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Georg Lukács, Sylvia Townsend Warner and *The Historical Novel*

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Abstract

Georg Lukács's seminal work *The Historical Novel* has a peculiar position in contemporary literary scholarship: while no one fully agrees with Lukács's theory, it remains a haunting presence that affects any discussion of the genre. This article argues for a radical historicisation of this text as a means to move beyond narrow and prescriptive definitions of historical fiction. For that purpose, it employs Sylvia Townsend Warner's writings on the topic and her forgotten critical engagement with *The Historical Novel* and Lukács himself.

Keywords Georg Lukács; Sylvia Townsend Warner; Walter Scott; historical novel; *International Literature*; Soviet cultural diplomacy.

Just as Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* haunts Anglophone feminist literary criticism, so too does another text loom over the scholarship on historical fiction: it is, of course, *The Historical Novel* by Georg Lukács. In this article I consider the genre of the historical novel by looking beyond the narrow confines imposed on it by Lukács himself and even more so by his book's afterlife. I look at *The Historical Novel* as a historical text, created in a specific moment and place, and then examine an important engagement by Sylvia Townsend Warner with one of its earliest published sections.

Anne H. Stevens has persuasively argued that 'Lukács's study, despite its title, is less a history of the genre than a selective history of a specific type of class-conscious historical novel.'¹ This history has a

prescriptive character, imposing certain generic features on the novels rather than deducing those features from them. Lukács makes his definitional priorities clear in his section on the biographical form of the historical novel:

If we derive the aesthetic criteria of a particular trend simply from the works belonging to this trend, then they have ceased to be criteria. And an aesthetic which is afraid to approach the question of criteria, of the rightness of a particular trend or genre, has abdicated from aesthetics.²

The elements that he sees as crucial for the abovementioned ‘rightness’ of a literary trend are the depiction of socially and historically ‘typical’ characters, whose individual destiny can express people’s experience of historical change at large, writing a concrete – rather than an abstract – prehistory of the present and capturing of historical necessity, understood as ‘the complex interaction of concrete historical circumstances in their process of transformation, in their interaction with the concrete human beings, who have grown up in these circumstances’.³ Thus, bourgeois literature post-1848 is labelled as being in decline because it does not fulfil the criteria imposed on it by Lukács, and because it is seen by him as being at an impasse, if not a complete dead-end.

When first published in English in 1962, *The Historical Novel* was welcomed with enthusiasm by the thinkers of Leftist orientation – and deservedly so. I am in no way denying Lukács’s contribution to Marxist philosophy at large and Marxist aesthetics in particular; the target of my criticism is the uncritical universalisation and de-historicisation of his understanding of the genre. A relatively recent debate on historical fiction demonstrates these problems, found even in writings by Marxist literary critics, whom one would expect to be more sensitive to the historical situatedness and political agenda of Lukács’s claims.

In 2011 the *London Review of Books* published an essay by Perry Anderson, entitled ‘From Progress to Catastrophe’, in which he considered the development of the genre from Scott up to the present day, retracing, in a way, Lukács’s steps. Anderson discusses *The Historical Novel* in his first paragraph: ‘Any reflection on the strange career of this form has to begin there, however far it may then wander from him.’⁴ For Anderson this utterance, it seems, is self-explanatory, needing no further proof; moreover, no matter how far Anderson believes himself to ‘wander’ from the great predecessor – he questions some elements of Lukács’s

