

Sir Walter Scott: Romantic or Enlightenment Man?

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Abstract

Although Scott is usually considered a Romantic, an analysis of the sources of his so-called Romanticism reveals it to be superficial: his thought is profoundly influenced by that of the Scottish Enlightenment and by Neoclassical concepts. Many of Scott's novels were written in reaction to the Glorious Revolution and the Act of Union, rather than the French Revolution. The Union influenced Scottish culture throughout the 1700s. One of its results was the development of Scottish Enlightenment historiography which forms the basis of Scott's systematisation of history. Scott's plots function as a means of examining various societies in different stages of progress. They also allow the protagonist to learn the worth of prized Neoclassical values such as the supremacy of reason over emotion and the importance of self-restraint and moderation. Scott's mediaevalism and use of exotic locations stems from the Scottish Enlightenment interest in cultural difference. In addition, his narratorial interjections in the narratives are not evidence of a Romantic pre-occupation with the self, but a development of eighteenth century British literary practice.

Keywords: Romanticism, Scottish Enlightenment, Neoclassicism, Act of Union, Historiography.

سر والتر اسکات: نویسنده رمانتیک یا روشنگری؟

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چکیده

گرچه سر والتر اسکات معمولاً به عنوان یک نویسنده رمانتیک شناخته شده است، لکن تحلیل رمانتیسم ادعا شده او نشان دهنده این امر است که این سخن سطحی است: اندیشه او عمیقاً تحت تأثیر مفاهیم روشنگری اسکاتلندی و نئوکلاسیسم است. بسیاری از رمان‌های سر والتر اسکات بیشتر در عکس‌العمل به انقلاب مشروطه سال ۱۶۸۸ میلادی بریتانیا و معاهده اتحاد سیاسی بین انگلستان و اسکاتلند نوشته شده است تا انقلاب فرانسه. این معاهده بر فرهنگ اسکاتلند در قرن هجدهم میلادی تأثیر گذاشت. یکی از نتایج آن گسترش تاریخ‌نگاری و فلسفه تاریخ روشنگری اسکاتلندی بود که بنیان نظام‌مند کردن تاریخ نزد والتر اسکات را شکل می‌دهد. طرح‌های داستانی والتر اسکات به عنوان وسیله‌ای برای آزمون و بررسی جوامع گوناگون در مراحل مختلف توسعه اقتصادی، فرهنگی و اجتماعی عمل می‌کند. این طرح‌ها همچنین قدر ارزش‌های نئوکلاسیک گرانبهایی همچون برتری عقل بر احساس و اهمیت خویش‌داری و میانه‌روی را می‌آموزند. توجه والتر اسکات به قرون وسطی و استفاده از مکان‌های بیگانه از علاقه روشنگری اسکاتلندی به تفاوت والتر اسکات به قرون وسطی و استفاده از مکان‌های بیگانه از علاقه روشنگری اسکاتلندی به تفاوت فرهنگی نشأت می‌گیرد. علاوه بر این، گریز زدن‌های او در روایت‌ها شهادی برای دل‌مشغولی رمانتیکی به خویش‌داری نیست، بلکه تحولی است در شیوه ادبی بریتانیایی قرن هجدهم میلادی.

کلیدواژه‌ها: رمانتیسم، روشنگری اسکاتلندی، نئوکلاسیسم، معاهده اتحاد بین انگلستان و اسکاتلند، تاریخ‌نگاری.

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Introduction

For a long time 1832 has been used to date the end of the English Romantic Period. In part, this is because by the 1830s the productive years of the major Romantic poets were over. In addition, however, this year marks a watershed in both political and cultural history for it witnessed the passing of the First Reform Bill and the deaths of two major cultural figures, Goethe and Sir Walter Scott. Until relatively recently Scott was always considered a Romantic. However, in the early 1930s Lukács voiced the opinion that he was not. He based his argument on his belief that the subject of the Waverley Novels was epic rather than Romantic (Lukács 1965: 34). While the foundation of his opinion is debatable, research carried out at the end of the twentieth century has revealed the eighteenth century thought and attitudes that form the basis of Scott's thinking, underlying his superficial Romanticism and causing critics to re-evaluate him. It is understandable that he should have been classified as a Romantic: his interest in the primitive, the mediaeval and what appear to be exotic locations, all features of Romanticism, are elements that even the most uncritical reader of the Waverley Novels can hardly fail to notice. However, deeper study of the novels, Scott's background and the environment in which he reached intellectual maturity reveal that these so-called Romantic elements spring from concerns that were central to the Scottish Enlightenment. In other words, Scott's Romanticism does not stand up to detailed analysis. In reality, his ideas are moulded by eighteenth century thought.

