Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*: A Literary Pivot Point Between Maria Edgeworth and George Eliot

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The publication of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley, or 'tis sixty years since* in 1814 marked a revolutionary change in the production of literature and set in motion Scott's dominance as a writer of prose fiction. *Waverley's* influence on a generation of writers was in part a reaction to the voracious appetite Scott's historical novel awoke in the reading public. It is no exaggeration to say that all strata of society read Walter Scott, from the highborn gentleman to the common reader. Scott's *Waverley* can also be viewed as a literary pivot point between Maria Edgeworth and George Eliot. This article examines the literary progression identifiable between the three authors while illuminating the formative role of Edgeworth and Eliot's juvenilia. Although the regional tales Maria Edgeworth inaugurated in Ireland would influence Scott, it was Edgeworth's early experimentation with provincially accurate settings and recognisable character voices in her juvenilia drama, *The Double Disguise*, which can be viewed as the starting point of this influence. In turn, *Waverley* was to have its own influence on George Eliot's production of juvenilia, a short story titled *Edward Neville*, that signals Eliot's admiration of Scott and foreshadows the great historical novelist she would become.

While Walter Scott is arguably the first historical novelist in English, and regarded as a dominant force on the direction of the novel, there has been a temptation to resist the influential role played by his literary forerunners. In particular, the formative influence of key nineteenth-century women writers on Scott's development of the novel genre has tended to be downplayed, or even dismissed. In George Lukács' significant work, *The Historical Novel* (1962), a study that was highly influential in reinstating Scott's prominence as an important nineteenth-century novelist, the majority of female authors are side-lined as 'second- and third-rate writers'. Lukács

states, 'With Scott, in particular, it was the fashion to quote a long list of second- and third-rate writers (Radcliffe, etc.) who were supposed to be important literary forerunners of his.'[1] While relegating Radcliffe to the status of a second- or third-rate writer is curious, the complete absence of Maria Edgeworth's role in the development of the historical novel, and Scott's debt to the Anglo-Irish novelist, is inexplicable.

Lukács' omission is contrary to Walter Scott's own acknowledgment of Maria Edgeworth's literary precedence. This acknowledgement is contained in chapter seventy-two of *Waverley*. In the section titled a 'Postscript which should have been a Preface', Scott makes clear that it was his intention to produce Scottish characters for *Waverley* that emulated the 'Irish portraits drawn by Miss Edgeworth':

> The Lowland Scottish gentleman, and the subordinate characters, are not given as individual portraits, but are drawn from the general habits of the period (of which I have witnessed some remnants in my younger days), and partly gathered from tradition. It has been my object to describe these persons, not by a caricatured and exaggerated use of the national dialect, but by their habits, manners, and feelings; so as in some distant degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits drawn by Miss Edgeworth, so different from the 'Teagues' and 'dear joys' who so long, with the most perfect family resemblance to each other, occupied the drama and the novel.[2]

In order to emulate the specific characterisation employed by Edgeworth, Scott's commencement of *Waverley* in 1805 would have required him to consult *Castle Rackrent* and/or *Essay on Irish Bulls*. Both texts focus on regionally accurate portraits, including the employment of Hiberno-English, to aid in the realistic and recognisable settings Edgeworth was producing. Scott establishes a similar approach to characterisation in *Waverley* by employing realistic Scots vocabulary, spelling, and grammar. Scott recognised that accurate representations of characters led to enhanced observational realism and combated the 'caricatured and exaggerated use of the national dialect'. Yet, while Edgeworth provided a paratext in the form of a glossary in *Castle Rackrent* to aid in the readers' comprehension of dialect, Scott chose to include in-text English definitions immediately

[1] George Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (London: Merlin Press, 1962). p.30.
[2] Walter Scott, *Waverley* (London: Penguin, 1985). p.493.

following the use of regionally specific discourse.[3] Like Edgeworth, Scott realised that a large proportion of the English readership required an apparatus to decipher the regionally accurate vocabulary, spelling, and grammar specific to Scotland. Rather than ostracise a particular reader, Scott wished to produce a novel that would enhance an understanding of the inhabitants of his homeland. Once again, this is something that Scott recognised as a convention first attributed to Edgeworth:

