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REPORT  
of  
COMMITTEE ON EXAMINATION

This is to certify that we the undersigned, as a Committee of the Graduate School, have given Lillian Ananora Helms final oral examination for the degree of Master of Arts. We recommend that the degree of Master of Arts be conferred upon the candidate.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

May 28 1917.

Stanley Craig  
Chairman

J. M. Thomas

Richard Barton

Joseph Beach

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REPORT  
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The undersigned, acting as a Committee of  
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thesis submitted by Lillian Ananora Helms  
for the degree of Master of Arts.  
They approve it as a thesis meeting the require-  
ments of the Graduate School of the University of  
Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts.

Harold Craig  
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13 Dec 17 H. 35

CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS TECHNIQUE

IN THE FICTION

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT

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A Thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Minnesota

By

Lillian A. Helms

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

June

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

A comparison between the great number, length and place in classical literature of Sir Walter Scott's novels, and the amazingly short time in which they were composed, as well as the careless manner in which they were flung together, gives rise to the question: were they the result of an original and unconscious practice or of a studied and careful theory of literary composition? The answer to this question may be best found in a comparison between what Scott himself said regarding the novel and what he actually did in the Waverley series. A definite knowledge of what he said may be obtained from his introductions, notes, explanations and comments upon his own methods, his Lives of the Novelists, and Periodical Criticisms on Romance from his Miscellaneous Prose Works. What Scott really did can be learned from the novels themselves and from an occasional remark upon his method of compilation recorded in his Journal or in a letter to an intimate friend or persistent publisher.

Under conscious theory may be grouped all Scott's knowledge of literary performance, his realization of artistic details, his awareness of the desirability of introducing factors necessary for a better depiction of setting, characters, or plot. His practice, on the other hand, includes the methods employed during states of mental activity in which the foregoing considerations were temporarily disregarded-- periods in which the inspiration derived from content or thought entirely outweighed any serious contemplation of literary technicalities.

Scott was not only a novelist of the first rank, he was also an intelligent and competent critic of the art of fiction. In the General Preface to the Waverley Novels, the author tells us that he showed a distinguished character for the talent of tale-telling when yet a mere school-boy. It was his chief enjoyment on holidays to escape with a chosen friend to a beautiful

retreat such as Arthur's Seat, Salisbury Crags, or Braid Hills. There amid romantic surroundings they recited to each other such wild adventures of knight errantry, battles, and enchantments as they were able to devise.

During his later youth, a long illness added to Scott's interest in the kingdom of fiction. For several weeks he was confined strictly to his bed and had much time at his disposal. Unless he played chess, he was allowed to do nothing, save read, from morning to night. There was at this time in Edinburgh a circulating library containing a most respectable collection of books of every description. Into this great ocean of literature Scott was cast without compass or pilot. He read almost all the romances, old plays, and epic poetry available-- no doubt unconsciously amassing materials for the task which was later to be his lot. Of all this reading, histories, voyages, and travels became his favorites, for he realized that the events they depicted were nearly as wonderful as those which were the works of imagination, with the added advantage that they were, in a great measure, true. This extensive reading, though of a rather desultory sort, inspired him with a desire to learn more concerning the writers of his own age-- concerning the Romanticists of the Eighteenth Century. Fifteen years previous to the publication of The Lady of the Lake in 1805, he had "nourished the ambitious desire to compose a tale of chivalry after the style of Walpole's Castle of Otranto, with plenty of Border characters and supernatural incident",<sup>(1)</sup> but this subject was never developed. This reveals the fact that though but a youth of nineteen he had made himself familiar with current fiction and its predominant characteristics. This very romance of Walpole's marked the crude beginnings of a vast movement, which Scott followed with undisguised eagerness. So it is but natural to find that out of the wild tales of Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, Mrs. Radcliffe, Maturin and their host of imitators

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Preface to Waverley Novels, p. 10. A. & C. Black, Edinburgh (1877).

eventually sprung the historical romance, in other words, the Waverley Novels.

By a brief review of literary conditions during the latter part of the eighteenth century, we can appreciate the scant material Scott had to build upon, and the vast amount of rubbish that he was obliged to discard in his efforts to construct a novel of a truly worth-while and permanent character. A study of Scott's introductions, notes, explanations and comments on his own novels and novels of other writers will show what his theory of prose fiction was. Finally, an analysis of the Waverley series from the viewpoint of setting, plot and character will show what Scott actually did. It will appear that in spite of his clear understanding of his art, his excellence is due not to an application of the conscious technique governing the literary productions of his time but to an unconscious amplification of his conception of the nature and scope of the novel as a form of art.

The Revival of Romanticism had brought many new and diverse elements into English literature. This new trend had manifested itself in three classes of prose fiction; the Gothic romance, the revolutionary novel of democracy, and stories of domestic life and manners. Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, "Monk" Lewis, and Anne Radcliffe were the chief exponents of the Gothic romance. They chose for their subjects material which had been cast aside by the realists of the age. Ghosts, goblins, and other mysterious spirits frequented their descriptions. The introduction of the supernatural, the employment of more marked pictorial effects, the return to Orientalism and Medievalism, the fixing of their minds upon all that was weird and ghastly caused their novels to take on the character of a literature of superstition, insanity, and nightmare. "Gloomy Gothic castles in wild valleys, with forests clothing the neighboring hills; lawless banditti hovering around; the moon bowling fearfully through clouds over inland scenes of horror or illuminating with its full blue light Italian bays and fated spots on their promontories; monks, tyrannical chieftains, and inquisitions; shrieks in the night, supernatural noises, the tolling of the bell, the heavy footstep in

the corridor, the flash of lightning thru the Gothic window, the door dashing open, the unnameable apparition; the roar of the simultaneous thunder,- are all representative of this style of art."<sup>(1)</sup>

Horace Walpole in his Castle of Otrante attempted to unite the old and new forms of romance and as a result obtained a hybrid sort of composition which is most ridiculous. The huge helmet with its superhuman power, the mysterious trap door leading to subterranean regions, the clattering of unseen armour, the enormous hand upon the staircase, the three drops of blood which fall from the nose of Manfred's statue, are but a few of the mechanical devices Walpole employed for heightening the terror of his readers. A single paragraph conveys the general tone of the entire novel:

"Words cannot paint the horror of the princess' situation. Alone in so dismal a place, her mind imprinted with all the terrible events of the day, hopeless of escaping, expecting every moment the arrival of Manfred, and far from tranquil, on knowing she was within reach of somebody, she knew not whom, who, for some cause, seemed concealed thereabout; all these thoughts crowded on her distracted mind, and she was ready to sink under her apprehensions. She addressed herself to every saint in heaven, and inwardly implored their assistance. For a considerable time she remained in an agony of despair. At last, as softly as was possible, she felt for the door, and, having found it, entered, trembling, into the vault from whence she had heard the sigh and steps. It gave her a momentary joy to perceive an imperfect ray of clouded moonshine gleam from the roof of the vault, which seemed to be fallen in, and from whence hung a fragment of earth or building, she could not distinguish which, that appeared to have been crushed inwards. She advanced eagerly toward this chasm, when she discerned a human form standing close against the wall. She shrieked, believing it the

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David Masson's British Novelists and their Styles, p. 192. Boston (1875).

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ghost of her betrothed Conrad."

In marked contrast to these vivid settings, the characters and plot are most colorless. Evan Manfred, who is supposed to be the bold, unmitigated villain, pales at the sight of blood, and Theodore, the hero prince, weeps at the thought of a life separation from Isabella. The plot with its constant thrilling and hair-breadth escapes, resembles that of the modern detective novel. Walpole, however, must be given credit for introducing into his fiction a more realistic view of current character and conversation than is to be found in the novels of any of his predecessors.

Such, in general, was the type of work turned out by the other members of The School of Terror. Clara Reeve in her Champion of Virtue and Old English Baron somewhat modified these extreme mechanical devices. Indeed, her writing sounds almost probable, but the result was highly insipid and we welcome the more positive ventures of Mrs. Radcliffe and "Monk" Lewis. The Mysteries of Udolpho, Mrs. Radcliffe's best known work, reveals her peculiar ability to excite terror and to give an appearance of the supernatural without permitting anything actually supernatural ever to happen. The mysterious element is always ultimately explained in an entirely satisfactory manner. When we are convinced that something terrible has just occurred, or just about to occur, the plot suddenly begins to clear up and Ludovico explains his strange disappearance from the north chamber or the mystery of the veiled portrait is solved. (2)

Mrs. Radcliffe's observance of strict "propriety" and use of natural scenery for settings -- two characteristics comparatively unknown in fiction at this time-- marked her as the originator of a new form of Romance. The Mysteries of Udolpho was but a forerunner of a large group of nineteenth century novels which

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(1) Castle of Otranto, Ch.I, p. 12. Philadelphia, (1854).

(2) See Part II, Chaps. I to VI Mysteries of Udolpho. G. Rutledge & Sons, London, n.d.

(3) See Part I, Chaps. XIX, *ibid*.



abounded in a deeper understanding and a truer delineation of external nature. Though Mrs. Radcliffe employs the same type of story and introduces the same sort of characters again and again, she succeeded during her generation because of her fixity of purpose and her strict adherence to the literary principles she had laid down for herself. Later we shall see how Scott with his "strong and sane imagination" (1) was temporarily led away by this romantic intoxication.

Matthew Lewis discarded some of this supernatural machinery, and in The Monk and The Bravo of Venice conceived as clever character depiction as can be found in this abnormal class of fiction. Yet pages of his novels remind us of the extreme modern melodrama. They are filled with such sentences as the following: "He wiped away a drop which hung upon his eyelid. Pshaw! 'twas not a tear; the night wind is sharp and bitter and makes the eyes water." (2) Little wonder that later novelists found in these tales nothing but food for laughter!

The revolutionary novel, represented by such writers as Mrs. Inchbald, Thomas Day, William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft and Robert Bage, dealt chiefly with social problems. It treated of every subject of interest to either parents or children. Reactionary and anarchistic in character, and pedagogical in style, it presented the ideas of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" in all their aspects, but, unfortunately, it frequently degenerated into a mere story filled with sentimental (3) moralizing. Bage's clever depictions of manners and customs of his own class, Holcroft's anarchistic tales based upon his own experiences among stable boys (4) and strolling actors, and Godwin's expositions of the vices and mal-adjustments

(1) Raleigh, The English Novel, p. 235. London (1904).

(2) See Lewis, The Bravo of Venice, Ch. I, p. 6. London (1804).

(3) See Bage's Mounth Herneth, Ballantyne Novelists' Library. Hurst, Robinson & Co., London (1821).

(4) See Holcroft's Anne of St. Ives, Vol. III, p. 156. London, n.d.  
See Hugh Trevor, Vol. II, p. 172

(1)

of society are without doubt the best efforts of this school and the forces which later kept it from falling into absolute oblivion.

Frances Burney and Maria Edgeworth devoted their attention to the solution of domestic problems. Their novels revealed an added tact and perception, a clearer insight into the affairs of every day life, especially among their own sex, than can be found in the writings of any of their predecessors. To what extent these stories-- especially those of Miss Edgeworth-- influenced Scott will be made evident by a later study of his attitude toward them.

Aside from the above mentioned novelists, there were scores of hopeless imitators whose works were but foolish and inane compositions treating of every possible phase of sentiment and horror. These writings served one purpose-- an object of laughter for real novelists. In 1813 Eaton Stannard Barrett in The Mercine derided prevailing fiction. His novel, though somewhat weak in general plot, was normal and healthy and gave evidence that at last a change was actually taking place in the literary tastes of serious-minded individuals.

The following year Sir Walter Scott, having combined with his master stroke all the best of these diverse and wayward attempts, gave to the world its first great historical novel-- Waverley. 'The wheel had come full circle'. A genius had successfully, in a single story, united elements which heretofore had been considered separate and distinct, had touched them with his magic wand and had made them real, vital, and compelling.

Eighteenth century novelists had been, on the whole, too engrossed in their own endeavors to devote a great deal of attention to criticisms of their contemporaries. A few men before Scott, however, did concern themselves regarding the standards to be applied. Bage, Holcroft, and Godwin, for example, seemed to formulate definite theories regarding the technique of their novels. But a brief extract from a letter or perhaps a page from a well preserved journal is prac-

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(1) See Godwin's Caleb Williams, p. 80. Frederick Warne, New York (1904).

tically all the evidence to be had even from these men. No novel writer before Scott's time attempted to set down in concise form any analysis of past or current fiction such as is found in The Lives of the Novelists.

William Hutton, a bookseller and antiquarian of Edinburgh, recopied several of Bage's letters. Through his daughter, Catherine Hutton, Scott came into possession of a number of these letters and reprinted them in his biography. On January 24, 1801, Bage wrote to Hutton concerning the latter's Dissertation on Juries. He spoke of its lively style of composition and its just reasoning. Then abruptly changing the subject, he asked why he must be abused because of his recent novels (Mount Henneth, Barnam Downs, and The Fair Syrian) -- "And why dost thou call me an infidel? Do I not believe in everything thou sayest?" Thus in his characteristic frivolous manner, Bage ignored one of the most serious charges ever made against him. The three novels, Mount Henneth, Barnam Downs, and James Wallace, which are included in the Ballantyne's Novelist's Library, add to our conviction that Bage's attitude toward fictitious composition was a very cheerful one, free from much concern of either content or style. The endless letters-- a true Richardsonian type of presentation-- grow tiresome because of their repetition of similar dialogues and scenes. This troubled no one less than Bage himself. He rambled on, dispensing his free-minded philosophy of life to all who were willing to listen. His general feeling toward careful work was summed up in a remark made in a later letter to Hutton. "No matter. Ten years hence, perhaps, I shall not care a farthing."<sup>(2)</sup>

Holcroft's Memoirs, continued by Hazlitt in 1815, gives us a glimpse as to his critical ability. In the first book, written in Holcroft's own words, we read that he greedily devoured Gulliver's Travels as well as other tales of Swift and Addison. He comments that these marvelous stories no doubt had an effect of the

(1) Life of Thomas Holcroft, by William Hazlitt, Bk. I, Ch. XV, pp. 42-43. J. M. Dent & Co., London (1902).

(2) Jan. 24, 1801. In Lives of the Novelists. E.P. Dutton & Co., New York (1910).

highest importance upon the tenor of his later writings. Books of piety, if the author were but inspired with zeal, also fixed his attention. (1) By far the greater part of Holcroft's attention was devoted to an analysis of dramas rather than novels, but occasional lines indicate that in relating a tale he favored a certain calmness and sanity which were entirely unknown to members of the School of Terror. In a letter written to Fulke Greville on October 28, 1799, he said: " I very much approve what you are pleased to term the niceties of verbal criticism. An exact and well regulated machine depends as much if not more upon small things as great; but still there must be vast labour and precision indeed, if no particle of dust insinuates itself among the cogs and wheels; however, when such is discovered, it would be folly not to brush it away." (2)

In Godwin's Preface to Fleetwood, or the New Man of Feeling, he briefly said that he has particularly sought to exercise one caution-- not to repeat himself. "Caleb Williams was a story of very surprising and uncommon events, but which were supposed to be entirely within the laws of established course of nature, as she operates in the planet we inhabit. The story of St. Leon is of the miraculous class, and its design, to mix human feelings and passions with incredible situations and thus render them impressive and interesting. Some of those fastidious readers-- they may be classed among the best friends an author has, if their admonitions are judiciously considered-- who are willing to discover those faults which do not offer themselves to every eye, have remarked that both these tales are in a vicious style of writing; that Horace has long ago decided that the story we cannot believe, we are, by all the laws of criticism, called upon to hate; and that even the adventures of the honest secretary, who was first heard of ten years ago, are so much out of the usual road, that not one reader in a million can fear

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(1) Life of Thomas Holcroft, by William Hazlitt, Bk. I, Ch. XV, pp. 42-43.  
J. M. Dent & Co., London (1902).

(2) Ibid, p. 265.

that they will ever happen to himself." <sup>(1)</sup> These considerations caused Godwin to reject all his improbability and in his following novel to depict the regular events that occur in the life of an ordinary English family of the middle class.

The foregoing brief comments reveal the unsettled state of the novel form at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Within ten years, however, Scott began not only to create a new type of fiction but also to formulate distinct ideas, methods and rules in accordance with which he thought the art of fiction should be developed. In the following chapter, by considering what Scott said regarding the efforts of other novelists, we shall learn the basic principles of his conscious practice.

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(1) Vol. I, p. 2, Preface. Published in Edinburgh Review, (1805).

## CHAPTER II

## SCOTT AS A CRITIC OF THE NOVEL

Scott's most extended criticisms of current fiction is his Lives of the Novelists, originally Biographical and Critical Sketches, written for the purpose of serving as Prefaces to the Ballantyne's Novelists' Library. As one writer on this subject suggests, "Here was an art, not a century old in its complete discovery, though counting 'tries' and embryonic failures, as well as some successes in special departments, over a couple of thousand years. Here was the living master of that art who had opened new regions to it, dealing with his predecessors, and dealing with them in a fashion giving scope for talents which, if not his greatest, were great."<sup>(1)</sup>

Each of the seventeen biographies is interesting and instructive. Scott's frequent recurrence to the same points of technique will show us what parts of the theory of novel-writing particularly engaged his attention. His treatment of the famous quartet-- Richardson, Fielding, Smollet, and Sterne-- and the no less important trio-- Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, and Anne Radcliffe-- are without question the most effective studies. We shall find throughout, however, Scott's praise of true merit, censure of technical and moral weaknesses, and apologies for faults which often were as characteristic of his own writing as of the works of his predecessors.

A study of Scott's criticisms will assure us that he did not prefer any one class of fiction to the exclusion of all others. He did, nevertheless, recognize the strong and weak points of each kind of novel-- the wild Gothic romance as well

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Introduction to Lives of the Novelists-- George Saintsbury, p. 8. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1905.

as the quiet stories of domestic life and manners-- and recorded his opinions concerning them with assuredness and competence. These opinions are the subject of the immediate chapter. Which form of composition Scott chose for himself will be discussed in connection with his criticism of his own novels.

Regarding Samuel Richardson, Scott writes, "Hitherto, romances had been written, generally speaking, in the old French taste, containing the protracted amours of princes and princesses, told in language boldly extravagant and metaphysically absurd. In these wearisome performances, there appeared not the most distant allusion to the ordinary tone of feeling, the slightest attempt to paint mankind as it exists in the ordinary walks of life-- all was rant and bombast, stilt and buskin. It will be to Richardson's eternal praise, did he merit no more, that he tore from his personages these painted vizards, which concealed under a clumsy and affected disguise everything like the natural lineaments of the human countenance, and placed them before us in all the actual changes of feature and complexion, and all the light and shade of human passion."<sup>(1)</sup>

In discussing the character of Pamela, though Scott objects to the "strain of cold-blooded prudence which runs through all the latter part of the novel, to which we are obliged almost to deny the name of virtue",<sup>(2)</sup> he approves of the general soothing and tranquillizing effect which Richardson produces. Scott's analysis of the inferior personages suggests that his own subordinates may have been drawn with careful precision. This fact must be borne in mind as we study his character depiction.

Clarissa Harlowe's absolute perfection, even at its best, seemed overdrawn and unreal to Scott, but regarding Lovelace's unnatural conduct, he declares that "some exaggeration must be allowed to the author of a romance."<sup>(3)</sup> He does

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Lives of the Novelists-- Richardson, p. 19

(3)

Ibid, p. 23

not, however, excuse all such improbabilities, and infers that the author made a serious mistake in making Belford keep his friend's infamous secret. The moral lesson in its entirety produced a pleasing effect, one which was later reflected by the author of the *Waverley Novels* himself.

The hero of Sir Charles Grandison is objected to on the ground that he is "an image of perfection not to be met with in the living world."<sup>(1)</sup> This novel is regarded somewhat as a work of amusement. Scott refused to consider it as a true effort of Richardson.