analysis as well as Fredric Jameson's interpretation of it – this default adherence to *The Historical Novel* as the pre-eminent text on the genre engenders all the consequent biases of his essay. For instance, he claims that the 'historical novel – if we except its one great precursor, Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* – is a product of romantic nationalism'. This is somewhat contradictory to Lukács's vision of its inception, yet still maintains the idea that there was no historical novel – with one exception – before Scott. Anderson's bias becomes even more obvious when he reaches the interwar period. He is merciless in his assessment of the interwar fortunes of the genre, claiming that it 'had become déclassé, falling precipitously out of the ranks of serious fiction', which he explains by the violent shock of the First World War and by the rise of Modernism with its 'primacy of perception' incompatible with a totalising look at the past. Refusing the optimism expressed by Lukács in the final section of his book, Anderson still maintains his classical model as a measure or as an 'ideal-type', to which he compares others as singular anomalies. The only two 'signposts to the future' he discovers in the period are Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Joseph Roth's *Radetzky March*; he sees the post-Second World War literary landscape as only marginally different: 'A reclusive semi-Belgian, a dead Sicilian, an obscure Egyptian. That was about where the historical novel lay, a few antique jewels on a huge mound of trash, for some 30 years after the war.' Finally, he identifies the 'resurrection' of the genre in postmodernism and proceeds to explain it by applying a Lukácsian approach to the distinctly 'post-Lukácsian' world:

Military tyranny; race murder; omnipresent surveillance; technological war; and programmed genocide. The persistent backdrops to the historical fiction of the postmodern period are at the antipodes of its classical forms. Not the emergence of the nation, but the ravages of empire; not progress as emancipation, but impending or consummated catastrophe ... The postmodern revival, by throwing verisimilitude to the winds, fabricating periods and outraging probabilities, ought rather to be seen as a desperate attempt to waken us to history, in a time when any real sense of it has gone dead.

However interesting Anderson's analysis might be, his over-reliance on Lukács leads to a blindness to some of the varied manifestations of the historical genre. Diana Wallace's critical response, published as a letter in the following issue of the journal, points out that blindness, starting

from the positioning of Scott as an inaugurator of the historical novel.⁵ Gender is the central concern of Wallace's critique, both of Lukács and Anderson, because the former established a Marxist model of the genre that 'has worked to exclude women's novels from discussions of the form' and the latter rehearses the same model in his essay, which leads to a skewed image of the genre's history. The historical novel, Wallace insists, 'did not become a "recessive form" after the First World War as Anderson claims. Instead it became, in Britain at least, a predominantly female form'; Virginia Woolf, moreover, 'was not the only writer to produce the "modernist historical novels" Anderson and Jameson think are impossible'. Such a distorted perspective leads, in the end, to erroneous conclusions, marked by gender bias:

When Anderson refers to the 'huge mound of trash' of the postwar years, he is replicating the dismissive attitude towards these women writers which led to the historical novel being critically ignored during these years. What he sees as the abrupt 'resurrection' of the form in relation to the 'postmodern turn' looks rather less abrupt if it is seen in relation to these still neglected writers.

The significance of Wallace's relatively short piece for my argument is twofold. First, she demonstrates, specifically in connection with the interwar period, how an over-reliance on a Lukácsian model leads to the assertion of generic 'resurrections' where there are, in fact, none, and, second, she highlights the unconscious dimension of this over-reliance. The prominence of *The Historical Novel* as the definitive point of reference has led to it becoming a ghost that haunts all subsequent theory. As a result, it appears that only scholars working, from the outset, with the most 'marginal' and 'non-literary' manifestations of the genre such as historical romance, are free from that ghost's judging regard: they are already excluded from Lukács's model of literary history.

How pertinent this ghost's influence is, even for scholars interested in women's historical fiction, can be seen in the example of Sylvia Townsend Warner and, more specifically, in the question of her status as a historical novelist, which is often in doubt. Warner's practice of the genre clearly troubles the limits traditionally assigned to it. The historical settings of her novels, starting from *The True Heart*, as well as the author's attention to what might be called 'period details' are undeniable. Yet certain scholars, having acknowledged this, insist on adding a 'but' and even proceed to argue that those texts are not properly to be

thought historical novels. Both parts of the genre's title – the 'historical' and the 'novel' – have been thought lacking in Warner's work. On the one hand, she is sometimes judged to engage with her own contemporary socio-political issues to the detriment of the past; on the other, as David Malcolm has suggested, 'de-historicisation' is found in her 'deployment of universal motifs of transience' (in *The Flint Anchor*), her 'focus on almost a-historical psychological states (loss, frustration, jealousy, pleasure)' and her 'resolute avoidance of archaic nineteenth-century language' (in *The Corner That Held Them* and *Summer Will Show*).⁶ Whether in portraying present-day struggles in the vague disguise of the past or in projecting timeless emotions onto Victorian figures and medieval nuns, Warner may not be observing a properly 'historical' character in her novels.