> Without being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact which pervade the works of my accomplished friend, I felt that something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland.[4]

Scott recognised the literary achievements of Maria Edgeworth, particularly her ability to produce characters reflective of real life habits, manners, and feelings of the country that she called home. Although Edgeworth was born in England, she moved to Ireland in 1782 at the age of fourteen. Despite making various sojourns abroad, Edgeworth would live out her life in rural County Longford. Ireland was the country where Edgeworth would hone her writing craft as a teenager, and it was to be the locale in which she would inaugurate the regional novel in English. According to Walter Allen:

> Maria Edgeworth gave fiction a local habitation and a name. And she did more than this: she perceived the relation between the local habitation and the people who dwell in it. She invented in other words, the regional novel, in which the very nature of the novelist's characters is conditioned, receives its bias and expression, from the fact that they live in a countryside differentiated by a traditional way of life from other countrysides.[5]

Yet before she was praised as one of the most important literary figures of the nineteenth century, and well before Walter Scott praised her for advancing the genre of the novel, Edgeworth was experimenting with regional tales in her juvenilia. In 1786, when she was just eighteen years old,

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[3] See for example: 'hallan', 'henchman', 'Bladier', 'Bhaird', 'strath', and 'glen'.
[4] Scott, *Waverley*. p.523.
[5] Walter Ernest Allen, *The English Novel: A Short Critical History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958). p.103.

Edgeworth wrote her first surviving stage drama titled *The Double Disguise*—a foundational work that would influence her later narratives, including her most popular novel, *Castle Rackrent*.[6] *The Double Disguise* is a full-length drama produced exclusively for the entertainment of Edgeworth family and friends. It was first performed at the Edgeworthstown family home at Christmas in 1786, with a second private performance taking place in 1801. Although a complete, full-length, comedy-drama, the manuscript sat unpublished in the Bodleian library at Oxford until 2014.[7]

The Double Disguise is revolutionary in Edgeworth's writing because it signals her turn toward literary realism through a focus on her Anglo-Irish heritage, issues of gender, and representations of the middle and lower classes. It is also the work in which Edgeworth produces her first Irish sketch, equipping the character of Justice Cocoa (played by Maria's father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, in the family performances) with a Hiberno-English dialect, similar to that which would later be employed by Thady, the faithful retainer-cum-narrator of *Castle Rackrent*. Three years prior to her production of *The Double Disguise*, however, Edgeworth produced another stage comedy titled *Anticipation, or the Countess*. While Edgeworth was only fifteen years old at the time of writing the play, it signals her burgeoning interest in the socio-political concerns that would ultimately play out in the pages of *The Double Disguise* and *Castle Rackrent*. Writing to her school friend Fanny Robinson, Edgeworth expressed her dislike of the stock character treatment of the working classes she was encountering in French theatre:

> Moliere's [plays] entertained me much. The plots of all I have yet read of Marivaux I think too much alike & too uninteresting; indeed that is a fault I have met with in most French plays—the waiting women & valets are mere machinery to help the author through his plot and to bring their Masters and Mistresses in spite of fate together.[8]

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[6] For a detailed examination of *The Double Disguise's* influence on Edgeworth's later narratives see: Ryan Twomey, *'The Child Is Father of the Man': The Importance of Juvenilia in the Development of the Author* (Houten: Hes & De Graaf, 2012). pp.19–52.

[7] Maria Edgeworth, *The Double Disguise*, ed. Christine Alexander and Ryan Twomey (Sydney: Juvenilia Press, 2014).

[8] ME to Fanny Robinson, 15 Sept. 1783; quoted in Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972). p.150.