Richardson's style is highly commended-- "The style of Richardson was of that pliable and facile kind which could, with slight variety, be adapted to what best befitted his various personages. ... The power of Richardson's painting in his deeper scenes of tragedy never has been, and probably never will be, excelled. . . His comedy is not overstrained; he never steps beyond the bounds of nature, and never sacrifices truth and probability to brilliancy of effect."<sup>(2)</sup>

At the outset of the discussion of Fielding, "the father of the English novel", Scott commends him for depicting English characters and manners exclusively. Because Fielding employed his extended knowledge of all classes in English society, his familiarity with English scenery, and his acquaintance with English characteristics, in all his works, Scott felt that this author made himself immortal as a painter of national manners. He regards Fielding as the first of British novelists in that he was the first to unite "force of character, strength of expression, felicity of contrast and situation, and a well-constructed plot, in which the development is at once natural and unexpected, and where the interest is kept uniformly alive, till summed up by the catastrophe,"<sup>(3)</sup>-- all the requisites essential to the labour of the novelist.

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(1) Lives of the Novelists--Richardson-- p. 32.

(2) *Ibid*, pp. 44-45.

(3) *Ibid*, p. 48



Here the biographer digresses and gives us a rather ingenious, though somewhat unsatisfactory, comparison between the purpose of a novelist and that of a dramatist. A single quotation is noteworthy, for it furnishes evidence that Scott realized the seriousness of his task-- though critics repeatedly condemn him in this respect: "It is the object of the novel-writer, to place before the reader as full and accurate a representation of the events which he relates, as can be done by the mere force of an excited imagination, without the assistance of material objects. His sole appeal is made to the world of fancy and of ideas, and in this consists his strength and his weakness, his poverty and his wealth. He cannot, like the painter, present a visible and tangible representation of his towns and his woods, his palaces and his castles; but, by awakening the imagination of a congenial reader, he places before his mind's eye, landscapes fairer than those of Claude, and wilder than those of Salvator."<sup>(1)</sup>

The commendation of The History of a Foundling also suggests the means by which the beauty of a novel may be enhanced. "The felicitous contrivances, and happy extrication of the story, where every incident tells upon and advances the catastrophe, while, at the same time it illustrates the characters of those interested in its approach, cannot be too often mentioned with the highest approbation. The attention of the reader is never diverted or puzzled by unnecessary digressions, or recalled to the main story by abrupt and startling recurrences; he glides down the narrative like a boat on the surface of some broad navigable stream, which only winds enough to gratify the voyager with the varied beauty of its banks."<sup>(2)</sup>

Scott thought that every successful novelist must be more or less a poet, even though he may never have written a line of verse. The same quality of imagination, the same accurate power of examining and portraying human character and

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Lives of the Novelists, p. 49

(2)

Ibid, p. 63

passion, the same ability to picture the external face of nature, and the same talent of describing well what he feels with acuteness, are as essential to him as to his artistic rival, the poet. But it is possible for the novelist to polish his characters and lines to such a degree that their delineation loses its ease and simplicity. A too finished, too laboured, style of excellence is apt to be the result of such endeavor. It was on the grounds of ease and simplicity in description that Scott ascribed to the fertile genius of Smollet an equal place with his great rival, Fielding. Possibly the fact that this author was Scott's compatriot caused the latter to over-estimate Smollet's versatility in scene depiction, varied range of incidents, and "inventiveness" of character delineation.

Imitation and lack of originality, according to Scott, were Richard Cumberland's chief weaknesses. Scott says that Cumberland lacked the inspiration, the strong impulse, the "inward fire, which makes or forces a way for its own coruscations, without respect to the course of others."<sup>(1)</sup> In this biography Cumberland's three novels-- Arundel, Henry, and John de Lancaster-- are dealt with briefly. The first two were received rather well by the public, but the last was less fortunate. Previous to this time, Scott had written a rather harsh article in the Quarterly Review on John de Lancaster, but, realizing that it was an effort of old age, now thought it unfair to dwell longer upon it. The easy and clear manner in which the characters, boldly and firmly sketched, were depicted in scenes with which the author was perfectly familiar, gained favor with Scott. He attributes its attractive certainty of treatment to its manner of composition-- "hastily written during the residence of a few weeks at Brighthelmstone, and sent to the press by detached parcels."<sup>(2)</sup>

Henry was written much more slowly and with extreme labour and attention. It is praised as an excellent novel, though perhaps it did not receive quite as much

(1) Lives of the Novelists, p. 120

(2) Ibid, p. 137

praise as the author expected for it. Scott generously places Cumberland among the first of English writers in his depiction of life in the lower ranks of society. He felt that Cumberland's delineation of clowns, buffoons, and other unusual characters, was especially good. Ezekiel Dow, an old fashioned Methodist preacher, with all his charming idiosyncracies traced in the cleverest way, is to Scott "not only an exquisite, but a just, portrait."<sup>(1)</sup>

Though beauty of description pervades the scenes, Scott felt that Cumberland was less happy in some of the narrative effects he introduced. The attempts to imitate Fielding in this respect fall somewhat flat. To the biographer scenes which were supposed to be humorous become actually disgusting. He objects to the same series of incidents, connected by the same train of sentiment which had formerly been employed by the author in his dramas. There is not a sufficient degree of improbability to render the tale really interesting. Scott finally questions the tone of Cumberland's situations on the grounds that those that do not cause ridicule, "exceed the decent license permitted to modern writers."

With the remark that Cumberland was the last living representative of the literature of his own age, inconsistent perhaps, but still a strong champion of the regular novel, the biographer turns to Oliver Goldsmith and his "Vicar of Wakefield".

When a fiction writer brings forth his first representations of any class of characters, Scott deems it wise for him to seize upon the leading and striking outlines, leaving for his second attempt the less obvious and ordinary traits of character. These lesser points may be able to hold the reader's interest later, if but placed in a new and less natural light. The narrative of The Vicar of Wakefield, despite certain improbabilities, excelled because of Goldsmith's ability to sketch his scenes with the greatest truth and simplicity. Inconsis-

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Lives of the Novelists, p. 138

tencies and practically impossible circumstances are overlooked because of the remarkable charm of the little book. "Whatever defects occur in the tenor of the story, the admirable grace and ease of the narrative, as well as the pleasing truth with which the principal characters are designed, make The Vicar of Wakefield one of the most delicious morsels of fictitious composition on which the human mind was ever employed. The very simplicity of this charming book renders the pleasure it affords but the more permanent."<sup>(1)</sup> The quiet dignity, the quaint humour, the delicate pathos and high moral tone are so happily blended that Scott closes the volume with a sigh that such a genius should have been so prematurely removed from a sphere of literature which he so highly adorned.

Tristram Shandy, Sterne's best known work, appealed to Scott not as a narrative but as a collection of scenes, dialogues, and portraits. "It resembles the irregularities of a Gothic room, built by some fanciful collector, to contain the miscellaneous remnants of antiquity which his pains have accumulated, and bearing as little proportion in its parts as there is connection between the pieces of rusty armor with which it is decorated."<sup>(2)</sup> Though its learning was not entirely original-- in fact, the author was sternly accused by many of plagiarism-- it displayed considerable wit, and this trait received the greatest praise at Scott's hands. He admired Yorick, the lively, witty, sensitive, and heedless parson, with his simplicity of character. The fanciful ornamentation of Sterne's style naturally did not in itself attract the sturdy Scotsman, but its vigor and virility, animation and force, caused him to record Sterne as "one of the most original geniuses whom England has produced."<sup>(3)</sup>

Walpole's depiction of "speciosa miracula" made a marked impression upon Scott. Although he admitted the impossibility of Walpole's descriptions, he

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(1) Lives of the Novelists, p. 160

(2) Ibid, p. 185

(3) Ibid, p. 187

acknowledged that they had won a place in his heart. He almost coveted "the art of exciting surprise and horror," and definitely defended Walpole from the charge of clumsiness or puerility. He insisted that Walpole succeeded in producing a perfectly harmonized tale, one in which the frame and tenor of the whole story was perfectly adjusted to the mainspring of the interest. "Horace Walpole has attained in composition what, as an architect, he must have felt beyond the power of his art."<sup>(1)</sup>

This discussion of Walpole affords Scott an opportunity to record his ideas regarding romantic narrative. In his conception it is divided into two kinds--the first, that which, being in itself possible, may be a matter of belief at any period; the second, that which, though held impossible by more enlightened ages, is yet consonant with the faith of earlier times. In the latter class Scott puts the Castle of Otranto, adding that Mrs. Radcliffe endeavored to effect a compromise between these two distinct styles. He is inclined to prefer Walpole's method on the grounds that it is more simple and impressive, more probable and ingenious. But even at its best, Scott realizes that the supernatural machinery is introduced too frequently, is thrust upon the reader's mind too hard and too constantly. In addition, that "veil of mysterious obscurity" which is later found in Hawthorne's works and which Scott admired so deeply is lacking in this earlier novel. Supernatural objects are brought forward into too strong daylight. Ghosts and disembodied spirits are too distinct and corporeal.

The scenes were of interest and grandeur, the characters strongly drawn and well discriminated, the plot with its unity of action highly commendable. The marvellous incidents were an object of delight to Scott's imaginative mind. Presented, as they were, in pure and correct English, not burdened with "those heavy though powerful auxiliaries which Dr. Johnson imported from the Latin language, and which have since proved to many a luckless wight, who has essayed to use

(1)

Lives of the Novelists, p. 198

them, as unmanageable as the gauntlets of Eryx", <sup>(1)</sup> and free from the luxuriant, florid, and highly varnished landscape painting of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances, they won the highest praise from the author of the Waverley Novels.

In direct contrast to these detailed descriptions, it is interesting to note Scott's observation here that "Description, for its own sake, is scarcely once attempted in the Castle of Otranto; and if authors would consider how very much this restriction tends to realize narrative, they might be tempted to abridge at least the showy and wordy exuberance of a style more fitted for poetry than prose". <sup>(2)</sup>

The ingenious analysis of Clara Reeve's Old English Baron contains a paragraph of unusual interest from the viewpoint of conscious technique. It is the old question of the best method by which a tale of the middle ages can be presented to the modern world. The author here repeats the same idea he held when writing his completion of Queen-Hoc-Hall, namely, that a fiction writer, to be successful, must sacrifice the time element in his settings and often "invest his characters with language and sentiments unknown to the period assigned to his story." <sup>(3)</sup> Scott suggested to other novelists, as a solution of this problem, that they follow the example set by Clara Reeve in this respect and adopt a style sufficiently antiquated to suit the character of the narrative, and yet modern enough to supply all that coloring which ancient times did not afford.

The same air of mystery which caused Scott to delight in the Castle of Otranto won from him hearty applause for Mrs. Radcliffe's tales. It has already been suggested that their weird horrors do not seem consistent with Scott's sane view of life. What, then, were the qualities which caused him to award to her such unreserved praise? Briefly, the following statements selected from the biography explain Scott's attitude:

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(1) Lives of the Novelists, p. 202

(2) Ibid, p. 203

(3) Ibid, p. 209

"We become then at length aware that there is no uncommon merit in the general contrivance of the story; that many of the incidents are improbable, and some of the mysteries left unexplained; yet the impression of general delight which we have received from the perusal remains unabated, for it is founded on recollections of the powerful emotions of wonder, curiosity, even fear, to which we have been subjected during the currency of the narrative." (1) Replying to the objection that Mrs. Radcliffe more often succeeded in exciting interest and apprehension than in giving vividness or dignity to her explanation of supernatural incidents, Scott reveals a most typical point of his character as a workman. He (2) terms the concluding chapters of a narrative "the torment of romance writers". He abhors the unraveling of the skein of adventures which he or any other writer has been very industrious to perplex. He dislikes to take time to account for all the incidents which he has been at so much pains to render unaccountable. Perhaps it is this common bond that makes Scott more tolerant with Mrs. Radcliffe's poorly developed plots than he would otherwise have been. He did not attach much weight to the fact that some incidents are imperfectly explained, or that points can be distinguished upon which the author had doubtless intended to lay the foundation of something which she afterwards forgot or omitted. So long as the setting is effective, the plot incidents impressive, and the characters simply but forcibly sketched, Scott did not, either in theory or practice, greatly concern himself about minutiae. At times, to be sure, they led him astray, but he never made them a burden or a delay for the rapid sweep of his imagination.

One great sentence makes the essay on Mrs. Radcliffe immortal and strikes the keynote between the old and new, the classic and romantic, forms of literary criticism: "The real and only point is whether, considered as a separate and dis-

(1)

Lives of the Novelists, p. 220

(2)

Ibid, p. 232

tinct species of writing, that introduced by Mrs. Radcliffe possesses merit, and affords pleasure; for, these premises being admitted, it is as unreasonable to complain of the absence of advantages foreign to her style and plan, and proper to those of another mode of composition, as to regret that the peach tree does not produce grapes, or the vine peaches."

Despite the many weaknesses of Robert Bage, Scott assigns him a rather startlingly important place. At the outset of his criticism, he asserts that Bage was a writer of no ordinary merit in the department of fictitious composition. Though Scott charges Bage with misrepresenting the different classes of society, of slackening the reins of discipline and morality upon certain points, of frequently employing indelicate expressions, of introducing ethical principles based upon a weak philosophy rather than a strong religion, he insists that "the works of Bage are of high and decided merit."<sup>(1)</sup> In addition to these "speculative errors", Scott admits that the plots seldom possess much interest, that the character conversions are often too quick and improbable, that the personages are indifferent and unreal. Yet Bage's "strong mind, playful fancy, liberal sentiment, and extensive knowledge everywhere apparent"<sup>(2)</sup> overbalanced all these defects and called forth Scott's constant admiration. Scott felt that the general object of Bage's composition was to exhibit character-- not to compose a narrative--, to infuse into others his own political ideas and philosophical opinions, not to entertain the reader with wonder, or melt him with sorrow. From this standpoint Scott considers Bage most successful. Briefly, Scott regards him not vicious in himself, but one who, entertaining erroneous notions, unwittingly casts them upon the public. Perhaps if Bage had not had "a continual goodhumored gaiety of natural temper", "a rich and truly English vein of humour", and "a light, gay, pleasing air", Scott would not have been carried quite so

(1) Lives of the Novelists, p. 290

(2) Ibid, p. 278



agreeably thru his novels. This fact but suggests a further possibility as to Scott's own method. Did he ever permit a delight in his own easy, good-humoured style to carry him far from the standards he may have placed for himself? Did he really care whether the Devil flew away with Punch, or whether Punch strangled the Devil? Did he always wish to assert his absolute literary authority or declare himself technically the master?

Defoe's fictitious compositions held a peculiar charm for Scott. Neither the style, unmarked by any especial beauty, the scene, usually laid in the lower walks of life, the type of characters delineated, nor the artful conducting of the story, is the cause of his praise. It is the appearance of reality given to the incidents narrated which holds Scott's attention. In his estimation, this characteristic outweighs the author's deficiencies in style, homeliness of language, and rusticity of thought. Recalling the great speed with which the Waverley Novels were composed, we read the following quotation with an appreciative smile: "Defoe seems to have written too rapidly to pay the least attention to the circumstance (the artful conducting of the plot); the incidents are huddled together like paving stones discharged from a cart, and have as little connection between the one and the other. The scenes merely follow, without at all depending on each other. They are not like those of the regular drama, connected together by a regular commencement, continuation, and conclusion, but rather resemble the pictures in a showman's box, which have no relation further than as being enclosed within the same box and subjected to the same string." <sup>(1)</sup> Here again we find Scott criticizing in another a weakness to which he himself was prone, again find him dealing with faults which were constantly forcing their way into his novels. Is he not, perhaps, pleading his own cause, as well as performing his prime office as a critic-- that of a careful reviewer of the work of other famous men?

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(1)

Lives of the Novelists, p. 374

An excellent summary of Scott's attitude towards the treatment of the improbable, the unreal and the circumstantial is found in his discussion of Defoe's romances. Here he suggests that "The air of writing with all the plausibility of truth must, in almost every case, have its own peculiar value; as we admire the paintings of some Flemish artists, where, though the subjects drawn are mean and disagreeable, and such as in nature we would not wish to study or look close upon, yet the skill with which they are represented by the painter gives an interest to the imitation upon canvas which the original entirely wants. But, on the other hand, when the power of exact and circumstantial delineation is applied to objects which we are anxiously desirous to see in their proper shape and colours, we have a double source of pleasure, both in the art of the painter, and in the interest which we take in the subject represented. Thus the style of probability with which Defoe invested his narratives was perhaps ill bestowed, or rather wasted, upon some of the works which he thought proper to produce."<sup>(1)</sup>

Volume XVIII on Romance in Scott's Miscellaneous Prose Works, also contains many striking comments on the novel form. Shortly after Godwin's publication of Fleetwood, Scott wrote his criticism of the story. This analysis forms one of the essays in the volume on Romance. At the outset Scott states that the story of Caleb Williams was displeasing; "we do not have any great pleasure in recollecting the conduct and nature of the story; for murderers, and chains, and dungeons, and indictments, trial and execution, have no particular charms for us, either in fiction or in reality."<sup>(2)</sup> Scott adds that the moral drawn is mischievous, being a direct reproach upon the laws of the country and in direct opposition to that of the worthy chaplain of Newgate. Still he acknowledges that few novels he has met have excited a more powerful interest in him than Caleb Williams. "Several scenes are painted with the savage force of Salvator

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(1)

Published by Robert Cadell, Edinburgh. Houlston and Stoneman, London, 1850.

(2)

Volume XVIII, Article IV, p. 118

Rosa; and, while the author pauses to reason upon the feelings and motives of the actors, our sense of the fallacy of his arguments, of the improbability of his facts, and of the frequent inconsistency of his characters, is lost in the solemnity and suspense with which we expect the evolution of the tale of mystery.<sup>(1)</sup>

The plot rather amuses Scott . We feel throughout that he catches the idea Godwin is attempting to convey. Though he approves of it in general, he is of the opinion that the author over-reached himself in trying to present to the public a story with a "moral". Scott does not discuss the adventures of the hero with any degree of seriousness, the prolix wandering of the narrative bores him, and he brands the closing incidents as "dragging insufferably." Nor does the character depiction please him. Fleetwood's suggested embezzlement of Mary's fortune brings forth a severe reproof from Scott's pen: "This is one of the instances of coarseness and bad taste with which Mr. Godwin sometimes degrades his characters. In Caleb Williams a gentleman passionately addicted to the manners of ancient chivalry, becomes a midnight assassin, when an honourable revenge was in his power; and in Fleetwood, a man of feeling, in soliciting a union pressed upon him by love, by honour, and by every feeling of humanity, is influenced by a motive of remote and despicable calculation, which we will venture to say never entered the head of an honest man in similar circumstances."<sup>(2)</sup> Scott further accuses the hero of using "sesquipedalia verba" in his tragic declarations over inconsequential trifles to a ridiculous extent. The same fault, revealed in a slightly different way, pervades the whole book. In the first two volumes ordinary incidents are related with the utmost extravagance of sentiment-- a thing Scott abhorred. All the more delicate expressions of feeling, the finer and more artistic bits of description, are wanting. "The inflated language of high passion"<sup>(3)</sup> constantly recurs, at times to such an extent that the critic judges

(1) Lives of the Novelists, p. 119

(3) Ibid, p. 135

(2) Ibid, p. 127

Fleetwood a fit subject for the madhouse. Scott does commend the general tenor of the narrative in the third volume, but the credulity and excess of emotion exhibited by the hero, caused him to close the book with a painful reflection, and a hope that a stern deeper insight be ready at any moment to take charge of the frantic "man of feeling".<sup>(1)</sup>

Scott's article on John de Lancaster, which has been previously mentioned, is worthy of somewhat further note here. It comprises the fifth Article in the Volume on Romance in the Miscellaneous Prose Works. Condemning Cumberland for his close imitation of Fielding, Scott points out the wide difference between the two novelists. On the whole, Cumberland is classed as a mediocre writer. His ability to observe and sketch unusual characters gives an air of originality to his otherwise rather ordinary stories. He excels in his depiction of such types as sailors, persecuted Jews, and picturesque Spaniards. Scott says that "excepting Smollet alone, whose sailors are, moreover, of a more ancient and rugged school none has better delineated the characteristic and professional traits of the British navy, than Mr. Cumberland."<sup>(2)</sup> He pictures classes rather than individuals. Scott insists that only two traits are really the author's own, all the others being borrowed from his predecessors. "The first is an odd and rather unnatural transfer of the task of the courtship from the hero to the heroine of the piece." --- "The second predilection is the peculiar pleasure which this author finds in a duel with all its previous pomp and circumstance of gentlemanlike defiance, retort and reproof valiant."<sup>(3)</sup> Neither device calls forth admiration, or even approval, from Scott.

