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*, 4 volumes [1862–82], would be followed later by *Fünf Schlösser* [Five Castles, 1889].

¹⁰ Theodore Fontane, *Before the Storm. A Novel of the Winter of 1812–1813* (Oxford 1985), the end of Book II, pp. 272–85, set in Schloss Guse on Christmas Eve, and the beginning of Book III, pp. 289–95, set in Berlin, deal with this issue. Stefan Neuhaus, 'Zeitkritik im historischen Gewand? Fünf Thesen zum Gattungsbegriff des Historischen Romans am Beispiel von Theodore Fontanes 'Vor dem Sturm'', in Durrani and Preece, *Travellers in Time and Space*, pp. 209–25; p. 222 contrasts the perspectives of father and son on the question of an uprising. Fontane's later historical novel, *Schach von Wutzenow* [Leipzig 1882], set in Berlin in 1806, also deals with this problem, although the focus of the narrative is Captain von Schach's choice of bride. There is a recent Spanish translation, *La elección del capitán von Schach* (Barcelona 2005).

Prince: '... I know only obedience. We live in a monarchy, and whatever happens, happens in accordance with the will of His Majesty... He sees a policy of procrastination as being the only policy to pursue. Time alone will resolve our confusion and perplexity... He regards the Empire as no more than a soap-bubble.'

Berndt: 'But it is a soap-bubble of such solidity that thrones and states are shattered when they collide with it.'

Prince: '... he spoke, too, I think, of a storm that is bound to expend its fury and abate. And you make take the word of an old man who has seen the changes time has wrought over almost three generations: it *will* expend its fury and abate.'

Berndt: 'To be sure, your Royal Highness, but not before it has struck down even the highest summits... Each new day brings its own duties and its own demands. One day demands submission, the next an alliance, a third day demands rebellion. I would like to think, your Royal Highness, that the day of rebellion has dawned.'

Prince: 'Rebellion? With what? We have no army.'

Berndt: 'But we have the people.'

Prince: 'The King distrusts them.'

Berndt: 'He distrusts their strength?'

Prince: '... he distrusts most of all the new spirit now active in the heads of the mob.'

Berndt: 'It is precisely in this spirit that salvation lies, provided one knows how to employ it and, within the bounds of good sense, rely upon it.'¹¹

This was a context with which Fontane's potential readership would be familiar. The issues which sprang from this context involved not only Prussia's relations with France and Russia, but also the nature of monarchical government in a united Germany. These were certainly live issues at the time of publication. Published eight years after the foundation of the Second Reich in 1871, the novel does not read in any sense as a retrospective search for the roots of German nationalism. On the contrary, the Christian religion, in its Protestant form, preoccupies most of the principal characters far more than any secular view of the universe. Furthermore, prime loyalties, including those of the author, are to the Brandenburg location—more so even than to the broader idea of the Prussian state, the territory of which extended well beyond this province even in this earlier period.¹²

Throughout the novel, the older characters continually contrast the greatness of Prussia under Frederick II and its humiliating subordination to Napoleon at the present time. The book's focus on insurrection within an absolute monarchy ensures that its parallel theme is the genesis of patriotic sentiment. These older characters, however, are not anticipating the unified German state of 1871, but are expressing deep loyalties to the Prussian kingdom as it developed during the eighteenth century. This traditional Prussia is lovingly described in the novel, not, we should stress, in terms of its political institutions but through its villages,

¹¹ Fontane, *Before the Storm*. I have extrapolated this quotation from pp. 293–5.

¹² Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom. The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600–1947* (London 2006), pp. 682–3, emphasizes this point with reference to Fontane's *Walks through the Mark Brandenburg*.

nobiliar homes, family life, groups of friends, local people, traditional celebrations, hymns, songs, and writers.¹³

Although this is a novel published well into the Romantic age in Central Europe, romance is not really its major theme, despite being below the surface most of the time. The two heads of families, Berndt and Ladalinski, who has abandoned his native Poland and thrown in his lot with Prussia, long to see their respective children, Lewin and Renate, and Tubal and Kathinka, married to their counterparts. This, however, is not to be.

The subject of Romanticism recurs, as it does among Galdós's circles of friends in his *Episodios Nacionales*, although in the Spain of a quarter of a century later. Here, the friends, Lewin and Tubal, pay a visit to the bookish Dr. Faulstich on their way to Hohen-Vietz. The doctor lives in lodgings in Kirch-Göritz owned by the terrible Frau Griepe, his room a chaos of books and papers. Soon the friends enter into an animated discussion of Novalis, whose Christianity Faulstich emphasizes. This leads him on:

There is also such a thing as a Romanticism attaching to the Classical world, but the actual root and cradle of all Romanticism is the Crib and the Cross. This is the note that, loudly or softly, is sounded in all that is best in what the school has created, and longing for the Cross is its criterion. In no one else is the longing stronger than in Novalis: he was consumed by it.

The readings that follow have a profound effect on Tubal, though less so on Lewin. Then, as evening falls, the two friends hurry across the snow-covered landscape towards their destination.¹⁴

Later in the novel, Lewin, a student in Berlin, has called on another friend, Hansen-Grell, and they are enthusing over Hölderlin's poetry. These are young men in the early 1810s, portrayed in 1879 by a writer approaching sixty, who is seeking to capture the appeal of Romanticism's newness and startling juxtapositions of the older world. Hansen-Grell declares his position:

I belong entirely to the new school; I hold, for good or ill, with the Romantics, and I shall never dream of anything but Nordic princesses and victorious dragon-slayers. And if the contrivances of Romanticism sometimes become too much for me, then, in compliance with the law of opposites, I am wont to throw myself passionately into things of rococo. I am not afraid even of powdered wigs and hooped skirts. But never anything classical, either in form or content.

Deeply moved by Hölderlin, he is prepared to allow that his form is classical, but insists that his sentiment, his mood, is Romantic. Furthermore, Hansen-Grell says that he is still under the spell of the Classical world. Here we have a cast of Romanticism different from that formed by Dr. Faulstich, who saw Christianity at the heart of the movement. Instead, Hansen-Grell, still enraptured by Greece and Rome, is talking about Nordic princesses, dragons, and knights with long spears,

¹³ Fontane, *Before the Storm*, Book I, chapters 3, 5–8, and Book II, chapter 12, for instance.

¹⁴ Fontane, *Before the Storm*, Book II, chapter 11, pp. 191–2.

all of whom seem to have come from Celtic legends popularized in the past century and further developed in the nineteenth century. While the contrast with Neo-Classicism is common ground, these young enthusiasts for Romanticism show how it meant different things to the different individuals who forged and espoused it.¹⁵

Lewin, in the following chapter, which provides a dramatic end to Book III, hears from Tubal of Kathinka's elopement with the Polish patriot, Count Bninski. Distraught that the woman he loves has abandoned him, in true Romantic style he wanders, ill-clad, along the Berlin streets, finally collapsing in the snow in the middle of a road. It takes a lot of nursing for him to recover. When, after the failed attack in Frankfurt, he is a prisoner of the French and facing court-martial, he looks from the window at the familiar landscape. This too is a classic Romantic scene.¹⁶

Fontane opts not for the overarching cycle of historical events from 1805 to 1820, in the manner of *War and Peace*, but for a short period of time, 24 December 1812 until 7 February 1813, in which he sets this *magnum opus* of nearly 700 pages. Views will continue to differ on the relation of content to size, as they always have. Furthermore, unlike Tolstoy or Galdós, there are no historical figures either among the main characters or appearing at decisive moments in the novel. In many respects, Fontane's historical novel is very modern, in the sense that the author's concern is to capture the mood of a period and place and, above all, the mentality of the people alive in that fictional world and relating to one another across the social divides. Although this reduces the conventional plot to almost nothing, the book's overall unity is conveyed precisely by means of these relationships and the familiar places described for us. Within this almost imperceptible framework Fontane works his delicate portrayals of character and his subtleties of conversation against a shifting picture of colours and sounds—the shape and texture of the fallen snow, evening light, sleigh bells, a turn of the wind, lines of poplar trees, and so on. His earlier travel works on Brandenburg had given him an intimate knowledge upon which to draw.

War correspondent during Bismarck's wars of German unification in the years from 1864 to 1871, Fontane's experiences served him well in the account of the local uprising, inspired by Berndt, in Frankfurt-on-the-Oder. The attack by Frankfurt civil militiamen and country volunteers is repulsed by hardened French troops, with disastrous consequences. This battle, however, never actually happened: it is fictitious, despite the realism with which it is described. Again we are in the area of convincing falsities—a speciality of the historical novel since Scott's time. An entire world has been evoked with intricate attention in the preceding 600 pages, and the reader has become an intimate part of it, only to be drawn at the final climax into a fabrication, which appears like the eye-witness account of a real event. In the novel—a construction of the imagination—this does not matter. Here, however, we clearly see the dilemma of the *historical* novel, in which the history itself may be fabricated.¹⁷

¹⁵ Fontane, *Before the Storm*, Book III, chapter 17, pp. 459–62. When thus expounding, Hansen-Grell's 'horny face, with its straw-coloured hair and red eyelids, was transformed from within to genuine beauty'.

¹⁶ Fontane, *Before the Storm*, Book III, chapter 18, pp. 462–9; Book IV, chapter 33, p. 634.

¹⁷ Fontane, *Before the Storm*, Book IV, pp. 604–55.

