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Fathers and Sons, Kings and Country: The Fight between Methods of Ruling in Sir Walter
Scott's *Redgauntlet*

Sir Walter Scott's *Redgauntlet* is interesting in that the title does not appear to be the name of the main character, unlike Waverley in *Waverley*, Ivanhoe in *Ivanhoe*, or Guy Mannering in *Guy Mannering*. But it turns out that the title is, in fact, referring not only to Hugh Redgauntlet, who it appears to be referring to, but also to the main character Darsie Latimer, or Sir Arthur Darsie Redgauntlet of that ilk. By referring to both characters, the title announces that it is a novel of family. This theme is fitting because the novel features a number of families, the Redgauntlets being the most prominent. But even before the reader knows that the Redgauntlet family is involved in the story, another family is present: the Fairfords. From the first letter, the reader meets Alan Fairford and his father, Saunders, and begins to get to know the family, first through the outsider Darsie and then from within with Alan. These two families, the Redgauntlets and the Fairfords, are the families that *Redgauntlet* is primarily concerned with, in part because these are the families of the two main characters and in part because they embody the novel's main concerns. At the same time, the book also discusses the quasi-familial relationship between rulers and subjects. Of course, since this is Scott, the rulers are the Hanoverians and the Stuarts, specifically George III the king of Britain and Charles Edward Stuart the not-so-bonnie-anymore prince. The Redgauntlets and the Fairfords are a microcosm for these rulers and the ways of life they represent. The Redgauntlets, as demonstrated by Hugh's

being a fanatical Jacobite, represent Charles Edward's rule, while the Fairfords, who are supporters of the Hanoverian crown, represent George III's rule. These two families show not only the good or bad within the rule but also all the little details that cannot be seen by looking at the rulers alone within the book. Together they illustrate that neither government is perfect, but the better government must be accepted by its subjects in order for the country to run smoothly without dangerous revolutions.

As any casual peruser of literary criticism surrounding *Redgauntlet*, and indeed many others of Scott's works, knows there is a lot of criticism surrounding the government and the characters' relationships to the Hanovers as opposed to their relationships to the Stuarts. Some examples are criticism like Tara Ghoshal Wallace's article published in 2015 that was mostly concerned with the Hanoverian government in *Redgauntlet*, and Alexander Walsh's book *The Hero of the Waverley Novels* which has a chapter called "Patriarchy, Contract, and Repression in Scott's Novels," although in this chapter he discusses many other Waverley Novels and merely mentions Darsie and Hugh's relationship. But the criticism does not relate to the Fairfords in this manner, or fully explain how the Redgauntlets are a microcosm to the Stuarts.

The relationship that Darsie has with his uncle is readily seen in the paralleling relationship between the Jacobites and the Bonnie Prince Charlie (Charles Edward). James Kerr, in his book *Fiction Against History: Scott as Storyteller*, shows this by saying, "Redgauntlet's ambition is to . . . transform the course of British history just as he has transformed himself" (120). Readers get the sense that Redgauntlet could almost have transformed British history, and they know that he is the driving force behind the Jacobite rebellion, thereby making him the perfect candidate to represent the Stuarts. The similarities between the Bonnie Prince and the Redgauntlets begin with Darsie not knowing his family. This relates to how the country as a

whole does not “know” Charles Edward as their king. The Jacobites hint at “the king over the water,” just as Darsie’s lawyers hint that they know who his family is. The microcosm becomes more concrete the deeper into the book one delves. Darsie actively defies Redgauntlet and what his uncle wants for him. Walsh notes, “[T]he uncle’s politics are as repressive as his manners are oppressive” (228). What this means is that for Redgauntlet, he is the one in charge, and he does not care about anyone else’s opinions—especially not Darsie’s. He sees it as his right to tell Darsie what Darsie is going to do since Redgauntlet is his guardian. This is illustrated when Redgauntlet tells Darsie, “The line of conduct which I am pursuing towards you, is dictated not by choice, but by necessity,” which becomes apparent later on (212). Here Redgauntlet believes that he has an innate right and obligation to set Darsie on the path he thinks best. This speech is reminiscent of Charles Edward’s beliefs of the divine right and destiny of kings another quasi-paternal relationship, which can be seen when he is telling the Jacobite conspirators, “I saw [the condition] not. . . . Out of tenderness towards the noble hearts of whom I think so highly, . . . Conditions can have no part betwixt Prince and subject” (377). The Jacobites’ response to the prince’s declaration can be seen in Darsie’s answer to Redgauntlet’s claims of paternal rights, and also the response that those who would have become Charles Edward’s subjects would have had. Just as Darsie demands his liberty and his free will and vows to never stop fighting against Redgauntlet’s injustice towards him, so too have the Jacobites themselves begun to do this towards Charles Edward by giving him the condition that he ignores. It can also be assumed that, had Charles Edward gained the throne, this disconnect between him and his loyal followers would have worsened, leading to the same dissatisfaction that Darsie has with Redgauntlet. The other citizens of Great Britain would also have reacted to Charles Edward the same way Darsie

did to Redgauntlet from the beginning, since Charles Edward would not have been the constitutional monarch they had become accustomed to with the Hanovers.