As for the story of John de Lancaster itself, its brief, simple plot does not exhibit a marked amount of skill. The squabbles between the villain and hero seem unreal and at times even disgusting. The feeling that virtue goes on from

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Lives of the Novelists, p. 136

(burgh, 1881.

(2)

Miscellaneous Prose Works, Vol. XVIII, Article VI, p. 140. A & C. Black, Edin-

(3) Ibid, p. 141

triumph to triumph and that vice is baffled in its schemes affords Scott a chance to approve of its moral tone. The characters are dismissed with but little additional discussion-- as usual, they are merely good imitations. The setting, however, is seriously questioned. Scott strongly objects to Cumberland's method of introducing an air of antiquity into the story. Instead of depending upon ancient Welsh manners, legends, traditions, and other appropriate allusions, Cumberland's hero constantly referred to imaginary authors, black letter lore, and foolish devices of a similar sort. Scott brands this "insertion of vague gibberish" as a "wretched substitute", taking from the hero all possible air of originality or individuality. This review contains as stern charges from the standpoint of technique as are to be found anywhere in Scott's criticisms. Even the closing paragraph does not accord to Cumberland any higher place in literature than "dignified and respectable mediocrity".<sup>(1)</sup>

In a letter written to Lady Abercorn on April 22, 1813, Scott speaks of Maturin's novels having struck him "as evincing a strong, though very wild and sombre, imagination, and great powers of expression". He continues, "His powers of language, indeed, sometimes outrun his ideas, like the man who was run away with by his own legs. But I think this man really deserving of patronage from his talents."<sup>(2)</sup>

A more detailed criticism of Maturin is found in the Miscellaneous Prose Works. Though the articles are valuable as reviews of The Fatal Revenge and Women, they have an added interest for us in that they still further indicate Scott's attitude-- in an age of disbelief-- toward the treatment of the supernatural. This discussion, together with his resumé of Hoffman's Tales and Mrs. Shelley's Frankenstein, shows that though for a time greatly affected by the mysterious element of these earlier Gothic romances, he eventually saw the

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(1) Miscellaneous Prose Works, Vol. XVIII, Article VII, p. 157.

(2) Familiar Letters of Sir Scott, Vol. I, p. 286. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, 1894.

incongruity of their extreme settings and had his laugh at the foolish machinations of these wild tales. Here Scott openly states that he disapproves of the method introduced by Mrs. Radcliffe, of turning, when the pantomime was over, "the seamy side without" and exposing the mechanical aids by which the delusions were accomplished. He also charges that the terrors of this class of novel writers were too accumulated and unremitting, and that the element of surprise is excited too repeatedly to cause vivacity of emotion. At all times he felt that supernatural appearances in fictitious narratives should be rare, brief, and indistinct. Only in this way can they be effective and produce respectful consideration and belief, rather than ridicule and incredulity, on the part of the reader.

Of highest importance for our study is the review of Maturin's Fatal Revenge, which contains a most interesting summary of later eighteenth century fiction. Scott had, it seems, been branded as a "dull" critic and, in order to prove the futility of the charge, had decided to extend his sphere of inquiries "to review not only the grave and weighty, but the flitting and evanescent, productions of the times; for the purpose of giving full scope to our ingenuity, and evincing the vivacity of our talents so wantonly called in question."<sup>(1)</sup> Because of this charge, he decided to devote his attention to a search of proper subjects for this lighter type of criticism. So, he tells us, he sent to his publisher for a consignment of the most recent and most fashionable novels, in the hope that from them he might select matter more fitted to his task. A rather random choice was made, owing doubtless to the fact that none of these works could truly appeal to him, even after a laborious inspection.

According to Scott's version, at this time all the novels of such writers as Richardson, Mackenzie, and Burney had vanished entirely from the shelves of the circulating libraries. These "elegant and fascinating productions", though

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Miscellaneous Prose Works, Vol. XVIII, Article VII, p. 169.

possibly too romantic for a practical mind, had been obscured by "the multitude of base and tawdry imitations" of their followers. As a result, the reading public had grown weary of all this overwhelming display of sentimentality and longed for something of true depth and spirit. Scott praises the simple efforts of Charlotte Smith and pays an unqualified tribute to Maria Edgeworth at this juncture. "Nor do we owe less to Miss Edgeworth, whose true and vivid pictures of modern life contain the only sketches reminding us of human beings, whom, secluded as we are, we have actually seen and conversed with in various parts of this great metropolis." (1) The compositions of Fielding and Smollet are called "novels of a tragic comic nature," which though not of the extreme sentimental class, contained much delicate humour. Scott adds that in his search these comic satires were followed by more fictitious and scandalous tales of even lower rank. These he strongly inveighs against and warns their authors to keep out of his reach, lest he run them down "like so many porpoises." He then relates that among the flat imitations of Mrs. Radcliffe and Mr. Lewis he unexpectedly came upon The Fatal Revenge and soon unconsciously found himself involved and engrossed in its perusal.

Scott's survey of Jonothan Swift's writings is most important to our discussion. To quote directly, "No word drops from Gulliver's pen in vain. Where his work ceases for a moment to satirize the vices of mankind in general, it becomes a stricture upon the parties, politics, and courts of Britain; where it abandons that subject of censure, it presents a lively picture of the vices and follies of the fashionable world, or of the vain pursuits of philosophy, while the parts of the narrative which refer to the traveler's own adventures form a humorous and shrieking parody of the manners of old voyagers, their dry and minute style and the unimportant personal incidents with which their journals are incumbered." (2) Swift's power of adopting and sustaining a fictitious

(1) Miscellaneous Prose Works, Vol. XVIII, Art. VII, p. 183.

(2) Miscellaneous Prose Works, Life of Swift, Vol. II, appendix, p. 480.

character, under every peculiarity of place and circumstance, led Scott to remark that he possessed the art of verisimilitude to a most extensive degree. The secret of this success is attributed to Swift's ability to relate narrative carefully and minutely. His discrimination in selecting such incidents as might strike the beholder of a real fact seemed to Scott unsurpassed. He concludes: "Jonathan Swift was blessed in a higher degree than any of his contemporaries with the powers of a creative genius. The more we dwell upon the character and writings of this great man, the more they improve upon us; in whatever light we view him, he still appears to be an original."<sup>(1)</sup>

Scott's admiration of Jane Austen was unfeigned. Her novels were a constant delight to him. The truth of her paintings of middle-class life were regarded by him as "inimitable." We are at once reminded of the well-known entry in his Journal-- "Also read again, and for the third time at least, Miss Austen's very finely written novel of Pride and Prejudice. That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which to me is the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-Wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch, which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment is denied to me! What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!"<sup>(2)</sup>

The essay on Northanger Abbey and Persuasion contains the chief remaining points of criticism made by Scott in this invaluable volume of the Prose Works. Owing to the fact that it was written in 1821, it presents a somewhat later view of the novel form than many of the articles we have just been reviewing. At this time fictitious composition was no longer considered trifling or frivolous by the literary world. It was not necessary for critics to apologize for reviewing

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Miscellaneous Prose Works, Life of Swift, Vol. II, appendix, p. 480.

(2)

The Journal of Sir Walter Scott, p. 155. New Ed., Edinburgh, David Douglass, 1891.



a novel. Scott himself had been one of the prime agents of this change. By means of his first twelve works he had presented to the general reading public the value of true fiction. As he suggests in this discussion, the new character of the novels within the last fifteen or twenty years had caused the delights of narrative stories to be more generally realized by men of sense and taste. A new form of novel had arisen-- not the wild and alarming tales so prevalent up to this time, but stories depending for their charm upon calm and quiet incidents, upon scenes chosen from real nature and real life. Scott draws an excellent distinction here between an improbable and an unnatural composition. He writes:

" A fiction is unnatural when there is some assignable reason against the events taking place as described-- when men are represented as acting contrary to the character assigned them or to human nature in general. ---- A fiction is improbable when there is no reason assigned why things should not take place as represented except that the overbalance of chance is against it."<sup>(1)</sup> He further comments that an author who understands human nature is not likely to introduce into his compositions anything that is unnatural, though he will often have much that is improbable. This means that he will have, as a result, striking scenes and situations, persons with perfect consistency of character, and plots filled with extraordinary adventures. Scott mentions that Fielding's novels were a good illustration of this very difference. Strong in all other points, they lacked force because of the impossibility of the circumstances which existed. Among the authors of this new school, Scott places Miss Austen first. Miss Edgeworth's remarkable talent for narration, despite the improbability and didacticism which characterized her stories, won for her second place. There is another important reason for Scott's deciding as he does. He feels that Miss Edgeworth's method of moral instruction was too open and undisguised. Moreover, she practically ignored the mainspring of virtue or the remedy for vice--religion.

(1) Miscellaneous Prose Works, Vol. XVIII, Art. VIII, p. 214.

Miss Austen, on the other hand, was openly a Christian writer, without being obtrusive in the expression of her ideas. Her moral lessons spring incidentally from the circumstances of the story. Scott also reminds us that Miss Austen's novels are of the highest type from the technical standpoint of setting, plot, and character. Her scenes are incomparable, containing vividness of description, fidelity of detail, and local coloring described with an unparalleled charm of unstudied ease. Her plots, compact in plan, unified in action, and based upon natural events, have the great virtue of concealing the final catastrophe until it suddenly occurs quite unforeseen and unexpected. Scott does not approve of artificial methods for disclosing plot development. Only in cases of extreme necessity does he favor the hero telling his own tale, or the heroine confiding her troubles to her dearest friend by a series of letters. Though Miss Austen occasionally related conversation and introduced letters with striking effect, she more frequently caused her characters to talk for themselves, in conversations suited to their individual natures. Her inferior characters, especially women, are sketched with the greatest skill, presenting as wide differences of type as her major figures. One of her exceptional merits in Scott's eyes is the insight she affords into the subtle intricacies of female character--peculiarities which men cannot, and women usually will not, describe. Scott contests the objections that her fools are too much like nature and her delineations too detailed-- both faults productive of tediousness. He says that such critics must, on this basis, find even Shakespeare tiresome, and shows how, without these characteristics, it would be impossible to become acquainted or interested in these charming personages. Finally, he declares without hesitation that, due to the piquant and harmonious way in which Miss Austen blends humour and innocent amusement with a certain seriousness of thought, her works are "the most unexceptionable of her class."

The foregoing quotations and suggestions have been selected from this group of biographies and reviews because they reveal in Scott's own words what he considered the strong and weak points of fiction writing. A brief summary of his ideas will more clearly define his views regarding literary methods.

As has been noted, Scott's catholic nature did not wholly eliminate any type of novel. The simplicity, truth, and sincerity with which Richardson, Fielding, and Smollet delineated human nature won his approval. Horace Walpole's, Mrs. Radcliffe's, and Clara Reeve's ability to arouse terror by means of their Gothic novels, Sterne's original way of recording true sentiment, Defoe's remarkable skill in making the unreal seem credible, and even Bage's satires on the vice and follies of his age, as well as the better characteristics displayed by more minor writers, drew forth approbation from Scott.

A main thought thruout the discussions is that the real object of a novel is the amusement of the reader. Scott discounts the effect of open moral instruction. He is always pleased with the presentation of proper sentiments, but objects to a too obvious treatment of them. He states that the mode in which a story is told, the picture of life sketched, and the fictitious incidents related, are the vital factors upon which the real value of narrative depends. Beyond the point of pleasure and instruction for youthful minds, Scott says that novels are "a mere elegance, a luxury contrived for the amusement of polished life." (1) Such a theory naturally opposes the sentimental ideas held by the "revolutionists" and writers of purpose novels. For this reason Godwin and Holcroft, Mrs. Incebold and others of the same school, do not appeal as seriously to Scott as authors who depicted in a simple and concise manner the experiences of average humanity.

A point made by Scott is that a successful novelist is not apt to be a successful dramatist. He observes that, whereas a good drama may be based upon the

(1)

Lives of the Novelists, p. 58

setting, plot, and characters chosen from a novel, it is practically impossible satisfactorily to develop the essentials of a play into a good novel.

A helpful review as to Scott's ideas regarding the unfolding of a plot is given in his article on Maturin's works. He says: "It is the business of the author to wrap up his narrative in mystery during its progress; to withdraw the veil from his mystery with caution, and inch, as it were, by inch; and to protract as long as possible the trying crises, until any reader of common sagacity may foresee the inevitable conclusion,- a period after which neither interest of dialogue, nor splendour of description, neither marriage dresses, nor settlement of estates, can protract the attention of the thorough-bred novel reader."<sup>(1)</sup>

The introduction of supernatural machinery is dealt with at length. Walpole's method of introducing ghosts without furnishing accompanying explanations meets Scott's approval. Mrs. Radcliffe, on the other hand, is blamed for attempting to give reasonable causes for her mysteries. Clara Reeve is charged with invoking spirits which she is not capable of "endowing with manners and language corresponding to their supernatural character." Defoe's ability to relate circumstantial evidence for his plots, while still maintaining the role of an impersonal narrator, arouses Scott's enthusiasm.

These biographies and comments show us that there was a considerable change in Scott's mind as to the best variety of novel form. Lockhart tells us that "during the earlier years of his life, Scott greatly disliked domestic stories, always preferring tales that smacked of the romantic and adventurous, but that the experience and wisdom of his later years taught him also to like the quieter stories laid in more peaceful settings."<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Miscellaneous Prose Works, Vol. XVIII, Art. VII, p. 175

(2) Lockhart's Life, Vol. I, p. 35

At first Scott was intoxicated by the scenes of supernatural horror to be found in the Gothic romance, but after he paused to take a calmer view, he steadily grew away from this hybrid sort of fiction, passed over the didacticism of the political and purpose novel, accepted a few of the more normal ideas presented by the "society" novelists, and at last, having been influenced by the quiet stories of Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen, adopted a settled conception as to his idea of a true novel. This novel was more or less composite in character, containing the finest elements of the various schools to which his predecessors and contemporaries belonged. How well Scott succeeded in placing this superior type of fiction in a fitting historical background, thus originating an entirely new prose form, we shall see in a further discussion of the Waverley Novels themselves.

We shall now turn to Scott's Journal, Familiar Letters, and Prefaces, to find what he said directly concerning each novel of the Waverley series. These comments, in addition to the criticisms we have already discussed, will give us an accurate conception of Scott's technical knowledge and of the conscious methods employed in the production of his own fiction.

## CHAPTER III

## SCOTT'S CONCEPTION OF HIS OWN TASK

From the year 1828 until the close of his life, Scott devoted the greater part of his time to writing the introductions and notes for his Waverley Novels. He was accustomed to call the final edition for which he was compiling these annotations the Opus Magnum. It was a fitting name-- for the work was truly great.

A chronological study of the prefatory matter to these novels and of Scott's comments in his Letters and Journal will furnish us with a further knowledge regarding the development of Scott's ideas as to technical methods. By means of this material, we shall also be able to trace the main causes of Scott's quick ascent to literary superiority, his steady progress while his genius was at its height, and his gradual decline to an uncertain state of artistic performance.

In The Preface to the Waverley Novels (written years after Waverley itself) Scott says that he had been in the Highlands when they were much less accessible and less visited than they were at the time his novels were composed. He was acquainted with many of the old warriors of 1745, who were easily induced to fight their battles over again for the benefit of a willing listener. "So," he writes, "it naturally occurred to me that the ancient traditions and high spirit of a people, who, living in a civilized age and country, retained so strong a tincture of manners belonging to an early period of society, must afford a subject favorable for romance, if it should not prove a curious tale marred in the telling."<sup>(1)</sup> These early recollections of the Highland scenery and customs had made such a favorable impression in The Lady of the Lake that he was induced to attempt something of the same sort in prose. Consequently, during the year 1805, he "threw

(1)

General Preface to Waverley Novels, p.11. A. & C. Black, Edinburgh, 1879.

together", as he says, about one-third of the first volume of Waverley.<sup>(1)</sup> Be-  
 cause of an unfavorable criticism by James Ballantyne,<sup>(2)</sup> this portion of the manus-  
 cript was laid aside and entirely forgotten for some time. The author later de-  
 cided that Ballantyne's opinion was perhaps rather just-- since the specimen did  
 not extend beyond the departure of the hero for Scotland and, as a result, lacked  
 interest. At the time, however, it sufficed to dampen Scott's zeal for prose nar-  
 ration and for several years he devoted his entire attention to poetical composition.

When he again turned his thoughts to a continuation of the romance which he  
 had commenced, he could not find what he had already written. He declares that he  
 was too indolent to attempt to write it anew from memory, but two factors finally  
 encouraged him to search for the missing manuscript. In the first place, he wish-  
 ed to make the English familiar with Scotch manners and customs as Miss Edgeworth  
 had made them with the Irish. In writing of this ambition, he says: "Without  
 being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humor, pathetic tenderness,  
 and admirable tact, which pervade the works of my accomplished friend, I felt that  
 something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which  
 Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland-- something which might introduce  
 her natives to those of the sister kingdom in a more favourable light than they  
 had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and in-  
 dulgences for their foibles. I thought, also, that much of what I wanted in talent  
 might be made up by the intimate acquaintance with the subject which I could lay  
 claim to possess, as having travelled through most parts of Scotland, both High-  
 land and Lowland; having been familiar with the elder, as well as the modern, race;  
 and having had from my infancy free and unrestrained communication with all ranks  
 of my countrymen, from the Scottish peer to the Scottish ploughman. Such ideas

(1) There is evidently some mistake in this date, since The Lady of the Lake was  
 published in 1810.

(2) See Ballantyne's letter concerning Waverley written from Edinburgh, Sept. 15, 1810.  
 Lockhart's Life of Scott, Vol. III, p. 299-300. A. & C. Black, Edinburgh, 1882.

often occurred to me, and constituted an ambitious branch of my theory, however far short I may have fallen of it in practice."<sup>(1)</sup>

On November 11, 1814, James Ballantyne wrote to Maria Edgeworth: "There are very few who have had the opportunities that have been presented to me of knowing how very elevated is the admiration entertained by the author of Waverley for the genius of Miss Edgeworth. From the intercourse that took place betwixt us while the work was going on through my press, I know that the exquisite truth and power of your characters operated on his mind at once to excite and subdue it. He felt that the success of his book was to depend upon the characters much more than upon the story, and he entertained so just and so high an opinion of your eminence in the management of both as to have strong apprehensions of any comparison which might be instituted betwixt his picture and yours. He has often said: 'If I could but hit Miss Edgeworth's wonderful power of vivifying all her persons, and making them beings in your mind, I should not be afraid.'" <sup>(2)</sup> It was this idea more than any other that gave to the Waverley Novels their highest value and prevented them from being a mere repetition in prose of the earlier poetic successes of their author.

About this time Scott also chanced to engage in a constructive work which formed sort of an essay piece and gave him the hope that he might in time become somewhat of a master of the craft of romance writing and be esteemed a tolerable workman. This work was the completion of a romance, Queen-Hoc-Hall, written by Joseph Strutt. Mr. Strutt was familiar with all the antiquarian lore necessary for the purpose of composing the projected romance; and although the manuscript bore the marks of hurry and incoherence natural to the first rough draft, the author of it evinced, in Scott's opinion, considerable powers of imagination. Since the work was unfinished, Scott supplied as hasty and inartificial a conclusion

(1) Preface to Waverley Novels, p. 14.

(2) Lockhart, Vol. IV, p. 406



as could be shaped out of the story. This concluding chapter was a distinct step in his advance toward romantic composition. Scott felt that the romance would have been more successful if the author had not rendered his language so ancient and displayed his antiquarian knowledge quite so liberally. He felt that "every work designed for mere amusement must be expressed in language easily comprehend-<sup>(1)</sup>ed." He conceived it possible to avoid Strutt's error and to render a similar work more light and obvious to general comprehension.

Because of the indifferent reception of Queen-Hoo-Hall, Scott<sup>(2)</sup> was led to form the opinion that a romance, founded upon a Highland story, with more modern events, would have a better chance at popularity than a tale of chivalry." His thoughts, therefore, returned once more to the tale which he had actually commenced, and accident at last threw the lost sheets in his way. When found, he immediately set to work to complete the story according to his original purpose. At this point, Scott confesses that the mode in which he conducted the narrative scarcely deserved the success which it attained. He says that the tale of Waverley was put together with so little care that he "cannot boast of any distinct plan of the work." We know that he must have written with incredible speed, for he compiled<sup>(3)</sup> at least two-thirds of the story in less than three weeks.