Ladalinski is the real sufferer in the book. He has lost his country and abandoned his Catholic religion, then lost his daughter to an eloper, and now his only son, Tubal, is killed as a result of the successful rescuing of Lewin from his prison. Tubal is missed by Renate, who no more loved him than Kathinka loved Lewin. The novel leads the reader to dwell on this for a time, though perhaps more so on the catastrophic outcome of Berndt's idea of an insurrection, with which the book opened. These last chapters have a strange feel about them, unresolved by the happy wedding of Lewin and the town mayor's adopted daughter, Marie. When the reader closes the book, a sensation of intense sadness comes over him, not only at having to leave this beautifully evoked world, but at the appalling death of Tubal, which may indeed be a story failure on Fontane's part. It leaves the reader unexpectedly hurt, as though tearing a finger on an ugly thorn.¹⁸

FONTANE, FLAUBERT, AND MANN

The best comparison and contrast is less between Fontane and Tolstoy, as novelists of past society, than between Fontane and the Flaubert of *L'Éducation Sentimentale* [1869]. The immediate differences, however, are obvious: Flaubert's focus is on a purposeless generation, young during the Orleans Monarchy, when the great principles of 1789 seem betrayed and the heroic events of the Empire are vanished. Although there are older figures—Monsieur and Madame Arnoux, and Madame Dambreuse—they are less the focus than the young people. In Fontane, the span of the generations forms the essence of the book, and the restless young form part of an integrated pattern of life. In Flaubert, the Revolution of 1848 has begun before the young are aware of what it is: they certainly do not initiate it in this book, and remain, in fact, equally alienated from it as from the Monarchy which has just fallen. The dreadful realization in Fontane is that the rebellion desired by Berndt von Vitewitz turns out to be so catastrophic for his own family and friends. Yet, these are two novels about memory, despite their discrepancy of time-span. Flaubert's *L'Éducation Sentimentale* is consciously a book about time, although not time construed as history. On the contrary, the history is virtually denigrated through its authorial submerging beneath the unimportant events, which are the focus of the novel. Everywhere in this novel, the horrible passage of time from youth to middle age lies beneath the surface of the 'inaction'.

In terms of conception and construction there are deep similarities between the two novels. Memory dissolves into personal happenings rather than historical events, which are external and, in many respects, alien to the central preoccupations in both of them. This does not mean that, at the end, those events do not brutally intervene. Frédéric Moreau witnesses the slaying of his companion, Dussardier, during the repression of revolutionaries, by another of the friends, Sénécal. This friend had formerly been in favour of revolution and earned the nickname '*le citoyen*'. Fontane, in *Before the Storm*, is not writing of love affairs, realized or

¹⁸ Fontane, *Before the Storm*, Book IV, chapters 23 and 24, pp. 642–55.

unrealized, as is Flaubert, but of a society steeped in a Protestant Christianity different from the experience of Frédéric and his circle, and which survives the 'storm' of 1812–13. In Flaubert, irony continues right to the end, as Frédéric and Deslauriers, his most faithful intimate, both of them failures at every level, contemplate their inconsequential youth by returning to the brothel they dreamed of entering then, only to be equally inconsequential as older men. This ending of the novel takes place at some time during the reign of Napoleon III; that is, after the revolutionary promise of 1848 has turned to nothing.¹⁹

Fontane leads straight to the Mann of *Buddenbrooks*: and even that family name was borrowed from a minor character of Fontane. Both Heinrich and Thomas Mann greatly admired Fontane, and in 1910 Thomas wrote an essay on the elderly Fontane, revised in 1919. Mann rather identified with the accomplished writer in his old age, looking forward to comparable wisdom in his own, even though unlike Fontane, Mann had become a novelist as a young man. In one of his many letters to Agnes E. Meyer, wife of the publisher of the *Washington Post*, Mann commented that he was rediscovering Fontane, long a favourite writer,

... with indescribable pleasure, in spite of old-fashioned touches in his narrative manner. He has a virtuosity which forever enraptures me, especially his dialogue, which is mostly pure chattiness, which has incredible charm and truly supreme grace in its suppleness and stylization. Oddly enough, he did not develop this until his old age; he became more and more subtle, more and more a practitioner of the magic of intonation and of unobjectivity, or rather super-objectivity.²⁰

Fontane was the supreme practitioner of German realism. Judith Ryan makes a revealing comment on the type of realism evident in the novels of Flaubert and Fontane, and points forward to Mann's ironic intertwining of realism and aestheticism in *Buddenbrooks*:

Realism, especially as practiced by Flaubert and his German counterpart, Fontane, is far from a straightforward representation of external reality. In all of its many forms, European realism, ostensibly an objective mode of presentation, was sensitive to the idea that reality can only be perceived from a particular point of view. Realism also depended heavily on the use of significant detail, chips of reality that serve in the first instance to build up the materiality of what is presented, but also, through repetition and variation in the course of the narrative, become invested with symbolic meaning. Descriptions of costume, interior décor, and outdoor settings, but also character gestures and repeated turns of phrase, were particularly favoured by the realists as they worked to create a thick accretion of detail.²¹

The function, purpose, and timing of *Buddenbrooks* is very different from those of Fontane. The latter belongs to an earlier epoch of Central European culture.

¹⁹ Flaubert, *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, pp. 541, 548–52.

²⁰ *The Letters of Thomas Mann*. Selected and translated by Richard and Clara Winston (London 1970), p. 303, Mann to Agnes E. Meyer, Pacific Palisades, 12 May 1942.

²¹ Judith Ryan, 'Buddenbrooks: between realism and aestheticism', in Ritchie Robertson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge 2002), pp. 119–36; pp. 119–20.

Although both novels are looking back historically, their character is distinct and reveals the social and artistic preoccupations of the age of writing. In one sense, both novels look back, with a certain nostalgia, at a vanishing or already vanished world—in Fontane the small world of the Prussian country nobility, and in Mann the almost seigneurial, mercantile bourgeoisie of Lübeck during the years 1835–77. In Fontane, the polarity at the heart of the novel is between legitimacy and obedience, on the one hand, and spontaneous political action in pursuit of a higher cause, on the other hand. This dilemma juxtaposed traditional Prussian and then Restoration era loyalties against Romantic defiance and self-definition. In Mann, however, the entire purpose of his 1901 novel is to highlight the polarity between the achievement of status through commerce and money-making, on one side, and aestheticism—that is, artistic talent and the pursuit of aesthetic goals—on the other. The latter threatens to destroy the former. Although repeated discussion of Romanticism represents a major part of Fontane's picture, his purpose is not to juxtapose it to the daily events of the real world. It is what his characters like to read and discuss; it does not consume them and distort their behaviour. From the very beginning of his career as a novelist, Mann sought to identify and emphasize the destructive nature of the conflict between aestheticism and bourgeois values. The artist is the outsider—not just because he had put himself there, but because he is seen, and made to see that he is, there.²²

²² See, for instance, Henry Hatfield, *Thomas Mann* (New York 1962 [1951]), pp. 22–3, 52–6, with reference also to 'Gladius Dei' [1902], 'Tonio Kröger' [1903], and 'Death in Venice' [1912].

13

Modernism and beyond

Discussion of the nature of fiction between the 1880s and the 1930s led to the reshaping of the novel, and the advance guard of this process was represented in the Modernist movement. Several authors sought to transcend realism through myth and symbolism, and by drawing on the psychological findings of their time, which stressed the importance of the subconscious. Flaubert's attempt to reduce the role of the narrator in his novels provided the background for this discussion. Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, and Thomas Mann developed from there, partly with the aim of subverting the reader–narrator relationship prevalent in the early and mid-Victorian novel, and partly in order to enter the mental processes—conscious and subconscious—of the protagonists of their novels. The landmarks in English-language literature were James' *The Ambassadors* [1903] and *The Golden Bowl* [1904], Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* [1902] and *Nostromo* [1904], D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* [1915], Virginia Woolf's essay, 'Modern Fiction' [1919], and Joyce's *Ulysses* [1924]. Marcel Proust (1871–1922), *À la recherche du temps perdu* [7 volumes, 1913–27; English versions from 1922–31; French authoritative text, 1987–8], marked the high point of French literary Modernism. In German, Robert Musil (1880–1942), *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* [1930, 1933, 1943; English version, *Man Without Qualities* 1953, 1954, 1960], and Franz Kafka (1883–1924), *Der Prozess* [1925; English version, *The Trial*, 1937], were leading expressions of Modernism, as was Andrei Bely (1880–1934), *Petersburg* [1916; English version, London 2009] in Russian. If the historical novel were to compete with the novel and history for a convincing representation of reality, it would need to absorb, sooner or later, these lessons in technique and approach. By the end of the twentieth century, the new history of gender, sexual orientation and identity, ethnicity, race, and 'subaltern' groups enabled the emergence of new types of historical novel which reflected these aspects.¹

In many respects, the later James and the Conrad of 1900 to 1915 represent the bridge in the English-language novel between nineteenth-century realism and

¹ Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism. Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900–1910* (Oxford 1994). Peter Childs, *Modernism* (London and New York 2000). Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms. A Literary Guide* (Basingstoke and New York 2002 [1995]). Sarah Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War* (Cambridge 2003). Morag Shiach, *The Cambridge Guide to the Modernist Novel* (Cambridge 2007). Günther Anders, *Kafka* (London 1960), pp. 24–6, suggests a comparison between the estranged 'K' of *The Trial* and the original Don Quixote by way of the tormented Michael Kohlhaas of Kleist's novella on the issue of what is versus what should be.