Romanticism is usually seen as a reaction against Neoclassicism, the Enlightenment and, in Britain, the French Revolution. Scott's conception of literature has been shown to be profoundly Neoclassical (Lauber 1963: 546), while his conception of history is that propounded by Scottish Enlightenment thinkers. Furthermore, although he disliked the French Revolution, his writing is not a reaction to it. Rather, it is a reaction to Britain's own Glorious Revolution that had taken place a century earlier and, more significantly, the Act of Union which united England and Scotland politically in 1707.

The eighteenth century was a time of deep questioning for the Scots. By the Act of Union, Scotland lost the political independence that its people had jealously guarded against the English for hundreds of years, often sacrificing their lives in the process. The Scottish parliament was removed to London and the number of parliamentary representatives drastically reduced. Eighteenth century Scottish cultural history is the tale of a country coming to terms with the loss of political independence (Daiches 1971: 461). One of the ways in which the Scots did this was by reflecting on the relationship between their nation's past and present. As a result, the study of history increased in importance and became a major part of the curriculum at Edinburgh University (Daiches 1986: 161-162). Indeed, the Chairs of History created in Scottish universities in the second half of the eighteenth century

were the first in Europe. Although written in the early nineteenth century, Scott's Scotch Novels form an important part of this movement as he examines the viability of the Jacobite cause. While the Act of Union is certainly important for Scott, the Glorious Revolution plays an equally important role in the genesis of the Scotch Novels. In 1688 Parliament deposed the Roman Catholic James II and replaced him with his Protestant daughter and son-in-law, Mary and William of Orange. James went into exile in France from where, after the accession of the Protestant House of Hanover to the British throne in 1714, his son and grandson launched rebellions that aimed to restore the throne to the rightful branch of the Scottish House of Stuart. As a young child Scott had been told stories about Bonnie Prince Charlie's 1745 Rebellion by old men who had taken part in it (Lockhart 1900: I, 14). From these, he early absorbed "a strong prejudice in favour of the Stuart family" (Lockhart 1900: I, 14). Later on in life he rationalised his acceptance of the Union and the House of Hanover, writing in a letter to Maria Edgeworth that he "would have resigned [his] life to have prevented [the Union], but which, being done before [his] day, [he] was sensible was a wise scheme." (qtd. Klein 1998: 1024). He looked back with nostalgia at Scotland's heroic past and regretted the loss of its independence, but at the same time, along with the *literati*, believed it to have been economically advantageous to Scotland.

Prose fiction provided him with a means of analysing his feelings towards the Jacobites. His first novel, *Waverley*, as well as two other early novels, *Rob Roy* and *Redgauntlet*, overtly examine the viability of the Jacobite cause. Other novels, particularly *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *Ivanhoe*, can be read as allegories for the Union. Through his fictional investigation of the Rebellions, he was able to work through his ambivalent feelings about the Union in a way that did not threaten the political *status quo*. Since he started to write his novels during the Napoleonic Wars, doing so in a non-threatening manner was imperative. At this time, the authorities, if not ordinary people, would certainly have interpreted any open questioning of the Union's legitimacy as treasonable. Through his narratives he was able to give vent to his emotional attachment to the Jacobites while simultaneously expressing his rational acceptance of the Union. Consequently, these novels show the emotional appeal of Jacobitism and Scotland's heroic past. Nevertheless, Scott does not wallow in a Romantic "overflow of powerful feelings." Emotional attachment to James II's descendants is, rather, subjected to a rational examination in which feelings are subordinated to reason.

