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# Gladstone and Scott: family, identity and nation[1]

**Ruth Clayton Windscheffel, St. Hilda's College, Oxford**

That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
What power shall be the sinner's stay?
How shall he meet that dreadful day?
When, shrivelling like a parched scroll,
The flaming heavens together roll;
When louder yet, and yet more dread,
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead;
Oh! on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgement wakes from clay,
Be THOU the trembling sinner's stay,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away![2]

## Introduction

With these foreboding lines, Sir Walter Scott's 'Last Minstrel' concludes his final performance before the emasculated household of Buccleuch. In 1868 William Ewart Gladstone declared that he knew of 'nothing so sublime in any portion of the sacred poetry of modern times' than this (apparently straightforward) rendering of the *Dies Irae.* So convinced was Gladstone of the poem's quality that he wrote in May 1883 to the Revd Orby Shipley to defend the verse against the latter's charge of derivation. 'My contention is', Gladstone argued, 'that the *Dies Irae* supplied Scott with a suggestion, not an original;

[1] My thanks go to the convenors and audiences of the History of Ideas Seminar, Stirling University; the Glasgow-Strathclyde [Universities] Scottish Studies Seminar; the British History and Politics of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries Seminar, Oxford; Ewen Cameron, Graham Clayton, Colin Kidd, Alex Windscheffel, and my anonymous *SHR* reader, for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article.

[2] Sir Walter Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), canto six, verse 31. J. Logie Robertson, (ed.), *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott* (Oxford, 1913), 47.

and that, setting out from that suggestion, he composed what is not only an original but very decidedly the grandest piece of sacred poetry in the English language'.[3]

Gladstone's affirmation of Scott's appropriation of this ancient text, both to secure his reputation and to impart sacred truth to a new generation, is suggestive of the statesman's own relationship with Sir Walter Scott: the most profound and long-lasting British literary influence on his life, thought and politics. Scott's poems and novels were amongst the earliest texts Gladstone read; he read no works (in English), except the Bible, so consistently or completely over such a length of time. They offered Gladstone a plethora of inspirations, ideas and language, which he imbibed, appropriated into his public and private personae and which he poured back upon his various audiences 'in a flood'.[4] The novels in particular reappeared with phenomenal regularity throughout his reading life and Scott himself, although he died in 1832,[5] remained a constant point of reference and an ever-present influence. Much of this influence was directly related to Gladstone's engagement with his Scottish heritage, his developing sense of identity and nationality. In his later years it also affected his conceptualisation of the status and future of the Scottish political nation.

Gladstone was (and is) not unique amongst politicians for publicly avowing a love of Scott. When the *Review of Reviews* asked the 1906 intake of Labour MPs to name the writers and books most influential over them, a high proportion named Sir Walter Scott, and Ramsay MacDonald claimed that the Waverley novels 'opened out the great world of national life for me and led me on to politics'.[6] More recently Tony Blair has, on numerous occasions,

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[3] London, British Library [BL], W. E. Gladstone MSS, Add. MS 44546 fo. 114.

[4] W. E. Gladstone, *Studies on Homer and the Homeric age*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1858), iii, 107.

[5] Gladstone never met Scott. The nearest he came was in Rome in 1832. He wrote, with obvious disappointment, 'Sir W. Scott arrived – but we could not find him out'. M. R. D. Foot and H. C. G. Matthew, (eds), *The Gladstone Diaries: With Prime Ministerial Correspondence*, 14 vols (Oxford, 1968-96), 19 April, 1832. Afterwards *Diaries* with date. Morley recalled that Gladstone 'constantly regretted that he had never met or known Sir Walter Scott, as of course he might have done'. John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, New edn, 2 vols (London, 1905), ii, 731.

[6] Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven and London, 2001), 40-1.

named *Ivanhoe* as his favourite novel. These latest declarations, tossed into a sceptical public domain in which Scott's name is known but in which his work is little read, have been interpreted as attempts to construct an appropriate image rather than as a straightforward acknowledgement of formative influence. This is not a charge that could have been levelled at Gladstone, partly because his audience was one to which the words as well as the name of Scott were familiar but also because of the amount of evidence which survives of his sustained engagement with the writer.

The aim of the following examination is threefold. Firstly, it seeks to elucidate how Gladstone's consumption of this seminal literature influenced the formation of his private identity, both individual and familial. Secondly, it aims to explain how Gladstone's readings of Scott fitted into the specific and serious character of his other reading and knowledge-gathering, and thirdly, how the details of Gladstone's response to Scott related to the broader intellectual and cultural context of his public life. In essence, what was Gladstone's Scottian frame of reference and how was it constructed and used?

## Reconstructing the Scottian frame of reference

### Gladstone's reading of Scott: an overview

In his diary Gladstone listed reading almost fifty different titles by or about Scott, many several times. These included edited works, letters, journals, biography and memoirs, short stories, melodrama, history, poetry and novels. Of the Waverley Novels (including their constituent stories),[7] Gladstone recorded reading twenty six in seventy-two different readings over his life; only *Redgauntlet* (1824) and *Count Robert of Paris* (1832) received no

[7] There are twenty-two Waverley novels but *Tales of My Landlord* (1816) comprises *The Black Dwarf* and *Old Mortality*; *Tales of My Landlord*, Third Series (1819) contains *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *A Legend of Montrose*; *Tales of the Crusaders* (1825) is made up of *The Betrothed* and *The Talisman*; *Chronicles of the Canongate* (1827) features *Two Drovers, The Highland Widow* and *The Surgeon's Daughter* and the fourth series of *Tales of My Landlord* (1832) consists of *Count Robert of Paris* and *Castle Dangerous* – making twenty-eight novels and stories in all.

specific mention. Those most frequently read were *The Bride of Lammermoor* (six times), *The Antiquary* and *Waverley* (five times each).

Gladstone often read several of Scott's novels in a concentrated period and interchanged them. He also combined reading Scott's novels with the record of the author's own life. The way in which Gladstone read Scott gives the strong impression that he conceptualised a seamless Scottian world. He practised the same interchangeable pattern of reading with the works of two of the greatest intellectual influences upon him: Aristotle and St. Augustine. By adopting the same technique with Scott, he was according the author extremely high status.

So fundamental was Scott to Gladstone's reading experience that, even in his almost blind old age, he remained determined to read him. His claim, made in September 1894, to have attempted 'little heavy reading' is belied by his following admission to having read 'A good deal of Walter Scott (7 novels in all)'.[8] When he was completely unable to read, he asked others (principally his daughter Helen) to read Scott for him.[9]

Gladstone read Scott under a variety of circumstances and it was more than a simple treat or recreation. Scott's works were comforters and stress relievers. For example, when at Trentham for the Dowager Duchess of Sutherland's funeral in 1868, Gladstone occupied himself by reading Scott's translation of Goethe's *Goetz of Berlichingen* (1799).[10] And at times when he was ill himself, Gladstone turned to Scott for comfort and amusement. For example, in 1873 when 'my upper jaw…sent me to bed early', he wrote with grim humour, 'I took to reading "Old Mortality"'.[11]

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[8] *Diaries*, 1 September, 1894.
[9] Cf. for example *Diaries*, 5 October, 1892 and 18 April, 1894.
[10] *Diaries*, 3 November, 1868.
[11] *Diaries,* 13 January, 1873. Cf. also *Diaries,* 15 November, 1827. For Scott as insomnia cure, cf. *Diaries,* 3 January, 1883.

Gladstone's reading of Scott was particularly important in his domestic life. During the last illness of his sister Anne, Gladstone was 'solaced' during an afternoon in Oxford 'with a little copy of Legend of Montrose' and several days before his mother's death in 1835 occupied his mind with *Paul's Letter to his Kinsfolk* (1816).[12] In 1847, during a dark time in his relationship with his sister Helen Jane (1814-1880), Gladstone 'spent much of the later part of the day with H[elen]. She was in a sad state. However I read Marmion Intr[oduction]. & Canto I to her: on these she was generally rational. It is in a manner pleasing to be again discharging offices of brotherhood about her even as she is'.[13] Scott also featured in Gladstone's relationship with his wife. In the weeks prior to their wedding in 1839 Gladstone recorded 'read…Kenilworth, aloud with dearest'. On their wedding night (and succeeding day) he 'read Marmion to her' and during their honeymoon 'read Lady of the Lake (aloud)'.[14] The following year Gladstone recorded reading both *Rokeby* and *Lord of the Isles* to Catherine.[15]

There is evidence to suggest that Gladstone confined his reading of Scott principally to the home. For example he began *Peveril of the Peak* (1822) on 1 October, 1860 whilst at Hawarden, left it behind whilst on a short visit to London (where he read Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*), resuming *Peveril* on his return.[16] Similarly he left *St. Ronan's Well* behind in Hawarden when returning to London on election business in 1857.[17] Several months later he repeated the same procedure with *The Heart of Midlothian*, reading almost every day, only breaking off when away from Hawarden.[18]

Nonetheless, Gladstone's reading of Scott did occasionally stray into a category of forbidden reading: that which he undertook with prostitutes who he was seeking to reform.