Modernism. From *Nostromo* to *Victory* [1915], Conrad's examination of moral dilemmas, character flaws, terrible decisions, delusions, and surrender to material desires set character on an equal plane to dramatic action. They are intertwined, however—the one dependent on the other. In this mingling the narrator imperceptibly dissolves, thereby drawing the reader into the working out of events.² *Ulysses* proved to be one among several one-day novels of concentrated thought, instinct, and action. It is not an historical novel, yet it alludes to different cultural periods, as Eliot and Pater had done and as Mann would do in *Dr. Faustus* [1947]. Joyce raises the question of the nature of history, and by his Homeric parallel posits a view of history as repetition.³

Running right through Modernism is the impact of war. This provides a thematic linkage between the nineteenth-century historical novel and Modernist literature. I have argued that the impact of the French Revolution and the European wars of 1793–1815 not only altered the perspectives of the Romantic movement but also influenced the subject matter of the historical novel from Balzac to Tolstoy and Galdós. The war of 1914–18 revealed the destructive extent of modern technology. Furthermore, it occurred against the background of loss of faith in revealed religion, suspicion of the supposed omniscience of science, and the exploration of the irrational. In literature, Modernism, self-consciously 'modern', rejected inherited ideas and institutions. It combined this with the recognition of the horrors of modern warfare and the heavy loss of life. A sense of irresolvable crisis permeated Modernism. The nineteenth-century ideals of Hellenism, romantic and patriotic heroism, and a stable, rational order went into the wreckage. Distraught and isolated individuals, broken former soldiers, and an overpowering numbness throughout society at the scale of human loss and the extent of psychological damage were the results of the experience of war.⁴

The technological revolution in communications, with the development of radio and the cinema from the 1910s, and eventually television during the later 1930s, differentiated the age of Modernism from the time of the early nineteenth-century historical novel. One well-known cinematic expression was Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* [1925–6], which combined political and social statement with the visual experience of a futuristic underground city of faceless proletarians bound like slaves in grinding labour.⁵ This vision foreshadowed the grim totalitarianism and class polarities of much of the twentieth century. The media revolution would accelerate rapidly after the Second World War, leaving the historical novel with a range of competition in the form of documentary history, televised re-enactments of historical events, radio plays, and so on. The problem of form, however, might be overcome by the seriousness of the content.

² Shiach, *Modernist Novel*, pp. 154–7.

³ Derek Attridge, *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce* (Cambridge 1990), pp. 259–60, 264–7.

⁴ Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship*, pp. 23–5, 38, 43–6, 52–4, provides a cogent discussion of these themes.

⁵ Lotte H. Eisner, *Fritz Lang* (London 1986 [1976]), pp. 83–94. Workers march into the mouth of Moloch, the machine centre. Eisner's critique points to 'the encounter of Expressionism and Surrealism'.

As argued at the beginning of this book, the historical novel emerged with the development of the novel as a major form of communication. We have seen how novels not conceived as historical novels assumed historical characteristics in the elaboration of their narrative. Furthermore, by the 1890s and 1900s the historical novel itself had a history—much of it distinguished, as demonstrated in the previous chapters. This pedigree gave the historical novel, despite the problems we have identified throughout, sufficient strength to respond to the new methodological and thematic challenges. Not one of the new media could compete with the novel in its depth of psychology and character, its portrayal of intimacy and sexuality, its combination of irony and humour, and its ability to exploit mistaken perceptions. The novel would continue to be the prime medium for the development of symbolism or myth through continuous narrative in its representations of reality.

'Modernism' can seem a nebulous term, and I prefer to confine it to literary, artistic, musical, and architectural works of the period c.1890 to the 1930s. In cultural studies of the period, we encounter such comments as the following. In the 1920s, for example, 'Paris was arguably the capital of high modernism', across the arts, with writers such as Proust, André Gide, and Joyce resident there, along with the surrealist André Breton, and Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ezra Pound as American cultural émigrés.⁶ Then, there is the suggestion that William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* [1929] was 'the quintessential American high modernist text'.⁷ From the above remarks we do derive a sense of who represented Modernism and how far it ranged. The themes and approach associated with Modernism found stark expression in literature in German, both in the territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its successor states, and in the Second German Empire and its successor, the Weimar Republic. German Expressionism in the 1910s and 1920s rejected the art of the nineteenth century and all previous forms.⁸

Modernism in Hispanic literature first referred specifically to the post-Romantic style of poetry pioneered by the Nicaraguan Rubén Darío at the end of the nineteenth century. Darío's influence on Spanish poetry proved to be dramatic, opening the way finally for the great poets and dramatists of the Silver Age from c.1927 to 1936: Luis Cernuda, Federico García Lorca, Emilio Prados, Rafael Alberti, and so on.⁹ In Russia, literary modernism in the period from the 1890s to c.1915–16 (with an extension into the 1920s to include the experimental art of the early Soviet era) explored the symbolic significance of historical figures and conflicts. The fiction of Merezhkovsky excelled in this, reconceiving Pushkin's earlier fascination with the times of Peter the Great.¹⁰

⁶ Scott Donaldson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ernest Hemingway* (Cambridge 1996), p. 198.

⁷ Noel Polk (ed.), *New Essays on The Sound and the Fury* (Cambridge 1993), p. 1.

⁸ Roger Carinall, *Expressionism* (London 1984).

⁹ See, for instance, C. B. Morris, *A Generation of Spanish Poets, 1920–1936* (Cambridge 1969).

¹⁰ Ungurianu, *Plotting History*, pp. 149–88.

The geographical breadth and variety, however, present as many problems of definition as we saw earlier in the case of Romanticism. The unifying characteristics in Modernism derived from the focus on consciousness in the form of multiple perspectives, the interpretation of time, and the nature of knowledge. Science—so confident by the second half of the nineteenth century—fell under scrutiny as the unique method of understanding reality. Modernists regarded it as another human construction, shying away from absolutes and systems of all kinds.¹¹

MYTH, SYMBOL, AND MODERNISM

Despite the assertive nature of the term, Modernism had antecedents, just as did Romanticism. Some of these were scarcely recognized and some were denied altogether in a similar rejection of the past. One of these influences was Vico, who argued for the particular nature of different cultures in the past, each infused with its own myths. They provided meaning and durability. Vico regarded past cultures as authentic expressions of human experience in time. Nineteenth-century historicism had developed a similar view. Modernism rejected historicism, while taking its stand on the authenticity of myth as an explanation of human behaviour in society. This led Modernists to examine past cultures, especially those regarded as primitive, and the cultures of peoples beyond Europe. We can see both of these traits in Lawrence's *Women in Love* [1921], when Birkin is puzzling over the West African statuette, and where Gudrun is talking to the German sculptor, Loerke: '...he liked West African wooden figures, the Aztec art, Mexican and Central American.' The narrator comments: 'The suggestion of primitive art was their refuge, and the inner mysteries of sensation their object of worship. Art and Life to them were the Reality and the Unreality.' Lawrence's Mexican novel, *The Plumed Serpent* [1926], is not only permeated with them but they express the purpose of the book, a clear rejection of the Hellenism of the 1880s and 1890s, while still preserving the centrality of male bonding.¹²

Three salient characteristics help set Modernism in its cultural context. They consist of its fascination with the primitive, the development of the irrationalism already apparent in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and a marked tendency to myth-creation. In terms of symbolism, the disruptive Dionysus returns from Ancient Greek religion in an early twentieth-century form. Walter Pater explored several of these elements in his investigation of the genesis of cultures and the origin and revival of art. As Nietzsche had already done in *The Birth of Tragedy* [1872], in 1876 Pater juxtaposed the Apollonian and Dionysian principles, regarding the former as centripetal, rational, and commensurate with Stoicism, and the latter as centrifugal, dynamic, and representing life as sap or fluid. Its parallel

¹¹ Michael Bell, *Literature, Modernism and Myth. Belief and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge 2006 [1997]), pp. 13–14, 72–5.

¹² D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (Cambridge edition 1987), p. 448. See the comments in Ross Parmenter, *Lawrence in Oaxaca. A Quest for the Novelist in Mexico* (Salt Lake City 1984), pp. 273–301.

would be with Epicureanism. Pater saw the Christian myths as continuations and developments of the earlier cults of Dionysus and Demeter, the Earth Mother. He saw the darker side of Romanticism in the subterranean legacy of Dionysus.¹³ The publication of James Frazer's *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion* [2 vols. 1890] and Jane Harrison's *Ancient Art and Ritual* [1913] proved to be landmarks in the understanding of religion and art in the Ancient World. Writers drew on these and other studies in cultural history and anthropology.¹⁴

Michael Bell widens the sphere to include Europe's imperial position at the time:

In the early decades of the twentieth century, some of the most significant European writers, stimulated partly by the fact of colonialism, and partly by the internal crisis of their own civilisation, conducted an important self-examination for which the techniques of Modernism were a crucial means. The widespread interest in 'primitive' cultures and artefacts was an important aspect of this, but its significance lies in the reception, in how these elements were reflected back, or internalised, as a self-recognition.¹⁵

Our study of Flaubert's *Salammbô*, viewed from this Modernist perspective, revealed how ground-breaking and forward-looking that disturbing novel was. It foreshadowed most of the elements I have outlined above. Not least of these was the novel's North African location and subject-matter at a time of expanding French colonialism. *Heart of Darkness* is recognized as a seminal work in the Modernist examination of the darkness of human nature, symbolized in the penetration of the Belgian Congo—of the 'Dark Continent', as Victorians and Edwardians described Black Africa. Primitivism, however, held no fatal attraction for Conrad, who continued to view it from the perspective of Western moral values. While this was never conceived to be in any sense an historical novel, it opened the way for subsequent examinations of colonialism, which exposed the absurdities, injustices, disdain, and incomprehension in the European clash with indigenous cultures. *Nostromo* sees the collapse of all moral value and the seduction of Charles Gould and a range of South American political figures by the promise of the silver of the mine pioneered by his late father. Corruption on such a scale threatens also to destroy Gould's marriage, as Dr Moynihan, crippled victim of torture during the dictatorship of Guzmán Bento, helplessly observes. This is a novel seeped in history, although not, strictly speaking, an historical novel. The concern is not to reconstruct a past epoch but to explain present-day conduct through the irremediable pressure of the past.