Scott's conception of history is the key to understanding his writing. For some decades now it has been generally acknowledged that the Waverley Novels are "grounded in a theory of history which approximates that of the speculative historians" (Fleishman 1971: 54). These thinkers were members of the Scottish *literati*, that is to say the intellectuals who had turned Edinburgh

into Britain's intellectual and cultural centre causing it to be dubbed "the Athens of the North." Scott was born into the Scottish capital's professional society. His father was an important lawyer, while his maternal grandfather and uncle were respectively Professors of Medicine and Botany at the city's university (Lockhart 1900: I, 6 and 8). As a young man Scott knew many of the leading thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, either as teachers or personal friends and acquaintances. In 1819 he wrote to his future son-in-law and biographer, John Lockhart, "that at an age not much younger than yours I knew Black, Ferguson, Robertson, Erskine, Adam Smith, John Home, etc., etc., and at least saw Burns" (Lockhart 1900: III, 304). Significantly, Edinburgh's leading intellectuals were only too happy to impart their knowledge to others (Amayat, qtd. by Smellie 1997: 161-162). Growing up in such an atmosphere, it was inevitable that Scott should absorb their ideas.

Scott spent his infancy on his grandparents' farm in the Borders. Here he listened to ballads and traditional stories as well as hearing about the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion from the mouths of men who had taken part in it. These stories gave him a very personal introduction to history which his university education at the hands of the *literati* complemented by providing him with a theoretical framework that allowed him to systematise the facts he already knew. His internalisation of Scottish Enlightenment historiography forms the foundation of his thinking about the past. Scottish thinkers such as Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and John Millar were extremely interested in the way in which societies developed over time. The most influential accounts contained a concept that was part of almost every British or French intellectual's thought at this time (Meek 1976: 174) and which Scott absorbed from his teachers and personal reading. This was the classification of the development of human society into three, or more commonly four, distinct stages. They considered that humanity's social development followed a similar pattern everywhere because of "the similarity of [mankind's] wants, as well as of the faculties by which those wants are supplied" (Millar 1990: 3). The first three stages were "rude and simple periods when men are chiefly employed in hunting and fishing, in pasturing cattle, or in cultivating the ground" (Millar 1990: 129). Social development culminated in a sophisticated, commercial society in which people "in proportion to the progress they have made in multiplying the conveniences of their situation become more refined in their taste, and luxurious in their manner of living" (Millar 1990: 99). Each stage was distinguished by its "means of subsistence" or, to put it another way, the manner in which it gained its livelihood. Various versions of the theory were developed during the 1700s in Scotland and France, but principally the former (Meek 1976: 91 and 97; Wood 1989: 104). It is possible that Adam Smith had expounded the stadial theory of historical development as early as 1748 at Edinburgh University, although he did not publish it until 1759 when his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* appeared.

The first published version of it, either in France or Scotland, formed part of Dalrymple's *Essay Towards a General History of Feudal Property in Great Britain* (1757) and Smith's student, John Millar, published an extremely influential version of it in his *Origin of Ranks* (1771) and *Historical View of the English Government* (Meek 1976: 107, 111, 174 and 176). All these works are to be found in Scott's library in his home, Abbotsford.

Although Scott did not publish his novels until the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, it must be remembered that he started writing novels in his forties. To do so he used the intellectual equipment that he had obtained as a young man. The dry concepts explained in the works of Scottish Enlightenment writers come alive in the characters that embody them in the Waverley Novels. However, Scott's does not consciously attempt to illustrate these theories; rather he uses them as an unconscious framework through which he comprehends history.

Almost without exception, Scott's plots take a young man or, in the case of his masterpiece *The Heart of Midlothian*, a young woman on a journey through unfamiliar territory. On their travels the protagonists encounter different societies that are in various stages of development. Thus, for instance, Waverley goes from "polished" England to the Highlands where he comes in contact with the ancient clan society that would be destroyed in the aftermath of the 1745 Rebellion. Likewise, Jeanie Deans, the heroine of *The Heart of Midlothian*, undertakes a similar journey, but in reverse, travelling from an old-fashioned, agricultural Scotland to a commercial England.

