

# UC Berkeley

## UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

Outlaws, Outcasts, and Criminals of the British Novel, 1800-1850

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7zd212gr>

### Author

Baldwin, Ruth Elizabeth

### Publication Date

2013

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Outlaws, Outcasts, and Criminals of the British Novel, 1800-1850

By Ruth Elizabeth Baldwin

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Ian Duncan, Chair

Professor Janet Sorensen

Professor David Lieberman

Spring 2013



## Abstract

Outlaws, Outcasts, and Criminals of the British Novel, 1800-1850

By

Ruth Elizabeth Baldwin

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Ian Duncan, Chair

“Outlaws, Outcasts, and Criminals” provides a new account of the nineteenth-century historical novel by using the category of outlawry to illuminate the transitional period between Romantic and Victorian literary regimes. I argue that any account of the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel must theorize the crucial link between outlawry and the novel form. Far from being a product of history, crime in these novels activates the category of history on which they depend. As the novel develops, the link between crime and history becomes an essential structural part of the genre. This recognition enables me to forge new and surprising connections between the Romantic outlaw as instituted by Schiller’s *The Robbers*, the outlaw anti-heroes of Walter Scott’s historical novels, the historical criminals of W.H. Ainsworth’s “Newgate” novels, the female social climbers of Jane Austen’s novels, and the scandalous anti-heroines of Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* and of M.E. Braddon’s sensation novels.

Key to the developments I am tracing is a new kind of anti-hero made possible by the early nineteenth-century novel’s incorporation of other, non-novelistic genres. During a period when the novel was becoming a force of cultural normativity, outlaw figures emerged from the margins of the plot to assume a central role. Unlike the Gothic villain or Byronic anti-hero, who are solitary outcasts, these anti-heroes represent an alternative, rival, outlaw society, from which they colonize the central plot. I examine the structural tension between the ostensible hero, the outlaw anti-hero, and the actual antagonists in Scott’s *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy*. These cases are particularly telling, as Scott’s system of history almost always focuses on groups that are, in some sense, outside of the law: Jacobites and members of the proscribed clan MacGregor in *Rob Roy*; Robin Hood’s band, the disinherited *Ivanhoe*, the Jews Isaac and Rebecca, and even the illegitimate regime of Prince John and his knights in *Ivanhoe*. The dynamic outlaw energy that originates with *Rob Roy* and with Robin Hood infects the entire narrative and symbolic system. In my final chapter, I examine the transformation of the new anti-hero into an anti-heroine—a rival to the protagonist of the traditional marriage plot. Ambitious lower-class women threaten the social order in their attempts to maneuver into high society through marriage. As the anti-hero becomes feminized and infects the domestic novel, novelists change their narrative strategies in subtle and unexpected ways. Through the development of free indirect style, affective withdrawal, and strategic reticence, Austen, Thackeray, and Braddon develop new

ways of dealing with the anti-social threats to their novel's marriage plots. The outlawry that I argue is so crucial to the development of the novel form thus brings about important changes in narrative technique.

Between Scott's death and the establishment of the novel as the dominant literary form by mid century, the genre was in flux: novelists interpolated non-canonical historical sources, ballads, broadsides, chapbooks, plays, and other ephemera, while collaborating with illustrators and engaging with theatrical and other adaptations of their work, to an unprecedented degree. This experimentation develops out of Scott's use of ballads and other popular forms in his historical novels. In this decade or so of generic instability the novel is actively reimagined as a locus of cultural consolidation. The past becomes intelligible through the medium of the historical novel, rather than through primary historical materials and artifacts, or historiography itself. Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* (1839), with its many unacknowledged allusions to and incorporation of earlier renditions of the eighteenth-century criminal's biography, marks a turning point in the long history of Sheppard narratives. Echoing the seriality of Sheppard's crimes and escapes, the novel's serial form provides a mechanism through which his crimes pervade not only the story world of the novel but the real social world of Ainsworth's readers.

*For Maggie*

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1:	Introduction: The 18 <sup>th</sup> -Century Roots of 19 <sup>th</sup> -Century Literary Outlaws, Outcasts, and Criminals	1
Chapter 2:	Character Structure and Outlawry in <i>Ivanhoe</i> and <i>Rob Roy</i>	12
Chapter 3:	Serial Criminal: The Proliferation of <i>Jack Sheppard</i> and the Structure of the Early Victorian Novel	40
Chapter 4:	History, the Gothic, and the “Wandering Race”: The Place and Time of Gypsies in <i>Rookwood</i> and <i>Guy Mannering</i>	68
Chapter 5:	Strategic Reticence: Narrating Social Criminals	95
	Bibliography	124
Appendix 1:	Primary sources on Jack Sheppard	132

## Chapter 1: The 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Roots of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Literary Outlaws, Outcasts, and Criminals

In 1834, while enjoying the success of his first historical novel, *Rookwood*, in which the eighteenth-century highwayman Dick Turpin plays a prominent role, William Harrison Ainsworth described his future literary ambitions to a friend:

Turpin... is only part of a plan, as this work is part of a more extensive edifice, which, in time, I may be able to construct.... The portrait of the robber is not, I am free to admit, complete in all its details. But, though I have not yet found canvass enough for it, the tablet exists fully wrought out in my imagination. In Turpin, the reader will find him upon the road.... In Du-Val... he shall find him at the theatres .... In Sheppard... he shall discover him in Newgate... and marvel at his extraordinary escapes. The character of the robber to be complete, should be presented in all these phases. And it shall be my business to perfect it. (qtd. in Ellis 1.285)

Although Ainsworth never completed his project—after the furor following the publication of *Jack Sheppard* in 1839, he abandoned his plan to write a novel featuring Claude Duval and never wrote another “Newgate novel”—imagining a “fully wrought” “portrait of the robber” remained a project central not only to his ambitions but to those of many authors as the novel developed in the early nineteenth century. Social transgressors, including pickpockets and highwaymen, but also political outlaws, wandering gypsies, and even ambitious social climbers, came to permeate the novel’s plot and redefine the novel form. There are, as yet, no full length accounts of the early nineteenth-century novel that examine the relationship between these different agents of social transgression and their relation to the development of the novel during this period. My project connects the criminal anti-heroes of the Newgate novel with the political outlaws and outcasts of Walter Scott’s historical novels and with Jane Austen’s social climbers, in the generation preceding, as well as the scandalous anti-heroines of the mid-Victorian sensation novel. I argue that history, in the early nineteenth-century historical novel, is activated through the category of outlawry that I describe. I offer a new account of developments in the early nineteenth-century novel—particularly the changing place of the outlaw in the novel’s character system—that illuminates the traditionally difficult transitional period between “Romantic” and “Victorian” literary regimes.

This study has two related, intersecting arguments. In the first, I examine the function of historical sources and artifacts in novels by the two most popular historical novelists of the first half of the nineteenth century, Walter Scott and W.H. Ainsworth, arguing that during the period of generic flux in the early nineteenth-century, novelists experimented with the form by interpolating other genres and discourses to an unprecedented degree<sup>1</sup>, troubling the relationship

---

<sup>1</sup> Although both Sterne and Fielding (among other eighteenth-century novelists) often toyed with generic expectations by incorporating other rhetorical modes or genres, neither did so to the extent or with the persistence of Ainsworth, who, as I will show, collaborated with his illustrators and theatrical adapters, apparently composing his historical novels with the understanding and expectation that they would then be deconstructed and recompiled through theatrical adaptation or imitation.



between fiction and history that had remained relatively stable through the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> In the second, I consider the new kinds of anti-hero made available by those novelists' various innovations with the form and the impact this new protagonist has on the novel's character field. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 develop these two arguments through close readings of the outlaws, criminals, and Gypsies of Scott's *Ivanhoe*, *Rob Roy*, and *Guy Mannering* and Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* and *Rookwood*. In the final chapter, I connect this predominantly masculine tradition with the female social climbers of Austen's novels and the scandalous anti-heroines who take over the sensation novels of the mid-nineteenth century.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the novel form was in flux. Between the death of Scott in 1832 and the consolidation of the novel as the dominant popular literary form by the late 1840s, novelists experimented with the genre, interpolating historical sources, ballads, broadsides, chapbooks, plays, and other ephemera, while collaborating with illustrators, and spilling over into theatrical and other adaptations, to an unprecedented degree. This experimentation with the genre develops out of Scott's use of ballads and other literary (and extra-literary) forms in his historical novels. In this decade of generic instability, the novel is actively re-imagined as a locus of cultural consolidation. It is through the consolidating medium of the historical novel, rather than through primary historical writings and artifacts, that the past comes to be understood. Through readings of Scott's *Guy Mannering* (1815), *Rob Roy* (1817), and *Ivanhoe* (1819); Ainsworth's *Rookwood* (1834) and *Jack Sheppard* (1839); and W.M. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848), I examine the ascendancy of transgressive anti-heroes and anti-heroines in the British novel, from Scott's social bandits and vagrants through Ainsworth's historical highwayman and escape artist to Thackeray's devious, ambitious Becky Sharp.

This introduction will define the parameters and delimit the scope of the chapters that follow, providing some critical and historical contexts for my argument about the relationship between outlawry to the development of the novel between the late eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth century. I will outline the eighteenth-century contexts and origins of crime and outlawry in the British novel, briefly examining the intersection of criminal biography, eighteenth-century broadsides, and criminal confessions with the rise of the novel in Daniel Defoe's crime novels. From the early eighteenth-century novel, I move to a short discussion of the development of the Romantic outlaw in Friedrich Schiller's internationally popular and influential *The Robbers* (*Die Räuber* [1781]). The social aspect of the Romantic outlaw tradition instituted by Schiller is developed and innovated in the banditti and outlaw communities of 1790s Gothic and Jacobin novels such as Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). That social outlaw, however, is generally only a marginal figure in the Gothic tradition. In the early nineteenth-novels I discuss in the chapters that follow, the outlaw moves to the center of the novel, providing transformative cases in representing outlawry as, at its core, a social condition, and one that can therefore spread and saturate various other social groups.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Everett Zimmerman's introduction on "Historical Faith" (pp 1-9) and his first chapter, "Skeptical Historiography and the Constitution of the Novel" (pp 11-55) on the usefulness of studying the rise of the novel in terms of the relationship of history with fiction as "facilitat[ing] the examination of important concepts, to include referentiality, adequacy, and verifiability" (13).

<sup>3</sup> Eric Hobsbawm invented the term "social bandit" to describe the transhistorical phenomenon of individuals living on the margins of society, plundering and robbing mainstream members of society, yet often seen as popular folk heroes or even as resistance fighters. My study is indebted throughout to Hobsbawm's insights on the social outlaw and banditry in general.

In exploring the structural tension between the novels' official protagonists and these transgressive figures, I mobilize, but also revise, the terms Alex Woloch develops in his theory of literary character in *The One vs. the Many*. According to Woloch, the many minor characters in the nineteenth-century novel are analogous to the cogs in an industrial factory: de-individuated, specialized functions within a larger system. Woloch defines the "character-space" allocated to each minor character, "[marking] the *intersection* of an implied human personality [...] with the definitively circumscribed form of a narrative," and the overall structure of these character-spaces as the "character-system" (13, 14). The anti-heroes of the novels I examine do not simply *intersect* with the character space of the hero; they diffuse their transgressive energy throughout the entire character-system. Thus, they do not function in the same way as the "minor characters" Woloch describes. Nor can they be classed with the true antagonists of these novels. Instead, the tension between the hero, the antagonist, and these transgressive anti-heroes structures the overall character-system of the novel.

Especially given the prevalence of crime fiction in popular culture in the last decade (TV series like *The Wire*, *The Sopranos*, *Oz*, *Breaking Bad*, *Weeds*, *Boardwalk Empire*, *Dexter*, *Deadwood*, et cetera), there has been a relative dearth of full-length accounts of the relationship of the outlaw or criminal anti-hero with the rise of fictionality more broadly. Aside from a few seminal works, which I will cite briefly here (and will discuss at greater length elsewhere in this dissertation), most studies of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel treat criminality and outlawry as a side note—a topic to be discussed in a few paragraphs and then dismissed. My study demonstrates how the ascendancy of criminal heroes and anti-heroes in the novel, beginning in the late eighteenth century and continuing through the mid nineteenth century, is actually a crucial element in the development of new narrative strategies, modes of reading, and the basic character structure of the novel.

The relationship of crime and eighteenth-century popular culture has been discussed thoroughly by Peter Linebaugh in *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*. In it, Linebaugh argues that Tyburn, the site of public hangings in London from 1571 until the late eighteenth century, was in fact the center of "urban class contention" in eighteenth-century Britain (xix). I am indebted to Linebaugh's exhaustive bibliographic research on the dying last speeches of these eighteenth-century criminals, particularly since at the time he was conducting his research, the literature describing these felons was scattered at libraries throughout Great Britain. Linebaugh's approach is primarily Marxist, focusing on the cultural effects of these criminal biographies and the impact of capital punishment on class relations in eighteenth-century London.

John Bender's foundational *Imagining the Penitentiary* is likewise fundamentally Marxist, although also influenced by the work of Michel Foucault. Bender argues that "attitudes toward prison which were formulated between 1719 and 1779 in narrative literature and art—especially in prose fiction—sustained and, on my reconstruction, enabled the conception and construction of actual penitentiary prisons later in the eighteenth century" (1). Bender's study is especially important to my own work because of his formulation that literature about crime and imprisonment (and realist narrative itself) and actual, historical crime and punishment are mutually enabling and co-constitutive. My study, though, focuses primarily on the ways that the rise to prominence of outlaw anti-heroes in the early nineteenth-century novel enabled—indeed, demanded—the development of new narrative techniques and a new structure to the character field.

Lincoln Faller also takes a structuralist approach in his study of criminal biographies: the stated goal of *Turned to Account* is to develop a “sociopoetics” of criminal biography, through close readings of a series of crime narratives. Criminal biographies, he argues, allowed the reading public imaginatively to live and relive the lives of criminals. But while Faller’s study explores the sociological effects of the ways certain criminal lives “lingered on in the popular imagination” (Faller 20), my study focuses on how the early nineteenth century novel functioned as a mechanism that both enabled and sustained that “linger[ing]”.

Robin Hood, of course, must be the most recognizable of the criminal figures that has “lingered on” in the way that Faller describes, moving across genres, and evolving from a fictional or mythological character to a recognizable criminal type. Stephen Knight’s exhaustive critical and bibliographic research on the mythology of Robin Hood has partly shaped the way that I conceive of the work of these criminal types in literature. Knight traces the various appearances of Robin Hood in literature from the medieval period onward, expatiating on the ways Robin Hood has been reinvented and adopted by different groups to serve various political and social functions. Knight traces the mythology of a single figure as it spans over seven centuries; my project is not as bibliographic in approach, nor as ambitious in terms of historical breadth. I discuss the appearance of Robin Hood as an outlaw anti-hero in Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* in my second chapter as an example both of how transgressive figures began to apply pressure to the central plot and to compete for narrative centrality with the romantic hero, and also as an example of the ways that Scott interpolated historical and popular materials, renovating the form of the historical novel and troubling the relationship of history and fiction that had been relatively stable for the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Studies of crime and literature of the early nineteenth century have generally focused on the relatively local example of the Newgate novel of the 1830s and ’40s, but without taking into account these novelists’ position as immediate successors to Scott. Keith Hollingsworth’s 1963 monograph on *The Newgate Novel* is still the most complete study of the genre and the most frequently cited; he offers a thorough historical account of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century popular sources (rogue pamphlets, canting dictionaries, broadsides, ballads, dying last speeches, criminal biographies in *The Newgate Calendar*, et cetera) of the Newgate-themed novels of the 1830s. Hollingsworth focuses primarily on the reception history of the most popular of these novels by Bulwer, Ainsworth, Dickens, and Thackeray, emphasizing the ways in which early controversy over the “Newgate school of literature” “affected the later writing of each of the four novelists” (15). Hollingsworth’s valuable study is not, however, inclusive of the broader kinds of outlawry that come to permeate the novel form in the early nineteenth century; he links the Newgate novels of the 1830s to a long history of crime fiction, but still considers these novels as a kind of parenthetical footnote in the more genteel history of the novel itself.

Simon Joyce takes these novels more seriously, but again, he studies them in their local context as sensational media events of the nineteenth century, rather than as important examples

---

<sup>4</sup> The reception and scandal surrounding James Macpherson’s *The Works of Ossian* (published as fragments in 1760 and as a collection in 1765) suggests the extent to which these questions of truth, fiction, and authenticity were vexed even in the late eighteenth century: I should emphasize that the novel form was “stable” in the late eighteenth century only relative to its position in the early eighteenth century, when the form was such “a contradictory amalgam of inconsistent elements” (McKeon 21), and relative to the generic shifts that were to take place in the early nineteenth century—particularly in the 1830s.

of the novel's formal development in the early nineteenth century. In *Capital Offenses*, Joyce investigates the reading practices that both created and were constituted by the proliferation of crime narratives in the late 1830s (Joyce 61). Joyce describes the cultural impact of Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* and Dickens's *Oliver Twist* in the 1840s. He focuses on what the "astonishing portability" of Ainsworth's narrative and the "Jack Sheppard craze" that followed its publication in 1839 reveal about the early Victorian reading audience (63). But what made these novels so "portable"? I am interested in the formal and structural innovations of the early nineteenth-century novel that helped to foster some of the most important media events of the century. These formal innovations were demanded by the incorporation and growing popularity of socially transgressive figures in the increasingly socially normative genre of the novel.

\*\*\*\*\*

The chapters that follow will focus almost exclusively on the criminal and outlaw anti-heroes of novels published in the early to mid nineteenth century, but of course their eighteenth-century precursors, both in the novel and in Romantic poetry and drama, should at least be briefly discussed here.<sup>5</sup> Because Daniel Defoe is the earliest exemplar of a constitutive relationship between crime and the British novel, I feel that it is necessary to explain why Defoe is *not* at the center of my study. Ian Watt usefully compares the criminal characters of Defoe's fiction with the heroes/anti-heroes of continental picaresque fiction, noting that in spite of the *picaro*'s historical basis in the breakdown of feudalism, "he is not so much a complete individual personality whose actual life experiences are significant in themselves as a literary convention for the presentation of a variety of satiric observations and comic episodes" (Watt 94). Defoe's criminals, by contrast, are ordinary people—"products of their environment" and "victims of circumstances which anyone might have experienced" (Watt 94). According to Watt, then, the defining element of Defoe's anti-heroes is not their criminality, but their common individualism. The criminal subject of many of Defoe's novels thus seems to be more a product of the popularity of criminal biographies and dying last speeches among the lower and middle classes, rather than a crucial element of the novel as it would continue to develop in England. After all, Defoe's novels might be the earliest example of criminals occupying a central role in the English novel, but after his death, criminals moved from the center of the novel's plot to its margins, there to remain until the early nineteenth century.

In the early eighteenth century, the novel was not yet a coherent form.<sup>6</sup> Authors experimented with the boundaries and limits of fiction and history, appropriating and consolidating various types of fiction under the new generic category of the novel. In other words, the genre was still viewed as a "novel" form—something new and different, but lacking the generally agreed-upon defining characteristics that would set it apart as a major literary genre independent of, say, memoir (even fictionalized memoir), criminal biography, or travel narrative.

---

<sup>5</sup> There are also, of course, precedents in continental picaresque fiction and in the coney-catching literature and rogue pamphlets of the seventeenth century.

<sup>6</sup> Everett Zimmerman describes the eighteenth-century novel as a "post-facto construction of a restricted canon of fiction [...] consolidating a notion of what is desirable in fiction, sometimes through their own appropriation of the more diverse fictions that they marginalize" (2). William Warner offers a "cultural history of the early novel as a type of print-media entertainment," noting that in the early decades of the 1700s, the novel was not yet "clearly defined or conceptualized" (4).

The relationship of history and fiction in the novel (and in criminal biography) was still under explicit discussion in the early eighteenth century—the tension between the two was a subject of frequent debate; novelists prefaced their works with apologies, assertions of veracity, and claims that they were acting merely as “Editors” of non-fictional, often “autobiographical,” works. These truth claims were taken literally by more credulous readers, while more savvy readers understood them as part of the framework of the formal realism (to borrow Ian Watt’s phrase) that the novel world would create. But however these truth claims were read, the simple fact of their presence as part of the textual apparatus of the novel form in the early eighteenth century points to the well-documented tension between truth and fiction that was still an open topic of discussion as the novel was developing in Britain. The tension between the two had not yet become recognized (even implicitly) as an integral, though buried and less openly acknowledged, part of the form itself.<sup>7</sup>

I do not make any sweeping assertions about whether or not Defoe’s early readers universally understood themselves to be reading fiction, or what proportion of his contemporaries were conned into believing themselves to be reading true history or edited memoir. These questions, while interesting and potentially revelatory about early eighteenth-century reading practices, have been often enough debated by reception historians.<sup>8</sup> The mere presence of the truth claims that preface Defoe’s novels suggests that the relationship of history and fiction in the novel was still an open question in the 1710s and ’20s. Indeed, Defoe’s novels tend to elicit critical debate and contention even now because of their troubled relationship with history. Robert Mayer argues that all of Defoe’s fictional narratives have a “something about” them “that is both essential to and yet difficult to reconcile with the history and the theory of the novel” (Mayer 529). That something “is the nexus of fiction and history, [...] a dialogue between two forms of discourse which shows that the historicity of fictional texts—repeatedly asserted by creators of the novel form from Aphra Behn to Sir Walter Scott—is a constitutive feature of that form” (Mayer 529). Perhaps “that something about” Defoe’s novels which is so “difficult to reconcile” with theories of the novel form is the very openness and explicitness of the “nexus” that Mayer describes, which becomes more buried and implicit later in the century. Part of the difficulty of reconciling Defoe’s novels to general theories of the novel may also be the result of the epistemological instability of his character field and the difficulty of locating authority (spiritual or secular) in his criminal biographies, in particular.

The impossibility of determining whether Defoe’s characters were historical or purely fictional personages, or somewhere in between, troubled earlier models of literary character. Two of the most influential theorists of the early English novel, Ian Watt and Michael McKeon, disagree as to both the extent and the source of the instability of Defoe’s criminal biographies. Prior to Defoe’s contributions to the English novel in the early 1700s, characters in literature

---

<sup>7</sup> The critical consensus dates this moment of transition as taking place in the mid-eighteenth century (see Warner p. 8; McKeon p. 22; Zimmerman pp 1-4): Fielding announces openly (and rather proudly) in 1749 that *Tom Jones* is his “invention.” In his prefaces to *Pamela* (1740) and to *Clarissa* (1749), Richardson still includes a kind of truth claim and calls himself an “Editor,” rather than an “author,” yet the vast majority of his early readers certainly understood themselves to be reading fiction, as opposed to history.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Robert Mayer’s *History and the Early English Novel*; Lennard Davis’s *Factual Fictions: the Origins of the English Novel*; Homer Brown’s “The Institution of the English Novel: Defoe’s Contribution”; or Ashley Marshall’s “Fabricating Defoes: From Anonymous Hack to Master of Fiction.”

were “general human types” set “against a background primarily determined by the appropriate literary convention” (Watt 15). With the rise of the novel, the circumstances of the character in time and place became as important to the plot as the inner life of the individual. By specifying the details of history and location, the general ideas expressed are made more particular: the “characters of the novel can only be individualised if they are set in a background of particularised time and place” (Watt 21). For Watt, the extreme material and historical specificity of Defoe’s criminal biographies (and, indeed, his other novels) simply adds to the rise of individualism which he takes as a fundamental ingredient of the rise of the novel as a genre.<sup>9</sup>

But McKeon points out that much of the particularity of Defoe’s criminal biographies comes from their claim to historicity, which is based on “objective documentation provided by the state apparatus” (McKeon 98). These biographies exhibit a “tension between a linear, ongoing present and vertical acts of retrospection [, which] is complicated by an explicit claim to historicity” (McKeon 98). Again, leaving aside the question of whether or not Defoe’s novels were actually read as “true history” at the time they were published, their insistence on their own historical sources certainly destabilized the already fraught relationship of fiction and history. Further, the criminal biographies’ reliance on “documentation, [...] trial transcripts and the official report of government functionaries” emphasizes the importance of human, material truth, while the narratives themselves are given the task of “demonstrating a truth that is ultimately spiritual” (McKeon 98-99). Because of the conflation of divine and human authority in Defoe’s criminal biographies, the danger is much more acute than in, say, Spanish picaresque novels for readers to misjudge the (anti)hero’s “common way of ‘error’” as, in fact, “the road of individual truth” (McKeon 98). Readers of criminal biography could thus be distracted, like spectators at an execution, by a sense of identification with the criminal (McKeon 98). Again, the approaches to reading these criminal biographies at the time when they first appeared are largely outside of my purview; I am interested, however, in the ways that the instability described by McKeon is developed both later in the eighteenth century, and then, most impressively, in the outlaw and crime fictions of the early nineteenth century.

Besides his deliberate foregrounding of the tension between history and fiction in his novels, the major contribution of Defoe that I wish to emphasize here is his validation of the low and criminal as a valid subject for literature. Defoe’s crime fictions (*Captain Singleton* [1720], *Colonel Jack* [1722], *Moll Flanders* [1722], and *Roxana* [1724]) helped to legitimize crime as a literary subject. Granted, he felt the need to defend his narratives in the prefaces: after an enticing reference to *Moll Flanders*’s original “descen[t] to the particular Occasions and Circumstances by which she first became wicked,” Defoe, as editor, assures his readers that he has exercised all his care “to wrap up [the story] so clean, as not to give room, especially for vicious Readers to turn it to his Disadvantage” (*Moll Flanders* 38). Indeed, Defoe assures us that this has been his *only* contribution to the narrative: the matter of Moll’s confession is entirely her own; his job as editor has simply been “to put it into a Dress fit to be seen, and to make it speak Language fit to be read,” since it was originally “written in Language more like one still in *Newgate*” (37). Defoe therefore recommends Moll’s memoir only “to those who know how to Read it,” although he assures us that it is a “Work from every part of which something may be learned” (38; 40). Readers quickly forget the editor’s prefatory advice, however, falling rapidly

---

<sup>9</sup> Watt compares *Moll Flanders*’s individualism, for example, with that of earlier *picaros*: “the feeling evoked by [Moll Flanders’s actions] is of a much more complete sympathy and identification: author and reader alike cannot but take her and her problems much more seriously” (Watt 94).

into what McKeon calls “the complacency of identification” (98). Defoe might advertise his crime novels as spiritual autobiographies or conversion narratives—and they do, of course, fit into those generic categories—but it seems silly to assert that even his earliest readers did not feel an avid curiosity and interest in his antiheroes/heroines, over and above the moral interest in their salvation.

Defoe’s interest in the low and the vulgar as a legitimate subject for literature is often tied by critics and historians to his radical politics.<sup>10</sup> After all, Defoe was imprisoned on more than one occasion, and although it is difficult to say how many criminal confessions were actually penned by Defoe, popular literary history has for over a century attributed many of the more popular examples of the genre to the radical novelist. In a 1997 article debunking the common misattribution to Defoe of many of these criminal biographies and other ephemera, Furbank and Owens date the error to the 1869 study of the life and “recently discovered writings” of Daniel Defoe by William Lee.<sup>11</sup> Yet however many of these pamphlets and “dying last speeches” were actually written by Defoe is really irrelevant to this study: whoever wrote them, this ephemeral, popular literature had a ready audience among London’s lower and middle classes, and novels like *Moll Flanders*, *Captain Singleton*, *Colonel Jack*, and *Roxana* simply helped to legitimize it as reading material for the middle and upper classes.

The popularity of criminal biography among the lower and middle classes “provided an audience” for Defoe’s novels that was “trained up to have certain tastes and expectations” (Faller 195). These readers of criminal biographies were relatively sophisticated, and could be expected to read Defoe’s novels with a degree of critical attention (Faller 200). Faller argues that Defoe’s crime novels are less an extension of the popularity of criminal biography than “exploitations of the possibilities and needs it opened up” (201). By providing protagonists who go unpunished, who can be read as entirely (or at least as mostly) fictitious, and by leaving his own meanings and intentions ambiguous, Defoe opened up a new avenue in the public’s imagination of crime and character. His novels are open-ended enough to allow readers space for identification, encouraging them to “become producers, not merely consumers, of meaning” (Faller 201). This pattern is developed in complicated ways at the turn of the nineteenth century, after a long lull as the novel evolved in different directions. In a way, then, the early nineteenth century novel marks a return to the logic of Defoe.

After Defoe’s death, the novel developed largely along different lines. Criminal and outlaw subjects continued to fascinate the public, but were manifested in different genres and media: John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* and William Hogarth’s *Industry and Idleness* (both of which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, “Serial Criminal”), *The Rake’s Progress*, and *The Harlot’s Progress*, for instance, were wildly popular and were produced and reprinted well into the nineteenth century. Henry Fielding’s *Jonathan Wild* (1743), while taking advantage of the popularity of narratives based on the lives of famous criminals, was intended as political satire—its status as a historical novel was almost beside the point. Most novels after the death of Defoe followed instead the middle-class model laid out by Richardson in *Pamela* (1742) and *Clarissa* (1748). While criminals, outcasts, and outlaws certainly do figure in the novels of the later eighteenth century, they tend to take either a more genteel form, like the would-be rapist

---

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Lincoln Faller’s *Turned to Account*, Peter Linebaugh’s *The London Hanged*, and articles including Adam Hansen’s “Criminal Conversations” and Hal Gladfelder’s “Defoe and Criminal Fiction.”

<sup>11</sup> I discuss Defoe’s relationship with the Jack Sheppard at more length in Chapter 3, “Serial Criminal.”

Squire B. of *Pamela*, the actual rapist Lovelace in *Clarissa*, or the aristocratic villain typical of Gothic romance;<sup>12</sup> or else they take a more marginal role, like the highwaymen of *Tom Jones* (1749) or the roving banditti in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).<sup>13</sup>

Friedrich Schiller, while neither a novelist nor British, did more for the Romantic outlaw tradition as it would develop in the British novel than any British novelist since Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding. *The Robbers*, Schiller's first drama (published in 1781; premiered in 1782; first translated to English in 1792), and *William Tell*, his last (published in 1804), both feature outlaw protagonists, and in the intervening years, Schiller produced scores of poems, dramas, and stories that explore outlawry as a fundamentally social condition.

Various critical studies have pointed to *The Robbers* as a fountainhead for the Romantic outlaw tradition (Thorslev 73-75; Butler *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries* 2, 118); few, though, have commented on the importance of *The Robbers* in establishing the representation of outlawry as a *social* condition.<sup>14</sup> Schiller's revolutionary anti-hero, Karl Moor, with his outlaw society formed in the Bohemian Forest, had a pervasive influence on the development of the Romantic hero and anti-hero in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. In Britain, the Romantic outlaw type instituted by Schiller can be seen most obviously and most famously in Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1818) and *Manfred* (1816-1817) (Thorslev 5-6). But unlike Schiller's outlaws of the Bohemian Forest, the Byronic anti-hero is solitary—fundamentally an outcast, carrying “a deep sense of guilt” (Thorslev 8). The titular anti-hero of Walter Scott's *Marmion* (1808) predates Byron's *Manfred* and *Childe Harold*, but he, too, operates primarily as an individual, rather than as part of an outlaw community (Thorslev 6; Butler 2).

As I will show in my first chapter, “Outlawry and Character Structure in *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy*,” the social aspect of the Romantic outlaw tradition is developed and innovated in the early nineteenth-century British novel, above all in the historical novels of Walter Scott. I look at the figures of outlaws who take over the novel's plot and its symbolic system, permeating the entire character field with their social form of outlawry. These figures represent an alternative, outlaw society, one which influences and intersects the central plot at key moments.

The following chapter, “Serial Criminal: the Proliferation of Jack Sheppard Narratives and the Structure of the Early Victorian Novel,” turns to the 1830s and the so-called “Newgate novel,” focusing on changes to the narrative structure of the novel in the most popular example of the genre, Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* (1839), a historical novel about the early eighteenth-century housebreaker and escape artist. I discuss the novel's textual and publication history, examining the formal and structural innovations that helped to make it one of the most important media events of the nineteenth century. It served as a locus of consolidation, in which more than one hundred years' accumulation of meaning around Sheppard's life and exploits was

---

<sup>12</sup> In *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates*, Erin Mackie examines the “mutually constitutive role that the conventional eighteenth-century discourse of masculine prestige and of criminality play” in *Caleb Williams* and in Burney's *Evelina* (149).

<sup>13</sup> The archetype of the Gothic villain has been well studied: see, for example, Peter Thorslev's *The Byronic Hero*, Deborah Lutz's *The Dangerous Lover*, Kate Behr's *The Representation of Men in the English Gothic Novel*, Ian Duncan's *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel*, or Michael Gamer's *Romanticism and the Gothic*.

<sup>14</sup> Schiller's relationship to English Romantic drama has been studied by Michael Gamer in *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* and by Jeffrey Cox in *In the Shadows of Romance: Romantic Tragic Drama in Germany, England, and France*.



condensed, fictionalized, and re-imagined. Ainsworth anthologized the various pieces of Sheppard lore that had been accumulating throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, molding them into a coherent narrative. The serial publication of Ainsworth's novel is an appropriate medium for the life of a serial escape artist. The seriality of Ainsworth's form, combined with his collaboration with both his illustrator and the playwrights who would adapt his novel for the theater, allowed for Sheppard's criminality to saturate not only the novel's plot and character-system, but also the broader social world. During the "Jack Sheppard craze" of the early 1840s, children "played at" Jack Sheppard, middle-class women performed "flash" songs in their drawing rooms without understanding half the thieves' cant of the lyrics, and specific scenes and illustrations became popular *tableaux vivants*. Ainsworth's innovations on the novel's structure helped create a media sensation and scandal.

The fourth chapter, "History, the Gothic, and the Wandering Race: the Place and Time of Gypsies in *Rookwood* and *Guy Mannering*," continues to explore the ways that socially marginal characters are able to reorder their narrative and social systems, while also considering the historical time and geographical space of these social outcasts. I focus on the Gypsy communities of Ainsworth's *Rookwood* (1834) and Scott's *Guy Mannering* (1815), via the apparent contradiction between the Gypsies as figures for the Romantic obsession with origins and the outcast, nomadic, seemingly origin-less Gypsies in these novels who are permanent, long-term inhabitants of their communities. Gypsies were long conflated with criminals because of their apparent placelessness, which was identified as "vagrancy" by local and national authorities with an interest in keeping everyone in their right place. Deborah Epstein Nord's *Gypsies and the British Imagination* (2006) illuminates the ways that the figure of the Gypsy was deployed in early nineteenth-century British literature; my work explores the place of the Gypsy within the broader context of the development of the novel. I discuss the ways that these figures are deployed within the structural space allotted them by the author and the geographical space granted them by local gentry and magistrates, focusing especially on their relationship to more truly "criminal" figures—the historical highwayman Dick Turpin in *Rookwood* and the suave, sycophantic Glossin and the violent smuggler Dirk Hatteraick in *Guy Mannering*. In *Guy Mannering*, the Gypsies' status is intimately tied to the question not only of their own origins, but also to the questions of homeland and belonging for all of the major characters. The Gypsies play a central role in the "lost heir" plots of both novels: they re-establish the history—and rights—of the protagonist, even as they lose their own place within the world of the novel. It seems strange that Gypsies, a group so persistently associated with crime, should become the mechanism by which early nineteenth-century British writers would approach and come to terms with questions of their own origins. In "The Time of the Gypsies," Katie Trumpener has argued that the Gypsy plot of *Guy Mannering* can be read as a social parable in which anxieties about expanding state authority and enclosure are projected onto the seemingly origin-less and placeless Gypsies (866-7). In the broader context of my project, though, it becomes clear that outlawry and social deviance could provide a powerful lens with which to understand history on both local and national levels.

The final chapter of the dissertation opens the category of "outlaw" still wider and looks forward across the 1840s to the sensation-novels of the 1860s, considering the nexus of outlawry, history, and domestic fiction. I have been tracing the genealogy of what has, so far, been a primarily masculine genre. By the 1860s, though, the socializing force of the outlaw figures I describe has become feminized: the anti-hero has become an anti-heroine, whose threat is not only to the novel's real hero or heroine, but to the novel's socializing schema, the marriage plot

itself. The domestic novel is generally assumed to have a separate genealogy from the crime novel;<sup>15</sup> my final chapter demonstrates the ways that they are connected.<sup>16</sup> I examine the transgressions of the female social climber as she is developed in the nineteenth century by three major authors, focusing especially on the ways that the narrator manages the social threat presented by these women through various degrees of narrative reticence. I open with a reading of Jane Austen's social climbers at the beginning of the century. Lucy Steele of *Sense and Sensibility* and Mrs. Clay of *Persuasion* endanger the stability of the social world in those novels by threatening to displace other, more worthy candidates for marriage. They are precursors of the Victorian novel's most famous social-climbing anti-heroine, Becky Sharp. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* develops the function of the anti-social woman as a lens through which to view—and to satirize—both history and society. I close the chapter with a short reading of narrative reticence in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), which continues to develop the type of the social-climbing anti-heroine as a threat, now, not only to the fabric of society but to national security.

Each chapter thus focuses on a specific innovation to the novel form in the early nineteenth century, using as case studies novels that employ different types of social transgression: social and political outlaws in *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy*; the criminal anti-hero in *Jack Sheppard*; the social outcast and displaced wanderer in *Rookwood* and *Guy Mannering*; and finally the female social climber as she develops through Austen, Thackeray, and Braddon. The project as a whole offers a new account of the story of the novel through the early nineteenth century that ties together the traditionally discrete genealogies of Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray with the more traditionally feminine domestic plots of Jane Austen and the popular sub-genres of the Newgate novel and sensation fiction. I see these apparently disparate traditions as being linked via a shared concern with the treatment of social transgression. The many innovations to the British novel form in the early nineteenth century have traditionally made it so difficult to describe a unified evolution of the form across this period. These many innovations to the form are so many different mechanisms and techniques developed for managing and containing social transgression.

---

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* and T.B. Tomlinson's *The English Middle Class Novel*.

<sup>16</sup> Most studies of the sensation novel tend to trace its genealogy via the Gothic tradition, drawing parallels with the Newgate novel as another example of a popular sub-genre that did not gain long-term traction or canonical recognition in the history of the genre. See, for example, Winifred Hughes's *The Maniac in the Cellar*, Lyn Pykett's *The 'Improper' Feminine*, or Ann Cvetkovich's *Mixed Feelings*.

## Chapter 2: Character Structure and Outlawry in *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy*

Scott's *Rob Roy* (1817) and *Ivanhoe* (1819) provide transformative novelistic examples in which outlawry is, at its core, a social condition, and one that can spread and saturate various individuals and social groups.<sup>17</sup> As a writer of historical novels, Scott sets up his readers to expect a certain level of historical referentiality in his allusions and source material. Yet in both *Rob Roy* and in *Ivanhoe*, Scott uses non-referential and balladic allusions (both explicit and implicit) to synthesize the historical with the legendary, and so transforms the character field.<sup>18</sup> Scott's outlaws, while common to almost all of his novels, are never the romantic heroes. Instead, they occupy the margins of the plot, influencing the central characters, but then disappearing off-stage when their work is done. Helen Phillips agrees that Scott's outlaws tend to be "borderers," inhabiting a position on the "margins" (Phillips 119). Yet this is in spite of Scott's own admission that he had, in his own words, "'an unfortunate propensity for the dubious character of borderers, buccaneers, Highland robbers, and all others of a Robin Hood description'" (qtd. in Phillips 119). Phillips argues that Scott's outlaws remain on the margins mainly for political reasons—Scott's sympathy for these social bandits reveals a complexity and conflict in his conservative, Tory vision of progress and reform (120). While I agree with Phillips's historicist account of the reasons for Scott's outlaws' confinement to the margins, I am interested in the formal consequences of Scott's marginal outlaws to the character-systems and to the structure of these novels' plots. The marginal position of Scott's outlaws and rogue figures parallels the marginal status of the balladic source material from which he draws them.

Scott's outlaws, rogues, and rebels are often inspired by popular folk and ballad traditions as well as from literary sources and predecessors like Schiller. *Rob Roy* and *Ivanhoe* are particularly indebted to popular history. The antiquarian revival of the late eighteenth century had made folk ballads about Robin Hood, Rob Roy, and other outlaws widely available to a literary audience. The transmissibility of Scott's source ballads adds to the potency of his outlaws. As ballads were collected, written down, and, ultimately, canonized, the popular perception of the ballad form shifted from a primarily oral to a primarily written form, albeit with an almost obsessive attention to the balladeer's work of translating or transmitting the original, authentic, oral text.<sup>19</sup> In a sense, then, ballads can be read as both timeless—existing across time periods as they were transmitted orally—and as intensely historical, belonging to the specific moment in which they were collected and printed as textual artifacts. Scott's outlaws, too, occupy a curious position in the novel, seeming to exist beyond the pages of the novel's plotted time. The presence of these figures often seems to disrupt the forward-moving

---

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Whitmore draws a useful comparison between *Ivanhoe* and other *Sturm und Drang* dramas, especially Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, focusing mainly on the role of Brian de Bois-Guilbert, the lawless Templar.

<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, and in spite of increasing attention to Scott's use of ballads and orality in his poetry and his role as a ballad collector, there has been very little work done on the formal question of Scott's incorporation of balladic elements in his novels. See, for instance, [Charles G. Zug III], "The Ballad and History: The Case for Scott" *Folklore* 89 (1978), 229-42; G.S. Fraser's "Walter Scott: Ballad Novelist?" *A Review of International English Literature* 2.3 (1971), 77-87.

<sup>19</sup> See Maureen McLane, *Balladeering Minstrelsy*, pp 44-50.

progression of the novel's time. The outlaw, representing a temporality different from and perhaps in conflict with the temporality of the central characters, is notably absent from the plot's resolution. The outlaw figures, then, are in conflict with the forward progression of narrative time, yet their final removal disperses that tension. These figures bring into focus an important element of Scott's narratology: a resistance to the forward-moving time of official historical chronology.

The outlaws of Scott's novels, springing as they do from the ballad tradition, embody the tension between the past-as-past and forward-moving time. This tension bears on the level of plot, as well: the outlaw figures of *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy* circulate both outside of the law and outside of the central plot. While they never emerge as protagonists, neither do they fade entirely from the narrative's attention. More often, they operate in the shadows, just off-stage, making their presence felt in the central plot through their implied influence rather than through directly represented action. Yet these figures are more than mere narrative motors; the novels show a sustained interest in them. Scott's interest in outlaw and rogue figures spurred a broader trend in the novel's development in the early nineteenth century, when outlaws began to move toward the center of the novel.<sup>20</sup> Scott's rogues linger on the periphery of the novel's plot, appearing repeatedly and accruing significance with each subsequent appearance.

Scott's model of the historical novel had a pervasive influence on popular memory. According to Ann Rigney, Scott "opened up the past as an imaginative resource, inspiring a fashion for history as the key to collective identity that continues down to the present day" (Rigney 4). Because Scott uses folklore and the ballad as sources for history, *Ivanhoe*'s Robin Hood and *Rob Roy*'s highland rogue come to represent a popular, collective outlaw force. Ballads are, as Maureen McLane puts it, a "mode of crossing beyond, or at least confounding, barriers [...] between historical periods" (McLane 16). Ballads, then, when inserted into the historical novel, interrupt the forward progression of the novel's chronology. Balladic figures like Rob Roy and *Ivanhoe*'s Locksley/Robin Hood exist within the novel's world; at the same time, the ballads to which Scott explicitly gestures offer a life for these figures both before and beyond the novel's pages.

The distinction between "criminal" and "outlaw," which is so crucial in Scott, may be rooted in Schiller, where the hypocritically law-abiding antagonist is often the true "criminal" and the banditti and outlaws often have their own codes of honor. Scott's outlaw, similarly, is "a figure apart from the criminal—rural instead of urban, more sinned against than sinning, with a high moral character" (Bolton, "Playing Rob Roy," 479). In Scott, outlawry often is divorced from actual villainy. The outlaw might have an uneasy alliance with the villain, as Rob Roy does with Rashleigh Osbaldistone as the novel opens, or share a similar costume or appearance, as Locksley and his men do with Brian de Bois-Guilbert and De Bracy when the villains disguise themselves as outlaws, but Scott still claims, to use the words of H. Philip Bolton, a "transcendent status" for Robin Hood and Rob Roy, setting them apart from and morally above the true "criminals" of the novels (479). Still, though, it is important to recall that in *Rob Roy*, the distinction between "criminal" and "outlaw" is one shared by the narrator, the reader, and the outlaw figure himself, but not by the absolute representatives of national, legal authority in the novel, for whom the outlaw's crimes are not mitigated by circumstance. Even the protagonist of

---

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Defoe's rogue and criminal heroes, of course, provide an important earlier precursor to the outlaws and criminals of the early nineteenth-century novels; I discuss the role of Defoe at more length in my introductory chapter and again in Chapter 3, "Serial Criminal."

*Rob Roy*, much as he admires the outlaw's courage, occasionally condemns his acts as "criminal." The lack of a centralized national law in *Ivanhoe* makes Locksley's status as outlaw, as opposed to criminal, much less ambiguous: his "crimes" are, in fact, pardoned at the end of the novel by King Richard, although the narrator reminds us that the king's death after the close of the novel nullifies his official pardon of the outlaw.

Both Rob Roy and Locksley develop complex relationships with the heroes of the novels and repeatedly influence the central plot before disappearing again into the margins. In *Ivanhoe*, the outlaw Locksley emerges regularly from the greenwood to take part in and organize the central action. He leads the siege at Torquilstone Castle, helps to rescue the wounded Ivanhoe, and arrives in time to save King Richard from ambush, only, like Rob Roy, to disappear at the end of the novel. Locksley has more influence over the central plot than the eponymous hero, who spends much of the novel incapacitated by wounds sustained at the Ashby tournament. Rob Roy appears in only a handful of scenes and yet seems to be aware of everything that takes place, and his name serves as a passport even past the locked bars of the Glasgow prison (256-7). That the novel is named for him, and not for the first-person narrator and romantic hero, Francis Osbaldistone, suggests the extent to which he will impinge on the central plot—and on the narrating hero's memory of its events.

Despite Rob Roy's strange status as an outsider in a novel that bears his name, his character, while perhaps less fully developed, is certainly more memorable than Francis Osbaldistone's: he acts decisively while Frank equivocates. Georg Lukács famously remarked in *The Historical Novel* that Scott's heroes tend to be "middling" (33): they serve as centers around which the historical events of the novel can unfold, yet they are in themselves blandly unheroic. They tend to be forgettable next to the outlaw figures, like Locksley or Rob Roy, or villainous anti-heroes like Brian de Bois-Guilbert or Rashleigh Osbaldistone. The romantic heroes of the novels might represent the desire for forward-moving narrative progress, for the completion of their own romantic unions, yet the outlaw figures, with no erotic interests of their own, who influence the forward motion of the central plot but do not themselves progress, are the more memorable.

*Ivanhoe* and Locksley, and Francis Osbaldistone and Rob Roy, are not connected simply for narrative expedience: the novel links these unlikely pairs formally as well as functionally. In both novels, the romantic hero and the outlaw figure seem to compete, structurally, for narrative centrality, as much as they collaborate on the story level. Understanding the structural intersection of the different types of character in these novels is crucial to understanding the function of Scott's outlaws and their relationship to the romantic heroes. Alex Woloch developed a new theory of literary character in *The One vs. the Many*, arguing that the nineteenth-century novel's ambition of broad, total social representation and the resulting tension between the protagonist and the many minor characters reflect the "nineteenth-century comprehension of social stratification" as it developed out of an increasing "division of labor that constricts full human beings to increasingly specialized roles" (26). Minor characters in the nineteenth-century novel, in other words, are analogous to the cogs of industrial machinery: de-individualized executors of a specialized function within a larger system. The terms Woloch develops to describe the narrative space allocated to minor characters are useful in considering the role of the outlaw in Scott: the "character-space," which "marks the *intersection* of an implied human personality [...] with the definitively circumscribed form of a narrative," and the "character-system," which is "the arrangement of multiple and differentiated character-spaces [...] into a unified narrative structure" (13, 14). The cases of *Rob Roy* and *Ivanhoe*, two of the most

influential and popular novels of the nineteenth century, allow us to revise Woloch's analysis. The outlaw characters of *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy* do not simply *intersect* with the character-space of the romantic hero, but actually diffuse their outlaw energy throughout the "unified" character-system. Scott's outlaws, like the minor characters in Woloch's industrial analogy, appear to be de-individuated parts in an elaborately plotted system; yet their function is actually distributed throughout the entire character-system. The outlaws' "character-space" is not as circumscribed or discrete as Woloch's term implies.

In the case of *Ivanhoe*, in particular, it is useful to consider the effects of character-*time*, or the ways that characters develop and accumulate meaning over time, gesturing to sources before the start of the novel and beyond its final pages. Scott's character-systems are thus more organic than Woloch's more mechanical model. These figures, and the balladic sources associated with them, apply pressure to the central plot through their diffusive influence. In both *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy*, the character-systems are constituted by the complex web of relations between the hero, the villain, the outlaws, and the other marginal characters. Scott's use of ballads in the creation of the mythico-historic outlaws creates pockets of resistance to the forward-moving chronology of the novel. Scott often alludes to and integrates ballad materials without acknowledging their sources. This reticence of attribution constitutes a form of textual illegitimacy that licenses an "outlaw function" in the novels, allowing this outlaw energy to escape the character-space of the outlaw himself and to pervade and saturate the entire plot and character-system. I demonstrate the ways that the outlaws' character-space interpenetrates and interacts with the space of the hero, and their ultimate fate in nineteenth-century popular culture and beyond. Finally, I will show how Scott's mode of incorporating literary and historical sources allows the outlaw figures to accumulate meaning gradually over the course of the novel. Because my readings hinge on an understanding of the overall structure of each novel's central plot, I discuss the outlaw elements of each in turn, rather than side by side.

In novels as capacious and densely plotted as *Rob Roy* and especially *Ivanhoe*, the "central plot" is difficult to define, with minor characters continually recurring and, often, impacting the outcome of the plot more strikingly than the hero himself. A different, more precise vocabulary is thus required to describe the relationship between the "major" and "minor" characters in Scott's novels. Rather than "major/minor" or even "primary/secondary," both of which imply an absolute subordination of importance, I use the distinction "central/marginal," to suggest instead the variability and interchangeability so crucial to Scott's character-system. I should stress that I do not use these terms in a hierarchical sense, but rather to indicate coordinates in a fluctuating, rather than a fixed topology. These terms, as I use them here, capture the important dynamism of character positions that change and develop as the novel progresses. The "central" hero's concerns—the advancement of his romantic, familial, and economic interests—occupy a greater number of scenes than the analogous concerns of any one of the "marginal" characters. Yet the "marginal" characters in *Rob Roy* and *Ivanhoe* move to the center to take over the advancement of the action at key moments, working in the interests of the passive hero, though they are relegated back to the margins as the novel concludes. The pressure of the marginal figures on the center, of course, troubles the structural metaphor. But the structural instability that this implies is actually an important element of the unsettling effect of Scott's character-systems.

For my purposes here, the central plot consists of the events most immediately pertinent to the resolution of the conflicts and obstacles facing the hero. In *Rob Roy*, the central plot includes Francis Osbaldistone's romantic attachment to Die Vernon, his repeated brushes with

the law, and his pursuit of Rashleigh to recover his father's lost fortune; the 1715 Jacobite uprising and Rob Roy's story are subordinate to the central plot. Because Francis Osbaldistone is narrating his own story retrospectively, it is relatively easy in *Rob Roy* to distinguish the central from the marginal plots. *Ivanhoe* is more difficult, simply because the omniscient narrator moves freely among characters and because the novel is more crowded with marginal characters and subordinate plots, but for the sake of convenience, I will define the central plot as Wilfred of Ivanhoe's return to England, his recovery from the injuries sustained at the tournament, his rescue from Torquilstone and ultimate victory at the Templar Preceptory, the recovery of his father's favor and inheritance and the securing of his father's blessing on his marriage with Rowena. The major subplots and marginal characters—the outlaws of the greenwood, Isaac and Rebecca, and Richard's return from exile—make *Ivanhoe*'s structure much closer to that of a Victorian multi-plot novel and create a dense web of narrative meaning around the central plot, in which the hero himself is in some senses “marginal.”