Anticipation, or the Countess was Edgeworth's response to the formulaic French theatre she was reading. Seeking Fanny's advice on the efficacy of the work, Edgeworth wrote: 'Are the gossips overdone? Or would they *take* on the stage?'[9] Fanny's reply was not favourable toward *Anticipation, or the Countess*; by December, Edgeworth had scrapped all but a single page of the manuscript, writing once more to Fanny to tell her that she 'had cured her of "the Mania of Playwriting at least for the Winter season"'.[10] Edgeworth was clearly disheartened by her earliest attempt at producing a drama that concerned itself with accurately representing the social milieu. Despite this setback, however, Edgeworth persisted with the themes inaugurated in *Anticipation, or the Countess*, leading to *The Double Disguise*.

The Double Disguise is Edgeworth's first attempt at portraying the common and ordinary individual going about their everyday business. The youthful Edgeworth constructed characters based on those she was personally familiar with, those from the lower and middle classes, along with a proportion from the servant class. This is no surprise given Edgeworth's introduction to Ireland in 1782. Richard Lovell employed the young Maria as his bookkeeper, a role that brought her into daily contact with the lower-class Irish inhabitants and Edgeworthtown tenants. It is also during this period that Edgeworth came into contact with the Edgeworthtown steward, John Langan—the real-life personality that would form the basis for Thady. Thirty-four years after the first edition of *Castle Rackrent*, Edgeworth wrote of Langan's influence:

> The only character drawn from the life in *Castle Rackrent* is 'Thady' himself, the teller of the story. He was an old steward (not very old, though, at that time; I added to his age, to allow him time for generations of the family). I heard him when first I came to Ireland, and his dialect struck me, and his character; and I became so acquainted with it, that I could speak it without effort; so that when, for mere amusement, without any idea of publishing, I began to write a family history as Thady would tell it, he seemed to stand beside me and dictate; and I wrote as fast as my pen could go.[11]

[9] ME to Fanny Robinson, 15 Sept. 1783, quoted in ibid. p.151.
[10] ME to Fanny Robinson, 6 Dec. 1783, quoted in ibid. p.151.
[11] ME to Mrs Stark, 6 September 1834; quoted in: Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*, ed. Ryan Twomey, Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 2014). p.86.

Both Maria and her father had an exceptional ability to mimic the subtleties and oddities of Langan's Hiberno-English dialect and would often employ it in order to simply entertain family members.[12] Fourteen years before Thady and *Castle Rackrent* was produced, however, Edgeworth was experimenting with the employment of folk phrases, such as, 'Don't skin a flint for three pence and spoil a four penny knife in doing it',[13] and idiomatic Irish phrases like 'faith & troth',[14] to generate a distinctive dialect in her youthful drama. *The Double Disguise's* production of entertaining yet accurate Irish characterisations, a hallmark of Edgeworth's regionalism, was also coupled with realistic and identifiable locations. *The Double Disguise* is set in a common inn providing simple accommodation with much of the plot revolving around the day-to-day running of the lodgings and associated bar. Edgeworth's detailed knowledge of food preparation, travel, and housekeeping, all further the realistic aspects of her juvenilia drama. The employment of a realistic setting had yet to be attempted by Edgeworth and it signals her turn toward the regionally accurate narratives she would later be credited with pioneering. Butler suggests that one reason for this sudden turn toward realism was that 'the broad temper of the times was moving writers towards a more frank and detailed realism, and the Edgeworth family's appetite for fact was in itself merely a symptom of this'.[15]

In order to present readers with 'frank and detailed realism', *The Double Disguise* couples a realistic setting with identifiable and individual character voices beyond the employment of regional vernacular. The servants of *The Double Disguise*, Betty Broom, a housemaid, and the Landlady, the owner of the inn, speak in a lower-class dialect in contrast to those guests of the inn who were of the higher social class, such as Westbrook and Dolly,[16] who speak in more formal verbal patterns. For example, Dolly is often formal in addressing other characters, either as 'Dear Sir' or with the prefix of 'pray'. Dolly labours what she sees as correct manners whenever she has the chance to speak: 'Lord Papa, you read it with