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[12] *Diaries,* 20 February, 1829, 18 September, 1835.
[13] *Diaries,* 5 October, 1847.
[14] *Diaries,* 18, 25, 26, and 31 July, 1839.
[15] *Diaries,* 17 and 27 June, 1840 ff.
[16] *Diaries,* 1-27 October, 1860.
[17] *Diaries,* 9 April, 1857.
[18] *Diaries,* 9-30 October, 1857.

He both read Scott to prostitutes,[19] and alone, after engaging in rescue work.[20] In the light of this it is perhaps not difficult to make sense of Gladstone's placement of a firm 'v'[21] by Rob Roy's observation that 'ye ken weel aneugh that women and gear are at the bottom of a' the mischief in the warld' in his copy of the novel.[22]

But Scott remained principally to be enjoyed within the official domestic environment in the company of family. This is unsurprising as Gladstone's Scottian reading was one of the most fundamental ways in which he received, analysed and expressed his national and familial identity.

**Scott, Scottishness and the formation of identity**

Considering the prominence of Scotland, both in Gladstone's personal and political life, it is remarkable that more has not been written exploring Gladstone's Scottishness. There is certainly little compared with the quantity of comment on his attitude towards Ireland (to which he only made two brief visits in 1877 and 1880) or even his possession of a 'European sense'.[23] As Christopher Harvie has pointed out, Gladstone's Scottish identity 'has, in the biographies, a curious, flickering quality'.[24] Sydney Checkland, when comparing the backgrounds of Disraeli and Gladstone, did briefly note that both had 'received the heritage of his peculiar people in such a way that though overlaid and amended it was never effaced'.[25] In fact it is questionable whether Gladstone, his family or contemporaries consistently sought to overlay, amend or efface Gladstone's Scottishness.

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19 On 8 April, 1859 he 'Saw Stapylton – Mrs Jarvis' (both rescue cases), 'Read L[ady] of Lake aloud' to them and placed a chastising 'X' by the date. In 1875 he repeated the exercise, this time to 'Stewart & another'. *Diaries*, 9 November, 1875.

20 For example, *Diaries,* 22 January, 1884.

21 Gladstone's tick mark. Gladstone used a consistent, symbolic system of annotation throughout his life to which his own key survives. See Ruth Clayton, 'W. E. Gladstone: an annotation key', *Notes & Queries* 246 (June 2001), 140-3.

22 Sir Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*, 3rd edn, 2 vols, Novels and Tales of the Author of Waverley, 25 vols (Edinburgh and London, 1821-4), [NTAW], vi, 395.

23 Cf. K. A. P. Sandiford, 'Gladstone and Europe', in B. L. Kinzer (ed.), *The Gladstonian Turn of Mind: Essays Presented to J. B. Conacher* (Toronto, 1985), 177-196.

24 Christopher Harvie, 'Gladstonianism, the provinces and popular political culture, 1860-1906', in R. Bellamy (ed.), *Victorian Liberalism: Nineteenth-Century Political Thought and Practice* (London, 1990), 164.

25 S. G. Checkland, *The Gladstones: A Family Biography 1764-1851* (Cambridge, 1971), 3.

*A Scottish family*

Gladstone was brought up within a family strongly conscious of its national identity. There were clear attempts to integrate the Gladstones' family history directly into the frames of reference employed by Walter Scott, as well as to construct Gladstonian biography according to Scottian models. Note the following description of the family by Gladstone's daughter, Mary Drew:

> Mr. Gladstone sprang from an old Scotch family, originally a race of Borderers (there is still an old Gledstanes Castle). One of his ancestors, Herbert de Gledstanes, appears in Sir Walter Scott as 'gude at need.' His mother was descended from Robert the Bruce. It was surely a sad lack of imagination that allowed his father and grandfather to anglicise the fine name of Gledstanes into Gladstone.[26]

Such characterisation reflected a long-standing Scottish passion for genealogy,[27] and interpretation of history in family terms. Mary firmly anchored the family's identity to that 'retrospective invention' of 'a distinct Highland culture and tradition', which, although not created by, was certainly, as Murray Pittock has phrased it, 'restored to prominence' by Scott.[28] But she also emphasised a persistent duality in the family's Scottish identity, as both Lowlanders and Highlanders, which, as we shall see, was also important.

Gladstonian identity was predominantly patriarchal. There is no doubt John Gladstone remained fiercely loyal to his Scottish heritage; Checkland describes him as 'a Highland chief' who 'regarded himself as the head of his clan (including his wife's kinsfolk)'.[29] John

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[26] Mary Drew, *Catherine Gladstone* (London, 1919), 25.
[27] Cf. David Allan, "What's in a name?': pedigree and propaganda in seventeenth-century Scotland', in E. J. Cowan and R. J. Finlay (eds.), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past* (Edinburgh, 2002), 147-167.
[28] Murray G. H. Pittock, 'The Jacobite cult', in E. J. Cowan and R. J. Finlay (eds.), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past* (Edinburgh, 2002), 194.
[29] Checkland, *The Gladstones*, xii.

maintained links with Scotland whilst in Liverpool.[30] But it was his desire to re-establish himself and his family there, an aspiration which was satisfied by his purchase of Fasque House in 1833. This grand residence, which possessed estates second only in extent to Balmoral, occupied space on the borderlands between Highland and Lowland Scotland. It was the ultimate expression of the family's genteel and dual Scottish identity.

William's sense of a Scottish home and a Scottish identity was significantly bound up with his feelings for Fasque, which he represented as a bucolic paradise,[31] a wild romantic retreat, a sacred space and a place for study. And he consciously accompanied the rich experience of Scottish family life he knew there with reading Scott. In a striking way this paralleled Scott's rendering of his protagonists' experiences. They are often sympathetic outsiders visiting a land with which they feel or develop an affinity, or exiles seeking knowledge of their lost national or familial history and identity.[32] Gladstone was little involved in the choice and purchase of Fasque, being at Oxford,[33] and his first visit did not take place until August 1833, when he was an MP living in London.[34] But he was '*much* pleased' with the house and its environs when he did encounter them,[35] and set about learning as much as he could about his new home.

In August 1837 Gladstone recorded travelling '7-5 (by Defiance) to Fasque' and interrogating "'The Captain" [who] drove us from Perth' for 'he has much inf[ormatio]n on men & things of these parts.[36] On his wedding tour in 1839, Gladstone delighted in showing his new wife, as well as Mary and George Lyttelton, the glories of Fasque and the

30 C. R. Fay, *Huskisson and his Age* (London, 1951), 369.
31 For example, *Diaries,* 11 August, 1836: 'Found all well – hay making, cherries & gooseberries ripening'.
32 Judith Wilt, *Secret Leaves: The Novels of Walter Scott* (Chicago and London, 1985), 16-17.
33 *Diaries,* 22-24 December, 1831.
34 *Diaries,* 20 August, 1833.
35 *Diaries,* 21 August, 1833.
36 *Diaries,* 14 August, 1837.

Scottish Highlands,[37] giving free rein to his feelings about his Scottish home and displaying the strength of his romantic characterisation of it.

> We were delighted & all my companions who are new to this country were in ecstasy…The spectacle from the rocks is indeed magnificent: they beetle over the black sleeping lake in everlasting horror…They do not reach round it: but form more than half a cradle: they are of very great height & extreme wildness. In 1836, I looked from their brow into mist which was almost more peaceful than the reality of the yawning chasm…The Garrawalt deserves its name: its channel is generally naked rock. The views from it are glorious.[38]

Gladstone, although not entirely successfully, was trying here to emulate Scott's treatment of the sublime. At the end of the tour, he continued to wax lyrical about the scenery and wildlife as well as noting 'the absence of the herd of tourists…which above all renders this a delightful trip';[39] a passage very reminiscent of Scott's description of the Highlands in *A Legend of Montrose*, which Gladstone marked with a 'v'.