Modernism, then, often demonstrated a growing consciousness of the distinct principles and organization of extra-European cultures, and fascination with them.

¹³ Gerald C. Monsman, *Pater's Portraits. Mythic Patterns in the Fiction of Walter Pater* (Baltimore 1967), pp. 16–21, 67–73, 160, 201–9.

¹⁴ The third edition of *The Golden Bough* [1911–15] was considerably enlarged to 12 volumes. There is much on Dionysus, who despite similarity to the Egyptian Osiris, is of Thracian origin. He is seen as vine-god and deity of agriculture and corn, as bull or goat, as the god who dies and is resurrected, who descends into Hades to rescue his mother, Semele, and whose flesh is eaten and whose blood is drunk: Part V, vol. 1, pp. 1–34.

¹⁵ Bell, *Literature, Modernism and Myth*, p. 149.

This latter aspect raised the question of colonialism, which reached its climax during the period in which Modernism exercised its maximum influence in European literature, art, architecture, and music. Exploration of the dark side of human nature accompanied emphasis on the barbaric foundations of modern cultures.

The moral ambiguities of colonialism became a central theme in Conrad and E. M. Forster. Cole argues that 'Conrad's modernism grows directly out of his conflicted reaction to imperialism and its formal tropes.' Exploitation and force lead to the collapse of social relationships and the disintegration of the relation of language to truth. Forster's *A Passage to India* [1924] poses the question of whether personal relationships can transcend the realities of colonialism in pre-war India. The conclusion is that racial divisions render them incompatible.¹⁶

THE REVIVAL OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL, c.1930 TO c.1980

The historical novel rose to fresh heights during the middle core of the twentieth century. This period began symbolically with Thomas Mann's Joseph novels and reached a climax with Marguerite Yourcenar's *L'Oeuvre au noir* [1968].

Mann's four novels based on the Hebrew Old Testament, published against the background of the Nazi capture of power in Germany, indicate a conscious cultural opposition to the Third Reich. Naguib Mahfouz's Ancient Egyptian trilogy provides a chronological parallel. The degree of myth in Mann's Joseph novels led one critic, Henry Hatfield, to argue that the tetralogy did not constitute a historical novel in the nineteenth-century understanding of the sub-genre:

Despite the wealth of scholarship which Mann exploited when writing *Joseph*, the work is not in any important sense a historical novel. Its intention is less to recreate a period of the past than to show typical and timeless figures against a more or less distinct background. Even when the treatment of the milieu approaches in sharp detail the 'realism' of the conventional historical novel, the symbolic aim is still primary.¹⁷

Whether or not one accepts this view, the symbolic significance of these four novels is that Mann consciously set the examination of the Old Testament Jewish myth in

¹⁶ Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship*, pp. 71, 81, 91–7, 104.

¹⁷ Henry Hatfield, *Thomas Mann* (New York 1962 [1951]), p. 98. Thomas Mann, *Joseph und seine Brüder* [*Joseph and his Brothers*, translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter, in one volume, New York 1948; by John E. Woods, New York 2005]: 1. *Die Geschichten Jakobs* (Berlin 1933) [*Tales of Jacob*, English version, 1934]; 2. *Der junge Joseph* (Berlin 1934) [*The Young Joseph*, 1935]; 3. *Joseph in Ägypten* (Vienna 1936) [*Joseph in Egypt*, 1938]; 4. *Joseph, der Ernährer* (Stockholm 1943) [*Joseph the Provider*, 1944]. We should also include Mann's return to the Goethe theme in *Lotte in Weimar* (Stockholm 1939) [English version, 1940], to this period of his historical fiction. Naguib Mahfouz, *Three Novels of Ancient Egypt*, translated from the Arabic by Raymond Stock, Anthony Calderbank, and Humphrey Davies, and published in one volume (Cairo and New York 2003): 1. *Kufu's Wisdom* [1939]; 2. *Rhadopus of Nubia* [1943]; 3. *Thebes at War* [1944].

the foreground of his fictional restatement of history at the time of the Nazi establishment in power in Germany with anti-Semitism as its official policy.

Symbolism unlocks *Dr. Faustus*—a complex novel which interprets the history of Germany during the first half of the twentieth century. Mann takes Goethe's theme of Faust's surrender of his soul to the devil in return for privileged insights on earth. This is Mann's explanation of Germany's surrender to the rhetoric of Hitler, as interpreted by the old conservative Serenus Zeitblom, the narrator, who speaks in an antiquated German of the time of Luther. Zeitblom is initially uncomprehending, and only gradually understands the horror of the composer Adrian Leverkühn's surrender to the devil and the depth of the disaster befalling Germany. Both the composer and the country are brought to extinction through insanity. Mann uses multiple time-scales both in Levekühn's life and in historical antecedents reaching back to the Middle Ages and the Reformation and into musical history. Beethoven, portrayed as a thematic *leitmotiv*, plays a key role in the development of the novel, since the devilish part of Faustus' soul is struggling to compose the negation of the triumphant humanism of Schiller's *Ode to Joy* at the end of the Ninth Symphony. By contrast, Günter Grass, author of *Die Blechtrommel* [1959] (*The Tin Drum*, New York 1993 [1961]), was too young (born in 1927) to be either a political exile or compromised by Nazism. A child and youth during this twelve-year dictatorship, his novel adopts the perspective of a physically retarded midget who, nevertheless, possesses astute capacities of observation. It is as though Dickens in *Barnaby Rudge* had made his 'half-wit' the prime mover of his narrative. Oskar Matzerath recounts past events from the mental hospital where he is subsequently confined. This perspective results in a more immediate portrayal of the Third Reich than in the allegorical treatment by the exiled Mann. The short length of time between the fall of the régime in 1945 and German publication in 1959 accounted for the outrage at the author's theme and the treatment of it.¹⁸

The Ancient World seemed to exercise a greater hold on historical fiction in the twentieth century than it had in the nineteenth century, even though it was never absent then. In 1933, Lewis Grassic Gibbon (1901–35) published *Spartacus*, whose revolt in 73–71 BC exposed the ugly face of Republican Rome. Gibbon saw Spartacus from a Marxist perspective, linking this uprising to the Spartacist movement of 1916–19 on the German Left. Robert Graves began the cycle of novels focusing on the Julio-Claudian beginnings of the Roman Empire.¹⁹ Yourcenar's *Mémoires d'Hadrien* (Paris 1951) sought through invented recollections to open up the mind of one of the great emperors of the second century. The difference in approach to Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, published sixty-six years previously, was striking. Yourcenar emphasized how Hadrian's mind worked: Pater's focus had been on Marcus Aurelius's Stoic ideas and the impact on the development of

¹⁸ John E. Woods' translation of *Dr. Faustus*, published in 1997, is an attempt to supersede the earlier unsatisfactory version by H. T. Lowe-Porter. Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum* (New York 1993), pp. 98–101, 196–233, 340–75.

¹⁹ Robert Graves, *I, Claudius* (London 1934); *Claudius the God* (London 1934), and for Byzantine expansion under Justinian, *Count Belisarius* (London 1938). Howard Fast, *Spartacus* [New York 1951] became the more well-known novel of the rising and the basis for the film version of 1960.

Marius's soul. Imperial policy and Hadrian's attraction to Greek culture did not obscure the emperor's passionate relationship with Antinoüs and his despair at this lover's mysterious death in the Nile. Well aware of the difficulty which historical novelists had already found in trying to invent Ancient-World forms of speech, Yourcenar decided to write the book virtually in monologue form.²⁰

Colin Thubron's variant of the Roman imperial theme studied the mind of Constantine at Verona in the year 312—a determining point in the fortunes of a divided Empire. Constantine, about to engage in battle against his leading rival for power, mulls over the merits and practical advantages of giving official sanction to the Christian religion. This he does within the context of a loveless marriage. The book's strength lies in its examination of Constantine's motives.²¹

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL IN THE WIDER WORLD: RESPONSES TO COLONIALISM, REVOLUTION, AND THE PROBLEM OF INDEPENDENCE

Latin American novels built on the earlier nineteenth-century experiments at a novel form commensurate to the specific historical and environmental experience of this sub-continent. European influences and home *costumbrista* traditions struggled for priority, but the later nineteenth and early twentieth-century regional novel, often in the naturalist traditions inherited from France and Spain, prepared the way, as did the novel of the Mexican Revolution, for the great writers of the 1940s onwards, such as Alejo Carpentier, Augusto Roa Bastos, and Miguel Angel Asturias. The latter's *Leyendas de Guatemala* [1930] had already sought to reclaim Indo-America's Pre-Columbian past from European imagery.²²

The Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes examined Spain's ambiguous legacy to Spanish America in complex literary form in a work which took him to the peak of his writing skills.²³ Iberian colonialism and its overthrow in the 1810s and 1820s was the theme of a range of writers, including Fuentes. Gabriel García Márquez, for instance, throws light on Simon Bolívar's last years in *El General en su laberinto* [Madrid 1989]. Here the liberator of half a continent and founder of five new states

²⁰ Marguérite Yourcenar, *Mémoirs d'Hadrien* (Paris 1951) [English version by Grace Frick in collaboration with the author, *Memoirs of Hadrian* (London 1955); Spanish version by Julio Cortázar (Buenos Aires, 1955)]. For the author's comments on the conception of her book, see *Entretiens avec Matthieu Galey: Marguerite Yourcenar: Les yeux ouverts* (Paris 1980), pp. 149–52, 155, 160–2.