### **The Outlaw Energy of *Ivanhoe*'s Greenwood**

In *Ivanhoe*, the greenwood is the crucial scene both of outlawry and of the ballad form. As the characters move between the principal episodes (the tournament at Ashby, the siege of Torquilstone, and the final trial-by-combat at the Templar Preceptory), they must pass along the road through the greenwood. The greenwood is ruled not by Norman or Saxon law, but by the English outlaws, where chance meetings, ambushes, rescues, and feasts seem bound, by the generic conventions of both the ballad and of romance, to take place. Structurally, the scenes of travel through the greenwood function as a kind of refrain, dividing the principal scenes of the central action. As the home of Robin Hood and the source of the many snatches of song and ballad, the greenwood appears to be the natural habitat of the ballad, and these interludes, or refrains, in the greenwood can be read as a kind of structural echo of the ballad form itself.

Robin Hood's dynamism—what I call his outlaw energy—is concentrated in *Ivanhoe*'s greenwood, which forms the hub of an outlaw community. This outlaw energy constitutes the rest of the field of characters and makes all of the characters, in a sense, outlaw. Indeed, this dynamism in effect “balladizes” many of the other characters. Even historical figures like Prince John and Richard the Lionhearted become divorced from that referential, historical legitimacy and become extractable from their original position within the novel. As with the explicitly balladic Robin Hood, Scott gestures to a life for these figures beyond the novel and even beyond the historical record.

The novel opens in the greenwood. Scott's invocation of the “large forest” of “merry England” contrasts the primeval wood of those “ancient times” with “the remains of this extensive wood” which still exist today (25)<sup>21</sup>. The paragraph closes with an allusion to the Robin Hood of legend and to the “English song[s]” that record and popularize the deeds of “bands of gallant outlaws.” Scott highlights the English ballads which serve, like the greenwood itself, both as a source of inspiration and as a way of linking England's legendary past with the present. The greenwood of *Ivanhoe*, existing outside of historical time, becomes the reservoir of those “English songs” and the space where England's mythic past can most readily be imagined and accessed.

---

<sup>21</sup> I cite from the Oxford edition of *Ivanhoe*, edited by Ian Duncan.

The idea of a unified “England,” though, is an anachronism in the novel—a part of the national myth-making so powerfully represented by the figure of Robin Hood in his greenwood. Although the novel never represents a fully unified England (indeed, it insists on England’s heterogeneity), the incipient English nation finds its roots in the outlaw energy of *Ivanhoe*’s greenwood. The nation still bears elements of this outlaw condition, as evidenced by the lines of mythic continuity Scott draws between the primeval, outlaw greenwood and the vestiges of it still visible today. Scott thus implies that natural rather than historical time applies to Robin Hood and to the greenwood. If the character Ivanhoe is, as Stephen Knight and others have observed, a hybrid of Saxon and Norman culture and values, then the greenwood of *Ivanhoe* forms an imaginative nexus linking mythic past and present, outlawry with national law. The greenwood’s outlaw energy complicates the imagined source of the nation to include (and to exclude) more groups than the usually acknowledged Saxon and Norman—most notably the Jewish community, including Isaac and Rebecca.

The antiquarian revival of the late eighteenth century had made folk ballads about Robin Hood and other outlaws widely available to a literary audience. As Scott was writing, he had ready access to centuries’ worth of folklore, ballads, and literary representations of Robin Hood dating back to the fourteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Thomas Percy included a Robin Hood ballad in his *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* (1765), Thomas Evans published a collection of *Old Ballads, Historical and Narrative* with many Robin Hood ballads in 1777 (republished in a new edition by his son, R.H. Evans, in 1810, keeping it in the public view), and Joseph Ritson published a more scholarly, annotated collection of Robin Hood songs and ballads in 1795, titled *Robin Hood: a collection of all the ancient poems, songs, and ballads, now extant, relative to that celebrated English outlaw*. By the time Scott was writing, Ritson’s collection had become the definitive anthology of Robin Hood ballads.

Scott was familiar with Ritson’s collection (among others), though his rendition of Robin Hood differs substantially from Ritson’s. Ritson opens the first volume of his two-volume collection with an authoritative “Life of Robin Hood,” followed by over 100 pages of “Notes and Illustrations.” Ritson is openly critical of earlier ballad collectors, especially of Percy, in whose work Ritson points out a lack of scholarly rigor. Yet he is himself guilty of selectively choosing ballads that support his theory of the life of Robin Hood. Ritson seems attached to the idea of Robin Hood as a distressed nobleman, the Earl of Huntingdon, although that portrayal does not appear in the sources until 1658 with Anthony Munday’s *The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington*, while the earlier (and thus arguably more authoritative) ballads style the outlaw as a simple yeoman.<sup>23</sup>

Scott, too, is committed to a particular version of Robin Hood. Locksley, as Robin Hood is named for much of *Ivanhoe*, is an illiterate yeoman, rather than a dispossessed earl.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> The Abbotsford Library Catalogue, now available online, provides a glimpse of Scott’s extensive collection of these anthologies, broadsheets, and ballads. [<http://voyager.advocates.org.uk/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?DB=local&PAGE=First>]

<sup>23</sup> Ritson’s radical politics would seem to conflict with his insistence on a gentrified Robin Hood. For more on this apparent contradiction, see Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw*, 153-8.

<sup>24</sup> Various explanations for this choice have been offered by critics: Clare A. Simmons suggests that Locksley is a yeoman so that Scott can “contrive a rescue for [Locksley’s Saxon] masters” (85). William E. Simeone similarly argues that Locksley’s status as a yeoman is meant to turn him “into the figure of a



Interestingly, although Scott rejects the version of Robin Hood as a Saxon earl, King Richard himself calls Locksley the “King of Outlaws,” a “Prince of good fellows,” and a “brother sovereign” (*Ivanhoe* 458 and 452). Scott’s references to Locksley’s metaphorical royalty, despite his literal rank as a yeoman, implicitly unite the disparate strands of the Robin Hood legend. Scott’s free incorporation of elements from different traditions consolidates the diverse outlaw mythology into a coherent figure. In this way, Scott establishes a more unified version of Robin Hood—one that integrates apparently contradictory elements from popular tradition and legend by slowly accruing significance and balladic allusions with each appearance by the outlaw.

The de-centered significance of the Robin Hood mythology in *Ivanhoe* accords well with the de-individuated Robin Hood of the ballad tradition. The Robin Hood of folk ballads could command “off-stage as well as on it, and his disseminated force in large part derives from the generality, the non-individualism, of his personality” (Knight, *Complete Study* 172). The Robin Hood of the ballad tradition is de-individuated because his purpose was to represent a broader social freedom in the greenwood, rather than the radical personal freedom that more recent renditions of the outlaw tend to embody. In his critical introduction to *Ivanhoe*, Ian Duncan remarks on the potentially “disappointing” characterization of Scott’s Robin Hood for modern readers who expect to find a flamboyant Errol Flynn in the greenwood. Instead, Locksley is “businesslike, even impersonal”—a characterization which helps to underscore the diffusiveness of the outlaw energy in this novel (xviii).

Ballads themselves were de-individualized—they are, after all, poems without authors or known origins, which belonged rather to the popular collectivity through which they circulated. As a ballad figure in a historical novel, Robin Hood thus takes on this de-individualized role, circulating in and through the novel’s world, anonymous and yet easily recognizable, as pervasively as the ballad tradition circulated through English society. The Robin Hood of ballad usually has no origin, but simply appears in the forest, fully formed, already an outlaw. He is given no back-story, nor do the ballad narratives offer the possibility of a future outside of the greenwood.<sup>25</sup> In *Ivanhoe*, he is first introduced as “a stout well-set yeoman, arrayed in Lincoln-green, having twelve arrows stuck in his belt, with a baldric and badge of silver, and a bow of six feet length in his hand” (91). Even before he is named as “Locksley,” this anonymous yeoman at Prince John’s tournament is recognizably the Robin Hood of the ballad tradition. Scott might have had a woodcut from a black-letter garland in front of him as he wrote this description. Most critics assume that this initial description of Locksley is inspired at least in part by Chaucer’s description of the yeoman in *The General Prologue*.<sup>26</sup> Scott’s description certainly accords well

---

deliverer, [in order to] show that from the beginning of the national history, ordinary men had an important role to play in the making of the nation” (Simeone 230). S.J. White argues that there is “a connection between the outlaws, in particular their leader, and the dispossessed cottagers and [...]the Pentridge Rising of June 1817. Both James Chandler in *England in 1819* and Graham Tulloch in his critical introduction, on the other hand, argue that Locksley’s yeoman status is part of the political setting of the novel, which foregrounds the “condition of England in the aftermath of Peterloo” (Chandler 84).<sup>25</sup> A partial but notable exception is the relatively long “Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode” (the first in Ritson’s 1795 collection), in which King Richard not only pardons Robin Hood after their mutual recognition in the greenwood, but invites him and his men to join his court. After a time, though, Robin Hood resigns his post in the court and returns to his greenwood home. The majority of the ballads, however, are simply vignettes (“Robin Hood and the Beggar,” “Robin Hood and the Valiant Knight,” etc.) describing now-iconic incidents of the outlaw’s adventures in the greenwood.

<sup>26</sup> A Yeman hadde he, [...]

with Chaucer's; they share a green costume, a "sheef" of arrows at the belt, a "baldric" and a silver badge. The epigraph to the chapter in which it appears is from John Dryden's 1700 modernized version of Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," and the epigraph to a previous chapter is the General Prologue's description of the monk, so Chaucer will be on the reader's mind as Locksley is first introduced, although he is not explicitly referenced in this scene.

Scott's initial description of Locksley accords equally well with these lines of Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612),<sup>27</sup> which Ritson quotes at length early in the introduction of his first volume:

...All clad in Lincoln green, with caps of red and blue,  
His fellow's winded horn not one of them but knew, [...]  
Their bauldricks set with studs, athwart their shoulders cast,  
To which under their arms their sheafs were buckled fast,  
A short sword at their belt, a buckler scarce a span,  
Who struck below the knee, not counted then a man:  
All made of Spanish yew, their bows were wondrous strong;  
They not an arrow drew, but was a cloth-yard long. (Ritson viii)

Chaucer's influence on Drayton is clear, though again not explicitly mentioned.<sup>28</sup> Drayton's largely-forgotten (but well known to Scott) chorographic poem on the history and topography of Britain is certainly not itself a ballad—it was never transmitted orally and its authorship is well established—but it was clearly inspired by the ballad tradition that Ritson was later to anthologize. Drayton does not cite any sources, but rather assumes (as Scott does) a certain familiarity on the part of his readers with the folk and ballad tradition and with British literary history more generally. Scott's opening description of Locksley, then, echoes two sources that are quintessentially English: Chaucer, who would be familiar in some form to almost all of Scott's early readers and who was widely regarded as England's first national poet, and Drayton, a relatively obscure poet whose poetic history of Britain was nonetheless made current and

---

And he was clad in cote and hood of grene;  
A sheef of pecok arwes brighte and kene [...]  
His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe),  
And in his hand he bar a mighty bowe. [...]  
Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,  
And by his side a swerd and a bokeler [...];  
A Cristofre on his brest of silver shene  
An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene... (101-116)

<sup>27</sup> Although it has since been largely forgotten by readers and many critics, Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* was well known to Scott (he had the 1622 edition, as well as two reprints, in his collection at Abbotsford). In addition, Scott's letters reveal a long and fond acquaintance: in 1816, he wrote to his antiquarian friend James Ellis, "Polyolbion has always peculiar charms for me though many people tire of it" (*Letters*, ed. Grierson, vol. IV, p. 221).

<sup>28</sup> Neither Ian Duncan in the 1996 Oxford edition nor Graham Tulloch in the 1998 Edinburgh edition remark the striking resemblance of Scott's yeoman to the yeoman described in Drayton and reproduced in Ritson.

visible through Ritson's lengthy introduction.<sup>29</sup> The passage of Drayton indirectly connects Chaucer's yeoman with the Robin Hood tradition, coming as it does as part of Ritson's introduction to a scholarly collection of Robin Hood ballads.

The length of the passage quoted from Drayton and its position so early in the introduction suggest that Ritson was anxious to establish it as a paradigmatic portrait of Robin Hood, one to which subsequent balladic descriptions could be compared. Although he had many earlier, perhaps more "authentic" ballads he could have quoted in his introduction, Ritson seems eager to establish the authority of Drayton's description: he includes a lengthy end note citing several sources to confirm that "Lincoln green," which has become a common-place in descriptions of Robin Hood, was indeed a well-known and sought-after textile dye as early as the thirteenth century (xxxviii-xxxix). It seems unlikely that the parallels between Scott's first description of Locksley and Ritson's earliest lengthy quoted description should be coincidental; Ritson's collection of Robin Hood ballads was popular enough that the echoes in Scott's description were probably readily apparent to many of his readers.<sup>30</sup> Like Ritson, Scott includes an early description of the outlaw that is exemplary, easily recognizable from the ballad tradition (and part of a larger English literary tradition), but not directly attributable to any one definitive source.

After this initial description, Locksley's subsequent appearances accrue significance even in the minds of the other characters. As they pass through the woods with the strange yeoman after the highway robbery, Wamba finds himself in a position similar to the reader's, trying to guess the identity of the strangely familiar figure in "Lincoln-green":

From his dress and arms, Wamba would have conjectured him to be one of those outlaws who had just assailed his master; but, besides that he wore no mask, the glittering baldric across his shoulder, with the rich bugle-horn which it supported, as well as the calm and commanding expression of his voice and manner, made him, notwithstanding the twilight, recognise Locksley the yeoman, who had been victorious, under such disadvantageous circumstances, in the contest for the prize of archery. (210)

The yeoman's props and costume—his "dress and arms," the "glittering baldric," and the "rich bugle-horn"—allow Wamba to recognize Locksley, even in the twilight, just as a reader familiar with the descriptions and wood-cuts of the ballad tradition would easily recognize Robin Hood in the yeoman Locksley.<sup>31</sup> Locksley needs "no mask"; his costume fully identifies him. His "non-

---

<sup>29</sup> Eighteenth-century writers and readers had reevaluated many such older British poets, publishing new editions and translations, making them widely visible and current to late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century readers.

<sup>30</sup> Although we know that Scott was familiar with Ritson's collection and that Ritson's collection went through several editions, it is of course impossible to say whether Scott expected his readers to have read Ritson in particular, or rather simply to possess a general, cultural knowledge of the balladic tradition anthologized and made available by Ritson and others.

<sup>31</sup> Robin Hood is often described as carrying a bugle horn and baldric in the traditional ballads and almost invariably is dressed in green. See, for example, "Robin Hood and the Shepherd" and "Robin Hood and the Curtall Fryer," both reproduced in Ritson, Vol. II, pp 203 and 209.

individualism,” to borrow Knight’s phrase, makes his character largely reducible to the iconic props he carries. He functions here as an archetype, rather than as an individual.

Despite Locksley’s “non-individualism”—or perhaps because of it, given his archetypal function—Knight argues that *Ivanhoe*’s outlaw “tends to dominate a scene whoever else appears in it” (*Mythic Biography* 115). His first major appearance involves a public defiance of Prince John at a tournament. Prince John, wanting to vent his rage without starting a public brawl among the nobles, turns on the yeoman in the crowd who cheered the loudest: “I always add my hollo,” the yeoman replies calmly, “when I see a good shot, or a gallant blow” (96). It is a quintessential Robin Hood moment: he stands alone in a crowd, applauding courage and defying tyranny. Although still unnamed at this point, he does, indeed, dominate the scene. He is not swept up by the events that unfold around him, and he never loses control, though he occasionally emerges from the margins, as here, to applaud a “gallant blow.”

Locksley steps out of the ballad tradition as entire and whole as he steps out of the crowd of spectators at the tournament. This is Locksley’s first directly reported dialogue in the novel, and it could have been lifted wholesale from one of the Robin Hood ballads that Scott borrows from so frequently: the line rhymes and almost scans (though not in ballad meter): “I always add my hollo when I see a good shot or a gallant blow.” Like the opening description, Locksley’s first reported dialogue seems to direct the reader to the ballad tradition. Although Scott does not refer directly to the “black-letter garlands” until the end of the novel, the allusions to ballad collections are frequent. Toward the end of the novel, for example, he refers “curious” readers to the “penny-histories of Robin Hood,” for additional information on Friar Tuck, the hermit who appears in the greenwood to entertain King Richard (453). Scott appeals to his reader’s knowledge of the Robin Hood tradition, referring us to anonymous, popular sources outside of the novel, reminding us of the mythic status of some of the characters.

Of all the characters who disguise themselves in *Ivanhoe*, Locksley, according to Ian Duncan, is “most completely absorbed by his mask” (Oxford introduction, xviii). Locksley’s many names and disguises contribute to the diffusiveness of the outlaw energy in the novel. Locksley enters the narrative gradually, first with the description of the anonymous yeoman. It takes several chapters before the yeoman identifies himself as “Locksley” to Prince John on the second day of the tournament. His identity goes through several other permutations before he finally reveals himself as Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest. When Isaac finds himself in the greenwood, he gives Locksley yet another name:

‘And thou art he whom we called Diccon Bend-the-Bow?’ said Isaac; ‘I thought ever I knew the accent of thy voice.’

‘I am Bend-the-Bow,’ said the Captain, ‘and Locksley, and have a good name besides all these.’ (364)

It is not clear where the name “Diccon Bend-the-Bow” came from—it seems to have been an addition of Scott’s own.<sup>32</sup> This name is perplexing, since we expect it to index something in the Robin Hood mythology. Yet it appears to be just an empty referent—another reminder of the many previous incarnations of the legendary figure in the ballads, plays, songs, and poems

---

<sup>32</sup> In his Edinburgh edition, Graham Tulloch notes that “Diccon” was a common diminutive for Richard, and that “Bend-the-Bow” was an obvious nickname for an archer, but is unable to cite a source for this name in the Robin Hood ballads.

collected by Ritson, Percy, Evans, and others, and circulated orally for centuries before the antiquarians began their work. In this scene, Scott implicitly enrolls his romance in that tradition. Locksley's many names work as layers of signifiers, which peel back to reveal only the slippery, non-individual signification of the legend itself: the yeoman in Lincoln green whom we first encounter.

The "revelation" scene is therefore not so much of a revelation; we have already recognized Locksley as Robin Hood. Rather, it is a moment of condensation. All of the references to the Robin Hood ballads that have circulated loosely among the clusters of marginal characters are suddenly concentrated into the yeoman, Locksley. His previous names are stripped away to reveal the myth: "Call me no longer Locksley, my Liege, but know me under the name, which, I fear, fame hath blown too widely not to have reached even your royal ears—I am Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest" (452). By this late stage in the novel, Locksley is fully united with the myth—a collection of meaning and reference that has "blown widely" in the ballad tradition, now consolidated in the novel under the name "Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest."

For all the pressure Locksley exerts on the narrative from the greenwood, he fades into the background at the end of the novel with startling abruptness. Scott elaborates only slightly on the ultimate fate of Robin Hood: we learn that the Coeur-de-Lion's "good intentions" toward the outlaw are "frustrated" by the king's death, and strangely, Scott then dissolves his Robin Hood back into the popular ballad collections and pamphlets that he had used as his source material: "As for the rest of Robin Hood's career, as well as the tale of his treacherous death, they are to be found in those black-letter garlands, once sold at the low and easy rate of one halfpenny, 'Now cheaply purchased at their weight in gold'" (*Ivanhoe* 462). This is a strange moment in the novel: Scott's reference to book history and the Ritson collection of Robin Hood "black-letter garlands" calls attention to his scholarly sources (thus underlining the authority of his particular rendition of the English outlaw), but it also functions as a reminder of the many distinct precursors to Scott's Robin Hood in ballads, plays, and popular culture.<sup>33</sup> Even while asserting the coherence of his own telling of the Robin Hood myth, Scott reminds the reader of the character's extractability. Scott's reference to his source material places the outlaw in a kind of meta-narrative space. As a figure of ballads and popular history, Robin Hood does not belong to history, but rather exists trans-historically, as well as across texts and genres.

Scott's Robin Hood slowly condenses out of the diffuse range of meaning invoked across the novel. Once he is fully realized as the mythological figure, he is relegated back to the collections of ballads, plays, and poems from which Scott first plucked him. Yet despite—or, perhaps, because of—the odd lack of closure to Scott's rendition of Robin Hood, the afterlife of his version of the outlaw has outlasted practically all others. Ann Rigney appeals to the example of Allan-a-Dale—mentioned "only in passing" in the novel—as an illustration of the ways that *Ivanhoe* "functioned as a vehicle for cultural memory, providing a platform for the public revival not only of the novel itself, but also of *other* stories—in this case, the large body of folklore relating to Robin Hood—with which it was associated" (Rigney 98). Rigney's recent study on the "afterlives of Walter Scott" in nineteenth-century popular culture and beyond reflects on the

---

<sup>33</sup> Scott emphasizes the commercial value of these black-letter garlands among antiquarian collectors—himself among them. This remark is itself an inter-textual reference, alluding perhaps to *The Antiquary* (1816), in which Jonathan Oldbuck collects such materials and frequent mentions the materials' market currency. The remark also refers the reader back to the dedicatory epistle of *Ivanhoe* which mentions both Sir Arthur Wardour and Jonathan Oldbuck.

“interplay between literary culture and popular memory,” showing how “the novel and its theatrical versions together generated new spin-offs in the form of chapbooks and ballads” (Rigney 68). I argue further that our inherited perception of the outlaw is really a conflation of Scott’s Robin Hood with *Ivanhoe* and the array of “outlawed” marginal characters that apply pressure to the central romance from the margins of the plot. The Robin Hood of our popular cultural consciousness is often, like *Ivanhoe*, a veteran of the Crusades<sup>34</sup>; a nobleman who is sometimes, though not always, explicitly racialized as Saxon;<sup>35</sup> he returns to find the kingdom in disarray under the tyranny of Prince John, and vows to right wrongs and defend the weak in the absence of the rightful king, Richard. Our popular conception of Richard the Lionhearted as a good king who would have united Saxon and Norman alike had he survived, can likewise be traced to Scott, who picks up the figure of Richard the Lionhearted again (although with more irony) in *The Talisman* (1825).

Through the figure of Robin Hood, *Ivanhoe* becomes a hub in which an array of sources on the English outlaw, both popular (balladic) and literary, are consolidated and redefined, and re-transmitted to future generations.<sup>36</sup> Scott often lays bare his balladic sources, making his conception of the English outlaw stand outside of the historical moment of the novel: Robin Hood precedes the novel’s action, and Scott gestures to a future for the outlaw beyond its pages. Scott weaves ballads and other literary material, both canonical and non-canonical, into the text, assembling the yeoman Locksley piecemeal out of the legendary tradition of Robin Hood and deliberately calling attention to his balladic sources. In doing so Scott adds to rather than undermines the authority of his own rendition of Robin Hood, creating a condensed and coherent version of the outlaw that is more easily transmissible. On other occasions, Scott also alludes to and integrates ballad materials without acknowledging his sources. This deliberate reticence of attribution constitutes a form of textual illegitimacy. The ballads appear, like the outlaws themselves, to invade the novel from the margins. Their presence in the novel—both acknowledged and unacknowledged—constitutes an “outlaw function,” allowing this outlaw energy to escape the confines of its official site, the greenwood, and to saturate and pervade the entire plot and character system.

At the time Scott was writing, Robin Hood had never been a central hero in a major novel.<sup>37</sup> Stephen Knight, the authoritative historian of Robin Hood, has argued that the Robin Hood of the ballad tradition is too impersonal a figure to bear a role at the novel’s center: he “lacks the inner tension” required of a novelistic hero (*Complete Study* 172). Scott’s Robin Hood similarly lacks the stakes of a romantic hero, although Wilfred of *Ivanhoe* himself could be said to lack “inner tension.” Brian de Bois-Guilbert, the Templar knight, is a psychologically more

---

<sup>34</sup> Kevin Reynolds’s *Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves* (1991), Mel Brooks’s *Robin Hood, Men in Tights* (1993), Foz Allan’s *Robin Hood* (BBC: 2006-2009); Ridley Scott’s *Robin Hood* (2010), etc.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Curtiz’s *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938); John Irvin’s *Robin Hood* (1991), etc. J.C. Holt confirms that the portrayal of Robin Hood as a representative of “the oppressed Anglo-Saxon, the genuine Englishman struggling against the Norman oppressor,” appeared for the first time in Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (Holt 180).

<sup>36</sup> Stephanie Barczewski agrees that Scott’s influence on later “treatments of the legend of Robin Hood can scarcely be exaggerated” (129); however, she asserts that the reason for the extended afterlife of Scott’s version of the outlaw has to do with *Ivanhoe*’s role in making the Robin Hood story explicitly about a conflict between Saxon and Norman in the making of an English national myth.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Love Peacock’s *Maid Marian* (1822), published after *Ivanhoe*, draws on some of the same sources and concerns as Scott’s novel.

complex and dynamic figure, although his unworthy and oppressive ambition makes him a kind of wicked counterpoint to both the romantic hero, Ivanhoe, and to the good outlaw, Locksley.

Judith Wilt argues that the relationship between Ivanhoe and Locksley is primarily cooperative, one of “mutuality,” and that they “occupy in tandem... the center” of the novel (42, 39). Lacking the individuality and erotic motivation of a romantic hero, Locksley’s role is rather that of a “manager-king” (Wilt 39). He takes over the organization of the central action when Ivanhoe is incapacitated by his wounds at the Ashby tournament. The romantic hero and the outlaw figure compete, structurally, for narrative centrality, despite their collaboration on the story level. As the manager of the novel, advancing the plot from his position in the greenwood, Locksley becomes a structural rival of Ivanhoe, although not a romantic one (a role that will be taken up by Bois-Guilbert).

Stephen Knight remarks in passing in his discussion of *Ivanhoe* that the titular hero, a disinherited Saxon lord recently returned from the Crusades, a close companion of King Richard but on the outs with Prince John, seems to be the “real” Robin Hood figure of the novel (*Mythic Biography* 110). Scott makes those “central elements of the outlaw myth” still more diffuse throughout the novel (110). The marginal characters of *Ivanhoe* circulate in and through Robin Hood’s greenwood, each set in some form of “outlawed” conflict with or opposition to the *de facto* systems of authority, the Templars and Prince John’s regime—both of which are enclosed and oppressive centers of power, rather than representatives of a more expansive national law, and both of which are thus, in a sense, “outlaw.”

The linking of these figures powerfully condenses the series of balladic allusions to the otherwise diffuse legendary figure of Robin Hood. Locksley’s band in the greenwood is only one of many communities within the broader social world of *Ivanhoe* that can be considered outlaw. The Saxon Cedric and his household represent an older regime, which has been displaced by the Norman overlords and is now oppressed by the arbitrarily-imposed Norman law; Isaac and Rebecca are, as Jews, outside of the protection of the Christian dispensation of the “law”; Wilfred of Ivanhoe, disinherited by his father, is an outcast from paternal law; the Norman lords operate without regard to national law, under the illegitimate regime of Prince John, and pursue predatory adventures on their own account; the Templars are a law unto themselves, and Brian de Bois-Guilbert flouts the rules even of the Templars to pursue his own lawless designs. Even King Richard, the legitimate monarch, assumes a role outside of the law. He returns to England in disguise, relying on the loyalty of Locksley and his outlaws, who ironically show a greater respect for law and legitimacy than the Norman overlords. Within this configuration, the outlaw energy of the greenwood becomes a force not of chaos, but of social (and narrative) order.

Locksley is the pure and literal realization of an outlaw condition that metaphorically includes everyone in the novel. He leads the siege at Torquilstone, although King Richard himself is present; he urges Richard to action, and later rescues him from ambush. His is the only good law we see implemented: he takes charge after the fall of Torquilstone, distributing the spoils among his men so fairly that even the disguised King Richard is impressed. Ivanhoe, the romantic hero of the novel, is repeatedly upstaged by the more efficacious Locksley: when Richard is ambushed by Waldemar Fitzurse on the road, Wamba sounds the outlaw’s bugle, calling them to their aid, and Locksley arrives on the scene almost instantaneously with his band of outlaws, shooting down the “most formidable of his assailants” and quickly “dispos[ing] of the ruffians, all of whom lay on the spot dead or mortally wounded” (450). The whole battle takes only a few lines of narrative to bring it to a speedy conclusion. Richard and Locksley have

already identified the ringleader of the would-be assassins and exchanged their true names before Ivanhoe comes trotting up, anxious for the king's safety but too late to effect it.

After Ivanhoe is reunited with his liege lord and well enough to be on his feet, if not in full armor, he is still reticent to act in situations not scripted by the rules of chivalry: at the greenwood feast with the outlaws, he feels uncomfortable and impatient that Richard should lose so much time—and dignity—by drinking and joking with the yeomen, but he does nothing. Instead, he delegates the task to Locksley: “It must be by your management then, gallant yeoman” (459).<sup>38</sup> The idea of “so soon risk[ing] the pardon and favour” of the king makes Robin Hood pause, but only for an instant: he then acts decisively, distracting Richard from his merry-making through a well-meaning deception.

Locksley upstages—indeed, almost displaces—Ivanhoe in these key scenes, acting where Ivanhoe hesitates or arrives too late. Yet Locksley is not simply replacing the romantic hero at crucial points; their situations are parallel in complex ways, as well. Both arrive at the Ashby tournament *incognito*, and both win handily, with almost superhuman skill, in their respective arenas. They share a similar position vis-à-vis structures of authority. While not a literal outlaw, Ivanhoe is still on the outs with the various systems of authority in place: he has been disinherited by his father for his loyalty to Richard and to Norman ideals of chivalry (and for his love of Rowena, which for Cedric is a betrayal of Saxon political interests). Ivanhoe's outspoken allegiance to Richard likewise makes him unpopular with Prince John, the *de facto* ruler in Richard's absence. Locksley, too, is in conflict with the powers that be: the frequently-cited Norman laws of the wood drive many yeomen to outlawry (461).

Yet despite their various conflicts with the ruling powers, both Locksley and Ivanhoe share an absolute allegiance to “England,” over and above the cultural and political allegiances that threaten the country with civil war. They both seem particularly capable of transcending distinctions between Norman and Saxon to make a claim on a healthy, hybrid English nation. Judith Wilt points out the parallel ways in which Ivanhoe and Locksley demonstrate the equality of Norman and Saxon at the Ashby tournament: Ivanhoe meets his Norman opponent in the joust with such equal force that their lances are “burst into shivers,” while Locksley duplicates the Norman archer's shot so precisely that he splits his opponent's arrow at the center of the target (Wilt 41). Ivanhoe, we are reminded, has “broken down many of the barriers which separated for half a century the Norman victors from the vanquished Saxons” (465). Locksley identifies himself to Richard initially as “a nameless man; but [...] the friend of my country, and of my country's friends” (218). Richard later praises Locksley briefly but aptly as “bear[ing] an English heart,” and despite his Saxon heritage, Locksley acknowledges the sovereignty of a Norman king, calling him “Richard of England” (452). Both Locksley and Ivanhoe are ambitious to unify England under a common and worthy monarch. The future unified England that the novel projects, then, is a product of the condition of outlawry that originates with Locksley and permeates the novel. This outlaw energy thus complicates the novel's idea of nationhood beyond the binary conflict between Saxon and Norman.

---

<sup>38</sup> Judith Wilt, Ian Duncan, Stephen Knight, and others have argued that Locksley functions as a director or “manager”; his role, according to this reading, is to orchestrate the action at the center of the plot from the novel's margins while Ivanhoe is wounded and imprisoned (Wilt 39). Ivanhoe's deferral to Locksley in this scene and his choice of words (“it must be by your management, then”) indicate the weight of this reading and the extent to which Ivanhoe's reluctance to act creates a power vacuum at the center of the novel.



The heterogeneity of the nation insisted on by the novel is reflected in its character system. The outlaw character system and the plot are complex; several scenes occur simultaneously, forcing Scott to narrate some chapters in retrospect. He calls attention to these narrative regressions—and to the resulting shift of attention from one “set of characters” to another—comparing his historical romance to an exemplary literary predecessor: “we resume the adventures of another set of our characters; for, like old Ariosto, we do not pique ourselves upon continuing uniformly to keep company with any one personage of our drama” (195). Some of the characters are necessarily set aside in order to make space for the stories of all. *Ivanhoe* might be the hero of the central romance and the title character, but he is frequently driven from the narrative’s attention by the competing demands of other characters.

Of course, many novelists forego linear, chronological storytelling (the traditional chronology of history as a genre) in order to exercise the right of an omniscient narrator to be, effectively, in two or more places at one time (assuming the non-linear chronology of romance, as Scott points out in his reference to the digressions of Ariosto).<sup>39</sup> In *Ivanhoe*, though, the tension is not merely between the forward-reaching mode of history—the compulsion to chronological progression—and the digressive and retrogressive impulses of romance. The balladic elements of the novel—the sources for the outlaw characters, the references to “black-letter garlands,” the occasional snippets of song by characters, epigraphs to entire chapters—are represented as ahistorical. They exist within the novel, but outside of the time of officially recorded, chronological history. Their presence in the novel expands the novel’s time to a dimension more capacious and more dynamic than historical time, gesturing beyond the novel itself to the preexistence of certain characters and to an afterlife beyond the novel’s pages. Robin Hood—and through him, other “outlaw” figures like Rebecca and King Richard—is extractable, and Scott draws attention to their extractability by alluding to his sources and to the material history of those sources. Scott’s literary sources—Shakespeare, Chaucer, Froissart, Dryden, among others—are similarly quoted and echoed anachronistically. They are removed from their own historical moment and referenced as extractable and ahistorical cultural artifacts, effectively “balladizing” all of Scott’s literary sources.<sup>40</sup> Their existence as texts is independent of the contingencies of the novel’s plotted time. The Robin Hood of *Ivanhoe*, as I have shown, is similarly suspended in time, which perhaps accounts for his strange and sudden disappearance before the final resolution of the central plot.

The very freedom with which Scott draws from the ballad tradition and recombines its elements creates a dynamism that allows the outlaw energy to bleed into the rest of the character-system. Locksley is the “manager-king” of the novel (again to borrow Wilt’s phrase) and competes with *Ivanhoe* for narrative centrality, but he is, as I have said, too impersonal a figure to rival *Ivanhoe* as the romantic hero. The true villain of the novel, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, becomes *Ivanhoe*’s romantic rival, and thus Locksley’s “outlaw” rival. The relation of Bois-Guilbert to *Ivanhoe* is further complicated by the disavowed status of Rebecca as *Ivanhoe*’s love interest—in different ways, she is off-limits, or “outlawed,” to both men. The presence of Bois-

---

<sup>39</sup> Henry Fielding and Lawrence Sterne are Scott’s novelist precursors in this mode, although Scott develops the technique by emphasizing the effects of simultaneity on the reader’s experience. He first made use of the technique—also referencing Ariosto—in *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818).

<sup>40</sup> In *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel*, Leah Price shows how the development of the anthology as a genre in the late eighteenth century made possible this kind of “anthologizing” performed by Scott and other novelists (Price 1-13).

Guilbert complicates the binary relationship of “mutualism” identified by Wilt as defining Ivanhoe and Locksley; he becomes the more active, illegitimate version of Ivanhoe as well as the wicked outlaw in counterpoint to Locksley’s inherent morality. Bois-Guilbert breaks the rigid code of the already outlaw Templars in following his lawless passion for Rebecca. His disguise as an outlaw in Lincoln green literalizes what he already is: a representative of both a lawless regime and a lawless order. In the absence of a strong male protagonist, Bois-Guilbert takes over as the active, desiring male who moves the action forward in the second half of the novel. Bois-Guilbert is Ivanhoe’s more assertive double, and his selfish designs advance the plot; he acts decisively while Ivanhoe passively reacts. Locksley, the third point of the hero-antihero-outlaw triangle, steps in as manager to direct the siege and to rescue Ivanhoe and his family from the machinations of the doubly outlaw Templar.

The Jewish characters are, like Brian de Bois-Guilbert, “outlaw” in a sense: they have a strong sense of their own law, but it falls outside of the Christian law professed by the other characters. They are forced to wander and to break Christian laws against usury in order to survive and are treated as outlaws by the other characters. When Isaac first appears in the novel, he is reviled by the guests in Cedric’s hall, and is only granted food and a seat by the fire by the disguised Ivanhoe, who does not wish to see anyone meet with a lack of hospitality in his father’s house. The two are then reluctantly allied for the remainder of the novel: they exchange favors and good deeds, until Ivanhoe is called to repay his debt of gratitude to both Isaac and Rebecca herself when he hears that Rebecca stands condemned to death as a sorceress unless a champion comes forward to appear for her in trial by combat.

Throughout their relationship, Ivanhoe is a very unwilling ally. Scott yokes them together both on the story level (in that their fates in the plot are intertwined) and on the discourse level (Ivanhoe shares many scenes with Isaac and Rebecca), but Ivanhoe’s reluctance creates a grating tension in their uneasy alliance. Yet there are similarities in the relative situations of the “Disinherited Knight” and the Jewish characters. Isaac describes the Jewish people with the same words that Ivanhoe uses to describe his own *incognito* identity: “O, daughter, disinherited and wandering as we are, the worst evil which befalls our race is, that when we are wronged and plundered, all the world laughs around, and we are compelled to suppress our sense of injury, and to smile tamely, when we would revenge bravely” (125). Ivanhoe, too, is disinherited by his father, forced to take a circuitous and wandering path home, only to find his lands plundered and usurped by Prince John and his minions. At first his disguise, and later his injuries, force him into the same position of unwilling passivity that Isaac here describes—he desires to “revenge bravely,” but is unable to do so.

The evident parallels between Ivanhoe’s position and that of the Jewish characters, as well as their continual narrative complicity, underscore their importance in the dense constellation of “outlaw” characters around Ivanhoe, in spite of Ivanhoe’s reluctance to acknowledge the alliance. Rebecca’s appeal, especially, is reflected by the nineteenth-century stage adaptations of the novel: the first and one of the most popular of the nineteenth-century theatrical adaptations was *Ivanhoe; or, the Jew’s Daughter*, by Thomas John Dibdin (1820), which focuses primarily on the Ivanhoe-Rebecca-Rowena and the Ivanhoe-Rebecca-Brian de Bois-Guilbert erotic triangles, as reflected by the subtitle of the play.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the subtitle

---

<sup>41</sup> About half of the almost 300 adaptations and performances recorded by H. Philip Bolton mention Rebecca at least in the subtitle (345-372); common titles include *Ivanhoe; or, the Jewess* and *The Hebrew. Ivanhoé*, with music by Rossini, was adapted for the English stage by Michael Rophino Lacy as

suggests that Rebecca is syntactically equivalent, although structurally subordinate, to Ivanhoe himself. Perhaps paradoxically, Rebecca's sentimental dilemma and her final exclusion from the romantic plot actually make her more "central" than Ivanhoe in these stage adaptations.

The narrator asks the reader to sympathize more with Rebecca, who is perceptive enough to see Ivanhoe's awkward change of manner and sensitive enough to be hurt by it as she nurses his wounds (299-301). The narrator devotes an entire page to explaining Rebecca's unspoken reaction to Ivanhoe's prejudice, while of Ivanhoe's interiority we are told only that he feels a "species of emotion" when admiring Rebecca's beauty of which Rowena, his betrothed, would not entirely approve (299). This disproportionate attention to Rebecca's interiority at the expense of Ivanhoe's seems incongruous, given that Ivanhoe is the ostensible romantic hero of the novel. Yet it seems we have already learned all that we need to know of Ivanhoe's inner life: the "deep interest in Rowena" that he is unable to conceal, his staunch loyalty to Richard, and his firm adherence to the laws of chivalry (interestingly, these are the very qualities which lead to his father's disapproval and his disinheritance). As a hero of romance, that is all the interiority that Ivanhoe needs, and having established it, the novel is free to move the hero to the margins to make space for other, more dynamic, figures. Ivanhoe's passivity and relative lack of interiority are by no means flaws in the novel; this vacuum at the center of the novel's character-system allows for the diffusion of the outlaw energy from the marginal characters.

The afterlife of Rebecca in the theater and in the popular imagination highlights her extractability from her original position in *Ivanhoe*.<sup>42</sup> In the final chapter of the novel, her potential afterlife beyond the pages of the novel is demonstrated in the way that the narrator tells us that "the recollection of [her] beauty and magnanimity" recurred frequently to Ivanhoe's mind (502). Rebecca's romance is never concluded—she is disappointed in her love for Ivanhoe, and she "glide[s]" from the novel like "a vision" (502). We are not privy to what happens to her after she leaves her interview with Rowena; although she tells Rowena that she and her father are going to the court of "Boabdil, King of Grenada," her future is left unnarrated (499). The future she imagines for herself is anachronistic—Boabdil's court exists 300 years in the future. Rebecca thus projects an afterlife for herself beyond the end of the novel and outside of the novel's plotted time. In effect, Rebecca asserts her own extractability in the final pages of the novel.<sup>43</sup>

---

*The Maid of Judah*, and was performed with some success in 1829 and was revived at least 20 times over the next 15 years (Bolton 343); the name of Ivanhoe does not appear at all in the English title, but only in the playbills and advertisements. Rebecca herself was famous enough that "The Maid of Judah" was enough to announce the subject of the opera. Sir Arthur Sullivan and librettist Julian Russell Sturgis's 1891 opera and Otto Nicolai's 1839-1840 *Il Templario*, too, consider the Rebecca plot as central.

<sup>42</sup> See Ann Rigney pp 98-105, "Righting Rebecca" for more on the afterlife of Rebecca and the later rewritings of her story for the stage and in sequels.

<sup>43</sup> In consequence, other writers have written sequels or revisions to *Ivanhoe* that allow a romantic ending for Rebecca and Ivanhoe (see Jennifer Camden, *Secondary Heroines in Nineteenth-Century British and American Novels*, pp146-54, on Thackeray's satirical 1850 *Rowena and Rebecca* and other such revisions). Perhaps most famously, George Eliot seems to have felt Rebecca's conclusion to be inadequate, or at least frustrating: many readers see *Daniel Deronda*'s second half as a re-writing of the end of *Ivanhoe* in which Rebecca is granted a union with Ivanhoe. Eliot likewise refuses a Daniel-Gwendolen union at the end of the novel, recapitulating but shifting Scott's refusal of a union between Ivanhoe and Rebecca. Conscious of this, Eliot makes the connection explicit by having the Meyrick sisters fawn over Mirah, romanticizing her as a Victorian "Rebecca" (*Daniel Deronda*, pp 194 and 361-2).

Brian de Bois-Guilbert and Rebecca are certainly the two most dynamic marginal characters in the constellation of “outlawed” figures (“marginal” in the sense that they are structurally subordinate to the romantic hero, but not “minor” in their importance and impact). But unlike Locksley, the source and archetype of the novel’s outlaw energy, Bois-Guilbert and Rebecca have strong personal (and outlawed) desires and motivations. Bois-Guilbert pursues his lawless passion, threatening not only to flout the laws of the Templars by abducting an unwilling woman, but to flout the laws of Christendom by allying himself with Saladin and setting up Rebecca as his queen in Palestine (431-2). Bois-Guilbert’s passion and ambition lead to his death. Rebecca is able to master what Scott himself, in the preface to the 1830 edition, termed an “ill assorted passion” (12). She scathingly reproves Bois-Guilbert’s “unruly passion” (432) and adheres to her own law. Rebecca is an outlaw figure, but one with as great a respect for “law” as Locksley himself. Like Locksley, Rebecca is “outlaw” in only a formal or technical sense; ethically, they form the law-abiding center of a novel in which other forms of law are shown to be inadequate or corrupt. Rebecca’s steadfast respect for her own laws, in spite of her “outlaw” status, adds to her power both within the novel and in her afterlife beyond it.

The extended afterlives of Scott’s Robin Hood, King Richard, and Rebecca are a consequence of the way that Scott activates various sources in his historical novel without explicit attribution. Scott’s activation and final condensation of the ballad tradition lend at least the semblance of coherence to the diffusive English outlaw. He calls up iconic scenes and images of Robin Hood that would be immediately recognizable from ballad and folk traditions and provides a fictional context for them. Instead of a Robin Hood who emerges, as in the ballads, fully formed, we are given an unnamed but recognizable yeoman whose influence circulates diffusively through the entire character-system, only condensing in the final chapters. *Ivanhoe* occupies the central focus of the novel, although it is Robin Hood and the other marginal, “outlaw” characters like Richard, Rebecca, and Bois-Guilbert who move things along. The balladic sources escape the greenwood and saturate the novel’s plot with a series of easily-recognizable topoi that exist outside of historical time: we are reminded that they pre-exist the novel in the ballad tradition, and their extractability grants them an afterlife beyond the final pages. These pauses are brief, however, and the balladic then dissolves into the chronology of history and of romance, contributing to the leakage of the outlaw’s dynamic energy throughout the entire character-system.

Locksley, Richard, and Rebecca—legendary, historical, and fictional characters—are thus granted a space beyond the margins of the novel. *Ivanhoe* gestures beyond history, and beyond itself, to a continuing afterlife of these marginal, “outlaw” figures. The outlaw energy of *Ivanhoe*’s greenwood that I have described continues to shape the popular tradition of these figures. Locksley’s dismissal from the final resolution of the novel suggests that the ballad can only resist the forward progression of historical time: Richard’s return to England is not permanent, and his own “untimely death” must close the “black-letter garlands.” Rebecca, the most dynamic and developed of the marginal, “outlaw” characters, is granted the last major scene, although she, too, is returned to the margins (and beyond), leaving the central hero to ruminate over his memory of her beauty and the reader to imagine an alternative future for her off the page.

## Outlaws as ‘Household Words’’: the Mutability of Outlaw Identity in *Rob Roy*

The relationship of Rob Roy to the romantic hero of that novel, Francis Osbaldistone, similarly works to move the outlaw closer to the center of the novel from the margins of the plot. In *Rob Roy*, however, the relationship is more vital and complex, in part because of the small population of marginal characters relative to *Ivanhoe*, and in part because the novel is narrated by the romantic hero in the first person. Rob Roy repeatedly emerges from the shadows to rescue Frank from the machinations of his cousin Rashleigh. As repelled as Frank claims to be by the very idea of breaking the law, he seems strangely attracted to the outlaw Rob Roy, and fascinated, too, by the mistaken “outlaw identity” that is so frequently pinned on him (Wilt 62; also see Welsh 121). By allowing the outlaw figure both to collaborate with the romantic hero, and to contaminate him with accusations of outlawry, Scott again allows Rob Roy’s outlawry to be diffused throughout the entire character-system. Yet the relative sparseness of the character-system, combined with the obvious difference introduced by a first-person narrator, creates an intimacy with the outlaw figure that is absent in *Ivanhoe*.

Although Rob Roy was a popular folk hero in Britain through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most modern readers are probably not as familiar with his history as Scott’s original audience would have been. I am less interested in tracing the places where Scott’s rendition of the Scottish outlaw differs from historical accounts than in exploring the ways that Scott anticipated and capitalized on the popular history and ballad tradition his readers already would have been familiar with. But since that knowledge is no longer universal, I will briefly outline the historical Rob Roy’s career.<sup>44</sup>

Robert MacGregor, alias Robert Roy (or “Red,” for his red hair), was born in 1671 in Glengyle, Scotland, about forty miles north of Glasgow. At age eighteen, Rob Roy joined his father in support of the Stuarts in 1688-9. While Rob Roy was pardoned for his involvement, he would retain his Jacobite sympathies for the rest of his life, participating in the first Jacobite Uprising in 1715. The incident provided evidence enough for the government to reenact the historical proscription of the MacGregor clan, so Rob Roy adopted the habit of using his mother’s maiden name of Campbell. Rob Roy was a respectable trader of cattle, and certainly a participant in the widespread underground economy of blackmail and protection money. He made money to support his family by buying and raising cattle in the Highlands and driving them to the Lowlands or to Northumberland where he sold them for a profit. In 1711, he borrowed a sum of money from James Graham, the Duke of Montrose, to expand his cattle trade. Unfortunately, his kinsman and second-in-command disappeared with the money and Rob Roy was forced to default on the loan, and Montrose branded him an outlaw. After the resulting unpleasantness with Montrose, Rob Roy found himself and his family almost destitute. He then made it his mission to make himself as obnoxious to the Duke of Montrose as possible, harassing his servants and cattle. It is at this point in Rob Roy’s career that popular mythology takes over: stories of individual forays against Montrose, of narrow escapes and bold plots, were circulated widely by word of mouth. Although reasonably well-documented by formal, written historical

---

<sup>44</sup> For more on Rob Roy’s life, see W. H. Murray, *Rob Roy MacGregor: His life and Times*, 1993 and Scott’s introduction to the 1829 Magnum Opus edition. It is interesting to note that Scott’s extended biographical essay was not included in the original edition.

accounts, Rob Roy became mythologized through the accumulation of popular folk tradition around his exploits, often referred to as a “Scottish Robin Hood.”<sup>45</sup>

The legendary status of Rob Roy makes him formally similar to *Ivanhoe*'s Robin Hood as a character in a novel: Scott had a wide array of popular and historical sources to mine for details and descriptions of Rob Roy, yet the character in the novel is still slippery, his outlaw identity diffused throughout the novel. Still more strongly than *Ivanhoe*'s Robin Hood, Rob Roy is absorbed by a series of masks, again to borrow Duncan's metaphor. Rob Roy is first introduced to the reader (and to Frank Osbaldistone) as “Mr. Campbell,” a Scottish cattle trader who exudes a natural authority in the company of English strangers in spite of disadvantages of dress, dialect, and education. When he next appears, it is as a witness to Frank Osbaldistone's innocence of the robbery, and, although he gives his proper name of Robert Campbell, he yet “assume[s] a “quiet and peaceful character,” which contrasts sharply with the “strong daring sternness expressed in his harsh features” (142). His next appearance is hardly an appearance at all: he approaches Frank from behind during a church service to whisper a warning in his ear, and disappears before Frank can catch an identifying glimpse of him (246-7). When Frank meets him at midnight on the bridge, Campbell is described as “apparently strong, thick-set, and muscular; his dress a horseman's wrapping coat” (254). Frank is unable to see his face, and still does not recognize the voice. Campbell identifies himself briefly as “a man,” who is exposing himself to some danger in order to assist Frank.

As they approach the prison, Campbell gives himself yet another name: he identifies himself to the Highland jailer in Gaelic as “[the] Gregarach,” which of course Frank Osbaldistone (and perhaps the implied, English-speaking reader) will not understand. This is yet another instance in which the implied reader presumably knows more than Frank Osbaldistone. Many of Scott's contemporary readers (especially his Scottish readers) would have known both of Rob Roy's connection with the Campbells, and also the name of his own MacGregor clan. So although Scott has Rob Roy identify himself in Gaelic to Dougall in order to stump the romantic hero, it is with a wink to the historical knowledge of the implied reader.

Once in the jail, Jarvie recognizes his cousin and calls him by the affectionate diminutive “Robin” (270). He has not yet been named as “Rob Roy,” except by the title. No one else calls Rob “Robin” (no one else would dare, perhaps), although “Robin” was, as now, a common enough nickname for Robert. This seems to be another nod to the reader—an acknowledgement of Rob Roy's popular status as the “Robin Hood of Scotland” The reader is invited to imagine this shadowy stranger—whom we have already recognized, of course, as Rob Roy—as a kind of avatar of the mythic outlaw. Jarvie later compares Rob Roy explicitly to “Robin Hood, or William Wallace,” putting the mythic Robin Hood into the same category of national hero/outlaw as the historical William Wallace and Rob Roy. History and mythology are linked together in the nebulous space of popular folk history—the space of hearsay, oral tradition, and the ballad.

The category of “outlaw” would have a different resonance in Scotland than in England, for obvious political and historical reasons: Wallace fought against England for Scottish independence, making him a hero in Scotland, but an outlaw in England; Rob Roy, similarly, was considered a popular hero for defying the English-sanctioned authority of the Duke of Montrose, though he did become an outlaw in the process. This ambiguity of definitions forms

---

<sup>45</sup> The comparison may first appear in 1803, in Wordsworth's “Rob Roy's Grave.”

the basis first of the frequent confusion between outlaw and law-abider in the novel, and of the ways that Rob Roy's outlaw identity becomes diffused throughout the entire character field.

Rob Roy is more distinctly individuated than *Ivanhoe*'s Locksley, but he is still difficult to pin down, even for the first-person narrator, who calls him "Campbell, or MacGregor, or whatever was his name" (292). There are occasional allusions to the "oppressors" that drove him to outlawry (292), but no explicit references in the novel itself, either to written history or to popular ballads and folk history. Scott is constrained by the style of narration employed in *Rob Roy*; without an omniscient narrator, he cannot credibly interweave references to his sources as he occasionally does in *Ivanhoe*. Instead, Scott includes a formal introduction in the 1829 Magnum Opus edition to provide an "account of the singular character whose name is given to the title-page, and who, through good report and bad report, has maintained a wonderful degree of importance in popular recollection" (5).<sup>46</sup> Scott's introduction provides a biographical sketch of the Scottish outlaw that combines popular anecdote, recorded history, and, occasionally, stanzas of ballads. The formal account of the outlaw recorded in the introduction contrasts strangely with the almost superhuman, shape-shifting figure Frank repeatedly encounters. Rob Roy, like Locksley, must ease into the narrative, absorbed by a series of disguises and names, exerting his control off-stage through his influence over the character field as much as through direct action.