[12] Edgeworth would often include snippets of Langan's use of Hiberno-English when writing letters, highlighting her remarkable aptitude for recalling his dialect. See: Augustas J.C. Hare, *Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth*, II vols., vol. I (1894). p.245, p.306.
[13] Edgeworth, *The Double Disguise*. p.39.
[14] Ibid. p.8.
[15] Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*. p.153.
[16] Although Dolly is middle class she wishes to rise in social standing by any means, including by marrying for money, or winning a fortune in the newly established Irish lottery.

such a provincial accent it quite destroys the effect of the sentiment, the manner is more than half; indeed it is all as the elegant Chesterfield teaches.'[17] While Betty Broom speaks in a lower-class dialect, delivering lines such as: 'Lackadaisy, I beg your pardon—but my heart misgave me. I was in such a fright—I was so flustered. I was well nigh in a swound—but no offence I hopes'[18], along with, 'the'en Ma'am there's poultry & pigeons ready to kill & the collar'd pig's head Ma'am for brawn'ent & quite eat.'[19]

This specific voicing leads to character portrayals reflective of the social strata, and not just those who are caricatured or formulaic. As mentioned, *The Double Disguise* is also the first of Edgeworth's narratives to employ the distinctive Hiberno-English dialect, a feature of *Castle Rackrent* that was to prove innovative in establishing the use of regional dialect in novels and would be praised by Scott. The use of Hiberno-English and speech patterns reflective of social hierarchy emphasises the unique dramatic life of Edgeworth's characters. Edgeworth had a remarkable ability to capture the nuances of real-life individuals, both in terms of the modes of speech and their mannerisms. In particular, Edgeworth and her father rejected the stereotypical representation of the blundering Irish in *Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802), the '"Teagues" and "dear joys"', that Scott also wished to avoid in his Scottish novels. According to Richard Humphrey in his study on *Waverley*:

> [The] interplay of Scots and English does allow Scott to portray a further reality of his changing and divided country, where the Lowlands gentry and clergy such as Melville and Morton speak English, but the lower classes such as Mrs Flockhart broad Scots, where in a family such as the Bradwardines the father speaks a medley, but the daughter only English, and where a highlander such as Evan Dhu can modulate from English into Scots into Highland Scots and then into Gaelic.[20]

The appetite for detailed realism that led Edgeworth to produce *The Double Disguise* was the same appetite that led her to produce *Castle Rackrent*. Edgeworth's focus on the lower classes and servant characters in her juvenilia foreshadows the later social and political concerns that would play

[17] Edgeworth, *The Double Disguise*, p.45.
[18] Ibid. p.22.
[19] Ibid. p.5.
[20] Richard Humphrey, *Scott: Waverley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). p.105.

out on the pages of her adult works. It seems self-evident to a modern day reader that an author would choose literary representations of their home region, and those who reside there, as a way of bringing the social and political concerns of the period to the fore. Yet, for Edgeworth's literary contemporaries, the representation of locale was often confined to London or Bath as a generalised, rather than specific, setting. Walter Scott recognised the narrative shift toward realism and an identifiable location that Edgeworth was making—a shift inaugurated in her juvenilia—and he wished to emulate it in *Waverley*.

Scott's focus on a specific region and characterisation was recognised by Frances Jeffrey, who stated in his November 1814 *Edinburgh Review* of *Waverley*:

> The object of the work before us [*Waverley*], was evidently to present a faithful and animated picture of the manners and state of society that prevailed in this northern part of the island, in the earlier part of last century; and the author has judiciously fixed upon the era of the Rebellion in 1745, not only as enriching his pages with the interest inseparably attached to the narration of such occurrences, but as affording a fair opportunity for bringing out all the contrasted principles and habits which distinguished the different classes of persons who then divided the country, and formed among them the basis of almost all that was peculiar in the national character.[21]