"The whole adventures of Waverley, in his movements up and down the country with the Highland cateran Bean Lean, are managed without much skill. It suited best, however, the road I wanted to travel, and permitted me to introduce some descriptions of scenery and manners, to which the reality gave an interest which the powers of the author might otherwise have failed to attain for them. And though I have been in other instances a sinner in this sort, I do not recollect any of these novels in which I have transgressed so widely as in the first of the

(1)

General Preface, p. 15

(2)

Ibid, p. 16

(3)

Letter to Morrill, July 9, 1814, in Familiar Letters, p. 324. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, 1894.

(1)  
series."

Waverley was published in 1814 without the name of the author. Finally the disclosure of his name induced him to give the tales to the press in a corrected and improved form. Scott admits that no attempt was made to alter the tenor of the stories, the character of the actors, or the spirit of the dialogue. He feels that any attempt to change a work already in the hands of the public is generally unsuccessful. "In the most improbable fiction the reader still desires some air of verisemblance and does not relish that the incidents of a tale familiar to him should be altered to suit the taste of critics or the caprice of the author himself."

Scott says that he simply corrected the errors of the press and slips of the pen. He also ventured to make some emendations of a different character, which, without being such apparent deviations from the original stories as to disturb the reader's old associations, did add something to the spirit of the dialogue, narrative, or description. These corrections consisted of "occasional pruning where the language was redundant, compression where the style was loose, infusion of vigor where it was languid, and the exchange of less forcible for more appropriate epithets-- slight alterations, in short, like the last touches of an artist, which contribute to heighten and finish the picture, though an experienced eye can hardly detect in what they consist." (2) Upon the whole, the author hoped that the Waverley Novels, (3) in their new dress, would not be found to have lost any part of their attractions in consequence of receiving his illustrations and undergoing his careful revision.

The correspondence between Scott and his friend J. B. S. Morritt, in regard to the first volume of Waverley, is most important in this connection. In a let-

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(1)  
General Preface, p. 16

(2) & (3)  
Ibid, p. 3. The General Preface was written in after the completion of many of the Novels.

ter written July 9, 1814, after relating his manner of composition, Scott says that he "had a great deal of fun in the accomplishment of the task, though it probably will not be popular in the South because of the type of its humor,"<sup>(1)</sup> which was not only local, but even professional.

The next letter, written on July 24, is also characteristic of its author. His naive modesty ever kept him from according to his own works the value they actually deserved. Here he calls himself "Sir Fretful" and claims that he "left the story to flag in the first volume on purpose," while "the second and third have rather more bustle and interest."<sup>(2)</sup> He gives as his reason for this method his wish to avoid the ordinary error of novel-writers, of making their first volume their best. It was only the immense sale of the first edition that drew from him the mildest form of exultation, to the effect that "It may really boast to be a tolerably faithful portrait of Scottish manners, and has been recognized as such in Edinburgh."<sup>(3)</sup>

A great deal of discussion has taken place over the possible reasons for the author of the Waverley Novels wishing to conceal his identity. This argument is of little concern to us, but we are interested in Scott's answer to Morritt's urgent request for him to acknowledge their authorship. "I shall not own Waverley; my chief reason is that it would prevent me of the pleasure of writing again."<sup>(4)</sup> He had already remarked in a previous letter regarding The Bridal of Triermain, one of his poetic compositions, that "this sort of muddling work"<sup>(5)</sup> amused him.

Scott often confessed his contempt for his own heroes. This contempt is well-shown in his discussion of Edward Waverley, of whom he wrote, "He is a sneak-

(1)

Familiar Letters, p. 324

(2) & (3)

Ibid, p. 326

(4)

Lockhart's Life of Scott, Vol. IV, p. 168'

(5)

Ibid, Vol. IV, p. 171

ing piece of imbecility." "If he had married Flora, she would have set him upon the chimney-piece as Count Borowlaski's wife used to do with him." Concerning his heroes in general, he continues: "I am a bad hand at depicting a hero, properly so called, and have an unfortunate propensity for the dubious characters of borderers, buccaneers, highland robbers, and all others of a Robin Hood description. My rogue, always, in spite of me, turns out my hero."<sup>(1)</sup>

Guy Mannering, published seven months after Waverley, was the work of six weeks at a Christmas, for sake of "refreshing the machine." Very little discussion of method is found in the Introduction. The only point worthy of note is that though the author felt that Astrology did not retain sufficient influence over the general mind of the reading public to constitute the main-spring of a romance, it would appeal to nineteenth century men and women more than the grosser and more crude superstitions of the preceding age.

As to actual technique, however, nothing is said until we come to the Advertisement to the Antiquary. Here Scott says that he was more eager to depict manners carefully than to construct an artificial or combined plot. He frankly states that his inability to unite these two requisites of a good novel caused him considerable regret.<sup>(2)</sup> He further remarks that he purposely did not employ historical personages as a background for his characters, since he did not regard them as fitting subjects for narrative delineation. On the other hand, he did not employ private characters, since he thought it not in keeping with the respect he wished to show them. He impresses us with the fact that he studies at all times to generalize his portraits, endeavoring to make them seem in every instance the results of the imagination, though possessing some resemblance to real individuals. Scott realizes that he sometimes fails in his attempts and that occasionally his characters were so marked by a leading or principal trait that they stood forth

(1)

Preface to Waverley, p. 6

(2)

The Antiquary Advertisement, p. 2. A. & C. Black, Edinburgh.

in all their original personality, despite the author's attempts to conceal it. He cites Jonothan Oldbuck as an unsuccessful result of just such an attempt.

Undoubtedly, of all his novels, The Antiquary was the author's favorite. His own words show us that he valued it even higher than the two great works which had preceded it. "It wants the romance of Waverley and the adventure of Guy Mar-  
nering; and yet there is some salvation about it, for if a man will paint from  
(1)  
nature he will be likely to amuse those who are daily looking at it."

It is in connection with this novel that we first find the heading "Old Play", hereafter used so often by Scott. The story is told that the author once asked John Ballantyne to find a passage for him in Beaumont and Fletcher which he wished to quote. Ballantyne was not immediately successful and Scott, becoming impatient, exclaimed, "Hang it, Johnnie, I believe I can make a motto sooner than  
(2)  
you will find one!" After this discovery, we are not surprised to read of Scott resorting more frequently to his invention than to his memory for assistance. It was but another way of expressing one of his fundamental opinions about literary methods-- that to write much and with abundant spontaneity was inevitably better than to put before the public a few meagre details polished so minutely that they failed to convey accurately the author's ideas to his readers.

In the novel itself we often come upon such confessions regarding minute construction as the following:-- "I like to little to analyze the complication of the causes which influence actions, that I will not venture to ascertain whether our  
(3)  
Antiquary's humanity", etc. This confession is truly characteristic of Scott. Analysis in any form, particularly analysis of motive, was ever burdensome to him.

(1) Lockhart, Vol. V, p. 142.

(2) Ibid, p. 145.

(3) The Antiquary, Chapt. I, p. 26.

One of the briefest and altogether the most unusual of Scott's stories is The Black Dwarf. The author gives us two reasons for its brevity. In a letter written to Lady Stuart November 14, 1816, he asserts that neither he nor his publishers were quite satisfied with this work. He says that he had begun a Border tale well enough, but, tiring of it and not finding people enough for his imagination, had "bungled up a conclusion as a boarding school miss finishes a task which she had commenced with glee and accuracy." <sup>(1)</sup> And in the Introduction to the novel, written thirteen years later, he says that he had intended the story to be longer and concluded by a less artificial catastrophe, but that the advice of a friendly critic who thought the character of the dwarf more likely to excite the disgust than the interest of the reader had brought it to an abrupt close. Hence the narrative itself was almost as disproportional and distorted as the chief character.

It has frequently been suggested that The Black Dwarf held a singular interest for Scott because it gave him an opportunity to reveal the dark feelings so often connected with physical deformity. Perhaps he did put into the speech and actions of this grotesque figure the feelings and emotions he habitually suppressed in regard to his own misfortune. This, however, is pure conjecture, for-- in keeping with his optimistic temperament-- we have not a single hint from Scott's pen to verify this statement.

Scott absolutely refused to re-write this story at the request of Murray and Blackwood, his publishers, though he did declare it "not very original in its concoction and lame and impotent in its conclusion," <sup>(2)</sup> and immediately began <sup>(3)</sup> Old Mortality, with which he felt he succeeded much better. The two novels constituted the first series of The Tales of My Landlord.

(1) Familiar Letters, p. 376.

(2) Lockhart, Vol. V, p. 172

(3) Familiar Letters, p. 376

Scott's boast that he was complete master of the history of medieval times is most evident in this remarkable romance. Yet feeling that he is incompetent to the task of recording all this information, he attributes it to "My Landlord", Jedediah Cleishbotham by name. In this way he puts all petty critics to shame and confusion and shields himself from the shafts and thrusts of their ignorance and foolishness. Scott was rather pleased with the result of his efforts at character delineation in his covenanted story. He tells Lady Louisa Stuart in a characteristic letter that he trusts that he has "come decently off, for as Falstaff reasonably asks, is not the truth the truth?"<sup>(1)</sup>

Whereas in the three preceding novels the author confines his explanations and introductory material to the Introduction and perhaps the first chapter, in Rob Roy we find it taking up the entire attention until we reach Chapter IV. All weaknesses in technique Scott attributes to his illness. The defective plot seemed to worry him and he says that he introduced rhyme and blank verse very occasionally to seduce the reader's continued attention by powers of composition of stronger attraction than his own.<sup>(2)</sup>

The title of Rob Roy was, as Lockhart tells us, the suggestion of Mr. Constable, Scott's publisher. Constable had great difficulty in persuading the author to adopt it. "What!", said he, 'Mr. Accoucheur, must you be setting up for Mr. Sponsor, too?— but let's hear it.' Constable said the name of the real hero would be the best possible name for the book. 'Nay,' answered Scott, 'never let me have to write up to a name. You well know I have generally adopted a title that told nothing.' The bookseller, however, persevered; and after they had dined, these scruples gave way."<sup>(3)</sup>

Scott had, as he says, "too much flax upon his distaff", and as a result was constantly weaving unnecessary bits into the main frame-work of the story. It

(1)

Familiar Letters, p. 376

(2)

Rob Roy, Chap. III, p. 142. A. & C. Black, Edinburgh n.d.

(3)

Lockhart, Vol. V, p. 217.

was not consistent with either his patience or his plan to write a fourth volume, so he was "obliged at last to draw a rough, coarse, and hasty thread."<sup>(1)</sup> He also complained that it "smelt of the cramp"<sup>(2)</sup> and his great relief at finishing the entire work is expressed in a letter written to Ballantyne on the day the novel was published:

"With great joy  
I send you Roy.  
'Twas a tough job<sup>(3)</sup>  
But we're done with Rob."

Before Rob Roy was completed Scott had begun The Heart of Midlothian. In this Introduction Jedediah Cleishbotham thanks the public for having received the previous Tales of My Landlord with so much favor. He again resolves to rehearse his story with great truth depicting all religious sects as they are and not as the glamour of some historical writings infer them to be. The tone of this preface is very light and nothing really serious is said on the subject of literary performance. James Ballantyne objected to the plot, on the ground that it was too sad. Scott's answer was "The whole story must be mournful. There is no way of changing the tone that I can discover, for it is a mournful story. In fact, it will thrive the better, for novelty is half the battle."<sup>(4)</sup> And in Scott's Journal we read: "A rogue writes to tell me that he approves of the first three volumes of The Heart of Midlothian, but totally condemns the fourth. . . However, authors should be reasonably well pleased when three-fourths of their work are acceptable to the readers."<sup>(5)</sup> These meagre bits are all the records we have of Scott's remarks regarding this novel.

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(1) Familiar Letters, Vol. II, p. 4

(2) Ibid, Vol. I, p. 425

(3) Lockhart, Vol. V, p. 267

(4) Familiar Letters, Vol. II, p. 5

(5) Journal, p. 409



In the first chapter of The Bride of Lammermor the author relates a supposed conversation between himself and an artist friend-- Dick Tinto-- concerning the former's power as a writer of narrative. The discussion proceeds after the following fashion:

Tinto says, "Your characters make too much use of the gob box, they patter too much, there is nothing in whole pages but mere chat and dialogue."

"The ancient philosopher," said I in reply, "was wont to say 'Speak that I may know thee,' and how is it possible for an author to introduce his personae dramatis to his readers in a more interesting and effectual manner than by the dialogue in which each is represented as supporting his own appropriate character?"

"It is a false conclusion. I hate it, Peter, as I hate an unfilled can. I will grant you undeed that speech is a faculty of some value in the intercourse of human affairs, and I will not insist on the doctrine of the Pythagorean toper, who was of the opinion that over a bottle speaking spoiled conversation. But I will not allow that a professor of the fine arts has occasion to embody the idea of his scene in language in order to impress upon the reader its reality and its effect. On the contrary, I will be judging by most of your readers, should these tales ever become public, whether you have not given us a page of talk for every single idea which two words might have communicated, while the posture, and manner and incident, accurately drawn and brought out by appropriate coloring, would have preserved all that was worthy of preservation and saved these everlasting 'said he's' and 'said she's' with which it has been your pleasure to encumber your pages.

"Description," he continued, "is to the author of a romance exactly what drawing and tinting are to a painter. Words are his colors, and, if properly employed, they cannot fail to place the scene which he wishes to conjure up as effectually before the mind's eye as the tablet or canvas presents it to the bodily organs. The same rules apply to both and an exuberance of dialogue in the former case is a verbose and laborious mode of composition which goes to confound the

proper art of fictitious narrative with that of drama, a widely different species of composition, of which dialogue is the very essence, because all, excepting the language to be made use of, is presented to the eye by the dresses, persons, and actions of the performers upon the stage. But as nothing can be more dull than a long narrative written upon the plan of a drama, so where you have approached most near to that species of composition, by indulging in prolonged scenes of mere conversation, the course of your story has become chilled and constrained, and you have lost the power of arresting the attention and exciting the imagination, in which upon other occasions you may be considered as having succeeded tolerably well."

After further discussion upon the subject to be chosen for the forthcoming novel, Scott accepts from his friend an old manuscript which contains a memorandum and sketch of an old tale of former times. This tale the author decides to weave into a story. He promises Tinto to endeavor to render his narrative descriptive rather than dramatic. He adds, however, that his favorite propensity at times overcomes him, so that his characters, like many others in this talkative world, speak now and then a great deal more than they act.<sup>(1)</sup>

The same characteristic of dislike for careful, detailed work which has been found in preceding novels is expressed here:- "I will not attempt to describe the mixture of indignation with which Ravenswood left the seat which had belonged to his ancestors."

This work was written during periods of great physical pain, and when the printed volume containing The Bride of Lammermoor was put into the author's hands, he did not recollect "one single incident, character, or conversation" in it,<sup>(2)</sup> though he still remembered the chief materials he had employed in its construction. While reading it, he remarked that it made him laugh and he trusted "that the good

(1)

Bride of Lammermoor, pp. 37-45. A. & C. Black, Edinburgh.

(2)

Lockhart, Vol. VI, p. 90.

natured public would not be less indulgent."<sup>(1)</sup>

Very little is said in The Legend of Montrose as to the writer's method. He remarks that he has endeavored to enliven the tragedy of the tale by the introduction of a personage proper to the time and country, adding that in this he has been held by excellent judges to have been successful.<sup>(2)</sup> He also urges that the reader give implicit credit to the natural events of the story, which actually rest on a basis of truth, even though he does treat with disbelief some of the "wild and wonderful incidents which belong to the period and the narrator."<sup>(3)</sup>

In reply to the charge of many critics that Caleb Balderstone was a mere caricature, Scott allowed that he "might have sprinkled rather too much parsley over his chicken,"<sup>(4)</sup> but refused to further admit that this censure was just. However, on November 25, 1819, Scott wrote to Lady Abercorn that the fourth series of The Tales of My Landlord was not by the author of the three former, and was "but a mere catchpenny of some hack author."<sup>(5)</sup> This brief remark shows us how he actually valued The Legend of Montrose.

About this time Scott felt that in confining himself to subjects purely Scottish, he was not only likely to wear out the indulgence of his readers, but also greatly limit his own power of affording them pleasure. As a result, he decided to make an experiment on a subject purely English. In the Introduction to Ivanhoe he tells us that this production was highly successful upon its appearance and may be said to have procured for its author "the freedom of the rules,"<sup>(6)</sup> since thereafter he was permitted to exercise his powers of fictitious composition

(1)

Lockhart, Vol. VI, p. 90.

(2)

Legend of Montrose, Intro., p. 6. A. & C. Black, Edinburgh.

(3)

Ibid, p. 32.

(4)

Lockhart, Vol. V, p. 88.

(5)

Familiar Letters, Vol. II, p. 63

(6)

Introduction to Ivanhoe, p. 4. A. & C. Black, Edinburgh.

in England as well as Scotland. He says that he chose the name Ivanhoe for two reasons; firstly, it had an English sound,- and secondly, it conveyed no indication whatever of the nature of the story-- a quality which Scott considered of no small importance.

In the remainder of the Introduction Scott justifies his license in changing the ancient language, sentiment, and manners to more modern forms. Severe antiquarians had accused him of impressing upon the rising generation false ideas of the age he described, of "polluting the well of his story with modern inventions,"<sup>(1)</sup> of mingling fiction with truth. In his reply he admits that he does not pretend to the observation of complete accuracy, even in the matters of outward costume, much less in the more important points of language and manners. He adds that it is necessary for exciting interest of any kind, that the subject assumed should be, as it were, translated into the manners, as well as the language, of the age we live in. So in Ivanhoe Scott endeavors so far to explain the ancient manners in modern language and so far to detail the characters and sentiments of his persons that the modern reader would not find himself "much trammelled by the repulsive dryness of mere antiquity."<sup>(2)</sup> By doing this he says that he attempts to keep within legitimate bounds, to avoid inconsistencies and confusions so far as possible.

This work, like several of its predecessors, was compiled during moments of the greatest pain. Scott records in his Journal (Oct. 30, 1826) that he "little thought to have survived the completing of this novel,"<sup>(3)</sup> yet it ranks among the finest of all his efforts.

Scott ably defends himself from the attacks of the critics who objected to the way he concluded his plot. He says: "The character of the fair Jewess found so much favour in the eyes of some fair readers that the writer was censured be-

(1) Introduction to Ivanhoe, p. 6

(2) Ibid, p. 7

(3) Journal, p. 289

cause, when arranging the fates of the characters of the drama, he had not assigned the hand of Wilfred to Rebecca, rather than the less interesting Rowena. But not to mention that the prejudices of the age rendered such a union almost impossible, the author may, in passing, observe that he thinks a character of a highly virtuous and lofty stamp is degraded rather than exalted by an attempt to reward virtue with temporal prosperity. Such is not the recompense which providence has deemed worthy of suffering merit; and it is a dangerous and fatal doctrine to teach young persons, the most common readers of romance, that rectitude of conduct and of principle are either naturally allied with, or adequately rewarded by, the gratification of our passions, or attainment of our wishes. In a word, if a virtuous and self-denied character is dismissed with temporal wealth, greatness, rank, or the indulgence of such a rashly-formed or ill-assorted passion as that of Rebecca for Ivanhoe, the reader will be apt to say, 'Verily, Virtue has had its reward!' But a glance on the great picture of life will show that the duties of self-denial and the sacrifice of passion to principle are seldom thus remunerated; and that the internal consciousness of their high-minded discharge of duty produces on their own reflections a more adequate recompense, in the form of that peace which the world cannot give nor take away.<sup>(1)</sup>

This is so strikingly characteristic of Scott's ideas regarding the moral technique of fiction that we find it not only here, but also cropping out in the plots of his other great novels, especially in The Heart of Midlothian, and St. Ronan's Well. To just what extent his theory was correct we shall discuss further in our treatment of the Waverley Novels themselves.

A suggestion in answer to the question regarding the author's technique of composition, raised at the outset of this discussion, is found in the Introduction to The Monastery. Scott opens this explanation by stating that the author had used "all the art he possessed to remove the personages, action, and manners

(1) Lockhart, Vol. VI, p. 176

of the former tale to a distance from his own country." <sup>(1)</sup> This sentence not only shows us that he employed literary devices for narrative effect, but that he frankly admitted his conscious methods.