> He therefore plodded patiently on through a waste and savage wilderness, treading paths which were only known to the shepherds and cattle-drivers, and passing with much more of discomfort than satisfaction many of those sublime combinations of mountainous scenery which now draw visitors from every corner of England to feast their eyes upon Highland grandeur.[40]

Gladstone's feelings about Fasque, Scott's works and the Scotland they embodied were acutely personalised. This in itself was distinctly Scottian. Scott's narratives relayed both

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[37] *Diaries,* 20 August, 1839.
[38] *Diaries,* 3 September, 1839.
[39] *Diaries,* 6 September, 1839.
[40] Sir Walter Scott, *A Legend of Montrose*, 3rd edn, 2 vols, NTAW, xii, 294.

present and past through the specific, personal experiences of individuals and families. The stones of Fasque, in Gladstone's mind, seemed almost literally to represent family members; the mortar holding them together symbolised their relationships. In particular, Gladstone's 'moving recollections' of Fasque in later years were closely associated with memories of Sir John Gladstone.[41] Visits to Fasque afforded Gladstone the valued opportunity to observe the ageing baronet at closer quarters and for longer periods than he had ever been able to do previously. And his feelings of love for Fasque intensified following his father's death in 1851 and his eldest brother Tom's succession to the estate and title. On a visit to Tom and sister-in-law Louisa in 1858 Gladstone recorded 'much is changed, some very well, all in the spirit of love to the place: yet I miss some marks of my Father, our foundations [*sic*] stone'.[42] And during a later stay, in 1885, he wrote: 'It is deeply interesting to me to be here. The house is still a home. I sleep in the room in which my mother died, sit in the room where my Father died. Dearest Jessy sleeps under the chapel. And my brother is in many ways an edifying sight'.[43] Several days after writing the above, Gladstone noted that 'stories of Sir J[ohn]. G[ladstone].' were told on a visit to The Burn in Fettercairn.[44] Gladstone regularly noted when the practice of family tale-telling was depicted in Scott's novels. For example, in his copy of *Waverley*, he placed his '+' of approbation next to the description of Edward Waverley listening to and appreciating 'the oft-repeated tale of narrative old age.'[45]

Just as Gladstone's idea of Fasque as home was given meaning by familial memories and associations, so his reading of Scott's texts was augmented by imaginatively peopling its pages with members of his own family. Thus, whilst reading *Rob Roy* Gladstone wrote 'Sir J[ohn]. G[ladstone].' next to Scott's descriptions of Frank Osbaldistone's father, the aged

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41 Cf. *Diaries,* 26 December, 1851.
42 *Diaries,* 7 October, 1858.
43 *Diaries,* 2 September, 1885. Catherine Jessy Gladstone, Gladstone's second daughter, who died aged 5 in 1850.
44 *Diaries,* 4 September, 1885. Cf. also *Diaries,* 10 November, 1836 note, 17 October, 1846 and 30 October, 1890.
45 Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley*, 3rd edn, NTAW, i, 36. He also noted tale-telling in *The Bride of Lammermoor*: Cf. *Diaries,* 31 October, 1836 and Sir Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, 3rd edn, 2 vols, NTAW, xii, p. 80.

and stern merchant.[46] This 'man of business' is given a prominent role in *Rob Roy* but the novel's romantic preoccupation is with Frank himself. The story is dominated initially by the question of whether or not Frank will carry on his father's business; however, by the end, the wealth of commerce is employed in securing the son landed property and a gentleman's life.[47] This, of course, is what Gladstone's father's money achieved for William, who, in his copy of *The Antiquary*, placed his own initials opposite a description of a merchant's son.[48] The 'dream of landed establishment', as Kerr terms it, was not only 'the political fantasy that animates the Waverley novels' but was one which occupied the Gladstone family.[49]

Such was the power of Gladstone's feeling for Fasque that he sought to persuade first his brother and then his father to agree to a division of the Gladstone inheritance on the latter's death. He proposed that the baronetcy should go to Tom but that he should have Fasque. His Machiavellian plot came to nothing, however, and there are a number of sharp rejoinders surviving in the family papers, written in the wake of Sir John's death, ordering William to abandon his 'claims'.[50] It is clear that much of William's sadness over Fasque derived from the fact that it was no longer his.

*A Scottish autobiography*

Physical residence in Scotland, particularly at Fasque, as well as Scottish reading encouraged Gladstone's lifelong practice of self examination. Considering the tendency for this to be a self-denigrating process, the reflection on Scott's life provided important affirmation for Gladstone in the face of his many self-established shortcomings. For, as

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46 Sir Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*, 3rd edn, 2 vols, NTAW, v, 265, 266. In his endnotes to his first volume of *Rob Roy* Gladstone noted '265, 6. Sir J. G. 271'.

47 Cf. Alexander Welsh, *The Hero of the Waverley Novels with New Essays on Scott*, (ed.) by L. Gossman, New edn (Princeton, 1992), 123-5.

48 Sir Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, 3rd edn, NTAW, iv, 26.

49 James Kerr, *Fiction Against History: Scott as Storyteller* (Cambridge, 1989), 10.

50 Hawarden, Flintshire Record Office [FRO], Glynne-Gladstone MSS, MS 1252: Correspondence and papers (mainly of Thomas Gladstone and W. E. Gladstone) concerning the division of the estate of Sir John Gladstone. 1845-51. Cf. David Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1993), 75-6; Richard Shannon, *Gladstone: Peel's Inheritor 1809-1865* (London, 1982), 158-9.

Judith Wilt has noted, the importance of Lockhart's *Scott* in particular was that 'this was a tale of a crippled child in love with the great outlaw deeds of aristocratic forbears who did not grow up to be Byron';[51] and Gladstone also drew direct attention to Scott's triumph over physical infirmity.[52] Scott, as numerous scholars have pointed out, was acutely aware of his own history and autobiography as both an important source of inspiration and also as an art he consistently practised. As Ferris notes, he frequently interchanged history and biography whilst writing.[53] And James Kerr writes 'Scott wrote his own career over and over again in the careers of the Waverley heroes. In the process of transforming history, he revised the life of Scott, he altered his autobiography'.[54]

There are striking concurrences between Gladstone's own idea of the status of autobiography and his engagement with Scott's (auto)biography. In 1868, whilst reading *Anne of Geierstein* for the second time, Gladstone also resumed Lockhart's *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, 7 vols (1837-8), which he had been reading a couple of months before in conjunction with *The Antiquary*.[55] In 1868 Gladstone wrote his own *A Chapter of Autobiography*, in which he discussed the question of his personal responsibility for Irish Church disestablishment.[56] It is striking to see how consistently this project went along with reading of, about and discoursing on Scott. In February 1868 he 'Worked on Scott – Lockhart's Life – Autobiogr[aphy]. and Q[uarterly]. R[eview]. &c.: and at 8.30 delivered in the…school a Lecture of 1h. 20m. on that great man' in which he mentioned 'the sketch which he [Scott] wrote of his own life'.[57] The simultaneous reading of Lockhart and *Geierstein* also accompanied more work on the *Chapter*. Lockhart and Scott's *Life of Jonathan*

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51 Wilt, *Secret Leaves*, 1.
52 'The Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P. at Hawarden, February 3, 1868', *The Chester Courant*, 3 February, 1868.
53 Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca and London, 1991), 120.
54 Kerr, *Scott as Storyteller*, 9.
55 *Diaries,* 30 July, 1868 and 15 September 1868 ff.
56 W. E. Gladstone, 'A chapter of autobiography', in W. E. Gladstone (ed.), *Gleanings of Past Years* (London, 1879).
57 *Diaries,* 3 February, 1868. *The Chester Courant*, 3 February, 1868. Gladstone's speech notes are at BL, W. E. Gladstone MSS, Add. MS 44660, fo. 1. Note also that he read *The Bride of Lammermoor* on the 5 February.