Francis Jeffery's early review of *Waverley* echoes Scott's own praise of Maria Edgeworth. In particular, Jeffery's praise of Scott's representations of the varied strata of society was an innovation Scott gleaned from the pages of Edgeworth. Yet, while Edgeworth's juvenilia was crucial to the establishment of the regional novel in English, Scott's continuation of Edgeworth's literary innovations in *Waverley* were to prove influential on the development of the historical novel. All over Europe authors were turning to historical fiction to enrich their national literature. Authors such as Wilhelm Hauff (Germany), Mikail Zagoskin (Russia), and Tommaso Grossi (Italy), all produced historical novels indebted to Walter Scott. Outside of Europe, Scott's influence reached as far as the Canadian-born author John Richardson, while on the back of *Waverley*, James Feinmore

[21] Frances Jeffrey, '[Review Of:] Waverley, or 'Tis Sixty Years Since. In Three Volumes.,' *The Edinburgh Review*, no. 24 (November 1814), p.209.

Cooper's novel *The Spy: a Tale of the Neutral Ground* (1821) launched the historical novel in America.

While Scott's influence is identifiable in the work of a multitude of writers who followed in his wake,[22] one writer in particular, George Eliot, established her literary career due to Walter Scott. As Eliot's biographer Gordon Haight stated, it was Sir Walter Scott who 'first introduced her to the writing of fiction'.[23] Like Edgeworth before her, Eliot's literary career commenced with the production of her first work of juvenilia. In 1827, when Eliot was just eight years of age, Eliot's neighbour lent the family a copy of Scott's *Waverley.* This was a transformative moment; Eliot's youthful reading of Scott's work was to prove central to the writer she would become. Eliot was immediately drawn to *Waverley*, and to Scott, who she later wrote of in *Middlemarch* (1871) as 'the beloved writer, who has made a chief part of the happiness of many young lives'.[24] For the young Eliot, then known as Mary Ann Evans, to be a novelist meant being a historical novelist.

The happiness Scott evoked in Eliot found an outlet in her earliest attempt at juvenilia—a work imitating *Waverley* that is no longer extant. As we will see, Eliot's first attempt at fiction focused on the leader of a Scottish Jacobite clan, the 'loyal Evan Dhu', and an aging Cavalier, the 'quaint, Bardwardine'. The Jacobite stories and the tales of the 45' heavily influenced Scott, and this influence was clearly not lost on the youthful Eliot. In *Vertical Context in Middlemarch: George Eliot's Civil War of the Soul,* Joseph Nicholes argues that the 'central Civil War motif in *Middlemarch* is in part a product of Eliot's lifelong veneration of Walter Scott.'[25] While imitation can be labelled as simple copying, or worse, plagiarism, this does little to explain the importance of the process in the production of juvenilia. As Christine Alexander has argued in the *Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*:

> Imitation is a major characteristic of youthful writing, and it is a feature that is often misunderstood. We are inclined to think of imitation as bad. This is because one of the meanings of 'imitate' is to copy, to reproduce. Mere copying of course has a stultifying

[22] For a further examination see: Humphrey, *Scott: Waverley*. pp. 99–105.
[23] Gordon Sherman Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography* (London: Clarendon Press, 1968), p 7.
[24] George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Second ed., Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 2000), p.353.
[25] Joseph Nicholes, 'Vertical Context in Middlemarch: George Eliot's Civil War of the Soul,' *Nineteenth-Century Literature* Vol. 45, no. No. 2 (Sep., 1990), p.145.

> effect on the creative process, and can also involve issues of dishonesty and plagiarism. To imitate is to follow the example of, to try to do something in the manner of someone else. It involves reworking, writing in the style of someone else, and until we develop our own style this is exactly what we do, what every writer does. We learn by imitation.[26]

A large part of what makes juvenilia so important and interesting is the wealth of information that can be gathered about the author and the works they imitated, about the composition process, and, perhaps more importantly, the direction of this process as the writer progresses from youthful pursuits into adult endeavours. Reflected in Eliot's juvenilia is the role that Scott's first historical novel played in the development of her authorship. It was an incomplete first reading of *Waverley* that was to ignite Eliot's interest in Scott's narratives and the historical novel genre. Eliot's neighbours had lent the family a copy of *Waverley* only to request its return before the eight-year-old Mary Ann could finish reading it. In distress, she set about recreating the tale and provided a conclusion as she presumed it would have occurred. In the now famous epigraph to Chapter 57 of *Middlemarch,* Eliot recounts:

> They numbered scarce eight summers when a name
> Rose on their souls and stirred such motions there
> As thrill the buds and shape their hidden frame
> At penetration of the quickening air:
> His name who told of loyal Evan Dhu,
> Of quaint Bradwardine, and Vich Ian Vor,
> Making the little world their childhood knew
> Large with a land of mountain, lake, and scaur,
> And larger yet with wonder, love, belief,
> Toward Walter Scott, who living far away
> Sent them this wealth of joy and noble grief.
> The book and they must part, but day by day,
> In lines that thwart like portly spiders ran,
> They wrote the tale, from Tully Veolan.[27]

[26] Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster, *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.77.
[27] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p.353.

Although the notebook in which the 'lines that thwart like portly spiders ran' no longer exists, the fact that Eliot chose to immortalise her youthful attempt at historical fiction in *Middlemarch* speaks to the importance of Scott's early influence on her as a writer. As mentioned, the Civil War setting was to prove highly influential in Eliot's construction of narratives. It is no surprise, seeing that it was a 'popular… preoccupation on the part of [Victorian] historians, novelists and artists', which had sprung after the Napoleonic Wars, 'from a new impulse, the romanticism of Sir Walter Scott'.[28] For Eliot, the impulse to write about the Civil War was a desire to imitate Scott. The Civil War motif also occurs in Eliot's earliest surviving attempt at historical fiction, *Edward Neville*, written when she was just fourteen. The youthful Eliot had begun calling herself Marianne, creating a *nom de plume* for her works of juvenilia. As Juliet McMaster stated in the Juvenilia Press edition of *Edward Neville*, the 'teenage Marianne, like the eight-year-old Mary Ann, takes to writing as an exercise in recreating Scott. For her, being a writer still means being Scott'.[29]

Setting her juvenilia narrative *Edward Neville* in the autumn of 1650, Eliot was placing her historical fragment towards the end of the English Civil War (1642–1651). The setting is the 'small but picturesque town of Chepstow', with narrative focus on the castle that is within Chepstow's boundaries. Eliot's principal resource whilst constructing *Edward Neville* was William Coxe's *An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire* (1801).[30] Coxe's work provides information on the topography that Eliot used in the opening section of *Edward Neville,* reflecting her early interest in the importance of factual research when producing fictional narratives. *Edward Neville* provided a platform from which Eliot launched her historical fiction, and the narratological methods formed in Eliot's juvenilia culminated in classic works such as *Middlemarch*.[31] It was in *Edward Neville* that Eliot honed her ability to produce picturesque scenes supported by precise geographical locations and physical descriptions. For example, Reading Coxe's *An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire*, Eliot was presented with the passage:

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[28] Roy C. Strong, *And When Did You Last See Your Father?: The Victorian Painter and British History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p.137.
[29] George Eliot, *Edward Neville*, ed. Juliet McMaster (Edmonton: Juvenilia Press, 1995), p.xiv.
[30] William Coxe, *An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire*, 2 vols. (London: Cadell, 1801).
[31] See: Twomey, *'The Child Is Father of the Man': The Importance of Juvenilia in the Development of the Author*, pp.89–108.

> on my arrival at Chepstow I walked to the bridge; it was low water, and I looked down on the river ebbing between forty and fifty feet beneath; six hours after it rose near forty feet, almost reached the floor of the bridge, and flowed upwards with great rapidity.[32]

Eliot recreated this scene for *Edward Neville*, borrowing the imagery of the tidal river and introducing the castle that was to be the site of the narrative's drama:

> It was indeed a scene of beauty; the tide was at its highest spring. Before him on its opposite bank rose the majestic walls of the castle, then in its prime (tho' now still more beautiful in its ruins), and founded upon the solid rocks.[33]