The lawlessness of Rob Roy's Highland home is similar to the greenwood of *Ivanhoe*: there are "nae bailie-courts among them—nae magistrates..." (298). Like Locksley's greenwood, Rob Roy's Highlands paradoxically know only the law implemented by the outlaw himself. The attempts to control either the Highlands or Rob Roy by the representatives of the Hanoverian government—the soldiers, Morris—are always ineffectual. At a word from Rob Roy, Dougall abandons his post as a jail-keeper in Glasgow, underscoring the pervasive influence of Rob Roy's authority even among supposed servants of the Hanoverian government.

Given the level of control Rob Roy exerts over the flow of events of the novel, both off-stage and on, it seems strange that it should be narrated by another character rather than by an omniscient narrator, as in *Ivanhoe*. Indeed, the competition for primacy between Rob Roy and Frank Osbaldistone is perhaps more pronounced than the competition between Locksley and *Ivanhoe* for this reason. The novel insistently links Frank with the outlaw Rob Roy, and Frank, along with the reader, finds both pleasure and fascination in the association. Yet by the closing chapters, Rob Roy is pulled from the stage and sent back to the margins—his Highland home—leaving the romantic plot of the novel to be hastily resolved by the romantic hero (and heroine) alone.

Rob Roy and Frank Osbaldistone, like Locksley and *Ivanhoe*, are yoked together by the narrative. The relationship of Rob Roy and Frank, perhaps because of the relative sparseness of the character-system in *Rob Roy*, seems more intimate and complex. The title of the novel, which suggests that Rob Roy will be a central character if not the romantic hero, already destabilizes the structural relation between the "central" hero and the "marginal" outlaw. When the two first meet, they are strangers on the road, conversing slightly after a shared Sunday dinner at a roadside inn. An alert reader will recognize that "Mr. Campbell," as he is at first named, will be important to the narrative; a reader at all familiar with the historical Rob Roy's association with the Campbell clan will no doubt suspect that this traveler is the titular Rob Roy himself. As the

---

<sup>46</sup> This introduction did not appear in the early editions. Indeed, the ways that its addition changed the novel's reception pose an interesting and potentially productive question.

novel progresses, it becomes increasingly clear that Frank's personal narrative—his relationship with Diana Vernon and his father's professional woes—is intimately tied to the fate of Rob Roy. The two are thrown together not by choice (Frank repeatedly assures the reader that he is repulsed by the outlaw's crimes, even as he admires his courage and strength), but by some strange narrative compulsion. Why should the romantic hero be so insistently associated with someone who is on the wrong side of the law? The novel repeatedly links Frank not only with Rob Roy, the individual, but with criminality more generally.

In his study on *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, Alexander Welsh discusses Frank's association with crime in terms of his fear of imprisonment and his relation to authority—particularly his father's, but also the Hanoverian government's. Frank distances himself from authority by refusing to accept a position in his father's business and by removing himself, geographically, from the center of the legitimate government's power in London. Yet he also insists on his continued loyalty to those systems of authority—refuting accusations of treason and offering, on first hearing of his father's distress, to return immediately to London (a pointless gesture in terms of actual usefulness to his father's interests, but one symbolic of his willingness to return to the center of Hanoverian civilization). For all his apparent innocence, Frank is continually threatened with captivity, though the threat is always a vague one: he is never guilty of any definite crime. His status as both romantic hero and narrator of the novel places him in a peculiar position as an intermediary between figures of authority (his father, soldiers, the magistrate, and other representatives of the government) and outlaw or criminal figures (Highlanders, Jacobites, and his villainous cousin Rashleigh). Welsh points out that though the “action of *Rob Roy* is centrifugal [...] the passive hero draws it together again” (123). Frank is certainly the hub of *Rob Roy*, much more so than *Ivanhoe* is in that novel. As the first-person narrator as well as the romantic hero, Frank's character-space marks the central point of intersection of the entire character-system. Because Frank is the figure linking the Hanoverian authorities on the one hand with the Jacobite outlaws on the other, his contradictory anxiety about and fascination with outlawry and his own relation to authority becomes more comprehensible. I am interested in a structural, rather than a psychological, account of Frank's relationship to authority.

Welsh argues that the plot of *Rob Roy* is largely motivated by Frank's repeated association with outlaws and Jacobites in the face of his own fear of incarceration (123). I would add to this that Frank's association with outlawry and Jacobites (in the form of Rob Roy, of course, but also his cousin Rashleigh and Diana Vernon) destabilizes the character field because of the control each of these characters exerts over the narrative and over the passive hero himself.

Frank is the narrating romantic hero, and most critics point to the triangle of Diana-Frank-Rashleigh as the most interesting point of entry to a discussion of the character field of this novel. I would contend, though, that Rob Roy is not a character on the same plane as Frank. He is a character whom Frank attempts, in retrospect, to narrate, when Rob Roy (as the title of the novel suggests) actually controls the action of the plot far more than the narrator himself. As Ian Duncan puts it in his introduction to the Oxford edition, “if Frank owns the *récit* (story, narration) of *Rob Roy*, Rob Roy owns the *discours* (its plot, the covert logic of events)” (xiii). The outlaws and Jacobites of the novel control its machinery much more completely than does the narrating hero himself; Rob Roy, as their chief, appropriately exemplifies the outlaws'



control over the entire character-system.<sup>47</sup> The sparseness of the character-system of *Rob Roy* is thrown into relief when considered in this light: Frank forms the narrating center of the novel, but he hardly seems in control of the events—or the characters—he narrates. Frank’s character-space is intimately tied with those of Diana Vernon and his cousin Rashleigh; the three form a classic love triangle. The presence of Rob Roy complicates the relations between the three principals in the romantic plot. Rob Roy seems aware of the motivations and the aspirations of each of the three, taking control of the outcome of events that would seem to fall under the jurisdiction of the narrating hero: he appears in time to exculpate Frank from the accusations of Morris, he guides Frank to visit his father’s head clerk in the Glasgow prison for the obscure reason that he “love[s] a free young blood” (256), he breaks up the duel between Frank and his cousin Rashleigh to prevent the two kinsmen from killing each other (290), only to dispatch Rashleigh himself at the end of the novel.

Yet Rob Roy is not the only character who exerts an influence the narrating hero does not fully understand: both Diana Vernon and his cousin, Rashleigh, are connected to an underground Jacobite network about which Frank remains almost completely ignorant. Indeed, there are times when Diana seems to assert her own control over Rob Roy to a rather surprising extent. Although Frank is narrating from some future point, he does not use his position as narrator to provide any answers. Rob Roy

had made a marked figure among those mysterious personages over whom Diana seemed to exercise an influence, and from whom she experienced an influence in her turn. [...] Rashleigh Osbaldistone had, at the instigation of Miss Vernon, certainly found means to produce Mr Campbell when his presence was necessary to exculpate me from Morris’s accusation—Was it not possible that her influence, in like manner, might prevail on Campbell to produce Rashleigh? Speaking on this supposition, I requested to know where my dangerous kinsman was, and when Mr Campbell had seen him. The answer was indirect. (274)

Although he is ostensibly the center of the novel as both romantic hero and narrator, Frank finds himself as an outsider in this scene, observing the network of mutual influence carried out by Diana, Rashleigh, and Rob Roy without really understanding it. It appears that there is an explanation, but it is granted only “indirectly.”

Diana Vernon could, of course, have explained it to Frank, if she wished. Her powers of observation and influence set her apart from the character field in general: having read so widely, she seems to understand the other characters *as* characters. She describes her Osbaldistone cousins with great accuracy as a naturalist would describe individuals within a species, or as a narrator might dismissively describe marginal characters: ““There are minute shades distinguishing the individuals, which require the eye of an intelligent observer; but the species, as naturalists I believe call it, may be distinguished and characterised at once”” (111). Such observation of character is generally reserved for the narrator, but Frank is a newcomer in the house, and seems helpless to perceive rightly the characters of his cousins without help. In the course of his conversation with Diana, she is even able to tell him what he is thinking of her, apparently with more accuracy than he describes his opinions himself (113). She is likewise able

---

<sup>47</sup> It’s important to note that although Rob Roy is both a Jacobite and an Highland outlaw (and a leader of both groups), the two categories do not overlap in any other major character in the novel.

to tell Frank that he is under suspicion for the robbery of Morris and able to manipulate the characters she knows so well (the magistrate, Rashleigh, even Rob Roy himself) to exculpate him.

Diana Vernon, then, fulfills the function of a narrator when Frank fails to narrate, either because of his indecision or because of his ignorance of local characters or the political climate. But Rashleigh, too, uses his knowledge of the characters around him to manipulate events. As Diana puts it, “Rashleigh is a man to be feared and wondered at, and all but loved; he does whatever he pleases, and makes all others his puppets—has a player ready to perform every part which he imagines, and an invention and readiness which supply expedients for every emergency” (145). She uses a telling metaphor, describing Rashleigh as a puppeteer and the character field as a stage. In her metaphor, Rashleigh is the true mover of the events that unfold and the director of the other “players” on stage; it is his “invention” that controls the story, up to a point, although it is Frank who actually narrates it.

As I have already suggested, however, it is Rob Roy, and not Rashleigh or Diana, who ultimately controls the stage. Rashleigh attempts to control the action by constant supervision, whereas Rob’s ultimately more effective mode of control is occasional, decisive intervention. Rob Roy is the *deus ex machina* produced to resolve every knotty problem in the plot, to continue Diana’s theatrical metaphor. He moves rapidly on and off stage, changing costume so often that it is often difficult to recognize the same actor, as Frank himself observes on first seeing Rob Roy in his Highland dress: “Upon the whole, betwixt the effect produced by the change of dress, and by my having become acquainted with his real and formidable character, his appearance had acquired to my eyes something so much wilder and more striking than it before presented, that I could scarce recognize him to be the same person” (374).<sup>48</sup> Rob Roy or one of his representatives appears in many disguises, under many names, emerging without ceremony from the margins and disappearing just as mysteriously.

Rob Roy describes himself as an anonymous “man” in his midnight appointment with Frank: “He that is without name, without friends, without coin, without country, is still at least a man; and he that has all these is no more” (254). His brief and self-effacing introduction is analogous to the self-description of Locksley as he guides Gurth and Wamba through the greenwood after their group has been ambushed: “who, or what I am, is little to the present purpose” (*Ivanhoe* 211). Rob Roy, like Locksley, identifies himself as an anonymous entity, taking on himself the role of guide and mentor. Rob’s outlaw status, he says, anonymizes him—he is reduced to “a man” because the law has taken away his name, his friends, and his country. Yet he also asserts that anyone, outlaw or not, is likewise “no more” than a man. He implicitly erases, or at least obscures, the distinction between outlaws and law-abiders.

The pervasive influence of Rob Roy cannot be contained in a single character-space; instead, its excess is dispersed throughout the novel, infecting those with whom he comes in contact. Rob Roy points out the potential danger to Frank: “But do you not fear the consequences of being found with one, whose very name whispered in his lonely street would make the stones themselves rise up to apprehend him...?” (255) Frank has broken no laws, but he is nervous, nonetheless, of being placed “in a dangerous and disagreeable collision with the laws of a

---

<sup>48</sup> Rob Roy’s ability to change shapes—to appear in different disguises in different places and to be unrecognizable, at least to the other characters—is an important element of literary criminality developed in Defoe. Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack, and Captain Singleton share a common ability to change forms and to disguise themselves when it suits their ends.

country, which [he] visited only in the capacity of a stranger” (257). Frank’s anxiety is not only the fear of imprisonment that Welsh has noted, but the fear of being caught in some sort of “collision” with, if not an infringement of, foreign laws. As I’ve already pointed out, the definition of “outlaw” would have been different in Scotland than it was in England, just as Jacobites and Hanoverians were either loyal subjects or traitors, depending on how close to London, or in whose company, they found themselves.

Frank’s guilt, when he is threatened with imprisonment, is always guilt by association. The narrator makes Frank’s association with crime implicit early on with the lengthy build-up to his encounter on the road with the cowardly Morris. At first, Frank’s connection with crime is only allusive: he converses with other travelers on his way to Northumberland, and the discussion naturally turns to highwaymen and crime:

Robbers, a fertile and alarming theme, filled up every vacancy; and the names of the Golden Farmer, the Flying Highwayman, Jack Needham, and other Beggar’s Opera heroes, were familiar in our mouths as household words. At such tales, like children closing their circle round the fire when the ghost story draws to its climax, the riders drew near to each other, looked before and behind them, examined the priming of their pistols, and vowed to stand by each other in case of danger. (86)

Frank and his fellow travelers swap tales of highwaymen on the road just as children trade ghost stories on stormy nights, simply for the sake of the pleasant terror it evokes. The rogue figures invoked here are, importantly, figures of popular history and literature: the “Beggar’s Opera heroes” refer, of course, to the 1728 satiric ballad opera by John Gay, which recounts a fictionalized version of the story of Jack Sheppard, an early eighteenth-century housebreaker. “The Golden Farmer” is the sobriquet of seventeenth-century highwayman William Davis described in the *Newgate Calendar*, who robbed stage coaches on the highway for over forty years before he was finally caught and executed.

The anachronistic reference to *The Beggar’s Opera* seems to be a slip either on the part of Scott or the elder, narrating Francis Osbaldistone; the action of the novel takes place sometime in the months leading up to the 1715 Jacobite uprising, while the *Beggar’s Opera* was first performed in 1728 and based on the life of a criminal whose career spanned only a few years, from approximately 1722-24. The popularity of *The Beggar’s Opera* throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century (and well into the nineteenth) makes it a natural enough shorthand reference for the elder, narrating Francis for the kinds of outlaws and criminals they discussed. The anachronism notwithstanding, however, the reference serves to emphasize two things: first, that the danger posed by highwaymen on the Great North Road in 1715 was very real, and second, that the stories of famous highwaymen were circulated widely by oral anecdote, through ballads, and by fictionalized, literary representation.

The story of “The Golden Farmer” was circulating by word of mouth in 1715 and as popular literature (in various versions of the *Newgate Calendar*, as well as in chapbooks) during the time Scott was writing; the apparently casual reference to him highlights both the duality of the criminal figure and the slipperiness of the labels of “criminal” and “law-abider.” William Davis, the Golden Farmer, essentially led two lives, and it was his dual existence that made his story so memorable—the rest of his entry in the *Newgate Calendar* is a fairly hackneyed account of his career as a highwayman, including anecdotes about his fierce implacability as well as his

debonair charm. The Golden Farmer's long-standing doubleness, the dual identity marked by his two names, sets him apart from common criminals and makes his story worth remembering—and worth sharing among other travelers. It is perhaps this very reference that first excites the suspicions of Mr. Morris, whose cowardice leads him to see a "Golden Farmer" lurking under the dirtied cloak of every common traveler.

Frank acknowledges that Morris is actually right to be suspicious: anyone, "in those days," might have been a highwayman or a robber, regardless of his outward appearance (88). He does not take offense at Morris's obvious suspicion, which Frank sees as "too ludicrous to be offensive" (88):

There was, in fact, no particular reflection on my dress or address, although I was thus mistaken for a robber. A man in those days might have all the external appearance of a gentleman, and yet turn out to be a highwayman. For the division of labour in every department not having then taken place so fully as since that period, the profession of the polite and accomplished adventurer, who nicked you out of your money at White's, or bowled you out of it at Marybone, was often united with that of the professed ruffian, who, on Bagshot Heath, or Finchley Common, commanded his brother beau to stand and deliver. (88-89)

The narrator takes care to distance himself (and the reader) from the dangerous slipperiness of social categories implied by the ease with which Frank is mistaken for a highwayman—he keeps "those days" at an historical arm's length, explaining that "the division of labour in every department [had not] *then* taken place so fully *as since that period*" (my emphasis). The narrator implicitly writes from a more civilized period, when it is possible to tell a highwayman from a gentleman.

Highwaymen have, by the time Francis is narrating the story, been relegated to their proper place in written collections of ballads and popular literature, safely separated from real life by the *cordon sanitaire* of the written word (both of history and of fiction) and the law. As the Hanoverian regime had since stabilized and continued to gain legitimacy and authority by the time Francis begins narrating the story, the definitions of outlaw and law abider had likewise stabilized. At the time of the action of the story, though, the category of outlaw is more nebulous. A central, national law had only recently been established (1707), and the Hanoverian regime is still unstable during the action of the novel—indeed, the regime has been in place for barely a year. Jacobites thought of themselves as loyal subjects, and of Hanoverians as traitors supporting a usurping family. Hanoverians naturally considered Jacobites to be guilty of treason. Yet the anxiety in *Rob Roy* about the definitions of crime and outlawry seems more immediate and more personal than this political-historical rationale would suggest. That the novel is narrated by a passive hero but named for an outlaw famous, paradoxically, for his moral rectitude, also establishes a kind of confusion among these categories. Rob Roy was guilty not only of being a Jacobite, but of repeated incursions against the Duke of Montrose's property. Although popular folk history holds him to be a much wronged gentleman, the Duke of Montrose's supporters accused him of being no more than a common cattle rustler. The confusion between law abider and outlaw, Hanoverian and Jacobite, or honest man and highwayman is amplified in the figure of Rob Roy, and almost immediately transferred onto Frank.

Frank's relationship to Rob Roy is complicated by the interchangeability between them suggested by the title of the novel, which is given to the outlaw instead of to the narrating

romantic hero. From his first encounter with Rob Roy on the road, Frank feels the effects of the mutability of outlaw identity, though without discerning the cause. Morris's suspicions turn out to be well-founded, however misdirected. The outlaw disguised as a common traveler is not Frank Osbaldistone, but the apparently innocent Mr. Campbell. The ease with which Rob Roy is able to disguise himself, so that his fellow travelers (though never the reader) are hoodwinked into believing him to be a common traveler forms a marked contrast with the outlaw of *Ivanhoe*, who is easily recognizable based solely on his accoutrements and costume, whatever identity he chooses to assume.

Frank begins to imagine himself in the character of a highwayman in disguise as well, and takes obvious pleasure in assuming the part. Judith Wilt observes that the "outlaw identity" both "repels and intrigues" Frank (Wilt 62). He playfully pulls the mask on and off, taking pleasure and "amusement in alternately exciting, and lulling to sleep, the suspicions of [his] timorous companion" (89). The ease with which he alternates between "highwayman" and "gentleman traveler" underscores the mutability of identity in this novel. Indeed, it is this mutability—and his obvious pleasure in toying with it—that strengthens the accusation against Frank. Jobson, the overzealous clerk of Justice Inglewood, argues that since Frank "had confessedly, upon [his] own showing, assumed the bearing or deportment of a robber or malefactor, [he] had voluntarily subjected [him]self to the suspicions of which [he] complained" (137). Ironically, the elder, narrating Francis Osbaldistone refers to Jobson as a "rogue" in this passage, as the clerk points out (with some justice) the foolishness of assuming the character of a rogue at a time when, as Frank himself has admitted, highwaymen could be anywhere, even in the dress of a gentleman.

When Frank finds that he is not in control of the criminal identity he had toyed with before, he insists on confronting his accuser head-on, hoping to sweep away any doubt as to his true allegiance to the Hanoverian government. Yet he does not understand that loyalty to the *de facto* monarch would not necessarily define him as a law abiding citizen in his new and unfamiliar environs. Even before the Justice (apparently a Hanoverian, although with sympathies for the local Jacobite faction), Frank finds it impossible to clear himself completely of suspicion. When he first arrives, Morris again appeals to literary representations of crime he has read—this time, Johnson's *Lives of the Highwaymen*—as evidence that Frank might have a gang of "rogues [...] to back him," even in the house of the Justice himself (134).<sup>49</sup> Frank's very appearance of innocence becomes grounds for suspicion in the mind of a man like Morris, who expects to see a two-faced "Golden Farmer" in every strange gentleman he meets. His outward identity, in the mind of Morris, is always potentially a mask.

The boundary between outlaw and law-abider is again troubled in this scene. The outlaw Rob Roy is again transformed into a respectable citizen, appearing as a witness for another man's character. Frank Osbaldistone is transformed from a suspected criminal, to an indignant gentleman, to a potential highwayman with "rogues to back him." The law magistrate's clerk, Mr. Jobson, is described as a "rogue." The timid Morris, too, changes position: the narrator likens his terror, by analogy, to that of a "condemned criminal [...] when he is informed that the

---

<sup>49</sup> Of course, Frank actually does have an outlaw "to back him" in Justice Inglewood's home—unknownst to him, his cousin Rashleigh has enlisted the aid of Rob Roy himself, who appears just in time to clear away the false accusation. The irony again seems lost on Frank and on the elder, narrating Francis Osbaldistone: neither acknowledges that Morris's suspicion that Frank might have "rogues" supporting him proves well founded.

cart awaits him” (143). Even Diana Vernon is accused of being on the wrong side of the law, as Jobson points out that “there are laws against papists,” although they are not often enforced (148). The mutability of the “criminal identity” Frank Osbaldistone had toyed with on the road north now applies to everyone. Apparently anyone could be outlawed at any time.

After this initial brush with the law, Frank’s character is frequently mistaken for that of a highwayman or Jacobite. While visiting Owen in the Glasgow prison in the company of Rob Roy, Frank’s shadowy form is at first described by Mr. Jarvie as “Some gillravager that ye hae listed, I daur say. He looks as if he had a bauld heart to the high-way, and a lang craig for the gibbet” (271). Frank’s motives in this scene are entirely innocent, although he finds himself in suspicious company, sneaking into a jail for an illicit midnight visit with a prisoner. Indeed, despite the lateness of the hour and the potentially dangerous character of his unknown companion, Frank’s anxiety is not aroused by the potential threat of violence, but by the threat of suspicion by association (Welsh 119).

Not only was it possible to mistake a gentleman for a highwayman or vice versa, it was all too easy for a gentleman “in those days” to find himself an outlaw in fact, as well as in the perception of his friends or neighbors. Just as the outlaw energy of *Ivanhoe*’s greenwood pervades and saturates the entire system of that novel, the mutability of outlaw identity in *Rob Roy* threatens, at times, almost every character. The lack of a stable national law is not made up for by the logic exerted retroactively by Francis, despite his assurances of narrating from a future date when the categories of law and outlaw are more easily discernible.

The slipperiness of the categories originates in Rob Roy’s own body. In *Scott’s Shadow*, Ian Duncan observes that through the “figure [of Rob’s primitivism] Scott imagines a heretic or outlaw identity at human and cultural origins, both in the miscegenation of categories (human, animal, demonic) and in the appeal to heterodox discourses, folkloric (goblins as the aboriginal inhabitants of the country) and biological (beasts as human ancestors)” (112). Rob Roy’s slipperiness, then, is a function of his primitivism. He is a figure of both folklore and of history, a representative both of human origins and of modernity. Scott appeals to both verifiable historical accounts and to popular ballads. His Rob Roy is imagined both as a fantastic, aboriginal figure and as a savvy politician and economist. Both thematically, in his resemblance to a less-evolved sub-species, and formally, in Scott’s appeal to folklore and popular ballads, Rob Roy manages, like Robin Hood, to disrupt the chronological progression of the plot while, paradoxically, to act as the primary agent of its advancement.

Scott’s dynamic outlaw figures inflect the entire character-system with outlawry from their position in the margins, moving freely through the novel’s structure; their marginal status parallels the formal marginality of the ballads and popular history from which they are drawn. Scott’s innovations with the form of the historical novel are taken up by his successor and (critics have maintained) imitator, W.H. Ainsworth. But while Scott’s outlaws exercise their pervasive influence on the novel’s plot and form from the margins and are removed from the reader’s attention as the novel concludes, Ainsworth’s historical fiction marks a return to the logic implemented by Defoe, while developing many of the formal innovations introduced by Scott. Ainsworth’s transgressive figures are more truly criminal than the political and social outlaws of Scott’s novels, and they are more firmly centered in the novel’s plot.

### Chapter 3: Serial Criminal: The Proliferation of *Jack Sheppard* and the Structure of the Early Victorian Novel

The Jack Sheppard narrative has so permeated our cultural imagination that it is surprising how few contemporary readers and scholars even recognize his name—but whether we recognize it or not, William Harrison Ainsworth’s 1839 historical novel on Jack Sheppard helped to shape the evolution of the novel during a period when the genre was in flux. Though it has since fallen out of sight, *Jack Sheppard* was a tremendous popular success from the time of its publication through the late nineteenth century, almost eclipsing even Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, which appeared alongside *Jack Sheppard* in the new magazine *Bentley’s Miscellany*.<sup>50</sup> *Jack Sheppard*’s early popular success alone is enough to make it of interest to literary and cultural historians. What interest me are the formal causes of that popularity. Approaching Ainsworth’s historical novel as a reinterpretation and reinvention of the many eighteenth-century narratives on the life of Jack Sheppard helps to elucidate Ainsworth’s innovations in the genre and the place of *Jack Sheppard* in the development of the nineteenth-century historical novel. The author’s indiscriminate incorporation of both historical and fictional sources on the life of Jack Sheppard, combined with his collaborative relationship with his illustrator and the playwrights who would adapt the novel for the stage, helped to redefine the form and cultural work of the historical novel in the early Victorian period.

In their accounts of the historical novel, both Georg Lukács and Richard Maxwell argue that a defining element of Walter Scott’s model of the historical novel—the model that would dominate the literary landscape of the early nineteenth century—was defined by his juxtaposition of history with fiction, particularly in his use of character. In his definition of the “classical form of historical fiction,” Lukács cites both the “concreteness” of “time and place of action” and the “historical peculiarity of characters and events” (20). Scott’s central characters are fictional, while the time and place of the action are rendered with great historical particularity. His greatness as a historical novelist “lies in his capacity to give living human embodiment to historical-social types,” not in his ability to assign plausible fictional causes to historical events by fictionalizing historical figures explicitly (35). Maxwell clarifies this distinction by describing two types of rhetorical approach to historical fiction: “secret history” and “particular history.” Particular historians must limit the juxtaposition of history and fiction, understanding that the two “make different truth-claims” (*Historical Novel in Europe* 15). Secret history, on the other hand, assigns “hidden personal motives or characteristics” to explain historical events (14). Scott uses a combination of the two rhetorical modes: his central plot and fictional hero are the subjects of secret history, while the truly historical characters and events—those of particular history—are allowed only occasional moments of direct contact (48). In other words, the “particular history” in Scott’s novels “enclose[s] and dominate[s] the secret one” (48).

Ainsworth, on the other hand, particularizes local history and insists on the historicity of his account of events, while also assigning fictional causes and motivations for those events. He goes to the extreme of citing popular modern fictionalizations as a source for the production of history. He carries this theory into practice by openly working with his illustrator and with the playwrights who would adapt his historical novel for the theater, effectively turning his historical

---

<sup>50</sup> See Joyce, “Reading Run Riot,” pp 59-64, in *Capital Offenses*.

fiction into a copy text and source for popular history. Ainsworth's apparently indiscriminate combination of these two rhetorical modes seems to muddy the form established by Scott, and perhaps accounts for his dismissal from the two most serious accounts of the historical novel in Europe.

Traditional accounts of the history of the novel in English often dismiss the 1830s and early '40s as a kind of "Dark Age," a fallow period between the death of Sir Walter Scott and the maturation of Charles Dickens.<sup>51</sup> Because the economic crash of 1825-6 made the dominant modes of novel production established in the first decades of the nineteenth century financially unviable, publishers were searching in the late 1820s and 1830s for an effective and profitable system to disseminate new fiction.<sup>52</sup> Publishers experimented with new methods of reaching a broad, cross-class readership as they struggled to imagine the tastes and preferences that might constitute a mass reading audience. In what N.N. Feltes describes as "the moment of *Pickwick*," the publication of a "monthly something" in magazine form was established: each part should be "discrete, illustrated...[and] of a determinate length" (Feltes 13).<sup>53</sup> This method of distributing new fiction was hardly conducive to the kind of narrative coherence that typifies novels written earlier in the century; indeed, the novels produced in the 1830s were hardly recognizable as novels at the time.<sup>54</sup> But as the "monthly something" evolved into the serial or part-issue novel, it became clear that the new method of publication had instituted a new kind of novelist: in contrast to the "impersonal productivity" of Scott (Shaw 4), the serial novelist of the 1830s and 40s would collaborate to an unprecedented degree with his or her illustrator, editor, publisher, and even with the playwrights who would adapt popular novels for the stage (licensed or not).<sup>55</sup>

Dickens's first two novels, *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*, tend to be the go-to examples for literary historians of this kind of collaboration.<sup>56</sup> Yet the collaboration between Dickens and his illustrators was never a partnership between equal contributors. It is well known that *Pickwick* began as a series of anecdotes to accompany illustrations by Robert Seymour; after Seymour's death, however, Dickens's text was given precedence, and the illustrations (for the third installment by Robert Buss, and, for the rest, by H.K. Browne, AKA "Phiz") were

---

<sup>51</sup> Many of the critics who elide the 1830s do so as a way of creating a smoother teleology to suit their own critical interests. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, for example, Nancy Armstrong dismisses the 1830s as a period during which the "fictions of courtship and marriage did not serve this purpose [of organizing and interpreting reality] particularly well" (161). Notable exceptions include Ian Duncan's *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel*. Other studies, such as Kathryn Chittick's *Dickens in the 1830s* and John Bowen's *Other Dickens: Pickwick to Chuzzlewit*, focus primarily on the early career of Charles Dickens, as opposed to the broader British literary world in the 1830s.

<sup>52</sup> Alexis Weedon, *Victorian Publishing: the Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market, 1836-1916*. Hants, England: Ashgate, 2003.

<sup>53</sup> This method was in fact determined before the publication of *Pickwick*, in miscellanies and serial reprints such as *Constable's Miscellany*.

<sup>54</sup> Even as it was being written, *The Pickwick Papers* was described as "a book" (as opposed to a series of comic sketches) but not as a novel (Chittick 70).

<sup>55</sup> For a thorough discussion of the ways illustration was used by Scott, see Richard Hill's *Picturing Scotland through the Waverley Novels: Walter Scott and the Origins of the Victorian Illustrated Novel* (2010).

<sup>56</sup> George Cruikshank was actually illustrating *Oliver Twist* at the same time as Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*, as the two novels were appearing serially in the same magazine.



contributed merely in support of the narrative.<sup>57</sup> While Dickens and Browne were to remain close friends and frequent collaborators for much of Dickens's career, Browne's illustrations were never given precedence over Dickens's work. By contrast, in *Jack Sheppard*, some of George Cruikshank's illustrations were sketched before the accompanying chapter was even completed; Ainsworth admits to having written several scenes with the Cruikshank illustration "before him" (Harvey 38). In fact, Cruikshank would later assert co-authorship with Ainsworth of several of their collaborative projects, including *The Tower of London*—an assertion which Ainsworth flatly denied (Harvey 35). Ainsworth's relationship with his illustrator was manifestly different from Dickens's: when Dickens heard, years later, of Cruikshank's claims that he had been the originator of the story of *Oliver Twist*, he denied it vehemently, with the almost unanimous support of contemporary critics and modern Dickens scholars.<sup>58</sup> Ainsworth, on the other hand, while denying actual co-authorship, still admitted to a level of creative collaboration with his illustrator which Dickens denied entirely. In spite of Ainsworth's occasional disagreements with Cruikshank, their collaborative use of both historical and fictional sources produced a shift in the evolution of how the historical novel was both read and written.

Illustrations were also attached to the later editions of Walter Scott's novels, and Scott was involved in their production. Scott's use of illustration provides the foundation for the later Victorian illustrated book (Richard Hill 1). Scott "illustrated" his works in both senses of the word: he added notes and commentary as well as visual images to authenticate the "factual basis" of his fiction (Maxwell, *The Victorian Illustrated Book*, 2). In Scott's novels, though, these supplementary "illustrations" were not added until subsequent editions, most often to illustrate the antiquarian "landscapes and manners" of the subject. Scott's illustrations, both verbal and visual, then, are subordinate to the fictional text itself. Scott's involvement in the production of those illustrations differs from that of Ainsworth in that Scott's fictional text was always completed first and took unambiguous priority, whereas Ainsworth's collaboration with Cruikshank was much closer to the collaboration of creative equals.

Ainsworth's reputation has suffered equally from unflattering comparisons to both Dickens and Scott. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics dismissed his historical novels as derivative, as poor imitations of the genre established by Scott. Ainsworth's departures from Scott's model of the historical novel have caused most theorists of the historical novel either to ignore Ainsworth completely, as Lukács did, or to acknowledge him only briefly before dismissing him as a serious participant in the genre.<sup>59</sup> On the contrary, I argue that Ainsworth was a deliberate, if unsophisticated, stylist, and his use of historical sources differs significantly from Scott's. His innovations on Scott's model are part of what made Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* a turning point in the history of the novel. Ainsworth renovated the form established by Scott in two important (and interrelated) ways: first, as a serial novelist, he was able to

---

<sup>57</sup> It has been argued by critics, historians, and readers that Seymour's struggle for precedence with Dickens precipitated Seymour's suicide. If true, the shock of that tragedy could well have changed Dickens's attitude towards his relationship with his illustrators. However, that particular biographical speculation is outside the purview of this study.

<sup>58</sup> For a thorough discussion of the "Dickens-Cruikshank 'controversy,'" see "Cruikshank and Dickens: A Reassessment of the Role of the Artist and the Author" by Richard A. Vogler, in *George Cruikshank: A Reevaluation*, edited by Robert L. Patten.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Richard Maxwell's recent reevaluation of the genre, *The Historical Novel in Europe, 1650-1950*, or Brian Hamnett's *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe*.

manipulate the literary marketplace in ways that Scott was unable to. Second, he used his sources transparently throughout the novel, consolidating well-known material, both fictional and non-fictional, into a pastiche of easily extractable scenes and passages. Ainsworth's sources are clearly visible *as* sources, making the narrative segments in which they appear more easily extractable.

Recent critical work on Ainsworth has tended toward a New Historicist approach, focusing on how *Jack Sheppard* both responded and contributed to Chartist agitation in the early 1840s. Matthew Buckley has persuasively argued that *Jack Sheppard* marks an important moment in literary and political history for the ways that it helped to drive the period's "crucial shift from political to perceptual modernity" (Buckley 426). Buckley focuses on the cultural and political impact of *Jack Sheppard* as a visual, as well as a literary, text: the "Jack Sheppard craze" following the publication of the novel caused fear and alarm because commentators believed that the visual representations of the novel—the illustrations and theatrical adaptations—prompted unreflecting imitation of the more violent crimes described in Ainsworth's prose. Simon Joyce argues along similar lines. He investigates the reading practices that both created and were constituted by the proliferation of crime narratives like *Jack Sheppard* in the late 1830s (Joyce 61). Joyce describes the cultural impact that *Jack Sheppard* had in the 1840s, considering it alongside the more canonical, and hardly less immediately successful, *Oliver Twist*. He focuses on what the "astonishing portability" of Ainsworth's narrative reveals about the early Victorian reading audience (63). But what made this particular novel so "portable"? Like Buckley, I am interested in the formal and structural innovations in *Jack Sheppard* that helped to make it one of the most important media events of the nineteenth century. Further, I argue that Ainsworth's use of sources transformed the well-established Sheppard mythology and the relationship between fiction and history instituted by Scott. Unlike Scott, Ainsworth does not simply fictionalize history; he uses modern fictionalizations as a source for the production of history.

Ainsworth certainly had many sources to choose from. From the time of Sheppard's death in 1724 to the close of the nineteenth century, more than eighty-five different narratives of the life of Jack Sheppard appeared in newspapers, pamphlets, chapbooks, and ballads, in collections of notable trials, in criminal biographies, and on the stage, including Ainsworth's 1839 historical novel, which, as I will show, spawned a new generation of chapbooks, plays, and ballads. The historical Jack Sheppard, a housebreaker, was born around 1702 and died on the gallows at Tyburn at the tender age of twenty-two, thanks in part to the machinations of the notorious thief-taker, Jonathan Wild. Besides showing an early aptitude for breaking in, Sheppard was at least as talented at breaking out, and his four escapes from prison contributed to the early proliferation of narratives about his life. Jack Sheppard's biography was published in at least three different versions immediately following his death in 1724, the most popular of which provided the content for dozens of chapbooks, ballads, pantomimes, and plays well into the nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup> In large part because of the popularity and proliferation of these early accounts and adaptations of Sheppard's life, his entry in the 1824 edition of the *Newgate Calendar* fills more than nine pages, while the average length for his contemporary felons is only about two or three pages. In 1839 Sheppard's life story was taken up by one of the most prolific historical novelists of the period, Ainsworth, who made it into the most popular (and controversial) of the so-called *Newgate* novels. Ainsworth's novel is a turning point in the long

---

<sup>60</sup> See Appendix I for a chronological bibliography of Jack Sheppard narratives.

bibliography of Sheppard narratives. After the appearance of Ainsworth's novel, the proliferation of Sheppard narratives increased still more rapidly. The popularity of Ainsworth's novel gave rise to a new generation of chapbooks, ballads, and penny histories of the life of the eighteenth-century criminal, largely taking Ainsworth's novel, rather than eighteenth-century sources, as their copy text and source. It serves as a locus of consolidation, in which more than one hundred years' accumulation of meaning around Sheppard's life and exploits is condensed, fictionalized, and re-imagined for the early Victorian reading public. Ainsworth anthologized the various pieces of Sheppard lore that had been accumulating throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, molding those pieces into a coherent narrative. He combined the supposedly authentic elements of the Sheppard mythology created and circulated in pamphlets and newspaper accounts with new details added by subsequent fictionalizations.

The combination of fiction with historical sources is, of course, a central device of the historical novel as established by Scott. Ainsworth consistently foregrounds his historical sources, sometimes through explicit reference, and often through transparent allusion, while Scott mentions his sources occasionally (indeed, he blatantly interrupts his story and addresses the reader, with lengthy excursions on actual and potential historical sources, at several moments in most of his novels), more often, his sources are woven more subtly into the structure of the novel. Ainsworth, on the other hand, persistently draws the reader's attention to his historical research, often quoting his sources verbatim (though often without explicit acknowledgement). Scott's novels use historical specificity as a backdrop over which the fictional heroes can play out the "romance" of their lives, as the narrator of *Waverley* famously puts it. Historical figures, like Richard Coeur de Lion in *Ivanhoe* or Charles Edward Stewart in *Waverley*, appear as part of that historical backdrop, emerging with their "personalit[ies] complete" from the historical background of the novel (Lukács 38). Ainsworth brings the semi-mythological figure of Jack Sheppard to the fore, making him the protagonist, though not the romantic hero, of his novel. He merges history with myth, as well as with fiction, much as Scott does in *Rob Roy*. But while the semi-mythological rogue figure remains in the shadows throughout most of *Rob Roy*, impinging on the central plot but finally receding into the margins, Ainsworth carves a place for Jack Sheppard at the center of the novel.

And with good reason. Ainsworth recognized the market both for historical specificity and for rogue figures in serial novels. His *Rookwood* was a popular success in 1834, but the criminal was still only a secondary character—although, like Scott's Rob Roy, Dick Turpin does threaten to upstage the romantic hero of the novel.<sup>61</sup> But Jack Sheppard's place as a central character seemed a matter of course, if only because there was so much more biographical and archival information available about him than about his contemporaries. At the time Ainsworth began the composition of his historical novel, the Sheppard story was still circulating in a number of different forms in various genres and media.

The first section of this chapter summarizes the early newspaper and biographical accounts of Sheppard's life, showing how even these brief narratives contributed to the formation and early circulation of a Jack Sheppard mythology. Both the early newspaper accounts and two of the three earliest biographical pamphlets were published and circulated by the same man, John Applebee. Applebee was one of the most prominent publishers in early eighteenth-century London, and his business interest in cross-advertising his Sheppard pamphlets

---

<sup>61</sup> For a longer discussion of *Rookwood*, see Chapter 4: "History, the Gothic, and the "Wandering Race": The Place and Time of the Gypsies in *Rookwood* and *Guy Mannering*."

in the newspapers he published helped to weave the Sheppard stories into something approaching a coherent legend. The popularity of Applebee's narratives then gave rise to a number of fictionalizations and dramatizations of the Sheppard story, using elements of the legend established by Applebee and introducing new twists to it. Both Applebee's "History of the Life of Jack Sheppard," which appeared when Sheppard was still at large, and the "Narrative of all the Robberies, Escapes, &c of John Sheppard" (1724), which was supposedly taken down from Sheppard's own words by a ghost writer on the eve of his execution, were still widely circulated throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The "Narrative" was longer and more complete than the "History," and it was most often used as a copy text and source for subsequent fictionalizations, both in the eighteenth century and beyond.

Besides Applebee's supposedly historical accounts, there were dozens of fictionalized narratives based on Sheppard's life. In the second section of my chapter, I examine the ways in which Ainsworth and his illustrator George Cruikshank adapt and renovate two of these early popular fictionalizations. John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, which first appeared in 1728, only four years after Sheppard's death, is one of the first fictionalized accounts of the life of Jack Sheppard. William Hogarth's series of engravings, *Industry and Idleness*, which first appeared in 1747, is likewise loosely based on Sheppard's story. Both remained popular well into the nineteenth century. Ballads like Gay's "Newgate's Garland," which celebrates Sheppard's friend Blueskin's attempt to assassinate Jonathan Wild, were continually reprinted in penny journals. Yet the Sheppard mythology had yet to be consolidated into a single, coherent form: the supposedly historical "Narrative" (and the other contemporary accounts), *The Beggar's Opera*, and *Industry and Idleness* all provide appreciably different versions of Sheppard's story. Ainsworth's novel consolidates the disparate strands of Sheppard lore, taking elements from many different eighteenth-century sources (both supposedly historical and avowedly fictionalized), weaving them together to form a coherent history. Ainsworth turns the historical novel into a medium of consolidation, in which the more than one hundred years' worth of accrued meaning surrounding the historical criminal, Jack Sheppard, could be re-imagined.

Like many novels of the period, Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* was written in cooperation with the illustrator, George Cruikshank, and composed so as to be easily disassembled and re-circulated in its component parts, either as chapbooks, musical numbers, theatrical adaptations, or *tableaux vivants*. In the third and final section of this chapter, I examine the *Jack Sheppard* moment, considering the consequences of consolidating criminal mythology in this way. The Jack Sheppard craze following the publication of Ainsworth's novel in 1839-40 sparked a series of debates about the morality of the Jack Sheppard narratives themselves that hardly abated until the close of the nineteenth century.

### **A Myth in His Own Time: Eighteenth-Century Journals and the Escape Narratives**

The Sheppard narrative evolved continuously over the latter half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, up until the moment of Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*. To understand the reason why Jack Sheppard's life story spawned such an unusual number of narratives, I will sketch out the original history of Jack Sheppard—or, at least, the closest we can come to it from the archives and early newspaper accounts. Each generation since Sheppard's execution at Tyburn in 1724 has re-imagined his biography and assigned new meaning to it, and each subsequent telling of his life has added another layer of narrative meaning to an already fraught historical figure.

All three of the biographies that appeared around the time of Sheppard's death in October to December of 1724 agree that Sheppard was born in the parish of Stepney, near London; that he came from a long line of carpenters; that his father died when he was young; that he had at least one brother (Thomas), and possibly a sister, as well; and that his widowed mother educated him briefly at a workhouse before binding him as an apprentice to Mr. Wood, a carpenter in Wych Street near Drury Lane. These are facts common to almost all of the early narratives on the life of Jack Sheppard.<sup>62</sup> This is the point in Sheppard's life when the narrative accounts begin to diverge. Most early accounts of his life suggest that Sheppard was a model apprentice and a promising carpenter up until the last year of his apprenticeship, at which point he took up with Elizabeth Lyon (better known as "Edgworth Bess," after the town where she was born). The pernicious influence of Edgworth Bess, according to these accounts, first drove him to drink, then to break the bonds of his apprenticeship, and finally to commit his first theft. Some accounts go so far as to suggest that Sheppard beat his former master, Mr. Wood, over some slight disagreement. All the narratives take a moment to shake their heads over this change in the young Sheppard: "such a sudden and deplorable Change was there in the Behaviour of this promising young Man," sighs the author of the "History of the Life of John Sheppard," which appeared on October 17, 1724—a full month before Sheppard was executed.

Sheppard was first arrested for burglary in the company of his brother, Thomas, in the spring of 1724 and was imprisoned in Saint Giles Roundhouse. He escaped through the ceiling. He was recaptured and imprisoned with Edgworth Bess in the New Prison in Clerkenwell. Using tools smuggled into the prison by friends, Sheppard escaped through the window of the prison, lowering Bess down with a rope made from her petticoats. That summer, Sheppard teamed up with Joseph Blake (AKA "Blueskin"), another of Jonathan Wild's minions, to rob Mr. Kneebone, a draper on the Strand, who had employed Sheppard's mother and to whom, many accounts suggest, Sheppard was indebted for early favors. Kneebone employed Jonathan Wild to recover his lost property and to expedite the recapture of the young criminal. Sheppard was imprisoned again, this time in Newgate, and was tried and sentenced to hang at the Old Bailey. On August 31, 1724, five days before his scheduled execution, Sheppard escaped from under the noses of the guards by cutting a bar from his cell door during a visit from Edgworth Bess and walking straight out, shrouded in a cloak and half-hidden behind Bess's bulky skirts. Although a talented escape artist, Sheppard was less careful of avoiding arrest: he was re-imprisoned just ten days later and weighed down with heavy irons in the Newgate cell known as the "Castle." Yet he managed a final escape from the supposedly impregnable Castle, breaking out through six locked doors and climbing onto the roof of a neighboring house before escaping into the streets. He was found in a gin-shop in Drury Lane in early November and arrested for the last time. A week later, on November 16, 1724, he was hanged at Tyburn.

These are the bare facts of Sheppard's biography so far as they can be ascertained from newspaper and trial records. Newspapers, though, were not always reliable in reporting bare facts: publishers had good commercial reasons to embellish Sheppard's story. The earliest newspaper accounts of Sheppard are not about his robberies or thefts (which were common

---

<sup>62</sup> I have not crosschecked this with parish records (if, indeed, such records still exist); I'm not concerned with Sheppard's actual biography, but rather in the shaping of a popular mythology based on his life. Here I summarize the common details from the three most popular early biographies of Sheppard that can be confirmed from contemporary newspaper accounts accessed at the British Library in the summer of 2008 (see bibliography of eighteenth-century sources).

enough occurrences in early eighteenth-century London), but rather are brief descriptions of his escapes from prison. The later biographical accounts, which appeared during the height of Sheppard's notoriety as a prison-breaker and immediately following his death, draw on parish records, trial and prison records and hearsay to describe Sheppard's early life and robberies. Those biographies were not able to rely on the accounts in popular newspapers of the day for information on Sheppard's early life. Daily and weekly newspapers tended to devote only a line or two in each issue to the criminals lately arrested, sentenced, and executed. Popular newspapers only pick up the Sheppard story after his second escape from prison, and even then do not mention his crimes or early life in any detail.

Rather, these earlier newspaper accounts focus on the relationship of Jack Sheppard to the authorities, sympathizing (at least ostensibly) with the guards, rather than with the escaped criminal. A short account of his escape from the condemned hold in Newgate on August 31, 1724, for example, describes how Sheppard "got himself thro' into the Lodge, and from thence into the Street, and so escap'd assisted by his Wife and another Woman," while the guards were nearby, "at a Table engag'd in a deep Discourse concerning his Dexterity, in his formerly escaping from New Prison" (*The Daily Journal*, Tuesday, September 1, 1724). The paragraph concludes with this pitying remark for the guards from the perspective of an omniscient, almost novelistic narrator: "This Misfortune falls the more heavy upon the Officers of this Prison, by reason they are esteem'd the most careful, vigilant, and, at the same time, the most human and Gentleman-like of any in the Kingdom." This supposed pity for the guards and the deliberate emphasis on their incompetence (they were, after all, in the next room, in the midst of a discussion of Sheppard's talents as an escape artist, when he slipped out from under their noses) are an important part of the Sheppard mythology. These early accounts provide the foundation for the letter Sheppard supposedly wrote to Austin, one of the officers at Newgate, shortly after his escape from the cell in Newgate called the Castle. That (probably apocryphal) letter is reproduced in the anonymous, epistolary "Authentic Memoirs" on the life of Jack Sheppard, published shortly after Sheppard's execution in November, 1724. The "Memoirs" thematize the ridicule of the guards more than the other two contemporary biographies, opening with a dedication "to the Vigilant, Trusty, and Indulgent Guardians of John Sheppard, during his late Confinement in Newgate-Castle, and the Condemn'd-Hold."

The ridicule of the guards continues in the newspaper accounts of Sheppard's escape after he was retaken. When he is imprisoned in the Newgate cell known as the Castle before his final and most dramatic escape, the guards find him pacing in his cell when he should have been chained to the floor by large "staples." The guards are bewildered, since they cannot find any tools on him that would have enabled him to free himself. Sheppard, according to the newspaper accounts, is more than happy to oblige them with a repeat performance: when "the Head Keeper and others, came and intreated [sic] him to discover how he had thus got himself free from the Staples: He reach'd out his Hand, and took up a Nail, and with that unlock'd himself again before their Faces. He is now hand-cuff'd, and more effectually chain'd" (*British Journal*, October 10, 1724).

Sheppard's theatricality as evinced in this episode becomes central to the developing mythology of his life and exploits: after all, most of the earliest pieces of the Sheppard bibliography are theatrical adaptations of his life, with his escape from the Castle as the climactic

scene.<sup>63</sup> The insistence in both the *British Journal* and the Applebee pamphlets that Sheppard deliberately acted out a scene of his own escape for the benefit of the guards before accomplishing his most impressive final escape adds to the sense that his life story could and should be read as an entertainment in which he himself played the starring role. Sheppard's self-aggrandizing theatricality (occasionally at the expense of his own interests—after all, the guards removed the nail with which he had freed himself after he demonstrated the mechanism of his escape) became an important element of his character, which was almost immediately incorporated into the Sheppard mythology. This episode described in a contemporary newspaper account suggests that Sheppard was a self-conscious actor in his own life and strengthens the perceived connection between the historical, real-life criminal and his developing mythology.

The celebration of Sheppard's prowess at the expense of the authorities began during his life, even before his final escape from the castle. The newspaper accounts register a gleeful satisfaction with Sheppard's ability to befuddle and outwit the guards at Newgate. Publishers and newspaper writers realized that Sheppard's wit and extraordinary talents would appeal to a broad reading audience. With each subsequent escape and recapture, the paragraphs describing Sheppard's exploits in the newspapers become increasingly sensationalized (and increasingly long). But Sheppard was still only a local criminal, even if he was becoming a popular folk hero: he never makes the front page of the weekly *British Journal*, or even the opening article in the shorter *Daily Journal* (both were published by Applebee, the leading printer of criminal "dying speeches" and "last confessions"). The accounts of his escapes remained nestled between lists of bankruptcy cases, deaths from smallpox, the transportation of petty felons, and stock prices.

Despite this apparent snub to the Sheppard stories, Applebee obviously recognized the potential profit to be made on a criminal who continually extended his own life with such dramatic flair. Just four days after Sheppard's fourth and final escape, and before he was recaptured, Applebee published the first contemporary biography of Sheppard—the "History of the Remarkable Life of John Sheppard, containing a particular Account of his many Robberies and Escapes, &c." The advertisement for this publication appears later in the same issue that contains an account of Sheppard's final escape from the Castle in Newgate. Applebee's savvy cross-advertising and manipulation of his position as the publisher of multiple newspapers and as the seller of criminal biographies make him an important figure in understanding the ways that the Sheppard mythology began to transcend particular textual accounts and to cross generic boundaries.

John Applebee was a prolific publisher and printer in the early eighteenth-century London.<sup>64</sup> He was the primary purveyor of criminal biographies and dying last speeches for many years, and his business relationship with the ordinary and chaplain at Newgate gave him access to (probably fictionalized, certainly sensationalized) first-hand accounts of how the most popular criminals of the day spent their final hours. Applebee printed the two most famous contemporary biographies of Jack Sheppard in pamphlet form, and if the number of subsequent editions that were issued and advertised is any indication, those pamphlets sold extremely well.