*Swift* (1814) also featured in his list of reading for the succeeding month.[58] At the beginning of *A Chapter*, Gladstone wrote:

> One thing is clear: that if I am warranted in treating my own case as an exceptional case, I am bound so to treat it. It is only with a view to the promotion of some general interest, that the public can becomingly be invited to hear more, especially in personal history, about an individual, of whom they already hear too much.[59]

Scott had displayed the same admixture of deprecation and public spirit in a memoir (reproduced by Lockhart), expressing the hope that 'those who shall hereafter read this little Memoir may find in it some hints to be improved, for the regulation of their own mind, or the training of others'.[60] The way Gladstone used Scott as a point of reference whilst compiling his *Chapter* exemplifies his reliance of existing knowledge and experience also shown by that rigorous approach to study and methodological analysis of scholarly texts that he was wont to display.

**Reception: the meaning of Scott**

**Scholarship, self education and identification with the Scottian hero**

An important aspect of Scott's establishment of himself as a man of learning and as an antiquary was that he consistently made reference to the libraries and reading habits of his characters, and in a way which was often overtly critical.[61] Gladstone regularly noted these descriptions of scholarliness and textuality, particularly when they were related to his preoccupations with broad reading and techniques of gaining knowledge. Thus he placed a 'v' next to this description of Cosmo Bradwardine in *Waverley*.

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[58] For example, *Diaries,* 28 October, 1868: 'Lockhart's Scott – finished – Scott's Life of Swift: began'.
[59] Gladstone, 'A chapter of autobiography', 98.
[60] J. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, 7 vols (Edinburgh and London, 1837-8), i, 3.
[61] Cf. Robert Colby, *Fiction with a Purpose* (Bloomington, 1967), 30.

> He was a …scholar, according to the scholarship of Scotchmen, that is, his learning was more diffuse than accurate, and he was rather a reader than a grammarian. Of his zeal for the classic authors he is said to have given an uncommon instance.[62]

It can be argued that the influence of Scott's imaginary library-haunting antiquaries was matched if not exceeded by that of his other creation: Abbotsford. In his library and study Scott was both deconstructing and constructing history whilst surrounded by the most amazing array of objects and symbols representing a romanticised vision of Scotland's past. The Abbotsford model: a baronial hall filled with Highland weaponry and regalia located in the gently undulating and peaceful Scottish borders, was much copied. In such a location the authentic remains of a heroic but vanished culture could be displayed and classified, read and written about whilst one remained safe in the knowledge that their practical use would never again be required. Hence the 'modern' laird could traverse the borders between Highland romantic fantasy and Lowland enlightenment reality, simultaneously feeding the imagination and cultivating the rational mind, whilst remaining safe in a domesticated environment. Whilst the decorative scheme at Fasque was not Abbotsfordian, Gladstone's behaviour there exhibited a similar duality. Both the atmosphere of Fasque, and the time and space vacation residence there afforded, inspired him to seek new levels of self-education and classificatory rigour. For example in 1834 he recorded 'Arranging my books & meditating great doings, to work 2 h[ours]. (at least) before breakf[ast] - & go to bed at 11'.[63] Such high levels of work were punctuated by immensely long walks over the estate, which gave him the chance to think and reflect, meet and observe the tenantry – opportunities not offered by the shooting expeditions which he

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62 Scott, *Waverley*, 3rd edn, NTAW, i, 59.
63 *Diaries,* 14 August, 1834.

made occasionally but did not really enjoy[64] - and glory in the romantic scenery. It is important to recognise, however, that, just as the romantic could enter the domestic sphere, so the domestic could seek to tame the romantic: Gladstone sought to bring his classifying and rationalising side to such encounters. Thus in December 1851 he expressed his romantic attachment to the physical landscape in a very rationalistic way: by pacing out and recording the distances on the estate.

> Walked up the hills: mist on the top but I had the same pleasure as in seeing an old friend though soiled with a journey. I noted these distances & put them down that if I look back upon this page I may love the old hills as I see them.
>
> By West Garrol to last gate 20 min
>
> 1 ½ mile
>
> Through to gorge to the stream,
>
> ¾ mile, 10 min
>
> Shank of Cairdown to top
>
> ½ mile 24 min
>
> Down, to point of East Garrol
>
> road. 1 ¾ mile 13 min
>
> (say 12 ½)
>
> To Annie Croals 1 ¼ mile 14 ½ min
>
> Back to Fasque 1 ¼ mile 12 ½ min
>
> Total eight miles & 1 h. 36 min."[65]

[64] Cf. for example, *Diaries,* 11 November, 1834: 'Conf[ess]. had to kill a wounded partridge: & felt after it, as if I had shot the albatross.'

[65] *Diaries,* 17 December, 1851.

Such tangible and practical interaction between the romantic and the rational was most obvious in Gladstone when in a Scottish setting, but the influence of Scott on Gladstone's methods of study was more far reaching and universal in scope.

The tendency for readers to identify with characters or scenes of which they read is well attested,[66] and there is compelling evidence that Gladstone both identified with and sought to improve on the literary character of Scott's first hero – Edward Waverley – specifically in terms of his own self-education.

Self-education (or auto-didacticism) was an important Gladstone family value and Gladstone regularly drew attention to autodidactic references in Scott's life and work. Thus, in 1868 Gladstone emphasised Scott's opportunities (as an isolated, invalid child) of 'acquiring that unbounded lore in legendary knowledge of all kinds, particularly connected with the history of his own country, which gave him a literary character in subsequent life, with some features which probably have never been seen in any former case'.[67]

In Chapter Three of *Waverley*, entitled 'Education', Scott summarised Edward's erratic reading and unsystematic learning techniques. In his edition, Gladstone placed two lines and a 'v' next to the following description.

66 Cf. Rose, *Intellectual Life*, 98, 412.
67 *The Chester Courant*, 3 February, 1868.

> Alas! While he was thus permitted to read only for the gratification of his own amusement, he foresaw not that he was losing for ever the opportunity of acquiring habits of firm and incumbent application, of gaining the art of controlling, directing, and concentrating the powers of his own mind for earnest investigation, - an art far more essential than even that learning which is the primary object of study.[68]

Gladstone went on to place two 'v's next to another passage, which continued in the same critical vein.

> With a desire of amusement…which better discipline might soon have converted into a thirst for knowledge, young Waverley drove through the sea of books, like a vessel without pilot or rudder. Nothing…increases by indulgence more than a desultory habit of reading, especially under such opportunities of gratifying it. I believe one reason why such numerous instances of erudition occur among the lower rank is, that, with the same powers of mind, the poor student is limited to a narrow circle for indulging his passion for books, and must necessarily make himself master of the few he possesses ere he can acquire more. Edward…read no volume a moment after it ceased to excite his curiosity or interest; and it necessarily happened, that the habit of seeking only this sort of gratification, rendered it daily more difficult of attainment, till the passion for reading, like other strong appetites, produced by indulgence a sort of satiety.[69]

Gladstone combined his reading of the novel with an attempt to sort out his own reading environment. Thus on 15 August, 1826 he 'read Waverley' whilst also being 'hard at work

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[68] Scott, *Waverley*, NTAW, i, 28-9. The mark on this page is possibly an '!'.
[69] Scott, *Waverley*, NTAW, i, 31-2.

getting the Library into some kind of order' and on the 18th recorded triumphantly 'On these days finished Library – [and] finished Waverley'.[70] This amazing association lasted throughout his life – in 1871 he recorded 'A day of unpacking, rummaging, and arranging' and reading *Waverley* in his own library in Hawarden where he was watched over, appropriately enough, by a print of Raeburn's portrait of Sir Walter Scott.[71]

Remarkable as this association was, it was on the surface at least a private and personal one. Gladstone and his brothers had had their father's vision of the nature and purposes of education well impressed on them at school. As a pragmatic preparation for public life, it was to be strategic, self directed and exhibit 'habits of application, of close thinking and investigation of subject, and that of tracing every effect to its cause', all of which was to be enriched by a 'general reading' of history.[72] If Gladstone was live up to his father's pragmatism, and obey his own conceptualisation of the aims of study, then knowledge was to be gained and used for practical, public ends. To what public use did Gladstone put his Scottian influences?

**Appropriation: the public legacy of Scott**

At least two specific aspects of Gladstone's public life incorporated important Scottian influences: his attitude to public education and the prosecution of his later political career.

**Communicating cumulative knowledge**

In 1906, Mary Drew claimed her father's enduring love for Scott was determined by the writer's commitment to achieving a 'sense of harmony' and 'fitness in literature', and his 'presentation to mankind of, not the ugly, the unnatural, the cruel, the base, but the lofty,

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[70] *Diaries,* 18 August, 1826.
[71] *Diaries,* 7 September, 1871.
[72] Sir John Gladstone to Tom Gladstone, 21 April, 5 May, 1820 and 9 October, 1822. Quoted in Checkland, *The Gladstones*, 410-12.

the beautiful, [and] the ideal.'[73] Such a conceptualisation brings to our attention once again the (often uneasy) combination, in both Scott and Gladstone of romanticism and rationalism and the attempt of both, in their public works (especially in a Scottish context), to foster and mediate union and understanding between the two in the realms of politics, history, religion and education.