His exact reason, or caprice, for selecting Melrose, Scotland, as the scene for his next venture had been forgotten before the Introduction was written, ten years after the novel was first published. The national setting seems of little consequence to Scott. He does, however, speak of the excellent locality of Melrose as providing a most fitting background for the proposed story. The magnificent ruins, the fertile valley, the deserted groves, the majestic river, and the abandoned churchyard, so appealed to the imaginative nature that he says this section of the country might have induced one even less familiar and less attached to the spot than the author to choose this section for description.

The general plan of the story had been, we are told, to oppose two religious enthusiasts, one a supporter of the Catholic Church, the other of the Reformed doctrine, and by revealing each character in its true light, to show the real worth of their passions and prejudices. In this Scott feels that Captain Clatterbuck's imaginary stories had not been related in vain. But in other respects he admits that he failed to delineate the subject he had chosen for himself. This Border district gave Scott all the means <sup>(2)</sup> to complicate and extricate the incidents of his narrative at pleasure." But inasmuch as this setting had been used on several occasions by the author himself, as well as by others, he knew that he must present his scenes in a new light if he wished to hold the reader's attention. So "to attain the indispensable quality of novelty" <sup>(3)</sup> he introduced the two contrasting groups--vassals of the church and the dependents of the lay barons.

This means, he says, did not act as a great advantage to his plot, so he brought in "the supernatural and marvelous-- the resort of distressed authors

(1) Introduction to The Monastery, p. 1. A. & C. Black, Edinburgh, n.d.

(2) Ibid, p. 9.

(3) Ibid, p. 10.

since the days of Horace, but whose privileges as a sanctuary have been disputed in the present age, and well nigh exploded." <sup>(1)</sup> Scott attributes the introduction of the White Lady of Avenel to a desire to follow a more beautiful form of superstition than the type common to Scotland at that time. The theory of an astral spirit, transcending all limits of time and space, seemed to him an excellent one upon which to construct this superior creature and he records that he devoted considerable attention to her delineation. But he adds at the same time that "the author either executed his purpose indifferently, or the public did not approve of it; for the White Lady of Avenel was far from being popular." <sup>(2)</sup> He makes it quite clear that his purpose in later explaining so fully his use of this mysterious being is not to argue his readers into taking a more favorable view of the White Lady, but rather to free himself of the accusation "of having wantonly intruded into the narrative a being of inconsistent powers and propensities." <sup>(3)</sup>

Here Scott mentions that he also failed in another character where he had hoped for some success-- Sir Pierce Shafton. The humor of his cavaliers and the cleverness of his Euphuist missed its mark. Scott frankly comments that this failure lay not in the author's want of skill to treat this character, but in his injudicious choice of it. In presecuting his argument "to prove that the introduction of a humorist, acting like Sir Pierce Shafton, upon some forgotten and obsolete model of folly, once fashionable, is rather likely to awaken the disgust of the reader, as unnatural, than find him food for laughter," <sup>(4)</sup> Scott makes an excellent point from the standpoint of literary technique. He very adequately shows how the experience of a rough type of human beings in a primitive state of society find much more ready access to the interest of the more civilized reader

(1) Introduction The Monastery, p. 10

(2) Ibid, p. 14

(3) Ibid, p. 14

(4) Ibid, p. 20

than do the national tastes, opinions and follies of a period of civilization similar to their own. While Scott attributes the marked success of the narratives of Cooper, filled with Indian chiefs, backwoodsmen and hunters, to this very kind of character selection, he records his own failure as a result of an unwise choice in the other direction.

In Scott's own words: "There was little in the story to atone for these failures in two principal points. The incidents were artificially huddled together. There was no part of the intrigue to which deep interest was found to apply; and the conclusion was brought about, not by incidents arising out of the story itself, but in consequence of public transactions, with which the narrative has little connection, and which the reader had little opportunity to become acquainted with."<sup>(1)</sup> He also accuses his hero, like many others of earlier romances, of being hurried through a variety of unimportant and detached scenes in which inferior characters appear and disappear without having any lasting effect upon the progress of the story. This lack of unity and happy combination of details, the general inaccuracy of fact, and artificial catastrophe, causes Scott, as well as other critics, to censure the Monastery rather severely. The success it did attain depended upon the reputation of the author rather than upon the intrinsic value of the novel itself. Perhaps a remark the author made in connection with the compilation of this novel will account for its lack of inherent worth. He said of this novel: "I agree with the public in thinking the work not very interesting; but it was written with as much care as the others-- that is, with no care at all."<sup>(2)</sup>

Scott, however, was not baffled and tells us that he comforted himself with the old song: "If it isna weel bobbit, We'll bob it again."<sup>(3)</sup> To satisfy him-

(1) Introduction The Monastery, p. 20.

(2) Lockhart, Vol. III, p. 379.

(3) Introduction The Monastery, p. 23



self that he could be more successful with a subject of the same sort, if it were but developed differently, he made another attempt of a similar nature,- The Abbot. He says with Shakespeare:

"In my school days, when I had lost one shaft,  
I shot another of the selfsame flight  
The selfsame way, with more advised watch  
To find the other forth." (1)

Since Scott had been unsuccessful in portraying the White Lady he withdrew her type and placed in her stead Queen Mary, thus rendering The Abbot a more thoroughly historical novel. Consciousness of method is again observable in this discussion, especially where we come upon such lines as-- "Naturally I paid attention to such principles of composition as I conceived were best suited to the historical novel."<sup>(2)</sup>

Lockhart relates an interesting bit in regard to its compilation. He writes that Scott sent him a complete copy of The Abbot as soon as he had finished it. On a slip of paper at the beginning of the first volume Lockhart read these lines:

"Up he rose in a funk, lapped a toothful of brandy,  
And to it again! any odds upon Sandy!" (3)

The biographer adds that Scott thought well of The Abbot when he had finished it. Fortunately, he felt that the fortune of The Monastery was amended by the success of its immediate successor.

In a letter to Lady Louise Stuart, written December 14, 1820, Scott says that though he is somewhat prejudiced against Queen Elizabeth on account of her treatment of Queen Mary, he will attempt in his composition of the novel to keep out all scandal concerning Elizabeth. He is going to try to be very fair and, as far as his faculties permit, make it "a pleasant tragedy, stuffed with most piti-

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(1)

The Abbot, p. 6

(2)

Ibid, p. 10

(3)

Lockhart, Vol. VI, p. 257

ful mirth" based on the real experiences of Leicester's first wife. (1)

Having been written at the rate of ten pages a day, Kenilworth appeared the last of January, 1821. Very little is said about the setting, plot, or characters in the prefatory notes. Several incidents, as well as the personages, are said to be borrowed from actual history. As we might expect, the setting is "Merry England." Scott simply remarks in passing that his opening scene is laid, according to the privilege of all tale-tellers, in an inn, "the free rendezvous of all travellers (2) and where the humour of each displays itself, without ceremony or restraint." The decided favor with which this novel was received by the public is probably the reason that Scott wrote but scant explanations concerning its literary form.

The Pirate, too, is accompanied by little comment. Scott does suggest at the outset the change in general setting from those scenes chosen for previous novels. Since he tells us that "it was on shipboard that the author acquired the very moderate degree of local knowledge and information, both of people and scenery, which he has endeavored to embody in the romance," we know that a new sort of tale is to be presented.

The critics pronounced Norna a mere copy of Meg Merrilies. This very criticism caused Scott to acknowledge that he had fallen short of his own expectations in this respect. He did, however, feel that he had been judged rather too hastily, and hints that a more careful reading of the story will reveal a considerable distinction between the Dumfriesshire gypsy and her prototype—the northern sybil. The ignorance and credulity of this queer people are Scott's only excuses for the unusual supernatural power he ascribes to Norna. He observes here that even Mrs. Radcliffe's genius could not surmount this air of improbability in her attempts to explain unfeal occurrences through natural causes.

(1)

Familiar Letters, Vol. II, p. 102

(2)

Kenilworth, Chap. I, p. 15

One fine October morning, according to Lockhart, Scott came out of Abbotsford with a portion of a manuscript in his hand, and, meeting his son-in-law and Terry, the dramatist, greeted them with--"Well, lads, I've laid the keel of a new lugger this morning-- here it is-- be off to the water-side and let me hear how you like it." <sup>(1)</sup> The "new lugger" was The Fortunes of Nigel, and, as may be expected, the sweep and animation of the opening chapters caused the "lads" to "like it" right well.

The Introduction and explanatory Epistle to this novel are of highest importance to anyone interested in Scott's literary methods and opinions. In the former he accounts for his setting, plot, and characters; in the latter he discusses his manner of procedure in writing novels. Over thirty pages are devoted to this prefatory material. We shall, by briefly summarizing them, attempt to show the main points which the author wishes to impress upon his readers.

Scott says that his success in creating in The Heart of Midlothian a heroine from a character not usually fitted for such delineation, led him to attempt the same in choosing a hero. He had discovered that an interest might be more effectually aroused in a personage who possessed "worth of character, goodness of heart and rectitude of principle," than in one who laid claim to "high birth, romantic sensibility, or any of the usual accomplishments of those who strut through the pages of this sort of composition." <sup>(2)</sup> George Heriot, a prudent and benevolent citizen of Edinburgh, seemed to Scott a man worthy of such delineation. The simple events of Heriot's life appealed as a basis for an attractive plot, while the reign of James I furnished ample material for constructing an effective background. This reign was especially advantageous since it afforded Scott an opportunity to carry out a favorite idea regarding romantic composition. He

(1)

Lockhart, Vol. VI, p. 414

(2)

Introduction to Fortunes of Nigel, p. 1

states this idea in a single sentence: " The strong contrast produced by the opposition of ancient manners to those which are gradually subduing them, affords the lights and shadows necessary to give effect to a fictitious narrative; and while such a period entitles the author to introduce incidents of a marvellous and improbable character as arising out of the turbulent independence and ferocity belonging to old habits of violence, still influencing the manners of a people who had been so lately in a barbarous state; yet, on the other hand, the characters and sentiments of many of the actors may, with the utmost probability, be described with great variety of shading and delineation, which belongs to the newer and more improved period, of which the world has but lately received the light."<sup>(1)</sup>

The author apologizes for his "hoity-toity, whisky-frisky" pertness of manner used in the following Introductory Epistle, on the grounds that, had he meditated an acknowledgement of the work under his real name, its employment<sup>(2)</sup> would have been a departure from the rules of civility and good taste.

The Epistle itself is an account of an imaginary conversation between the author of Waverley, or the Reverend Dryasdust, and Captain Clatterbuck, doubtless representing some of Scott's acquaintances and friends who had urged him to give the public a rest and himself a little more time to prepare his next novel. The Captain's first charge is that the White Lady is no favorite with the critics. To this remark the author replies that he himself was disappointed in her and suggests that his elementary spirits are too ethereal-- that he must invest them with more human flesh and blood. Moreover, he adds that no one shall ever find him "rowing against the stream,"<sup>(3)</sup> since he is writing for general amusement and not edification. He is frank to admit that though he will never seek popularity

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(1) Introduction to Fortunes of Nigel, p. 5

(2) Ibid, p. 12

(3) Ibid, p. 19

by unworthy means he will not, on the other hand, be pertinacious in defense of his own errors against the voice of the public. So in the present work he resolves to abandon every trace of the mystical element. Clatterbuck then questions him as to the naturalness and probability of the tale, asking if it commences strikingly, proceeds naturally and ends happily, like the course of a great river widening and deepening as it flows until at length it reaches "some mighty haven, where ships of all lands strike sail and yard."<sup>(1)</sup> In return, the writer satirizes the foolish and artificial methods resorted to by narrators to interest their readers, and exclaims: "I should be chin-deep in the grave, man, before I had done with my task; and in the meanwhile, all the quirks and quiddities which I might have devised for my reader's amusement, would lie rotting in my gizzard."<sup>(2)</sup>

Furthermore, it is his desire to write a few scenes with sense and spirit, which though unlaboured and loosely united have sufficient interest to relieve bodily pain, to amuse an anxious mind, to unwrinkle a brow furrowed with daily toil, to suggest good thoughts for bad, to induce an idler to study the history of his country, and to furnish harmless amusement to those not engrossed in the discharge of serious duties.

The Captain is obliged to grant the point but says the new production is "hastily huddled up"<sup>(3)</sup> and that common gratitude to the public should induce the author to bestow more pains upon his story. Dr. Dryasdust glibly replies that he is but as the postman who leaves a packet at the door of an individual. If it contains pleasing intelligence it is acceptably welcomed and cherished. If the contents are disagreeable the correspondent is cursed and the expense of postage regretted. In either case, the bearer of the despatches is little thought of-- hence there is no cause for gratitude on either side.

(1) Introduction to Fortunes of Nigel, p. 20

(2) Ibid, p. 20

(3) Ibid, p. 22

Here Scott gives his answer to the much mooted question among critics-- Is an author's greatness increased or lessened by a frequent control and suppression of his genius? He clearly announces that the works he had composed most rapidly were also the ones with which he had succeeded best. He says: "A man should strike while the iron is hot and hoist sail while the wind is fair,"<sup>(1)</sup> that, "when they dance no longer, I will no longer pipe," and "it is something to have engaged the public attention for seven years, instead of being merely 'the ingenious author of a novel much admired at the time'"<sup>(2)</sup>. He also cites examples to prove that the most successful authors have been the most voluminous as well, and adds that he relies sufficiently on the literary taste of the present generation to feel fairly well insured from too severe condemnation in the future.

Though Clatterbuck agrees that this may justify a certain degree of rapidity of publication, it does not warrant an unlimited speed. He further urges that the author take time at least to arrange his story. The Doctor's answer to this is extremely characteristic of him. He pretends that his companion has "struck a sore point" with him. He insists that he has planned his work, and has taken the ordinary literary precautions: "I have repeatedly laid down my future work to scale, divided it into volumes and chapters, and endeavoured to construct a story which I meant should evolve itself gradually and strikingly, maintain suspense, and stimulate curiosity; and which, finally, should terminate in a striking catastrophe. But I think there is a demon who seats himself on the feather of my pen when I begin to write, and leads it astray from the purpose. Characters expand under my hand; incidents are multiplied; the story lingers, while the materials increase; my regular mansion turns out a Gothic anomaly, and the work is closed long before I have attained the point I proposed."<sup>(3)</sup>

(1) Introduction to Fortunes of Nigel, p. 26

(2) Ibid, p. 36

(3) Ibid, p. 27

Another paragraph is too delightfully naive to paraphrase. It so breathes the spirit of its writer that we cannot but again quote his own words:- "When I light on such a character as Bailie Jarvie, or Dalgetty, my imagination brightens, and my conception becomes clearer at every step which I take in his company, although it leads me many a weary mile away from the regular road, and forces me to leap hedge and ditch to get back into the route again. If I resist temptation, as you advise me, my thoughts become prosy, flat, and dull; I write painfully to myself, and under a consciousness of flagging which makes me flag still more; the sunshine with which fancy had invested the incidents, departs from them, and leaves everything dull and gloomy. I am no more the same author I was in my better mood, than the dog in a wheel, condemned to go round and round for hours, is like the same dog merrily chasing his own tail and gambolling in all the frolic of unrestrained freedom. In short, sir, on such occasions I think I am bewitched." (1)

The Captain decides that if his friend pleads sorcery, argument is of no avail. Such a person must go where the devil drives even though he be driven to write for gain! The answer to this is that all professional men must be, and are, actuated by two motives, a true love for their work, and a remunerative return just large enough to prove that their services are actually valuable to the public. With this final thrust and with the hope that the Waverley Novels are of the type which may defy all the alchemy of the critics, the discussion closes.

The completion of Scott's next work, Peveril of the Peak, marked the first real check in the progress of his novels. Driven on by a restless energy, the author failed to realize how rapidly he was losing strength. In fact, he agreed to furnish his publishers with four novels within a year. He admits that, had he valued his reputation as he should have done, he might have "drawn a line and remained for life, or (who knows?) perhaps for some years after death 'the in-

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(1)

Introduction to Fortunes of Nigel, p. 27

(1)  
 ingenious author of Waverley'". But this sort of immortality did not appeal to him. He felt that romance writing was his occupation and that he was too old to find another. Financial difficulties, he says, obliged him either to lay aside his pen completely or continue his "vagaries" until the public openly let him know what they thought of him. So, since his memory was well stored with historical, local, and traditional information, he decided to attempt again a new Waverley novel which he hoped might still demand some attention in the literary world.

This work, like The Fortunes of Nigel, is prefaced by an imaginary discussion between Captain Clatterbuck and Doctor Dryasdust. The record is in the form of a letter written by the Doctor to Clatterbuck. He tells the Captain that when he hastily read over Peveril he said to himself: "Here are figments enough to confuse the march of a whole history-- anachronisms enough to upset all chronology! The old gentleman hath broken all bounds-- abilit-- evasit-- erupit." (2)

Dryasdust then relates a dream in which the author of Waverley appears and reviews the general method of his composition with him. When the Doctor asks him how he dares venture to write narratives that are not based on a true historical foundation, and informs him that he is much censured for abusing the pure sources of historical knowledge, the author replies that he is rendering a greater service to the public in presenting a lively fictitious picture than he would if he merely recorded actual facts in a somewhat dull fashion. He also suggests that mere facts can be obtained from any history. Dryasdust, however, insists that such frothy and superficial novels cause real history to be neglected. The author flatly denies this charge, saying that his works awaken an interest in history and the hints they throw out urge their readers to look up the real source of the novelist's material. The most careless reader will receive an added degree of knowledge, even though it is not of the most accurate kind, which he might not other-

(1)  
 Introduction to Peveril of the Peak, p. 1

(2)  
 Prefatory Letter to Peveril of the Peak, p. 35



wise have acquired. This, he claims, is the slight service he hoped to render society when he produced the following story.

But in spite of this brave front, Scott admits in a letter to Morritt written January 11, 1823, that his heart was not really in the work. He writes: "I fear you will think P.,<sup>(1)</sup> which I hope you have long since received, 'sent l'apoplexie'. Loath to say, I tired of it most d-----, and Ballantyne mutinied me to make me put more strength and spirit into a fourth volume which (needs must go, when the Devil, typographically speaking, drives) 'I wrote in fourteen days, as much too fast as the others were too slow. I hope to do much better things in my next, having an admirable little corner of history fresh in my head where the vulgar dogs of imitators have no sense to follow me.'<sup>(2)</sup>"

"The next" was Quentin Durward. Aside from what has already been suggested, Scott says but little regarding its composition. He briefly remarks that his introduction of Quentin's little love intrigue and the systems employed by feudal lords at that time are but means to open up deeper scenes of interest to the reader, as well as to afford considerable facilities to the author.<sup>(3)</sup>

Regarding its continental setting-- a new venture for him-- he wrote to Ballantyne:

(4)

"The mouse who only trusts to one poor hole,  
Can never be a mouse of any soul."

But at the suggestion of Laidlaw, his amanuensis, Scott decided to lay the scene of his next novel in a small English village with which he was entirely familiar. This novel-- St. Ronan's Well-- called forth more censure than any other of the Waverley series. How Scott partially defended himself from the many criticisms raised against it is shown in the Introduction, written in 1832. He prefaces his remarks with the statement that this novel is built upon a different plan from

(1) Peveril of the Peak

(2) Familiar Letters, Vol. II, p. 163

(3) Introduction to Quentin Durward, p. 13

(4) Lockhart, Vol. VII, p. 167

any other the author has ever written. His intention is "celebrare domestica facta", to give an imitation of scenes, actions, and characters well known to any inhabitants of a rural community such as the village of St. Ronan's. The fact that a place of this sort afforded novel subjects for narrative depiction caused Scott to abandon his former scenes and to choose a quiet watering-place far from "the world of fashion and the narrow circles of rank in the metropolis" <sup>(1)</sup> for the setting of his story. He tells us that his idea was not that he might rival his many formidable competitors in this field, but rather that he might avoid worn-out characters and positions by a new style of composition. <sup>(2)</sup>

He says that the life at the mineral spring of St. Ronan's appealed to his imaginative faculties. Nowhere, he thought, could be found a better background than this secluded resort for describing all classes of society, for contrasting humorous characters and manners, for revealing the emotions of the human heart, and for delineating the affectations of individual personages in their various eccentricities.