²¹ Colin Thubron, *Emperor* (London 1978).

²² Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions. The National Romances of Latin America* (California 1991). Miguel Angel Asturias, *El señor Presidente* [1946] (English version, 1963); Alejo Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo* [1949] (English version, 1967); *El siglo de las luces* [1962] (English version, 1963), the Cuban writer focussing on the impact of the French Revolution in the Caribbean, and particularly Haiti. Augusto Roa Bastos, *Hijo de hombre* [1960] (English version, 1965).

²³ Carlos Fuentes, *Terra Nostra* (Mexico City 1975) (English version, London 1977). Daniel Balderston (ed.), *The Historical Novel and the Latin American Tradition* (New Orleans 1986). Raymond D. Souza, *La historia de la novela hispanoamericana moderna* (Bogotá 1988). Seymour Menton, *La nueva novela histórica de la América latina* (Mexico City 1992). Magdalena Perkowska, *Historias híbridas. La nueva novela histórica latinoamericana (1985–2000)* (Madrid 2008).

is ground down by factionalism, despair, and illness, as he makes his way through the tropical lowlands of Colombia's Magdalena River. A grinding sense of failure inhabits the novel, which lacks the vibrancy of García Márquez's other works. In psychological terms, Bolívar has become a solitary figure, although in historical terms he is far from that. This paradox provides the novel's central theme. The dreamer of continental unity becomes the victim of fractional localism.²⁴

Vargas Llosa's *La guerra del fin del mundo* [1981] (*The War at the End of the World*, 1984) developed from Euclides da Cunha's account of the tenacious resistance of a rural religious community to the Brazilian army in the backlands during the 1890s. This was the story of the millenarian movement of Canudos. It signified a departure from Peruvian themes in the period of the author's lifetime, but broadened earlier fictional treatment of the conflict between state and community or individuals.²⁵

Several contemporary historical novelists deal with the issue of the dawning of consciousness in individuals as momentous historical processes slowly take shape. The disintegration and collapse of the Western European colonial empires during the course of the twentieth century becomes a major theme. Irony fills the Asiatic novels of J. G. Farrell, for instance. Even so, the conceptualizing of the themes in Farrell owes a great deal to Conrad. Irony accentuates the distance between author and fictional characters, drawing *The Siege of Krishnapur* [1973] and *The Singapore Grip* [1978] away from the late Victorian adventure story set in the Eastern colonial world as much as the centrality of moral dilemmas had done in Conrad's fiction. Furthermore, Farrell's Irish origins helped account for his scepticism towards British imperial pretensions. Yet, other elements appear: Farrell's contrast, for instance, between the magnificent self-discipline of the ordinary Japanese soldier and the slovenly complacency of the British colonialists, might come as a surprise to the reader. The racism of the British appears starkly not only in their under-estimation of the capacity of the Japanese but also in their failure to trust the Chinese majority in Singapore.²⁶

The great Indonesian novelist, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, studies the fissures in the Dutch East Indian Empire from the 1890s. The Dutch authorities imprisoned him in 1947–49 for anti-colonial activities. His 'Buru tetralogy' was named after the prison island on which he was confined without trial from 1965 to 1979. In the

²⁴ Gabriel García Márquez, *El General en su laberinto* (Madrid 1989).

²⁵ Reynaldo Arenas, *El mundo alucinante* (Mexico City 1966) [English version by Gordon Brotherton, *Hallucinations* (London 1971)]. Jorge Ibargüengoitia, *Los pasos de López* (Mexico City 1981). García Márquez, Gabriel, *El General en su laberinto* (Madrid 1989). García Márquez, Gabriel, *El General en su laberinto* (Madrid 1989). Carlos Fuentes. See also Monica Morley and Enrico Mario Santú, 'Reynaldo Arenas y su mundo alucinante: una entrevista', *Hispania*, 66 (March 1983), pp. 114–18. Mario Vargas Llosa, *La Guerra al fin del mundo* [1981]. Fernando del Paso, *Noticias del Imperio* (Mexico City 1987).

²⁶ J. G. Farrell, *The Siege of Krishnapur* (London 1973); *The Singapore Grip* (London 1978), pp. 138–40, 216, 256, 258, 271–80, 369–75. The French character, Dupigny, who recoils at the thought of British food and compared British merchants in Singapore to Renaissance princes, is probably modelled on Conrad's Decoud in *Nostromo*: see pp. 136–8, 235–7, 287. R. J. Crane (ed.), *J. G. Farrell. The Critical Grip* (London 1999), and Jennifer Livett, *Troubled Pleasures. The Fiction of J. G. Farrell* (Dublin 1997).

first three volumes of the tetralogy, historical events are seen through the eyes of the central character, Minke—who is nineteen years of age when the first book opens—and his close associates. Perceptions of the Dutch colonial world in Java reveal Minke's developing consciousness of what this outside domination implies for the local people. The novels, replete with intriguing ethno-social and political detail, have a powerful impact, demonstrating the vitality of the historical novel well beyond the time and place of its original flowering. The reader grows up with Minke, since the theme of these three novels is Minke's self-discovery within the complex ethnic structure of colonial society in the 1890s—in part through his personal relationships, and in part as a result of his increasing understanding of how politics is conducted and society constructed. He discovers himself as part of this society, rather than as an outsider. Yet objectively, colonialism has taken his country away from him. The problem, however, is that neither he nor the rest of the non-Dutch population know what this country, in the realities of the 1890s, actually is. Colonialism has made it radically different from what it had been before the Dutch assumed control. For these reasons, all of them overpowering, Minke learns what his role in this society must be: what is he, one individual, going to do about it? In this respect, the historical novel acquires a dimension distinct from that of the nineteenth-century prototypes. The focus on consciousness-raising, however, does recall the earlier novels of national identity which we have seen in the cases of Scotland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland, and Russia. Furthermore, the issue arises in Minke's thinking of where the core of the new multi-island nation is to be. Should it not be Java, the most culturally and politically important territory of the Dutch East Indies?²⁷

The issue of identity, which had emerged as a central theme of the earlier nineteenth-century historical novel, whether collective or individual, continued to be a major theme. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* [1981] and *Shame* [1988] made it central to the shaping of India and Pakistan, respectively, which provides the context of these two novels. We shall see other instances in the course of this chapter. This issue, however, raised the problem of where identity is to be located. Was it to be somewhere in the past in ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, or in the contemporary realities of the multi-ethnic societies developing in Western Europe—for instance, since the collapse of the great empires? Questions such as these might provide starting points for historical novels of the twenty-first century—especially significant if we add sexual identity to the component elements.

Novels of the Indian and Sri Lankan *diaspora* have used history to explain both the establishment and character of colonial systems and the roots of contemporary ethnic and civil strife. Both Kunal Basu's *The Opium Clerk* (London 2001) and Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* (London (2008) examine the Chinese opium trade

²⁷ Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *The Buru Quartet* [1982–92]; *This Earth of Mankind* (Sydney 1982 [Jakarta 1980]); *Child of All Nations* (Sydney 1984 [Jakarta 1980]); *Footsteps* (Sydney 1990 [Jakarta 1985]); *House of Glass* (Sydney 1992 [Jakarta 1988]). This last volume has Minke in prison and is written—not really successfully—from the perspective of his gaoler. See also Nagesh Rao (ed.), *Exile. Pramoedya Ananta Toer in conversation with Andre Vltchek and Rossie Indira* (Chicago 2006).

from India organized by the British East India Company in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In a similar vein, Timothy Mo examined the British acquisition of Hong Kong in 1842.²⁸ A later novel studies the civil and ethnic strife which resulted from the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, the former Portuguese colony, in the mid-1970s, and its impact on the territory.²⁹ The Canada-based Sri Lankan writer, Shyam Selvadurai, exposes the prospect of Tamil reduction to precarious minority status by the British attempt to establish representative democracy in Ceylon under the Donoughmore Constitution of 1931. These discussions form the background to the personal lives of the protagonists in the novel.³⁰

PORTRAYALS OF HUMANITY CAUGHT IN WAR

One of the striking features of the nineteenth-century historical novel was its capacity to portray humanity caught in war. This could be seen in Scott's novels of the Covenanter Wars and the Jacobite rebellions, Galt's *Ringen Gilhaize*, Balzac's treatment of the Breton-Norman rebellion, and Galdós's episodes from the Carlist Wars. Neil Gunn, in *Butcher's Broom* [1934] and *The Silver Darlings* [1941], dealt with what Scott had omitted: the Highland Clearances and their aftermath.³¹ These were all localized conflicts. As we have seen, three writers—Tolstoy, Galdós, and Fontane—had been most directly concerned with the impact of the Napoleonic Wars. There is a strong case for arguing that revolutionary and military conflict across Europe played a major role in shaping the historical novel in nineteenth-century Europe. Could the same be said for its twentieth-century counterpart? Certainly an entire range of popular, twentieth-century historical novels developed that earlier concentration: C. S. Forrester, Bernard Cornwell, Patrick O'Brian, to name the most well-known.

The unpleasant coexistence of totalitarianism in Europe and colonialism beyond it pointed to the violence and barbarism lying beneath the surface of civilized life. Two world wars and the experience of dictatorships, expressions of moral regression, occurred, it should stressed, against the background of expanding scientific knowledge and rapid technological change. War accelerated such changes and made the world an even more dangerous place.