These journeys bring Scott's protagonists into contact with different cultures and societies. In most of the novels, the hero goes on a simple, linear journey that takes him from A to B. In striking contrast, *Ivanhoe* presents the stages of societal development in a much more sophisticated manner. In this novel a number of distinct phases of social evolution exist simultaneously in the same geographical and temporal space and interact with each other. The novel's action revolves around the clash between Anglo-Saxon society and that of the Normans. These two groups constitute primitive societies whose wealth lies in land, although admittedly the Normans are more advanced than the people they have conquered. They contrast with the Jews, embodied by Isaac the moneylender and his daughter Rebecca, who represent commercial society in which wealth is measured in gold rather than land. To further complicate the narrative, post-Conquest society in England is seen from the perspective of a "civilised" early nineteenth century Englishman who is introduced in the Dedicatory Epistle. The narrator's interjections into the narrative imply his presence as an observer, because the former constantly explains features of mediaeval England that might puzzle Scott's own contemporaries.

Associated with the classification of social organisation and development was the idea that primitive societies had certain virtues, such as physical

courage, honesty and loyalty that were endangered and sometimes destroyed by advanced society. This has a superficial resemblance to the idea of the "noble savage" beloved by Rousseau. However, it is far from the same. Rousseau considered "savage" society to be an ideal from which subsequent societies degenerated. In contrast, Scott, following the *literati*, sees primitive society, whether that of the Highlander in *Waverley* or the Anglo-Saxon in *Ivanhoe*, as a lower form of societal development in comparison to the stages that followed.

Furthermore, Scott and other Scottish writers held that all societies, at whatever stage of their development, were composed of both good and bad features. One of the weaknesses that Scott considered to be inherent in "polished" societies was the "luxury" in which their members lived. He regarded this material comfort as causing advanced societies to decline into decadence. This opinion, seen most clearly in his last complete novel *Count Robert of Paris* but also discernable elsewhere, is similar to that which Ferguson sets out in his *Essay in the History of Civilisation*. In addition, eighteenth century gentlemen were brought up on a diet of Classical literature, and Roman writings condemning luxury as effete were well known. Moreover, these ideas were reiterated by Defoe, Temple and Swift (Johnson 1967: 49 and 50). The latter, whom Scott knew intimately having edited his works, spent much of his life railing against the corrupting influence of luxury (Johnson 1967: 63-67). Thus, Scott's condemnation of luxury's engendering of decadence is not rooted in a Romantic idea of the perfection of savages and the subsequent decadence of man, but in an eighteenth century concept that was itself derived from that of the Ancients.

Self-restraint, moderation, the avoidance of extremes and a belief in reason are important features of Neoclassicism that can be detected time and again in Scott's works. His belief in moderation and reason constitutes an important organising principle of the *Waverley Novels*: his heroes' journeys enable them to learn the worth of these Neoclassical values. Having successfully accomplished his education, the hero is then rewarded by marriage (Cusac 1969: 71). The passive hero of the *Waverley Novels* is central to the novels' structure for he is exposed to both sides of various conflicts and learns the importance of the "middle way" and the avoidance of extremes (Lukács 1965: 37). Time and again Scott condemns extremism and praises moderation; *Old Mortality* being his most eloquent condemnation of fanaticism. His censure of extremism leads naturally to his opinion that no society has a monopoly of good or evil. There are no "historical villains" in Scott. That is to say, not one of his characters are good or bad because he is a member of, or supports, a particular group. Instead, he considers the role played by both the physical and moral environments in shaping men's characters to be crucial. Again, Scottish Enlightenment historiography is the direct source of his belief. The notion that different stages of social evolution

acted on society's members to develop particular personality traits was inherent in the overall theory of societal development posited by the *literati*.

The esteem in which self-control was held during the 1700s was related to the belief in moderation. Self-control was one of the main characteristics of "civilisation" as understood in the eighteenth century. The term "civilisation" was coined in the mid-seventeen hundreds to designate a particular period in the history of a nation or culture's history. The neologism first appeared in France and then passed into English via the Scottish *literati*. The period that it designated was that in which civilised man is distinct from the barbarian because he is able to control his emotions and employ reason (Rothblatt 1976: 18). The characters in Scott who exercise self-control are invariably those who belong to an advanced culture, while those who lack the ability to do so are members of a more primitive one. *The Talisman* illustrates this very well. Saladin, who represents mediaeval Muslim society which Scott freely acknowledges to be superior to that of mediaeval Europe, constantly exercises self-control while his arch-enemy, Richard the Lionheart is ruled by his emotions.