Scott acknowledges that his information regarding this section of the country was not as extensive as it should have been. He confesses that in this respect the author of St. Ronan's Well could not be termed fortunate. His habits of life had not led him much, of late years at least, into its general or bustling scenes, nor had he mingled often in the society which enables the observer to "'shoot folly as it flies'". The consequence perhaps was that the characters wanted that force and precision which can only be given by a writer who is familiarly acquainted with his subject. <sup>(3)</sup>

It gave Scott great satisfaction to feel that he had chronicled his testimony against the practice of gambling, which he brands as "a vice the devil has contrived to render all his own." <sup>(4)</sup> This pleasure helped to offset the worry

(1) Introduction to St. Ronan's Well, p. 3

(2) Ibid, p. 2

(3)&

(4) Ibid, p. 6

caused by the hue and cry of the critics to the effect that the author had written himself out. He denies that he had exhausted himself and remarks that the chief censure came from English critics of no great influence rather than from his friends north of the Tweed, who were much more capable of judging the merits of this new attempt at drawing Scottish portraits. Four years before the Introduction was published, Scott had written a few lines in his Journal which show that the story was causing him concern even at that time. This is the record for July 28, 1826: "Read through and corrected St. Ronan's Well. I am no judge, but I think the language of this piece rather good. Then I must allow the fashionable portraits are not the true thing. I am too much out of the way to see and remark the ridiculous in society. The story is terribly contorted and unnatural, and the catastrophe is melancholy, which should always be avoided. No matter, I have corrected it for the press."<sup>(1)</sup>

St. Ronan's Well was immediately followed by Redgauntlet-- a story told largely by means of letters and diaries. Scott does not mention its compilation in either his Journal or Letters, except in a note to Terry written from Edinburgh the fifth of February, 1824. In this note he merely says that his present labors "comprehend two narratives in about two volumes each; they may perhaps intrude on volume third."<sup>(2)</sup> Neither the Introduction nor the first letter contains any explanations of Scott's reason for selecting this new style of narration. He does note that "various instances in the composition induced the author to alter its purport considerably,"<sup>(3)</sup> but no hint is given as to why he chose the diary and letter form.

Before the second volume of Redgauntlet had been mailed to the printers,<sup>(4)</sup> Scott was planning The Tales of the Crusaders, more commonly known as The

(1) Journal, p. 231

(2) Letters, Vol. II, p. 87

(3) Introduction to Redgauntlet, p. 16

(4) Journal, Feb. 21, 1831, p. 793

Betrothed and The Talisman. Later the first section of The Chronicles of the Canongate, including several short stories such as My Aunt Margaret's Mirror, The Tapestry Chamber and The Death of the Laird's Jack, were bound in one volume with The Talisman. Since the three mentioned stories are, according to the author (1) mere transcripts of incidents that had been related to him from time to time and not ordinarily grouped with the Waverley novels, we shall omit them from this discussion.

Scott speaks of The Tales of the Crusaders in a letter to Lady Louisa Stuart, written July 7, 1825. He says: "I am heartily glad that you think well of the volumes I had sent your Ladyship. I say heartily glad, because I had sinkings of the heart about them both; while writing and when they were finished. I never read them a second time until printed, and it does strike me there was a flatness and a labor about some passages which savored of the Bishop of Grenada's apoplexy." (2)

The Betrothed is prefaced by another of Scott's imaginary conversations. A meeting, it seems, had been called of the gentlemen and others interested in the publication of the Waverley Novels. The related conversation took place at this gathering. As a whole, the criticisms are of little value. A few lines show the chief points of technical importance. The Press says:-

"It is indeed a mystery to me how the sharp-sighted could suppose so huge a mass of sense and nonsense, jest and earnest, humorous and pathetic, good, bad, and indifferent, amounting to scores of volumes, could be the work of one hand, when we know the doctrine so well laid down by the immortal Adam Smith, concerning (3) the division of labor."

The Betrothed itself is later accused of being "heavy enough to break down (4) the chair of John of Gaunt." In self defense the author declares that he will

(1) Introduction to Aunt Margaret's Mirror, p. 320

(4) Ibid, p. 24

(2) Familiar Letters, Vol. II, p. 295

(3) Introduction to The Betrothed, p. 20

no longer be dictated to by his friends, but will declare his independence by abandoning the novel form and writing history. The purpose of this remark is, of course, to prepare the public for The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte. It was not in any way a true statement of the author's actual intention. A few of Scott's friends objected to The Betrothed on the ground that it did not correspond well to the general title of The Crusaders and urged that he lay the scene of his next romance among the Eastern nations. In the Introduction to The Talisman he records his reluctance to comply with their request, saying that he was diffident of making the attempt because Eastern themes had been already so successfully handled by previous and contemporary writers. (1) Had not the clever idea occurred to him of again selecting England's beloved Richard the Lion Hearted as his hero-- this time, however, as a conquering monarch instead of a disguised knight-- Scott thinks that this story would have never succeeded as it did.

Scott was much too absorbed in the actual novels he was writing during these years to devote a great deal of time to their criticism. This portion of The Chronicles of the Canongate has no suggestions regarding literary technique. Regardless of his attitude toward writing "pot-boilers", he knew that he must send another novel to press as quickly as possible. In this way alone could he maintain his own self-respect financially. The beginning of the year 1826 found him farther in debt than ever. The second of January, he wrote in his Journal, "I am pressed to get on with Woodstock and must try. I wish I could open up a good vein of interest which would breathe freely. I must take my old way and write myself into good humour with my task. It is only when I dally with what I am about, look back, and aside, instead of keeping my eyes straight forward, that I feel these cold sinkings of the heart." (2)

(1) Introduction to The Talisman, p. 6

(2) Journal, p. 74

A month later he remarks that James Ballantyne has accused him of imitating Mrs. Radcliffe in this novel. Scott is of the opinion that Ballantyne is quite in the wrong. "In the first place, I am to look on the mere fact of another author having treated a subject happily as a bird looks on a potato-bogle which scares it away from a field otherwise as free to its depredations as anyone's else! In the second place, I have taken a wide difference: my object is not to excite fear of supernatural things in my reader, but to show the effect of such fear upon the agents in the story-- one a man of sense and firmness-- one a man unhinged by remorse-- one a stupid uninquiring clown-- one a learned and worthy, but superstitious divine. In the third place, the book turns on this hinge and cannot want it. But I will try to insinuate the refutation of Aldiboronte's exception into the prefatory matter."<sup>(1)</sup>

On the tenth of February he writes that he has had some good ideas respecting Woodstock, but "the devil of a difficulty is, that one puzzles the skein in order to excite curiosity, and then cannot disentangle it for the satisfaction of the prying fiend they have raised."<sup>(2)</sup> In another memorandum he declares that Woodstock is an extempore from his mother wit, a sort of spinning of the brains which often tires him.

One of Scott's best outlines as to his method of procedure is found in his Journal for the twelfth of the same month. His comments here apply not only to the compilation of Woodstock but are indications of his manner of composition as a whole:

"Having ended the second volume of Woodstock last night, I have to begin the third this morning. Now I have not the slightest idea how the story is to be wound up to a catastrophe. I am just in the same case as I used to be when I lost myself in former days in some country to which I was a stranger, I always pushed for the pleasantest road, and either found it or made it the nearest. It is the

(1)  
Journal, p. 103

(2)  
Ibid, p. 117

same in writing, I never could lay down a plan-- or, having laid it down, I never could adhere to it; the action of composition always diluted some passages and abridged or omitted others; and personages were rendered important or insignificant, nor according to their agency in the original conception of the plan, but according to the success, or otherwise, with which I was able to bring them out. I only tried to make that which I was actually writing diverting and interesting, leaving the rest to fate. I have been often amused with the critics distinguishing some passages as particularly laboured when the pen passed over the whole as fast as it could move, and the eye never again saw them except in proof." (1)

Late in the spring of the same year Ballantyne was still writing gloomily about Woodstock, though he did commend its conclusion. Scott at last agreed with him in this point. He had begun to realize that too many imitators had nearly caught his manner and so finally resolved to strike out upon something new. (2) In the Introduction to Woodstock or The Cavalier Scott carefully explains the causes of the ghostly adventures of Woodstock, that the reader may not disbelieve his account of the remarkable events. This remark and a statement that this novel is a contemporary and not an imitation of Horace Smith's Brambletye House is practically all we have from the author's pen regarding its general composition.

Lady Scott's death and the total ruin of his pecuniary fortunes caused the greatest possible change in the author's life in the year 1826. His bravery at this point is most remarkable. Twenty-four days after his wife's death he recorded in his diary: "There is another world, and we will meet free from the mortal sorrows and frailties which beset us here: amen, so be it. Let me change the topic with hand and head, and the heart must follow. I finished four pages today, headache, laziness, and all." (3) We can, however, no longer expect the same

(1)

Journal, p. 117

(2)

See record for April 2, 1826, p. 167

(3)

Lockhart, Vol. VIII, p. 367

light-hearted, cheerful words to fall from Scott's pen as did heretofore.

The first series of The Chronicles of the Canongate included The Highland Widow, The Two Drovers, and The Surgeon's Daughter. The General Introduction for this group of novels contains Scott's open avowal as the author of the Waverley Novels. He had in 1827 made this acknowledgement with the comment that "I do this without sham, for I am unconscious that there is anything in their composition which deserves reproach, either on the score of religion or morality; and without any feeling of exultation, because whatever may have been their temporary success, I am well aware how much their reputation depends upon the caprice; and I have already mentioned the precarious tenure by which it is held, as a reason for displaying no great avidity in grasping at the possession."<sup>(1)</sup> The remainder of this preface is composed of sketches of Scott's life and portraits of his friends. These, although very interesting, do not in any way affect the subject matter of his works and consequently need not be dwelt upon in this connection.

In regard to the story of The Highland Widow based on Mrs. Murray Keith's Tale of the Desert, Scott writes that the plot of the novel "may be made most affecting, but will hardly endure much expansion."<sup>(2)</sup> He toils on with unswerving purpose until he begins The Fair Maid of Perth or Second Chronicles of the Canongate. At this point for the first time in his life the author of Waverley seems a little weary of fiction. This was probably due to the cold reception of the First Chronicle of the Canongate. Nevertheless he refuses to give up and, concerning the objections of his publishers, says on December 12, 1827, "They cannot say but what I had the crown. It is unhappily inconvenient for my affairs to lay by my work just now, and that is the only reason why I do not give up literary labour; but, at least, I will not push the losing game of novel writing."<sup>(3)</sup>

(1) Introduction to Highland Widow, p. 23

(2) Journal, May 2, 1826, p. 280

(3) Ibid, p. 496



The suggestion is made in the Introduction that perhaps the author used little prudence in sending the volume to the press. He justifies himself by saying that he regarded it of "a size too important to be altogether thrown away."<sup>(1)</sup> By the following summer, Scott partially regained his self-confidence and in his Journal for June 5, 1828, stoutly declares "I can spin a tough yarn with any now going." We feel, nevertheless, that the author has failed to gain a new inspiration, even when he comes to Anne of Geierstein.

His method of procedure is best expressed in his own words,- "I muzzed on-- I can call it little better--, with Anne of Geierstein. The materials are excellent, but the power of using them is failing. Yet I wrote out about three pages, sleeping at intervals."<sup>(2)</sup> And three months later he decides to "let the sheets go nearly as they are, for though J. S. be an excellent judge of this species of composition, he is not infallible, and has been in circumstances which may bias his mind."<sup>(3)</sup> Though Scott declared that Anne was not so bad after all, he feared it would not be popular. He could not feel that the public would enjoy a work which had given him no pleasure in producing. The conclusion worried him and he constantly records that he undertakes other when he should be devoting his time to his novel. Finally, the twenty-fifth of April, he resolved to finish it. On the twenty-seventh he declares that he "hates" Anne. But he works unfaltering until about three o'clock when "my story fell into a slough and in getting out I lost my way, and was forced to postpone the conclusion." The next day he realizes that he has "slept upon the puzzle" and concludes "the tale will end, and shall end, because it must end."<sup>(4)</sup> The story was actually completed at nine o'clock the following evening.

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- (1) Introduction to Fair Maid of Perth  
 (2) Journal, Jan. 26, 1827, p. 680  
 (3) Journal, April 14, 1827, p. 681  
 (4) Ibid, p. 689

Scott had never been in Switzerland and for that reason felt that many mistakes must have occurred in his attempts to describe the local scenery and history of that romantic region. He concludes his introductory material to this novel with the statement that the work met with a reception of more than usual cordiality among the Swiss people, as well as with those of other countries. (1)

The author attributes this success to his ability to make his stories attractive by the snatches of verse, fanciful narration, and unusual delineation of character, rather than to his aptitude for recalling accurately names, dates, and other minute technicalities of history.

A very serious breakdown in health occurred just after Scott's next novel had been begun-- October, 1830. For six months he struggled on but made little progress. He told Lockhart that as soon as he had finished Count Robert and a little story about the Castle Dangerous, he would attempt nothing more, at least not until he had completed all the prefaces and notes for the previous novels. The two mentioned works were completed by the end of the summer and appeared together in November. (2)

In April of the same year Scott had recorded in his Journal that the third volume of Count Robert was fairly begun and had added: "I fear I shall want stuff to fill it, for I would not willingly boast it with things inappropriate. If I could fix my mind to the task to-day, my temper, notwithstanding my oath, sets strong toward politics, where I would be sure of making a figure, and feel I could carry with me a great part of the middle-class who wait for a shot between wind and water-- half comic, half serious, which is a better argument than most which are going. The regard of my health is what chiefly keeps me in check." (3)

Concerning Ballantyne's and Cadell's severe opinion regarding Count Robert, he says, "God knows, I am at sea in the dark, and the vessel is leaky, I think, into the bargain. . . . I will right and left at these unlucky proof-sheets and alter at least what I cannot mend." (4)

(1) Introduction to Anne of Geierstein, p. 19 (3) Journal, April 5, 1831, p. 808

(2) Lockhart, Vol. IX, p. 357

(4) Ibid, May 7, 1831, p. 819

Because of Scott's illness, there is an interval from May twenty-fifth to September twentieth, in his Journal. For this reason we find in it no discussion of Castle Dangerous. On January 26, 1832, he merely mentions the financial success of his last two Waverley novels. He writes, "Castle Dangerous and Sir Robert of Paris, neither of whom I deemed seaworthy, have performed two voyages,- that is, each sold about 3400, and the same of the current year. It proves, what I have thought almost impossible, that I might right myself." <sup>(1)</sup> This declaration, in view of the author's rapid literary decline, is most pitiful. When we consider Lockhart's statement that Scott was unable successfully to compile his own prefaces for these two editions and that they are chiefly a combination of extracts from his notes, we know how unwilling the great novelist must have been to acknowledge his condition.

The Introductions, sent to Lockhart from Naples in February, 1832, are of a different tenor than their predecessors. They mark the close of a remarkable life chapter, since they contain Scott's last words of literary criticism. Nor are these words of especial value. They chiefly concern the stories upon which the tales have been founded. Scott's only reason for writing these prefatory remarks is given at the outset:- "It would, I say, ill become me to suffer this my youngest literary babe, and, probably at the same time, the last child of mine old age\*, to pass into the world without some such modest apology for its defects, as it has been my custom to put forth on preceding occasions of like nature." <sup>(2)</sup> The author again, through the fictitious personage Jedediah Cleishbotham, brands these efforts as incorrect and unprepared for the press. He accuses them of containing grievous inconsistencies and other mistakes. A careful perusal, however, shows him that these manuscripts did reveal passages here and there of high merit. He

(1)

Journal, p. 875

\*Scott uses the singular here in speaking of the two novels. This was due to the fact that they were published together in one volume.

(2)

Introduction to Count Robert of Paris and Castle Dangerous, p. 11

finally decides that severe indisposition has not been able " to extinguish altogether the brilliancy of that fancy which the world has been pleased to acknowledge in the creations of Old Mortality, The Bride of Lammermoor, and other of these narratives."<sup>(1)</sup>

Cleishbotham finally retires in the hope that the last "Reviews", even as they are, may receive the indulgence of those who have ever been but too voracious to the productions of the author's pen.

Aside from these comments upon the individual novels, we also have records of Scott's ideas concerning the series as a whole. His manner of composition receives his greatest attention. Through his *Journal and Letters* such statements as the following are frequent:

"I am sensible that if there be anything good about my poetry or prose either, it is a hurried frankness of composition, which pleases soldiers, sailors, and young people of bold and active dispositions."<sup>(2)</sup>

"There is one thing I believe peculiar to me-- I work, that is, meditate for the purpose of working, best, when I have a usual engagement with some other book for example. When I find myself being ill, or like to come to a windmill in writing, I take up some slight book, a novel or the like, and usually have not read far ere my difficulties are removed, and I am ready to write again. There must be two currents of ideas going on in my mind at the same time, or perhaps the slighter occupation serves like a woman's wheel or sticking to ballast the wind, as it were, by preventing the thoughts from wandering, and so give the deeper current the power to flow undisturbed. I always laugh when I hear people say ' Do one thing at once.' I have done a dozen things at once all my life."<sup>(3)</sup>

Such passages as the foregoing explain the reason for the vagueness in Scott's rhetorical constructions, the elipse in his fiction, and the defects in his syntax. They also account for his contradiction in small details, his faulty

(1) Introduction to Grand Robaki of Paris and Castle Bannockburn, p. 18  
(2) Lockhart, Vol. VIII, p. 370  
(3) Ibid, Vol. IX, p. 504

style in portions of narrative or descriptive passages, and the general careless tone which pervades his works.

Scott, like every other great writer, had his host of imitators. His attitude toward them and their work is clearly shown in his reflections in his Journal on Sir John Chiverton and Brambletye House.<sup>(1)</sup> These two publications were popular romances of the day, the former written anonymously, the latter by Horace Smith. Mr. William Harrison Ainsworth later acknowledged the authorship of Sir John Chiverton.

When we consider that both books were modeled on the narrative plan of the Waverley Novels, that their settings were practically the same-- the scene of one being laid in the days of chivalry, of the other in the time of the Civil Wars-- and that the characters introduced were based on historical figures, we are not surprised to find Scott asserting that these authors had adopted his methods. He says:- "It is a style

'Which I was born to introduce--  
Refined in first, and showed its use.'

Scott maintains a most friendly attitude toward these imitators. He assures us that he means the gentlemen no wrong, and but sincerely wishes that they had followed a better model. He even goes so far as to declare that their efforts have been a real assistance to him in his own tasks:- "It serves to show me, *veluti in speculo*, my own errors, or, if you like, those of the style."

Scott's next observation is a very familiar one. Though it has been quoted in practically every criticism of the author of the Waverley Novels, it must not be omitted here. Briefly, it is his boast concerning his historical knowledge: "One advantage, I think, I still have over all of them. They may do their fooling with better grace; but I, like Sir Andrew Aguecheek, do it more natural. They have to read old books and consult antiquarian collections to get their

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(1) Journal, Oct. 18, 1826, p. 273

knowledge; I write because I have long since read such works, and possess, thanks  
 (1)  
 to a strong memory, the information which they have to seek for."

The ways in which these men introduce their historical details does not meet Scott's approval. He accuses them of dragging their points in "by heads and shoulders." He feels, consequently, that the main interest is lost in minute descriptions of events which have little connection with the real progress of the plot. He continues: "Perhaps I have sinned in this way myself; indeed, I am too conscious of having considered the plot only as what Bayes calls the means of bringing in fine things." Scott adds, however, that if he has made this mistake he has also repented of it, declaring that it has ever been his endeavor to conduct his story thru the agency of historical personages and, by connecting them with historical incidents, to weave the events as closely together as possible. He further resolves to study this plan more carefully in the future, realizing that he must not let the background eclipse the principal figures, or the frame overpower the picture.