Echoes of the pain caused by First World War permeated three of Virginia Woolf's novels: *Jacob's Room* [1922], *Mrs. Dalloway* [1925], and *To the Lighthouse* [1927]. It took ten years for Hemingway to write directly about this war, in which he had participated on the Italian Front. Although *A Farewell to Arms* appeared in 1929, the impact of war explained character and action in *The Sun Also Rises* in 1926. Influenced, as Tolstoy had been, by Stendhal's vision of the Battle of

²⁸ Timothy Mo, *An Insular Possession* (London 1986).

²⁹ Timothy Mo, *The Redundancy of Courage* (London 1991).

³⁰ Shyam Selvadurai, *Cinnamon Gardens* (London 1999).

³¹ The subject of Neil Gunn's *Sun Circle* [1933] was the Viking raids in Scotland.

Waterloo through the eyes of his young hero, Fabrice, who cannot understand the broader picture, Hemingway's Frederick Henry finds himself disastrously caught up in the Italian retreat after the defeat at Caporetto in 1917. Terse writing, which Hemingway had learned both as a journalist and under the wing of Gertrude Stein in Paris, makes this one of the finest sections of the novel.³² In this book and in the Spanish Civil War novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* [1940], a love story, which ends in disaster, runs through the narrative of war. Here, Hemingway's approach is episodic in the sense to which I refer in my remarks on the different approaches to the Napoleonic Wars taken by Galdós and Tolstoy, and in the former's treatment of nineteenth-century civil wars in Spain. The El Sordo incident, in which enemy aircraft wipe out a hill-top nest of local Republican guerrillas, is perhaps the best illustration of this.³³ In both war novels there is a powerful suggestion that both Frederick Henry and Robert Jordan—American volunteers in European conflicts—are defining themselves, searching for their identity under extreme pressure, with the assumption that identity is not self-evident.

These were not historical novels in terms of either distance in time or the relationship between past and present. The indelible experience of war, however, marked them as both specifically historical and, at the same time, transcendent in their portrayal of shattered individuals. Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy* [1960–65] and *Levant Trilogy* [1977–80] looked back on the Second World War from a broader distance in time, and these six novels are also historical without being historical novels. Although international politics and military conflict explain the context of the novels, the focus is on how the impact of war subverts individual relationships, including marriage, and distorts individuals' views of themselves and of their place in society. The style becomes increasingly Spartan, as though the external events are too terrible to describe directly. The authorial perspective, mediated through the diverse range of characters in changing locations from Romania to Egypt and Syria, is bleak. Despair infuses all six novels—especially the final three. In general terms, the characters, reduced to impotence, witness the near destruction of British influence and power.³⁴

Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *August 1914* took up Tolstoy's baton, as it were, and attempted a cross-section of Russian society, with the focus on ordinary people, during the first month of the First World War. Imperial Russia, not fully mobilized, is ensnared in a French alliance. Russia sees its principal enemy as Austria-Hungary, but the French press for an attack on Germany's exposed eastern flank and a swift strike at Berlin. The doomed August offensive militates around this dilemma. The book's journey moves relentlessly to the defeat of the Russian Second Army under General Samsonov at Tannenberg in East Prussia, and examines why this catastrophe occurred. The investigation becomes an indictment

³² Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (London 1978), pp. 158–204. Ernest Hemingway, *A Moreurable Feast* (New York 1992 [1964]), pp. 19–42, 135–6.

³³ Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (London 1978), pp. 289–304.

³⁴ Neville and June Braybrooke, *Olivia Manning. A Life* (London 2004), pp. 181–90, 246–58.

of the Imperial régime and leads to Samsonov's suicide. No matter how large the army, the weakness of the Russian state and the ineptitude of its leadership will sooner or later bring down the system.³⁵

Boris Pasternak (1890–1960), *Dr. Zhivago*, published in the West in 1957, dealt with the Russian Revolution and the Civil War which accompanied it. Although Solzhenitsyn's novel never achieved popularity, Pasternak's work rose almost to cult status throughout the non-Communist world after David Lean's film of 1965. The novel was eventually published in Russia in 1987. It works through the disintegration and final overthrow of the Tsarist régime, examining its impact on the fictional characters caught up in these events, which occurred forty years before the first publication. Then, the political controversy opens with Pasternak's portrayal of the October Revolution and its consequences for individuals—particularly the poet-medical practitioner who is the book's hero. Once more, the state grinds down individuals, whose lives are subordinated to official ideology. Pasternak—already a leading poet in Soviet Russia—takes up the mantle of Pushkin, the critic of Tsarist power in its various forms. At the same time, there are elements of Tolstoy's Pierre Bezukhov in Yuri Zhivago, whose family, however, is ruined by the Revolution.³⁶

Although eighteenth- and nineteenth-century wars had significant American and Asiatic dimensions, European issues tended to decide their outcome. This also proved to be the case with regard to the First World War. Intense and long-lasting fighting, however, took place in the North African, Asiatic, and Pacific theatres in the Second World War, and fiction reflected this experience.³⁷ The consequences of these conflicts were played out over the following half century, most notably in the disintegration of the Asiatic empires of the European Powers, the rise of Communist China, and the collapse of American intervention in Vietnam. Three novels by William Riviere, Amitav Ghosh, and Tash Aw have sections which focus in different ways on the impact of war in Burma and Malaya after the Japanese attack in 1942. Together with Farrell's earlier *Singapore Grip*, which climaxes with the humiliating British defeat in Singapore in February 1942, they show a powerful awareness of the significance, in human and political terms, of the eastern theatre of the war both for the imperial power and for the various ethnic groups subjected to it and then faced with Japanese occupation. James Webb's *The Emperor's General* [New York 1999] looked back on the struggle for the Philippines during the Second World War, the role of General MacArthur, the occupation of Japan, and the execution of General Yamashita.³⁸

³⁵ Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *August 1914* [Paris 1971, in Russian], translated by Michael Glenny (London 1972). The book originated around 1937, and an expanded version appeared in 1984.

³⁶ Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago* (London 1991).

³⁷ William Boyd, *An Ice-Cream War* (London 1982).

³⁸ William Riviere, *Echoes of War* (London 1997). Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace* (London 2000). Tash Aw, *The Harmony Silk Factory* (London 2005).

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL IS ALIVE AND WELL

Later twentieth-century novels took up the themes discussed above from widely differing dimensions. They build on the groundwork laid out in the previous century.

The Italian historical novel recovered from a long period of disdain among critics and historians in the form of Giuseppe di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, which first appeared in 1958. It has been published in many subsequent editions, both in Italy and abroad, and was successfully filmed by Luciano Visconti in 1961. The issue of how to preserve as much of the old society as possible at the time of Italian unification in the traditionalist Sicily of 1860 became the focus of the novel. Its character studies of the Prince, his family, and the aspiring urban bourgeoisie, against the background of armed conflict, gave the novel its power.³⁹

Yourcenar's *L'Oeuvre au noir* [1968: English version, *Zeno of Bruges* (1976)] may well be regarded as one of the outstanding historical novels of the twentieth century. In many respects, Zeno, its central character, has two identities, first as priest and medical practitioner—the latter more important to him than the former—and second, his secret identity as sceptic, bisexual, and dissident. He has to tread carefully in the Spanish Netherlands of the Counter-Reformation era, in order not to fall foul of the political and ecclesiastical authorities, which have severe penalties for dissent. Zeno is a man of the northern Renaissance who had studied the medical sciences at the University of Montpellier in southern France. He is less focused on the centrality of God than on the power of man, putting his faith in human dignity rather than ecclesiastical authority. The depth of his divergence from Christian thought becomes evident through the narrative. Two dialogues expose this clearly—the first between Zeno and Henry-Maximilian, his younger soldier-cousin at Innsbruck, and the second between Zeno and the Prior of the Cordeliers, his protector in Bruges. The Prior had been a courtier of the Emperor Charles V and is a clandestine opponent of Spanish repression in the Netherlands. Here the novel's theme relates back to the historical drama of Goethe and Schiller. The background of this novel is violent religious conflict and persecution, as in the section describing the repression of the Anabaptist movement in Münster. Yourcenar was writing this novel from the later 1950s—the time of the Algerian war, the Suez crisis, and the repression of the Hungarian revolt—and its publication coincided with the revolutionary year, 1968. The hideous scenes recall Brueghel paintings, which Yourcenar studied as potential source material. Zeno's mother dies in the course of the violence. The illegitimate Zeno is a fictional character, although there are elements of Erasmus of Rotterdam and several Italian Renaissance figures, such as Giordano Bruno, in his make-up.⁴⁰

³⁹ Giuseppe di Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Il gattopardo* (Milan 1958) [*The Leopard*, translated by Archibald Colquhoun, London 1961 [1958]].

⁴⁰ Marguerite Yourcenar, *L'Oeuvre au noir* (Paris 1968), pp. 61–80, 99–123, 141, 148, 182–206. *Entretiens: Les yeux ouverts*, pp. 167–92.

The geographical and thematic range of the historical novel continues to be astonishing. Nikos Kazantzakis's *Freedom and Death* [1950 (English version 1956)] dealt with the Cretan rising against Turkish rule in 1896. Two novels of Driss Chraïbi, *La Mère du Printemps* [Paris 1982] and *Naissance de l'Aube* [Paris 1986], examined the impact of the arrival of Islam on local communities in Morocco in the seventh century and its advance to Córdoba in the eighth century to establish a culture which combined both East and West. Amin Maalouf's *Leo the African* [Paris 1986 (English version 1988)] took the story of the collapse of Muslim Spain through the subsequent wanderings of the eponymous Leo in the sixteenth century. Orhan Pamuk's *The White Castle* [Istanbul 1979 (English version 1990)] and *My Name is Red* [Istanbul 1998 (English version 2000)] were set in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire.