On the other hand, George III does listen to his subjects—he has to, or else they will get rid of him just as they got rid of Charles Edward’s ancestor. Bruce Beiderwell notes that George III’s “[l]eniency becomes . . . a way of avoiding dangerous ceremonies of suffering”; his leniency gives him power and respect (106). This leniency is also reflected in Saunders, who is fairly lenient towards his son. At first he does not appear to be so—he does have a strict regimen set out for Alan’s studies—but when Alan is breaking Saunders’s rules, Saunders is rather lax in his blame and punishment. In fact, “When [Alan] did indulge in any juvenile frolics, his father had the candour to lay the whole blame upon his more mercurial companion, Darsie Latimer” (Scott 143). Likewise, George III is slow to see fault—at least concerning the Jacobites. This can be seen when General Campbell interrupts the Jacobites’ strategy meeting at Crackenthorp’s public-house. Everyone there knows that the Jacobites are engaged in and plotting treasonous activities. Yet, the king allows them to go on their way. “‘I will,’ said his Majesty, ‘deserve the confidence of my subjects by reposing my security in the fidelity of the millions who acknowledge my title—in good sense and prudence of the few who continue, from the errors of education, to disown it’” (395). The king even goes so far as to allow the Bonnie Prince to safely return to France. In this way George III kills the revolution with kindness. Even more so, Beiderwell suggests that George sees the rebellion as not being true opposition. “Mistakes in judgement or education,” which George III notes in his message to the Jacobites, “are possible, but true opposition on the part of honorable men against the established power is officially unthinkable” (Beiderwell 112). This true opposition is reflected in the fact that Alan, while he

does go out and do things with Darsie that Saunders does not agree with, is never opposed to or against his father.

All this is not to say that Charles Edward would have been a terrible king, nor that George III was the best ruler—just look at America as George did ignore the constitutional side of his monarchy here. Simply examining the portrayals of the kings within the novel shows Charles Edward as someone stuck in the past with the idea of divine right of kings, and it shows George III as a tolerant person who is lenient towards dissent. Tara Ghoshal Wallace notes that the novel has an “insistence on the parity of two opposing fantasies: that of the fanatical unreconstructed Jacobite and that of the obstinately optimistic Hanoverian” (146). This, of course, is not all that great, as Wallace’s tone suggests. Looking closer, one can see that the rulers are less black and white. For starters, Charles Edward is himself in a more gray area. He does ignore the Jacobite’s conditions, but his followers are willing to lay down their lives for him when it looks like General Campbell has them surrounded with no escape. Clearly, rather than just relying on reader’s residual sympathy with the Jacobites from *Waverley*, Scott reminds readers that people liked Charles Edward for a reason. But this gray area can most easily be seen through the two families yet again.

Darsie’s relationship with Redgauntlet, although Darsie doubts it at first, is in fact legitimate, just as Charles Edward’s claim is mostly legitimate in terms of lineage. This legitimacy is illustrated in the scene in which Redgauntlet brings in some lawyers to try to convince Darsie that Redgauntlet’s hold on him is actually legal. After Darsie pleads his case to the justice citing that he was not to go to England until he was twenty-five and that Redgauntlet has kidnapped him, the justice tells him, “[Y]ou must e’en remain under custody of your guardian, till your coming of age” (Scott 192). Even though Darsie is convinced that Redgauntlet

could not be his guardian, seeing as how he has never seen the man in his life, the justice and Redgauntlet insist that it is so. Darsie later learns from Redgauntlet and, more convincingly, from his sister, Liliass, that Redgauntlet is indeed his uncle, and that because of a custody law in England but not Scotland Redgauntlet does have custody over Darsie while Darsie is in England. This is similar to Charles Edward's claim to the throne. Many people would say that the Bonnie Prince should not be king because they have never seen him before and the Stuarts are out of power. But Charles Edward's claim is actually quite a bit closer than the Hanovers'. He is, after all, directly related to Queen Anne—the last Stuart monarch and monarch before the Hanovers. It is only because of a law that disallows him because of his family's religion, just like in Darsie's case with his guardian, that Charles Edward is not allowed to be king.