Other scholars ask if her histories are 'novelistic'. In other words, it is the form of the narrative that causes the doubt. Rachel Willcock insists that *The Corner That Held Them* only appears to be a historical novel, but in fact,

it attempts to chronicle the effect of time and worldly events on a community who strive to be timeless and 'have no history' ... Warner's fiction does not impose modern conceptions of human and metaphysical understanding anachronistically onto the middle ages, instead it genuinely enters the mentalité of the middle ages at all levels of writing.⁷

This, apparently, is not something a 'historical novel' – here clearly understood in the most narrow and conventional sense – is expected to do. To reiterate: the book in which 'history is the plot' is not a 'historical novel' in that the subject matter that pre-dates modern history clashes with the form that is envisioned as the product of that modern history. By mimicking the practice of the medieval chronicle Warner distanced herself both from the plot- and character-driven genre novels of the twentieth century and from Modernist stream-of-consciousness novels, hence Willcock's rejection of the genre label.

Of course, this is a small selection of critical opinion. I put these judgements forward as symptoms of the abovementioned trend in scholarship – overdependence on *The Historical Novel*. It is in Lukács's juxtaposition of the 'classical historical novel' with the post-1848 'novel of bourgeois decadence' that such critical features as turning the past into 'a parable of the present' and making history 'a large, imposing scene for

purely private, intimate and subjective happenings' emerge.⁸ Moreover, because the historical novel envisioned by Lukács is inseparable from the 'great tradition' of the realist and social novel, experiments such as *The Corner That Held Them* may appear as not novelistic enough. To complicate this too-straightforward an application of Lukács's paradigm, I suggest we return to the history of the reception and the broader context of *The Historical Novel*.

While the ghostly presence of Lukács's theory works towards the exclusion of Warner from the unproblematic canon of historical fiction, her political convictions of the late 1930s, on the contrary, encourage a re-reading of the novels from the perspective of the final chapter of *The Historical Novel*, rooted firmly, as they are, in their time and place of writing. Such elements of *Summer Will Show* and *After the Death of Don Juan* – trying to apprehend 'the nature of mass crisis, mass experience'⁹ and organically connect the characters' insights into the economic and social reality to their historical situation¹⁰ – are in perfect harmony with Lukács's demands for new novels produced 'on behalf of anti-Fascist humanism'.¹¹ My suggestion, therefore, is that rather than using *The Historical Novel* as a guidebook for defining what is and is not a historical novel or for establishing the tradition of the genre, it is more fruitful to treat it as a particular text on the issue, produced, moreover, in the worse-than-unfavourable conditions of Moscow in 1936. As such, it can be put side by side with Warner's 1939 discussion of the historical novel in a lecture to the Third Congress of the League of American Writers, published in part in 1940 in *Fighting Words*, edited by Donald Ogden Stewart.¹²

The parallel reading of the two texts (despite the latter being less than a thousand words long) demonstrates that beyond the numerous similarities in their demands about what a good historical novel must do with its characters, there is a fundamental difference in their approach to literature and history. Let us recall, to begin with, a long sentence, in which Warner enumerates all the minor details that go into understanding and representing how 'people clothed their minds':

Human nature does not change, etc., but human thinking alters a great deal, is conditioned by what it has been taught, what it believes, or disbelieves; what it admires in art or nature; at what age it marries; to what extent it has outwitted weather (it was the medieval winters, cold, dark and boring, that taught the troubadours to praise the spring); what careers are open to it; whether it reads Aristotle or Plato; whether it believes in witches or planets.¹³

Compare this to Lukács's statement that the 'historical faithfulness in Scott is the authenticity of the historical psychology of his characters, the genuine *hic et nunc* (here and now) of their inner motives and behaviour'.¹⁴ The argument is the same on the surface, but all the unique details of people's everyday lives, essential to Warner, would be superfluous, inconsequential even, to Lukács. The personal quirks are not typical in the Lukácsian sense, and therefore they do not belong to the history that is proper to the historical novel.