If we take some notable examples of historical fiction in the English language, the strength of this sub-genre rapidly becomes evident. We might start with Patrick White's *Voss* [New York 1957]—the expedition of a megalomaniac German explorer across the Australian desert in the nineteenth century—and John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* [London 1979]—a consciously Post-modernist variant on the Victorian novel. Moving through Farrell, we arrive at Thomas Flanagan's *The Year of the French* [New York 1979], a novel about the attempted Irish uprising of 1798 in alliance with Revolutionary France. Barry Unsworth opened a series of historical novels set in the late Ottoman Empire with *Pascali's Island* [1980] and *The Rage of the Vulture* [1982], and subsequently with *Land of Marvels* [2009] set in Turkish Mesopotamia on the eve of the First World War. His thematic range extended to the Atlantic slave-trade in *Sacred Hunger* [1992] and Norman Sicily in *The Ruby in her Navel* [2006]. William Golding's *Rites of Passage* [London 1980], the first of the *To the Ends of the Earth* trilogy [1980–9], dealt with the moral and religious dilemmas arising from the long voyage to Australia in the eighteenth century, while Brian Moore's *Black Robe* [London 1985] examined the plight of French Jesuits in seventeenth-century Canada, when confronted with the savagery of Indian customs and the rawness of the natural world. *Restoration* [1989], set in the court of Charles II, was followed by Rose Tremain's second seventeenth-century novel, *Music and Silence* [1999], set in the court of Christian IV of Denmark. Pat Barker's First World War trilogy [1991–5], focusing on the psychological impact of warfare, opened with *Regeneration* [1991]. Sebastian Faulks' highly successful *Birdsong* [London 1993] opened in pre-First World War France and then thrust his characters through the gruelling experience of trench warfare. Anthony Burgess's *A Dead Man in Deptford* [London 1993] took the playwright Christopher Marlowe's secret life in Elizabethan espionage as his theme. Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* [New York 1997] developed several current themes—political identity, flight from horrific warfare, raiding bands and arbitrary killing, women behind the lines—within the context of the southern cause in the United States' Civil War of 1861–5. Two novels by Richard Zimler—*The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon* [New York 1998] and *Guardian of the Dawn* [London 2005]—focused on the violent imposition of religious conformity in sixteenth-century Portugal and Portuguese Goa. Sarah Dunant's *The Birth of Venus. Love and*

Death in Florence [London 2003] drew a frightening picture of moral intrigue and religious violence at the time of Savonarola's hegemony in Florence, with a keen eye on the sexual politics of the early twenty-first century. Ronald Blythe's *The Assassin* [Norwich 2004] took up Dumas' theme of the assassination of the Duke of Buckingham. C. J. Sansom's *Winter in Madrid* [2006] drew a grim picture of post-Civil War Madrid, with flashbacks into the war period. Hilary Mantel dealt with the lives of the three French Revolutionaries—Danton, Robespierre, and Desmoulins—in *A Place of Greater Safety* [1993], and won the Man Booker Prize in 2009 with *Wolf Hall*, about the early life of Henry VIII's minister, Thomas Cromwell. In fact, the number of historical novels which have won literary prizes is remarkable in view of the low prestige which this sub-genre is supposed to have.

AND BEYOND

Historians recoil from predictions. This book, however, has a broad constituency. For that reason I shall try to transcend such constraints. First, the current success and popularity of the historical novel should not lead us to assume that the old problems have necessarily been overcome. Similarly, the frontiers between history and literature remain as indistinct as ever. More than likely, former stumbling blocks will recur, and the entire sub-genre will again fall under suspicion. The previous distinction between entertainment or romance and the serious historical novel will undoubtedly regain significance, perhaps queering the pitch, once more, for the latter. The moral purpose and artistic viability of the historical novel may be radically questioned, as it had been after the mid-nineteenth century. The term 'fiction', as we have seen, is highly misleading in view of the negative connotations of the word not only for historians but also in general parlance. One might describe it, instead, as another form of factuality; but then again, that term also has given rise to debate.

The exhaustion of the new matter, which has in recent decades given fresh vigour to the historical novel, may well become evident. In any case, it is doubtful whether these new orientations have overcome the old dilemmas of internal contradictions and unstable form. In due course, we shall see whether these have been transcended or circumvented. In other words, the problems identified since the 1820s, and dramatically highlighted by Manzoni in the early 1850s, have not gone away. The underlying tensions and shifting sands are still there.

Nevertheless, certain paths could be beaten through the undergrowth—some of them, even, fresh ones. Two directions do seem to offer a likely passage. The first of these could well be the historical novel which takes as its central theme the connection between religious exclusivity and political violence. This theme has its roots, as we have seen, in the early historical novel at the time of Scott, Galt, and Balzac, and was subsequently developed in a Spanish context in Galdós's third series and in Tolstoy's *Hadji Murad*. It is a major issue of the contemporary world, although, for most of the twentieth century, it was less so,

except in specific geographical areas. The relation between religion and violence is always a fundamental issue in human behavior, which shows itself not only in the Islamic world but among Indian Hindus and Sri Lankan Buddhists, as well as throughout Christian cultures. It reappears, furthermore, in Western European cities of cultural diversity. The historical novel can examine the roots of violence in both the individual psyche and in cultural and social contexts. The fictional mode enables a deeper, more personal examination than studies in the social sciences alone. It provides an alternative representation of reality, perhaps, in this case, over two or three generations.

The incongruity between objective truth and individual perception—a theme with roots in Cervantes—might well provide the basis for study of the tenuous process of ‘coming out’ in harshly opposing societies and cultures. Sarah Cole’s important study of Modernism and Masculine Friendship poses the problem of how male-to-male friendships (erotic or not) can emerge or survive when institutions and attitudes are resolutely against them. The destruction of alternative legitimacies and recurrent stress on ‘family values’ threaten to dispel them. The result is denial, repression, or invisibility.⁴¹ What if the truth one is required to believe runs in conflict to the truth learned from experience? What if emotional attachments run counter to religious doctrines or the requirements of state—or, worse still, to both combined and reinforcing one another? This is a major theme for examination in the form of an historical novel. The questioning of Christian doctrine in the latter part of the nineteenth century opened the way for a forthright exploration of sexuality in literature by the beginning of the new century. The collapse of the official Christian straightjacket in the latter part of the twentieth century opens the way for historical examination of these issues in social and individual terms through the medium of the novel. As we have seen, the historical novel, at least from the 1970s, has explored the tensions of later colonialism and the problem of creating alternatives to imperial rule. It might well set the problem of ‘coming out’ in Islamic or African contexts, especially against the background of rising fundamentalism, where the threat of violence is always present. A comparable scenario may be seen in societies such as Russia, where the collapse of Soviet Communism has opened the way for an ultra-conservative Orthodoxy and a xenophobic (and homophobic) nationalism.

One major theme of my study has been the paradox of aggressive nationalism and the interdependence of European cultures in the later nineteenth century. The conflict between intellectuals’ cosmopolitan instincts and the nationalist projects of their governments could similarly provide a theme for the historical novel. A prospective author might take his context as a fundamentalist or authoritarian state in which official policy runs counter to broader desires for access to the outside world and differing ideas.

⁴¹ Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship*, p. 143.

Certainly, traditional themes associated with the historical novel have not been exhausted: the conflict between adventure and domesticity, individuals caught in a labyrinth, the solitary and hurried flight, desperate and secret missions across country, pursuit by the authorities, 'going to ground', accusations of treason, calumnious denunciations, disguise, ending up 'on the wrong side' in a conflictive situation, and coincidence with great historical events, and, perhaps, understanding one's own part in them.⁷ All of these offer plenty of leeway.

Fictitious histories

In Parts I and II I have developed the themes set out in the Introduction, first by general discussion of the issues, and second by comparative examination of case examples over the geographical areas where, at different times, the historical novel assumed significance. Central to this objective was the identification of the problems posed by the construction of an historical novel. The key problem has been the relation between the fictional story, also regarded by the writer as real, and real historical events. The overriding argument of the book has been that the serious historical novel, as defined here, represented an alternative means of portraying human experience in time, whether through realism, symbol, or allegory, to both history and the novel not specifically set in the past. This explains the book's sub-title.

The historical novel thrives on the tension between fact and imagination. It is at its best when the balance is consistently sustained and the division seamless. It is also concerned with the relationship between present time and past events. Authorial motivation, often hard to discern, reveals how a particular epoch views itself through that medium.

The early historical novel contributed to greater realism in social context and geographical location. Distinct topographies, customs, and dialects were an underlying characteristic and strength. Realism extended down the social scale to middling and lower social groups, whose destinies and opinions were given prime treatment. The historical novel rose with the realist novel, but, given its predilection for romance, was not identical to it. At the same time, it stimulated general interest in history, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century was still not a solidly established discipline. Even so, it was agreement on the facts of history which made the modern historical novel possible, founded as it was in believable characters, realistic situations, and a developing psychology. This attention to a realistic past enabled the historical novelist to position past time in relation to the present by means of an implicit form of dialogue.