Scott charges his contemporaries with stealing too openly. He says that Brambletye House contains whole pages from Defoe's Fire and Plague of London. Personally, Scott strives to avoid this method as if it were a criminal offense. It seems to trouble him that his imitators are not more sensitive in regard to the wholesale way in which they copy his ideas and expressions:

"I consider, like a fox at his shifts, whether there be a way to dodge them-- some new device to throw them off, and have a mile or two on free ground while I have legs and wind left to use it. There is one way to give novelty; to depend for success on the interest of a well-contrived story. But woe's me! that requires thought and consideration-- the writing out of a regular plan or plot-- above all, adhering to one-- which I never can do, for the ideas rise as I write, and bear such a disproportional extent to that which each occupied at the first

(1)

Journal, p. 274

concoction that I shall never be able to take the trouble; and yet to make the world stare, and gain a new march ahead of them all! Well, something still we do. (1)

The sections we have quoted thus far in this chapter constitute practically all the material directly from Scott's pen regarding his own compositions. We wish that he had left more definite and concise suggestions as to his opinions on the subjects of setting, plot, and character treatment. But, since careful arrangement was an unknown art to Scott, it is only by sorting and sifting this mass of ideas for ourselves, that we can glean the basis principles of his literary technique.

What, then, are the chief points made by the author concerning the construction of his Waverley Novels? Briefly summarizing, we find that great stress is laid upon rapidity of compilation. He suggests that revision does not necessarily improve a tale, but on the contrary often makes it artificial and unnatural. The broad sweep, easy vigor, healthy freedom, and careless charm of a story he attributes to the high rate of speed at which it is composed. He exults in the fact that he is ever writing against time.

The thoroughness of his equipment is another cause for elation on Scott's part. Though he was always a modest and retiring man, he refused to be outclassed in his particular field by any other writer. His boast of his extended historical knowledge (2) remains unchallenged.

Scott's intense local feeling was the actual cause for his first attempt at fiction writing. His reverence for Scottish manners and traditions, his patriotism, and his love for the people of his own country, aroused in him the desire to make the world familiar with the land of his birth. He says, "The love of natural beauty, more especially when combined with ancient ruins or remains of our fathers' piety or splendour became with me an insatiable passion." (3)

(1) Journal, p. 275

(2) Preface to Waverley Novels, p. 14

(3) See preceding reference to Sir John Chiverton and Brambletye House

Though Scott disliked close analysis and often passed over seemingly important points without care or thought, though he never wrote for the purpose of drawing a moral or teaching a lesson, he did gain a sincere pleasure from depicting truth as truth in its fundamental forms, from exalting rectitude of conduct, and from happily combining the forces of the good and the beautiful.

Since the historical novel originated with Scott, and since he has surpassed all his successors in its construction, we shall look to him for its standard. Selecting a historical background for his setting, he introduces imaginary characters and conducts them thru a fictitious story with marked ease and grace.

Though he often admits his failure to choose the best setting, to delineate a particular character or to construct a unified plot, Scott says that he ever keeps one idea uppermost in his mind while writing-- that of making his novel, as a whole, acceptable and pleasing to the best class of fiction readers. His successes and failures, from a technical standpoint, in this direction can be best learned from what he actually did in the novels, rather than from what he says he does or intends to do. For this information we shall turn to the Waverley Novels themselves.



## CHAPTER IV

## WHAT SCOTT DID IN THE WAVERLEY NOVELS

As has been suggested, a study of the Waverley Novels will best reveal what Scott actually did from the standpoint of literary technique. It is not to our purpose to outline fully plot-incidents nor to discuss each novel in its entirety. Such an analysis would fail to answer the question we have proposed. In order to learn whether the success of the Waverley series was the result of the unconscious workings of innate genius or of a careful endeavor to adhere to the standard principles governing literary composition, it will be necessary to select and compare the significant points in each novel where unconscious practice or conscious effort is most apparent. Since a general improvement may be traced in Scott's methods from the year 1814-- the date of the publication of Waverley-- for a period of about twelve years, until, perhaps, the publication of Woodstock in 1826, and since a definite decline may be noticed from this time to the end of his life, a treatment of the novels in chronological order seems best suited to our present discussion.

It is well known that Scott's first successes were long poems. In 1814, however, he fully realized for the first time that in the person of Lord Byron he had not only an equal but a superior in this field of art. "He has overshot me with my own bow," was the admission Scott made to his friends regarding the new poet. (1) This fact, together with the reasons mentioned in Chapter III, led Scott to turn his attention from verse to the pursuit of novel writing.

Naturally, we shall expect to find many technical weaknesses in his first prose attempts. Waverley, with its monotonous introductory chapters, which seem

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See Chapt. III, pp. 35-39

unending to the impatient reader, does not offer much hope from the viewpoint of plot. About the tenth chapter a real interest in the story is aroused. Why Edward Waverley has been put through various experiences, who Rose Bradwardine is and for what purpose she is introduced at the close of the ninth chapter, become matters of speculation.

The gallant Fergus MacIvor and his sister Flora-- both Scott's ideal of Celtic figures-- arouse a further investigation as to main and sub-plots. What part, we ask ourselves, are these personages to play in this story of medieval times?

The following chapters open up for us the wonderful depths of Scott's historical and antiquarian knowledge. The freshness and geniality of his Celtic lore overshadows the slow movement of his plot and the artificiality of his characters. We forget that Fergus MacIvor is too "stagey" as a Highland Chief, that Flora lacks color and character as a heroine, that Edward is "a sneaking piece of imbecility,"<sup>(1)</sup> and that Rose is a purely literary type.

The Baron of Bradwardine, at least, has a distinct individuality. Scott's ability to picture whimsical Scottish gentlemen gives to this character a peculiar charm. No reader can fail to see that the Baron, despite his recurring pedantry, is a real man. Of the remaining personages, Davie Gellatley, the half-witted, ballad-singing boy, is the most true to life.

Scott objected to his characters being called "minor". He felt that each individual was of equal importance, be this one laird or servant. It will be noticed throughout that the characters which make the greatest appeal to our interest and emotion are invariably those from the lower ranks of society. Scott's lairds are largely traditional, his Highland Chiefs theatrical and his heroes and heroines purely conventional. It is in his depiction of the Lowlander that Scott excels.

Occasionally a character based upon an historical figure-- such as Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, in Waverley-- is introduced with undeniable skill.

(1)

See General Preface to Waverley Novels, p. 6

Scott was the first to undertake this delineation of royal personages and in this respect we feel that he has never been surpassed. For the portrayal of these national types Scott chose the most appropriate background. Places and characters exhibit a common feature-- Scottish ruggedness. As the author himself says, it was also an ambitious branch of his theory to describe various sections of his native country to those unfamiliar with Scottish scenes and landscapes. The fruits of his extensive travel "through most parts of Scotland" <sup>(1)</sup> are everywhere apparent. The "local color", at which former novelists had made wild attempts, now becomes a natural part of romantic fiction. Scott's scenes in Waverley are laid in the open air. The garden at Tully-Veolan, with its flowers and fruit trees, is the first meeting place of Edward and Rose. A Highland glen, with its sylvan solitude, is the spot to which Flora lures the hero, as she tunes her harp to the music of a distant waterfall.

"Indoor" settings had not been employed by any eighteenth century novelist except Smollet. Scott's introduction of them met with unusual success. From his contemporary, Maria Edgeworth, he had learned that the castle hall, the blacksmith's shop, the inn, the village school and the peasant's cottage, were as fit subjects for scene painting as the Highlands of which he himself was so fond.

Though the atmosphere of all his scenes is tinged with the spirit of past generations, its strangeness contains no suggestion of unreality. Scott prided himself on being able to select ancient subjects, and, by treating them in a somewhat modern fashion, to make them deserving of the reader's attention. In Waverley he puts into practice his theory suggested in the Preface to The Fortunes of Nigel-- of employing ancient manners, modified by the introduction of characters <sup>(2)</sup> and sentiments belonging to a newer and more improved period.

(1)

See Chapt. III, p.35

(2)

See Chapt. III, p.59

Scott was especially fortunate in selecting for the setting of Waverley an age which, while it was far enough removed from his own time to allow him freedom of expression, could not be regarded as ancient history. Jacobitism was still well remembered by the people of the early nineteenth century. In taking this subject (Jacobitism) for the theme of his first novel, he brought before the public the most striking events in Scottish history. Scott was acquainted with several of the actors in the rebellion and connected by descent with the chief parties who had for generations partaken in this great political discussion.

It is but natural that a subject so well suited to Scott's romantic temperament strengthened rather than weakened the power of the story. Though he realized that the restoration of the Stuarts was wrong and, from the first, doomed to failure, he felt very sympathetic with the upholders of the lost cause. By his fair-minded portrayal of this people and their ideas, Scott awakens in the mind of the reader the same tender feelings toward them which he himself had. The fact that the narrative is, for the most part, true gives but an added charm to the incidents of the story.

Waverley shows a streak of the masquerader, and does not follow strict rules. Had the author's name been known, his dignity would have required more precision. We do, on the other hand, find careful planning in certain respects, especially in the accuracy with which manners, customs, and characteristics are recorded. These conscious details, vitalized as they were by natural imaginative sketches and made real by inborn human sympathy, would have immortalized Scotland and the Scottish people had Waverley been the only novel ever written by "the Wizard of the North Country."

Guy Mannering, published the following year, resembles its predecessor in general plan, though the stories themselves are vastly different. The scene is laid in Galloway, a former division of southwestern Scotland, not far from Perthshire-- the setting of Waverley. The date of the second story is from 1750 to 1770, while that of the first is from 1715 to 1745. In fact, all of Scott's early

novels are based on Scottish legends of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is not until Ivanhoe, the tenth of the series, that the author employs foreign, or even English, settings.

The opening chapters relate the incidents that befall a young English gentleman just out of Oxford. After several pages of irrelevant material the real story opens and progresses at a rate similar to that of Waverley. The story itself is superior to its predecessors. Some critics have felt it is the best of the series in plot formation.

Lockhart tells us that Guy Mannering was received with eager curiosity, and pronounced by acclamation fully worthy to share the honors of Waverley. The easy, transparent flow of the style; the beautiful simplicity, and here and there the wild solemn magnificence of his sketches of scenery; the rapid ever-heightening interest of the narrative; the unaffected kindness of feeling, the manly purity of thought everywhere mingled with a gentle humor and a homely sagacity; but above all, the rich variety and skillful contrast of characters and manners, at once fresh in fiction, and stamped with the unforgeable seal of nature.<sup>(1)</sup>

If character drawing is the supreme test of a novel's claim to superiority, Guy Mannering, with its inimitable figures, should hold the high claim to which Lockhart attributes it. Accuracy in the creation of men and women is vastly better than mere outlining of plot. Any ordinary writer can invent a story, but it takes the touch of a genius to invest that story with living characters.

The most conscientious representation of types is found in Guy Mannering. Such a shrewd, sagacious, yet kindly, figure as the Colonel could never have been drawn by a vulgar artist. Such a harmonious blending of sternness and sympathy, haughtiness and chivalrous courtesy could never have been conceived by an artificial means. Scott's excellent taste in depicting the aristocratic gentleman,

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(1)

Lockhart, Vol. V, p. 35

the gallant cavalier, or the dignified veteran is without parallel. In this marvelous ability lies one charm of his unconscious practice.

One of the greatest-- if not the greatest-- of Scott's creations is found in this novel. Meg Merrilies, the progenitor of a race of strange wandering creatures, is but one of the professional women Scott paints with ease and power. This insane woman of heightened stature is an outgrowth and reflection of her surroundings. The daily life of the other characters is revealed through her wild speeches and actions. Her dramatic farewell to Ellangowan outranks, in our opinion, anything of a like nature in fiction. After reading this story, we feel that it has been our privilege to catch a glimpse of the innermost thoughts of a being whose kind is no longer known to writers of the present age. We feel that Scott has opened up to us regions hitherto unknown and has, by his sympathetic treatment, awakened in us a deeper understanding of that despised group of outcasts-- the homeless gypsy women.

It has already been noted that The Antiquary was Scott's favorite novel. We are not, therefore, surprised to find its main interest centered in the loving touches with which a group of characters-- all types well known to Scott from early boyhood-- are represented. The scene of The Antiquary is laid among the fishing villages of the northeastern coast of Scotland. The author had lived in this country when a boy and knew thoroughly the life of these seaport towns. The accurate and direct manner in which scenes and characters are painted throughout reveals the fact that the author's knowledge is the result of his own experiences. Such figures as Edie Ochiltree, the vagrant Deacon, Elspeth, the old fishwife, and Herman Dousterswivel, the knavish German, could not have been made to live in so realistic a manner except for Scott's remarkable familiarity with Dutch and Scotch middle-class life.

The cumbersome plot (the chief events of the hero's life have little or no relationship to the actions of the other personages) is redeemed by the sympathetic way in which Scott shares with us the tragedy and comedy of these simple folk.

From the sadness caused by the death of the fisherman's son to the humor occasioned by Edie's tormenting attacks upon poor Dousterswivel, our emotions are one with those of the men and women who experience them. Old Elspeth's death is as real to us as if we had been present at the bedside.

The sane, simple, and healthful manner in which Scott deals with his less complicated types, the contrasting skill with which he draws Monkburne-- more commonly known as Jonothan Oldbuck-- and the natural ease with which he relates the story, suggest to us that he is putting into practice his idea that "if a man will paint daily from nature he will be likely to amuse those who are daily looking at it."<sup>(1)</sup>

Scott draws no moral and attempts no didacticism. His object is to illustrate the manners of Scotland during the last ten years of the eighteenth century. In this respect we feel that he admirably succeeds.

The theme of The Black Dwarf differs radically from any other of the Waverley Novels. It has a singular interest from its delineation of the dark feelings so often connected with physical deformity. There is nothing remarkable about this story from the standpoint of conscious theory and practice, aside, perhaps, from the fact that as the narrative progresses we become less and less interested in the character of the Dwarf. We are glad that the story is short. Scott suspected that the Dwarf might excite the reader's disgust rather than admiration and so brought it to an abrupt ending.

Old Mortality gives evidence of considerable improvement in workmanship. Scott is beginning to understand more thoroughly the nature of his task. To us it seems one of his ablest performances. The reader "glides down the narrative" in better fashion, due to Scott's greater skill in framing his plot. The characters are more vividly sketched and strongly contrasted than in any of the pre-

(1)

Lockhart, Vol. V, p. 142

ceding novels. The settings-- chiefly in Lanarkshire during the rising of the Covenanters from 1679 to 1690-- are more than usually well drawn.

The word pictures are natural and unaffected. This is especially noticeable in such instances as the one in which Balfour of Burley dashes the old oak tree, his bridge across the chasm to the outer world, into the stream and attempts to kill Morton for defying him in his wild mountain retreat. It is observable here, as elsewhere throughout the novel, that, wherever the interest rises to a very high pitch, there the dialogue, or whatever form of composition be employed, becomes in a peculiar way condensed and pointed. A single sentence paints for us the most vivid and striking picture: "But, as he turned to retire, Burley stepped before him, pushed the oak-tree from its resting-place, and, as it fell thundering and crashing into the abyss beneath, drew his sword, and cried out, with a voice that rivaled the roar of the cataract and the thunder of the falling oak-- 'Now thou art at bay! fight, yield, or die!' and, standing in the mouth of the cavern, he flourished his naked sword."

The title is wholly irrelevant; Old Mortality himself is an inferior figure in the narrative. The travels of this religious itinerant, however, afford Scott the opportunity to relate the entire history of these wonderful times and to delineate for the reader queer personages whose peculiarities would have passed unrecorded had it not been for this splendid romance. Mause Headrigg-- the uncompromising Covenanter-- is the most noteworthy example of this class. She is another representative of a distinct group for which we now have a new understanding. Mause is worthy to be classed with Meg Merrilies, the gypsy, in her remarkable individuality.

Old Mortality especially shows the vast amount of time and industry Scott spent upon tracts and documents that had for years been forgotten by the English and Scottish peoples. The perfection of the author's technique greatly enhances the minute and accurate information regarding ancient times displayed in this novel. Considered in the light of conscious practice, it may be termed his first



real literary achievement.

Delightful as Rob Roy is, we must admit at the outset that the plot is defective and the story is oppressed by its titular hero. As Scott himself said, he had "too much flax upon his distaff."<sup>(1)</sup> As a result the story, as Lady Stuart declared, is "huddled." Even at this, had the author been content to close the story at the parting between Diana Vernon and Frank Osbaldistone, instead of dragging it out to a "happy ending", the plot would have been much more unified, and-- to the majority of critics-- much more satisfactory.

It is, doubtless, the excellent portrayal of character, both national and individual, the wonderful description of Highland scenery, and the pleasant tenor of the narrative, which make Rob Roy so readable.

Scott's desire to create his characters true to life is successfully carried out here. Rashleigh and Sir Frederick Vernon faintly remind us of Gothic figures. Otherwise all the personages are real people. Frank is a true Englishman. Bailie Nicol Jarvie is delightfully Scotch. Jarvie is, in fact, one of Scott's personages that will stand for all time. The contrast between him and Rob Roy and his wife (whom Carlyle said were "painted from the skin inwards") is most marked. We can very easily imagine that one might meet the Bailie walking down the streets of Glasgow. He is real and vital in his simplicity. The Highland characters, on the contrary, are just as unreal and artificial because of their complexity. Scott admired such figures but did not understand them sufficiently well to picture them to others. For this reason Highland types are never entirely natural. In a letter to Miss Edgeworth, written in October, 1824, Scott says, "The Highlander, unless his spirits are roused by bodily exercises, is a grave, proud, stiff animal, his language sometimes poetical, but never by any chance humorous, and his demeanor often polite and obliging, but never intimating any sense of expression or humour."<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Introduction to Rob Roy

(2) Familiar Letters, Vol. II, p. 386

Perhaps it was an attempt to depict such a personage that caused Scott to unconsciously infuse into these men and women an artificial strangeness which, fortunately, is not found in any of his other types.

Scott's next venture was a most happy one. By the time The Heart of Midlothian was written, four years after the publication of Waverley, he knew his instrument and understood his task well. He no longer fell into the mistakes of minor artists. A careful study of narrative devices was teaching him how to avoid them. His knowledge of life, law, landscape, theology, court, and character is most remarkable in this novel. As a whole, Scott's methods are well adapted to his desired ends. His worst faults are spending time on unimportant characters and introducing poorly managed endings. Six chapters, for instance, are devoted to George Staunton, about whom the reader cares little or nothing. The ten concluding chapters are of no interest or importance to the plot. We cannot but feel that the strength of this novel would have been doubled had the author concluded the story at the end of the fortieth chapter. Jeanie's mission had been accomplished, Madge Wildfire's life-story and death have been related. All that is told concerning Effie's and Jeanie's later careers acts but as an anticlimax to a novel which in its fundamentals is of the highest type.

We are reminded here of Scott's rather stern criticisms of other novelists for dragging out the conclusions of their narratives until their readers have become weary and have asked the cause of all this delay. Perhaps our author has forgotten his theories in the pleasure he himself is finding in the story. His characters seem to carry him along and he writes because he cannot avoid it. For the greatest part of the story, Scott is surely at his best-- unconsciously inspired by the force of his own creative imagination.

Though all the characters are exquisitely drawn, Jeanie grows upon us more than any other figure. We can see that she grows upon the author in the same fashion. As he proceeds, she gains shapeliness and strength. Howells suggests

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that the straggling story does the same thing. It is not until a crisis occurs that Jeanie rises in all the glory of her womanhood to meet it. Effie's misfortune presents to her sister her great life problem and Jeanie enlarges to the measure of her task. She does not change-- she is the same simple peasant girl thruout-- yet she develops, and we feel that her life is the biggest and fullest thing we have yet had from the pen of Scott.

Without definitely intending to enlist our affections in the cause of virtue, Scott out-Richardsons Richardson and with one supreme effort sweeps from his reader's mind the censure of petty critics that already the author is "wearing himself out."

We cannot leave this scene of mingled love and misery without a glance at another of Scott's master figures-- Madge Wildfire, the crazed daughter of the wild Meg Murdockson. We at once group Madge with Meg Merrilies and Mause Headrigg. The deep insight with which Scott presents these strange women assures us that he is not "telling a story", but that he is actually painting for us word pictures of figures whose likenesses he has met in real life.

The Bride of Lammermoor, written the same year (1819), stands in a class by itself. The very wierdness of the plot, combined with the exceptionally fine manner in which the leading personages are delineated, gives this novel a place in literature which is duplicated by no other. Many of Scott's works are more interesting, many more instructive, but there is a pathetic charm about the plot and chief characters of this story that compels us to turn to it again and again.