---

<sup>63</sup> E.g., *Harlequin Sheppard* (1725), *The Prison-Breaker; or, The Adventures of John Sheppard* (1725), *The Beggar's Opera* (1728).

<sup>64</sup> Despite his important relationship to the development of the Sheppard mythology and of crime narratives more generally, Applebee remains an under-researched figure in British literary history; researches at the British Library in London and the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh in the summer of 2008 turned up very little material on his life and work.

The first, the “History of the Remarkable Life of John Sheppard...” was published a month before Sheppard’s execution. The second, the “Narrative of the Life...,” was written in the first person and advertised as having been written by Sheppard himself from the condemned hold in Newgate and published on the day of his execution. The popularity of the second biography made the first “History,” which did not include a satisfactory account of the means by which Sheppard escaped from the Castle in Newgate, somewhat irrelevant—the “History” had very few subsequent printings after the appearance of the “Narrative.”

Of all the contemporary biographies, the “Narrative” has certainly had the most lasting impact on the evolving Sheppard mythology. Over the years, it became traditional to attribute the “Narrative” to Daniel Defoe. Later biographies that would appear in chapbooks and the Newgate Calendar borrow mostly from the first-person “Narrative,” but generally rewrite it in the third person, except in places where they quote dramatically “from the words of the criminal himself.” The idea that Sheppard’s own words could be found in the “Narrative”—even if those words were filtered through an editor or ghost writer—obviously held some fascination for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers.

Even twentieth-century historians, like Christopher Hibbert, assume that the “Narrative” was not only written by Daniel Defoe, but actually based on the verbatim account of Sheppard himself.<sup>65</sup> But this is a piece of the Sheppard mythology created by Applebee: in his newspaper accounts of Sheppard’s execution, Applebee (or his anonymous writer, which amounts to the same thing) avers that Sheppard publicly handed a document to a gentleman in the cart at Tyburn, with the request that it be printed by Applebee. This was, of course, the manuscript of his life story, almost immediately published by Applebee as the “Narrative of the Life of John Sheppard.” The popular Sheppard mythology also has it that this “Narrative” was ghostwritten by Defoe, who visited Sheppard in Newgate to take down his story from his own lips. This wrinkle in the myth surrounding the origin of the first-person “Narrative” was given additional credence much later. In his 1869 biography of Daniel Defoe, William Lee attributes many of the criminal biographies published by Applebee to Defoe, suggesting that Defoe had been working for Applebee in secret for many years. This myth linking Defoe to Applebee (and to the Sheppard narratives) has been effectively debunked in a recent article by Furbank and Owens.<sup>66</sup> They show that the attribution of many of the criminal biographies published by Applebee to Defoe was fallacious—an attempt by William Lee to rescue Defoe from his previous reputation as a radical dissenter.<sup>67</sup> Much subsequent critical work on Defoe has taken the attributions made by Lee as gospel. Given the fallacy of those attributions, I refer to both the “History” and the “Narrative” of the life of Jack Sheppard as anonymous.

But the desire to attribute the “Narrative” to a well-known writer and to consider the ultimate source for the content of the “Narrative” to be Jack Sheppard himself is an important and widespread part of the Jack Sheppard mythology. An article in *The Flying Post* from 1729 (a year after *The Beggar’s Opera* first appeared to great critical acclaim), for example, related a probably apocryphal anecdote about how John Gay had been inspired to write *The Beggar’s Opera* after a chance meeting with Jack Sheppard’s nemesis, the notorious thief-taker Jonathan

---

<sup>65</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *The Road to Tyburn: The Story of Jack Sheppard* (London: Longman, Green, and Co. Ltd., 1957).

<sup>66</sup> P.N. Furbank and W.R. Owens, “The Myth of Defoe as ‘Applebee’s Man’,” *The Review of English Studies*, New Series. 48.190 (May, 1997), pp. 198-204.

<sup>67</sup> William Lee, *Daniel Defoe: His Life, and Recently Discovered Writings*, 1869.



Wild, at a pub in 1723, during the height of Sheppard's notoriety.<sup>68</sup> This much insisted-upon connection between the historical Sheppard and his early and most popular life stories suggests the extent of the desire for a direct correlation between the popular literature and its "historical" source—even on the part of respected and popular twentieth-century historians like Christopher Hibbert.

Applebee understood and profited from the desire for verisimilitude in criminal biographies, employing the Ordinary, or chaplain, of Newgate to provide him with detailed accounts of the confessions of condemned criminals. He churned out four or five such accounts each year during the 1720s (Mullan and Reid, 202). His connection with the Newgate ordinary was well advertised; indeed, his criminal biographies had a reputation for being true to life, supposedly coming from the lips of the criminals themselves. The typical Ordinary's account was headed with a woodcut "depicting the malefactors caught between a bible-holding minister and a devil emerging with pitchfork from the flaming mouth of hell" (Mullan and Reid, 203). Because Applebee framed the Ordinaries' accounts as cautionary tales, in which the criminal confesses and is repentant before his execution, he was rarely criticized for turning a profit on the supposedly confidential confessions of the felons.

Most of the criticisms of Applebee came from jealous competitors. Applebee's business partnership with the Newgate chaplain gave him an effective monopoly on criminal biographies, and other writers made the occasional snide or sarcastic remark about Applebee's method of capitalizing on crime. Nowhere was Applebee's effective monopoly on crime narrative more obvious than in the struggle for control over the developing body of texts on the life of Jack Sheppard, and his competitors occasionally vented their frustrations in pointed attacks against Applebee or the Newgate Chaplain. A particularly acerbic example appears in an anonymous dialogue called *News from the Dead: or, a Dialogue Between Blueskin, Shepperd, and Jonathan Wild*, which was published in 1725 by a printer named Thompson in the Strand. The dialogue takes place in Hell, where the three criminals are reunited. Blueskin tells his old comrades that he has been made Hell's Ordinary and Chaplain:

Jonathan: What Devil made you a Chaplain? You can scarce write common Sence.

Blueskin: No matter for that, I hope I may make as good an Ordinary in this World, as somebody we knew did in the other,--- Prithee, what is become of that fellow, who used to Murder the dying Speeches of Malefactors, and put his Readers to more pain in making out his meaning, that the Criminals suffered in getting rid of his Non-Sence?

Jonathan: He was the very same numerical Blockhead when I conversed with him last, as I ever knew him to be. (*News from the Dead*)

The attack against the Ordinary in this exchange has nothing to do with his betrayal of the criminals' trust in profiting from their confessions, but rather condemns his crimes against narrative itself—he's a bad writer. He "murder[s] the dying Speeches," and is so incoherent a writer that his readers are given "pain in making out his meaning." The attack is thus the more obviously motivated by a rival publisher's bitter sense of competition with Applebee because of

---

<sup>68</sup> *The Flying Post or the Weekly Medley* (London, England), Saturday, January 11, 1729; Issue 15.

his monopoly on criminal biographies and dying last speeches: it doesn't even pretend to attack the Ordinary (or Applebee) on moral grounds.

The least famous of the three contemporary biographies of Jack Sheppard, "The Memoirs of the Life and Surprising Adventures of John Sheppard,"<sup>69</sup> contains a similarly surly reference to Applebee as a "more happy competitor," but without the biting remarks on Applebee's business partnership with the Newgate Ordinary. Rather, the author of the "Memoirs" (which are signed only "G - E") ends by saying that the first-person "Narrative" published by Applebee was not really written by "Mr. J—S," but rather was "the hand-work of another of Mr. A---by's faithful Garreteers, who is a WAGG by Name, as well as Nature" (73). The actual identity of this "Wagg" has never, to my knowledge, been ascertained, yet this reference by name to the author of the "Narrative" in a rival publication is yet another piece of evidence supporting the de-attribution of the Applebee Sheppard biographies to Daniel Defoe.<sup>70</sup>

The "Memoirs" refer more obliquely to the "Narrative" in the preface, as well: the author purports to offer "authentic memoirs," so the public won't be "impos'd on by Romantic Narrations instead of Fact" (iii). The author clearly felt the need to differentiate himself from Applebee—but how could he justify the publication of yet another Sheppard narrative, when the "Narrative" published by Applebee was marketed as a first-person account by the criminal himself? The author of the "Memoirs" frames the biography with attempts to discredit the "Narrative." In the Preface, the author reassures his "Courteous Readers" that his "Intelligence is full as Genuine as [Applebee's...]. For I received all my instruction from a Gentleman who was intimately acquainted with Sheppard in his Infancy, and has had an uninterrupted Correspondence with him" (vi). The "Narrative," the author claims, is "romance," posing as history—its supposed first-person legitimacy is brushed off as fiction; the epistolary "Memoirs," on the other hand, provide a true historical account, offered by an anonymous eyewitness and close friend of Sheppard. The "Narrative" was given a stamp of authenticity by the popular report circulated by Applebee that Jack Sheppard had handed the physical manuscript of his autobiography to Applebee before his execution. The authenticity of the "Memoirs," on the other hand, will be apparent to any reader attentive to the conventions of probability.

The defensive tone set in the Preface of the "Memoirs" did not help its staying power—while Applebee's "Narrative" was re-issued multiple times and was used as the copy text and source for most subsequent Sheppard narratives and fictionalizations, the "Memoirs" were virtually forgotten after their modest immediate success. I do not wish, however, to discount the impact of the anonymous "Memoirs" on the initial formation and circulation of the Sheppard mythology: as we have seen, the "Memoirs" picked up on the ridicule of the Newgate guards and prison authorities that was so prominent a feature of the newspaper accounts, and cemented that

---

<sup>69</sup> "The History of the Remarkable Life of John Sheppard, Containing a Particular..." was published by Applebee on Oct. 19, 1724, and "A Narrative of all the Robberies, Escapes, &c. of John Sheppard: Giving an Exact Description of the manner of his wonderful Escape from the Castle in Newgate, and of the Methods he took afterward for his Security" was published by Applebee on Nov. 17, 1724. The third contemporary account, "Authentic Memoirs of the Life and Surprising Adventures of John Sheppard," was printed for Joseph Marshall late in 1724, probably soon after the "Narrative."

<sup>70</sup> It is possible that the "WAGG" mentioned in the "Memoirs" is a reference to the Reverend Mr. Wagstaff, one of the Newgate Ordinaries with whom Applebee often dealt. But as this "WAGG" is described as one of Applebee's "garreteers," or literary hacks (OED), it seems unlikely to refer to the Ordinary.

aspect of the story as an important piece of the emerging Sheppard mythology. In addition, the author of the “Memoirs” used an innovative epistolary form in structuring his narrative. This tactic added to the pervasive belief that Sheppard had left material and textual traces behind him, which could be collected, reorganized, and reconstituted in order to piece together his life story.<sup>71</sup>

Applebee’s publishing system, with its frequent cross-references and self-promotions, likewise created the sense of a coherent body of historical evidence that readers could collect, compile, and reconstitute. Actual records of Sheppard’s life are scanty: what evidence we have for the existence of this criminal comes primarily from crosschecking different newspaper accounts. Applebee, who was involved with many of the journals of the period, was responsible for creating a believable, if not strictly accurate, narrative that would withstand the obsessive crosschecking by a readership hungry for escape stories and fascinated by “true crime” narratives. In a sense, Applebee’s ability to compose a piecemeal narrative based on a variety of sources created the formal model for the historical novel as it would develop in the early nineteenth century.

### **The Moment of Jack Sheppard**

In his 1839 novel, *Jack Sheppard*, William Harrison Ainsworth’s work of consolidation is analogous to Applebee’s efforts to compile and interweave his biographical narratives. Ainsworth combines the supposedly authentic elements of the Sheppard mythology created and circulated by John Applebee’s pamphlets and newspaper accounts with new wrinkles in the mythology added by subsequent fictionalizations. At the time Ainsworth began the composition of his novel, the Sheppard story was circulating in a number of different forms in various genres and media. Applebee’s “Narrative” was still in circulation after its numerous reprintings in the first half of the eighteenth century; John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* and William Hogarth’s series of engravings titled *Industry and Idleness* remained popular well into the nineteenth century.<sup>72</sup>

John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*, which first appeared in 1728, is one of the first fictionalized accounts of the life of Jack Sheppard. The highwayman, Macheath, is the Sheppard figure, and Peachum, the thief-taker and Macheath’s nemesis, is the fictionalized Jonathan Wild. The popularity of *The Beggar’s Opera* carried it well into the nineteenth century—it was

---

<sup>71</sup> It is interesting that the epistolary form of the “Memoirs” did not have much staying power as the body of Sheppard narratives developed—this is in part because of the simple reason that Applebee’s “Narrative” both had a plausible explanation of Sheppard’s final escape from Newgate, and was more successful marketed and cross-referenced. In the end, though, neither the first-person form of the “Narrative” nor the epistolary form of the “Memoirs” was adopted by Ainsworth, who used an omniscient third-person narrator to bring in elements of a variety of sources from a variety of genres.

<sup>72</sup> Although it’s impossible to verify whether or nineteenth-century readers recalled *The Beggar’s Opera* and *Industry and Idleness* as being about the historical Jack Sheppard, it seems likely that they would recognize at least the important elements of Sheppard’s biography in these adaptations, in spite of the important differences—after all, versions of Sheppard’s life that were more explicitly biographical were still popular and frequently reprinted well into the early nineteenth century (see bibliography of nineteenth-century primary sources on Jack Sheppard).

produced almost every year from 1728 until 1886.<sup>73</sup> The second text linking the historical Sheppard and his eighteenth-century off-shoots with the novel by Ainsworth is the series of engravings by William Hogarth entitled *Industry and Idleness*, which first appeared in 1747. The series traces the fates of two apprentices—the idle one meets his end at Tyburn, as Sheppard did, while his industrious counterpart, Goodchild, eventually becomes Lord Mayor of London. Hogarth’s popularity extended well beyond his death in 1764, and his engravings were frequently reprinted in penny periodicals well into the nineteenth century. The twelve plates of *Industry and Idleness*, the most popular of his series of engravings on “modern moral subjects,” appeared in *The Penny Magazine* in 1834, just five years before the publication of Ainsworth’s novel.

So Jack Sheppard had never really fallen out of the public imagination from the time of his brief career ending at Tyburn in 1724, to January 1839, when William Harrison Ainsworth began the serial publication of his novel. In keeping with the conventions of melodrama and Gothic fiction popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Ainsworth’s novel reimagines the early life of Jack Sheppard to include some mystery surrounding his birth and his mother’s origins. In Ainsworth’s version, we discover that Sheppard’s mother was the oldest child of an ancient but decaying aristocratic family, and Jack, were he not a convicted felon, would be the heir. Besides the gentrification of Sheppard (which was first introduced by Gay in *The Beggar’s Opera*), the major liberty Ainsworth takes with historical fact is the introduction of Thames Darrell, Jack’s fellow apprentice and adoptive brother. Hogarth suggested the character of the “industrious” apprentice to provide a counterpoint to the wicked example of the idle one. Ainsworth adopts this idea, including an unambiguously good hero to serve as a foil to his likeable but tragically flawed anti-hero, Jack.<sup>74</sup> Ainsworth works to make the connection with Hogarth’s series as apparent as possible—the second volume of his novel, which begins when Jack is a thirteen-year-old carpenter’s apprentice, opens with a chapter entitled, “The Idle Apprentice”—an allusion that would be immediately recognizable to contemporary readers, even before Thames Darrell is introduced as Jack’s “industrious” counterpart. Further, the first (and perhaps most famous) plate by George Cruikshank of the second volume has some obvious parallels with the first plate of Hogarth’s series.<sup>75</sup>

The scene is obviously the same in the two plates—the master peering in at the door of the workshop, finding the idle apprentice remiss in his work. In the Hogarth plate (Figure 1), the idle apprentice is in shadow, while Goodchild, the industrious apprentice, is caught in a beam of

---

<sup>73</sup> When *The Beggar’s Opera* was first produced in 1728, its run of 62 performances was the record for the longest running play—a record it held for over a hundred years. There’s some record of it being produced in almost every year between 1728 and 1886 (William Eben Schulz, *Gay’s Beggar’s Opera: Its Content, History & Influence* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1923), xxi). The theatrical adaptations of Sheppard’s life continued with some regularity into the early nineteenth century, with W.T. Moncrieff’s *Jack Sheppard, Housebreaker, or, London in 1724* appearing at the Victoria (?) in 1825.

<sup>74</sup> Ranulph serves a similar function as a foil to his half-brother, Luke Rookwood, in Ainsworth’s earlier novel (*Rookwood*, 1834; see Chapter 1: “Ainsworth’s ‘Portrait of the Robber’”).

<sup>75</sup> I am indebted to Jonathan E. Hill’s article on the development of Cruikshank’s “tableau style” and to Martin Meisel for pointing out some of the more minute parallels between Cruikshank’s illustrations and the Hogarth engravings. Matthew Buckley, in his “Sensations of Celebrity: *Jack Sheppard* and the Mass Audience,” likewise explores the Hogarthian echoes of Cruikshank’s illustrations, but does so in order to further his argument that *Jack Sheppard* and the sensation it incited helped to spur a shift from a “political” to a “perceptual modernity.”

light on the right side of the plate. Goodchild's virtue is apparent from his orderly loom, his beneficent smile as he leans over his work, and from the broadsheet over his head displaying the ballads of the London 'Prentice and Dick Whittington. The idle 'prentice, on the other hand, appears to have fallen asleep standing up, with his head leaning back against an upright post (a posture that foreshadows his final death at Tyburn). The ballad hung over the idle 'prentice's head is the "Ballad of Moll Flanders." The prominent display of the title is an obvious allusion to Daniel Defoe, representing another early attempt to link the historical Jack Sheppard to the eighteenth-century novelist. The empty beer mug that appears to be floating in the foreground at the far left indicates the reason for the idle 'prentice's sleepiness, while his carelessness is suggested by the torn manual on the ground at his feet, and the cat playing with part of his loom.

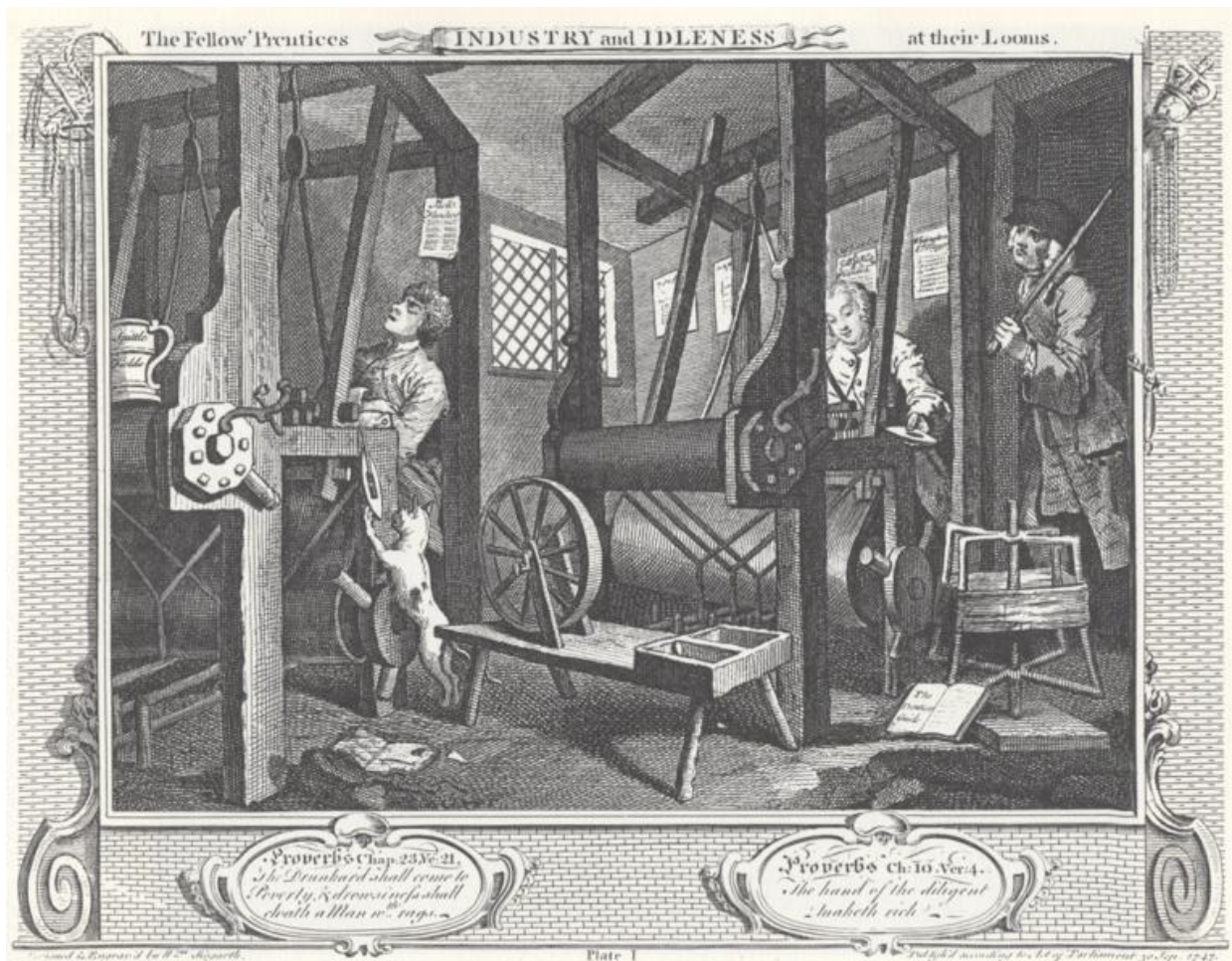


Figure 1: William Hogarth. "The Idle Apprentice." Plate 1, *Industry and Idleness*, 1747.

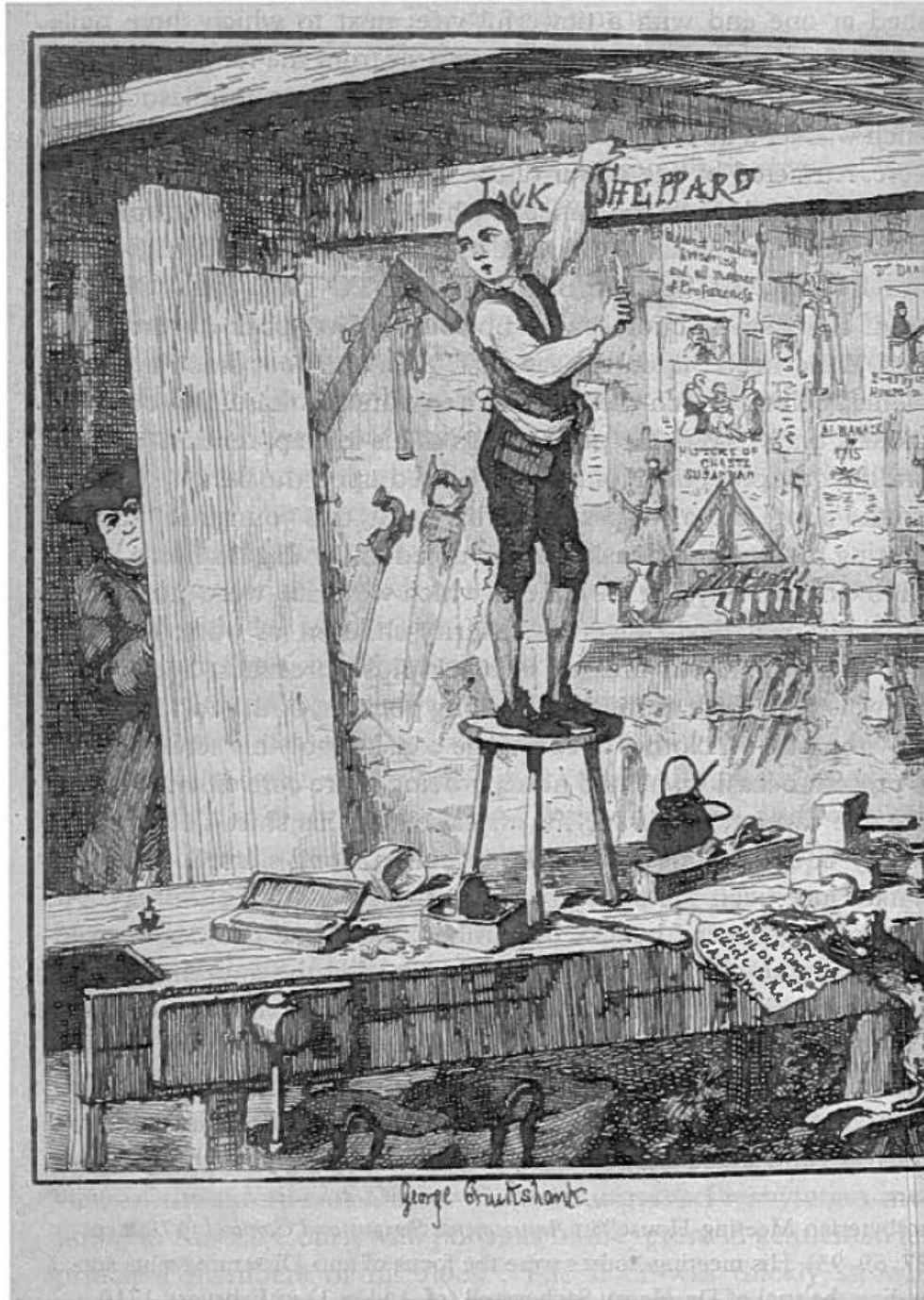


Figure 2: George Cruikshank, "Jack carving his name on the beam." *Jack Sheppard* by W.H. Ainsworth, 1839.



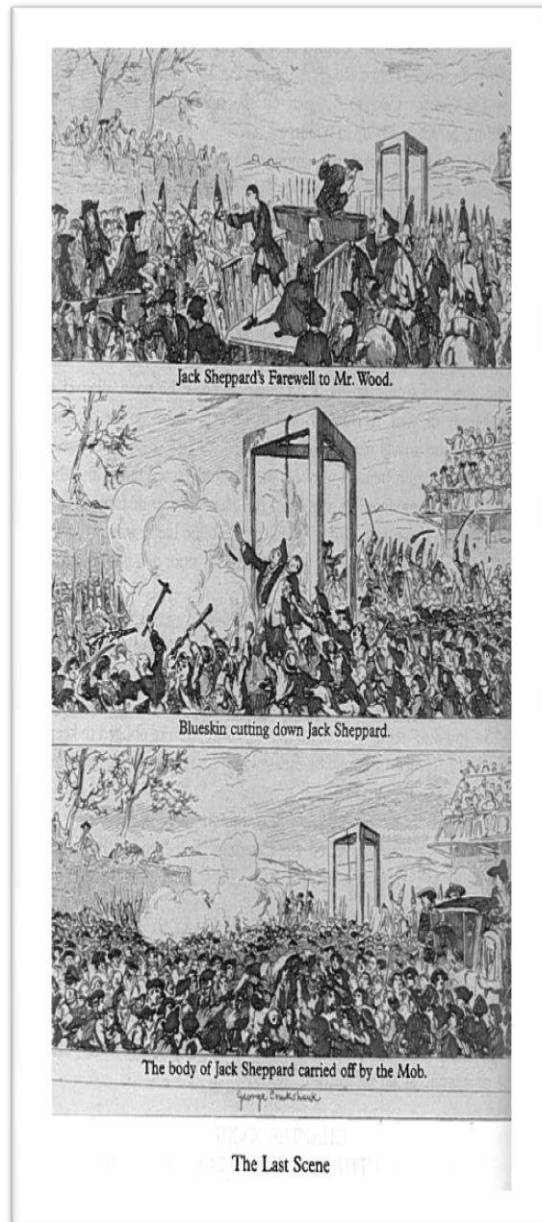


Figure 3: George Cruikshank. "The Last Scene." *Jack Sheppard* by W.H. Ainsworth, 1839.



Figure 4: William Hogarth. "The Idle 'Prentice Executed at Tyburn." *Industry and Idleness*. 1747.

The plate by Cruikshank from Ainsworth's novel (Figure 2) shares some of the same elements—the broadsheets on the wall of the workshop behind Jack display ballads that celebrate virtue, like the "History of Chaste Susannah," and the tidiness of the tools hanging on the master's wall in the background is in sharp contrast to the chaos on the workbench in the foreground. As in Hogarth's print, the slovenly apprentice's mess has attracted the attention of a cat—in Cruikshank's print, the cat appears to be going for the cheese on the bench and is pulling loose a ballad analogous to the "Moll Flanders" broadsheet of Hogarth's version—this one is the "History of the Four Kings, or, the Child's Best Guide to the Gallows." Jack's position in the center of the picture, standing on a joint-stool below a crossbeam, foreshadows his death by hanging even more obviously than did the posture of the idle apprentice in Hogarth's engraving.

The final plates by Hogarth and Cruikshank's final illustration have the same striking parallels as the first plate. The final scene of both texts is the execution of the idle 'prentice at Tyburn. The Cruikshank version of this scene is a triptych, consisting of a plate broken into three horizontal scenes, providing a downward-moving narrative of Jack's final moments (Figure 3). The top scene shows Jack in the cart on his way to Tyburn, pausing to bid farewell to Mr. Wood (the three-sided gallows is visible in the background). The middle scene shows Jack's body being cut from the gallows by Blueskin amidst a rioting crowd of onlookers. The bottom scene shows the mob carrying away Jack's body, with soldiers holding pikes in the left middle ground, the gallows in the middle right background, and a cart with some of the more well to do spectators in the right fore.

The bottom scene by Cruikshank is the most strikingly similar to the corresponding plate by Hogarth (Figure 4). The scene of the Idle 'Prentice being executed at Tyburn is drawn from the same angle, with many of the same elements: The soldiers in the left middle ground with their pikes upraised; the carriage in the right foreground filled with spectators; the crowd lining



the stadium seating in the right middle ground; and of course, the three-sided gallows in the right center background. Even the trees in the left background are the same in the two images, despite the fact that the trees would of course have grown in the intervening decades.

The Hogarthian echoes apparent in the Cruikshank text are obvious enough that they cannot have been unconscious—nor would either the artist or the author have wished for the audience to remain ignorant of the novel’s debt to Hogarth. Cruikshank’s illustrations would have been recognizably Hogarthian to his contemporary readers, and the deliberate parallels between the two texts would have suggested that the Cruikshank images (and, by extension, the Ainsworth text) should be read with the same care and attention to emblematic detail demanded by the Hogarth series.<sup>76</sup>

If the parallels between the Hogarth series and Cruikshank’s illustrations did not foreground clearly enough Ainsworth’s debt to his eighteenth-century sources, the author actually includes an apocryphal meeting between Sheppard, Gay, and Hogarth. The meeting takes place when Sheppard is imprisoned in Newgate, before his final and most dramatic escape. The portrait artist, James Thornhill, visits Jack in prison to take his portrait before his execution, and Gay and Hogarth accompany him. The Thornhill portrait, though now lost, is historically well documented, and it is possible that Hogarth did indeed accompany the artist to Newgate when he took the portrait, given their close relationship (Hogarth was to marry Thornhill’s daughter). Gay’s presence in the scene is historically unaccountable; probably, Ainsworth was thinking of the early review of *The Beggar’s Opera* that I describe above, which cited a meeting (again, probably apocryphal) between Gay and Jonathan Wild in a pub while Sheppard was still at large. According to *The Flying Post*, Gay was inspired to write *The Beggar’s Opera* after hearing Sheppard described by his nemesis, Wild. Whatever Ainsworth’s source, and however plausible or implausible the meeting between Sheppard, Gay, and Hogarth, it shows the conscious desire of the author to highlight his novel’s connection with earlier narratives of Sheppard’s life—both fictional and historical.

But Ainsworth’s novel isn’t just a Frankensteinian pastiche of earlier forms: it was composed in collaboration with the illustrator with the anticipation that it would be dismantled and re-adapted for the stage. In fact, Jonathan Hill has argued convincingly in an essay on Cruikshank’s illustrations for *Jack Sheppard* that the shift in Cruikshank’s style from the “vignette-style” illustrations of earlier novels to the more easily stage-able “tableau” illustrations of *Jack Sheppard* resulted directly from the pressures of composing a novel that could easily be adapted to the stage. The illustration in Figure 5 is taken from Ainsworth’s 1835 novel, *Rookwood*. The moment Cruikshank chose to illustrate is an action shot—the famous highwayman, Dick Turpin leaps the tall Hornsey gate during the famous (though apocryphal) chase scene in which Turpin rides his famous mare from London to York in one night, with the magistrate and thief-taker hot on his heels. The sketchy and ill-defined border of the engraving implies speed and motion—the reader is able to imagine the action both before and after the moment arrested in the illustration. This is the style Jonathan Hill described as “vignette” illustration—it provides a sense of narrative action. The image of Jack carving his name on the beam in Figure 2, by contrast, is an example of Cruikshank’s developing “tableau” style. The action here has been suspended. The borders of the engraving are well defined by their frame—

---

<sup>76</sup> For more on the way that Cruikshank’s illustrations were used as extractable scenes for dramatic adaptation, see Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England*.

rather like the framing edges of a Victorian stage. The reader has to pause to decipher the image—to notice the Hogarthian attention to emblematic detail and the heavy-handed symbolism of the crossbeam.



Figure 5: George Cruikshank. "The Hornsey Gate." *Rookwood* by W.H. Ainsworth, 1834.

But unlike in the Hogarth series, the reader is not left to decipher the details alone: each detail of the engraving is enumerated in the lengthy description of the scene provided by Ainsworth. This is one instance of many in which it is tempting to assume that the engraving of the scene had been completed before, or at least concurrently with, the chapter, and that Ainsworth literally was describing the details of the already-completed illustration. Ainsworth describes the “saws, hammers, planes, axes, augers, adzes, chisels, gimblets, and an endless variety of tools [that] were ranged [...] in racks against the walls. ... Divers plans and figures were chalked upon the walls; and the spaces between them were filled up with an almanack for the year; a godly ballad, adorned with a rude wood-cut, purporting to be “*The History of Chaste Susannah*.” Ainsworth’s description progresses from the background to the fore, touching on each item on the workbench with scrupulous attention to detail, and finally ending with the description of the idle apprentice himself.

Cruikshank’s illustrations for *Jack Sheppard* serve two purposes. First, they provide a visual space where the more than one hundred years’ accumulation of meaning surrounding the historical Jack Sheppard could be consolidated. The echoes from Hogarth’s famous engravings would have been readily apparent, both to readers of the novel and to those pausing in the street to admire the engravings as they were displayed in the windows of booksellers’ shops. The illustrations, because they were easily reproducible and copyright law was not stringently observed, circulated more widely even than the text of the novel. The illustrations were made to stand in metonymically not only for Ainsworth’s novel as a whole, but also came to stand in for the entire accumulated mythology of Jack Sheppard. As I’ve shown, the illustrations were

sometimes privileged over the text—Ainsworth’s text serving merely to enumerate and to provide context for the symbolic weight of the details created by Cruikshank.

Second, the new attention to emblematic detail and the elaborately staged scenes of Cruikshank’s new “tableau style,” to borrow Jonathan Hill’s phrase once again, make the illustrations into a kind of pre-scripted set design and stage direction for dramatists who would adapt the novel for the stage. And indeed, that is precisely how the engravings were used. Both with and without Cruikshank’s explicit sanction, his illustrations (or shoddy but recognizable imitations) were used on playbills and advertisements for almost all of the early adaptations of Ainsworth’s novel that appeared in late 1839 and 1840. The popularity of staging “tableaux vivants” reached its peak as part of domestic entertainments in the early part of the nineteenth century, and the mode began to be incorporated into stage theatricals by the 1830s. Scenes would either open or close with the actors frozen in an emblematic pose, often reproducing the posture and backdrop of famous paintings—or, in the case of the *Jack Sheppard* plays, popular novel illustrations. Playwrights had no wish to hide their indebtedness to the Cruikshank illustrations—in many cases, they refer the actors and directors to the illustrations in the place of more elaborate stage directions. For example, in Buckstone’s popular adaptation, which appeared on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October in 1839, Act II opens with the following stage direction: “*Wood’s workshops in Wych Street, Drury Lane. ‘The name on the beam.’ Jack Sheppard is discovered on a stool carving the last letter of his name on a cross-beam—Some planks cover the entrance door, right (See Illustration)*” (21). Buckstone doesn’t cite Cruikshank by name, but the engravings were so easily recognizable that he didn’t have to. One early reviewer exclaimed at the accuracy with which the emblematic detail of Cruikshank’s engravings was reproduced on the stage: the audience “will be struck with the exactness and beauty with which Mr. George Cruikshank’s varied compositions are placed in living tableaux before the eye. In some instances they might be mistaken for the artist’s actual designs enormously magnified, and mysteriously made to breathe” (Quoted in Jonathan Hill, “Cruikshank, Ainsworth, and Tableau Illustration”, *Victorian Studies*, 23.4, 1980, p. 458).

Cruikshank’s Hogarthian echoes emphasize the narrative echoes that can be traced between Ainsworth’s novel as a whole and his eighteenth-century sources, including not only Hogarth and Gay, but also the Sheppard biographies and histories of the city of London. Ainsworth researched his topic exhaustively, reading the early printed accounts of Sheppard’s life (especially the two printed by Applebee, the “History” and the “Narrative”), as well as the contemporary, sensationalized accounts printed in newspapers like the *Daily Journal*, the weekly *British Journal*, and the *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer*. He likewise foregrounds his use of the more common histories of the city of London, actually citing his sources verbatim on occasion, especially from William Maitland’s and John Strype’s histories of the city of London. Ainsworth’s insistence on providing the reader with historically accurate and geographically specific detail can have the tendency to distract the reader from the narrative. Ainsworth’s attention to historical, geographical, and architectural specificity is typical of the historical novel established by Scott. The difference in Ainsworth, as I have suggested, lies in the frequency and extent of these passages of historical exposition. He persistently situates the action of the novel in the familiar setting of London, pointing out landmarks that would be familiar to his readers and clarifying any important differences between the cityscape of the early eighteenth century and his own London of the 1830s. His specificity and frequent comparisons between the 1720s and the 1830s emphasize the sameness of the London of Jack Sheppard and the London of his early Victorian readership: many of the monuments, edifices, and bridges in question still

existed, although many had changed shape or had since been rebuilt or renovated. All this insistence on the physical remains of the places important to Jack Sheppard's story helped to foster the sense that the London of Jack Sheppard had actually left material traces behind—traces that Ainsworth was uniquely capable of reading, interpreting, and anthologizing in his novel through his use of historical and archival sources.

Ainsworth is particularly insistent on mapping the layout of Sheppard's London. He describes, with great accuracy and attention to detail, the layout of the Mint and its position within the larger social and geographical context of London. This is where Ainsworth's debt to Scott is most apparent: Scott's descriptions of historical Edinburgh in *The Heart of Midlothian*, Glasgow in *Rob Roy*, or London in *The Fortunes of Nigel* are comparable to Ainsworth's descriptions of London in *Jack Sheppard*. Scott's emphasis on localness and specificity in the cities he describes is largely responsible for the ways that his readers began to take *Rob Roy* as a kind of guide book to the Highlands north of Glasgow. Yet rarely does Scott quote his sources on the history of the city verbatim as Ainsworth does so often in *Jack Sheppard*.<sup>77</sup> For Scott, the authority of his erudite narrator is enough; Ainsworth appeals to outside authority repeatedly.

Ainsworth uses William Maitland's *The History and Survey of London from Its Foundations to the Present Time* (1756) as his source, paraphrasing and occasionally quoting directly from Maitland's description in his account of the history and structure of the criminal sanctuary. Because the other sanctuaries of Whitefriars, Salisbury Court, and the Savoy had been closed or "divested of their privileges" (69), the Mint remained, after 1712, the only remaining sanctuary in London. The Mint, or the "Island of Bermuda (as the Mint was termed by its occupants)" was still a "place of refuge to the debtor," "through the intricacies of which it was impossible for an officer to follow him, without a clue" (69). Ainsworth carefully situates the Mint geographically, placing it in the "quarter of the Borough of Southwark," comparing it to the "rookery near Saint Giles's and the desperate neighbourhood of Saffron Hill in our own time" (63). Early Victorian readers of Jack Sheppard (and, indeed, modern readers) would be able to take themselves on a Jack Sheppard tour of London, imagining themselves to be walking in the footsteps of the famous housebreaker.

Ainsworth's descriptions of Newgate, too, are part of this same effort to map a London that is historically accurate and geographically specific. In the chapter titled "Old Newgate," Ainsworth both quotes directly and paraphrases from his copy of *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster.... Written at first in the Year 1598*, by John Styrpe and John Stow. He opens the chapter with the origins of Newgate: "At the beginning of the twelfth century, [...] a fifth gate was added to the four principal entrances of London; [...] This gate, called *Newgate*, 'as being latelier builded than the rest,' continued, for upwards of three hundred years, to be used as a place of imprisonment for felons and trespassers; at the end of which time, having grown old, ruinous, and 'horribly loathsome,' it was rebuilt and enlarged [...]" (Ainsworth 322, emphasis added). The direct quotations from the Styrpe history, which I have highlighted, are hardly necessary; surely Ainsworth could have paraphrased those as easily as the rest of his exposition on the history of Newgate. Or indeed, he could have plagiarized the direct quotations wholesale; it was a common enough practice, and his contemporary audience would hardly have noticed, or have complained if they did. Ainsworth's decision to highlight his historical source

---

<sup>77</sup> A notable exception is the scene in *Rob Roy* in which Jarvie echoes a passage from Defoe's *Tour*, although it is absorbed into the diegesis—Scott does not cite it as a quotation from Defoe.

by quoting it directly (although he does not mention the title) shows how deliberately he wished to foreground his historical research.

Ainsworth's persistent focus on historical and geographical specificity parallels his insistence on the material, physical history of Jack Sheppard. Perhaps the most striking example is Ainsworth's assertion that Jack Sheppard had left a material trace that could still be found by devoted pilgrims visiting the house of Owen Wood in Wych Street. As Jack finishes carving his name on the beam in the famous passage at the opening of Volume 2, Ainsworth inserts a "fac-simile" of the actual carving, interrupting the clean print of his own text to incorporate an image of a text supposedly carved by Jack's own hand. Because Ainsworth is so insistent upon the materiality of the carved name, and goes so far as to insert an image of it in the midst of a printed page, I will reproduce it here. Ainsworth writes, "the name inscribed upon the beam (of which, as it has been carefully preserved by the subsequent owners of Mr. Wood's habitation in Wych Street, we are luckily enabled to furnish a fac-simile) was—

**JACK SHEPPARD** (123).

The claim that a material trace left by Jack's own hand still exists, and can be viewed and touched by visitors, reminds readers that a real hand did the carving. Ainsworth's insistence on the material traces left by that real hand emphasizes the existence of the fully real human consciousness that belonged to it. Ainsworth's characters might lack the sophistication of Scott's or Dickens's, but his insistence on their real, material past forces the reader to imagine a psyche for the hero even as the author fails or refuses to create one.

All of this attention to historical, geographical, and architectural detail highlights both the historicity and the localness of the narrative. Despite the many Gothic or Romantic tropes that Ainsworth weaves into his novel—the "industrious" Thames Darrell, the dramatic flood of the river, Sheppard's aristocratic heritage—the basic narrative is firmly rooted in history. What better way to demonstrate this than to plant those branches firmly in a historical, but geographically specific, London, while appealing to historical authorities to confirm the truth of his narrative? As the author of the "History" assured his reader, the story of Jack Sheppard "is not compos'd of Fiction, Fable, or Stories plac'd at York, Rome, or Jamaica, but Facts done at your Doors, Facts unheard of, altogether new, Incredible, and yet Uncontestable" (reproduced in Defoe, *Memoirs of an English Officer*, 230).

Ainsworth's indexing of the exact locations in early Victorian London where Jack Sheppard had walked and lived a century before is analogous to the claims by John Applebee that Jack Sheppard had penned his own autobiography in the "Narrative," or the claim laid out in the 1729 *Flying Post* that John Gay had met, in person, with Jonathan Wild before writing *The Beggar's Opera*. These attempts to situate the action geographically as well as historically serve to enhance the historicity of Jack Sheppard. Ainsworth's project thus does more than to adapt the form of the historical novel established by Scott to suit the changing literary marketplace: his persistent emphasis on his eighteenth-century sources—both the avowedly fictionalized, like *The Beggar's Opera* and *Industry and Idleness*, and the supposedly historical, like the Applebee "Narrative" or the Maitland and Strype histories of London—suggests a desire to redefine not only the historical novel, but "history."

In spite of his transparent appeals to historical “fact,” Ainsworth does not set *Jack Sheppard* in a verifiable, authentic past. His eighteenth-century London is not a stable, pre-existing medium. Rather, it is informed to a large extent by the popular fictions that develop out of Applebee’s newspaper and biographical accounts and subsequent chapbooks and dramas. He calls on his nineteenth-century readers’ own experiences of London to make Jack Sheppard’s city more “real,” describing the superficial changes to architecture and geography that had taken place over the last century. Ainsworth appeals to material traces left by the robber himself—the name on the beam—to emphasize the “realness” of the events he describes. Yet just as often, he incorporates elements from fictionalized accounts of Sheppard’s life or from his own imagination. These sources are foregrounded as insistently as the more authentic, “historical” sources, like Applebee’s “Narrative” or the histories of London. Ainsworth integrates fiction with non-fiction deliberately and transparently, yet he never engages in a self-conscious critique of their relation. His seemingly indiscriminate mixing of fiction with historical fact suggests that the popular fictions about Jack Sheppard are as useful to understanding historical figures and events as the supposedly non-fictional. Fictionalizations that inform popular perceptions of a historical figure are legitimized as sources. From the 1840s onward, Ainsworth’s novel became the most accepted “history” of the life of Jack Sheppard, suggesting that his consolidation of history with popular myth provided a more complete portrait of the robber than either the purely historical or the largely fictional—one that is perhaps more accurate to the real, historical figure, in that it incorporates, to some extent, the psychological elements of character, while remaining true to the supposedly “authentic” body of historical sources.

### **The Jack Sheppard Craze**

Ainsworth’s use of sources brings history and fiction into tension—with, as contemporary critics claimed, potentially dangerous consequences, destabilizing a compound that Scott had been understood to have stabilized. *Jack Sheppard* generated critical debate in part because of the way that it proliferated itself. Its episodic structure made it particularly easy to adapt to the stage. Ainsworth had left the seams visible, as it were, of his own patchwork of sources, practically inviting playwrights and amateur actors to dismantle, rearrange, and re-enact *Jack Sheppard*. Cruikshank’s illustrations were used by professional directors to aid in choreography and set design, and by average readers as guides for home theatricals and *tableaux vivants*. The episodic structure of the novel made it easy to act out one or two scenes, and the popularity of the novel ensured that, even out of context, the scenes would be recognizable and understood.

Just weeks after the novel was published in volume form in October 1839 (and before the final monthly parts were issued in *Bentley’s Miscellany*), stage adaptations began to appear all over London. At least seven play adaptations appeared in the eighteen months following the novel, besides countless penny gaff versions.<sup>78</sup> At least three other novels about the life of Jack

---

<sup>78</sup> Exact numbers for the licensed theatrical versions are difficult to come by, given the spottiness of the minor theater records, and impossible to come by for the penny gaff versions that were produced in public houses, in the streets, and at fairs. Critics and bibliographers have cited as many as eight different stage versions of *Jack Sheppard* immediately following its publication in 1839-40, and as few as five. Seven is my own estimate, based on records, acting copies, and citations I was able to turn up at the British Library

Sheppard were produced in the five years following the appearance of Ainsworth's novel, riding on the coattails of Ainsworth's tremendous popularity. Nor was Jack Sheppard's popularity limited to its circulation as a novel or its theatrical productions: songs, passages of dialogue, and George Cruikshank's illustrations were extracted, both with and without the permission of the artist, and were disseminated across Britain, Western Europe, and North America. The canting song from Ainsworth's novel, "Nix my Dolly, Pals, Fake Away" was set to music for J.B. Buckstone's stage adaptation, and the tune was so catchy that it was famously played from the steeple of St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh (Ellis 1.366). The popularity of Ainsworth's novel gave rise to a new generation of chapbooks, ballads, and penny histories of the life of the eighteenth-century criminal, largely taking Ainsworth's novel, rather than eighteenth-century sources, as their copy text and source.

The Sheppard craze that swept Great Britain in the wake of Ainsworth's novel in 1839-40 is useful in examining the process of "emblemization" that developed in the literary marketplace of the 1830s. Jane Moody has argued that the monopoly on traditional narrative drama held by the Royal Patent theaters drove minor theaters to develop plays which were staged as a pastiche of emblematic scenes and characters, with music as the unifying medium. This style of drama became popular enough that the major theaters caught on. And once the major theaters had adopted this mode, Moody argues, the style began to proliferate in fiction, as well.<sup>79</sup> Novelists who wanted to benefit from the free advertising offered by having their work adapted to the stage collaborated with their illustrators and with dramatists, creating an environment of literary exchange and cross-pollination that crossed boundaries of genre and of medium.<sup>80</sup>

Because of Ainsworth's close collaboration with George Cruikshank and their attention to emblematic detail that could be easily dramatized on stage, *Jack Sheppard* was especially suitable for theatrical adaptation. But beyond the novel's capacity to proliferate itself in other genres and media, *Jack Sheppard* appeared more dangerous to critics because of the ways that it blends the legendary and the historical, as well as for the obvious sympathy the novel elicits for the criminal protagonist. Middle class critics already feared that less savvy readers of Gothic novels (i.e., middle class women and working class readers) would not be able to differentiate between the real and the romantic. Ainsworth's novel, as I have shown, weaves together the historical, archival biography of Jack Sheppard with various elements of the popular fiction that had circulated after his death, foregrounding the historical sources, blending the "real" with the romantic so that the two are almost indistinguishable. Ainsworth's insistence on the local, material history of his hero disguises the novel's reliance on conventional romance tropes. The dangers associated with reading Ainsworth's novel thus seemed greater to critics than with reading other novels: parts of *Jack Sheppard* (indeed, most of the basic plot) are "real," and the criminal characters advance from the margins of the novel to the center, where they supplant the

---

and the National Library of Scotland in July 2008 (see bibliography of primary sources on the Jack Sheppard narrative).

<sup>79</sup> Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

<sup>80</sup> It is important to remember that Scott's novels were already being mined by playwrights at this point, although not always with the novelist's official connivance or the help provided by the novelist's collaboration with the illustrator to create easily extractable scenes and *tableaux*, although Scott did collaborate with—and even befriend—some of his theatrical adapters, most notably Daniel Terry.

traditional romantic hero.<sup>81</sup> Because it relies, to a large extent, on popular history, *Jack Sheppard* does not depend simply on novelistic conventions of the probable to create and sustain the reader's suspension of disbelief; the novel narrates real, local history, so conventions of probability become largely irrelevant.

Ainsworth's critics believed *Jack Sheppard* to be more dangerous than contemporary Newgate novels like *Oliver Twist* or Bulwer Lytton's *Paul Clifford*. Ainsworth's historical accuracy might have been seen as a safeguard against such accusations, because unlike Bulwer's *Paul Clifford*, which deviates from the historical accounts to allow a happy ending, Ainsworth followed his eponymous anti-hero's life through to his unredeemed death at the gallows. Yet critics blamed *Jack Sheppard* and its theatrical adaptations for decades after its publication in 1839 for inciting working class violence and crime. The most famous crime attributed to corruption by *Jack Sheppard* was the murder of Lord William Russell. In May of 1840, Courvoisier, Lord William Russell's valet, asserted in one of his confessions that he had been inspired by reading *Jack Sheppard* to murder his master. Courvoisier's public execution attracted a crowd of thousands outside of Newgate prison, including William Makepeace Thackeray, who described the experience in his essay "On Going to See a Man Hanged" (1840). The public alarm that arose after this confession was such that the Lord Chamberlain banned the licensing of any play with "Jack Sheppard" in the title.

This ban lasted for forty years, but had no effect on the production of penny gaff theatricals, or on versions of the play produced with the names of the main characters changed. The most popular of these spin-offs with changed names, *The Stone Jug*, was first performed at the Adelphi Theatre in London in 1873, and has a "Notice to managers" on the second page, reminding them that "[t]his is the only form in which the escapades of the popular hero of Ainsworth's Romance are allowed to be enacted on the Stage; but under the present title, and with the present characters, its representation has been specially sanctioned by the Lord Chamberlain" (*Stone Jug*, 2). The play itself is virtually identical in terms of plot to the earlier acting versions by J.B. Buckstone and others—only the names have been changed, and the new names are so obviously analogous to their historical and fictional originals as to be almost ludicrous: Jack Sheppard becomes "Bob Chance"; "Owen Wood," the carpenter and Jack's master, becomes "Benjamin Bevel" ("Bevel," of course, being a carpentry tool); "Jonathan Wild" becomes "Sampson Savage"; "Blueskin" becomes "Purpleface." Even Ainsworth's fictional character, Thames Darrell, is altered—in Ainsworth's romance, he is named after the river from which Wood rescues him during the great storm. In *The Stone Jug*, he becomes "Richard Riverside" for the same reason. With the exception of Darrell/Riverside, these characters are all historical figures—changing their names without altering the substance of their actions seems to be a superficial nod, at best, to the ban on "Jack Sheppard" plays. Even the legal ban had little effect on the proliferation of Jack Sheppard plays; Ainsworth's novel seems to have taken on a life of its own, circulating freely in the public imagination in a variety of forms and media.