It is also worth recalling Warner's article 'Portia', in which she claims that women are 'unhistorical' and thus lend reality to history: 'Women lend reality to history by being themselves so unhistorical.'¹⁵ In this distinction she operates the same criterion for what is 'historical' as Lukács, but she regards it with suspicion and irony. Singular events – Lukács's 'situations of historical importance'¹⁶ – turn for Warner into 'a mere flash-in-the-pan episode in the human epic', striking but 'non-significant and ineffective'.¹⁷ Warner subordinates that which is historical in this universalist, masculine sense; the reality of the mundane is proclaimed to be superior, more truthful, because it makes no claim to explain and totalise. Warner is suspicious of any absolutes when it comes to the lives of human beings, let alone of the idea that any text can contain the totality of history. *The Corner That Held Them* – the novel created, according to Warner, 'on the purest Marxian principles'¹⁸ – shows economic forces as guiding social development but it simultaneously refuses to make any overt claims about causes and effects in human actions. It is the complete opposite of what Lukács would have identified as 'the Marxian principles' in the historical novel.

Despite the similarities in their vision of fiction's goal in the late 1930s and its instrumentality in the struggle against fascism, Warner's employment of historical setting to achieve this goal does not fit into the rigid conventions suggested by Lukács. Her historical novels cannot be the 'concrete prehistory' of the present, because for Warner there is no concreteness in the past, no single line connecting it to the present moment. And in that respect, they exemplify what Lukács himself envisioned when he wrote that the

perspective of the real and permanent liberation of the people alters the perspective which historical novels have of the future; ... it is able to discover entirely new tendencies and features in the past, of which the classical historical novel was not and could not be aware.¹⁹

United in their concern for the future, but opposite in their understanding of the past – Lukács's sweeping generalisations as against Warner's valorisation of idiosyncrasies – the two had, in fact, one near interaction in the shared uncertain present. This short and indirect conversation between the two is worth describing here, for three reasons: first, it adds some nuances to both authors' vision of historical fiction; second, it confirms the opposition between them that I identified earlier; and third, it emphasises the drawbacks of a de-historicised theory that is allowed to bypass facts that contradict it.

In the second half of the 1930s, following her joining the Communist Party and becoming a recurring author in the *Left Review*, Warner appeared on the radar of Soviet cultural diplomacy. The Soviet activities designed to encourage Western writers' sympathy with the Soviet Union took multiple forms and led to surprising intellectual intersections. One of these happened in 1938, when the editor of the multilingual journal *International Literature* Timofei Rokotov sent Warner another issue of the English version of the journal (their correspondence had been ongoing for some time already). As per custom, he asked for her feedback and criticism. The issue in question featured, among other things, the beginning of *The Historical Novel*, not long before published in *Literaturny Kritik* and here translated for the first time into English. It is important to underline that the text that Warner read back in 1938 differed significantly from what a contemporary reader encounters as Lukács's book. First, it was only a part of the first chapter, awkwardly cut off in the middle of his analysis of Scott. Second, its translation from the Russian version bears subtle but consistent differences from later versions. I do not intend to speculate about when these alterations happened, since I have no means to consult Lukács's original manuscript or the version that was published after the Second World War in Hungary and Germany.

In her letter of 3 June 1938 to Rokotov, Warner praised most of the works from that issue, but decided to end 'with a little disparagement', in order not to be taken for 'a careless or uncritical reader', she jokingly added. Her criticism was directed at Lukács, and I quote this section of the letter in full:

I was disappointed in the study of Walter Scott and the Historical novel. It seemed to me that it showed two grave misunderstandings of Scott's position. First, there is a misunderstanding of his social status. He was not 'a small nobleman'. Even now there is a sharp distinction between noblemen, even small ones, and what is called

a gentleman, and in Scott's day the distinction was much clearer because at that time small noblemen never earned their living, whereas gentlemen frequently did, in such professions as the church, the law, the service of the state, etc. Scott was born into the professional gentleman class, before he earned his living as a writer he earned it as a lawyer.