Gladstone felt enormous respect for Scott's history writing. He particularly appreciated the author's ability to communicate facts. In his 1868 speech Gladstone expressed his

> …belief is that in this extraordinary power of calling forth from the sepulchre the dry bones of former ages – clothing sinew and flesh – causing them to live and move before us, and us to live and move among them, as if we belonged to them and they belonged to us – I believe in…that very rare power, Scott has exceeded most of the literary men that the world has produced.[74]

Gladstone also endorsed Scott's aim to communicate a thirst for knowledge by teaching readers about their past, a trait exemplified, for example, in the prefatory letter to *Peveril of the Peak*, which describes how readers might be led to deeper, more rigorous engagement with the past by reading popular, fictionalised history.

> The love of knowledge wants but a beginning – the least spark will give fire when the train is properly prepared; and having been interested in fictitious adventures, ascribed to an historical period and characters, the reader begins next to be anxious to learn what the facts really were, and how far the novelist has justly represented them.[75]

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[73] Mary Drew, 'Mr. Gladstone's library at 'St. Deiniol's Hawarden'", *Nineteenth Century* 59 (June 1906), 944-954, at 950.
[74] *The Chester Courant*, 3 February, 1868.
[75] Prefatory Letter to *Peveril of the Peak*, quoted in Kerr, *Scott as Storyteller*, 15-16.

Gladstone portrayed the example and works of Scott as potentially civilising and spiritualising influences on the next generation if it would but heed them. His annotation of the Waverley novels exhibits a consistent interest in characters' expression of spiritual, religious or ethical sentiments (Wilibert of Waverley,[76] Jeannie Deans[77]) or lack of them (Prince John in *Ivanhoe*)[78].

In his 1868 Hawarden speech, made to Welsh schoolchildren, Gladstone noted with some concern Scott's apparent waning popularity amongst the young, calling it a 'public misfortune'.[79] For Scott to lie unread was to Gladstone a tragedy almost akin to that inaugurated by the destruction of Scott's strongest characters (like Lucy Ashton and Amy Robsart) who possessed both moral principles and the courage to act on them. And the fact that Gladstone characterised this as a public misfortune underlines his understanding of Scott's work as knowledge that had direct relevance to the public as well as the private domain. This was not a new idea; *Waverley* had long been seen as a text which dealt with the 'serious political concerns of the age'.[80] The *New Monthly Magazine* in 1820 observed that 'He [the author of *Waverley*] has enriched history to us' by making it 'loftier' and 'more public'.[81] And fifty-eight years later Richard Hutton wrote 'the most striking feature' of the Waverley novels was that

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[76] Scott, *Waverley*, NTAW, i, 37.
[77] Sir Walter Scott, *The Heart of Midlothian*, 3rd edn, 2 vols, Tales of My Landlord Series 2, NTAW, ix, 150, 157.
[78] Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, 3rd edn, 2 vols, NTAW, xiii, 118.
[79] *The Chester Courant*, 3 February, 1868. Lionel Tollemache reported that Gladstone came across this attitude at a dinner party in December 1891: 'A young lady present sprung a mine by saying that Scott was dull, and adding that she got more pleasure from Thackeray and George Eliot…Mr. Gladstone said, "We shall never agree about novels."' Asa Briggs, (ed.), *Gladstone's Boswell. Late Victorian Conversations by Lionel A. Tollemache and Other Documents* (Sussex and New York, 1984), 44.
[80] Ferris, *Literary Authority*, 84.
[81] Quoted in Ferris, *Literary Authority*, 207.

> They are pivoted on public rather than mere private interests and passions…And this it is which gives his books so large an interest for young and old, soldiers and statesmen, the world of society and the recluse, alike. You can hardly read any novel of Scott's and not become better aware what public life and political issues mean…no man can read Scott without being more of a public man, whereas the ordinary novel tends to make its readers rather less of one than before.[82]

So far it has been demonstrated how Gladstone's reading of Scott in particular reflected, and potentially informed, his own personal sense of nationality. The final section will explore the impact of Scott on Gladstone's public life as a politician.

**Nationality, politics and public association with Scott**

Gladstone's practical political experiences had been accompanied by Scottian readings from an early age. In 1832, during the run up to his first election contest in Newark, Gladstone read Scott's *History of Napoleon*.[83] Despite engaging in frenetic canvassing and other election business, Gladstone kept up his reading and analysis of the text right through the election (although on the 8th December was forced to admit that he had 'made very little of it').[84] Reading Scott's account of Napoleon's career, and his own experience of political involvement combined to produce a powerful emotional effect on the young man, which he strove to articulate in his diary. On 31 December 1832 he reflected on

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[82] Richard H. Hutton, *Sir Walter Scott* (New York, 1878), 101-2, quoted in Ferris, *Literary Authority*, 98-9.

[83] Walter Scott, *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French. With a Preliminary View of the French Revolution,* 9 vols (Edinburgh and London, 1827). *Diaries,* 16 November, 1832 ff. Gladstone's analysis of the text is at BL, W. E. Gladstone MSS, Add. MS 44722, fos. 75, 77.

[84] *Diaries,* 8 December, 1832.

> an eventful year…to this poor country…[and] to my own prospects. May the mercy of God be upon it sins and failings, and may His Wisdom provide against their recurrence in that which now lies before us…[and] may the stormy elements of agitation which are now aroused, be overruled by Him.[85]

And, as he was nearing the end of *Napoleon*, Gladstone gave one of the most vivid and physical descriptions of a reading experience that he ever made, imbued with a similarly apocalyptic and messianic tone to that he had employed to conjure up the dangers of reform.

> At night I read the account in Scott of Napoleon's last days & death. While going through the detail, I literally felt an internal weakness and my stomach turned, with such a feeling as is excited upon hearing of some sudden & terrible catastrophe – with such a feeling as I should behold the sun removed out of the face of the heaven. What is so awful, as the transition of such a Spirit![86]

Such language is reminiscent of several of Scott's 'gothick' passages dwelling on the physical effects of encountering the terrible or horrific, such as Fergus MacIvor's spectral vision in Carlisle which Gladstone much admired.[87]

One might ask if Gladstone's journey from Toryism to Liberalism affected his attitude to or public use of Scott. Lionel Tollemache asserted that Gladstone 'never quite forgave Walter Scott for the part he took about Queen Caroline's trial or for his somewhat servile

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[85] *Diaries,* 31 December, 1832.
[86] *Diaries,* 19 January, 1833. Gladstone's final analysis took place on 22nd. For the death scene cf. Scott, *Napoleon*, ix, 254 ff.
[87] Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley*, NTAW, ii, 225. Gladstone marked '+' and noted in his diary how both 'sublime' and 'grand' he found the two chapters. *Diaries,* 4 December, 1848, 21 December, 1876.

loyalty to "that creature George IV." And he regarded Scott's Toryism as "silly.'"[88] But overall Walter Scott's political conservatism seemed to matter little to the Liberal Gladstone. Partly because Gladstone saw Scott's genius as transcending such mundane categories; there was also a shared Episcopalianism and, within certain bounds, a shared appreciation for conservatism, rationalism and unionism. In addition, the broad brushstrokes with which Gladstone painted liberal values meant that it was often extremely easy to marshal Scott to support them in general terms. Gladstone's ability to see things anew in Scott in the light of his own developing attitudes is perhaps seen most clearly in his annotations with respect to religion. As a young man, Gladstone's denominational chauvinism made him dubious about the status of the Presbyterian establishment in Scotland,[89] and sometimes anti-Catholic. He marked passages critical of Roman Catholicism, for example, in *Waverley* and *The Monastery* where the Scottish Roman Catholic church is described as 'at her last gasp'.[90] But equally Gladstone's increased religious tolerance in later years is reflected in the marginalia, which emphasise (with clear approval) messages of accommodation and tolerance articulated by some of his characters: Kirk ministers,[91] Roman Catholics,[92] and Episcopalians[93]

Gladstone in practice favoured Episcopalian Scotland. He encouraged his father to build an Episcopalian church at Fasque and to invest in Trinity College, Glenalmond, the Episcopalian school in Perthshire planned by James Hope Scott and himself.[94] The key attraction for Gladstone of Episcopalianism was its claim to Christian apostolic descent,

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88 Briggs, *Gladstone's Boswell*, 78.