---

<sup>81</sup> The outlaw anti-heroes of Scott's fiction likewise threaten the stability of the character field by advancing from the margins of the novel's plot, but in Scott, they merely threaten to take over the novel's romantic plot; they are safely returned to the margins by the novel's close. For a more detailed discussion of Scott's anti-heroes and the character field of the novel, see Chapter 2: "Character Structure and Outlawry in *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy*."



Perhaps as a result of the sensational example of Courvoisier, prison officials began to look for evidence that incarcerated felons had been tempted to crime by the unsavory example presented by the popular novel and its theatrical adaptations. In 1841, a Liverpool prison inspector complained about the number of young men incarcerated who claimed to admire Jack Sheppard, to have read the novel or to have had it read to them, and/or to have seen it produced in the theater. Some boys, the inspector claimed, had even “attempted to play Jack Sheppard” themselves (*Report from the Select Committee*). The Liverpool prison inspector was so convinced of the pernicious effects of *Jack Sheppard* on the youth of his city that he ordered all young men in his system to be questioned on the subject. While some admitted that the play was “very interesting,” they blamed their incarceration on other causes (“getting into bad company,” “love of drink,” etc.). Most, though, seemed eager enough to blame their corruption on the novel or its theatrical adaptations: “I am certain that it was a desire to go to the theatres that first brought me to ruin”; “I was first led to steal on purpose to get money to go to the plays...”; “I attribute my first committing crime to have arisen entirely from a desire to go to plays” (*Report*). Obviously, these claims should be taken with a grain of salt in terms of their actual veracity: these young men were in jail mostly for pick-pocketing and were being questioned as to the cause of their crime; corruption by a popular play was offered as an easy scapegoat. But, true or not, their assertions were important to the way the public *imagined* criminals to be produced. The public outcry against *Jack Sheppard* was belied by its continued popularity through the end of the century.

The proliferation of Jack Sheppard narratives might not seem to have much to do with the bare bones of the story itself, a common enough story of a young apprentice who breaks his bonds, turns to crime, and is eventually hanged. Yet the Jack Sheppard narrative has perpetuated itself, with each new version giving rise to new offshoots and imitators, crossing genres and media. The historical Jack Sheppard’s story was likewise one of self-perpetuation (and self-preservation). Even before he died, his story was proliferating by word of mouth and by newspaper publishers and garreteers like John Applebee. His story continued because his life did—most criminals were arrested, sentenced, and either executed or transported after only a few days or weeks in the condemned hold at Newgate. These criminals were granted a paragraph at most, and more often only a line or two, in the daily or weekly journals. Applebee would publish the “dying speech” or “last confession” of the criminal, thanks to the cooperation of the Newgate Ordinary, the Reverend Mr. Wagstaff and, if the criminal life were popular enough to warrant a second edition, he or she might be included in later editions of the *Newgate Calendar* or collections of *Notable Trials*. But Sheppard’s was a different case: he survived beyond the initial paragraph delineating his arrest and sentencing, and was granted a longer paragraph describing his escape (and mocking the incompetence of the Newgate officers). Sheppard was captured again—and again escaped; sparking a still longer account describing his escape from the castle in Newgate, and the publication of Applebee’s initial “History of the Life of Jack Sheppard.” Applebee’s “Narrative” was published the day Sheppard was finally executed, but the proliferation of narratives of his life did not stop with his death. The repetition of this motif (crime, capture, escape) creates the backbone of a perfect serial narrative.

The seriality of Sheppard’s repeated escapes and arrests provides an episodic structure profitable for early eighteenth-century pamphleteers and necessary for the serialized novels of the early Victorian period. John Applebee’s efforts to take advantage of the emerging and disparate mythology of Jack Sheppard to form a system of self-promoting, inter-generic cross-referencing prefigures the form that the novel would take in the early nineteenth century.

William Harrison Ainsworth and his illustrator George Cruikshank create a text that consolidates and weaves together a variety of easily recognizable strands of the Sheppard mythology. They designed the piecemeal, episodic narrative to be easily dismantled and re-imagined in other genres. Their chosen structure made the historical novel, like Sheppard's basic story, into a self-perpetuating, self-proliferating form.

**Chapter 4:**  
**History, the Gothic, and the “Wandering Race”:** The Place and Time of Gypsies in  
*Rookwood* and *Guy Mannering*

Turpin was the *ultimus Romanorum*, the last of a race, which (we were almost about to say we regret) is now altogether extinct. (*Rookwood* 163)

Although the origin of those gypsy tribes, which formerly inundated most of the nations of Europe, and which in some degree subsist among them as a different people, is generally known, the reader will pardon my saying a few words respecting their situation in Scotland. (*Guy Mannering* 35)

With Robin Hood, Rob Roy, and Jack Sheppard, I have shown how historical figures operating outside of the normative law can become detached from their particular historical moments, and how these figures’ mobilization as fictional characters helped to bring about a shift in the novel’s character structure as the outlaw figures apply pressure to the central plot and serve as rivals to the romantic hero. In each case, the novel in which these historical (or legendary, in the case of Robin Hood) figures appear serves to condense a series of references to both official and folk history, consolidating the mythico-historic status of these characters and troubling the distinction between history and fiction. In this chapter, I examine the consequences to the novel’s structure when Walter Scott and Ainsworth, writing in the Gothic tradition, activate a set of figures that are, by their very definition in the British literary imagination, detached both from history and from a specific geographic point of origin.

“Gypsies,” as the Romany people were called in nineteenth-century Britain, were long imagined to be a “people without history.”<sup>82</sup> The story of their origins was a source of debate by scholars and imaginative speculation by novelists and poets, who found in these people—alien, and yet familiar—a ripe source for Gothic romance.<sup>83</sup> The currently accepted account of the Roma’s origins as Indian and their language as closely related to Sanskrit was already in circulation in the early nineteenth century, and most communities of Gypsies were actually well settled, if not integrated, in the European countries to which they had long since emigrated.<sup>84</sup> Yet despite this, most writers still preferred to imagine the Roma as a rootless “wandering tribe” of vaguely Oriental origin.

It is no wonder that late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers and artists were interested in Gypsies as subjects. They could function as a *tabula rasa*: because they were

---

<sup>82</sup> See Katie Trumpener, “The Time of the Gypsies: A ‘People without History’ in the Narratives of the West” and Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*.

<sup>83</sup> Trumpener notes the preponderance of Gypsy encounters in Jan Potocki’s 1803 *The Saragossa Manuscript*, which Tvetan Todorov cites as the “inaugural[1]” example of “the period of fantastic narrative” (qtd in Trumpener 869).

<sup>84</sup> Peter Garside points to Scott’s frequent linking of Gypsies to India through allusion and analogy and argues that Scott was aware of contemporary theories that India was the Gypsies’ original place of origin (Garside, “Meg Merrilies and India”).

considered placeless and without a definitive history, writers could project their own imaginative ideals onto the Gypsy, creating their own version of an origin story for these people, whether or not they researched the many ethnographic accounts of Gypsy origins circulating during the period. In her *Gypsies and the British Imagination* (2006), Deborah Epstein Nord suggests that the Gypsies, as a people “without history,” “came to stand, paradoxically, for the question of origins itself and to be used as a trope to signify beginnings, primal ancestry, and the ultimate secret of individual identity” (8).<sup>85</sup> The Romantic-era obsession with origins is well documented: the antiquarian revival, the Gothic, and the rise of the historical novel demonstrate the period’s general fascination with the search for beginnings. Yet Gypsies baffle that search for origins because of their lack of an officially recorded history. They become emblems for a frustrated quest for ultimate origins.

Gypsies were long conflated with criminals because of their apparent placelessness, which was identified as “vagrancy” by local and national authorities with an increasing interest in keeping everyone in their right place. The criminalization of vagrancy dates back to the early modern era.<sup>86</sup> A moral line was drawn between the “deserving” and the “undeserving” poor, and that line was drawn based on labor practices and location: vagrants, wanderers, Gypsies, highwaymen, and the homeless were all cast under the same rubric of the “undeserving” poor—those, in other words, who had no fixed abode or parish. This categorization is generally attributed to changing attitudes towards poverty and almsgiving following the Reformation, but may actually have begun earlier still: “The shift from indiscriminate charity to the reservation of alms only for the deserving was under way as early as the twelfth century, in Gratian’s Decree and writings of twelfth-century decretists, who reinterpreted church fathers to divide beggars into the ‘honest’ and the ‘dishonest’” (Woodbridge 276). So the ethnic fact of being a “Gypsy,” as late as the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, was enough to label one as having no origin or fixed abode, and therefore to convict one of vagrancy and hence “dishonesty”—even if, like the Gypsy tribes of *Rookwood* and of *Guy Mannering*, the Gypsies in question had actually been settled for generations in the same neighborhood.

Jane Austen’s *Emma* is often a go-to example for the ironic deployment of Gypsy stereotypes in an early nineteenth-century novel; however, the incident involving Gypsies in that novel has relatively little impact on its central plot.<sup>87</sup> Rather, it is an example of the romantic imagination run wild: the troop of Gypsies (composed mostly of children) that “attack” Harriet are not actually a threat either to the young women or to the broader community (*Emma* 217). Indeed, it’s not clear whether the term “Gypsy” in *Emma* refers to actual Romany people, or whether it’s used as a generic term to describe vagabonds and vagrants in general.<sup>88</sup> The “Gypsy” episode in *Emma* offers only an oblique commentary on the search for origins: they

---

<sup>85</sup> Like Nord, I use the now-antiquated term “Gypsy” instead of the currently preferred “Roma,” because “Gypsy” was the term most often used in the early nineteenth century and the word almost invariably chosen by Scott and most other writers of the period.

<sup>86</sup> Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

<sup>87</sup> See, for example, D.E. Nord, “Marks of Race: Gypsy Figures and Eccentric Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing”; and Laura Mooneyham White, “Beyond the Romantic Gypsy: Narrative Disruptions and Ironies in Austen’s *Emma*.”

<sup>88</sup> The term is used again later in the novel in the sense of “vagabond, informal,” as Mrs. Elton describes her vision of the strawberry-picking gathering at Donwell Abbey as “a sort of gipsy party” (232).

threaten Harriet Smith in particular because they call attention to her own uncertain, “gypsy” status. Katie Trumpener uses the Gypsy episode in *Emma* to launch her discussion of the Gypsies in *Guy Mannering*. In the fundamental difference between the function of the Gypsies in *Emma* and their more extended, complex use in *Guy Mannering*, Trumpener traces “the movement [...] from Gypsies who appear as actual (if threatening) characters to a lingering narrative anxiety about the Gypsies as shadowy, haunting discursive figures[, which] parallels the main shift of ‘gypsy’ literature in the nineteenth century from [...] self-contained social group into self-contained literary chronotope” (Trumpener 868-869). The Gypsies of *Guy Mannering* offer a new, more direct way of representing the search for both historical and geographical origins.

In this chapter, I examine the “self-contained chronotope” of literary Gypsies described by Trumpener in a slightly different context. I am interested in tracing the development of the Gypsy archetype from the Gothic tradition and in the lines of continuity between Gypsy literature and literature about outlaws and crime. Ainsworth’s *Rookwood* (1834) is the logical (even if not chronological) place to begin. Although *Rookwood* is clearly influenced by *Guy Mannering*, Ainsworth seems unwilling to acknowledge the debt. In *Rookwood*, he launches his prospective project of a series of novels with historical criminals at their center. According to Ainsworth’s own plans, Dick Turpin is the focus of the novel; the Gothic plot is merely the backdrop, and the Gypsies seem apparently to be a mere Gothic set-piece. *Rookwood*, although published almost twenty years after *Guy Mannering*, provides a useful example of the ways that the Gypsy stereotypes critically established by Scott in *Guy Mannering* were unironically deployed by later novelists. Indeed, Ainsworth treats the Gypsies with what can only be described as a kind of careless, haphazard glee. He not only associates the Gypsies with criminality, but fully conflates the Romany tribe in Davenham with crime by referring to Dick Turpin, the English highwayman, as the “*ultimus Romanorum*,” or the “last of the Romany” (*Rookwood* 163).<sup>89</sup> Ainsworth uses the Gypsies settled in Davenham as a link to connect the disparate halves of the novel—the Gothic romance about the heirs to the fictional Rookwood estate and the “Newgate” subplot about the historical highwayman, Dick Turpin. The Gypsies are, by turn, emblems of Gothic violence and mystery, and merry members of the “Canting Crew,” happy to follow Dick Turpin as a natural leader.

I conclude with a discussion of the role of the Gypsies in the resolution of the “lost heir” plot of *Guy Mannering*, focusing especially on the role of Meg Merrilies and her affiliative ties to the land at Ellangowan. I argue that the character field of *Guy Mannering* can usefully be examined based on the relationship of the major characters to both the land at Ellangowan and to the law. Sir Walter Scott’s *Guy Mannering* (1815) is certainly guilty of romanticizing its Gypsy characters, yet Scott seems to be conscious of the stereotypes to which he ascribes, and, at points, to ironize them. The popularity of *Guy Mannering* may have actually helped to establish certain literary stereotypes of the romantic Gypsy, yet even while deploying these stereotypes, Scott manipulates and undermines them. The Gypsies of *Guy Mannering* become emblems not of wandering or placelessness, but of affiliative belonging, and have a central function in Scott’s meditation on the law and landownership. I will discuss the ways that these figures are deployed

---

<sup>89</sup> Ainsworth is, of course, punning on Caesar’s famous epithet for Brutus as the “last of the Romans.” This pun, which Ainsworth uses repeatedly in his descriptions of Turpin, establishes not only the mock-heroic terms of his engagement with crime, but perhaps more importantly with his mock-tragic engagement with the decline of the Gypsies’ culture and its equation, in Ainsworth’s formulation, with criminality.

within the structural space allotted them by the author and the geographical space granted them by the local laird, focusing especially on their relationship to the more truly criminal figures of Gilbert Glossin and Dirk Hattaraick. I am interested not only in the ways that these figures were imagined in literature, but in the narrative, social, and geographical space[s] reserved for them as they intersect with and impinge upon the central plot.

### **The ‘*Ultimus Romanorum*’: Dick Turpin and *Rookwood*’s Canting Crew**

*Rookwood*, William Harrison Ainsworth’s 1834 Gothic historical romance with a special appearance by the eighteenth-century highwayman Dick Turpin, has not enjoyed even the modest critical staying power of his 1839 *Jack Sheppard*, about the eighteenth-century housebreaker and escape artist.<sup>90</sup> *Jack Sheppard* was greeted first with applause and later with censure, as critics of the “Newgate novel” began to fear that romanticizing criminals would incite young working class readers to crime. Its condemnation, as much as (or perhaps more than) its initial applause, has kept *Jack Sheppard* in the consciousness of literary historians and students of the Victorian novel and theater. The recent Broadview edition of *Jack Sheppard* (2007), the first modern critical edition, has helped to expose younger readers and scholars to Ainsworth’s fiction. *Rookwood*, on the other hand, faced no legal scandal or censure, and has therefore faded quietly from critical view: after numerous nineteenth- and early twentieth-century editions and reprints, publishers have largely ignored Ainsworth’s first novel, despite its resounding initial success.<sup>91</sup>

In the preface to the novel (added in 1849), Ainsworth opens with the claim that his motive in writing the novel was to revive the romance form and to “attempt a story in the bygone style of Mrs. Radcliffe” (Preface xxxiii).<sup>92</sup> He suggests with false modesty that he has, at least, partially failed: “If the design of Romance be, what it has been held, the exposition of a useful truth by means of an interesting story, I fear I have but imperfectly fulfilled the office imposed upon me; having, as I will freely confess, had, throughout, an eye rather to the readers’ amusement than his edification” (xxxvii-xxxviii). His novel is too entertaining, and without a straightforward moral, it cannot—nor does he wish it to—fit the “bygone” category of romance as he here defines it. But he does not believe that that old definition holds true any longer: he goes on with the grandiose claim that his “chief object” was to “infus[e...] a warmer and more genial current into the veins of old Romance” in order to “reviv[e] her fluttering and feeble pulses” (xxxviii). He recognizes (rightly, I believe) that he is witnessing a shift in the evolution of the novel; how much his own work was involved in bringing about that change is of course open to debate. He argues that “Romance”

---

<sup>90</sup> See Chapter 3, “Serial Criminal.”

<sup>91</sup> Ainsworth did publish a novel eight years earlier, *Sir John Chiverton*, which was sometimes credited solely to John Aston, a clerk who worked at Ainsworth’s father’s legal firm, but it was more often attributed to Ainsworth. It was this novel that caused J.G. Lockhart, in the published edition of Scott’s private journals, to dismiss Ainsworth as an imitator of Scott. Ainsworth later took no notice of his first novel, and did not even include it in his final bibliography. *Sir John Chiverton* is, however, an important precursor to *Rookwood*.

<sup>92</sup> The first edition of 1834 contained no preface, only a brief dedicatory note to the author’s mother.

is destined shortly to undergo an important change. Modified by the German and French writers, — by Hoffman, Tieck, Hugo, Dumas, Balzac, and Paul Lacroix—the *structure*, commenced in our own land by Horace Walpole, Monk Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Maturin, but left imperfect and inharmonious, requires, now that the rubbish, which choked up its *approach*, is removed, only the hand of the skilful *architect* to its entire *renovation* and perfection. (1849 Preface to *Rookwood*, xxxviii, my emphasis)

Ainsworth employs an architectural metaphor to describe the current state of “Romance,” suggesting that his is the “hand of the skilful architect” that will “renovate” and “perfect” the form left incomplete by the likes of Walpole, Lewis, and Radcliffe.

I will return to the architectural metaphor; for now, the “important change” that most interests me is Ainsworth’s experiment in bringing the low into close contact with the high within the world of the novel: Gypsies are closely allied to the ancient house of Rookwood (indeed, the heir apparent marries Sybil, the beautiful granddaughter of the Gypsy queen); the highwayman Dick Turpin is the agent of both the Gypsy queen and of Luke Rookwood; “flash,” or canting songs are interpolated into the fabric of the Gothic romance; and the plot moves rapidly between the adventures of the “flying highwayman” and the Gothic “lost heir” plot of the Rookwood estate. Of course, this “innovation” was hardly an innovation by the time Ainsworth was writing; bringing together unlikely and disparate social groups was an important feature of the novel as established by Scott.<sup>93</sup> It is worth noting here, however, that throughout his preface, Ainsworth makes no mention of Scott as his immediate predecessor and an obvious influence, if not direct competitor.

Yet in the bulk of the preface, Ainsworth abandons his claims about his novel’s place in the history of romance as a form, instead asserting that his primary innovation in the novel was in his rendering of the flash songs of the criminal characters and especially in his portrait of the highwayman Dick Turpin. He describes the process of composition, claiming that he wrote the chapters describing Turpin’s (apocryphal) ride from London to York in a single sitting of less than twenty-four hours, “thoroughly . . . identifying [himself] with the flying highwayman.” He makes nary a mention of the Gypsies in his preface, instead focusing proudly on his portrayal of Dick Turpin, Jerry Juniper, and the Knight of Malta, explaining the historical origins and fates of his real-life sources for the latter two, less well-known, figures. Ainsworth foregrounds his researches in the *Newgate Calendar*, the *Lives of the Highwaymen*, and canting dictionaries, suggesting that his portrait of the lives of the “Canting Crew” is based on fact, rather than pure “romance.”

Even in Ainsworth’s preface, it seems clear that his novel had two potentially conflicting goals: first, to “renovate” the form of Gothic romance left “imperfect” by his predecessors, and second, to compose flash and cant songs, since, unlike the literary traditions of Spain and France, England has “scarcely any slang songs of merit” (xxxvi). These two goals fit together only uneasily in the novel itself, in which the scene shifts abruptly from a “flash crib” (271) to the Gothic crypt of the Rookwood family near their ancient estate. The Gothic plot seems only to be the backdrop, or excuse, while the author’s main interest is in portraying the jolly highwayman Dick Turpin. Ainsworth frames his preface with lofty claims about his “renovation” of Romance

---

<sup>93</sup> Indeed, Walpole cites Shakespeare as a precedent for mixing the comic business of servants and the lower classes with the tragic affairs of noblemen in his preface to *The Castle of Otranto*.

as a genre while the bulk of the preface, which describes with enthusiasm the criminal elements of the novel, belies his true interests. Predictably, then, the novel itself is strongest and most interesting in the scenes in which Dick Turpin or the Gypsies appear.

Describing real crime and historical criminals, rather than “renovating” romance as a form, was always Ainsworth’s ambition. In his letters, Ainsworth describes his overall ambition to create a complete and universal “portrait of the robber”:

Turpin... is only part of a plan, as this work is part of a more extensive *edifice*, which, in time, I may be able to *construct*.... The portrait of the robber is not, I am free to admit, complete in all its details. But, though I have not yet found canvass enough for it, the tablet exists fully wrought out in my imagination. In Turpin, the reader will find him upon the road, armed, mounted, laughing, jesting, carousing, pursuing, and pursued. In Du-Val... he shall find him at the theatres, at the gambling-houses, on the Mall, at court.... In Sheppard... he shall discover him in Newgate; shall witness his midnight labours; admire his ingenuity and unconquerable perseverance; and marvel at his extraordinary escapes. The character of the robber to be complete, should be presented in all these phases. And it shall be my business to perfect it. (qtd. in Ellis 1.285, emphasis mine)

Ainsworth uses the architectural metaphor that he later picked up again in the 1849 preface of *Rookwood*, describing the “portrait of the robber” as an “edifice” to be constructed. Using the same metaphor to describe both his conception of the figure of the robber and of the Romance form does not indicate, I think, a lack of imagination on Ainsworth’s part, but rather implies that for his project, at any rate, the two were almost interchangeable: a portrait of a universal robber was synonymous with his conception of Romance as a form: renovating Romance, for Ainsworth, meant creating a universal portrait of the robber—an archetype of the romantic criminal.

*Rookwood* was the first of what Ainsworth originally intended to be a series of historical novels with famous rogues and criminals at the center. Historical sources, however, were less relevant for Ainsworth, at least at this stage in his planned project. His aim was not necessarily to render the historical Dick Turpin, or even to expand on the bare facts listed in the Newgate Calendar, but to create a novelistic figure of some depth that would complement the characters he anticipated in future novels to create a harmonious, holistic picture of the Criminal. Still, Ainsworth would have expected his immediate audience to be at least passingly familiar with the historical Dick Turpin.<sup>94</sup> Since the Newgate Calendar is no longer common adolescent reading material, I will pause briefly to outline Turpin’s career.

---

<sup>94</sup> Most of Ainsworth’s contemporary readers would have a certain familiarity with the famous criminals of the previous two centuries: the popularity of what came to be called “Newgate novels” had not yet reached the fever pitch it would reach in 1839 with the simultaneous publication of Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard* and Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* in *Bentley’s Miscellany*, yet the fad was already reasonable far-reaching, with popular sensations such as Pierce Egan’s *Tom and Jerry, or, Life in London* (1821) and Bulwer-Lytton’s *Paul Clifford* (1830), both of which enjoyed a widespread popularity as serial novels, circulating in volume form from public libraries, and as stage adaptations. The Newgate Calendar, a collection of biographies and “dying last speeches” of famous criminals from the previous two centuries,



According to the 1824-8 edition of the *Newgate Calendar*, Richard Turpin was born in 1705 in Thackstead, Essex, where he received a common education and was apprenticed as a butcher. He began his criminal career as a cattle and horse thief in his home county of Essex, but, following the arrest and execution of some members of his gang, he turned to highway robbery and common burglary. He enjoyed a certain success and notoriety in the 1730s, though never achieving the kind of fame and glory attributed to him by Ainsworth. Indeed, the 1824 *Newgate Calendar* describes him as a “heartless and depraved villain,” who, far from the suave and debonair ladies’ man described by Ainsworth, was guilty of “robbing two country girls (which even his fellow-thief objected to), [and] the barbarity of placing an old woman on the fire, because she refused directing his gang to the little hoard which had probably been laid by as the support of her declining years” (*Newgate Calendar* 1.394). All accounts agree, however, that Turpin eventually met the inevitable end of the highwayman at the gallows of York in 1739.

Dick Turpin is the real hero of *Rookwood*, in that he is its most memorable and interesting character. (At the beginning of Dick Turpin’s overnight ride from London to York, Ainsworth’s narrator declares that Black Bess, Turpin’s famous mare, is “undoubtedly the heroine of the Fourth Book of this Romance [272].) Indeed, Turpin’s presence is the novel’s primary historical index: outside of a knowledge of Turpin’s life and the date of his death, it is impossible to date the action of the novel precisely. Ainsworth obviously takes many liberties with the historical facts of Turpin’s life, the most obvious being his alliance with the Davenham Gypsies and his friendship (under a pseudonym) with the late lord of Rookwood, Sir Piers.

Ainsworth’s Gypsies are an established community on the land of the local noble, yet are aligned almost entirely with the criminal underworld. Their language, “Romany,” is equated with “flash,” or thieves’ cant (193), and the whole “Gypsy gang” at Davenham Wood is described as the “Canting Crew” with Barbara Lovel, the Gypsy queen, as their chief (163). Yet the Gypsies of the novel commit no crimes (aside from the Gothic impulses of revenge and jealousy, which are common to everyone in the novel); the only crimes described are committed by the English highwayman Dick Turpin himself: he attempts to rob the Rookwood manor on the evening of Sir Piers’s funeral, he commits several robberies on the highway, and he steals Lady Rookwood’s letter and ring from Mr. Coates in order to impersonate her agent.

Persecuted as vagrants, potential thieves and kidnappers or even witches, the Gypsies are set in juxtaposition to true criminals. Dick Turpin threatens to steal the show in *Rookwood*, and his rapid movement across the country in a single night in the famous set-piece “Dick Turpin’s Ride to York” provides an important counterpoint to the Gypsies’ relative stability at their encampment in Davenham Wood. It seems ironic and perhaps paradoxical that the Gypsies—usually emblems of unfixed wandering—are fixed all too firmly, to their ultimate detriment, at Davenham and in the Gothic past. It is Turpin who is dramatically able to enact the kind of rapid geographic and social movement usually ascribed to Gypsies. The Gypsies are outsiders, despite their status as fixtures of the community; as outsiders, they are regarded with as much (or more) suspicion and distrust than the actual criminals, like Tom King and Dick Turpin. The novel frequently equates Gypsies with criminals in general, buying into the centuries-old prejudice against anybody without a fixed abode or parish, and especially against those of obscure origins.

In *Rookwood*, Turpin is glorified as the “ultimus Romanorum,” or (punningly) “the last of the Romans/Romany,” lamented as the last of a breed of noble highwayman. Dick Turpin,

---

was frequently edited and reprinted—a four-volume edition was printed in 1824-8, edited by Knapp and Baldwin.

although not himself a Gypsy, is frequently allied with the Gypsy “gang” at Davenham; indeed, they perform a ceremony initiating him as one of their own. Given that Ainsworth makes Gypsies and criminals interchangeable in *Rookwood*, in this section, I likewise move back and forth between the actual Gypsy characters and Turpin.

Ainsworth’s description of Turpin as the “*ultimus Romanorum*” seems wholly unconscious of the potential conflict, if not inaccuracy, in equating a highwayman of English descent with the Romany, or Gypsy, people, even at the level of pun:

Turpin was the *ultimus Romanorum*, the last of a race, which (we were almost about to say we regret) is now altogether extinct. Several successors he had, it is true, but no name worthy to be recorded after his own. With him expired the chivalrous spirit which animated successively the bosoms of so many knights of the road [...] but which was extinguished at last by the cord that tied the heroic Turpin to the remorseless tree. (*Rookwood* 163-4)

Ainsworth makes criminality a matter of race or ethnicity, and therefore a vice to which someone is born, rather than which one might learn by habituation, by making Turpin “the last of a race,” which is “now altogether extinct.” The novelist’s playful “regret” at the extinction of an entire “race” is typical of the general attitude toward both the Gypsy characters and toward Dick Turpin himself in *Rookwood*: his regret is overstated as applied to real, historical highwaymen, while it is disturbingly casual as applied to the actual “race” of Gypsies in England, which was, indeed, going “extinct” in Britain at the time Ainsworth was writing, from a combination of persecution, emigration (voluntary and involuntary), and integration (Nord 30). Several pages later, Ainsworth continues to wax eloquent in the same vein: “The last of this race (for we must persist in maintaining that he *was* the last), Turpin, like the setting sun, threw up parting rays of glory, and tinged the far highways with a luster that may yet be traced like a cloud of dust raised by his horse’s retreated heels” (166). Turpin, like the rest of his “race” of noble highwaymen (and Gypsies), disappears romantically into the sunset like the cowboy in an American Western. He and his race end in glory, to be lamented in the imaginations of poets and writers of romance, if not by law officials.

Ainsworth seems blithely unconscious that his playful account could describe the extinction of a way of life of an entire ethnic group. It is clear from the context that Ainsworth’s discussion of the extinction of the “race” and his description of Turpin as the “last of the Romany” is intended to apply solely to the romantic highwayman, or the “knight of the road,” however tellingly ambiguous his phrasing (although he presumably intends the pun on “Romans”/“Romany”). He calls frequently throughout the novel for a revival of the “race” (of highwaymen) with, we are to assume, mock seriousness: “The road, we must beg to repeat, is still open; the chances are greater than they ever were; we fully believe it is their only road to preferment, and we are sadly in want of highwaymen!” (246). The author punningly encourages young people to consider “the road” as a possible career. No reader would consider his injunction as seriously meant; later, however, when the furor over *Jack Sheppard* reached its height in 1840 during the trial of the murderer Courvoisier, opponents of the Newgate novel

would cite earlier, apparently harmless, publications by Ainsworth, including passages of *Rookwood*.<sup>95</sup>

Dick Turpin is insistently connected with the band of Gypsies at Davenham on the Rookwood estate, and the Gypsies themselves are repeatedly referred to, collectively, as “the Canting Crew.” Their language, which has its roots in Sanskrit, rather than in Romanian as previously believed (Nord 8), is substituted by English thieves’ cant and “flash” patter. As Turpin complains to Mrs. Mowbray while apologizing politely for using a cant term during an attempted robbery on the road near Davenham, “My ears have been so stunned with those Romany patterers, I almost *think* in flash” (193). Romani is not dignified as its own language, but made synonymous with the universal, underground language of criminals and thieves.

Each member of the Gypsy gang is described as a different type of rogue or vagabond made famous and visible through the kinds of rogues’ galleries published and circulated in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, and collected by Ainsworth and many of his peers.<sup>96</sup> The women are “morts” (single women) or “autem morts” (married women); the men are “palliards” (beggars feigning disability), “whip-jacks” (beggars feigning amputation), “dummerars” (feigning dumbness): “all the shades and grades of the Canting Crew, were assembled” (162-3). The arrival of Turpin in the Gypsy camp produces a sensation as by the “arrival of a prince of the blood, a commander-in-chief, or other illustrious and distinguish personage, whose fame has been vaunted abroad amongst his fellow-men by Rumour” (162). As a famous highwayman with a price on his head, Turpin appears to the Gypsies of Davenham as a natural leader. Ainsworth’s description of Turpin’s “inauguration” into their ranks takes a great many pages and still more footnotes; he obviously delights in using flash and cant terms and then footnoting their meanings for the edification of the curious reader.<sup>97</sup>

Ainsworth’s footnotes (added by the author in later editions—they do not appear in the first volume edition of 1834—in imitation, perhaps, of Scott’s addition of annotations to the “Magnum Opus” edition of his novels in 1829-34) are more extensive in this section than in any other: he cites his sources where he quotes verbatim from primary sources (as in his quotation from Brome’s “The Merry Beggars,”<sup>98</sup> p. 163), but more often he uses the footnotes as a space to explain in almost ethnographic terms the types of ceremony and tradition alluded to in the text of the novel. After briefly mentioning “the nice custom of the dead horse between” couples being married, Ainsworth includes a lengthy footnote explaining the origin of the tradition, citing Thomas Dekker as his authority (163). Later in the chapter, he uses the footnotes primarily to translate single words and phrases of cant uttered by the Gypsy characters: “flashes his sticks,” we’re told, means “exposes his pistols,” and “kickseys and pipes” are “breeches and boots.” After Zoroaster, the leader of the Gypsy gang (second to Barbara Lovel, the Gypsy queen), has administered the oath that makes Turpin an honorary member of their gang, Ainsworth includes

---

<sup>95</sup> For more on the Jack Sheppard craze and the trial of Courvoisier, a valet who claimed to have been inspired to murder his master after reading Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard* and seeing the plays adapted from it, see Chapter 3, “Serial Criminal.”

<sup>96</sup> For example, John Awdeley’s *The Fraternity of Vagabonds* (1561), Robert Greene’s *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage* (1591), etc.

<sup>97</sup> It is possible that Ainsworth is here imitating Gringoire’s initiation into the Court of Miracles in Hugo’s *Notre-Dame de Paris*.

<sup>98</sup> A play by Richard Brome from 1652, usually referred to by its primary title, *A Jovial Crew*.

yet another lengthy footnote describing a comparable set of laws governing a gang of thieves, providing names and dates to highlight the authority of his sources.

This is also the chapter in which the most famous of Ainsworth's flash songs first appears: "Nix my dolly pals,— fake away!"<sup>99</sup> The song is introduced to the company by the comical Jerry Juniper, rather than by Turpin. (Turpin's songs are almost entirely about himself and his mare, Black Bess.) The song gained lasting fame (as Ainsworth is happy to point out in his 1849 preface) after it was put to music by G. Herbert Rodwell and used in the theatrical adaptations of Ainsworth's later *Jack Sheppard* (1839). The footnotes for the flash and cant terms appear at almost every line of the song.

Ainsworth is at his most enthusiastic in chapters like this one, which treat of Dick Turpin, Jerry Juniper, and the rest of the "Canting Crew." The style shifts in the presence of the highwayman: it is more lively, light, and entertaining, in contrast to the heavy, overwrought, plodding movement of the Gothic portion of the novel. The pace changes when Ainsworth moves from one subject to the other, which makes the texture of the novel somewhat uneven. The opening description of the Gypsies' encampment at Davenham wood near the Rookwood estate links together the Gothic frame, as it were, of the Rookwood lost heir plot, and the setting of the "Canting Crew," and provides a fairly representative example of the two contrasting modes in which Ainsworth composes in this novel:

Sequestered in the vale stood the Priory before alluded to (a Monastery of the Grey Friars, of the Order of St. Francis), some of the venerable walls of which were still remaining; and if they had not reverted to the bat and owl, as is wont to be the fate of such sacred structures, their cloistered shrines were devoted to beings whose natures partook, in some measure, of the instincts of those creatures of the night—a people whose deeds were of darkness, and whose eyes shunned the light. Here the gipsies had pitched their tent; and though the place was often, in part, deserted by the vagrant horde, yet certain of the tribe, who had grown into the years (over whom Barbara Lovel held queenly sway), made it their haunt, and were suffered, by the authorities of the neighbourhood, to remain unmolested—a lenient piece of policy, which, in our infinite regard for the weal of the tawny tribe, we recommend to the adoption of all other justices and knights of the shire. (138)

The paragraph opens in the Gothic mode, with the description of the ruins of a monastery (what better setting for a Gothic romance?). Even the initial mention of the Gypsies remains in the same style, describing them as "creatures of the night," a "people whose deeds were of darkness." Yet as the paragraph ends, Ainsworth shifts gears, offering a characteristically light-hearted admonition to "justices and knights" to adopt a similarly "lenient" policy towards Gypsies in their own neighborhoods. This is the same tone Ainsworth adopts as he praises Dick Turpin and laments the relative lack of highwaymen in the modern age. Ainsworth's deliberately archaic diction and involuted syntax imitates

---

<sup>99</sup> "Nix my dolly" was one of the more popular songs included in excerpted collections soon after *Rookwood*'s publication (see the collections in the *British Register* July 1834 and in the *Literary Gazette* June 1834).

Scott's mixture of the solemn with the facetious, but the tonal shifts in Ainsworth appear more abrupt and—perhaps—less deliberate.

The initial description of Barbara Lovel involves another tonal shift. As Sybil enters her grandmother's tent, her anxiety over Luke transforms into her fear and intimidation of her grandmother. The light-hearted descriptions of the rest of the inhabitants of the Gypsy camp give way again to the Gothic tone of the Rookwood plot. As the Gypsy queen of the Davenham "horde," Barbara is of course connected with the "Canting Crew." Yet she was also present at the death of Susan Bradley/Rookwood, serves as Luke's foster-mother, and is the prophetess of doom for the house of Rookwood (153). As such, she is introduced with the same Gothic heaviness as the "sequestered Priory" of Davenham itself:

Around her head was coiffed, in folds like those of an Asiatic turban, a rich, though faded shawl, and her waist was encircled with the magic zodiacal zone—proper to the sorceress—the *Mago Cineo* of the Cingara (whence the name Zingaro, according to Monçada)<sup>100</sup>, which Barbara had brought from Spain. [...] Upon her withered fingers, which looked like a coil of lizards, were hooped a multitude of silver rings [...]. Her skin was yellow as the body of a toad; corrugated as its back. She might have been steeped in saffron from her finger tips [...] to such portions of her neck as were visible, and which was puckered up like the throat of a turtle. (156)

Unlike Meg Merrilies of *Guy Mannering*, Barbara is not a figure who marries East and West, either through her language or her costume.<sup>101</sup> In Barbara, a threatening eastern, matriarchal magic is found, almost intrusively, on British soil. The shawl around her head is like an "Asiatic" turban, and it is "coiled" like a snake. She is likened through simile to various amphibians and reptiles: to "lizards," "a toad," and "a turtle." This scene functions as a theatrical set-piece: the young and beautiful but distraught Sybil enters the room, long hair flying, to discover her ancient grandmother, a withered, witch-like, reptilian crone, crouched at the center of a room on a kind of platform.<sup>102</sup>

Sybil, like her grandmother, remains exempt from the light-hearted jocularities the narrator reserves for true members of the "Canting Crew" of Davenham. Sybil is a member of the "Gypsy tribe" only by ethnic and cultural affiliation: she is honest and honorable; the reader cannot imagine Sybil participating in any of the shams of her fellows. Sybil, too, is introduced unambiguously as a figure of Gothic romance, rather than as a figure of harlequin or comedy:

---

<sup>100</sup> It is interesting to note that even here, Ainsworth cannot resist inserting a learned aside, reminding the reader of the many scholarly sources he consulted in the composition of his historical romance.

<sup>101</sup> Indeed, at least one early critic uses an unfavorable comparison of Barbara Lovel and Meg Merrilies as the basis for a stinging critique of the whole novel.

<sup>102</sup> This scene, made famous by Cruikshank's illustration, is self-consciously theatrical: Ainsworth's tableau-like description even of the light shining down on Barbara's stage-like "platform" indeed made a perfect opening to the scene in the theatrical adaptations of the novel, which would be recognizable to audience members who had read the novel.

Upon a platform of rock, rising to the height of the trees, nearly perpendicularly from the river's bed, appeared the figure of the gipsy maid. Her footstep rested on the extreme edge of the abrupt cliff, at whose base the water boiled in a deep whirlpool, and the bounding chamois could not have been more lightly poised. [...] Braided hair; of the jettiest dye and sleekest texture, was twined around her brow in endless twisted folds [...] Sparkling, as the sunbeams that played upon her dark yet radiant features, were the large, black, Oriental eyes of the maiden[...]. Hers was a Moorish countenance, in which the magnificence of the eyes eclipses the face, be it ever so beautiful (an effect to be observed in the angelic pictures of Murillo)[...]. (142)<sup>103</sup>

Sybil, more than Barbara, is a figure who marries opposites. Her costume is Spanish (as is her song, "La Gitanilla"), while her features are "Moorish" and her eyes "Oriental," though compared to the eyes in portraits by the Spanish painter Murillo. Her face is at once both "dark" and "radiant." She is a member of the Gypsy tribe of Davenham and under the sway of Barbara Lovel, their queen, yet she can hardly be considered a member of the "Canting Crew." She appears to be an exception to the otherwise universal synonymy between "Gypsies" and "vagrant criminals" to which the novel subscribes. Although a Gypsy, she is betrothed to Luke Bradley/Rookwood, the son of the late Sir Piers who is revealed to be the heir apparent of the Rookwood estate. Her fate seems to be literally to marry East and West.

The ominous position in which we first observe Sybil will not be lost on the seasoned reader of Gothic romance: she is poised on the brink of a precipice, both literally and, of course, figuratively. She is compared to an Alpine "chamois"—a favorite figure of many Romantic poets, including Byron and Wordsworth. Yet Sybil seems unaware of the potentially symbolic import of her position on the brink. In spite of her name, Sybil is no seer: her name suggests that she possesses the stereotypical Gypsy gift of prophecy, but that gift belongs only to her grandmother, Barbara. Indeed, the only thing stereotypical about Sybil is her appearance: black hair, dark complexion, and large, dark eyes. Even her dress, when compared to her grandmother's, seems Western: she wears a black dress with an "embroidered velvet" bodice (142). It is true, Sybil's fear and awe of her grandmother and her belief in the prophecies concerning the house of Rookwood do appear to be a stereotypically "Gypsy" superstition.

Barbara Lovel is involved in almost every moment of crisis in the history of the Rookwood family: she was present at the death of Susan Bradley Rookwood, and embalmed the body using techniques known only to her; she becomes the foster-mother of Susan's son, Luke; she provides both a reviving potion and a love potion to control Eleanor Mowbray (197, 205); she utters various prophecies concerning the members of the house of Rookwood. Indeed, Barbara's skills as an embalmer, potion-maker and prophetess are at the center of Ainsworth's deployment of Gypsy stereotypes in the Gothic portion of this novel, and it is through Barbara's prophecies that Ainsworth connects the more light-hearted "vagrant Gypsy" plot of Davenham with the Gothic plot of the Rookwood estate.

Barbara's prophecies are highlighted by the novel materially, as well: they are invariably rendered dramatically in Gothic typeface (132 and 152). These prophecies stand out from the rest of the text on the page; their utterance is of a different type entirely from the ordinary dialogue of the characters. The change in type both legitimizes Barbara's prophecies, in that it sets them

---

<sup>103</sup> Sybil might usefully be compared to Esmeralda, the beautiful Gypsy of *Notre-Dame de Paris*.

apart from common speech and cant, and it connects her more firmly with the Gothic portion of the novel and the fate of the house of Rookwood. We never witness Barbara uttering a prophecy for the first time; we hear them only repeated by others, gaining legitimacy with each subsequent re-telling. The speech-act itself is never dramatized; the gravity with which other characters (Luke's grandfather and Sybil) repeat Barbara's prophecies is marked by the very type in which they are printed and reinforces their authority, both moral and material. Indeed, the prophecies of the novel seem all to be of the self-fulfilling variety: believing in them and acting upon them seem to bring about their fulfillment.

Barbara is a prophetess because she is a Gypsy, but even her more personal experiences and attachments are rendered in universalized, racial terms. In one of the rare moments when Ainsworth allows Barbara to expose a more human side, she mourns the loss of her daughter, Sybil's mother: 'Ah! It was a bitter day when she left me for Spain; for though, to one of our wandering race, all countries are alike, yet the soil of our birth is dear to us, and the presence of our kindred dearer' (157). Barbara switches registers in the middle of her sentence, moving from her own "bitterness" to generalized assertions about the entirety of her "wandering race." Ainsworth does not develop the idea of the Gypsy's attachment to her natal homeland, however, though the idea of the "wandering" Gypsy being attached to a particular area—the "soil of our birth"—is presented as potentially paradoxical. Ainsworth is not interested in developing, debunking, or ruminating on any of the accepted myths or stereotypes about Gypsies; rather, as I have suggested above, he activates those myths primarily to develop and to connect the two otherwise disparate strands of the novel: the Gothic plot of the Rookwoods and the plot following the historical highwayman Dick Turpin.

Near the end of the novel, Barbara Lovel is reduced to the "wandering" she describes as a fundamental characteristic of her "race." She lingers beneath the decomposing bodies of two of her children who have been hanged by the roadside, where she is discovered by Turpin:

'Do you know whose bodies these are?' asked Barbara, pointing upwards.  
'Two of your race,' replied Dick; 'right brethren of the blade.'  
'Two of my sons,' returned Barbara; 'my twin children' (286).

Turpin again links the Gypsy "race" with roguery and crime, making that "race" synonymous with "brethren of the blade," or "brother criminals." Crime is thus conveniently racialized in *Rookwood*: "lower" criminals (beggars who feign disability, pickpockets, fortune-tellers, and the like), or the "Canting Crew," are made synonymous with Gypsies, while the more "noble" profession of highway robbery, as represented by Turpin, Tom King, and even Jerry Juniper, are, by the end of the novel, merely allied with the Gypsies—they are the natural leaders of that rabble.

As I have pointed out, Barbara Lovel's language, race, and kindred are made synonymous with the criminal underworld of England. Although the Gypsy tribe has been settled at Davenham Wood for generations, they are still considered as outsiders in England and in "civilized" society, just as criminals, rogues, and vagrants are outside of the law. They live in the forest of Davenham, retired from society, in an abandoned and partially ruined monastery—an appropriate setting, both for the Gothic resonance of a ruined monastery and for the suggestion of a life retired and isolated from broader society. The encampment is not dissimilar from the legendary encampments of Robin Hood and his Merry Men, with the crucial difference that Robin Hood is always granted a moral exception in the myth. He is exemplary: his robberies are

never for personal gain, and his outlawry is politicized, exempting him from the condemnation of robbers and outlaws more generally.<sup>104</sup> The Gypsies and the “Canting Crew” of Davenham, though, have no such exemption. They are as morally isolated from the rest of “civilized” English society in the woods near Rookwood as they would be on a desert island. Ainsworth’s Gypsies and criminals are thus different in a moral as well as in a social context from the political outlaws and outcasts developed by Scott.

Ainsworth is very conscious of his novel’s place not only relative to his precursors in the Gothic mode, but to the tradition of crime literature and to the history of actual criminality. Indeed, although he makes much of his ambition to resuscitate Romance—especially Gothic Romance—in his 1849 preface, he hardly mentions his romance precursors at all in the text of the novel itself. He does, however, refer frequently to other writers of picaresque romance and crime literature more generally, looking for reasons for the decline in the number of *actual* highwaymen in the history and evolution of literature *about* rogues and highwaymen:

‘Cervantes laughed Spain’s chivalry away,’ sang Byron; and if Gay did not extinguish the failing flame of our *night* errantry (unlike the “Robbers” of Schiller, which is said to have inflamed the Saxon youth with an irrepressible mania for brigandage), the “Beggar’s Opera” helped not to fan the dying fire. That laugh was fatal, as laughs generally are. Macheath gave the highwayman his *coup de grace*. (165)

Ainsworth quite explicitly connects the history of real crime with literature about criminals, blaming the comic “Beggar’s Opera” for the decline of real-life highwaymen. The more romanticized “Robbers” of Schiller, on the other hand, helped to rejuvenate the profession of “brigandage,” at least in Germany. Again, he shifts tone to discuss rogues and highwaymen, discussing the “decline” of “*night* errantry” with what we assume to be light-hearted mock regret. Ainsworth’s own project, as he lays it out in the Preface, is to revive the genre of Romance by incorporating the canting songs and criminal elements he so admires in the French tradition. It is interesting Ainsworth should be so explicit here about the ways that Gay’s satire helped to diminish the popularity of “brigandage” as a profession, given the commotion caused by the *Jack Sheppard* craze only five years later, when critics would accuse Ainsworth’s novels of increasing the popularity of criminal professions.

The relation between history and literary romance continues to be troubled in the novel. The narrator invites the reader to imagine Turpin imagining the fight between Ranulph and his followers with the “Canting Crew” as an enactment of chivalric romance: “[...] had Turpin ever read Ariosto or Cervantes, or heard of the discord of King Agramante’s camp, this *mêlée* must have struck him as its realisation” (235). The whole is rendered as a conditional, since of course neither the historical Turpin nor Ainsworth’s fictional version of him would have read either

---

<sup>104</sup> Robin Hood is only referenced once in the novel, but it is to compare him implicitly to Dick Turpin, and to suggest that Turpin has effectively taken the place of the mythic outlaw in the popular imagination: “We must fly before our flying highwayman [...] He flies before] its waste (forest no more) of Sherwood past; bold Robin Hood and his merry men, his Marian and his moonlight rides, recalled, forgotten, left behind. Hurrah! hurrah!” (288)



Ariosto or Cervantes. Ainsworth's projected reader, however, presumably has.<sup>105</sup> Ainsworth attempts to elevate the tone of the scene (which, despite its bloody outcome, is described light-heartedly and mostly from the somewhat detached point of view of Turpin himself) by associating it with the famous battles of literary romance and mock-epic. Similarly, Ainsworth attempts to elevate Dick Turpin himself—in spite of his well-documented crimes and final death by hanging—by inviting the reader to imagine him well-versed in the literary romance tradition.

Ainsworth mentions Radcliffe, Balzac, Hugo, and others in his 1849 preface, as he advertises his ambition to resuscitate romance as a form. He references Schiller, Gay, Ariosto, and Cervantes in the text of the novel. Yet only once does he mention his most obvious and most immediate precursor, Sir Walter Scott. Appropriately, the reference appears in a description of the moral habits and career of Dick Turpin's best friend and fellow highwayman, Tom King:

[Tom King] took to the road; and in his new line he was eminently successful. Fortunately, he had no scruples to get over. Tom had what Sir Walter Scott happily denominates 'an indistinct notion of *meum* and *tuum*,' and became confirmed in the opinion that everything he could lay hands upon constituted lawful spoil. (246)

The phrase appears in Scott's introduction to *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, but Ainsworth appears to be thinking of the phrase from the final chapter of *The Pirate*: "the trifling distinctions of Meum and Tuum" (390). It does seem odd, given both the apparent echoes of Scott's *Guy Mannering* in *Rookwood*, with its Gypsies and lost heir plot, and Scott's revitalization of the romance tradition more generally, that Ainsworth should mention Scott only in this passing way, although he mentions other writers frequently enough elsewhere.

Ainsworth's inattention to Scott is unsurprising, though, given Ainsworth's general inattention in this novel to providing a broader social context either for criminality or for the Gypsies with which he equates it. Ainsworth's *Rookwood* is too preoccupied with the jolly highwayman plot to give much thought to the position of the Gypsies: they are used in this novel as an uneasy hinge between the light-hearted Dick Turpin plot and the heavy, Gothic plot of the house of Rookwood. The Gypsies are, at times, reduced to mere caricature: vagrants, pickpockets, and "sturdy beggars," while at other times the narrator steps back to satirize that stereotype. Scott, by contrast, seems far more self-conscious in his deployment of typical Gypsy literary tropes in *Guy Mannering*: his meditation is on the romantic search for origins and affective ties to the land, rather than on a universal "portrait of the robber."

### **"The Parias of Scotland": the Space of the Gypsy in *Guy Mannering***

In *Guy Mannering*, the Gypsies' status is intimately tied to the question not only of their own origins, but also of the question of homeland and belonging for all of the major characters.

---

<sup>105</sup> Ainsworth may have assumed his readers would be familiar with Cervantes and Ariosto via Scott, as he seems perhaps to be echoing allusions to both Cervantes and to Ariosto in novels by Scott—"The Confusion of King Agramante's Camp" is a chapter title in *Waverley*.

The Gypsies, and Meg Merrilies in particular, play a central role in the “lost heir” plot: Meg helps to re-establish the history—and rights—of the protagonist, even as the Gypsies lose their own place within the world of the novel. It seems strange that Gypsies, a group so long and so persistently associated with crime, should become the mechanism by which early nineteenth-century British writers would approach and come to terms with questions of their own origins. Yet their position outside the normative legal apparatus and national allegiances of the central characters puts Gypsies in a category analogous to the outlaws of *Ivanhoe* or *Rob Roy*. They become a powerful lens through which to understand history on both local and national levels.