Second, there is a more serious misunderstanding as to Scott's national status. Scott had no quarrel with the Act of Union between England and Scotland; but he was always a Scotsman; and his training as a lawyer certainly reinforced this national consciousness, as the Act of Union left intact the Scots law, a legal code using different methods and different terminology to the legal code of England. Why I say this is a serious misunderstanding is that it leads Georg Lucacz [sic] to overlook an aspect of Scott's writings which has a lesson for the world today. Strongly conscious of his nationality, proud of his country's history, always delighting in the portrayal of Scotch character and customs, Scott was yet quite comfortable, so to speak, in the United Kingdom. He is a most important example that a minor nationality can be blended into a compound state, without either servility or the chauvinism of racial theories; and as such, Scott is relevant to the question of national minorities today.

Under quite different social circumstances, as a dweller in bourgeois society instead of under socialism, Scott can thus be dimly related to those folk poets whose work sometimes appears in *International Literature*, those poets who preserving their national traditions and idioms, use them to express their loyalty to the USSR, to Lenin and Stalin.

And, though this is a smaller point, Georg Lucacz should not say that 'the hero of Scott's novels is invariably a rather ordinary English Squire' when the 'hero' of one of Scott's greatest novels, 'The Heart of Midlothian,' is a Scotch peasant-girl! This is allowing a theory to ride rough-shod over fact.²⁰

What is significant in Warner's critique, first of all, is that she does not engage with Lukács's theory of historical development that led to the inauguration of the 'classical historical novel', nor with what he had to say about the historical genre at all. The target of her criticism, in the first two paragraphs, is what she perceived as his misunderstanding of Walter Scott's social position, implied to be detrimental to Lukács's theoretical conclusions. This implication comes through again in the last paragraph,

in which Warner points out Scott's important female character, missing from the article, and explains this absence as the author choosing facts to support his theory.

No less telling is the exchange between Rokotov and Warner that followed. 'It is curious enough', Rokotov wrote, 'that your opinion on Lucacz's article is in sharp contrast to that received from other people from England (A. Jackson, Jack Lindsay) and America (Grenville Hicks).'²¹ Warner, having read Jackson's reaction to the piece, replied: 'I still hold firmly to my guns against Comrade Jackson, because he praises the Lucacz article on Scott in general terms, whereas I dispraise it on specific grounds, which indicates, to my mind at least, that I read it more attentively!'²² And indeed, however minor her observations might appear, they stand in stark contrast to the general praise of Lukács as a great theorist of Marxist aesthetics. Warner's is a different way of thinking about literature and history, one that does not accept a theory that manipulates the facts and aims at universality.

Warner's opinion on the article reached its author. Her letter was published (in translation) in the Russian version of *International Literature*, followed by Lukács's response.²³ He addressed all three points of criticism in reverse order, and it is interesting to see how his rejoinders further illuminate the crucial difference between his and Warner's thinking. First, he insisted that many of Warner's 'misunderstandings' were caused by the article's incompleteness. Then, passing to the particulars, he took 'most to heart' the third objection, 'the one she believes to be lightest, if it concerned the article as it is. But it is precisely the problem of the people (*problema narodnosti*), analysed precisely through *The Heart of Midlothian* that constitutes the main section of the article not yet published in English.' And indeed, the following part of the first chapter of *The Historical Novel* incorporates the analysis of Jeanie Deans from the abovementioned novel; but as a counter-argument this completely misses the point. Jeanie Deans only interests Lukács as a representative figure of the Puritan *peasants*, not as an eighteenth-century *girl*. Any indication of gender is absent from Lukács's response, since he merely tried to correct the assumption that his critical attention had somehow missed *The Heart of Midlothian*.²⁴

No less telling is his reaction to the second paragraph of Warner's critique:

And I suspect that my critic (S. T. Warner) would not support her second objection, were she able to discover, on the basis of my

whole work, my true intention. Hence my desire to develop the world historical significance of Walter Scott, and precisely on the basis of his great concept of universal historical development.