89 Cf. Stewart J. Brown, 'Gladstone, Chalmers and the disruption of the church of Scotland', in D. W. Bebbington and R. Swift (eds.), *Gladstone Centenary Essays* (Liverpool, 2000), 10-28.

90 Scott, *Waverley*, NTAW, i, 398.

91 Scott, *Waverley*, NTAW, i, 348. Here Gladstone notes (with a single line) an affirmation of Presbyterian worship. Gladstone notes ('v') further favourable commentary of Presbyterian attitudes and ethics in *Old Mortality*. Sir Walter Scott, *Old Mortality*, 3rd edn, Tales of My Landlord Series One, NTAW, viii, 115. Tollemache recorded Gladstone favourably acknowledging, in the 1890s, how much Presbyterianism had changed over his lifetime. Briggs, *Gladstone's Boswell*, 146-7.

92 Scott, *Waverley*, NTAW, i, 232, 332; Sir Walter Scott, *The Abbot*, 3rd edn, 2 vols, NTAW, xvi, 380; Sir Walter Scott, *Peveril of the Peak*, 3rd edn, 3 vols, NTAW, xxii, 164.

93 Sir Walter Scott, *Guy Mannering: or, The Astrologer*, 3rd edn, NTAW, iii, 204; Sir Walter Scott, *Quentin Durward*, 3rd edn, 2 vols, NTAW, xxv, 58.

94 Cf. H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1898* (Oxford, 1997), 61, 97, 100, 245.

but its representation of an unbroken Scottish history and nationality was also vitally important. The fractured nature of both Scottish history and identity were realities that preoccupied both Scott and Gladstone in public and private.

Scott is famous for his romantic depictions of Scottish history but the fundamental message of his writings was not to foster a revival of the eighteenth-century Highland world. Although Scott celebrated and idealised that strong nationalism and organic communitarian society, which he argued had existed in Scotland up to 1745, and dealt with the possibility for reform of the existing social and political order in novels such as *The Heart of Midlothian*, which Kerr describes as 'a romance of national regeneration',[95] his ultimate sense of reality (however regretful) was that this Scotland was dead and gone; the post '45 generation was severed from what had gone before. As he wrote in the 'Preface' to *Ivanhoe*: 'even within these thirty years, such an infinite change has taken place in the manners of Scotland, that men look back upon their fathers' habits of society, as we do on those of the reign of Queen Anne'.[96]

There was much in this anglicised, domesticated and cautious Scottishness which appealed to Gladstone. Gladstone's own Scottish identity was problematic as a result of having been born and brought up in an émigré-Scots household in England. He was as attracted as Scott to a romanticised Scottish heritage in which national identity and patriotism played a large part, but he was also cautious and in general supportive of the union which had been effected between the romantic, violent, irrational 'Jacobite' or Highland Scotland and rational 'Hanoverian' Lowland Scotland. As we have seen, he was more than happy returning from the wildness of the mountains to work in the secure and rational study of the country house. In political terms, he was also exhibited a baffling mixture of caution and radicalism. The message of his Midlothian speeches was essentially a conservative one,

[95] Kerr, *Scott as Storyteller*, 62, 64.
[96] Scott, *Ivanhoe*, NTAW, xiii, vi.

if more radical in its implications.[97] And his commitment to Scottish land reform was not immediate and instinctive. It was partly based, as Clive Dewey has demonstrated, on an careful absorption of new historicist modes of thought (exemplified by the work of W. F. Skene and J. S. Blackie), which demanded political recognition for indigenous agricultural traditions and customary laws.[98] It needed the evidence and moderate recommendations of the Napier Commission report to secure it, and reform was made a matter of urgency by the Crofters' agitation of 1886.[99] Gladstone, as a pragmatic politician and one who believed that the 'freedom best known to us' was that 'allied with order and loyalty',[100] definitely shared Scott's overall concern to keep the Scottish cart on the Union's wheels.

Nonetheless Gladstone believed in the persistence of an authentic and autonomous (if not unanimous)[101] Scottish national identity. When reading Scott, Gladstone was drawn to those characters who exhibited peculiarly Scottish characteristics either in physiognomy, dress, language or behaviour, which, to him, represented the long history of Scotland's distinctness as a nation.[102] Furthermore, Gladstone was particularly attracted by those characters who exhibited a strongly nationalistic brand of politics. Thus Scott's descriptions of Fergus and Flora MacIvor in *Waverley*, the archetypal highland rebels, elicited special notice and comment.[103]

Despite his caution, Gladstone was more open than Scott to the possibility of a regeneration in Scottish nationality. In 1885, at the dedication of the newly restored town

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97 For example his promise to 'consent to give Ireland no principle, nothing that is not upon equal terms offered to Scotland and to the different portions of the United Kingdom' was made much of in future years by the Scottish Home Rule Association. W. E. Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland, November and December 1879* (Edinburgh, 1879), 88. Cf. Richard Shannon, *Gladstone: Heroic Minister, 1865-1898* (London, 1999), 236-7.

98 Clive Dewey, 'Celtic agrarian legislation and the Celtic Revival: historicist implications of Gladstone's Irish and Scottish Land Acts 1870-1886', *Past & Present* 64 (1974), 30-70.

99 James Hunter, 'The politics of Highland land reform, 1873-1895', *Scottish Historical Review* 53:1 (April 1974), 45-68. Cf. also Ewen A. Cameron, *Land for the People?: The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c. 1880-1925*, Scottish Historical Review Monographs Series, 2 (East Linton, 1996).

100 Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland*, 163.

101 In December 1891 he told Tollemache: 'In Scotland [national] sentiment is not unanimous'. Briggs, *Gladstone's Boswell*, 199.

102 For example, Gladstone marked (with lines) Scott's description of an old man in *Waverley*. Scott, *Waverley*, NTAW, i, 270-1. In the endnotes to this volume, Gladstone draws attention to four references to national dress.

103 Scott, *Waverley*, NTAW, i, 206, 216, 219, 233.

cross of Edinburgh (for which Gladstone had paid) he flagged his divergence from the political conservatism of his hero (as well as his admiration for him): 'I am not able to subscribe to every article of the creed of that great man in relation to modern occurrences' he wrote.[104]

Fundamentally Gladstone was inspired by Scott's stories and language to consider the regeneration of 'Old Scotland' because of the coincidences he saw between Scott's concentric model of Scotland's nationality, rooted in the community of clan and family, and his own mature, religiously-informed Liberalism. He marked the following passage in *Rob Roy* with a single, vertical line.

> 'You do not know the genius of that man's country, sir,' answered Rashleigh; 'discretion, prudence, and foresight…modified by…ardent patriotism, which forms…the outmost of the concentric bulwarks with which a Scotchman fortifies himself…Surmount this mound, you find an inner and still dearer barrier – the love of his province, his village, or, most probably, his clan; storm this second obstacle, you have a third – his attachment to his own family…It is within these limits that a Scotchman's social affectation expands itself, never reaching those which are outermost, till all means of discharging itself in the interior circles have been exhausted'.[105]

In his second Midlothian address, Gladstone similarly called attention to the 'sacred constitution' of the family, that 'primary element of society',[106] and presented an understanding of society ordered in exactly the same concentric way. Clive Dewey suggests that Gladstone's model for regenerating an 'idealized aristocracy – an aristocracy

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104 'The Cross of Edinburgh', *Daily News*, 24 November,1885.
105 Scott, *Rob Roy*, NTAW, v, 435.
106 Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland*, 84.

redeemed by service,' in both Scotland and Ireland, 'was a historicist argument of his own'.[107] Whilst such an idea might not have derived directly from Gladstone's reading of Blackie *et al*, it was undoubtedly inspired by his reading of Scott.