Scott's internalisation of Enlightenment historiography not only allows him to make sense of history and inter-community relations, but also profoundly influences his descriptions. His characters' clothes are, in part, historically determined. Social theory, however, plays just as important a part in their garments and their physiques. Consequently, men from primitive societies are often compared to giants. Thus Rudolph in *Anne of Geierstein* and Kenneth in *The Talisman*, for instance, are "gigantic" (Scott 2000: 126; 1894b: 19). Likewise, men from these societies uniformly sport luxurious moustaches and beards.

Scottish Enlightenment thought informs almost every aspect of Scott's thinking. Most importantly, its historiography constitutes the foundation of his systematization of history and, therefore, his novels. The *literati's* interest in social development is directly related to the eighteenth century study of differing cultures and the attempt to classify them. This question was of particular interest to Scottish thinkers because in the 1700s Scotland's commercial and industrial development accentuated the pre-existent differences between the cultures of the Lowlands and Highlands. In the former what the *literati* termed a "polished" society existed and grew, whilst in the latter a "rude" clan society subsisted until the failure of Bonnie Prince Charlie's rebellion in 1745 after which harsh, but not totally successful, measures were taken by London to destroy the old ways. The existence of two cultures within one people who shared a common national identity contributed to Scottish intellectuals' deep interest in the question of the development of human society and civilization. Consequently, the origins of Scott's interest in different cultures are to be found in a concern common to eighteenth century European, especially Scottish, intellectuals and the

cultural and political conditions that prevailed in Scotland after the Union.

Scott's mediaevalism and use of exotic locations, features of the Waverley Novels that have often been seen as proof of his Romanticism, must be considered in this cultural context. Even though he sets many of his novels in the Scottish Highlands and two in the Levant, his choice of geographical setting does not arise from a Romantic interest in the exotic. On the contrary, Scotland, the setting for sixteen of his novels, was his own country. Scott could hardly have thought of his native land as strange. Indeed, he knew it intimately for although he was born and educated in Edinburgh, as a young child he had spent a significant amount of time at his grandparents' farm in the Borders and in his youth had explored both the Lowlands and Highlands in search of ballads and folktales. In addition, he counted Adam Ferguson, the founding father of sociology and the only one of the *literati* who was both a Highlander and a Gaelic-speaker, as his "revered and venerated friend". It was the English and other foreigners among his readers who found Scotland exotic. Consequently, he set many of his novels in Scotland not from a desire to write about something unknown and mysterious, but because he knew Scottish geography and, more importantly, history intimately. Furthermore, when he wrote *Ivanhoe*, the first of his novels to be set outside his native land, it was in the hope that he could bring English history to life for English readers in much the same way as he had done with Scottish history for the Scots (Scott 1998a: 6).

In his topographical descriptions Scott exhibits an interest in the picturesque. Admittedly, this is an interest that he shares with the Romantics (Cusac 1969: 72). Indeed, in the late 1700s the word "romantic" was often synonymous with "picturesque" (Wellek 1949: 3). However, the taste for the picturesque flourished equally during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, being an important quality sought in the landscape by both artists and gardeners in the 1700s. Scott, who frequently describes scenes in terms of paintings, often uses the term "picturesque" in his descriptions and also cites Gilpin, the major eighteenth century writer on the subject. According to the latter, picturesque scenery consists of "elegant relics of ancient architecture; the ruined towers, the Gothic arch, the remains of castles and abbeys" (Gilpin, qtd. Lévy 1997: 216). Scott's work is full of descriptions of buildings, ancient and modern, which he quite often describes as "picturesque". However, these descriptions do not originate in an interest in the picturesque *per se*; rather they are rooted in his conception of history which was profoundly informed by eighteenth century historical theory. For him, history was not just something to be read about in books. It was something physical. Old stories about the events of the Borders, where he lived as a small child and could feel the ground on which they had taken place beneath his feet, were his first experience of history. Thus he learnt to associate history with topography, and to visualize historical events in a very

physical setting. In the Ashteil Fragment, a small autobiographical document that makes up the first chapter of Lockhart's *Memoirs of Sir Walter Scott*, he gives an example of how scenery affected him:

show me an old castle or a field of battle, and I was at home at once, filled it with its combattants in their proper enthusiasm of my description. In crossing Magus Moor... the spirit moved me to give a picture of the assassination of the Archbishop of St. Andrews to some fellow-travellers... and one of them... protested my narrative had frightened away his night's sleep. (Lockhart 1900: 40)

This, coupled with the sophisticated Enlightenment historical theories that he studied at university, was the source of his "historical vision" (Daiches 1971: 460).