Scott maintains an ironic distance from the image of the Gypsy as a rootless wanderer. The Gypsies of *Guy Mannering* are fixtures in the community at the beginning of the novel, having been settled on the estate of the Laird of Ellangowan “for at least two centuries” (37). They only become the rootless wanderers of the stereotype, ironically enough, when the Laird evicts them for being the vagrants that he forces them to become. Even after their banishment, the Gypsies’ roots are more clearly set in Derncleugh on the Ellangowan estate than anywhere else.

Close to the beginning of the novel, Scott describes the situation of Gypsies in Scotland during the period of his story’s action (around the time of the American Revolution in the 1770s). He asserts that their origins elsewhere in Europe and Great Britain are already “generally known,” yet he avoids any definitive account of those origins. He prefers instead to leave those origins obscure, insisting that they are common knowledge. At various points, Scott alludes to the “eastern” and, even more specifically, the “Egyptian” origins of all Gypsies (37), yet their ultimate place of origin is never made explicit.

Peter Garside, among others, argues that the prominent position of India as a source of wealth and a locus of personal re-invention and the frequent association (through analogy) of the Gypsies with India suggest that Scott was aware of the emerging theory of Gypsy origins as, ultimately, Indian.<sup>106</sup> When he first encounters Meg, for example, young Bertram (still calling himself Vanbeest Brown) is reminded of “some of the strange figures [he has] seen in an Indian pagoda” (123). Despite the novel’s descriptions of a “hybrid” Meg Merrilies, whose dress and customs combine elements of East and West, Garside notes that many of the portraits produced during the period of “Meg-mania” following the publication of *Guy Mannering* depict an essentially “Eastern-looking Meg” (160), with turban, shawl, robe, and dark features.<sup>107</sup> He provides a thorough reading of the many ethnographic accounts from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that associated Gypsies with India, underlining especially an account that linked Gypsies with the “Pariahs” of southern India. Garside points to Meg’s “Eastern-looking” portraits, and the various allusions to India throughout the novel, as evidence that the portrait artists and Scott himself were aware of the theory that Gypsies originated in India. Yet if this were the case, why would Scott leave their origins obscure, instead alluding to commonly-held misperceptions and stereotypes about their origins and pointing to their true land of origin in only a peripheral, oblique way?

In the case of *Guy Mannering*, the ultimate origin of the Gypsies is of little import (although India, with its associations of generic oriental romance, does play a key role in the tale, it is never explicitly mentioned as the Gypsies’ original homeland): Scott is interested primarily

---

<sup>106</sup> Peter Garside, “Meg Merrilies, the Gypsies, and India” (160-1)

<sup>107</sup> For more on Meg’s clothes, see Peter Garside, “Picturesque Figure and Landscape: Meg Merrilies and the Gypsies,” in *Politics of the Picturesque*, 145.

in asserting that the Gypsies of Ellangowan are as much a part of the Scottish landscape as many of the characters, having resided on the estate for centuries. Their relationship with the land is as strong, if not stronger, than that of the “native” inhabitants of the region. According to the narrator of *Guy Mannering*, Scottish Gypsies have a unique character, having been more integrated into the broader fabric of society than had their counterparts in England, combining elements both of their forbears and of the native Scottish Highland groups with whom they intermarried (35). The co-mingling of the Gypsies in Scotland with different native groups is of vital importance to Scott’s meditation on origins and homeland more generally. Whatever the faults of the Ellangowan Gypsies, they belong to and on that land. That they are finally displaced at the end by another wanderer, Guy Mannering, suggests that, finally, as Gypsies, they are doomed to wander or to die out. Meg is a representative of a previous epoch; although the Laird of Ellangowan resumes his rightful place, the novel does not wholeheartedly embrace a return to a feudal system. The Gypsies are replaced at Derncleugh by a new wanderer from the East: Guy Mannering, with his nabob wealth, who tears down the Gypsy village to build an Indian-style bungalow in its place. His daughter marries the reinstated Laird of Ellangowan, reinvigorating that estate with wealth acquired abroad. The final traces of the Gypsies are wiped away.

The lost-heir plot, with its questions of legal landownership and belonging, has long been taken to be the crux of *Guy Mannering*.<sup>108</sup> When considering the function of the Gypsies, though, the question takes on another cast: how, and to what extent, can one choose one’s own homeland? The principle figures of the novel are all at least incidentally associated with the estate of Ellangowan, mostly by their own choice: Henry Bertram, or Vanbeest Brown as he is called for much of the novel, is the lost heir of the estate; Glossin, the novel’s real villain, ingratiates himself with the old Laird in order to take over the estate’s management and eventually gain the title for himself; Dominie Sampson is virtually adopted by the family at Ellangowan and stays loyal to the orphaned Lucy Bertram after her father dies. Even the smugglers led by Dirk Hattaraick are attracted to Ellangowan: they use the cave at the border of the property, the ruins of the “Old Place,” and the Gypsies’ settlement as a landing ground for illegal goods and a meeting place with their companions. Guy Mannering visits the estate by accident on a trip through Scotland as a young man, and the impression the place makes on him is deep and long-lasting. Meg Merrilies, the Gypsy sybil, is most deeply connected with the land: even after years of banishment, she still considers the settlement at Derncleugh to be her natural home.

Although Meg and the rest of her “tribe” have inhabited the dell of Derncleugh since time out of mind, they are perpetually viewed as outsiders because of their distinct language, habits, and social mores. The “native” Scottish inhabitants of the area seem to regard their Gypsy neighbors with a combination of tolerance and mistrust. The presence of Meg Merrilies in the manor house of Ellangowan is tolerated out of habit, but her cultural and national differences are frequently underlined and almost feared. Although a familiar member of the neighborhood, a frequent visitor to the house, and a member of a family that has resided in the area for generations, Meg is and always has been considered something of an outsider by the landowners and by the rest of the community. Yet although the narrator emphasizes Meg’s foreign status and

---

<sup>108</sup> In *Sir Walter Scott and History*, James Anderson describes *Guy Mannering*’s “long-lost heir” plot as the principal “subject of discussion” (44). In *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel*, Duncan argues that in *Guy Mannering*, “history is troped in terms of place or setting” (as opposed to the terms of public events) (111).

her cultural differences from the inhabitants of Ellangowan and the surrounding community, he still suggests that she is rooted in the region as much as any of her neighbors. Meg spends much of her period of banishment from Ellangowan attempting to restore the rights of the proper Laird—if not her own—to the land. She maintains a strong affective relationship to the neighborhood in which she had grown up, and where her family and tribe had lived for “centuries”: she insists on being taken to her old house at Derncleugh on the Ellangowan estate as she dies, because “the spirit will not free itself o’ the flesh but there” (336). Only when restored to her rightful place, which, importantly, is in Scotland and the home of her *Scottish* Gypsy ancestors, as well as her Scottish patron, can Meg Merrilies die in peace.

There seems to be something about Ellangowan (or about Scotland more generally) that enables this kind of affective relationship to the land—a relationship that is affiliative, or formed by choice and a sense of kinship, rather than by inheritance or proximity alone.<sup>109</sup> The Gypsies are relative newcomers, yet they have adopted and been adopted by the land at Derncleugh, which they now consider as their familial and tribal homeland. Similarly, young Henry Bertram feels himself unaccountably drawn to the “Old Place” of his ancestors when he first arrives in Scotland after many years of absence, although he has no idea of a legal or inherited relationship to that property. His sense of familiarity and belonging is heightened, appropriately, when he overhears a young woman singing an old, vaguely familiar ballad in the distance. Guy Mannering, too, is inexplicably attracted to the neighborhood: he is English and has lived much of his adult life as a soldier in India and elsewhere, yet he feels more kinship and connection with this area of southern Scotland that he visited briefly as a young man than with any other part of the world. Decades later, as a nabob Colonel retired from the army in India, he chooses the neighborhood of Ellangowan as his family home, attempting even to buy the place for himself when he hears that it is for sale. He chooses that region as an adoptive home for himself and his daughter, immersing himself in the neighborhood’s politics and society. The parallels between Meg’s situation and Mannering’s are important: they both feel an affective kinship with Ellangowan although they are not the legal tenants or heirs to the estate.

In his chapter on *Guy Mannering in Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel*, Ian Duncan argues that the unlikely alliance between the various figures who help to reassert the rights of the young Laird (Guy Mannering and Meg Merrilies are joined by the Border yeoman Dandie Dinmont, the tutor Dominie Sampson, and the Edinburgh lawyer Pleydell) is enabled by their shared affection for Bertram himself. It is important, according to this reading, that none of the team of allies is a rent-paying tenant of the estate. The help they offer Bertram is offered as freely as friends of the family, and not as feudal dependents. I would add to this that in the cases of Meg and Mannering, the help offered is motivated equally by affection for the land itself (and for the traditional pattern of inheritance and landownership). After all, Mannering has a strong personal dislike of young Bertram at the beginning, so his efforts to reinstate his rights as the legal owner of Ellangowan must be motivated by causes beyond personal affection for the legal heir. True, his motivations shift as he begins to realize the extent of his misreading of the relationship between Bertram, his wife, and his daughter; yet initially he sets out to right the

---

<sup>109</sup> Edward Said describes the shift in the nineteenth-century novel from filiative kinship to affiliative relationships—“a joining together of people in a nongenealogical, nonprocreative but social unity” (Said 118). Said, however, focuses entirely on the late nineteenth century, and on the social institution of marriage as the primary exemplar of the social affiliative bond.

wrongs he observes at Ellangowan out of a nostalgic respect for the old Laird, pity for his orphaned daughter, and a vestigial affection for the land itself.

As it turns out, affiliative relationships to the land and the community are as important, if not more so, than the relationships developed by years of continuous occupation, legal ownership, or natal inheritance. Glossin has occupied the land and has assumed the rights of ownership, but his affiliative relation to the land is fundamentally different from that of Mannering or Meg Merrilies. His desire for the land is purely selfish; his plans to pull down the Old Place demonstrate the lack of authenticating sentiment in his relation to the property, as does his insistence on taking a new coat of arms and family motto. Meg's relationship to Ellangowan is more complex and deeper than Mannering's for the obvious reason that, up until the time of her banishment in the first volume, it is the only home she has ever known. Her family has lived at Derncleugh on the Ellangowan estate for generations, yet her status as a Gypsy and therefore, by accepted definition, a wanderer without a permanent home, makes her relationship to the land at Ellangowan an affiliative one—a relationship of choice and personal preference, rather than natal or familial right. As a Gypsy, she has no “natal right” to any land at all.

The novel's meditation on homeland is complicated by the global movements of many of the characters and the international scope of the plot. Although the narration rarely leaves Scotland, incidents that occur in other parts of the world (Westmoreland, London, India, and continental Europe) are related retrospectively by the characters themselves in the form of letters and personal reminiscence. The scenes in India are narrated partly by Mannering in a letter to his best friend and take the form of a confession. The rest of the Indian part of the story is narrated by Julia Mannering, in an epistolary, school-girl confession to her best friend. Bertram's period of exile from Scotland is only partly accounted for, but what we do learn is narrated by Bertram to *his* friend. It is important that the narrator himself does not leave Scotland; the primary focus of the narrative remains in Scotland, and more specifically in the neighborhood of Ellangowan. Ellangowan is the organizing center of the novel, providing a hub for other locations, like Liddesdale, India, and Edinburgh. The travels of the characters are narrated by themselves only after they have returned to the general proximity of Ellangowan, the navel of the novel's universe.

All of Scott's novels are, at least to some extent, political in their scope and historical context, but few are as international as *Guy Mannering*. India, continental Europe, and even the United States have their place in the world of the novel (the American war for independence is the primary historical index of the novel). Yet all of the wanderers and travelers in the novel are ultimately united by invisible, affective ties to the Ellangowan estate in southern Scotland.

According to the popular imagination that Scott activates in his opening description of the Gypsies of Derncleugh, Gypsies represent no one particular place of origin; so, appropriately, Meg's dress and cultural mores are adopted from a variety of sources. She marries East and West in what appears to be a comfortable, stable union: her costume is a combination of Oriental robes with Scottish tartan; her language, a mixture of Scottish dialect, thieves' cant, and Romani; her superstitions, both originating (apparently) in the East and rooted firmly in Scotland.<sup>110</sup> But despite her hybridity, Meg Merrilies comes to represent a specifically Scottish memory and connection with history. She tells the future, but is also a matriarchal figure embodying the past of Ellangowan. Both Duncan and Nord point out that all the Gypsies of *Guy Mannering* and

---

<sup>110</sup> For more on Meg's dress and habits as a combination of East and West, see Deborah Epstein Nord's reading of Meg's overall hybridity, *British Imagination* p. 26.

especially Meg are a repository of real history (Duncan *Modern Romance* 131; Nord *British Imagination* 36-7). Meg's knowledge of the past (via ballads, folklore, and observational experience) helps to reassert the rights of the Laird. Her situation as both a native of the land and a foreign wanderer in it, both representing history and foretelling the future, give her a unique position from which to manipulate events and people to bring about the reinstatement of Henry Bertram's rights as heir of Ellangowan.

As the "Egyptian sibyl," Meg's oracular ability could almost go without saying. The trope of the Gypsy fortuneteller was already well established, as was the distrust of the motives for such fortunetelling: Gypsies never tell fortunes for free, or without some ulterior motive. Guy Mannering's astrology, by contrast, is read as a science (by the "old clergyman" who taught him at Oxford and by the credulous Laird of Ellangowan, at any rate), and should be trusted for its apparently disinterested objectivity. Yet, in an odd reversal, Meg reads the fortune of the newborn heir of Ellangowan *gratis*, on her own account, and in private (although observed by Guy Mannering), while Mannering "calculate[s]" young Bertram's "nativity" at the explicit request of the old Laird—almost, I might say, in exchange for his dinner and lodging (16). He performs the task half-unwillingly and partly in jest. After heatedly defending the "imaginary science" to Dominie Sampson at dinner, he cannot but carry out the Laird's request, though he does it, as Ian Duncan observes, even while renouncing and half-disbelieving the art (*Modern Romance* 126-7). I would add that his position as a guest in the house would make a refusal of his host's explicit request socially awkward, if not downright rude. The Gypsy's place as family fortuneteller is taken over by the Oxford-trained astrologer of the novel's subtitle. Meg is "overpowered by a jargon more mysterious than her own," and she quietly cedes her position in deference to Mannering's superior abilities (17). Meg's magic is thus displaced by the "pretended science" (as Sampson calls it) of the man whose presence in the neighborhood will ultimately displace all of the Ellangowan Gypsies.

Meg's private forecast of young Bertram's life is similar to Mannering's: a life interrupted by periods of danger at three intervals (20; 24). But while Mannering employs the pseudo-science of astrology and mathematical projections of the stars and planets, Meg is "assist[ed by] those ancient implements of housewifery now almost banished from the land, the distaff and spindle" (23). Meg's art is rooted in feminine domesticity, but it is importantly a version of feminine domesticity that, the narrator reminds us, has all but died out by the narrator's time. The instruments of her art, like Meg herself, are the relics of a bygone age. Yet the results of the two forecasts—the Eastern, feminine, magical fortune and the Western, masculine, pseudo-scientific horoscope—are finally equivalent. Meg's power, though more mysterious and mystical in its provenance, yields the same results as Mannering's more rational calculations. This equivalence is almost glossed over by the narrator; the scene is narrated from Guy Mannering's point of view, and the reader is in the same position as the astrologer of the sub-title—spying on Meg as she casts her fortune and (presumably) noting its similarity to Mannering's horoscope of the previous page. Yet neither Mannering nor the narrator offers any commentary on the outcome of Meg's fortune—neither has a chance to comment, as Meg's magic is interrupted by the arrival of the true criminal of the novel, Dirk Hattaraick. Because neither Mannering nor the narrator has time to remark on it, the equivalence of Meg's fortune and Mannering's horoscope remains ambiguous—an ambiguity which comes to typify both the relationship between Mannering and the "art" of astrology which he "mentally relinquishe[s]" (21) and the relationship between Meg and Mannering as the "symbolic parents—authors of [Bertram's] destiny" (*Modern Romance* 126).

Meg's power is partly genetic—the natural gift of any “Egyptian sibyl”—and partly a product of her relationship to the land. Her magic asserts itself primarily in two places: as she forecasts the fortune of the new heir of Ellangowan (23-4), and as she curses the Laird upon being evicted from the neighborhood (44). In both cases, her power, or at least the motivation for its exercise, seems rooted in the land. After leaving the house on the night of young Bertram's birth, her private forecast of the heir is performed in the ruins of the “Old Place” of Ellangowan—the ancestral seat of the family. If she seems out of place in the modern house of the family (an “awkward mansion,” though “well situated” [22]), she seems perfectly at home in the ruins of the “Old Place.” She seems to be an integral part of the ruin. Mannering, the representative of modern rationality, sees Meg as a repository of ancient magic in the midst of the ruins, seated, appropriately enough, “upon a broken corner-stone” (23).

It is an important detail: the corner-stone is the symbolic, if not the actual, physical foundation of the house and the family which it metonymically represents. Meg spins out the future of the house of Ellangowan while seated on its symbolically broken foundation stone. Meg herself forms the symbolic corner-stone of the Ellangowan estate—without her, the family is threatened with ruin and eradication. She helps to rebuild the family by working to re-establish the rights of Henry Bertram at the end of the novel. Her fortunetelling, too, is an act of *creation*, rather than simple reading or calculating: she spins out the “wool of three different colours, black, white, and grey,” into a single thread, which she then measures and reads (as opposed to Mannering's method of observing and calculating based on the positions of the stars at the moment of young Bertram's birth). Bertram's future, then, is a product of Meg's *creation*, as much as of her foresight or of Mannering's calculations.<sup>111</sup>

Given Meg's almost supernatural affiliation with the land at Ellangowan and the novel's association of Bertram's future with that place, it seems appropriate that Bertram's recollection of his origins should begin when he stands before the entryway of the Old Place of Ellangowan. The place and the family arms and motto above the door (“*Our Right makes our Might*” [246]) recalls to his mind a few lines of a ballad, which are the key to his identity as the heir of the estate. Although the exact words escape him, he remembers the tune perfectly, and (in spite of Glossin's ineffectual efforts to suppress him) he plays it on his flageolet. A local woman overhears the melody and takes up the words, singing a different verse (248). Later, Meg uses lines from this same ballad as a kind of password to solicit the active participation of Guy Mannering in the recovery of the Ellangowan estate.

Ballads in this novel, then, function as a kind of folk memory, and Meg Merrilies is the primary repository and mouthpiece of that memory. Although Vanbeest Brown/Bertram has forgotten or repressed his own individual history, the memory of the ballad that will restore it is still present. The memory of that ballad is awakened by his physical presence at the Old Place of his family, again underlining the connection between history, place, and memory.

In addition to the collective memory represented by the ballads, most of the “history” of the novel is likewise folk, rather than political, history. Unlike its immediate predecessor, *Waverley*, *Guy Mannering* is, as Scott himself called it, a novel of “private life”<sup>112</sup>: it follows the fortunes of two “private”—that is to say, wholly fictional and non-historical—gentlemen, Henry

---

<sup>111</sup> Duncan formulates this differently, using a metaphor of childbirth to fit with his assertion that Mannering and Meg are Bertram's “symbolic parents”: “Mannering conceives the romance plot while Meg Merrilies actually bears and delivers it” (126).

<sup>112</sup> Edgar Johnson, *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*, 2 vols. (New York: MacMillan 1970).

Bertram/Vanbeest Brown and the titular Guy Mannering. It is a “historical novel” in that it is set some forty years before it was written: the historical indices are the references to the “American war.” The primary events of the novel’s plot, however, are the events of “private life.” There is no climactic Jacobite Uprising, no Rob Roy MacGregor emerging from the misty Highlands, no disguised Coeur-de-Lion appearing to rescue the hero from captivity. “History,” in *Guy Mannering*, is an ancestral force that many characters attempt—unsuccessfully—to escape.

The force of the past is represented most dramatically in the figure of Meg Merrilies. I have shown how Meg and the rest of the Derncleugh Gypsies are vestiges of a bygone time. They do not belong to historical time, but rather to the time of romance. Scott’s historical romance, then, grants them an existence within the pages of the novel, but then must clear them away before the conclusion. Yet Meg’s heritage as a Scottish Gypsy gives her both the power to foretell the future and the will to help sustain the inheritance pattern of the local Laird. Trumpener argues that although “the Gypsies are increasingly reduced to a textual effect, their chronotope increasingly exerts a decisive power over the temporal cohesion of the text itself” (Trumpener 869). Meg, in other words, might exist outside of historical time of the novel, but that position allows her to wield a power on the novel’s central romance from her position in its margins.

Like the outlaws of *Ivanhoe*’s greenwood, Meg Merrilies is situated both outside of historical time and outside of the law. Unlike *Ivanhoe*, though, in which the lack of a legitimate central ruler contributes to the sense that all of the characters are, in some sense, “outlaw,” the world of *Guy Mannering* is more clearly regulated. London and Edinburgh are the centers of legitimate authority, however much the local Laird might choose to flout that authority in favor of a more local, feudal system of control and law enforcement. The old Laird condones the presence on his land of both the Gypsy band and Hattaraick’s smugglers, apparently viewing both groups in the light of feudal dependents and ignoring any legal irregularities or even outright crimes, defending his own right to apply the law—or not—on his own land as he sees fit. By the end of the novel, though, all vestiges of this more feudal system of protection and law enforcement have been cleared away in favor of the more modern, centralized, national system of law and legal inheritance. The relationship of the Gypsies and the more truly criminal Hattaraick and Glossin helps to clarify this transition.

The Gypsies of Ellangowan are more integrated with broader society than the Gypsies of Davenham in Ainsworth’s *Rookwood*, yet they, too, are insistently associated with crime. The narrator insists on the “mingled” inheritance of the Gypsies in Scotland, linking them both with their Eastern ancestors and with their Highland neighbors: “They lost in a great measure, by this intermixture, the national character of Egyptians, and became a mingled race, having all the idleness and predatory habits of their eastern ancestors, with a ferocity which they probably borrowed from the men of the north who joined their society” (35). The group seems not to have much benefited by the “intermixture,” becoming now “ferocious” as well as “idle” and “predatory.” The “men of the north” are, in this description, as much a wild tribe outside the norms of civilized Scottish society as the Gypsies themselves. The crime with which they are associated, then, is simply the crime of being an outsider in civilized society, rather than the vice and propensity to crime which will be insisted on by Ainsworth as the natural inheritance of all Gypsies by virtue of their *foreign* ancestry.

Scott, then, does not wholly naturalize the association of Gypsies with crime; he historicizes it and seems more conscious of its inherent injustice and fallacy than does Ainsworth:



[...The] Gypsies were, at an early period, acknowledged as a distinct and independent people by one of the Scottish monarchs, and [...] they were less favourably distinguished by a subsequent law, which rendered the character of Gypsy equal, in the judicial balance, to that of common and habitual thief, and prescribed his punishment accordingly (35).

The prepositional phrase, “in the judicial balance,” separated from the rest of the sentence by commas, distances the narrator—and the reader—from the view he describes. The “judicial balance” might equate Gypsies with the “common and habitual thief,” but the structure of the sentence suggests the distaste with which the narrator records but rejects that view. (This is in marked contrast to the glee with which Ainsworth equates the entire Gypsy tribe of Davenham as the thieving “Canting Crew.”<sup>113</sup>) The litotes of the phrase, “less favourably distinguished” marks the narrator’s ironic distance from the laws he describes. Using an occasionally ironic, but otherwise neutral tone, Scott’s narrator describes the historical evolution of the position of the Gypsies in Scotland, moving, as Nord has summarized it, from “segregation and outlawry” of an earlier period to the integration, domestication, and salutary coexistence” of the opening of *Guy Mannering*, which “end[s] with banishment” (Nord 30).

As the description of the Gypsies of Scotland develops, however, the narrator’s ironic distance begins to evaporate, although he resolutely maintains the passive voice when describing the “character” of the Gypsies in order to attribute that characterization to universal, or near universal, opinion, rather than to assert it from a more editorial point of view:

The wildness of [the Gypsies’] character, and the indomitable pride with which they despised all regular labour, commanded a certain awe, which was not diminished by the consideration, that these strollers were a vindictive race, and were restrained by no checks, either of fear or conscience, from taking desperate vengeance upon those who had offended them. These tribes were, in short, the *Parias* of Scotland, living like wild Indians among European settlers, and, like them, judged of rather by their own customs, habits, and opinions, than as if they had been members of the civilized part of the community. (*Guy Mannering* 37)

The “wildness” and “indomitable pride” of the Gypsies is taken for granted, but by whom? The narrator begins to naturalize the stereotypes associated with the Gypsies of Scotland, describing them passively from the point of view of the unnamed, de-individuated mass of (civilized) Scottish society. These are the points of view that Scott assumes but from which he maintains an ironic distance: these are the stereotypes that Glossin (certainly the villain of the novel, inasmuch

---

<sup>113</sup> Meg Merrilies and the other Derncleugh Gypsies are always given a political motivation for any criminal acts, as opposed to Ainsworth’s Gypsies, who enjoy mischief and crime for its own sake. Meg Merrilies is motivated first by revenge for her family’s banishment and the clearance of their encampment, and then by the desire to reinstate the rightful Laird and to perpetuate the system of feudal inheritance that had so long benefited her people at Ellangowan. Meg is not guilty of the murder or even of the kidnapping of which she stands accused, but only of helping to bring to pass the future that she herself foretold.

as there is a villain) encourages the hapless old Laird of Ellangowan to assume, to his ultimate detriment.

But Scott does not adopt a simple set of stereotypes either to ironize or to maintain: he evokes one set of assumptions only to discard them later, destabilizing the position of the Ellangowan Gypsies even further. His choice of the word “Paria” to describe the Gypsies is telling: a “paria,” or “pariah,” has come to mean any kind of social outcast, but the original definition, as Scott certainly knew (as the word was still used in both senses in the early nineteenth century), was a class or tribe in southern India, which was outside of the official caste system, as it originally designated an aboriginal tribe or group (Oxford English Dictionary, “Pariah”). The Pariahs of southern India originally were employed as sorcerers or as ceremonial drummers for the broader Brahmanical society, though they themselves were not officially a part of that society. Indeed, the Gypsies of Scotland could indeed be the Paria tribe, wandering far from their original homeland, outcasts both in the southern Indian region they left behind and in the European countries they settled.

Whatever were Scott’s intentions, the designation “*Parias of Scotland*” seems particularly apt as applied to the Ellangowan Gypsies. Like the Pariah tribe of southern India, the Ellangowan Gypsies are a part of the fabric of Scottish society, just one of many disparate groups that coexist in the region, exchanging “good offices” with their neighbors (*Guy Mannering* 37). But like the Pariahs, although they coexist with the other groups, they are outside of the accepted social system. They are separated from the Scottish landowners not only by “class,” as Nord argues (31), but by culture and by generally accepted racial and national difference. To call them “integrated” is an overstatement: while at the start of *Guy Mannering*, Scott describes a certain amount of “mingling” and intermarriage between the Gypsies and their neighbors, as well as a good-natured “intercourse of good offices,” they are still, for the most part, a segregated society. Their segregation seems to be partially self-imposed, but also due to the preference and prejudice of their neighbors.

In the same sentence as he designates the Gypsies of Ellangowan “*Parias of Scotland*,” the narrator likens them to “wild Indians” among more “civilized” “European settlers.”<sup>114</sup> The narrator’s ostensible purpose in the analogy is to emphasize that the Gypsies were judged by their neighbors according to a separate set of principles and social norms: although forming a part of the social fabric of the neighborhood as longtime residents, the Gypsies, like the “wild Indians” of the analogy, have a disparate set of “customs” and “opinions,” and they must therefore be taken on their own terms. Still more telling in this analogy is the parallel between the troubled legal relationship of the “wild Indians” to their land and the displaced, wandering “tribe” of the Gypsies in Europe.<sup>115</sup>

Interestingly, Scott compares Highlanders to “wild Indians” elsewhere: in the introduction to the Magnum Opus edition of *Rob Roy*, Scott describes the Highland outlaw Rob Roy as acting with the “unrestrained license of an American Indian” (5). (As Ian Duncan remarks in his notes to the Oxford critical edition, this analogy was actually a common one in the anthropology of the time.) The parallel is appropriate, given the narrator’s insistence that the

---

<sup>114</sup> Presumably there is no pun intended between the Indian origins of the “*Parias*” and the “wild Indians” of North America.

<sup>115</sup> Similarly, Scott refers to the conflict between the old Laird and the Gypsies as a “Scottish Maroon War” (40), referring to the conflicts between the Maroons (former slaves and Amerindians) in Jamaica and the British colonizers.

Ellangowan Gypsies have long intermarried with the “men of the north” in *Guy Mannering*. Like the Gypsies, the Highlanders cannot be judged according to the social “customs, habits, and opinions” that govern more “civilized” society; they, too, have to be understood on their own terms. The Gypsies mingle with the Highlanders, and, like them, “travelled in different bands, and had rules among themselves, by which each was confined to its own district” (35). The “wild Indians” of North America and the “Parias” of southern India become stand-ins for the social other in Britain—those who live in a society, forming an important part of its fabric, but who are not able or perhaps not willing to integrate fully.

The crucial difference is that “wild Indians” of Scott’s analogy are native to North America and stayed there, whereas the “Parias” originated in southern India and traveled to Europe and elsewhere. The “Parias,” then, are wanderers—vagrants—and therefore *de facto* potential criminals. In the “wild Indian” part of the analogy, it is the more “civilized” European settler who is actually the foreigner, using his “civilizing” influence and his own set of “customs, habits, and opinions” to make the “Indians” *seem* “wild,” uncouth, and out of place even in their own native land. This reversal troubles Scott’s analogy and draws attention to the uneasy relationship of both the Gypsies and the Scottish landowners to their homeland: who is the native, and who the outsider? At what point can an immigrant claim to belong to his new homeland? The instability of the analogy is appropriate, given the novel’s persistent interest in the legal and moral questions of landownership and inheritance. The comparison has a particular edge, given the historical index of the novel: the war for American Independence dramatized this question of homeland and affiliative belonging for the European colonists, even as it changed the status of the Indians, some of whom were allied with the British against the colonists. Despite the emphasis on the Gypsies’ wildness and their status as wanderers, then, this analogy does more to underline these broader questions than it does to suggest their inherent criminality.

The Gypsies of *Guy Mannering* are not fully equated with criminality, although the narrator does, as I have shown, gesture toward that stereotype on occasion. Like the Davenham Gypsies in *Rookwood*, the Ellangowan Gypsies are set in juxtaposition to a “real” criminal. While the criminal of *Rookwood*, Dick Turpin, is a jolly and surprisingly non-violent figure, Dirk Hattaraick, the smuggler of *Guy Mannering*, bears (as the “Dirk” of his name would imply) a threat of real physical violence. His motivation is almost always personal gain, unlike the Gypsies, who are willing to act for revenge and for the restitution of the rights of the heir.

Hattaraick threatens physical violence (indeed, he is guilty of the murder of Kennedy on the day of young Bertram’s kidnapping), but the greater threat of the novel is not of physical violence, but of legalized usurpation. Glossin, the slick, sycophantic clerk, manages to wrest the Ellangowan estate from the rightful heir. Dirk Hattaraick and Glossin represent the two types of threat to the social (and legal) world of the novel. The two men collaborate toward the end of the novel, but their collaboration extends beyond the plot and is acknowledged by the characters themselves as something more archetypal. The Edinburgh lawyer Pleydell acknowledges a kind of affinity between himself and Glossin, and between Mannering and Hattaraick: “‘Very natural, Colonel,’ said the advocate, ‘that you should be interested in the ruffian, and I in the knave—that’s all professional taste’” (348). Pleydell is clear-sighted enough to see Glossin and Hattaraick (and himself and Mannering) as archetypal representatives of their professions, if not as narrative functions. Duncan clarifies the relation between the two villains in structural terms: “Scott sets [Mannering and Pleydell] in symmetrical opposition to his villains, as the legitimate versions of force and fraud” (Duncan 117). Pleydell’s off-handedly humorous remark to

Mannering, then, helps to reduce the two real villains of the novel to textual functions—the two types of threat that endanger the social and legal world of the novel.

Hattaraick threatens to de-stabilize the social world through occasional acts of violence and through the illegal importation of foreign goods, but he seems, at least, to operate according to a personal code, however at odds it may be with the social and legal code of the broader world of the novel. Glossin's smooth-talking hypocrisy is, by contrast, more thoroughly condemned. The old Laird describes Hattaraick confusedly as “a—a—good sort of blackguard fellow enough,” a “smuggler, [...] privateer, or pirate,” whom “no one cares to trouble” (26). He's a “blackguard,” yes, but at least he's of a “good sort.” That no one bothers “to trouble” him is no great compliment to Hattaraick's morality, but rather a gentle indictment of the local magistrate and the local Lairds, who worry more about their own source of duty-free brandy and tea than about upholding the letter of an abstract law that is dictated from London.

Hattaraick's position is analogous to the Gypsies', in that his presence in and around Ellangowan, however irregular according to the “revenue-lads,” is condoned by the Laird (27). The Gypsies of Derncleugh are the Laird's ““exceeding good friends,”” enjoying a position as “a kind of privileged banditti upon the estate” (37). The old Laird, being unable to “embrac[e] a general or abstract idea,” similarly considers Hattaraick's presence only in the light of a personal convenience—a less expensive alternative to a “d—d lang account” from the local grocer, rather than as a serious economic, legal, and physical threat (27). The Gypsies render “acts of voluntary service” to the Laird as feudal dependents, offering tribute of berries, mushrooms, and other wild edibles (37). Hattaraick likewise buys the goodwill of the Laird, although his “tribute” appears less like a feudal acknowledgement of dependence and more like a bribe: a “keg or two, or a dozen pounds left at [his] stable door at Christmas” (27).

The parallels and collaboration between Hattaraick and the Gypsies are further highlighted by their relationship to magic and superstition. The old Laird describes the smugglers, like the Gypsies themselves, as “having no religion, [but] [making] it all up in superstition, and [having] as many spells, and charms, and nonsense—” (29). Indeed, Hattaraick relies on Meg Merrilies as a kind of priestess of his superstition, interrupting her forecast of the infant heir of Ellangowan to request her blessing on his ship (25). It is appropriate that Hattaraick should first be introduced in the ruins of the “Old Place” of Ellangowan, given his pseudo-feudal relationship with that house. Hattaraick's association with the Old Place and his reliance on Meg's old world superstitions and magic suggest that he, like her, belongs to a bygone era. He will not survive what Duncan describes as a “local, private parable of revolution, played out in the economic warfare between smugglers and excisemen and the loss of the infant heir of Ellangowan” (*Modern Romance* 116). Having a code of his own that condemns Glossin for causing the unnecessary deaths of his crewmen, he murders Glossin and then “anticipates justice” by hanging himself (350-2). His final act before committing suicide, though, emphasizes his continued collaboration and alliance with Meg Merrilies: he writes the letter affirming her evidence and helping to re-establish the rights of the “yunker of Ellangowan” (352). The re-establishment of the rightful heir, though, brings about an end to the system of local permissiveness that had enabled his livelihood as a smuggler under the protection of the old Laird.

The relationship of the Gypsies and Hattaraick, and their deaths at the close of the novel, thus clarify the move in *Guy Mannering* from local authority, which can too easily be abused or manipulated, to more modern, national mechanisms of authority and legal inheritance. History and magic might enable or underscore the affective relation to the land, but to make a legal, real-

world claim, Guy Mannering and Henry Bertram must enlist the help of Pleydell, the Edinburgh lawyer, to supplement and to legitimize the evidence provided by Meg and by Hattaraick. The law, as an institution, can be openly flouted or abused under the old Laird, but is reinvented and strengthened as a mechanism for maintaining social order and control by the end of the novel after the deaths of Hattaraick and Meg and the dispersal of the rest of the Gypsies and smugglers. The law that equates a Gypsy, “in the judicial balance, [with...a] common and habitual thief,” is applied by Glossin to encourage the old Laird to banish Meg and her family. Glossin abuses his legal knowledge to usurp the title of the Ellangowan estate for himself, disinheriting the absent Henry Bertram. The old Laird uses the fact that he has not been appointed as a justice of the peace as an excuse to wink at the smugglers and to take advantage of their goods, and exerts his influence with the local magistrate to support the Gypsies of Derncleugh “against the law of the country” (27, 37). Yet the same laws, exercised rightly, allow Bertram to regain his rightful inheritance, although at the expense of the smugglers and Gypsies who help to reinstate him. The reestablishment of the legal rights of Harry Bertram effectively wipes out all vestiges of the old world represented by Hattaraick and Meg Merrilies.

The resolution of *Guy Mannering* brings an end to both the irregular practices of the smugglers and to the placeless, wandering lifestyle ascribed to the “Parias of Scotland.” In the fully restored legal and social order of the end of *Guy Mannering*, there is no place for figures like Meg or like Hattaraick, who fit only uneasily in the social world or in the modern era. The perhaps overly tidy conclusion of *Guy Mannering* may have seemed a dissatisfactory resolution to Scott’s meditation on belonging and social Parias: as we have seen, W.H. Ainsworth takes up some of these questions two decades later, albeit with less sophistication and apparent self-consciousness. Meanwhile, many of these questions were being considered in other contexts and in other subgenres of the novel, as novelists reflected on the position of social threats of another, more immediate kind: extraneous, ambitious, and socially ambiguous women.

## Chapter 5: Strategic Reticence: Narrating Social Criminals

I have so far focused entirely on criminals and outlaws who appear in novels with historical settings and whose actual existence can be at least partially confirmed by the historical record.<sup>116</sup> The anti-heroes discussed in the first four chapters rival the romantic heroes of the novels in which they appear for narrative centrality and for control of the novel's temporality. The outlaws I have described, in contrast to the solitary, outcast anti-heroes of Byron or even of Scott's poems, are inherently social figures, representatives of an alternative, outlaw society that threatens, at times, to take over the novel's world. In this final chapter, I turn to a different genre: domestic fiction. I examine the consequences of the feminization of outlawry both to the novel's romantic hero or heroine and to the domestic plot itself. The social-climbing anti-heroines of Austen, Thackeray, and Braddon, through their own plotting and manipulation of the marriage market, lend new meaning to the term "marriage plot." These women become rivals not only to other female characters but to the narrator, threatening the terms of the novel's plot through their active maneuvering.

The social climbers and female "outlaws" I describe in this chapter attempt to isolate themselves, morally, from the conventions that bind and restrict the rest of the characters. I am interested, then, in the ways that these potentially threatening figures are handled by the narrators. I open with a reading of *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), Austen's first published novel, and *Persuasion* (1818), her last. Lucy Steele and Mrs. Clay both endanger the stability and rectitude of their social worlds: these women threaten to displace other, more worthy candidates for marriage. Austen's narrator rarely shows any sympathy for these figures; indeed, she tends to avoid direct judgment of them in her narration altogether. Their active maneuvering for social position makes them anathema to her vision of a stable and healthy society. Lucy Steele and Mrs. Clay are precursors to the Victorian novel's most famous social-climbing anti-heroine, Becky Sharp, not only in their active manipulation of the marriage market, but in their position relative to other female characters and to the narrator. In the character of Becky Sharp, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848) feminizes the socializing force of the outlaws in Scott and Ainsworth, destabilizing the traditional marriage plot. At times, Becky seems aware of her status as a character, one who rivals the narrator himself for control of the novel. I close the chapter with a short reading of narrative reticence in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's famous sensation novel *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), which continues to develop the type of the social-climbing anti-heroine as a threat not only to the fabric of society but to national security, as the narrator herself becomes complicit, at times, with the manipulative Lady Audley.

Across these three case studies, I describe a formal development in narrative technique: as the anti-heroine becomes increasingly aligned with either the narrator or with the narrative

---

<sup>116</sup> These include Dick Turpin, Jack Sheppard, Rob Roy, and Robin Hood (Robin Hood's status as a mythological figure of long standing, of course, troubles the distinction between history and fiction, but given that Scott's use of ballad sources on Robin Hood is analogous to his appeal to historical sources on Rob Roy, I will class him with the more certainly historical figures of Turpin, Sheppard, and Rob Roy). The Gypsies of *Guy Mannering*, while obviously fictional, are representative also of a class of people who existed in Scotland at a definitive historical period: Scott goes to some lengths to assure the reader that Gypsies like those of Ellangowan truly existed in Scotland during the period of the novel's action.

machinery, the author must resort to more drastic measures to close her off from the risk of readerly identification, which could amount, allegorically, to her taking control of the story and of the marriage plot itself. By mid-century, “reticence” (both on the part of the narrator and on the part of the anti-heroines) becomes a crucial narrative strategy as the anti-heroine emerges as a major character and moves to the narrative foreground.

The rise of gender studies in the last thirty years has provided a wealth of criticism on the role of women in the development of the novel. My own readings are most strongly informed by Nancy Armstrong’s *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, which argues that the domestic constituted a “gendered field of information [that] contested a dominant political order which depended, among other things, on representing women as economic and political objects” (Armstrong 15). Any female character, then, might be represented as an “economic and political object”; I am most interested in the women who flout, or at least manipulate, the rules of the “dominant political order” in which they appear—who seem, to varying degrees, to be *conscious* of the “field of information” in which they appear.

Other feminist critics (Lyn Pykett, Ann Cvetkovich, and Winifred Hughes, among others) have focused more specifically on scandalous women and anti-heroines, offering offer valuable accounts of the subversion of traditional social mores and conventional models of femininity, especially in the sensation novels of the 1860s. The insights into gender theory offered by this group of critics have certainly influenced my readings (and I will cite them more extensively, especially in my final section on Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*), but my own readings diverge from these critics in both scope and in approach. These critics’ interest is primarily historicist and feminist. While I am interested in the historical, social, and political context in which these anti-heroines first appeared, my own argument is mainly formal: I examine the ways that these subversive women are managed by their narrators and the formal innovations developed by novelists to incorporate and to control these potentially damaging anti-heroines.

This chapter offers an alternative, parallel account of the novel’s development in the early nineteenth century, one that aligns the apparently “domestic” fiction of Austen with the more overtly political fiction of Scott and Ainsworth. Traditional accounts of both domestic and of political fiction endeavor to “make a continuous narrative out of material that actually proceeds in fits and starts” (Armstrong 161). Armstrong accounts for these gaps by asserting that

They tell us when this fiction could not deal with the important issues of the day, just as its reappearance in startlingly new forms suggests that it was engaging a particular moment in history. In other words, the sporadic production of domestic fiction implies that discontinuities were a function of fiction’s place in a much larger process of meaning. Such a history also implies that the work of organizing and interpreting reality continued in other symbolic modes when fictions of courtship and marriage did not serve this purpose particularly well. (Armstrong 161)

I agree with Armstrong’s formulation that the “gaps” in production of domestic fiction reveal fiction’s role in the production of meaning, especially at particular moments in history. But I contend that narratives of courtship and marriage actually have more in common with the more overtly political historical novels of Scott and with Newgate fiction than has been previously supposed. Both domestic fiction and outlaw fiction reveal analogous preoccupations with law

and the social order, with individual subjectivity and the individual's responsibilities to—and transgressions against—the social collective.

Many critics assume that Austen's novels are concerned with the feminine, domestic sphere, largely or entirely to the exclusion of the economic or the political.<sup>117</sup> Other critics, like T.B. Tomlinson, assert that Austen's heroines understand only “unconsciously,” however “accurately, the mixture of personal and economic factors surrounding them” (Tomlinson 12). The evolution of the English novel, then, takes a leap over the 1820s and '30s—that difficult “gap” that Armstrong has noted—and critics like Tomlinson then continue their discussion of the form in the 1840s, with the rise of a new generation of novelists including Dickens, Gaskell, Thackeray, and the Brontës. Tomlinson, like Armstrong, finds it difficult to account for the “gap” in the history of the novel (and particularly of what he calls the “domestic” novel) between the death of Austen and the maturation of Dickens, since, as he claims, “most of the concerns of Scott's novels [in the 1810s and '20s] are rather different from those in the English novel, but certainly by the mid-century a hundred years after Richardson, there is no doubt about the status and function of the English novel: it is very much a middle class enterprise” (Tomlinson 12). I agree entirely with Tomlinson that by the mid nineteenth century, the English novel is a genre primarily consumed by and associated with the middle class. But his formulation elides the important contributions to the novel's development in the 1820s and '30s that help to consolidate the two disparate traditions of the novel—the domestic and the political. I argue that Austen's novels already begin to do this. Austen's heroines might indeed, as Tomlinson has claimed, be “unconscious” of the economic and political factors that motivate other characters; however, the social-climbers of her novels—the self-serving, manipulative women who attempt to displace the heroine or to marry above their station in each novel—are very acutely aware of the economic and personal factors that form the unspoken foundation of the social world of Austen's novels. Yet Austen's narrator keeps these women at a moral arm's length, rarely offering explicit judgment of their bad behavior, and instead allowing their social “crimes” to be interpreted (and judged) by other characters—primarily by the heroines whom their actions most threaten.

---

<sup>117</sup> This has been the case since Austen's admission to the literary canon in the mid nineteenth century, and it is a view that has prevailed well into the latter half of the twentieth century in spite of an extraordinary and expanding body of criticism demonstrating the political stakes of Austen's novels, including the likes of Deidre Shauna Lynch, Claudia Johnson, Edward Said, and others. As Johnson argues in her groundbreaking *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, “The precondition of Austen's posthumous admittance into the canon was an apparent contentment to work artfully within carefully restricted boundaries which have been termed ‘feminine,’” and the “misleading premises [of these nineteenth-century critics] are still with us” (xiv, xvi). See, for example, Ian Watt, who argues that Austen—besides developing formal techniques of narration first innovated by Fielding—is “representative” of other female novelists of the time in that her novels “reflect the process whereby... women were playing an increasingly important part in the literary scene. [...] In Jane Austen, Fanny Burney and George Eliot the advantages of the feminine point of view outweigh the restrictions of social horizon which have until recently been associated with it” (Watt 298-9). Even Marilyn Butler, while acknowledging as a “truism” that common critical claim that Austen “take[s] no interest in the broad concerns of national life” and describing Austen as a participant in her study's “war of ideas,” still accepts it, taking Austen's “narrow range” as a given (161). Despite Butler's acceptance of inherited critical “truisms” about Austen's “narrow range,” however, Edward Neill credits Butler with bringing about a paradigm shift in Austen studies—a “recovery of a ‘politicized’ Jane Austen,” which he develops in his discussion of Austen's conservatism (3; 2).



By later in the century, though—and, importantly, after the rise and subsequent decline in popularity of the “Newgate novel”—these ambitious, social-climbing women take on a more central role. Instead of mere rivals to the heroines’ interests to be dismissed at the happy conclusion of the marriage plot, as in Austen, they become anti-heroines in their own right: Becky Sharp might threaten Amelia’s chances at happiness in *Vanity Fair* just as wantonly and selfishly as a Lucy Steele or a Mrs. Clay, but she is hardly a minor character in any sense of the term. Her interests and social maneuvers form the center of the plot. As much as the narrator disavows her, Becky is the closest to a real protagonist to appear in Thackeray’s “novel without a hero.” Unlike Austen’s narrator, who withdraws in apparent disgust from explicit judgment of the social climbers in her novels, the narrator of *Vanity Fair* offers the reader frequent judgment—sympathetic, unsympathetic, and ironically aloof—of Becky Sharp’s movements. The narrator of *Vanity Fair* is famously difficult to pin down, and Becky’s canniness at negotiating the slippery narrative world of *Vanity Fair* becomes, ironically, the one thing the reader is able to count on. She attempts to manipulate the other characters and the reader’s sympathy to seize control of the story. While the narrator is generally happy to cast judgment on Becky, his final withdrawal into reticence signals the extent of Becky’s potential danger. Reticence becomes a key narrative strategy in managing the anti-heroines of the Victorian sensation novel in the 1860s. In the final section of this chapter, I demonstrate the ways that Mary Elizabeth Braddon develops strategic reticence in her narration of the potentially insane, murderous Lady Audley.

What all the female social climbers and anti-heroines in this chapter have in common is a desire to marry above the station to which they were born. In itself, this is hardly a criminal desire—almost every heroine and many heroes of almost any marriage-driven novel in almost every national tradition could then be labeled as “criminal.” These subversive women, however, are willing to flout social and moral laws in their quests to marry well, making them as “outlaw,” in this sense, as Scott’s Rob Roy, but without the Highland outlaw’s political justification. From Austen to Thackeray to Braddon, the social climbing anti-heroine’s crimes become more and more severe, and the narrator is pressed to manage readerly sympathy for these women in more and more dramatic ways.

### **Social Dynamism and Social Climbing in Jane Austen**

Marrying well is the common fate of every Austen heroine. In terms of money, social position, and personal fitness, no Austen heroine has ever made a *mésalliance*. Elizabeth and Jane Bennett, the Dashwood sisters, Catherine Morland, Fanny Price, and even Anne Elliot, all marry up either in terms of position, fortune, or both. In an essay on Jane Austen and money, Lisa Hopkins traces the relationship of money and social position chronologically through Austen’s oeuvre, considering the apparent shift away from the insistence on the necessity of a steady income (based on land) to marry. She observes that Austen’s earliest written novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*, and, to an extent, *Pride and Prejudice*, emphasize the relative incomes and net worth of the central characters with a remarkable precision, especially when compared to the later novels, like *Persuasion*, in which fortune and social position are treated as separate, though equally important.

J.A. Downie offers a persuasively combative argument about the relative social class of the “landed gentry” and aristocracy of Austen’s novels that dismisses most earlier accounts of Austen as a bourgeois writer of domestic fiction. Downie argues, for example, that Armstrong’s

“invention” of a “middle-class aristocracy” to describe the lower gentry in Austen’s novels (Mr. Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance) is confusing in that it is unclear whether that “middle-class aristocracy” is supposed to exist “below or between the nobility and gentry,” and is furthermore misleading and historically inaccurate, since that formulation “fails to appreciate that, time out of mind, the English aristocracy has consisted of the nobility and the landed gentry, the titled and the untitled alike” (Downie 76-77). Ultimately, Downie argues that the definition of both “gentleman” and “aristocrat” was significantly broader in the historical context of Austen’s novels than critics like Armstrong or Tomlinson appear to assume, and that the differences of rank so insisted upon by the more snobbish characters (Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Lady Russell, or even Emma) are in fact more minute than many critics and readers have seemed to believe. Austen’s novels do, however, track a historical shift away from a clear hierarchy between nobility and gentry towards a broader, more inclusive sense of what constitutes the ruling class: in other words, the definition of a “gentleman.”

It is within this context of minute social differences within the aristocracy or ruling class that Downie describes, then, that social climbers like Lucy Steele and Mrs. Clay are able to operate so effectively. In a study of political thought in Austen’s novels, Anne Crippen Ruderman assesses the various definitions of “duty” among the major and minor characters of Austen’s novels, in the context of marriage and marital ambition. Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, for instance, asserts that “it is everybody’s duty to do as well for themselves as they can” (289), yet her philosophy is implicitly condemned when she uses it “to defend the ambitious but extremely unhappy marriages” of her London friends (Ruderman 4) and later, to defend her own and her brother’s selfishness. I am interested in what Austen’s narrator seems to consider the social crimes of Lucy Steele and of Mrs. Clay as they pursue what Mary Crawford might call their “duty,” manipulating and deceiving in their quests to use marriage as a road to upward mobility into and through the English ruling class. Looking beyond the narrator and the heroines’ obvious contempt for these women, it is clear that their over-interested negotiation of the marriage market marks them not just as artificial and insincere, but as explicitly “dangerous.” They seem to represent a different kind of social threat from that of a Willoughby or a Wickham.<sup>118</sup> Their social crime is not simply their desire to secure their fortunes by marrying well; rather, it is the anti-social manipulation that takes advantage of the weakness or misfortunes of others and attempts to displace other, perhaps more worthy, Englishwomen.

One might expect that the implied author who asks the reader to sympathize with the foibles of Marianne Dashwood and of Wentworth, or to appreciate the good qualities of Mrs. Jennings and of Lady Russell, even while acknowledging their weaknesses, might have a modicum of sympathy for the plight of a single and thoroughly dependent young woman like Lucy Steele or Mrs. Clay.<sup>119</sup> Hardly: these socially ambitious women are the villainesses of these

---

<sup>118</sup> Wickham and Mrs. Clay form an interesting comparative study: both are the children of trusted employees of ancient and wealthy members of the landed gentry, and both attempt to secure their own fortunes by marrying into those families. Willoughby’s social position is of course far above Wickham, Mrs. Clay, or Lucy Steele, which perhaps accounts for the narrative’s willingness to forgive his betrayal of Marianne. In this chapter, however, I focus on the social crimes of Lucy and of Mrs. Clay, because social ambition and aggression is more thoroughly condemned in women than in men.