The negative aspects of King George III's reign are less apparent than Charles Edward's claims, but they are there. One such negative aspect can be seen through the Fairfords' occupation: law. Peter Peebles, Alan's first defendant, has been arguing his case to no avail for years, going through lawyer after lawyer. What started as a relatively straightforward case of embezzlement soon became a tangled mess of legalities—in short a legal nightmare. In addition to being a slow and drawn-out trial, it completely ruined Peebles and his reputation. George III does something similar with the Jacobites, in that he waits as they grow more and more revolutionary. He only stops them when the Bonnie Prince comes to Great Britain and all the Jacobites are gathered together preparing to attack. George's tactic does work for him here, but in other situations it has the potential to not work. Another negative aspect of George III's rule is that the law varies from place to place within the country, most notably between Scotland and England. This difference is what makes it impossible for Alan to get help from the Provost, because Darsie was in the borderlands between Scotland and England where the laws overlap

and are confusing. Alan also further sees the discrepancies after leaving Edinburgh, when he joins the smugglers in order to find Darsie. They are smuggling whisky and other contraband across the border between England and Scotland. “[T]he excise laws had occasioned an active contraband trade betwixt Scotland and England, which then, as now, existed, and will continue to exist, until the utter abolition of the wretched system” (Scott 263) This system further “establishes an inequality of duties betwixt the different parts of the same kingdom” (263). Clearly, this primarily hurts the Scottish because they are the ones who are doing the smuggling. This inequality is one of the more blatant problems of George III’s rule that Alan sees firsthand.

Another such problem can be seen when Saunders tries to stop Alan from leaving Edinburgh to help Darsie. Just as Darsie resists his uncle, so too does Alan resist his father. Walsh rightly notes that “this relationship pits parental dominance against youthful, though respectful, resistance” (227–28). At first Alan goes along with what his father says. Saunders gives Alan the Peebles case to keep Alan where Saunders wants him to be and doing what Saunders wants Alan to be doing. Just as Alan is dissatisfied by his father’s refusal to allow him to help Darsie, so too was Great Britain historically, even while not in the text, chafing against George’s rule. Wallace notes, “*Redgauntlet* accurately represents the general disaffection and disarray” within the empire (146). One way this can be seen in *Redgauntlet* is stated above, through the law. But sometimes, when reading *Redgauntlet*, it is hard to remember that it is George III who was ruling when America seceded from the British Empire. Because this book takes place in 1765, the rumblings of the Jacobites are a sort of prelude to America’s declaration of independence. In addition, Alan begins acting like the Americans did. He puts up with Saunders’s request and begins the Peebles case. He goes along and does a good job, but “[h]e stopped short in his harangue—gazed on the paper with a look of surprise and horror—uttered an

exclamation; and, flinging down the brief which he had in his hand, hurried out of Court without returning a single word” (Scott 151). Once Alan leaves, Saunders acts much like George III did, running after Alan and refusing to let him leave. In addition, something the people in the court say seems to be in reference to George III. They say, “This is a daft case . . . and now auld Saunders Fairford is as lunatic as the best of them” (151). George III had his first bout of mental illness in 1778, and he suffered reoccurring mental illness to the extent that he is also known as Mad King George and his son eventually became regent (History.com). Saunders is not actually insane here, and neither is George III by this point in *Redgauntlet*, but illness is not something that a country wants in its leader.

The two families, the Redgauntlets and the Fairfords, show us things that citizens do want in their leaders as well as things that people do not want in their leaders. These families have problems within them: Redgauntlet is demanding; Saunders tries to make Alan stay. But both families also have good points. In the end, both father figures just want what is best for their son or nephew. The two rulers also want the best for the country—and they think that they are it. Like Saunders accepting Alan going after Darsie, George III accepts that the Jacobites want Charles Edward to be king and lets them return to their homes pardoned when they see that their rebellion is not going to happen. George III knows that it is the best for the country, especially Scotland, to avoid another rebellion. Just as Redgauntlet is glad that Darsie does not need to change his allegiance and Redgauntlet apologizes for his heavy-handedness, so too is Charles Edward glad that his followers will continue to thrive and feels the “forgiveness and kindness” that people feel “even for their executioner” (Scott 399). In the end, everyone—the families and the rulers—acknowledge that “history is against the Jacobite party, despite the unpopularity of the current regime; and history, as Scott has so often demonstrated, will have its way” (Kerr

121). In the end, the Fairfords and the Redgauntlets show that no ruler or family is perfect, but in order to avoid dangerous revolutions, such as another Jacobite Rebellion, the country has to accept the best available government for them, in this case George III's constitutional monarchy.

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