Such a conception of history results in Scott concretising time through chronotopes. His long descriptions use physical details, such as characters' clothes and their dwellings, to render a sense of culture that is different from that of the early nineteenth century because it is in the past. Thus, in *Ivanhoe*, Cedric's ancestral hall is a chronotope that physicalises the Anglo-Saxon Period through its very construction. Likewise, Sir Kenneth and Saladin in *The Talisman* not only represent mediaeval Europe and the Levant, but their very appearances give physical expression to their respective societies' stages of social and historical development.

Romantic poems, particularly those by Wordsworth, are full of descriptions of nature which they often deify. Although Scott does describe landscapes in his novels, he is not interested in them as expressions of nature. It is not the beauty of the countryside that attracts his attention. Rather, the relationship between mankind and the landscape is important to him. In the passage quoted above, for example, the landscape of Magus Moor does not cause Scott to extol the beauties of nature. Instead, it functions as a sort of mnemonic device that helps him to recall a historical event. The descriptions of the countryside in his novels serve utilitarian literary purposes. Sometimes they function as a scene-setting devices. A detailed description of the area around the Dead Sea, for example, opens *The Talisman*. This helps the reader to picture the physical environment in which the characters move, while the biblical references in the text underline the importance of religion in the work. At other times, Scott's descriptions of the scenery serve as a device that differentiates between different groups of characters. Thus, the forests in *Ivanhoe* are consistently associated with the Anglo-Saxons, affording a contrast with the Normans who are linked to manmade constructions.

In addition, his belief that men's habits are formed by their physical environment originates in Scottish historiography. The *literati* continued a tradition that can be traced back through Montesquieu to Classical writers in which climate played an important role in forming human character. Throughout the Waverley Novels the physical environment plays a part in the

formation of the characters' personalities. However, it is merely hinted at in most of the novels. Only in *Anne of Geierstein* does Scott explicitly assert it, stating that because the Swiss

dwell among rocks and deserts which are almost inaccessible, and subsist in a manner so rude, that the poorest [Burgundians] would starve if subjected to such a diet, [t]hey are formed by nature to be the garrisons of the mountain-fortresses in which she has placed them. (Scott 2000: 290)

Scott's interest in the Middle Ages, another element of his work often adduced as proof of his Romanticism, has been exaggerated. Moreover, it does not stem from a Romantic, interest in the past as something unusual and strange, but in the eighteenth century Scottish concern with historical change. It is generally acknowledged that Scott's influence contributed to the interest of Victorian historians in the Middle Ages (Young 1950: 81). However, his reputation for being obsessed with the mediaeval has more to do with the restricted choice of texts exercised by mid and late nineteenth century readers than a careful examination of his work. The Victorians preferred the mediaeval novels, *Ivanhoe* in particular, and it is these that tend to be known to the general public today. However, the historical period covered by the Waverley Novels runs from the eleventh century (*Count Robert of Paris*) to the end of the eighteenth (*The Antiquary*). The opinion that Scott's main interest was the Middle Ages is not only old-fashioned, but misinformed: two thirds of his novelistic output deal with post-Reformation Scottish history. Other novels deal with English history of the Reformation period and only six novels, *Ivanhoe*, *Anne of Geierstein*, *Quentin Durward*, *The Talisman*, *The Fair Maid of Preth* and *Count Robert of Paris*, take the Middle Ages as their subject matter. Furthermore, Scott's interest in primitive societies, be they that of the Highlands in the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries or of mediaeval England, does not arise from a love of the primitive *per se*, but from his interest in the relations between differing cultures and change within one culture over time.