<sup>119</sup> In the course of her argument that Austen’s comedies “challenge the notion of male superiority,” Audrey Bilger shows how Austen’s satiric portraits of female characters (Lucy Steele and Mrs. Clay

novels, far more than Willoughby or Mr. Elliot. By the end of *Sense and Sensibility*, Willoughby becomes “poor Willoughby,” in spite of his dishonorable behavior to Marianne and his seduction and abandonment of Colonel Brandon’s ward, Eliza Williams, and he is granted a long scene of apology and self-justification. Mr. Elliot of *Persuasion*, if never forgiven, is at least apparently forgotten by Anne and Wentworth as they embark on their peripatetic marital life together—while his crimes are judged severely by both Anne and the narrator, he is, in the end, dismissed as the potential future prey of the grasping Mrs. Clay.

Lucy Steele and Mrs. Clay, on the other hand, are treated with persistent coldness by the implied author—never are they granted a moment’s sympathy, even after the reader is made aware of their dependent status as single women. Their situations are, economically speaking, more pitiable than those of the other female social climbers of Austen’s novels, like Miss Bingley or Isabella Thorpe, in that neither Lucy nor Mrs. Clay has either a wealthy brother or a dotting mother to lend support or to offer advice or respectability. Mrs. Clay is the adult daughter of Sir Walter Elliot’s attorney; her father seems to be her only family and only means of support. We’re told in the opening chapters that she “had returned, after an unprosperous marriage, to her father’s house” (15). Because the narrator does not tell us explicitly that Mrs. Clay has been widowed, her position is all the more ambiguous: Deidre Lynch notes the ambiguity in her Oxford edition, pointing out that, since divorces were rare and only available to the very rich, readers would have understood Mrs. Clay to have been widowed (as, indeed, becomes clear later in the novel)<sup>120</sup>, yet it does seem telling that the narrator should not make this explicit in the context of the “widowed society” of *Persuasion* (Brodie 699).<sup>121</sup>

Lucy Steele’s state is still more dependent: she and her older sister, Nancy, rely on their uncle, Mr. Pratt, for support. Mr. Pratt is a private tutor living in Plymouth, and Lucy and her sister have to depend on a combination of his generosity and the hospitality of their distant relations and friends to scrape together enough money and good will to keep up a genteel appearance in the world. In the absence of a mother figure, Lucy has to rely on her own judgment in matters of marriage and acquaintance, and her judgment appears to reference only the purely economic question of potential future return on the present investment of insincere flattery and affection. Indeed, Lucy also has to contend with the liability of a silly and vulgar older sister, and frequently has to act the part of their absent mother, whose job it would be to keep the behavior of one sister in check while making the most of opportunities for both. The awkwardness of Lucy’s position more than accounts for the inconsistencies—not to say hypocrisies—of her character.

I am not interested, though, in trying to persuade readers to view either Lucy or Mrs. Clay as a sympathetic character. That would be a serious misreading of both novels—the narrator clearly marks both of them as detestable, and any attempt to redeem them, or even to excuse their bad behavior, would be somewhat absurd. Rather, I am interested in the way the narrator manages both Lucy and Mrs. Clay via the judgment of other characters, rather than through her own explicit narratorial voice.

---

among them), far from “engaging in antifeminism or misogyny” actually “promote solidarity among women by dramatizing the failures of female isolationism and duplicity” (143; 150).

<sup>120</sup> Note to *Persuasion*, ed. Deidre Shauna Lynch, p. 233.

<sup>121</sup> For more on Austen’s treatment of widows, see Laura Fairchild Brodie’s “Society and the Superfluous Female: Jane Austen’s Treatment of Widowhood.” Brodie is especially strong in her treatment of *Persuasion*, whose society is replete with widows and widowers.

Both Lucy Steele and Mrs. Clay are rendered differently from the other minor characters that make up the fabric of Austen's social world. They are less eccentric than other Austenian minor characters, and thus less truly individuated. They have no unique quirks—like Mrs. Bennett's harping on her "poor nerves" or Nancy Steele's obsession with handsome "beaux"—that would make them ripe for ridicule and would at the same time mark them as unique individuals. Rather, they are rendered as realistically as the more likable minor characters, like Miss Tilney or Charlotte Lucas, yet without the condescending pity accorded to Charlotte or the happy ending that rewards Miss Tilney. Their very blankness, relative to Austen's other minor characters, indicates a chameleon-like ability to blend and to adapt to whatever social situation or opportunity they come across.

Despite the naturalism with which their characters are drawn, their names suggest their almost allegorical function in their social worlds. The names are far more allusive than is generally true of Austen's characters; indeed, they are almost transparently so. Mrs. Clay's name suggests, rather plainly, a common, vulgar material, as well as her ability to conform herself to whatever social role she finds herself in, and her willingness to mold herself to suit the Elliot family's whims. She is a "Mrs." Clay, but without a husband, only a marriage, presumed to have ended, described as "unprosperous." The malleability indicated by her name is unsurprising, given the ambiguous social position she occupies in the Elliots' household: neither paid companion nor a social equal, she instead inhabits an awkward middle position including elements of both. Her father's name, too, suggests crookedness. He repeats his full name several times within a couple of pages as though to call attention to it: "Sir Walter Elliot cannot be half so jealous for his own rights, as John Shepherd will be for him" (19, previously on 17)—this is perhaps a sly allusion on Austen's part to the famous eighteenth-century housebreaker and escape artist, John (or Jack) Sheppard, whose exploits form the historical basis for John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), and who inspired countless chapbooks and popular theatrical adaptations as Austen was writing.<sup>122</sup> Lucy Steele's name suggests the bright, sparkling, hardness and coldness of her character, and her equal willingness to reflect the moods, foibles, and desires of those around her, and to use her sharp, steely wit to make stabbing, underhanded remarks at those whom she views as a threat—not to mention her obvious desire to "steal" the hand, if not the heart, of each of the Ferrars men in turn.

Neither Lucy nor Mrs. Clay is described directly by the narrator until the closing pages of the novel; rather, descriptions and judgments of both tend to be mediated through other characters, either through free indirect discourse or through direct narration. The narrator maintains an aloofness from these social climbers, refusing to narrate, even indirectly, events from their perspective until the final chapter, when events have made clear how disingenuous and manipulative they have been. The reader is thus spared even the possibility of sympathy with Lucy or Mrs. Clay.

Lucy Steele is first introduced through Elinor's eyes as having "pretty" features, a "sharp quick eye, and a smartness of air, which though it did not give actual elegance or grace, gave distinction to her person.—Their manners were particularly civil, and Elinor soon allowed them credit for some kind of sense, when she saw with what constant and judicious attention they were making themselves agreeable to Lady Middleton" (103). After their initial conversation, during which Lucy flatters their hosts and scolds her sister, Elinor is "not blinded by the beauty, or the shrewd look of the youngest, to her want of real elegance and artlessness" (107). The narrator

---

<sup>122</sup> For more on Jack Sheppard, see Chapter 3, "Serial Criminal."

maintains an ironic distance from Lucy throughout, never offering an opinion independent of one of the other characters, but only channeling the astute observations and opinions usually of Elinor, or, in the closing chapters, Edward. After jilting the disinherited Edward to marry his wealthier brother Robert, Lucy sends a greeting to the Dashwoods through their man-servant which, it is “perfectly clear to Elinor” was “a flourish of malice” that was “meant to deceive” (322). The actual scene is not narrated directly; it is only described by the servant and then interpreted by Elinor. The narrator herself withholds all apparent judgment.

Unlike Willoughby, Lucy is never once given the opportunity by the narrator to exculpate herself; the possibility—however implausible—that she is actually in love with Robert at the end of the novel is never admitted by the narrative, nor are readers permitted to entertain the idea for a moment. The dissolution of Lucy’s engagement to Edward is achieved without any discredit to him; it is abundantly clear that Lucy has ended their engagement for the obvious reason that he is penniless and Robert is now the sole heir of Mrs. Ferrars’s fortune. Readers and critics have often complained that this resolution of the Edward-Elinor-Lucy triangle is so implausible as to be almost ridiculous. Robert’s behavior is acknowledged by the main characters to be strange, and is only explained away in passing: “he was proud of his conquest, proud of tricking Edward, and very proud of marrying privately without his mother’s consent” (331). Lucy’s role in the novel as a temporary obstacle to Elinor’s marriage to Edward is thus ended with the narrator’s first and only explicit judgment of Lucy’s behavior that is not mediated by one of the main characters: “The whole of Lucy’s behavior in the affair, and the prosperity which crowned it, therefore, may be held forth as a most encouraging instance of what an earnest, an unceasing attention to self-interest, however its progress may be apparently obstructed, will do in securing every advantage of fortune, with no other sacrifice than that of time and conscience” (331). The narrator’s silence on the subject before the final chapter only highlights this one example of explicit judgment: Lucy is reduced to a function; an ironic “encouraging instance” of a particular kind of social threat.

The narrator of *Persuasion* is less coy about describing Mrs. Clay as a “danger” to the social world of the novel, yet here, too, the judgment of the social climber is mediated through another character, rather than expressed directly by the narrator. Mrs. Clay is first introduced in a long passage of free indirect discourse explaining Lady Russell’s reasons for approving a removal from Kellynch Hall as a remedy for Sir Walter’s straitened financial affairs. Lady Russell, we are told through the narrator’s voice, finds in Mrs. Clay “a clever young woman, who understood the art of pleasing; the art of pleasing, at least, at Kellynch-Hall” (19). The pause at the semi-colon, followed by the qualification, “at least, at Kellynch-Hall,” highlights Lady Russell’s moral aloofness: she, unlike Sir Walter and Elizabeth, is not taken in by Mrs. Clay’s brand of cleverness, nor by her “art of pleasing.” Still through the narrator’s free indirect discourse, the chapter ends with Lady Russell’s opinion that Mrs. Clay is actually a “dangerous companion” for Elizabeth, although neither Lady Russell nor the narrator explains the source of the danger, except in the relative social inferiority of Mrs. Clay.

Whatever reason Elizabeth might have for keeping Mrs. Clay in the household, Anne and Mrs. Russell see dangers in her ambiguous role. Mrs. Clay is neither a paid assistant nor companion, nor is she a true friend among equals. Her nebulous position in the house is comparable to the ill-defined social position of governesses in the late eighteenth through early twentieth century. Mary Poovey shows how the governess, in the nineteenth century, is increasingly an intimate of the family while at the same time an outsider in it. The passage quoted by Poovey from an article in Fraser’s Magazine from the mid-nineteenth century

describing the latent emotions of a governess living amidst the luxury of an upper-middle class household could as easily apply to a companion in Mrs. Clay's situation:

She must live daily amidst the trials of a home without its blessings; ... without any consent of her will, she is made the confidante of many family secrets; she must live in a familial circle as if her eyes did not perceive the tokens of bitterness; she must appear not to hear sharp sayings and *mal-a-propos* speeches; kindly words of courtesy must be always on her lips; she must be ever on her guard; let her relax her self-restraint for one moment, and who shall say what mischief and misery might ensue to all from one heedless expression of hers? (qtd. in Poovey 133)

The governess here described is forced, through economic necessity, into a position of unnatural self-restraint. She must be "ever on her guard," lest she should say something to offend the family. This position of dependence was common not only to governesses and to paid companions, but to servants of all types. The key difference between the self-restraint necessary to the governess or companion, and the appearance of respect necessary to the servant, was that the governess or companion generally belonged to a similar social circle, however reduced in circumstances she might be. Mrs. Clay's social position is below that of the Elliots (her father, Mr. Shepherd, is Sir Walter's lawyer), but she is still firmly rooted in the English middle class. She is not a servant, nor has she any claims on the gentry but those of friendship (at least nominally), and of business.

A still more damning description comes in the following chapter, when Anne laments the undesirability of Mrs. Clay's continued intimacy with the family, explaining the source of the "danger" that Lady Russell only hinted at—again, through the narrator's free indirect discourse.

With a great deal of quiet observation, and a knowledge, which she often wished less, of her father's character, she was sensible that results the most serious to his family from the intimacy, were more than possible. She did not imagine that her father had at present any idea of the kind. Mrs. Clay had freckles, and a projecting tooth, and a clumsy wrist, which he was continually making severe remarks upon, in her absence; but she was young, and certainly altogether well-looking, and possessed, in an acute mind and assiduous pleasing manners, infinitely more dangerous attractions than any merely personal might have been. Anne was so impressed by the degree of their danger that she could not excuse herself from trying to make it perceptible to her sister (33).

Again, Mrs. Clay is described as actually "dangerous." Anne fears not only that Elizabeth's close friendship with a social inferior might be damaging, but that her father might gradually become reconciled to Mrs. Clay's "personal defects" (34) and be persuaded into a "degrading" marriage. While one can hardly blame Anne's lack of enthusiasm at the prospect of a step-mother like Mrs. Clay, it is crucial to remember that the implications of Mrs. Clay's insincerity and "art" originated with Mrs. Russell, and not with Anne. Thus far, Anne's only complaints of Mrs. Clay are physical (freckles, bad teeth, and a "clumsy wrist") and personal (an "acute mind and assiduous pleasing manners"), not moral.

Even Anne Elliot's friend, Mrs. Smith, who functions as a kind of social oracle in Bath, describes Mrs. Clay's apparent plan to become Lady Elliot as a "danger" to which Elizabeth is "blind" (166). Mr. Elliot is described by Anne as "disingenuous, artificial and worldly" in his behavior to her and the rest of her family, and as "inhumane" in his behavior to Mrs. Smith, but Mrs. Clay is again, and by all accounts, a truer "danger" (167). The two quit the scene of Bath together, and the reader is left to imagine whether or not Mrs. Clay might "wheedle and caress" Mr. Elliot to marry her, where she had failed with Sir Walter. Her removal from the reader's view at the end of the novel does not reduce her to a narrative function as completely as Lucy Steele in the earlier *Sense and Sensibility*, but the final tone is similar: the narrator, in her own voice (as opposed to the free indirect discourse of earlier descriptions), tells us that Mrs. Clay "has her abilities, however, as well as affections: and it is now a doubtful point whether his cunning, or hers, may finally carry the day" (201). The switch to present tense here is odd; it suggests a kind of universality to the Mrs. Clay, whose "abilities" make her potential success still a "doubtful point." In this case, the final pairing of the social climber is with her male counterpart, a man who is as "disingenuous and artificial" as she, though less of a social "danger" since his flattery and "cunning" have been directed at social equals, and his energies have been to circumvent one self-serving marriage by promoting another.

Beyond a more sophisticated and fluent use of free indirect style in *Persuasion* than in *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen's manner of dealing with this kind of active, entrepreneurial maneuvering on the marriage market does not change markedly between her first and last novels: both Lucy Steele and Mrs. Clay are treated with a similar degree of ironic aloofness by the narrator; their descriptions consistently mediated through the eyes of the heroines until the final chapter, where they are paired off with men equally self-serving and finally ushered off stage.

### **Reading and Misreading Becky Sharp: Social Crimes of an Anti-Heroine in a "Novel without a Hero"**

Mrs. Clay and Lucy Steele are both reduced, in the end, to mere narrative functions, rather than expanded as naturalist characters, yet the narrator seems to enjoy describing their "cunning" and maneuvering as much as we enjoy reading about them. Our fascination with these female social criminals certainly prefigures the popularity of later Victorian anti-heroines like Becky Sharp, who effectively steals the show, maneuvering not just for marriage prospects and social position, but for control of the central plot of Thackeray's "Novel without a Hero." Yet while Lucy Steele and Mrs. Clay break the unwritten moral laws of social conduct and of friendship in their quests to marry well, Becky Sharp's behavior is more legally ambiguous: she lies, manipulates, swindles, and ruins her creditors. She is also implicated in more serious crimes: adultery with Lord Steyne and even—more implicitly—murder. In order to manage readerly identification with his corrupt anti-heroine (as well as to make a broader point about the emptiness of the world of *Vanity Fair*), Thackeray's narrator offers more explicit judgment of Becky's bad behavior, but still occasionally withdraws in silence—a surprising maneuver for a narrator so generally communicative.

Thackeray's narrator is famous for laying bare the narrative machinery of his novel and for treating his characters as functions. The allegorical naming of many of the characters is less jarring in Thackeray than in Austen; after all, the allegorical thrust of *Vanity Fair* is announced in the title's reference to Bunyan. Minor characters are given transparently allegorical names (the West Indian, dark-complexioned Miss "Schwartz," the reputation-ruining Lord Steyne, etc.),

while even the major characters are given allegorically suggestive names: the complacently sedentary “Sedleys,” the sycophantic Crawleys, and of course the astute, maneuvering Becky Sharp. Thackeray toys with our expectation of the allegorical significance of Becky’s name: in her letter to Amelia describing the inmates of Queen’s Crawley, she reports that the younger Pitt Crawley mistakenly addresses her as “Miss ah—Miss Blunt” (93). Thackeray calls attention to Becky’s “sharpness” by allowing Becky, in her own words, to repeat Pitt Crawley’s misreading of her. Of course, she is not “Blunt”; she is so far from being “blunt” that Pitt’s mistake is laughable. That Becky repeats Crawley’s error (which, of course, is far from complimentary to her, as he cannot seem to be bothered to remember the name of his sisters’ new governess at dinner) suggests the extent to which she is aware of the allegorical significance of her own name. Becky’s self-awareness as a maneuvering piece, jockeying for position within the unstable and shifting narrative world of *Vanity Fair* is part of what gives her character its power, both within and beyond the confines of the novel itself.

The narrator’s position vis-à-vis the reader and the story is likewise in continual flux: he is often an omniscient figure moving in and out of the consciousness of all of the characters interchangeably, but briefly becomes a minor character in the story world, observing Dobbin and Amelia from a café table in Pumpernickel (793); he describes himself at times as a puppet-master manipulating the characters on the stage of *Vanity Fair* (878), or as a member of the London literary world, imagining the text he is writing as a material object that is being printed and read (351, 8). The instability of the narrator underscores the instability of the entire story world. The implied or projected reader, too, is changeable: occasionally projected as male, sometimes as female, as wise or as foolish, as sympathizing with Amelia or as holding her in contempt for her weakness, admiring Becky’s courage, or condemning her falsehoods and inconsistencies. Even the ideals of the more admirable characters, which the reader is given to believe are somehow true, are eventually undercut: Amelia turns out to be unworthy of Dobbin’s devotion, and Dobbin himself, though probably the closest the novel has to a moral center or “hero,” is dismissed in the end as “a spooney” (844). There is very little in the world of *Vanity Fair* that is stable enough to grasp or to hold as consistent or true.

The physical book that we read is one thing that we *can* hold, and the narrator continually emphasizes its materiality, though he does so by reminding us that the book was constructed by the novelist, has been printed and circulated, and can be defaced and marked up. The narrator reminds the reader of the whole process of novelistic production that created the physical book that she holds in her hands. The narrator describes the “curses” uttered by General Tufto as “so deep, that I am sure no compositor in Messrs Bradbury and Evans’s establishment would venture to print them were they written down” (351). We are asked to imagine a hypothetical narrative in this conditional phrase, in which General Tufto’s curses *were* recorded by the narrator, and the shock of the real-world printers who would have had to refuse to put them in print. (Bradbury and Evans was, in fact, the publishing house that printed the first editions of *Vanity Fair*, which was serialized in 1847-1848 and issued in book form in 1848.) Thackeray reminds the reader of the steps involved in producing this or any other novel, laying bare the mechanisms of novelistic production and, through his own transparency, implicitly criticizing the kinds of novel that invite readers to forget or ignore those modes of production. He asks his readers to understand fiction *as* fiction—much as Becky Sharp seems, at times, to understand her own allegorical status.

Similarly, in the opening pages, the narrator invites us to imagine “Jones,” a projected reader of the novel (emphatically not an “ideal” reader), reading “this book at his Club” and criticizing various details as “trivial, twaddling, and ultra-sentimental,” after dining on “mutton



and [a] half-pint of wine” (8). This imaginary “Jones” becomes a character in his own right, though transcending the usual boundaries between character and reader—he reads the same novel we have in our own hands, “taking out his pencil” and writing remarks in the margins as, it is to be presumed, we are doing ourselves. Yet the narrator invites us to congratulate ourselves on our difference from this “Jones,” who will find himself disgusted with the opening pages and “go elsewhere,” while we, the more enlightened reader, keep company with the narrator and continue to read (8).

The narrator does not consistently place himself in a position of moral and intellectual superiority vis-à-vis the reader, with the reader continually distanced as a “Jones” who will not understand the story; he occasionally addresses the reader familiarly and with a tone almost of affection that seems out of place in a novel as generally cynical as *Vanity Fair*: “I say, brother, the gifts and pleasures of Vanity Fair cannot be held of any great account, and that it is probable... but we are wandering out of the domain of the story” (484). The affectionate tone of the narrator is undercut by the narrator’s meandering prose—he cuts himself off after the ellipsis, and returns from the tangential, confidential address to the reader to continue with the story. Occasionally, the narrator pokes fun at himself, as well. He calls attention to his own “omniscience” as a narrator when he asserts that the “novelist, who knows everything, knows this also” (409). True omniscience is obviously impossible outside of the narrative world; the narrator reminds the reader in an ironically self-aggrandizing way that this is, indeed, a narrative world, constructed by a novelist, and through which we are guided by a shifty, changeable narrator.

There is a wealth of criticism describing various elements of the narrative instability of *Vanity Fair*, including the shiftiness of the narrator himself, who appears at times as a character and at others as an omniscient, disembodied puppeteer. M. Corona Sharp has described the narrator as “the principle of unity in *Vanity Fair*,” despite the fact that any “irresponsibility” on the part of the narrator would make the novel “defective in meaning, merely a jest at the reader’s expense” (325). Tamar Yacobi offers a succinct account of the impact of the narrator’s inconsistency: in order to “integrate” with the rest of the novel a passage in which the narrator’s unreliability is particularly apparent,

[...] the reader must choose or shuttle among three alternative perspectival constructs at least: (1) The narrator is somehow reliable in context and the characters alone are morally deviant. (2) The narrator assumes an ironic mask, pretending to share the failings of his characters. (3) The narrator, like the heroine, betrays the unreliability of the Fair. And knowing Thackeray’s artistic temperament, we can add the genetic mechanism: (4) The sloppy or ambivalent author, instead of tightly organizing his materials, has left incongruous elements in his text. (228)

The reader, in other words, is left with very little that is firm or consistent. The narrator is self-consciously unreliable, forcing the reader to shift for herself.

The instability of every aspect of *Vanity Fair* is part of what makes Becky Sharp so striking at its center: her inconstancy is one of few things we can count on. The moments when Becky does change or act out of character are marked as exceptional by the narrator with a tone almost of surprise, as when she is startled by a proposal of marriage from the elder Sir Pitt Crawley after her secret marriage to his younger son, Rawdon: “In the course of this history we

have never seen her lose her presence of mind; but she did now, and wept some of the most genuine tears that ever fell from her eyes (178). Becky's tears are "genuine" in that she sincerely regrets being unable to accept a marriage proposal from a baronet; Sir Pitt reads her tears incorrectly as Becky's regret for him personally. He misreads her reaction utterly, assuming, when she admits that she is already married, that her husband has abandoned her, and that she sincerely regrets being legally and morally unable to accept his proposal. He generously offers to take her back to Queen's Crawley as his daughters' governess anyway, under his personal protection. Becky is not even being hypocritical, for a change—her tears are "genuine," and we can take the narrator's assessment of them at face value. The irony, of course, is that her tears, though genuine, are shed out of self-interest, not care for Sir Pitt—Sir Pitt simply misreads them. Naturally, Sir Pitt doesn't see himself as "reading" anything; he doesn't understand Becky as a narrative function or as a character as she seems to understand herself.

Of course, Becky Sharp is rarely as genuine as she is in this scene. As the narrator points out, her sincerity in this moment is an exception to a general rule of hypocrisy. But hypocrisy is an art in the world of *Vanity Fair*, which Becky learns to perfect over time. At the beginning of the novel, she makes occasional gaffes that the narrator assures us are purely the result of her relative inexperience: "[...] we must remember that she is but nineteen as yet, unused to the art of deceiving, poor innocent creature! and making her own experiences in her own person" (23). Becky is not a "poor innocent creature"—the narrator's irony hardly needs to be noted. But she is indeed "making her own experiences in her own person," for the benefit both of herself and of the reader. Inasmuch as *Vanity Fair* is a progress narrative of the same type as *Pilgrim's Progress*, it is a story of Becky's progress (and perhaps also the narrator's) as a hypocrite and as a successful negotiator of the world of *Vanity Fair*.

Not long after the narrator describes Becky as a "poor innocent creature," we are told that she is well on her way to mastering the art of hypocrisy necessary to maneuver in *Vanity Fair*. The narrator steps back from Becky's particular case to make a more universal statement about the practice of hypocrisy in general in *Vanity Fair*. It is more than an art, it is a whole "system of hypocrisy, which lasts through whole years, [and] is one seldom satisfactorily practiced by a person of one-and-twenty; however, our readers will recollect that, though young in years, our heroine was old in life and experience, and we have written to no purpose if they have not discovered that she was a very clever woman" (111). Over the course of eight chapters and two years, Becky manages to develop her "system of hypocrisy" to a surprising extent. Becky's "life and experiences," after all, also form the basis for the plot of *Vanity Fair*—they are the matter that teaches the reader about the nature of the allegorical world of the characters.

If Becky's education comes in the form of her own "life and experience," the text of these lessons is thus internalized and written in "her own person." In the world of *Vanity Fair*, the mastering of hypocrisy becomes part of a character's embodied experience. Learning to negotiate in this world has to be attained through not through observation or by rote, but by trial and error, acting and reacting. It seems appropriate, then, that so much of Becky's progress as a hypocrite is figured in terms of acting and the theater. She is an accomplished mimic from the time she is a child, and performs scenes from Miss Pinkerton's school, using dolls as the chief characters, for the amusement of her father and his friends before his death. Her talents evolve from being a mere mimic, however, to those of an accomplished actress re-enacting scenes from Brussels that took place during the Battle of Waterloo. She impresses Rawdon Crawley's superior officer, General Tufto, and delights her husband with her satire: "Tufto was charmed, and Rawdon roared with delightful laughter, and swore that she was better than any play he ever

saw, by Jove!” (432-5). Of course, neither Rawdon nor Tufto can be said to be a wholly impartial judge of Becky’s abilities, and she still is only mimicking and re-enacting scenes and dialogue of others. By the end of the novel, though, she is frequently and persistently described as an “actress” in her own right—no longer a mere mimic or satirist: Dobbin calls her “a splendid little actress and manager” as he watches her manipulate Jos Sedley, though obviously without admiration (663). When Becky’s performance is perceptible *as* performance, she loses much of her effect. Dobbin is never swayed by her acting, which is why he is able to describe it as an act: “All the time she was here, didn’t you see, George, how she was acting at the General over the way?” (352). Of course, George did not see “how she was acting”; her performance blinds him as well as the General.

Although probably the most accomplished actress in the world of *Vanity Fair*, Becky is not the only character described in terms of theater and performance. Acting becomes a trope for insincerity in any form, and insincerity, the narrator assures us, is an almost universal condition in *Vanity Fair*. The melodramatic, overwrought speeches of Lady Southdown are rendered through free indirect discourse in theatrical terms: she is likened through simile to the famous Victorian actress “Mrs Siddons in *Lady Macbeth* [as she] ordered that horses might be put to her carriage. If her son and daughter turned her out of their house, she would hide her sorrows somewhere in loneliness, and pray for their conversion to better thoughts” (516). As she has nowhere else to go, Lady Southdown’s threat to leave Queen’s Crawley is an insincere bit of play-acting, yet the narrator’s mock admiration of her performance as the self-sacrificing mother underscores the extent to which this kind of insincere performance pervades the story-world.

Attempts to appropriate the speech and manner of social superiors is also described in terms of acting, but as more of a farce than as the (mock) tragedy of Lady Southdown’s self-sacrifice. Miss Horrocks, the daughter of the butler at Queen’s Crawley and the probable mistress of the old Sir Pitt, imagines herself as the future Lady Crawley, and dresses the part, to the great amusement of Sir Pitt, who “swore that it was as good as a play to see her in the character of a fine dame, and he made her put on one of the first Lady Crawley’s Court-dresses, swearing (entirely to Miss Horrocks’s own concurrence) that the dress became her prodigiously” (504). “Character,” in the world of *Vanity Fair*, is something that can be put on and taken off as easily as a “Court-dress”; it is entirely malleable. Of course, “character” has multiple valences: it can indicate a fictional person in a novel-world, a role for an actor to assume, or it can suggest the more general “reputation” that follows a person from job to job and from city to city.

Becky’s character, in every sense of the word, remains an open question for much of the novel. She manages to adopt, with varying degrees of success, different versions of the same character at each stage of her life: the *ingénue* orphan; the daughter of an aristocratic Parisian *émigrée*; the maligned, misunderstood, and abandoned wife. Yet as despicable as Becky’s disingenuous role-playing can be, the narrator does remind us that Becky’s situation makes it necessary for her to adopt a character that is not her own: as an orphan, she must negotiate the marriage market for herself. Like Mrs. Clay or Lucy Steele, she has no “mamma” who can act as a discreet agent for her; she must be actress, manager, and agent all at once. So it is with a certain degree of sincerity that the narrator reminds the “ladies” among his readers that “we [do not] have any right to blame her; for [...] Miss Sharp had no kind parent to arrange these delicate matters for her, and that if she did not get a husband for herself, there was no one else in the wide world who would take the trouble off her hands” (26). Becky is as self-conscious of her disadvantage with regard to the marriage market as she is of everything else; she falls back on her old talents of mimicry and satiric re-enactment to become a more effective actress of the

multiple roles that she must embody in this context, as well. Again, the narrator reminds the reader of Becky's disadvantage: "Of what else have young ladies to think, but husbands? Of what else do their dear mammas think? 'I must be my own mamma,' said Becky; not without a tingling consciousness of defeat, as she thought over her little misadventure with Jos Sedley" (105). Even as he asks the ironic rhetorical questions, reducing the entire mental life of both young ladies and their mammas to the all-consuming act of "husband-hunting," the narrator sets Becky apart—her motives are no worse than other young ladies' or their mammas'; her situation simply requires her to play both parts at once.

The malleability of Becky's character—her ability to act several roles at the same time—is part of what make her such a threat to the social world of the novel. She generally plays by the same rules as everyone else; she just appears to be a more effective player. But her skill at adapting herself to different roles makes her a danger: "Becky had a knack of adopting a demure *ingénue* air, under which she was most dangerous. She said the wickedest things with the most simple unaffected air when in this mood, and would take care artlessly to apologise for blunders, so that all the world should know that she had made them" (640). Becky can play the part of the "*ingénue*" as easily as she can take on the role of her "own mamma." This disingenuousness makes her as dangerous as a Mrs. Clay or Lucy Steele, because of the total contrast between the innocent and "demure" role she adopts and her actual hypocrisy and satiric knowingness.

The figure of the disingenuous French (or half-French) actress is a common one in the nineteenth-century British novel.<sup>123</sup> Julia Kent has argued that these figures, through their own insincerity, "help define the privacy and sincerity of the British individual and of the British domestic interior. [...]Thackeray diverges from this pattern by locating interiority within precisely those forms of motivated acting often attributed to the French" (Kent 134). In other words, Becky's danger to the social world of *Vanity Fair* isn't so much that she is an insincere French actress, but rather that her brand of individuality is the *only* real interiority represented in the novel. The more sincere, English characters—Amelia and Dobbin, for instance—are rendered as shallow and uncomplicated by comparison. Becky's French staginess doesn't reveal the moral superiority of the English, but only exposes the essential flatness of that ideal.<sup>124</sup>

Becky's acting is constantly being interpreted—and as often, misinterpreted—by other characters. As with Mrs. Clay and Lucy Steele, the narrator of *Vanity Fair* only rarely offers a direct description of Becky, instead allowing other characters to interpret her actions or to describe her character and then remarking ironically on their relative success. When characters misread Becky Sharp, the narrator occasionally allows the misinterpretation to pass without remark, allowing the incompetence, jealousy, or ignorance of the character to speak for itself. Miss Pinkerton, for example, offers a lengthy misreading of Becky's character at Mrs. Bute's request, which the narrator presents in the form of the letter. Miss Pinkerton's interpretation is thus offered to the reader with minimal mediation from the narrator:

...her mother, as I have since learned, with horror, [was] a dancer at the Opera; yet her talents are considerable, and I cannot regret that I received her *out of*

---

<sup>123</sup> See, for example, Lydgate's former mistress Laure before the start of the action in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* or Céline Varens in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

<sup>124</sup> Similarly, Kit Dobson's essay on performativity in *Vanity Fair* argues that the world of "*Vanity Fair* posits from its outset, I believe, a framework for thinking about identity as a fictional performance that is similar to [Judith] Butler's, and returns to this concept throughout in its use of language" (10).

*charity*. My dread is, lest the principles of the mother—who was represented to me as a French Countess, forced to emigrate in the late revolutionary horrors; but who, as I have since found, was a person of the *very lowest order and morals*—should at any time prove to be *hereditary* in the unhappy young woman whom I took as *an outcast*. But her principles have *hitherto* been correct (I believe), and I am sure nothing will occur to injure them in the elegant and refined circle of the eminent Sir Pitt Crawley. (117)

The words and phrases Miss Pinkerton has chosen to highlight are telling; she draws attention to her own blameless charity in having taken Becky in and then in having recommended her as a governess, while also emphasizing the lowness of Becky's mother and the potential danger in having such a parent, since immorality, especially for women, was indeed believed to be "hereditary" (as we will see with Lady Audley). The potential hereditary taint from Becky's mother, combined with the deception about her mother's origins, makes Becky appear to be a kind of ticking bomb: her morals have "*hitherto* been correct"—with the parenthetical "I believe" to undercut even that concession—but who knows at what point the immorality of the mother will make its appearance in the behavior of the daughter? She is also taken in as a social "outcast"—a Pariah; someone who is necessarily a transgressive and perhaps an anti-social threat. Miss Pinkerton's prejudice, vanity, and jealousy speak for themselves; the narrator doesn't need to step in with any explicit judgment of her interpretation of Becky's potential "danger."

Of course, the belief that Becky could be "dangerous" has everything to do with her ambiguous social position. She is, as Miss Pinkerton observed, effectively an "outcast." As with Mrs. Clay in *Persuasion* and the governess described in the passage quoted above, Becky's role in the Crawley's household is somewhere between that of a servant and a social equal: she draws a salary as a governess, of course, but her education and bearing give her a status above that of the other servants. Her "airs" make the other servants resent her as much as Miss Pinkerton did, but not just because of her arrogance. Mrs. Blenkinsop frames her dislike of Becky in terms of "trust": "I don't trust them governesses, Pinner, they're neither one thing nor t'other. They give themselves the hairs and hupstarts of ladies, and their wages is no better than you nor me" (75). Mrs. Blenkinsop's remark is only partly due to her natural resentment of the privileged position accorded to Becky because of her education and ladylike manners; her central complaint is that she does not "trust" governesses as a class because of their nebulous status—they are "neither one thing nor t'other," and as such, the usual social rules and strictures seem not to apply.

Becky's freedom from the usual rules combined with her unique awareness of her own status as a player in a larger game allows her to take on a variety of roles, including the male roles of the historical figures generally perceived to be at the periphery of *Vanity Fair*—the Duke of Wellington and of course Napoleon. Becky is persistently associated with Napoleon, especially, due to her courage, strength of will, and her social dynamism. Like Napoleon, Becky comes from an obscure background and rises meteorically above her station through her talent and perseverance. The association between Becky and Napoleon is not simply an allegorical device of the narrator, or a snide suggestion of treason on the part of other characters: even in the opening pages, Becky associates herself with the French emperor. As they leave Chiswick Mall for Amelia's family's house in London, Becky credits France and the French with her "escape" from Miss Pinkerton's establishment, crying, "*Vive la France! Vive l'Empereur! Vive Bonaparte!*" (14), to Amelia's great consternation. From this moment, the narrator and other

characters persistently associate Becky with the French emperor, either through direct comparison or through analogy.<sup>125</sup> It is important, though, that Becky first claims that association herself, in her own directly reported dialogue—just as Napoleon insisted on crowning himself emperor.

The frequent comparisons between the novel's (anti)-heroine with the universally reviled Napoleon have certainly elicited a quantity of critical commentary. In an essay on the "Napoleonic background" of *Vanity Fair*, John Hagan argues that Thackeray's real purpose is to expose the ultimate vanity of Napoleon's ambitions, even as Becky is reduced "to her true proportions by being tacitly compared (in mock-heroic fashion) to the Emperor" (Hagan 360). The comparisons between Becky and Napoleon—both implicit and explicit—illuminate the emperor and his actions as much as his ambitions expose the character of *Vanity Fair* in general. Napoleon himself, then, is "assimilated to the world of *Vanity Fair*—takes his part in the dance of the puppets—and has his ambition shrunk to merely another occasion [...] for the rueful questions, 'Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?'" (Hagan 360). Becky, then, as the anti-heroine, "(Wo)man of Destiny," and English counterpart to Napoleon—that paradigmatic "upstart" in the nineteenth-century imagination—serves to ridicule and comically to deflate Napoleon's mythic status.

Patricia Marks argues rather more subtly that, ultimately, the comparisons highlight "the indeterminacy of language" in *Vanity Fair* and Becky's "rise and fall," and her "fulfill[ment of] the heroic archetype of Napoleon as [...] 'the culture-hero and the outlaw-adventurer' [Knapp 76]. Yet at the conjunction of these categories that become indeterminate in Thackeray's hands—the hero(ine), the (Wo)man of Destiny, the fictional Becky and the factual (and mythical) Napoleon—lies the indeterminacy of language" (Marks 78). Ultimately, language itself is at fault in Marks's reading of *Vanity Fair*: French language and French tastes have invaded England in a subtler but ultimately more successful version of Napoleon's campaigns: "the British have in reality lost the war by enthroning Napoleon at home linguistically" (Marks 80). The use of French by all of the socially ambitious characters—even during a time of war with France—effectively allows Napoleon to invade England culturally, if not physically. But although, as Marks points out, French is in *Vanity Fair* "the language of duplicity, [...] it is finally no more duplicitous nor emptied of meaning than English" (Marks 76). In this sense, then, the conclusion of Marks's reading of Napoleon looks a lot like Julia Kent's understanding of the role of French actresses in the novel: both underscore not so much the treachery or duplicity of the French, but the moral emptiness of England. In the world of *Vanity Fair*, it is impossible to find truth in any language.

In English or in French, Becky is aware of herself *as* an allegorical figure and an actress in a way that makes her unique, both among the other characters in *Vanity Fair*, and among earlier social climbers. Her crimes in the world of the novel have to do with her own self-awareness and the consciousness of her conduct as potentially damaging to others. Her self-

---

<sup>125</sup> Rawdon Crawley, for example, "believed in his wife as much as the French soldiers in Napoleon" (435). She is compared to the Duke of Wellington during the Waterloo scene, when the narrator unexpectedly claims her as the novel's heroine: "If this is a novel without a hero, let us at least lay claim to a heroine. No man in the British army which has marched away, not the great Duke himself, could be more cool or collected in the presence of doubts and difficulties, than the indomitable little *aide-de-camp's* wife" (369).

consciousness makes her an occasional rival to the narrator for control over the events of the novel.

Becky accommodates herself to whatever position she finds herself in, maneuvering and deceiving with equal fluency and skill at every level of society. In Paris after Waterloo, she is situated historically, as well as socially: “So in *fêtes*, pleasures, and prosperity, the winter of 1815-16 passed away with Mrs Rawdon Crawley, who accommodated herself to polite life as if her ancestors had been people of fashion for centuries past—and who from her wit, talent, and energy, indeed merited a place of honour in *Vanity Fair*” (436). Becky witnesses Waterloo only from the periphery, but is situated firmly in the historical moment by the narrator. Mary Hammond has argued that while the Waterloo chapters do ground the novel historically by providing a solid historical index, the Waterloo scenes actually serve “to *dis*-place it; on one level the narrative becomes a sort of time-machine which, wandering arbitrarily and innocently between one period and another, is never actually rooted anywhere” (Hammond 19). The function of Waterloo and of the Napoleonic War, then, is primarily allegorical, and should not be interpreted in a strictly historical context.

It is often easy to forget that *Vanity Fair* is a historical novel, as well as a satiric social allegory. The central historical events, like the Battle of Waterloo, are narrated from a distance, and historical figures like the Duke of Wellington, Napoleon, and the Prince Regent are described only indirectly or by tacit comparison with Becky Sharp. The narrator reminds us occasionally of the historical upheaval that occurs at the periphery of the novel’s main scene, but even at Waterloo, the focus remains persistently on the day-to-day concerns of the central characters—their petty, selfish, everyday desires and ambitions. More often, the narrator reminds us of our historical distance from the moment of the novel’s action through similarly quotidian comparisons, such as his nostalgic discussion of the age of the stagecoach: “Where is the road now, and its merry incidents of life? Is there no Chelsea or Greenwich for the honest pimple-nosed coachmen?” (86).

Yet the narrator goes on to conflate history with fiction in this passage, rhetorically asking about the “road” and the inns where the stagecoaches would typically stop to change horses, and then continuing his string of rhetorical questions to ask whether “old Weller [the coachman father of Sam Weller in Dickens’s *The Pickwick Papers*] is alive or dead?” Thackeray alludes to historical and fictional events, self-consciously eliding the difference between the two. As the passage continues, he deliberately conflates “legend and history,” listing as potential subjects for romance an unlikely assortment of topics: the ancient Biblical city of “Ninevah”; the historical, although mythic in stature and reputation, King Richard the “Coeur de Lion”; the historical housebreaker “Jack Sheppard”; “Bucephalus,” the actual, historical horse of Alexander the Great; and “Black Bess,” the fictional horse belonging to the historical highwayman Dick Turpin (86-7).

The two criminals referenced in Thackeray’s list of potential subjects for romance are both featured prominently in popular novels by W.H. Ainsworth and are clearly intended as digs against crime novelists in general and Ainsworth in particular.<sup>126</sup> Thackeray deplored the

---

<sup>126</sup> *Rookwood*, in 1834, features the highwayman Dick Turpin, and *Jack Sheppard*, based on the life of the eighteenth-century housebreaker, was published in 1839. Richard Coeur de Lion, though obviously not a criminal, was also made famous as a literary character earlier in the century in both Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (1819) and *The Talisman* (1825). See chapter 2, “Character Structure and Outlawry in *Ivanhoe*

popularity of the so-called “Newgate” school of fiction, blaming the romanticization of crime by popular novelists for the corruption of young people.<sup>127</sup> Thackeray blamed Ainsworth, in particular, for blending historical fact with fiction—for romanticizing parts of historical criminals’ lives while eliding or avoiding discussion of the seedier aspects of crime: “not being able to paint the whole portrait, [the author] has no right to present one or two favourable points as characterising the whole; and therefore, in fact, had better leave the picture alone altogether” (“On Going to See a Man Hanged”). In this passage of *Vanity Fair*, it seems that Thackeray’s narrator demonstrates the irony that a safely self-conscious mixture of history and fiction can accomplish. His narrator treats even the larger-than-life historical figures of Napoleon and the Duke of Wellington as puppets in a play, so that no reader can be tempted to lionize them as heroes, just as no single character elicits our sympathy consistently throughout the book.

If, by the end of the novel, readers have learned to avoid unreflecting sympathy for the inhabitants of *Vanity Fair*, they seem to be left instead with a near-universal suspicion. The narrator himself leaves Becky’s guilt as an open question: “What *had* happened? Was she guilty or not? She said not; but who could tell what was truth which came from those lips; or if that corrupt heart was in this case pure?” (677). The social world of *Vanity Fair* is likewise unable to determine Becky’s innocence or guilt: “Her history was after all a mystery. Parties were divided about her. Some people, who took the trouble to busy themselves in the matter, said that she was the criminal; whilst others vowed that she was as innocent as a lamb, and that her odious husband was in fault” (817-818).

The narrator’s refusal to offer a definitive answer is typical of his insistence that truth cannot be found in *Vanity Fair*. Less typical are the few instances in which he refuses to comment on or to acknowledge an ambiguity at all. In a brilliant close reading of Becky Sharp’s charades, Maria DiBattista points out that although Thackeray is willing enough, at other times, to step in with his authorial voice to offer a moral judgment, he “remains conspicuously silent on the psychological, ethical, and social significance of Becky’s impersonation of Clytemnestra and on the ‘dark moral’ explicated through feminine retaliatory or ‘opportunistic’ violence” (DiBattista 827). Becky appears as Clytemnestra, the murderous, vengeful wife of Greek myth, twice: first, she plays Clytemnestra in a charade, though Thackeray refuses to comment; and later, she appears in an illustration, hiding in the shadows behind a curtain, watching Jos Sedley with Dobbin and clutching what appears to be a sharp weapon—the caption reads, “Becky’s second appearance in the character of Clytemnestra” (875). Nowhere in the text does the narrator suggest that Becky is present in this scene at all, let alone in the possession of a weapon or in the character of a vengeful or murderous wife. DiBattista concludes in her essay that Thackeray’s reticence on the subject of Clytemnestra is deliberate—that it is a moral choice, rather than a stylistic one. In the end, Thackeray’s withdrawal into reticence is damning—it implicates Becky Sharp of crimes that the narrative has barely suggested. But almost every character is figured as a culprit or a criminal at some point; Becky Sharp simply understands her own role as an actor in

---

and *Rob Roy*, chapter 3, “Serial Criminal” and chapter 4, “History, the Gothic, and the “Wandering Race.”

<sup>127</sup> See Thackeray’s essay, “On Going to See a Man Hanged,” which was written after witnessing the execution of Courvoisier, a valet who claimed that he was inspired to murder his master after seeing a stage adaptation of Ainsworth’s 1839 *Jack Sheppard*. Thackeray doesn’t mention Ainsworth by name in the essay—the only Newgate novel he references is *Oliver Twist*—but the criticism is clearly intended for Ainsworth, given the context of the execution he witnesses.



that allegorical world better than most. The indeterminacy of language and Thackeray's reticence finally implicates all the inhabitants of *Vanity Fair*, including both the narrator and reader.

### **The Struggle between Reader and Narrator over *Lady Audley's Secret***

Mary Elizabeth Braddon is less reluctant than Thackeray to figure her social-climbing anti-heroine as a Clytemnestra figure, although she still withdraws into reticence at strategic moments. Braddon's narrator lacks the satire characteristic of the narrator of *Vanity Fair*: she does not comment upon her own omniscience, but rather seems to take it for granted. Her inconsistencies and occasional moments of reticence then, are less predictable, more jarring, and more potentially threatening as the narrator herself appears occasionally complicit with the subversive anti-heroine. *Lady Audley's Secret* is not as transparently allegorical as *Vanity Fair*, of course, and the titular anti-heroine therefore appears less conscious than Becky Sharp of her role within the narrative and of the potential tension with the narrator. Yet like Becky, Lady Audley's canniness at maneuvering among different social situations makes her a threat to the social world of the novel. And like Becky, Lady Audley is implicated in—indeed, condemned for—crimes far more severe than the merely social crimes of Mrs. Clay or Lucy Steele.

Lady Audley rewrites her own history, attempting to erase earlier chapters in her life. The narrator is thus forced into silence in scenes in which full disclosure would expose the erasures and revisions of the anti-heroine. This is Lady Audley's real threat in the novel—not her more obvious crimes of bigamy or attempted murder, or even her alleged “madness.” Mrs. Clay of *Persuasion* may be able to conform herself to the whims of the Elliots, and Becky Sharp to take on multiple roles and allegorical meanings in *Vanity Fair*, but their malleability and insincerity is generally transparent to the narrator the reader, if not to the other characters. Lady Audley's ability not only to conform to different social situations or to take on new performative roles, but actually to *rewrite* her own history makes Lady Audley strangely independent of the narrator, whose strategic reticence seems to make her complicit with the crimes of the anti-heroine where the earlier narrators of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Persuasion*, and *Vanity Fair* remained morally and structurally distant from their subversive social climbers. The tension the narrative reticence creates between Robert and Lady Audley, and between the reader, Lady Audley, and the narrator, serves to manage, but not to extinguish, the reader's sympathy with the eponymous anti-heroine.

The narration of *Lady Audley's Secret* (and of sensation fiction more generally) has elicited a substantial body of critical commentary, generally in the context of feminist critiques of the genre. The kind of authorial reticence I describe is a natural consequence of the development of sensation fiction as an off-shoot, or even (as Wilkie Collins described it) as the “twin-sister” of drama.<sup>128</sup> According to the conventions of both melodrama and of sensation fiction,

the fictional characters should ‘play out the play’ on their own account without authorial interference, since, in Dickens' phrase, ‘it is, as it were, their business to do it, and not mine.’ The author should dramatize his story rather than himself, abandoning the role of omniscient puppeteer favored by Thackeray and Trollope. Not only should the narrator refrain from comment in his own voice or discursive

---

<sup>128</sup> See Collins, Preface to *Basil*, p. iv.

digressions in the manner of Fielding, he should also avoid explicit dissection and analysis of character, as practiced preeminently by George Eliot. Even the direct representation of a character's thoughts, an obvious convention of narrative, is frowned upon as an intrusion beyond the narrator's sphere as well as an interruption of the flow of events." (Hughes 24-5)

While this convention holds true as a general rule in *Lady Audley's Secret*, the moments of reticence I will describe are not merely instances of the narrator withholding key information about the anti-heroine's motives or interiority, but rather, moments in which the narrator withdraws from narrating actual dialogue or action that might expose her secret before the appropriate time. These gaps in the narrative do serve, of course, to heighten the melodramatic suspense of the novel,<sup>129</sup> but they also create a tension between the narrator and the reader in the form of a potential complicity between the narrator and Lady Audley herself.

Ann Cvetkovich, on the other hand, argues that the narrator's silence on the subject of Lady Audley's interiority is the result not only of the evolution of narrative technique to create suspense or to manage sympathy for a subversive and potentially damaging anti-heroine, but also the consequence of gendered modes of reading and fantasizing about female crime: "At the same time as Lady Audley's crimes satisfy female readers' fantasies of rebellion and affective expression, her sensational appeal within the narrative is also the product of a masculine fantasy about women's hidden powers... The narrative rarely provides access to Lady Audley's inner life or point of view" (Cvetkovich 48). Lyn Pykett agrees that access to Lady Audley's interiority is obstructed by the narrator, although she disagrees as to both the cause and the consequences of that reticence. She argues that the over-emphasis on physical, superficial descriptions of the anti-heroine makes her "the object of the reader's gaze. Thus, at the level of textual or narrative representation, [she] is staged as a spectacle, just as within the narrative the character is staging herself. This latter kind of performance is central to Braddon's novels, since, like [Lady Audley], virtually all of her heroines have something to hide, and are to that extent actresses" (*The Improper Feminine* 89). Although Pykett does not emphasize the difference between male and female readers' modes of reading Lady Audley, both Cvetkovich and Pykett seem to agree that the narrator's reticence on the subject of Lady Audley's interiority effectively exaggerates her exterior, turning her into a staged spectacle for the enjoyment of the other characters and of the reader.<sup>130</sup>

Lady Audley seems quite conscious of her role as an actress, but only on a diegetic level: she performs for the benefit of Sir Michael, Robert Audley, and even for Alicia, but seems unaware of her role within a constructed narrative world. Whereas Becky Sharp seemed aware not only of her status as an actress playing a part, but also of her allegorical role within a larger context for a wider audience, Lady Audley's consciousness seems limited to her position within the story world itself. Sympathy for Lady Audley should therefore be easier for the narrator to

---

<sup>129</sup> In their study of Victorian heroines, Reynolds and Humble add that "sensation fiction is precluded from supplying the sort of psychological and social motivations that deepen our sense of character in the work of James or Eliot, since precisely the suspense in these novels—as in their descendents the detective novels—lies in hidden and unexplained motivation and elements of character" (107).

<sup>130</sup> For a psychoanalytic account of female violence and the female body in *Lady Audley's Secret*, see Andrew Mangham's *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction*, especially chapter 3: "'Frail Erections': Exploiting Violent Women in the Work of Mary Elizabeth Braddon."

manage, but the more dramatic requirements of sensation fiction, as Hughes has pointed out, made it imperative for authors to allow fictional characters to speak for themselves with minimal authorial interference. The narrator of *Lady Audley's Secret* is forced, therefore, to remain silent where Thackeray's narrator or Austen's would certainly render judgment. My reading of the narrator's silence in *Lady Audley's Secret* will show how the deliberate gaps left by the narrator are filled in by the traces of text that Lady Audley carelessly leaves behind her. The narrator's unreliability and apparent complicity with the anti-heroine thus obstruct any kind of sympathetic alliance with the reader (such as we find in Austen or even, occasionally, in *Vanity Fair*), forcing the reader to find an ally instead in the indolent amateur detective, Robert Audley.