At the same time, other issues play a decisive role (the emergence of the modern state, the struggle between the 'upper' and 'lower' classes, the inevitable death of the remnants of the clan system, etc.).

Naturally, I would be glad if my work ended with the separate analysis of the Scottish problem as understood by Walter Scott. But since I was writing only a general history of the most important stages of the historical novel, this problem was outside the scope of my work.²⁵

Note two expressions: 'his great concept of universal historical development' and 'the Scottish problem as understood by Walter Scott'. The first highlights the universalism of Lukács, while the second makes his blindness to the issue of nationality, beyond the narrative of great nations' awakening, painfully obvious. He might have been interested in what Scott had to write about Scotland, but he ignored the possible influence of Scott's existence on the margins of two national allegiances on his writing. His 'general history', moreover, has a place for non-European cultures only as long as they join the 'progressive' social movements in the twentieth century.²⁶

Finally, Lukács did not see a 'real contradiction' between his and Warner's position in regard to the first problem:

I meant to show Engels's 'victory of realism' in the dialectics between Walter Scott's individual worldview and its artistic realisations. And it has little to do with the difference between the average landowner and the gentleman.

It would be another matter if I had the intention to deduce the question of Walter Scott's work from his social position. Then it would be necessary to argue about the extent to which the analysis of a specific stratum of the class plays an important role in this. I believe that Sylvia Townsend Warner, in this case, too, greatly exaggerates the importance of the stratum.²⁷

In effect, he did not deny his mistake; he simply doubted the importance to his theory of precision in this question. When claiming that Warner 'greatly exaggerates the importance of the stratum', Lukács demonstrated

a total misunderstanding of the larger point Warner had made in her letter: the point that ‘allowing a theory to ride rough-shod over fact’ is a highly questionable way of writing literary history. For all the criticism directed at *The Historical Novel*, inconsistencies like the ones pointed out by Warner have not, to the best of my knowledge, come under scrutiny, at least not from male scholars. As Michèle Le Doeuff aptly put it, when discussing the wilful blindness of Spinoza’s translators and commentators, ‘when a theory signed by a famous gentleman collides with a historical fact, the theory wins’.²⁸

It is not surprising that this brief critical exchange has been forgotten: it left, to all appearances, no impact on either of the parties, nor did it spark any further debates on the subject. But – and this is important to underline – neither did *The Historical Novel* when it was published. Just as Lukács’s work gained attention nearly 30 years after its creation, when the socio-political stakes were strikingly different, and became a source of inspiration for literary theorists of the new generation, so can this minor dialogue between Warner and Lukács be re-read today, from a temporal distance and with a different perspective on its subject matter and conditions in which it took place. The difference, however, would be that *The Historical Novel* was (and often continues to be) read anachronistically, as a piece of universal theory rather than a document of its time. The conclusions that I suggest we draw from this episode, in contrast, are much more modest. This peculiar convergence between two thinkers distant in terms of geography and social standing demonstrates, first, the importance of literary-historical issues at that moment in Europe and, second, the existence of divergent models of thinking about them. These alternative models were at least partly informed by the thinker’s gender (note how Rokotov cited the praises for Lukács from English and American male authors), and they were not limited to a single national-cultural context. By considering the exchange between Warner and Lukács, then, we can simultaneously reconsider existing definitions of historical fiction and advance it as a valuable analytical category.

Note on Contributor

Ksenia Shmydkaya is a researcher at Tallinn University’s School of Humanities. In 2022, she defended her doctoral thesis entitled ‘Revolution, she wrote: Historical representation in the interwar works of Stanisława Przybyszewska, Sylvia Townsend

Warner, and Olga Forsh'. In her current work, she continues to explore historical imagination in interwar Europe and women's unconventional intellectual practices. Research for the article published in this volume was supported by a European Research Council Starting Grant (TAU17149), 'Between the times: Embattled temporalities and political imagination in interwar Europe'.

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Not applicable to this article.

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Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the author during peer review of this article have been made. The author declares no further conflicts with this article.