When addressing specific contemporary political issues relating to Scotland, Gladstone was deeply influenced by his reading and understanding of Scott's Scotland. When Gladstone was preoccupied with Scottish land reform in 1885, as well as reading 'Blackie on Land Laws' and 'L[or]d Selkirk on the Highlands', he was also re-reading *The Heart of Midlothian*.[108] His conceptualisation of both the Scottish people, their levels of nationalism and indeed how dangerous they were came straight from a personal (re)interpretation of Scott's world. For example, when he wrote to William Harcourt about the extension of the Land Act to Scotland and the problems of achieving a just settlement for the Scottish people, he described them as 'a people united by tradition, by neighbourhood, often by blood; by agitation, as it may now be added, and always by common interest'. The landowners might be different at present, but 'the representatives of the old flesh and blood, still largely on the ground' were to be treated with respect.[109] Instead of the disjunction stressed by Scott, Gladstone habitually stressed historical continuity by calling Scotland 'Old Scotland'.[110] Gladstone saw Scottish nationality as alive and well and was keen to fight anyone who sought to belittle or underestimate the strength of it. In 1885 he criticised Parnell for alleging 'that Scotland had lost her nationality' remarking 'that Mr Parnell "is a very thoughtful man…but he never said a sillier thing than that"'.[111]

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[107] Dewey, 'Celtic agrarian legislation', 60.

[108] *Diaries,* 12, 17, 19 January 1885.

[109] MS Harcourt dep. 9, fos. 120-31, letter two: W. E. Gladstone to W. V. Harcourt, 19 Jan., 1885 (quoted in *Diaries* at this date).

[110] Cf. for example: BL, W. E. Gladstone MSS, Add. MS 44543, fo. 64: W. E. Gladstone to G. Young, 9 Feb. 1874 (quoted in *Diaries,* at this date); BL, W. E. Gladstone MSS, Add. MS 44316, fo. 117: W. E. Gladstone to Lord Richard Grosvenor, 27 Nov. 1885 (quoted in *Diaries* at this date).

[111] *The Scotsman*, 3 September 1885, 4a, quoted in *Diaries,* 2 September, 1885 note. Cf. also 'The Cross of Edinburgh', *Daily News*, 24 November, 1885.

Unlike Scott, but a conception importantly derived from his depiction of Scotland, Gladstone still regarded the Scots as a potential political threat. The volatility and unpredictability of Scottish national feeling, especially amongst Highlanders, was a subject to which Gladstone frequently returned. In 1884 he wrote to Lord Carlingford, after reading the Napier Commission Report, expressing his concern about Scottish resentment over their lack of representation at cabinet level.[112] 'The Scotch are a dangerous people' he observed in 1889, who need to be 'treated with prudence and consideration' in a political context.[113] And this only a month after he had re-read *Peveril of the Peak* in which the consequences of awakening the 'fury of a whole people' are discussed.[114] In the face of such power and potential danger, the only resort was to ensure that British governance of Scotland was completely and transparently just and unrepressive, respectful of the nation's long history and traditions and careful not to arouse its hatred, which would be disastrous for both the stability of the Union as well as for the Liberal party.

The Midlothian campaigns themselves can be read explicitly within a Scottian frame of reference. David Brooks' analysis of the background to the first campaign characterises the constituency as a 'world of local rivalries and family influence', and the campaign itself as a contest between the two noble Scottish houses of Rosebery and Buccleuch in which 'the democratic and the feudal were at times strangely combined.'[115] The constituency was traditional Tory territory and was not going to be easy for Gladstone win: 'It may be necessary to make a pilgrimage in the county', Gladstone duly observed in January 1879.[116] Not only was the resulting campaign rhetorically an attempt to save the nation from corrupting influences but structurally, as a punishing schedule of tours and political rallies,

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112 Carlingford MSS, CP1/227: W. E. Gladstone to Lord Carlingford, 7 Sept. 1884 (quoted in *Diaries* at this date).
113 *Hansard*, 336, 1510 (quoted at *Diaries,* 30/5/89 note).
114 Scott, *Peveril of the Peak*, NTAW, xxii, 499.
115 David Brooks, 'Gladstone and Midlothian: the background to the first campaign', *Scottish Historical Review* 64, 1:177 (April 1985), 42-67 at 46, 55-6.
116 BL, W. E. Gladstone MSS, Add. MS 56444: W. E. Gladstone to W. Adam, 11 Jan. 1879, quoted in Brooks, 'Gladstone and Midlothian', 47.

was in a striking way like the picaresque journeyings of so many of Scott's protagonists. As Kerr observes, 'Touring is not a politically innocent activity in *Waverley*' and it certainly was not for Gladstone in Midlothian.[117]

Gladstone's political speeches and writings are obvious places to look if one is seeking the marks of Scott's influence upon the public man and also to gauge the levels of Scottishness in Gladstone's mentalité. On this latter point, of course, one has to be cautious. Politicians are adept at seeking to identify a link with their audience and Gladstone did this when in Scotland. For example, in the first Midlothian speech he defended his status as a non-local parliamentary candidate and in the second speech addressed 'the subjects most likely to have a special interest' to his audience as Scots.[118]

The passion of Gladstone's Midlothian Speeches was certainly Scottian and so was their language. However, the stylistic influence Scott had over Gladstone's oratory was more diffused and integral than direct and ornamental, appropriate to his level of immersion in Scott's world.

David Bebbington has convincingly shown how the influence of Scott ensured Gladstone conceptualised early Greek society as in many ways equivalent to patriarchal Highland society.[119] In the same way Gladstone's graphic description of the fate of women and children in Afghanistan in his second Dalkeith speech at the Foresters' Hall was imagery drawn not just from his own experience and conceptualisation of Highland society, but it was importantly mediated through Scott's rendering of that world in both his fictional and non-fictional prose, a world with which Gladstone had been familiar since his schooldays.

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[117] Kerr, *Scott as Storyteller*, 24.

[118] Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland*, 68. Tory papers at the time suggested Gladstone's reference to larger representation for Scotland constituted a bribe to electors. Brooks, 'Gladstone and Midlothian', 57.

[119] In his *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1858). David Bebbington, *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer, and Politics* (Oxford, 2004), 150-1.

During the summer of 1826, Gladstone spoke several times in favour of the Jacobite cause at the Eton debating society.[120] One of his sources was Scott's long article on 'The Culloden Papers' in the *Quarterly Review* of 1816, which he read and from which took quotations.[121] Whilst he was reading it he noted 'I [am] rather getting a new light on subject of Stuarts, 1745 &c.'[122] In his article, Scott had drawn attention to 'curious points of parallelism' between Scottish Highland clan society and that of the Afghan or Persian mountain tribes, which 'show how the same state of society and civilisation produces similar manners, laws, and customs, even at the most remote periods of time, and in the most distant quarters of the world.'[123]

Gladstone urged the people (and particularly the women) of Dalkeith to 'Remember the rights of the savage, as we call him. Remember that the happiness of his humble home, remember that the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan among the winter snows, is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own'.[124] Here he was painting a picture of the horrors of war and pillage in Afghanistan reminiscent of Scott's graphic description of the devastation wreaked by the English army after Culloden in *Waverley*:

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120 *Diaries,* 17 June, 1826. (Notes for his speech are at BL, W. E. Gladstone MSS, Add. MS 44649, fos. 17-20); *Diaries,* 24 June, 1826, 1 July, 1826 and 4 July, 1826.

121 *Diaries,* 30 June 1826 and 3-12 July, 1826.

122 *Diaries,* 4 July, 1826.

123 Sir Walter Scott, 'Culloden Papers', *Quarterly Review* 14 (January 1816), 283-332, at 288, 290. For a recent, stimulating discussion of this piece cf. James Watt, 'Scott, the Scottish Enlightenment, and Romantic Orientalism', in L. Davis, I. Duncan, and J. Sorensen (eds.), *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, (Cambridge, 2004), 94-112.

124 Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland*, 92-4.

The place had been sacked by the King's troops, who, in wanton mischief, had even attempted to burn it; and though the thickness of the walls had resisted the fire…the stables and out-houses were totally consumed. The towers and pinnacles of the main building were scorched and blackened; the pavement of the court broken and shattered; the doors torn down entirely, or hanging by a single hinge; the windows dashed in and demolished, and the court strewed with articles of furniture broken into fragments. The accessories of ancient distinction…were treated with peculiar contumely. The fountain was demolished, and the spring, which had supplied it, now flooded the courtyard. The stone basin seemed to be destined for a drinking-trough for cattle…and one or two of the family pictures, which seemed to have served as targets for the soldiers, lay on the ground in tatters…

Amid these general marks of ravage, there were some which more particularly addressed the feelings of Waverley. Viewing the front of the building, thus wasted and defaced, his eyes naturally sought the little balcony which more properly belonged to Rose's apartment…It was easily discovered, for beneath it lay the stage-flowers and shrubs, with which it was her pride to decorate it, and which had been hurled from the bartizan: several of her books were mingled with broken flower-pots and other remnants. Among these Waverley distinguished one of his own, a small copy of Ariosto, and gathered it as a treasure, though wasted by the wind and rain.[125]

[125] Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley*, Penguin Popular Classics (London, 1994), 417-8.