Lady Audley's missteps in rewriting her life—her only missteps, which allow Robert Audley and the reader to retrace her early life and connect her with the Helen Maldon married by George Talboys—all involve leaving textual traces behind her. These traces of text function like footprints—indeed, they take the place of footprints and the more physical forms of evidence usually favored by amateur detectives. Robert Audley takes on the role of a surrogate author, becoming a rival to the narrator in his ability to reconstitute the narrative of Lady Audley's life, and George Talboys' disappearance, through the scraps of text he discovers.

Robert is unwilling to rely on eyewitnesses to attest to Lady Audley's identity. However, a number of individuals questioned by him claim that they would be able to identify Helen Maldon-Talboys if they saw her again, but short of noting the fact in the course of his conversation with them, Robert does nothing with these possible eyewitnesses. The evidence he uses to terrify Lady Audley in the lime-walk includes letters with matching handwriting, the half-burnt telegram, and the label on the bonnet-box, but he never threatens to call in the innkeeper or the landlady from Wildernsea, Mrs. Vincent or Miss Tonks from the school, or even Helen's father.

Even her husband, George Talboys, although he recognizes her when he finally meets her as the mistress of Audley Court, is unable to articulate his revelation to anyone besides Lady Audley herself. Indeed, she has so fully insinuated herself into her new rank and role as Lady Audley, that she manages to avoid detection by her first husband for a long enough period almost to snap the reader's suspension of disbelief. More maneuvering is required on the part of the narrator to perform the task of describing Lady Audley's subtle, almost effortless, manipulation of her circumstances than on the part of Lady Audley herself. Braddon's narrator stays primarily with Robert Audley, following his movements and letting us overhear his thoughts. The exceptions to this rule are therefore rather surprising when they do occur: we occasionally are allowed to overhear conversations between Lady Audley and her maid, Phoebe; between Phoebe and her husband-to-be, Luke; between Lady Audley and Alicia; and between Lady Audley and Sir Michael. The difference, though, between the narration of Robert's movements, and of Lady Audley's, is that the narrator almost always accesses Robert's feelings or motives through free indirect style, and she almost always elides Lady Audley's. The narrator spends two pages describing the order and execution of the "little commission" Lady Audley asks Phoebe to perform for her in London as "a favour," the description of which errand is "so simple that it was told in five minutes" (61). The narrator is in the awkward position of describing a conversation without actually narrating it: we are privy to the exchange between Lady Audley and her maid leading up to the description of the errand, but are denied the details. The narrator's reluctance to narrate the details of Phoebe's commission in London serves more than the obvious narrative purpose of keeping the reader in suspense as to Lady Audley's true identity: the narrator's refusal to grant us access to Lady Audley's interiority through free indirect discourse obstructs

the reader's sympathy.

The reader's anticipation of a directly narrated confrontation between Lady Audley and George Talboys is again thwarted when Lady Audley is unexpectedly called to visit a sick friend. She unobtrusively locks her rooms on her way out of the house. Again, the action is described, but the motive is blocked. The reader realizes, of course, that Lady Audley has locked the door to her rooms lest George Talboys should visit and take it into his head to view her portrait, but the narrator is silent on the subject of her motives. When the narrator finally allows a confrontation between George and Lady Audley, though, it is only with her portrait, and occurs only through rather elaborate plotting: they bypass the locked door and access the room with the portrait through a secret passage discovered by Alicia in her childhood (as narrated in passing in the opening chapter).

George's reaction to the portrait, when he finally is face to face with it, is elided by a long narratorial analysis of the style and technique of the portrait artist:

Yes, the painter must have been a pre-Raphaelite... No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have painted, hair by hair, those feathery masses of ringlets... No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have so exaggerated every attribute... No one but a pre-Raphaelite could have given to that pretty pouting mouth the hard and almost wicked look it had in the portrait. (72)

The narrator speaks in general terms of what any casual viewer, at all acquainted with the pre-Raphaelites, would have noticed about the portrait. The singularity of George's reaction is glossed over. When the narrator finally turns from the portrait itself to the figure of George, who has been standing and staring at it for the better part of a page, we're given an external impression of his reaction only—we see only what Robert Audley sees; the long technical analysis of the painting, which seemed to be oddly veiling George's reaction, was perhaps only a summary of Robert's own reaction to the painting, which he mulled over while George stood and stared. At the end of the analysis of the portrait, then, the narrator tells us, "it could not have made any great impression on George Talboys, for he sat before it for about a quarter of an hour without uttering a word—only staring blankly at the painted canvas" (72-3). George's reaction, like Lady Audley's motives, is left a narrative blank.

The narrative gaps, I have suggested, perform two functions: both in the case of the elision of Lady Audley's motives, and in the case of George's reaction to her portrait, the narrator's reticence serves the obvious purpose of creating suspense. In the case of Lady Audley's maneuvering, the narrative blanks serve a secondary purpose of strengthening the reader's sympathetic alliance with Robert and consequent distance from the subversive affective potential of a sympathetic identification with Lady Audley. For practical reasons of narrative expediency, then, as well as for more aesthetic reasons of articulating the subtlety and effortlessness of Lady Audley's position, the novel is riddled with narrative blanks. In what is, at least ostensibly, an omnisciently narrated novel, the narrator suffers from odd withholdings in her transmission of knowledge. The gaps in the narrative of *Lady Audley's Secret* appear more exaggerated than similar gaps, left for similar purposes of creating suspense, in other mystery and sensation novels. The result for this novel is an unevenness of texture in the narrative. In other mystery or sensation novels, we read on in part because of the pleasure of watching a clever detective at work. Fictional detectives like Sherlock Holmes were popular because of their singularity or eccentricity; Robert Audley, on the other hand, is remarkable mostly for his

blandness (although arguably, his insistence on his own blandness works as a kind of eccentricity, and his languor might be said to have affinities with Holmes). He is in any case a singularly unwilling detective, and is more concerned about the source of his cigars or the conclusion of his French novels than in exerting himself in any more intellectual pursuits. Even after he is inspired to solve the mystery of his friend's disappearance, the inspiration comes from outside of himself—his position is rather one of a cipher than of an interesting or striking protagonist. The interest of the novel is in discovering the nature of Lady Audley's secret on our own, rather than in watching the evolution of Robert's feelings towards Clara, or his sense of duty in tracing the mystery of his friend's disappearance. It seems that we're following the wrong narrative, somehow—we follow Robert around western England, flying by train from Essex to London to Dorsetshire, trying to reconstitute the narrative that forms the real interest of the novel—the story of Lady Audley's life, and her connection to George Talboys' disappearance.

The tension between these two conflicting narratives, and the resulting unevenness of the text, can be explained through the “gaps” in the narrative—the occasional lapses in the supposedly omniscient narrator's transmission of information. These gaps are, as I've suggested, different in effect, if not in kind, from the similar holes used to create suspense in sensation and mystery novels. The first-person narrator of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, for example, knows no more about the mystery his hero is working through than the reader—Watson makes no claim to the position of omniscience Braddon's narrator adopts and then occasionally retreats from. Our task in reading the novel is, along with Robert, to reconstitute the narrative; to smooth over or patch up the gaps left by the narrator. The holes in the text created by the narrator's occasional strategic reticence are filled by the textual traces left by Lady Audley at every step of her career. The gap created by the question of the nature of Phoebe's errand to London, for example, is filled by the telegram Lady Audley receives the next morning. The more substantial hole of George Talboys' response to the portrait is filled by the entire collection of textual traces over the course of the novel—by the contents of Robert Audley's scrapbook, and the pigeon-hole in his office desk marked “*Important*” (54).

This sequence of textual markers form what Robert repeatedly refers to as the “fabric” of “circumstantial evidence.” The pun in this definition on textile/text is rather obvious: the examples of clues listed by Robert as he explains the “theory of circumstantial evidence” to Lady Audley are almost exclusively examples either of textual traces, or traces of textiles: he describes

that wonderful *fabric* which is built out of straws collected at every point of the compass, and which is yet strong enough to hang a man. Upon what infinitesimal trifles may sometimes hang the whole secret of some wicked mystery, inexplicable heretofore to the wisest upon the earth! *A scrap of paper; a shred of some torn garment; the button off a coat; a word dropped incautiously from the over-cautious lips of guilt; the fragment of a letter...* a thousand circumstances so slight as to be forgotten by the criminal, but links of steel in the wonderful chain forged by the science of the detective officer.... (123; emphasis mine)

Robert Audley is rewriting the story of the disappearance of his friend, George Talboys, based on the traces of text he finds scattered in the wake of Helen Talboys/Lady Audley. His own authorial work compensates for the unevenness of the text created by the narrator: he collects bits of text to fill the holes left by the narrator, like a tailor patching up a “garment” from which

some “shred” has been “torn” (123).

Robert begins his project of rewriting and patching up the gaps of the novel as any good author should, with a detailed outline: he records “all that has occurred between our going down to Essex and to-night, beginning at the very beginning” (103). He sets out to list events, in a chronological manner, but a full third of the supposed “events” he records are actually references to letters, post-scripts, or telegraphic messages. He sees the task he has undertaken as the work of a barrister (104), but the work he is doing is really that of an editor. He compiles and sorts through the various letters, notes, labels, and burnt “telegraphic messages,” that he has collected, weaving them together and extrapolating what is missing to form a coherent narrative. In one of his verbal duels with Lady Audley, he offers to tell her “the story of my friend’s disappearance as I *read* that story” (264, emphasis mine). He might as well have offered to tell her the story of George’s disappearance as he “writes” it, but all the same, his choice of word indicates that he does consider his investigation in light of a narrative that he can read, bits of which he must uncover and fill in.

The two most important scraps of text that Robert discovers are found entirely by accident, where he was not looking for them, and are both partly destroyed. The first is the half-burnt telegram that he finds at Captain Maldon’s house. Captain Maldon happened to have been careless in throwing it in the fire to destroy it; Robert happened to have needed a twist of paper to light his cigar, and picked it up. The message itself is only partly destroyed; the surviving portion of the text happens to include the very information that would suggest to Robert that Captain Maldon is deceiving him on someone else’s behalf. The message reads as follows: “\_\_\_\_\_alboys came to \_\_\_\_\_ last night, and left by the mail for London, on his way for Liverpool, whence he was to sail for Sydney” (97). The “upper portion” of the paper is “burnt away,” leaving only the information Robert needs to begin his investigation—yet the most crucial information is excised. The part of the message with the date, name, and address of the sender was also burnt away. Just as the narrator elides details that would give away too much, the scrap of the telegram which happens to survive the fire, and which Robert happens to pick up, also has an important hole in it.

The final scrap of text uncovered by Robert fills in the last remaining hole in the narrative he is trying to reconstruct. Like the half-burnt telegram, the label on the bonnet box is found entirely by accident. Robert hopes to find something that Lucy Graham might have left behind her, which might offer some clue connecting the Miss Graham who taught for Mrs. Vincent, with the Helen Talboys who fled from her father’s house in Wildernsea (235). The only piece of property Lucy Graham left behind her was “a dilapidated paper-covered bonnet-box,” which was covered with scraps of “railway labels,” partially torn off (236). There are only a few scraps with any legible writing remaining, one of which is a foreign label with the letters “TURI.” One of the few facts Robert and the reader recall about George Talboys’ brief period of happiness with his wife was that they had traveled to Italy on their wedding tour—it seems providential that one of the few legible bits of writing on the bonnet box should be recognizably Italian, with enough of the word “TURIN” surviving to assure Robert that the box had traveled to Italy. The only other scrap of text on the box was the name of the box’s previous owner, “Miss Graham” (236). Robert scrapes back the top label to discover—another label, which the narrator does not describe, but which Robert considers of sufficient importance to take away with him (237). In this scene, the act of discovering the final piece of text to fill the gap in the narrative left by the author is only partially narrated—the actual contents of the hidden label are elided, and the reader finds herself in the same position as Miss Tonks, unable to “contrive to read this

address across Robert's shoulder, though she exhibited considerable dexterity in her endeavours to accomplish that object" (237).

These two important scraps of text were both discovered entirely by accident. Braddon seems to be obsessed with providing realistic detail, and to place the novel squarely in a particular historical moment and geographical locale—she takes pains, for example, to remind her readers that the word “telegram” had not yet been invented at the time of the action of the novel (61). Yet the realism of the narrative is put in serious jeopardy by frequently resorting to coincidence or chance in the advancement of the plot. The fortuitous discovery of scraps of text functions like the providential machinery typical of romance plots. The repeated turn to coincidence is more problematic in *Lady Audley's Secret*, which at least purports to adhere to the tenets of realism. Contingency enhances the reality effect of the narrative, while mere coincidence undermines it.

Even Lady Audley dismisses Robert's proposed narrative of the disappearance of George Talboys as “a romantic story” (267). The other pieces of evidence he's accumulated are either not mentioned at all to Lady Audley, or are mentioned only to be rejected. Lady Audley denies the insinuations against her as too much based on coincidence—therefore, too “romantic” to persuade her to give in. The half-burnt telegram and the peeled-off label from the bonnet-box are the two textual scraps that Robert shows Lady Audley that actually cause a reaction. After she has coolly dismissed the other links in the chain of evidence he has presented to her, Robert only gains his point with her when he presents the peeled-off labels of the bonnet-box, and she “clasp[s her hands] convulsively over her heart, and he knew that the shot had gone home to its mark” (269).

The reader learns for the first time, along with Lady Audley, what the contents of that second label were. Even a moderately attentive reader would already have guessed that the bottom label carried the name of Mrs. George Talboys, of course, so the effect of the simultaneous revelation is not precisely parallel. This is the climactic moment, though, of all of Robert Audley's efforts at rewriting and reconstituting the narrative of Lady Audley's life, and Lady Audley's reaction can be read as a deliberate failure on the part of the narrator at creating a sympathetic, or at least parallel, affective reaction between the reader and Lady Audley. The bonnet-box label fills the last hole left by the narrator: it confirms Robert's (and the reader's) suspicion that Mrs. Helen Maldon Talboys and Lucy Graham Audley are the same individual.

The uneven texture of the narrative demands that the reader, like Robert Audley, scratch at the text to find the label stuck beneath the surface. The holes left by the narrator in the text are obviously necessary to create the suspense expected in a sensation novel of this kind. In novels of this genre, the reader is expected to fill in the gaps left by the narrator, and the narrator in turn offers the reader a few tantalizing scraps of information, occasionally to set the reader deliberately on the wrong track, but never enough to allow the reader to form a solid conclusion. In this sense, the sensation novel requires the reader to become a surrogate author. Robert—himself an avid reader of French sensation novels—becomes a reader/detective of the textual traces left in the wake of Lady Audley. *Lady Audley's Secret* seems unusually aware of the writerliness of the task of the detective: Robert rejects physical evidence (the ability of a large number of eyewitnesses to identify Lady Audley as Helen Maldon) in favor of the “fabric” of (textual) circumstantial evidence.

The act of reading the life of Lady Audley, both through the narrator's reticence and through Robert's interpretations and reinterpretations of the textual traces he collects, demands a general reorientation towards the work of the narrator. The narrator is aligned with Lady Audley,

and the reader with Robert: she deliberately places gaps in her narrative, but leaves in her wake the textual traces to be gathered and sorted by the reader/Robert, whose work is then to reconstitute, patch up, and rewrite the narrative, filling in the holes left by the narrator and Lady Audley. The implicit trust the reader is supposed to feel for the narrator is thus ironized: no reader of Braddon would describe her implied author as W.C. Booth did Austen's, as "friend and guide" (Booth 264). Rather, the reader is forced to rely on the indolent, cigar-smoking Robert Audley, the surrogate narrator, whose task it is to reconstitute the narrative that has been broken up and riddled with holes through the machinations both of Lady Audley and of the narrator. The threat of Lady Audley, then, is not one of unmediated social mobility, or the ability to glide seamlessly and alarmingly between social spheres, but rather the threat of a narrator whose primary purpose, it seems, is to undo the text.

### **Conclusion: Outlaw Narratives and Roads not Taken**

With the benefit of historical perspective, critical retrospect tends to view the sensation novel of the 1860s, like the Newgate novel of the 1830s, as a relatively minor subgenre of the novel—a blip in the history of fiction, worth a footnote or a few paragraphs, at most, in critical histories of the novel's development. It's true that sensation fiction has received more attention in recent decades, in part because of the increased interest of feminist critics in sensational anti-heroines, and in part because sensation novels have been seen as laying the groundwork for later Victorian detective fiction. Still, though, neither sensation fiction nor Newgate novels tend to be taken seriously as an important part of the history and evolution of the novel: they are resolutely referred to as "subgenres," subordinated to the work of Austen, Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, the Brontës, and Eliot and the more serious mainstream development of the novel. Of course, many of these canonical favorites did experiment with Newgate fiction (Thackeray's *Catherine*; Dickens's *Oliver Twist* or *Barnaby Rudge*) or with sensation fiction (Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Eliot's *Adam Bede*, or Dickens's *Bleak House*), yet these novelists are not identified with those sub-genres; their novels have remained a part of the critical story of the novel even after the passing fad for Newgate novels or sensation fiction had faded.<sup>131</sup>

Yet at the time these novels were being written, published, read, and adapted, the future of the novel was far from certain. Witness the anxiety of early critics on the subject of the "Newgate school of fiction," or, later, on sensation novels, and their pernicious effect on modern morals.<sup>132</sup> Novelists and critics alike struggled, at the time, to imagine what the future of the novel might look like as reading habits, tastes, and fashions evolved. Indeed, Richard Nemesvari has pointed to the sudden burst of popularity of sensation fiction as the source of an "epistemological crisis" in the history of the British novel (15). By midcentury, Nemesvari goes on to argue, the mainstream English novel had moved away from the Gothic tropes and romance

---

<sup>131</sup> Indeed, Dickens's experimentation with both subgenres in *Bleak House* (1852-1853) can be seen as a kind of nexus linking Newgate fiction, sensation fiction, and the mainstream history of the novel: Lady Dedlock is the quintessential transgressive female social climber of sensation fiction, and Jo the marginal and marginalized outcast (though not criminal) that we have seen circulating in and through the novel beginning with Scott.

<sup>132</sup> See Chapter 3, "Serial Criminal," for more on the reception history of Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* and other Newgate novels.



conventions popularized by Scott and developed by Dickens (15-16). Instead, the period marks the “ascendancy of the domestic novel, which centered on the familiar events and social interactions of everyday life” (Hughes 6). Yet although common critical histories of the novel mark George Eliot as the successor to Dickens by the mid nineteenth century, at the time she was writing, her mode of fiction, with its emphasis on the everyday troubles of realistic people, was perhaps not as secure as subsequent canonization and critical reception would suggest.

These apparently minor subgenres of the British novel, far from being mere blips in the long history of the form, actually expose important moments of crisis in the novel’s development. The evolution of the novel from Austen and Scott to Dickens, and from Dickens to Eliot, was, in fact, far from a smooth or uncontested transition. The wild popularity of novels like Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard* or Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) can in retrospect be viewed as a passing fad, yet at the time, they constituted a potential new direction in modes of narration and indeed, the very purpose of fiction (Nemesvari 16-17).

The history of the novel cannot be studied in isolation from other genres and discourses. As I have shown, the Romantic outlaw tradition was instituted in German Romantic drama by Schiller, imported to Great Britain via the poetry of Scott, Byron, Shelley, and Blake, and transmitted to the novel as a social force, rather than a solitary figure, most prominently in the novels of Scott. The adaptability and malleability of the novel form has been well established since the novel’s inception; indeed, the impossibility of agreeing on which text constitutes the “first” English novel indicates the form’s surprising resistance to generalization and categorization.

Even as Scott’s marginal outlaws and rogues gained traction as social and political forces that could inflect and permeate the novel’s entire character system, Jane Austen was writing novels that have long been taken to be the quintessence of domestic fiction—novels that, while perhaps “unconsciously” reflecting the political and economic context in which they were written (again to borrow Tomlinson’s phrase), have primarily to do with scenes of domesticity, marriage, and family life. Yet the social force of the Romantic outlaw tradition comes to infect even the supposedly apolitical character systems of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Persuasion*, as the transgressive outlaw is both domesticated and feminized in the form of the female social climbers, Lucy Steele and Mrs. Clay.

Scott’s experimentation with genre and with the integration of history with fiction is developed by Ainsworth, who cast aside both the relatively minor role and the political justification of Scott’s outlaws to set real-life criminals at the center of his historical novels. Ainsworth incorporated both historical and fictionalized accounts of his criminal anti-heroes without theorizing a difference between the two—his use of fiction as a source for history proved to be especially fruitful in his reinvention of the eighteenth-century housebreaker and escape artist, Jack Sheppard, in his 1839 historical novel. Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard* enjoyed wild popularity, at least initially—and his novel, even with its fictionalizations and outright inventions—since became the standard copy text and source on the life of the eighteenth-century criminal. Yet *Jack Sheppard*’s immediate popularity sparked a widespread debate about the nature and purpose of fiction that ultimately led to the fading of the fashion for Newgate fiction.

The socially transgressive outlaw energy that was incorporated into the novel form by Scott takes another turn with the passing of the Newgate fad: the transgressive anti-hero becomes an anti-heroine—not merely a rival to the romantic heroine, as in Austen’s novels, but an anti-heroine in her own right, more akin to the criminal anti-heroes of Ainsworth and other Newgate novelists. Becky Sharp of *Vanity Fair* commits crimes ranging from lying, cheating and

hypocrisy to the attempted seduction of her best friend's husband, to probable adultery and the hinted possibility of murder, all without a shade of remorse or repentance. The transgressive anti-heroine becomes still more dangerous in *Lady Audley's Secret*, in which the eponymous social-climber is not only a hypocrite, but guilty of bigamy, arson, and attempted murder. These anti-heroines are condemned more entirely even than the real, historical criminals of Ainsworth's novels, who, for all their faults, are admirably courageous and even noble. Social ambition and criminal acts are, of course, considered more unnatural and therefore more dangerous in female characters: the narrators of these novels thus develop new narrative strategies to manage the potential danger of these anti-social women. They withdraw into reticence at strategic moments, leaving the reader, or other characters, to cast judgment—or not—without explicit guidance from the narrator. The strategic reticence developed by the narrators of these anti-social women is more pointed than the obvious reticence required of narrators of detective fiction to maintain the plot's mystery; the narrators of these novels withdraw into reticence only at key moments, when explicit judgment of the anti-heroine's crimes seems to be called for.

The changes in character-systems, narrative structure, and narrative technique that I have described over the last five chapters were developed in response to the increased need to manage the anti-social threat of the outlaws, outcasts, criminals, and even the female social climbers of the early nineteenth-century British novel. These transgressive figures offer a new and productive way of looking at the history and development of the genre that allows us to knit together traditionally disparate accounts of the novel as it developed through the early part of the nineteenth century. Taking seriously these apparently minor subgenres—the roads not taken in the novel's history—provides a new perspective on the directions the novel did, in fact, take.

## Bibliography

- Ainsworth, William Harrison. *Jack Sheppard*. Ed. Edward Jacobs and Manuela Mourão. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Rookwood*. London: George Routledge and Sons, 1892.
- Anderson, James. *Sir Walter Scott and History*. Edinburgh: Edina Press Ltd., 1981.
- Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*. Ed. R.W. Chapman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Persuasion*. ed. Vivien Jones and D. Lynch. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sense and Sensibility*. Ed. James Kinsley and Mary Ann Doody. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Emma*. Ed. Stephen M. Parrish. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000.
- Barczewski, Stephanie L. *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Behr, Kate E. *The Representation of Men in the English Gothic Novel, 1762-1820*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002.
- Bender, John. *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Bilger, Audrey. *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998.
- Bolton, H. Philip. *Scott Dramatized*. London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1992.
- Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Bowen, John. *Other Dickens: From Pickwick to Chuzzlewit. Other Dickens : Pickwick to Chuzzlewit*. Oxford, U.K.; New York: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley's Secret*. ed. Jenny Bourne Taylor. London: Penguin, 1998.
- Brewer, David. *The Afterlife of Character, 1726-1825*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

- Brodie, Laura Fairchild. "The Superfluous Female: Jane Austen's Treatment of Widowhood." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 34.4 (Autumn, 1994), 697-718.
- Brown, Homer. "The Institution of the English Novel: Defoe's Contribution." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*. 29.3 (Spring 1996): 299-318.
- Buckley, Matthew. "Sensations of Celebrity: *Jack Sheppard* and the Mass Audience," *Victorian Studies* 44.3, 2002.
- Butler, Marilyn. *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background, 1760-1830*. New York: Oxford UP, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- Camden, Jennifer. *Secondary Heroines in Nineteenth-Century British and American Novels*. London: Ashgate, 2010.
- Chandler, James. *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism*. Chicago and London: U of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Chittick, Kathryn. *Dickens and the 1830s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Collins, Wilkie. *Basil*. New York: Harper, 1874.
- Cox, Jeffrey. *In the Shadows of Romance: Romantic Tragic Drama in Germany, England, and France*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1987.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992.
- Davis, Lennard. *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.
- Defoe, Daniel. *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders*. Ed. David Blewett. London: Penguin, 1989.
- DiBattista, Maria. "The Triumph of Clytemnestra: The Charades of *Vanity Fair*." *PMLA* 95.5. 1980, 827-837.
- Dobson, Kit. "'An Insuperable Repugnance to Hearing Vice Called by Its Proper Name': Englishness, Gender, and the Performed Identities of Rebecca and Amelia in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*." *Victorian Review*. Vol. 32, No. 2 (2006), pp. 1-25.
- Downie, J.A. "Who Says She's a Bourgeois Writer? Reconsidering the Social and Political Contexts of Jane Austen's Novels." *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40.1 (Fall 2006), pp 69-

84.

Duncan, Ian. *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: the Gothic, Scott, Dickens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Eliot, George. *Daniel Deronda*. Ed. Terence Cave. London: Penguin, 1995

Ellis, Samuel M. *William Harrison Ainsworth and His Friends*. 2 vols. London: John Lane, 1911.

Faller, Lincoln B. *Turned to Account: The Forms and Functions of Criminal Biography in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Feltes, N.N. *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Fraser, G.S. "Walter Scott: Ballad Novelist?" *A Review of International English Literature* 2.3. 1971, 77-87.

Furbank, P.N. and W.R. Owens. "The Myth of Defoe as 'Applebee's Man.'" *The Review of English Studies* 48 (1997): 198-204.

Gamer, Michael. *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Garside, Peter. "Picturesque figure and landscape: Meg Merrilies and the Gypsies." from *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape, and Aesthetics since 1770*. Edited by Stephen Copley and P. Garside. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pages 145-174.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Meg Merrilies, the Gypsies, and India." from *Scott in Carnival*. Edited by J.H. Alexander and D. Hewitt. Aberdeen, UK: University of Aberdeen Press, 1993. Pages 154-171.

Gay, John. *The Beggar's Opera as it is acted at the theatre-royal in Lincolns-in-the- Fields*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: John Watts, 1728.

Gladfelder, Hal. "Defoe and Criminal Fiction." From *The Cambridge Companion to Daniel Defoe*. Ed. John Richetti. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. pp 64-83.

Hagan, John. "A Note on the Napoleonic Background of *Vanity Fair*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 15.4, 1961, pp 358-361.

- Hammond, Mary. "Thackeray's Waterloo: History and War in *Vanity Fair*." *Literature and History* 11.2.
- Hamnett, Brian. *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Representations of Reality in History and Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Hansen, Adam. "Criminal Conversations: Rogues, Words and the World in the Work of Daniel Defoe." *Literature and History*. 13.2 (Autumn 2004): 26-48.
- Harvey, J.R. *Victorian Novelists and Their Illustrators*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1970.
- Hibbert, Christopher. *The Road to Tyburn: The Story of Jack Sheppard*. London: Longman, Green, and Co. Ltd. 1957.
- Hill, Jonathan E. "Cruikshank, Ainsworth, and Tableau Illustration." *Victorian Studies* 23.4. 1980.
- Hill, Richard. *Picturing Scotland through the Waverley Novels: Walter Scott and the Origins of the Victorian Illustrated Novel*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *Bandits*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1969.
- Hollingsworth, Keith. *The Newgate Novel, 1830-1847*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963.
- Holt, J.C. *Robin Hood*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1982.
- Hopkins, Lisa. "Jane Austen and Money." *Wordsworth Circle*. 25.2. 1994. p.76.
- Hughes, Winifred. *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- Johnson, Claudia L. *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Johnson, Edgar. *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*. 2 vols. New York: MacMillan, 1970.
- Joyce, Simon. *Capital Offenses: Geographies of Class and Crime in Victorian London*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003.
- Kent, Julia. "Thackeray's 'Marriage Country': The Englishness of Domestic Sentiment in *Vanity Fair*. *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*. 30:2, 127-145.
- Knapp, Andrew and William Baldwin. *The Newgate Calendar*. 1824-28.

- Knapp, Shoshana. "Napoleon as Hero." *Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Heroism*. Eds. Sara Putzell and David C. Leon. Potomac, MD: Studia Humanitatis, 1982, pp 75-83.
- Knight, Stephen. *Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Robin Hood: An Anthology of Scholarship and Criticism*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999.
- Lee, William. *Daniel Defoe: His Life and Recently Discovered Writings*. London: J.C. Hotten, 1869.
- Linebaugh, Peter. *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*. London: Allen Lane, the Penguin Press, 1991.
- Lukács, Georg. *The Historical Novel*. Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1983.
- Lutz, Deborah. *The Dangerous Lover: Gothic Villains, Byronism, and the Nineteenth-Century Seduction Narrative*. Columbus, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006.
- Mackie, Erin. *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.
- Mangham, Andrew. *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine, and Victorian Popular Culture*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Marks, Patricia. "'Mon Pauvre Prisonnier': Becky Sharp and the Triumph of Napoleon." *Studies in the Novel* 28.1. Spring 1996, 76.
- Marshall, Ashley. "Fabricating Defoes: From Anonymous Hack to Master of Fictions." *Eighteenth-Century Life*. 36.2 (Spring 2012): 1-35.
- Maxwell, Richard. *The Historical Novel in Europe, 1650-1950*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *The Victorian Illustrated Book*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2002.
- Mayer, Robert. "The Reception History of *A Journal of the Plague Year* and the Nexus of Fiction and History in the Novel." *ELH* 57.3 (Fall 1990): 529-555.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *History and the Early English Novel: Matters of Fact from Bacon to Defoe*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

- McKeon, Michael. *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.
- McLane, Maureen. *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Meisel, Martin. *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983.
- Moody, Jane. *Illegitimate Theatre in London 1770-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Mullan, John and Christopher Reid, eds. *Eighteenth-Century Popular Culture: A Selection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Murray, W.H. *Rob Roy MacGregor: his Life and Times*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993.
- Neill, Edward. *The Politics of Jane Austen*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Nemesvari, Richard. "‘Judged by a Purely Literary Standard’: Sensation Fiction, Horizons of Expectation, and the Generic Construction of Victorian Realism." From *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre*. Harrison, Kimberly (ed). Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006.
- Nord, Deborah Epstein. *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Marks of Race: Gypsy Figures and Eccentric Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing." *Victorian Studies* 41, 1998.
- Percy, Thomas (ed). *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. London: J. Dodsley, 1767.
- Phillips, Helen. "Scott and the Outlaws." From *Bandit Territories: British Outlaw Traditions*. Ed. Helen Phillips. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008.
- Poovey, Mary. *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Price, Leah. *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Pykett, Lyn. *The "Improper" Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Report from the Select Committee on Criminal and Destitute Juveniles (1852)*. *Parliamentary Papers* 1852 (515) vii.



- Reynolds, Kimberly and N. Humble. *Victorian Heroines: Representations of Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Art*. New York: New York University Press, 1993.
- Rigney, Ann. *The Afterlives of Walter Scott: Memory on the Move*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Ritson, Joseph. *Robin Hood: a collection of all the ancient poems, songs, and ballads, now extant, relative to that celebrated English outlaw*. London: T. Egerton, Whitehall, and J. Johnson, St. Pauls-Church-Yard, 1795.
- Ruderman, Anne Crippen. *The Pleasures of Virtue: Political Thought in the Novels of Jane Austen*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995.
- Said, Edward W. *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Schiller, Friedrich. *The Robbers: a tragedy*. Trans. A.F. Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee. London: G.G and J. Robinson, 1800. 4<sup>th</sup> ed.
- Scott, Sir Walter. *Ivanhoe*. Ed. Ian Duncan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Rob Roy*. Ed. Ian Duncan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ivanhoe*. Ed. Graham Tulloch. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Pirate*. Ed. Mark Weinstein and A. Lumsden. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Guy Mannering*. Ed. Jane Millgate. London: Penguin, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*. Ed. H.J.C. Grierson. New York: AMS Press, 1971.
- Sharp, M. Corona. "Sympathetic Mockery: A Study of the Narrator's Character in *Vanity Fair*." *English Literary History*. 29.3 (September 1962), pp. 324-336.
- Simeone, William E. "The Robin Hood of *Ivanhoe*." *The Journal of American Folklore*. 74.293. pp. 230-234.
- Simmons, Clare A. *Reversing the Conquest: History and Myth in Nineteenth-Century British Literature*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- Thackeray, William Makepeace. *Vanity Fair*. Ed. John Sutherland. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Thackeray, William Makepeace. "On Going to See a Man Hanged." *Fraser's Magazine* 22. July-Dec (1840): 150-158.

- Thorslev, Peter Larsen. *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962.
- Tomlinson, T.B. *The English Middle Class Novel*. London: Macmillan, 1976.
- Trumpener, Katie. "The Time of the Gypsies: A 'People without History' in the Narratives of the West." *Critical Inquiry*. 18.4, Identities. Summer, 1992, 843-884.
- Vogler, Richard A. "Cruikshank and Dickens: A Reassessment of the Role of the Artist and the Author." From *George Cruikshank: A Revaluation*. Ed. Robert L. Patten. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.
- Warner, William B. *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998.
- Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Welsh, Alexander. *The Hero of the Waverley Novels, with New Essays on Scott*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. (originally published 1963)
- Weedon, Alexis. *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market, 1836-1916*. Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2003.
- White, Laura Mooneyham. "Beyond the Romantic Gypsy: Narrative Disruptions and Ironies in Austen's *Emma*." *Papers on Language and Literature*, 2008.
- White, Simon J. "Ivanhoe, Robin Hood, and the Pentridge Rising." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. 31.3, 2009, pp. 209-224.
- Whitmore, Daniel. "Scott's Indebtedness to the German Romantics: *Ivanhoe* Reconsidered." *The Wordsworth Circle* 15.2 (1984, spring), pp 72-73.
- William Eben Schulz. *Gay's Beggar's Opera: Its Content, History & Influence*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1923
- Wilt, Judith. *Secret Leaves: The Novels of Sir Walter Scott*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- Woloch, Alexander. *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Woodbridge, Linda. *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

Yacobi, Tamar. "Package Deals in Fictional Narrative: The Case of the Narrator's (Un)Reliability." *Narrative*. 9.2, "Contemporary Narratology" (May, 2001), pp. 223-229.

Zimmerman, Everett. *The Boundaries of Fiction: History and the Eighteenth-Century British Novel*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.

[Zug, Charles G. III]. "The Ballad and History: The Case for Scott." *Folklore* 89. 1978, pp 229-42.

**Appendix 1:**  
**Jack Sheppard Bibliography of Primary Texts**

**18<sup>th</sup>-century**

[Various contemporary newspaper articles.]

[anon.] “History of the Remarkable Life of John Sheppard, Containing a Particular...” published by Applebee on Oct. 19, 1724. (haven’t seen an original ed. of it—only copies from reprints include. Bleackley and Ellis. Seems that once the “Narrative” was published by Applebee, it was no longer worth his while to re-issue the “History.”)

Thornhill, Sir James. *Portrait of Jack Sheppard in the Condemn’d Hold*. Location unknown. 1724. [various subsequent engravings after the portrait survive]

[anon.] “A Narrative of all the Robberies, Escapes, &c. of John Sheppard: Giving an Exact Description of the manner of his wonderful Escape from the Castle in Newgate, and of the Methods he took afterward for his Security.” published Nov. 17, 1724 (advertised in the article describing Sheppard’s execution in that day’s *Daily Journal*, which was also published by Applebee).

[G.E.] “Authentic Memoirs of the Life and Surprising Adventures of John Sheppard: Who was Executed at Tyburn, November the 16<sup>th</sup>, 1724.” This is the one that’s got a short dedication and then a series of 6 letters, a postscript, and an epitaph and a “warning to youth.” The letters are all signed “G.E.”

Thurmond, John. *Harlequin Sheppard: a Night Scene in Grotesque Characters: As it is perform’d at the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane*. London: J. Roberts in Warwick-Lane, and A.Dodd at the Peacock without Temple Bar. 1724 (Price 6d).

Gay, John. *Newgate’s Garland*. Song first appearing in *Harlequin Sheppard* (?), 1724. AKA “Blueskin’s Ballad” (with the chorus, “Now Blueskin’s sharp Penknife has set you at East,/ And ev’ry Man round me may rob if he please”)

Anon? *The Prison-Breaker; or, The Adventures of John Sheppard*. A farce [in two acts and in prose]. London: N.p., 1725.

Anon. *Sheppard in AEGypt, or, News from the Dead: or, a Dialogue Between Blueskin, Shepperd, and Jonathan Wild*. London: J. Thompson, in the Strand [n.d.; BL cat has 1725].

Anon. “An Epistle from Jack Sheppard to the late L—d C---ll—r of E---d, who when Sheppard was try’d, sent him to the Chancery Bar” [broadside ballad of eleven verses; 1725]

Anon. “A Dialogue between Julius Caesar and Jack Sheppard.” *The British Journal*, Saturday, 4 December, 1725. [Bleackley p. 129]

Anon. "La Vie et les Vols du fameux Jean Sheppard," qui fut execute le 5 Decembre[sic] dernier à Londres. Avec une exacte Relation des moyens surprenants qu'il employa pour s'évader des prisons, et entr'autres des formidables Cachots de Newgate. Traduit de l'Anglois d'après la sixième edition. Amsterdam: Chez Guillaume Berents, Libraire sur le Vooburgwa, vis-à-vis le Nieuwe-Straat. 1725. [Bleackley p. 129]

Walker, Thomas. *The Quaker's Opera* [in three acts, the dialogue in prose; based on the Prison-Breaker of 1725, which was never acted. Performed at Bartholomew Fair?]. 1728.

Gay, John. *The Beggar's Opera as it is acted at the theatre-royal in Lincolns-in-the-Fields*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: John Watts, 1728.

Blake, Joseph, alias Bleuskin[sic]. *The History of the Lives and Actions of Jonathan Wild, Thief-Taker*. Printed for Edw. Midwinter, at the Three Crown and Looking-Glass in St. Pauls Church-Yard [n.d—NLS cat. suggests 1730; Ellis/Bleackley suggests 1725]

Anon. "Select Trials"... at the Sessions House in the Old Bailey. From the year 1720-1724 inclusive. London: Printed for J. Wilford behind the Chapter House in St. Paul's Churchyard. 1734. Vol I, pp. 433-6, 440-5. [Bleackley p. 129]

Hogarth, William. *Industry and Idleness*. 1747.

Anon. "The Bloody Register." A Select and Judicious Collection of the Most Remarkable Trials... From the year 1700 to the year 1764 inclusive. London: Printed for E. and M. Viney in Ivy Land, near Paternoster Row. 1764. [Bleackley p. 129]

Anon. "Geschichte zweyer berühmten Strassenräuber Johann Sheppard" ... Aus dem Englishchen und Französischen übersetzt... Dritte Auflage pp. 126. Frankfurt und Leipzig. 1765. [With a fine engraving of Johann Sheppard and a companion leaving a building in order to enter a waiting coach. River beyond under a dark sky with crescent moon: a most romantic picture] [from biblio. in Bleackley/Ellis, p. 129.]

Anon. "The Tyburn Chronicle, or Villainy Displayed." From the year 1700 to the Present Time. London: T. Cooke at Shakespeare Head in Paternoster Row. 1768. Four volumes. Vol II, p. 97 [Bleackley p. 129]

Rev. Mr. Vilette, Ordinary of Newgate, et al. *The Annals of Newgate*." London, 1776. Four volumes. Vol I., p. 253. [Bleackley p. 129]

## 19<sup>th</sup>-century

Anon. *The Criminal Recorder*. 1804. Four volumes. Vol. II, pp 365-377. [Bleackley p. 129]

Jackson, William. *The Newgate Calendar*. Vol. I, pp 392-410. 1818. [Bleackley p. 129]

- Caulfield, James. *Portraits of Remarkable Persons from the Revolution in 1688*. Vol II, pp. 158, 167. 1819. [Bleackley p. 129]
- Wilkinson, George Theodore. *The Newgate Calendar, Improved*. Manchester: J.Gleave, Deansgate, 1819. Vol. I, pp. 301-314. With an engraving of Thornhill's portrait of Jack Sheppard. [Bleackley p. 130]
- Knapp, Andrew and William Baldwin. *The Newgate Calendar*. 1824-28.
- Borrow, George. *Celebrated Trials*. London: George Knight and Lacey, Paternoster Row. 1825. In six volumes. Vol. III, pp. 375-389. [Bleackley p. 130]
- Ainsworth, William Harrison. *Jack Sheppard: a Romance*. London: Richard Bentley, 1839.
- Anon. *The Lives and Adventures of Jack Shepherd, Dick Morris, William Nevison, and Sawney Beane; Notorious Thieves and Highwaymen*. Manchester: William Willis, 1839.
- Lacy, Thomas Hailes. *The Life and Death of Jack Sheppard: a drama in 4 acts*. London: T.H. Lacy, Wellington Street, Strand, 1839.
- White, G. *Jack Sheppard. A domestic Drama in three acts* [and in prose]. London: Duncombe's Edition [of the British Theatre]. Vol. 38, 1825[??] first performed at the Queen's Theatre on Oct 21, 1839.
- Anon. [Fortescue, Lincoln] *The History of Jack Sheppard: His Wonderful Exploits and Escapes. A Romance, Founded on Facts*. With original Illustrations from drawings by Jack Sketch. London: John Williams, 1839.
- Anon. *The Eventful Life and Unparalleled Exploits of the Notorious Jack Sheppard, the Housebreaker*. London: Thomas White, c. 1840. [BL has this one on microfilm, but couldn't find it on shelf when I was there the week of 7/2/08, so I haven't seen it]
- Fortescue, Lincoln. *The Life and Adventures of Jack Sheppard*. London: James Cochrane, 1845. [[2<sup>nd</sup> ed. with numerous emendations of the earlier *History of Jack Sheppard*...]
- Throttle, Obediah. *The Life and Adventures of Jack Sheppard*. London: F. Hextall, nd. (catalogue at BL has "c. 1840). [text same as anon. *Life and Adventures* publ. by Purkess]
- Anon. *The Life and Adventures of Jack Sheppard*. London: G. Purkess, Compton Street, Soho. N.d. [text virtually identical to Throttle's.]
- Anon. *Life of Jack Sheppard the Housebreaker*. London: Glover, Water Lane, Fleet Street, 1840. [Bleackley p. 132] [frank imitation of Ainsworth. In the Illustrated Library of Romance.]
- Buckstone, J.B. *Jack Sheppard*. [drama in 4 acts]. London: Chapman and Hall, 1840. [acted at the Adelphi in Oct. 1839 and at the Haymarket in Sept. 1852]

- Greenwood, Thomas. *Jack Sheppard, or, the Housebreaker of the Last Century*. A Romantic Drama in Five Acts. [dramatized from Harrison Ainsworth's novel... as performed by the Metropolitan Minor Theatres] London: John Cumberland & Son, 2, Cumberland Terrace, Camden New Town. Acted at Sadler Wells in Oct. 1839.
- Hooper, Edward (?). *Jack Sheppard: a drama in four acts*. Intended for representation at the Theatre Royal, Hull. Microfiche [New Canaan, CT]?. 1839.
- Moncrieff, William Taylor. *Jack Sheppard* [acted at the Victoria in Oct. 1839 and Sept. 1842]
- Almar, George. *Jack Ketch; or, A Leaf from Tyburn Tree: A Romantic Drama, in Three Acts*. [performed at Sadler's Wells Theatre, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1841.]. Plot based loosely on Jack Sheppard.
- Anon. "Der Neue Pitaval." Leipzig: Brockhaus. 1845. "John Sheppard" in Vol. 8, 30 pages. Contains German translation of "Dialogue Between Julius Caesar and Jack Sheppard." [Bleackley p. 130]
- Anon.? *Jack Sheppard*—acted at the Grecian Aug. 1855.
- Searle, William. *Jack Sheppard: a drama in three acts*. Microfiche [New Canaan, CT]. 1855.
- Brown, Isaac. *The Life and Death of Jack Sheppard* [3 acts]. Acted at Sadler Wells in April 1857.
- Wag, Charley. *Charley Wag, the new Jack Sheppard. a new and intensely exciting real-life romance*. London, N.p., 1861. re: Bleackley/Ellis: London: United Kingdom Press, 28, Brydges Street, Strand. 1860-1. Published in Penny Numbers with green covers. Also issued in Monthly Parts. The Advertisement observes: "In this work... will be found the most graphic and reliable pictures of hitherto unknown phases of the Dark Side of London Life... rendered in stern, truthful language by one who has studied, in all its blackest enormity, the doings of secret crime." [British Library; also listed in Bleackley p. 133]
- Anon. *Edgeworth Bess, or Shephard [sic] in Danger*, No. 2 of *The Blueskin Series* issued by Robert M. de Witt: New York, No. 13, Frankfort Street, 1867. Each number complete. 100 pages. Price 25 cents. The same publisher produced *The Black Bess Series*, *The Claude Duval Series*, *The Nightshade Series*, and *the Jonathan Wild Series*. [Bleackley p. 133]
- Viles, Edward[?]. *Blueskin, A Romance of the Last Century*. London: E. Harrison, Salisbury Square, Fleet Street. N.d. [1867-8? re: Bleackley]. [Bleackley p. 134].

Anon. *The "Stone Jug,"* In a Prologue and Three Acts. Compiled and arranged (by authority) from the acting versions of Harrison Ainsworth's "*Jack Sheppard*." First performed at the Adelphi Theatre, Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1873.

Stephens, Henry Pottinger. *Little Jack Shepherd: A three-act burlesque-operatic-melodrama*. London: W.S. Johnson "Nassau Steam Press," 1885.

Hatton, Joseph, *Jack Sheppard* [4 acts]. Acted at the Pavilion, April 1898.

Hatton, Joseph. *When Rogues Fall Out: A Romance of Old London*. London: C. Arthur Pearson, Limited, Henrietta Street, W.C. 1899. Maroon covers. [Bleackley p. 135]

### **19<sup>th</sup>-Century Chapbooks and Ballads:**

*The Life and Adventures of Jack Sheppard, the Notorious Housebreaker, with a Particular Account of his Extraordinary Prison Escapes*. Reprinted from an Authentic History compiled Shortly after his Execution at Tyburn. London: C. Strange, Paternoster Row... 8 pages. Price: 1 Penny. Part of a series called "The Universal Pamphleteer. N.d. (1820-30?, re: Bleackley/Ellis). [Bleackley p. 131]

*The Life and Exploits of Jack Sheppard, A Notorious Housebreaker and Footpad*. Derby: Thomas Richardson; London: Simpkin Marshall and Co.; Portsea: S. Horsey. Price: sixpence. 24 pages. Green paper covers. N.d. (1829-30, re: Bleackley/Ellis). [Bleackley p. 131]

*The Life of Jack Sheppard, a Notorious Housebreaker and Footpad*. London: Printed for T. and J. Allman, 55, Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1829. With a coloured plate. [Bleackley p. 131]

*The Life of Jack Sheppard, A Notorious Housebreaker and Footpad*... embellished with four coloured Engravings. London: J. Bysh, 8, Cloth Fair, West-Smithfield [n.d.; 1820? acc. to BL cat; 1830? Acc. to Bleackley/Ellis] [Content from the "Narrative."]

Anon. *The Lives and Adventures of Jack Shepherd, Dick Morris, William Nevison, and Sawney Beane; Notorious Thieves and Highwaymen*. Manchester: William Willis, 1839.

*The Life and Adventures of Jack Sheppard*. [woodcut] Manchester: J. Wrigley, Miller Street, n.d. (1840? re: Bleackley and Ellis). 8 pages. Green paper covers. [Bleackley p. 132]

*Jack Sheppard*. [ballad] printed by W. S. Fortey, Monmouth Ct., London [n.d.—1840s?]- from the Lauriston Castle Collection of Broad-sides and Ballads at the NLS. Shelfmark: L.C. 1269 (321)



*The Life and Surprising Exploits of Jack Sheppard.* Devonport: S. & J. Keys. 8 pages, blue paper cover, with picture. 5 other woodcuts. N.d. (1840? re: Bleackley/Ellis). [Bleackley p. 132]

*The Life and Surprising Exploits of that Notorious Housebreaker and Footpad Jack Sheppard,* containing his wonderful Escapes from Newgate and other Prisons. To which is added his own Account of Himself as he left it in Manuscript for Publication. London: J. Bailey, 116 Chancery Lane. Price: sixpence. With a coloured frontispiece. N.d [Bleackley p. 132]

*The Life of Jack Sheppard, a Notorious Housebreaker and Footpad,* etc. London: Printed and Published by J. Fairburn, 110 Minories. [n.d.] [Content from the “Narrative.”]

*The Life and Surprising Exploits of Jack Sheppard.* Otley: Printed and published by William Walker. N.d. [Bleackley p. 132] [identical to Fairburn ed.]

*Life and Singular Adventures of Jack Sheppard.* London: Printed for G. Bladon, at 3, Paternoster Row. Price: eighteenpence. N.d. [Bleackley p. 133]

*The Life of Jack Sheppard, the notorious House and Gaol Breaker.* Newcastle-on-Tyne: Bowman, Publisher, Nuns’ Lane. N.d. [price- 1 penny, 24 pages] [content mostly from the “History”; with supplements from the “Narrative” to describe the escape from the castle]. 1840-50, re: Bleackley and Ellis.

*The Life and Exploits of Jack Sheppard, the Highwayman.* Glasgow: William Inglis, Printer and Stationer, 5 Melville Place and 7 Brunswick Place. N.d. [content mostly from the “History”; with supplements from the “Narrative” to describe the escape from the castle]

*The Life and Exploits of Jack Sheppard, The Notorious Housebreaker and Footpad.* Sydney: Edmund Mason, George Street South. Price Sixpence. 22 pages. On the pink paper cover is “The Original Edition.” N.d. (1845? re: Bleackley/Ellis) [Bleackley p. 133]

*The Real Life and Times of Jack Sheppard,* London: Newsagents’ Publishing Company, 147 Fleet Street, [1866, acc. to BL cat.—title page torn, n.d.]

## **20<sup>th</sup> century:**

Treeton, Ernest. *A New Jack Sheppard.* London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited, Broadway House, Ludgate Hill, 1906. Price Sixpence, in paper covers with picture of men in a boat on the river near old London Bridge. Uses scenes and characters (like Thames Darrell) from Ainsworth. [Bleackley p. 135]

Marshall, A.C. *The Adventures of Jack Sheppard: A stirring Story of the Wonderful Escapades of the Most Amazing Boy in History*. London: George Newnes, Southampton Street, 1921. [Bleackley p. 135]

Marshall, A. C. *Jack Sheppard at Bay*. [sequel to above]. London: George Newnes, 1922.

Anon. *Jack Sheppard, the Notorious Highwayman*. Printed and Published by E. Lane, 21, South Street, Islington, N.1. 8 pages in pink covers with picture, and three other illustrations by D. Taylor. This brochure was sold outside the Elephant and Castle Theatre at the time "Jack Sheppard" was performed there during the early summer of 1928.

Hibbert, Christopher. *The Road to Tyburn: The Story of Jack Sheppard*. London: Longman, Green, and Co. Ltd. 1957.

*Where's Jack?* (film) 1969.

Campbell, Ken. *Jack Sheppard*. London: Macmillan Education Limited (dramascripts), 1976.

Priestley, Chris. *Jail-Breaker Jack: A True Story of Double-Dealing and Amazing Escapes*. London: Hodder Children's Books, 2001.