Eliot's recreation of Coxe's passage indicates that it wasn't just topographical and historical accuracy aided by the use of secondary sources that Eliot gleaned from Scott. Scott's narratives were popular thanks to their coupling of historical accuracy and correct period detail with an entertaining and engaging narrative. This particular approach to the construction of historical fiction had an impact not only on the novel, but also on the academic discipline of history. As Brian Hamnett has argued, 'Scott's introduction of believable history as a theme between 1814 and 1819 significantly contributed to the transformation of both history and the novel.'[34] This was due to historians realising that Scott's narratives were both informative *and* entertaining. Scott produced novels that kept his readers reading—something that the historians of the day were envious of.[35] When Eliot set about emulating Scott's narratives in her juvenilia she was aware of the importance of historical sources, yet as equally aware of producing engaging narratives with riveting plots.

One way Eliot achieved this in *Edward Neville* was to borrow another of Scott's practices, that of 'recasting the classic Romeo and Juliet

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[32] Coxe, *An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire*, p.358.
[33] Eliot, *Edward Neville*, p.3.
[34] Brian Hamnett, 'Fictitious Histories: The Dilemma of Fact and Imagination in the Nineteenth-Century Historical Novel,' *European History Quarterly* Vol. 36, no. 31 (2006). 32.
[35] See: Michael Bentley, *Modern Historiography: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p.26.

problem'.[36] Neville was a Roundhead officer in love with the daughter of a passionate Royalist, placing two lovers on opposite sides of a political conflict. This dynamic is seen in Scott's *Old Mortality* (1816) and *Peveril of the Peak* (1822). In *Old Mortality* we witness Henry Morton, the son of a Covenanter, fall in love with Edith Bellenden, a member of a Royalist family. While in *Peveril of the Peak*, Julian Peveril, a Cavalier, is in love with Alice Bridgenorth, a Roundhead's daughter.

The primary research Eliot conducted for her juvenilia is dwarfed by the research she undertook for her adult narratives. Eliot's adherence to historical accuracy in *Middlemarch* led Henry James to ask, 'if we write novels so, how shall we write history?'[37] Eliot wished to avoid the conventional historical plots that lacked substance, not unlike Edgeworth wishing to avoid the stereotypical reproductions of the lower classes in French drama. Eliot wrote:

> I want something different from the abstract treatment which belongs to grave history from a doctrinal point of view, and something different from the schemed picturesqueness of ordinary historical fiction. I want brief, severely conscientious reproductions, in their concrete incidents, of pregnant movements in the past.[38]

Eliot's ability, and willingness, to conduct historical research was combined with a realistic and recognisable setting, something that the youthful author first witnessed in Scott's *Waverley* when she was just eight-years of age. Scott's novels marked a shift from the 'masquerades and mummeries of Walpole, Monk Lewis or Mrs Radcliffe' to focus on a definite historical period and 'keen observation of correct period detail.'[39]

An accurate representation of historical periods, regional settings, and characterisations, was somethint that Scott recognised in the work of his friend and literary counterpart, Maria Edgeworth. Her early motivation to

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[36] Nicholes, 'Vertical Context in Middlemarch: George Eliot's Civil War of the Soul,' p.146.
[37] Henry James, in David Carroll, *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1971), p.359.
[38] George Eliot, *Essays of George Eliot*, ed. Thomas Pinney (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp.446–47.
[39] Strong, *And When Did You Last See Your Father?: The Victorian Painter and British History*, p.30.

provide a regionally accurate setting for the recognisable voice of her characters was established in her juvenilia *The Double Disguise*. In turn, Edgeworth's writing was to prove influential on the development of Walter Scott's first historical novel, *Waverley*, which was to have its own influence on Eliot's production of juvenilia, and by proxy, her later authorship. It is not suggested that Edgeworth's juvenilia directly inspired Scott's work—or that without *Castle Rackrent* Scott wouldn't have written *Waverley*. It is argued, however, that an identifiable history of influence can be traced from Edgeworth, to Scott, to Eliot, with youthful writing playing a seminal role in the literary development of the three authors.

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