Notes

- 1 Anne H. Stevens, *British Historical Fiction before Scott* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 6.
- 2 Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p. 301.
- 3 Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 58.
- 4 Perry Anderson, 'From progress to catastrophe', *London Review of Books* 33, no. 15 (28 July 2011). All quotes in this paragraph are from: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v33/n15/perry-anderson/from-progress-to-catastrophe> (accessed 30 October 2023).
- 5 Diana Wallace, 'Letters: Where are the women?', *London Review of Books* 33, no. 16 (25 August 2011). All quotes in this paragraph are from: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v33/n16/letters#169255> (accessed 30 October 2023).
- 6 David Malcolm, 'The Flint Anchor and the conventions of historical fiction', in *Critical Essays on Sylvia Townsend Warner*, eds. Gill Davies, David Malcolm and John Simons (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), p. 158.
- 7 Rachel Willcock, 'Re-imagining the Middle Ages: Sylvia Townsend Warner and *The Corner That Held Them*', *The Journal of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society* 7, no. 1 (2007), p. 41.
- 8 Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 338, 199.
- 9 Richard Maxwell, 'A rediscovery: Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Summer Will Show*', *Powys Notes* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1990), p. 42.

- 10 See Janet Montefiore's comments on *After the Death of Don Juan*: 'Though Ramon knows nothing of Marx, his hard-won insights articulate the Marxist perception that class control of the means of production, which in a preindustrial society means the ownership of land, is crucial to political dominance ... The political perceptions are not tacked on to the narrative by means of authorial commentary or "abstract" anachronistic dialogues, but grow, as Lukács required, out of the peasants' own life and work.' Janet Montefiore, *Men and Women Writers of the 1930s: The dangerous flood of history* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 156.
- 11 Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 343.
- 12 *Fighting Words*, ed. Donald Ogden Stewart (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1940); reprinted in Sylvia Townsend Warner, *With the Hunted: Selected writings* (Norwich: Black Dog Books, 2012), pp. 268–71.
- 13 Warner, *With the Hunted*, p. 270.
- 14 Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, p. 60.
- 15 Warner, *With the Hunted*, p. 188.
- 16 Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, p. 60.
- 17 Warner, *With the Hunted*, p. 188.
- 18 Warner, *With the Hunted*, p. 404.
- 19 Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, p. 347.
- 20 Sylvia Townsend Warner to Timofei Rokotov, 3 June 1938, in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts: correspondence of the *International Literature* editors with Sylvia Townsend Warner (1936–1943), f. 1397, op. 1, no. 609; l. 20.
- 21 Timofei Rokotov to Sylvia Townsend Warner, 31 July 1938, Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts; l. 28.
- 22 Sylvia Townsend Warner to Timofei Rokotov, 27 August 1938, Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts; l. 33.
- 23 'Letters to the editor', *Internatsional'naya Literatura* no. 9 (1938), pp. 225–6. In the following, I will be quoting Lukács's letter without its additional footnotes.
- 24 For a recent gender-focused reading of Scott's novels see: C. M. Jackson-Houlston, *Gendering Walter Scott. Sex, violence and Romantic period writing* (London: Routledge, 2017).
- 25 'Letters to the editor', *Internatsional'naya Literatura*, 225–6.
- 26 See also the following paragraph from Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, p. 345: 'Up to now oriental subjects have necessarily been of an exotic and eccentric character in bourgeois literature. The importation of Indian or Chinese philosophy into the declining ideology of the bourgeoisie could only increase this exoticism. Now, however, when we are contemporaries of the heroic liberation struggles of the Chinese, Indian, etc., people, all these developments flow concretely into the common historical stream of the liberation of mankind and are therefore portrayable in literature. And in the light of this common direction the past of these peoples is illuminated in a new way or at least can be so illuminated through the work of their important writers.' On the one hand, this is a critique of the tendency to exoticise non-European subjects in literature. On the other, however, he overtly rejects the possibility of portraying these subjects otherwise, unless they are included 'into the common historical stream', that is, until they are integrated, through their self-liberation, into the common – that is, Eurocentric – (pre)history.
- 27 'Letters to the editor', *Internatsional'naya Literatura*, 225–6.
- 28 Michèle Le Doeuff, *The Sex of Knowing* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 105.

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