It is important to my argument that the temporal locations of three of the mediaeval novels, the period after the Norman Conquest in *Ivanhoe* and the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Period in *Anne of Geierstein* and *Quentin Durward*, are times of profound historical change. The general theme of all the Waverley Novels can be summarised as an examination of the viability of old traditions and customs in more modern times, in other words in "the relation between tradition and progress" (Daiches 1971: 459). The above-mentioned works therefore share a common theme with nearly all of the other Waverley Novels, not least the Scotch Novels such as *Waverley*, *Old Mortality* and *Rob Roy*. Scott's fascination with the relationship between the past and the present is the source of his concern with intercultural relations, whether they be those between Highlander and Englishman or Lowlander as in *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*, fanatical covenanting

Protestant and more conventional Protestant in *Old Mortality* or between different national cultures as in *Ivanhoe* and *Quentin Durward*.

The source of Scott's apparent temporal exoticism is, therefore, his interest in the relationship between the past and the present which finds its greatest expression in periods of historical change and intercultural relations. His earlier novels, set in eighteenth and seventeenth century Scotland, analyse this. It was when he had more or less exhausted this historical seam that he turned to mining the history of other nations in order to examine similar, fundamental problems.

Although the position of the *literati* was special, their interest in matters of national identity and history was a Scottish expression of a concern common to many Europeans. The eighteenth century witnessed a growth in national consciousness all over the Continent. It sometimes took political forms, but also took cultural ones which included an interest in folk-lore and traditional literature and music. Thus, in the 1700s the French, for instance, became interested in their pre-Frankish, Gaulish ancestors. In Britain Allan Ramsay published a collection of traditional Scottish songs and poems in the 1730s and James Macpherson's "translations" of the ancient Gaelic poet Ossian were followed by Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, the first published collection of English ballads. Their example was eagerly followed by others in the British Isles with Edward Jones publishing *Musical and Poetical Relics of the Welsh Bards* in 1784 and Charlotte Brooke, *Reliques of Irish Poetry* in 1789. Scott contributed to this movement by scouring the Lowlands and venturing into the Highlands in search of traditional ballads. The result was *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* which he published in 1802. To this work we owe the survival of many ancient Scottish ballads, such as *Sir Patrick Spens*, *The Wife of Usher's Well* and *Lord Randal*. While these movements are often seen as part of the Primitivism and Mediaevalism characteristic of the Romantics, a different interpretation is equally valid. They can be regarded as rational expressions of growing European nationalism; expressions that aimed to define and categorise the different peoples of that continent. As such they are informed by the rationalistic categorisation that was such a significant feature of intellectual life during the Enlightenment. This concern with classification not only informs the thought of the *literati*, but also works such as the *Encyclopédie* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which the Scot William Smellie first published in the 1760s in Edinburgh.

Pre-occupation with the self is, of course, one of the distinguishing features of Romanticism. In Scott we have no self-absorption à la Wordsworth or Shelley. That is not to say, however, that Scott as subject is absent from his novels. However, his presence in the text is not that of the inward-looking Romantic subject. On the contrary, he is present as a very sociable narrator, constantly anticipating his readers' questions and directing remarks designed

at answering them to his audience (Waswo 1980: 305). In part this arises from his conception of novel writing. All his life he was a consummate storyteller who loved nothing better than entertaining friends and acquaintances with tales. He conceived of history itself as a story, with the historical novel being an extension of the oral storyteller's function. Through the printed word he extended his audience from friends and family to one on both sides of the Atlantic.

More significantly, Scott's textual presence follows eighteenth novelistic convention. The narrative apparatus of a Waverley Novel consists of a preface, introduction or dedicatory epistle in which the narrator presents the novel as his version of a story he has found in an old document. The narrator of *Ivanhoe*, for instance, claims that his original is the Wardour Manuscript "a singular Anglo-Norman MS., which Sir Arthur Wardour preserves with such jealous care in the third drawer of his oaken cabinet" (Scott 1998a: 12). Prefaces form an integral part of the English novelistic tradition. Their use to present a fictional or semi-fictional past dates back at least as far as Defoe who introduced many of his novels in this way. Fielding increased the narrator's presence in the novel by the addition of authorial comment in the main narrative. Scott further developed this tradition by adopting a number of narrative personae, each with his own particular personality, who recount the stories of a number of novels. Throughout the narratives the various narrators interject with comments and explanations that often aim to explain history to the reader, but simultaneously reveal an acute sense of the distance between the time of the narrative and that of the reader. As time wore on, the narrators became increasingly complex until in the later novels they become characters in their own right with their personal histories being recounted in the prefaces. As a result, the main narrative becomes but the most important part of a larger, complex entity in which many narrative threads are woven together.