Professional historical scholarship rapidly eclipsed the capacity of fiction to handle primary sources. By mid-century, the historical novel reached a turning point. History offered a powerful challenge in the representation of reality. Eliot and Flaubert, struggling to respond, sought to reconceive the historical novel and move away from realism in the direction of a fiction permeated by allegory. They aimed in their different ways to transform the past into symbol or paradigm, in order to endow events with a broader moral significance. Eliot's mid-nineteenth-century historical novel went to the root of that century's paradox—renewed (and

assertive) religious belief versus growing materialism and secularism. Although neither Eliot's nor Flaubert's fictional experiment proved to be popular, *Romola* and *Salammbô* fell into the intellectual context of their time. Eliot, rejecting theology, believed that morality could be derived from both Antiquity and a Christianity from which the religion had been removed. Flaubert's novel rejected both the Classical tradition exalted by the Enlightenment and the Romanticism of his own day.

Many commentators, both contemporary and modern, were correct to point out that historiography based on documentary sources and critical method—‘scientific’ history—challenged the historical novel, rooted though it originally was in the realist tradition. This challenge led many writers, their eye on a lucrative market, to branch away from the serious historical novel, based on source materials and realistic observation, in the direction of pure romance (in costume) and entertainment. A few historical dramas of one kind or another might rumble in the background. The protagonists of the costume novel might even become enmeshed in them. However, romance and adventure lay at the core of this kind of novel, which went from strength to strength through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and into the twenty-first century. As a result, popular perceptions of the historical novel soon came to be the costume romance and the adventurous entertainment. Realism, for the most part, became an irrelevance. By taking this route, the original historical novel, in the countries of its birth, lost the moral purpose we have identified in Scott's Scottish novels, in Balzac and Manzoni, and in Eliot and Flaubert. It could be said that, thereby, it lost its direction.

The strain of writing a serious and convincing historical novel took a heavy toll even on the greatest writers. In contrast to Scott, a number of them—Vigny, Balzac, Gogol, Manzoni, Eliot, Flaubert—took the decision never to write another novel of that type. This is not to say, however, that history did not permeate their other fiction, but they refrained from further attempts to encapsulate the historical past and make it the subject of a work of fiction. Dickens made two attempts at novels set in the past, although he did not go back beyond 1780. Galdós alone followed and overtook Scott in the number of historical novels he produced, but they represented a different fictional scheme in their attention to chronology and their anecdotal and existential character. Unlike Scott, Galdós wrote a large number of very substantial ‘contemporary novels’ which have generally taken precedence over the *Episodios Nacionales* in the assessment of his work. These novels, however, were steeped in history, although they are not historical novels in the sense that the *Episodios* are.

The critique of the historical novel, already forming by the mid-1820s, deepened in the 1840s, and reached crisis point by the 1850s and 1860s. Although inhibitions arose concerning the merits of attempting to write one, leading novelists still chose to do so, with varying degrees of success in terms of the balance between fact and imagination, authenticity and linguistic conviction. The perceived failures of Eliot and Flaubert—two of the principal writers in Western Europe at mid-century—marked a watershed. Thereafter, writers ventured on historical fiction under this shadow.

The introduction of historical figures into a fictional text considerably complicated works which by origin were of the imagination. In the writer's mind, at any rate, the fictional plot of the historical novel had never actually happened, although the historical events had and the historical characters were usually well-known to readers. Yet these latter were also part of the plot. The thorny question of the relationship between the real and the invented characters arose from the start, as is evident in Scott. As if that question were not difficult enough, the related issue of the purpose of having historical characters in a work of fiction would not go away. It usually proved to be an irresolvable dilemma in the historical novel. The degree of success would not only depend on the author's skill in manoeuvring narrative and dialogue, but also depended on a clear definition of the book's purpose.

The first thing anyone (but an historian) can tell us about history is that it is dead. Michelet, it is true, claimed to be spending his entire career in breathing fresh life into the dead, but even his vivid prose could not perform the trick. In contrast to fiction, history has already happened and we know the result, no matter how much we may differ concerning the interpretation. The dialectic between the known outcome of historical facts and the unpredictability of the fictional story lies at the core of the historical novel. For that reason, the historical novelist must somehow discover a way of binding these two elements together in a seamless narrative without risking distortion. Their difficulties in doing so characterize the history of the historical novel. The explanation for these difficulties lies in the fact that history and fiction are distinct in their methods, expectations, and objectives.

This present work has discussed the relationship between imaginative literature, in the form of the historical novel, and the development of history in Europe during the nineteenth century. As such, it may be seen as a contribution to the ongoing debate concerning the use of the narrative form by both fiction and history. The current form of this debate took shape after the 1950s and 1960s, varying its nature and form under the influences of structuralism, post-structuralism, and post-modernism. However, most of the overriding issues were not new, despite the way in which they came to be phrased in recent decades. They were anticipated in the discussion from the 1820s onwards concerning the character and purpose of the historical novel, and the relation between fact and imagination in both history and the historical novel. Scott, Ranke, Macaulay, Carlyle, Michelet, Pushkin, Manzoni, Balzac, Eliot, Flaubert, and Tolstoy were all aware of the blurred border between the narrative forms of fiction and history. Manzoni's disquisition on the subject, published in 1850, is the most detailed exploration of the dilemma of fact and imagination in the historical novel, although still little known.

Regrettably, the historical novel, which is the place where history and fiction come most intimately together, has played virtually no part in the voluminous present-day discussion of narrative forms. Despite its continued, if not growing, importance as a literary medium in varying forms, the historical novel seems to have fallen between the two stools of history and literature as institutionalized in university departments.

From the outset, in the 1810s and 1820s, historians and historical novelists have striven to assert the difference between their distinct ways of approaching the past.

Even so, each has contributed to a greater understanding and consciousness of the past by capturing the imagination, accumulating verifiable data, and changing perspectives. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment had already begun the development of critical history—one of its major and lasting contributions to knowledge. Critical history, which developed across the European continent during the century, revealed the extent to which history represented contested space. It sought to separate fable from fact, and to root out inherited errors and baseless assumptions. Both the historians and historical novelists (several of whom also wrote history) were rooted in critical history, committed to its methods and objectives. This differentiated the serious historical novelist from the Gothic and chivalric fiction, which preceded them and subsisted alongside them. We may define the serious novelist as one who developed the Enlightenment's moral concerns, didactic purposes, and critical method. It is important to stress these roots in the Enlightenment because of the general association of the historical novel with the Romantic movement.

Romanticism had many, often contradictory, strains and layers. Yet, the reaction against the Enlightenment was neither universal nor complete. On the contrary, there was considerable, sometimes unacknowledged, continuity. The medievalism, which is so strongly associated with Romanticism, also had its roots in the later Enlightenment. In several respects this represented a search for the explanation for liberties subsequently lost under absolutism and powerful dynastic monarchies. The German *Sturm und Drang* was an outstanding example of this, and out of it came the historical dramas of Goethe and Schiller. Nineteenth-century portrayals of the past as the source of national consciousness in the present also looked to the medieval and early modern periods for their origins. The hybrid Gothic–Latin cultures which had superseded the Roman Empire in the West became the subjects of historical investigation by a range of writers across Europe. In Russia, the Byzantine inheritance, Slavic traditions, and Orthodoxy contested literary space with Western ideas and Asiatic influences.

We gain through the medium of the historical novel a different vision of nineteenth-century issues than those of a political or economic history concerned with struggles for power and wealth. This vision contributes dramatically to our understanding of the age, especially as we observe in the fictional worlds of *Romola* and *Salammbo* mid-century confidence in progress and the certainty of knowledge beginning to disintegrate.

Perhaps the most striking observation is the extent of mutual influence among the authors discussed in this present book. Influences, themes, and methods comfortably transcended political boundaries. By contrast, nationalist interpretations have predominated in the political histories of most European countries, as though each embarked on its own *sonderweg* or separate path. The cultural perspective adopted here shows the contrary. Everyone, it seemed, influenced everyone else. This included borrowings, attributed or otherwise, and transference from one art form to another. The historical novel certainly contributed to the formation of national consciousness, but the picture of mutual influences

considerably alters, at the same time, the national-history perspective with its emphasis on 'competition for power' or 'struggle for mastery'.

Despite the difficulties of the historical novel at mid-century in the countries where it originated, this was not the end of the story. It flourished in the latter part of the century in Spain and in Central and Eastern Europe—above all in Russia—in response to distinct cultural and social factors prevailing in those societies. Pushkin and Gogol and others had already explored the possibilities of the historical novel in a Russian context in the 1830s. A generation later, Tolstoy published *War and Peace*, which many commentators consider to have been the greatest of the nineteenth-century historical novels. Within Western Europe, Spain took the forefront in the exploration of the possibilities of the historical novel through the period from c.1870 to c.1920.

This book has tried to show the general picture across the European continent—one often forgotten in purely national studies. The historical novel not only had a common past in the nineteenth century, but also a lively future. In the case of the countries of origin, we may regard the decades from the 1870s to the 1930s as a 'bridging period' before the next flourishing of the historical novel from the 1930s into the 1970s. Thereafter, the prime impulse began to move away from Europe to the decolonizing world and the *diaspora* from it. There the historical novel would become the medium for examining the crisis of European colonialism and the painful transition to independent states. This would be seen primarily in social and cultural terms rather than in military or political terms, although these latter elements often pervaded the lives of the fictional protagonists. Ethnicity, foreshadowed in the historiography and fiction of the 1820s, rose to the forefront as a prevailing issue between them.

On the basis of our discussion here, we can now argue that the historical novel was, and continues to be, a powerful form of expression, responding to issues prevailing at particular moments in the history of specific societies. However, when these moments are passed, the intrinsic instability of form becomes exposed. That, in turn, raises once more the unresolved issue of the credibility of the historical novel. The ill-defined boundaries remain.

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Brian Hamnett is Emeritus Professor, Department of History, University of Essex.

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