Scott had, through the eyes of the returning Waverley, brought home the human and personalised consequences of the Jacobite rebellion to a generation for whom Scottish society had been irrevocably altered. But, by viewing it from the vantage point of sixty years since and concluding with Edward and Rose's nuptial union, Scott softened and somewhat sentimentalised the post-Culloden devastation. This world was truly 'dead and gane', as Davie Gellatley choruses at the scene.[126] But here was the difference and where Gladstone had to go beyond Scott. When Gladstone delivered his second Midlothian speeches, the issue of Afghanistan was no longer a hot political topic, a fact which has puzzled other commentators on this speech.[127] By prodding the collective memories of another highland people, in rhetoric evoking the most famous literary description of their own treatment at the hands of the British army, Gladstone was doing his best to rekindle the flames:

[126] Scott, *Waverley*, NTAW, i, 419.
[127] Cf. Roland Quinault, 'Afghanistan and Gladstone's moral foreign policy', *History Today* 52 (December 2002), 28-34.

> Go into the lofty hills of Afghanistan…and what do we there see?...our gallant troops… in its border lands, inhabited by hill tribes who enjoy more or less of political independence…You have seen…that from such and such a village attacks had been made upon the British forces, and that in consequence the village had been burned. Have you ever reflected on the meaning of these words?…The meaning…is, that the women and the children were driven forth to perish in the snows of winter…Is not that a fact…which does appeal to your hearts as women…which does rouse in you a sentiment of horror and grief, to think that the name of England, under no political necessity, but for a war as frivolous as ever was waged in the history of man, should be associated with consequences such as these?[128]

There is no framing or softening here. Gladstone confronts his audience with a contemporary atrocity and demands a moral response. The telling line: 'If they resisted, would not you have done the same?' is offered in the full knowledge that, as Scots, his listeners knew their ancestors had done exactly that and had paid dearly for it.

Gladstone's eagerness to be associated with the sort of Scottishness that the name of Scott conjured up and his blatant flaunting of his 'Scottishness' during his political campaigns was not lost on his audiences, nor on contemporary commentators and caricaturists. If, as David Brooks suggests, leading Liberals considered Midlothian to be the ideal siding into which to shunt their most controversial figure, then they gravely miscalculated.[129] As we have seen, the rhetorical and representational resources offered by Scott, Scotland and Midlothian were substantial, and carried a number of potentially worrying implications. Gladstone was thus represented by some cartoonists as a heroic, but possibly dangerous,

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[128] Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland*, 92-4.
[129] Brooks, 'Gladstone and Midlothian', 45.

Highlander. In August 1884 he was shown by Tenniel 'Raising the "Fiery Cross" of 'agitation' in Midlothian, dressed in full Highland regalia and backed by a crowd of surly looking Scots glaring out menacingly from the smoke and shadows [fig. 1].[130] But the Scott-inspired Gladstone of Midlothian also presented characteristics with which more conservative forces could work. As Kerr notes, of Edward Waverley's commissioning of a heroic portrait of himself and Fergus in full highland costume at the end of *Waverley*, political portraiture can fulfil a domesticating function: 'the preferred method of dealing with disruptive political desire is to frame it within the boundaries of a sentimental portrait'.[131] By representing Gladstone as a tartan-clad romantic rebel, cartoonists could also domesticate his increasingly radical politics by romanticising, sentimentalising and even poking fun at them. In 1890 Harry Furniss pictured 'The Grand Old Campaigner in Scotland' as a completely humorous figure in 'a Ravenswood costume' supposedly lent to him by Henry Irving [figs. 2 and 3].[132] Such a variety of response is also observable in the popular reception of Gladstone in Scotland. In a period during which 'English' and 'Scottish' were regularly synonymised, there is evidence that Gladstone's Scottish nationality and identity was acknowledged and positively celebrated by the Scots themselves. Rosebery described a meeting at which the convenor was shouted down by 'a furious shout of "Scotchman, Scotchman"' after he had referred to Gladstone as "'the greatest living Englishman"', and the Lord Provost of Dundee received the same treatment in 1890.[133] But it is important to note that recognition of Gladstone's Scottish nationality by Scots, much as was his recognition of theirs, was not predominantly anti-Union, as the following description of Gladstone's visit to Glasgow in 1892 indicates:

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130 Cf. 'Raising the "Fiery Cross." Midlothian, August, 1884', *Punch, or the London Charivari*, 30 August, 1884.
131 Kerr, *Scott as Storyteller*, pp. 19-20.
132 'The Grand Old Campaigner in Scotland', *Punch, or the London Charivari*, 25 October, 1890.
133 BL, W. E. Gladstone MSS, Add. MS 56444: Lord Rosebery to W. E. Gladstone, 9 Jan. 1879, quoted in Brooks, *Gladstone and Midlothian*, 47; 'Mr. Gladstone in Scotland', the *Glasgow Herald*, 30 Oct. 1890.

> The exterior of the [Liberal] Club was gaily decorated with bunting and festoons. It was evidently the occasion of Scotchmen welcoming a Scotchman. Above the doorway was displayed the Scottish Coat of Arms, and at each side the Scottish flag. Overhead was a picture of The Grand Old Man; and crowing all floated proudly the Union Jack![134]

Here Scottish nationality is asserted but safely within the context of the United Kingdom.

Gladstone's overwhelmingly positive public association with Scott continued after his death. John Morley drew a direct comparison between the composition of his biography of Gladstone and the story of Scott's life:

> I must here pause for material affairs of money and business, with which,…in the case of its heroes the public is considered to have little concern. They can no more be altogether omitted here than the bills, acceptances, renewals, notes of hand, and all the other financial apparatus of his printers and publishers can be left out of the story of Sir Walter Scott.[135]

Equally, as I have suggested, neither can the fascinating engagement between Gladstone and the works of Scott be omitted from a consideration of his life and career.

**Conclusion**

This examination, although not exhaustive, has attempted to cast new light on an important and influential relationship in Gladstone's life, establishing that it was far from the superficial and recreational association some have described, nor simply a ploy of an astute politician. Gladstone's engagement with Scott was long-lasting, evidenced by his volume and technique of reading, and the writer's influence upon him was truly

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[134] 'Mr. Gladstone's Visit to Glasgow', the *Glasgow Herald*, 4 July 1892.
[135] Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, i, 337.

remarkable. Scott functioned as a constructor and classifier of memory and identity for Gladstone. His concept of self, his understanding of family and sense of home, were all forged and conducted within a concentrically modelled Scottian frame of reference. In the context of Midlothian, Gladstone broadened this circle to incorporate and appeal to the collective memory of the Scots themselves, showing how crucially Scott influenced Gladstone's political understanding of the Scottish nation and its people and his conception of how he could, acting and represented as a fellow countryman, best serve their political interests. Gladstone shared with Scott an essential commitment to the Union but, with his principled commitment not to offer to Ireland what he could not to Scotland and Wales (essentially leaving the door open for devolution), Gladstone was to be a significant force in the reanimation of Scottish nationalism, apparently 'missing' for much of the nineteenth century. This outcome would have surprised and undoubtedly troubled the author by whom much of Gladstone's enthusiasm for his ancestral land had been inspired and, in its most separatist manifestations, Gladstone himself.

At the end of *A Legend of Montrose,* Scott addressed his reader as follows:

> He cannot be more sensible than I am, that sufficient varieties have now been exhibited of the Scottish character, to exhaust one individual's powers of observation, and that to persist would be useless and tedious. I have the vanity to suppose, that the popularity of these Novels has shewn my countrymen, and their peculiarities, in lights which were new to the Southern reader; and that many, hitherto indifferent upon the subject, have been induced to read Scottish history, from the allusions in these works of fiction.[136]

[136] Scott, *A Legend of Montrose*, NTAW, xii, 505. Gladstone marked this with a 'v'.

By placing Gladstone within his 'Scottish' context we see again how frequently and significantly his private and public worlds intersected; how 'allusions in…works of fiction' read in the privacy of a library underpinned so much of import in a public life.