It could be argued that Scott's growing presence in the text through the adoption of narratorial personae is in itself evidence of a Romantic preoccupation with the self. I would contend otherwise. One cannot take for granted that the narrators are Scott himself, even though one of them, Laurence Templeton, is an antiquary like "the Authour of Waverley." More importantly, even if one does accept that the narrators are merely Scott in disguise, they are not pre-occupied with their own egos and experiences. Rather, their attention is directed to the story and the reader's reactions to it, evidenced by their concern to establish the narrative's veracity and the continual interjection of comments aiming to explain features of the action, scenery, costumes and so on that might puzzle the nineteenth century reader. Consequently, the insertion of the narrating subject into the narrative does not constitute an expression of Romantic self-absorption. Instead it is a development of traditional British novelistic practice.

That this should be so is confirmed by study of Scott's undoubtedly Neoclassical conception of literature. Although he had no systematic, organic conception of art, his ideas about literature can be gleaned from his criticism of other writers and *obiter dicta* scattered throughout his work (Lauber 1963: 546 and 554). Here, Scott employs Neoclassical criteria as the foundation for his remarks. Consequently, Lauber considers that "his criticism represents the end of a tradition; it is the last expression of the neoclassic position by a major writer" (Lauber 1963: 546). Scott did not concur with Wordsworth's famous evaluation of the importance of emotion to poetry. Rather, his fundamental concept of literature is consistently one of mimesis (Lauber 1963: 554 and 546). It was his poems, based on the folklore of the Scottish Borders, that brought him fame. However, at the height of his popularity as a poet he had toyed with the idea of writing a novel, starting *Waverley* in 1805 and then putting it aside before finishing and publishing it anonymously in 1814. In order to analyse in depth the themes that interested him he required a long narrative space with which poetry was unable to provide him. As a result, encouraged by his reading of the Anglo-Irish novelist Maria Edgeworth, he turned to the novel. The change of genre proved an inspired decision. The medium of a long prose narrative allowed him to analyse history at leisure, bringing it to life for hundreds of thousands of readers and revealing him as a gifted interpreter of history.

Although he felt himself constrained to write novels rather than poetry, he nevertheless shared the eighteenth century opinion that the novel was a lesser form of literature:

a mere elegance, a luxury contrived for the amusement of polished life and the gratification of that half-love of literature which pervades all ranks in an advanced state of society. (Scott 1928: 21)

History writing was the most prestigious form of prose writing in the 1700s. In England, Edward Gibbon composed his monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* which examined its subject in an extremely rational and scholarly manner. In Scotland, David Hume wrote a *History of Scotland*. However, historiography was the Scots' most important contribution to history writing. Scott also wrote straight history to professional standards before he turned to novel-writing. Indeed, he continued to do so even after making his fortune as "The Author of *Waverley*," bringing out a *Life of Napoleon* and contributing articles to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Although he dismissed novel writing and reading as a pastime, nonetheless by incorporating aspects of historiography, the most prestigious form of eighteenth century narrative discourse, into the novel he was largely responsible for changing its status from that of a minor genre to a prestigious one (Kelly 1989: 140).

Today, after many decades of critical disdain, scholars have rehabilitated

Scott, according to his true status of a major author of seminal importance. This position rests on a re-evaluation of the Scotch novels. However, these novels contain many difficult passages written in Scottish dialect. As a result, during the Victorian period non-Scottish readers read those novels which do not have such passages, in other words, the mediaeval novels. Thus was his reputation as a Romantic born. His prose fiction certainly includes features that can be described as Romantic. Nevertheless, examination of the sources of these characteristics as well as the manner in which he was influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment and Scottish history reveals the superficiality of his so-called Romanticism. In reality, he is a nineteenth century novelist writing from an Enlightenment and Neoclassical stance.

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