Scott would, no doubt, have been criticized many times for having introduced scenes of a Gothic nature into his story had it not been that they were verified by actual fact. The incident of the wedding night is said to be based upon established history. Even Scott's vivid imagination, encouraged as it was by the

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Harper's Bazaar, XXXIII, 903-8

wild tales of Mrs. Radcliffe and others of the School of Terror, could not have conceived of any situation more wonderful than this one.

Caleb Balderstone, the single servitor at Wolf's Crag, affords an excellent example of comedy of situation. The versatile way in which he conceals his master's utter poverty, in face of the most trying circumstances, is but another instance of the delicate cleverness with which Scott invests his humor.

Lucy Ashton vies with Jeanie Deans for superiority among Scott's heroines. Her high sense of honor causes the spilling of her detested husband's blood in the bridal chamber to take on the character of a sacred funeral rite rather than of a ghastly murder. Like Jeanie, the noble dignity of Lucy's actions arouse the deepest emotions and call forth the sincerest sympathy of the aesthetic reader.

The old crones employed to nurse, watch, and lay out the corpse, are most impressive figures. They mark a fourth group of the professional woman Scott was so clever in portraying.

The narrative holds our attention thruout. From the time the Master of Ravenswood steps out from the thicket and miraculously saves Lucy and her father from the attack of a wild bull, until the moment the hero rides headlong into the ocean to drown his grief, we are absorbed in the progress of the tale.

We feel that Scott is at his best here from the standpoint of setting, plot, and character. We are not surprised that his presentation of the story was most favorably received by the English public and that later (1835) it furnished the basis of Donizetti's famous opera, Lucia di Lammermoor.

In The Legend of Montrose we find no posing, no artificializing. All the author's free and unrestrained genius seems to burst forth unhampered by thoughts of literary form or style of composition. The action of the principal scenes moves with the greatest ease and smoothness. The dungeon scene at Invernary is a masterpiece of dramatic narration.

Dalgetty, the true soldier of fortune, surely cannot be accused of being "painted from the skin inwards."<sup>(1)</sup> The lively way in which in the prison he wrests from the disguised Duke of Argyle the means of his freedom is worthy of any hero of fiction. Scott enters into the character of this conceited, yet attractive, captain, with great zest and, as a result, wins for him an abiding admiration, and for the story our constant interest.

It was the author's purpose in Ivanhoe, written in 1819, to bring before the public an experiment on a subject purely English. But, despite the fact that the story is based upon an old English manuscript and even the name "Ivanhoe" suggested by a bit of English rhyme, the tale does not carry with it the ease and naturalness of its predecessors of purely Scottish origin. The name "Ivanhoe" itself does have an ancient English sound and serves to arrest the reader's attention, as it conveys no indication whatever of the nature of the story. Nevertheless, its English setting and the fact that the story was laid in the twelfth century, did not keep Ivanhoe from being highly successful upon its appearance. On the contrary, this new venture procured for Scott freedom from professional rules, since ever after he was permitted to exercise his powers of fictitious composition in England as well as in Scotland.

The introductory chapters are delightful in their descriptions of "merry England." A comparative stranger to York scenery at this time, Scott's touch is somewhat uncertain. Yet, because of his exceptional ability, his landscapes are, without doubt, as fascinating as those of his Scottish novels. What can surpass the following selection in beauty and charm?

"The sun was setting upon one of the rich glassy glades of that forest which we have mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. Hundreds of broad-headed, short-stemmed, wide-branched oaks, which had witnessed perhaps the stately march

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See Carlyle's Criticism of Rob Roy, Chap. IV, p.86

of the Norman soldiery, flung their gilded arms over a thick carpet of the most delicious greenward; in some places they were intermingled with beeches, hollies, and popwood of various descriptions, so closely as totally to intercept the level beams of the sinking sun; in others they receded from each other, forming those long sweeping vistas in the intricacy of which the eye delights to lose itself, while imagination considers them as the paths to yet wilder scenes of silver solitude. Here the red rays of the sun shot a broken and discolored light, that partially hung upon the shattered boughs and mossy trunks of the trees, and there they illuminated in brilliant patches the portions of turf to which they made their way. A considerable open space, in the midst of this glade, seemed formerly to have been dedicated to the rites of Druidical superstition; for, on the summit of a hillock so regular as to seem artificial, there still remained part of a circle of rough, unshewn stones, of large dimensions. Seven stood upright; the rest had been dislodged from their places, probably by the zeal of some convert to Christianity, and lay, some prostrate near their former site, and others on the side of the hill. One large stone only had found its way to the bottom, and, in stopping the course of a small brook which glided smoothly round the foot of the eminence, gave, by its opposition, a feeble voice of murmur to the placid and elsewhere silent streamlet." (1)

Scott never cared to construct an elaborate or artificial plot. He placed the value of the story itself above the narrative form. He depended for interest upon the incidents themselves rather than upon the manner in which these incidents were arranged. These facts are most evident when we carefully examine the plan of Ivanhoe.

The plot is totally deficient in unity of action. As several critics have suggested, the events seem to be but a series of experiences which occurred at about the same time to a set of persons who happened to be collected at the time at Ashby. All the events take place within a period of ten days and are divided into three great sections.- The Tournament, The Storming of the Castle, and The

(1) Ivanhoe, p. 40

### Judicial Combat.

At the opening of practically every chapter the author feels it necessary to explain what he is about to relate and why he is introducing a particular scene at a particular point. Since there are three important threads of action in the main plot, the love affair between Ivanhoe and Rowena; the overplot, the rivalry between John and Richard; and the underplot, the experiences of Rebecca and the Templar-- it is practically impossible for Scott to lend any real proportion to his narrative. The successive denouements form a sort of relay race of plot interests. There is no great achievement around which the story may be artistically grouped.

Despite all these weaknesses, the vigorous, open-air cheerfulness and humorous sketches which Scott introduces into his castle or forest scenes, as well as the striking contrasts with which he adorns his tale, give a mysterious strength to this fictitious history of medieval times.

Another marked deficiency is one from which Scott is generally free-- want of individuality in the principal characters. Wilfred of Ivanhoe, the hero, is subordinated in our attention whenever the daring Black Knight, the gallant Locksley, the jesting Wamba, or even the haughty Templar, appear. Rowena, the heroine, lacks any definite characteristics. She, too, is but "a vapid piece of still  
(1) life." All the persons are mere figures, introduced full grown and unchangeable. They are types rather than men, symbols rather than human beings. Rebecca is the one exception. Her character shows a development, a struggle with fate. We realize the greatness of her sacrifice because we are constantly afforded glimpses of her inner thoughts and feelings.

Critics have accused Scott of permitting his characters to run away with him. They dislike to see the less interesting Rowena receive the hand of Wilfred, while Rebecca is left to devote her thoughts to Heaven and her actions to works of kind-

(1) See Scott's criticism of his characters in Introduction to Waverley

ness to men-- "tending the sick, feeding the hungry, and relieving the distressed. The author justifies this outcome by reminding us that, aside from the fact that the prejudices of the age rendered a union between a Christian and a Jewess almost impossible, it would have been inconsistent to attempt to recompense the virtue and self denial of a noble character, such as Rebecca's, with temporal wealth, greatness, rank, or the indulgence of such a rashly-formed or ill-assorted passion as that of the Jewess for Ivanhoe. (1) Instead of such an artificial conclusion, designed to suit popular taste, we have a picture of true self denial, of sacrifice of passion to principle, of high-minded discharge of duty, followed by a peace which the world cannot give or take away.

Cedric is significant for us as a symbol of the vanishing order. The primal motive of the novel is based upon his forlorn hope that the ruling power may at some future time again come into Saxon possession. Scott's love for medieval affairs lends a very sympathetic touch to his treatment of the stern old Saxon.

Scott is, however, inconsistent regarding one point in his conclusion. To please his printer, James Ballantyne, he brought to life the dead Athelstans-- thus committing a most inartistic and artificial ending. Such errors as this cause us to question seriously Scott's wisdom in writing to suit popular taste and (2) in making some sacrifices to his own judgment in order to satisfy the public.

The Monastery, unlike its predecessor, is laid in Scotland, during the reign of Elizabeth. From this date (1820), Scott's settings are varied. They range over a wide region of time and space-- from Elizabethan England and France to Constantinople and Palestine.

When Scott showed the first volume of The Monastery to Lockhart, he said that he had worked at the two books (Ivanhoe and The Monastery) together because "It was a relief to interlay the scenery most familiar to me (in the Monastery) with the

(1) Lockhart, Vol. VI, p. 176

(2) See Introduction to The Monastery, The Pirate and The Fortunes of Nigel



strange world for which I had to draw so much upon my imagination (in Ivanhoe)."

Scott was tempted in this novel to resort to the method employed by authors for centuries, and especially by those of the eighteenth century,- the introduction of the supernatural. The impression made by the Gothic romance was yet strong in Scott's mind and he wished to venture something similar to the tales of Horace Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe and Clara Reeve.

As a result we have The White Lady of Avenel, a tutelary spirit, connected in some mysterious way with the fate of the hero and heroine. She is the cause of much that is inexplicable in the story. Possessing superhuman power, she wields a strange influence over all the characters. But her influence is not impressive. She is neither a very good nor a very bad spirit. Her mediocrity is the weakest point of the book. Her sleight of hand tricks, her sham burials and other mechanical devices employed for forwarding her schemes, seem ridiculous and nonsensical to the modern reader.

Sir Piercie Shafton is also modeled after ancient rogues. He, too, is not a success, as Scott himself admits in his Introduction. Sir Piercie tends to arouse our disgust rather than awaken our sense of humor. This "obsolete figure of folly" and The White Lady are constantly placed before us without permanently affecting the progress of the story. We close the book with the feeling that Scott has not only failed in his character portrayal but also in his delineation of the subject he proposed to himself at the outset. There is nothing of sufficient merit to atone for these two mistakes. The narrative seems "huddled", the intrigue lacks interest, the conclusion is artificially brought about. Halbert Glendinning, the hero, is hurried through disconnected experiences regarding which the reader has little or no accurate information. These experiences have practically no connection with the story itself.

Let us consider at this point a weakness altogether too characteristic of our author. On the basis that his incidents are true to life, Scott takes the liberty of introducing at random into his novels adventures of any sort.

Occasionally he makes a hasty explanation or excuse for his order-- or better, perhaps, disorder-- but usually he leaves the arranging of the events absolutely to the reader. Scott fails to realize that the province of the romance writer is to a certain extent artificial. A mere compliance with nature in its original simplicity is not all that is required of a novelist.

Fielding is an excellent example of a writer who recognizes his responsibility from the standpoint of plot construction. The narrative of Tom Jones is regularly and consistently developed. No incident is permitted to occur which does not have a direct bearing upon the plot, no personage is introduced who does not share in advancing the catastrophe. Though we cannot demand that every novelist follow technical rules as exactly as Fielding, we may require a much more careful arrangement of events than is to be found in many of Scott's Waverley Novels, especially The Monastery.

One critic has suggested that the intrigue of this romance "neither very interesting in itself nor very happily detailed, is at length finally disentangled by the breaking out of national hostilities between England and Scotland, and the as sudden renewal of the truce. Instances of this kind, it is true, cannot in reality have been uncommon, but the resorting to such in order to accomplish the catastrophe was objected to as artificial and not perfectly intelligent to the reader."<sup>(1)</sup>

In The Abbot, a sequel to The Monastery, the fortunes of the House of Avenal are continued. It, too, is weak in plot construction, but strong in description of both settings and characters. Queen Mary's experience at Lochleven Castle, as well as her flight to England, are not only true to life but accurately reveal to us characteristic traits of her bravery.

Scott discovered that the supernatural machinery of The Monastery "had not met the taste of the times" and so completely discards it here. The White Lady

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Stephen, The Art of the Novel, Contemp. XIX, p. 37

is practically excluded from the tale, receiving only incidental mention in the closing chapter. In a word, Scott recovered his lost ground with admirable skill. We are glad for this successful return to former methods.

The Abbot, though more successful than its immediate predecessor, does not hold an equal place in our minds and hearts with Kenilworth, published a few months later. There are, doubtless, at least three reasons for this:- the story of Kenilworth is more appealing than that of the Abbot, Elizabeth is more interesting to us than Mary, and the character sketches in the later work are much superior.

The conscious study of details is noteworthy here. No better example can be cited than the description of the Earl of Leicester as he appears before the queen upon her visit to his castle-hall at Kenilworth. "The favorite earl was now apparelled all in white, his shoes being of white velvet, his understocks or stockings of knit silk;- his upperstocks of white velvet, lined with cloth of silver which was shown at the slashed part of the middle thigh; his doublet of cloth of silver, the close jerkin of white velvet, embroidered with silver and seed-pearl, his girdle and the scabbard of his sword of white velvet with golden buckles; his poniard and sword hilted and mounted with gold; and over all, a rich loose robe of white satin, with a border of golden embroidery a foot in breadth. The collar of the Garter, and the azure of the Garter itself around his knee, completed the appointments of the Earl of Leicester; which were so well matched by his fair stature, graceful gesture, fine proportion of body, and handsome countenance, that at that moment he was admitted by all who saw him as the goodliest person whom they had ever looked upon."<sup>(1)</sup>

Scott's peculiar ability to transplant his readers to the Middle Ages, to make them at home in Gothic castles, and to cause them to participate personally in scenes of medieval chivalry, and to associate with men and women of former times, is particularly noticeable in Kenilworth. The Queen Elizabeth created by Scott is the Queen Elizabeth we think of when reading history to-day. The same

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Kenilworth, Vol. II, p. 277

thing is true, in a less degree, of her rival in The Abbot-- Mary Stuart. These facts warrant the high merit of Scott's characterization of historical personages.

Kenilworth is considered second only to Ivanhoe as a "popular" novel. It is particularly delightful in the grace and ease of its portraits, the interest of its narrative, and such accurate bits of description as the one quoted concerning Leicester.

The Pirate, also written in 1821, has the same attention given to minutiae. Cleveland and his party are described as accurately as was Leicester. The action is confined mainly to shipboard, differing in this respect from the majority of Scott's other settings. Because, however, of an extensive coast trip taken some seven years previous, it is very accurate. We may safely say that it is the surroundings, rather than the story itself, that are most noteworthy in this novel.

Norna of the Fitful Head has been accused of being a counterpart of Meg Merrilies, but there is something about this wild Northern sybil that distinguishes her from the Dumfriesshire gypsy and gives us another glimpse into the versatility of Scott's graphic power. As usual, Scott's hero is the weakest link in his narrative chain. Cleveland is rather too gentlemanly to be the hero of such a tale. Scott's love for outlaws causes him to look upon even the unwelcome trade of a pirate with tender leniency!

The high degree of improbability makes this story almost equal to a goblin tale, but the author reminds us that even the genius of Miss Edgeworth could not always surmount this difficulty.

Almost against Scott's will, the Gothic element invades his novels. In his more deliberate moments, supernatural terrors do not seriously appeal to him, but when he is hard pressed and his genius longs for a "different" mode of expression in order to catch the reader's attention, we find him adopting the old devices and the old schemes employed by the School of Terror to startle readers

of the preceding age.

The marked contrast between Lady Hermione, the recluse, and Mistress Margaret, the lively, good-humored child with a playful disposition and an excellent heart, is one of the most attractive bits to be found in The Fortunes of Nigel. Dame Ursula's surprise at finding Margaret, the daughter of a watchmaker, in love with the Scottish nobleman, Lord Glenverloch, more commonly called Lord Nigel Olifaunt; Nigel's imprisonment as a traitor in the Tower; Margaret's rash visit to his cell; and their ultimate marriage, are the chief points of interest. Though they are well portrayed, we have the same weakening thruout the closing chapters that is the author's constant limitation. All his knowledge of technical devices seemed unable to keep Scott from this flagrant error.

The most striking part of the novel is that though the scene is laid in and around London, all the important characters are Scotch. The plot is a strange mixture of Scottish experiences and Cockney rascality. This is Scott's third romance laid in England, so we find additional ease in scene portrayal and more perfect settings. One flagrant exception is to be noted. Hyde Park is mentioned fifty years before it existed.

On the whole, The Fortunes of Nigel presents a vigorous and truthful picture of London during the reign of James I. Without doubt, the king himself is the most accurate portrait. Contemporary history leads us to believe that James is more faithfully drawn than any other of Scott's historical figures. Dalgarno, the son of Lord Huntinglen, is less individual than the majority of Scott's villains. He is too lawless and reckless. His excessive effrontery takes from him the very reality which is so characteristic of such villains as Richard Varney in Kenilworth.

Peveril of the Peak also reveals clumsy handling. The plot-- the longest of the Waverley Novels-- is distressingly perplexed. The love story of Alice and Julian is prolix. Major Bridgenorth and the old Countess of Derby appear and re-appear like jacks-in-the box. The catastrophe can be seen from the outset.

The conclusion is sudden, jerky and uninteresting. We must acknowledge in passing that this conclusion is an exception to the author's general rule, and, though foreseen, is brought about in an inartificial way-- in fact, we are inclined to question if it is not too inartificial. But all these weaknesses do not keep the novel from entertaining us with the powerfully conceived or happily portrayed characters. Even Fenella, though not original,-- being a copy of Mignon in Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre-- displays enough of her own individuality to make a favorable impression upon those familiar with the tale.

Practically the same amount of thought and conscious deliberation is shown in Quentin Durward as in the works which directly preceded it. A tale of France in the fifteenth century, this romance abounds with foreign materials. It is the first book written by Scott in which the scene is laid outside the British Isles. As might be expected, the story, ending with the union of the true young Scot and her "humoursome" French ladyship, Isabelle de Craye, met with an unusual success both on the continent and at home.

The skillful manner in which Scott compacts this romance is most welcome after his inartistic management of the three preceding novels. The natural ease with which he fits a fictitious hero into real incidents is worthy of our praise. The heroine, Isabelle de Craye, is absolutely colorless, but the author's forceful delineations of Louis the Eleventh and Charles the Bold more than make up for this deficiency. Scott's ingenuity is particularly noticeable in his ability to unite in these character delineations fictitious conversations and incidents with actual historical facts.

St. Ronan's Well is one of the few exceptions to Scott's plan of making a story center about affairs of public, rather than private, interest. In this story the events are grouped around the life of a single family, the Mombrays. The author uses a more delicate and exquisite touch than the "big-bow-wow style," his usual wont. How well he succeeded we shall presently learn. Scott's adventurous turn of mind was constantly influencing him to try literary experiments.

St. Ronan's Well is the result of a suggestion made by William Laidlaw, the author's amanuensis, that Scott attempt to portray the contemporary life of a quiet Scotch village. The scene of the story is laid at a northern watering-place, Inverleithen upon the Tweed, Peebleshire, Scotland. The time is about the year 1800, during the reign of George the Third. St. Ronan's Well is Scott's solitary attempt in nineteenth century settings. As the author suggests in his Introduction, this novel was written in good-natured rivalry with Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Charlotte Smith, and others whose success seemed to have appropriated this province (celebrare domestica facta) for their own. (1) Scott's only excuse for his action was that he desired to attempt something new in the line of fiction.

There is, perhaps, a greater diversity of opinion regarding this novel than any other of the Waverley series. It was published before Christmas, 1823, and was received very coldly by English readers. Scott's countrymen, however, stoutly defended his efforts and denied the charge that he had written himself out. The unfortunate conclusion was, naturally, lamented and censured by all men and women of literary taste, excluding, possibly, James Ballantyne with his Philistine prudery. Maria Edgeworth stated very frankly the attitude of the general public toward St. Ronan's Well in a letter written to Scott on January 26, 1824. The criticism runs as follows:

"I confess how much it has amused us all-- till we come to the last thirty pages, for which we all agree that the author deserves to be carbonadoed. When he and Touchwood had the game in their hands, how could he have the heart to throw it up and huddle the cards together in such a shameless manner, overturning table and all, in haste to be after some new game!" (2)

Let us, however, suspend judgment until all the evidence is in. Though perhaps the first thirty-seven chapters do not reach the height of Scott's best ef-

(1) See Introduction to St. Ronan's Well, pp. 1-8

(2) Familiar Letters, Vol. II, p. 179

forts, we must admit that, due to the remarkable character delineation of such personages as Meg Dods or Peregrine Touchwood and the extraordinary interest of the narrative that this work ranks as high as any novel of its class. It reminds us in some respects of the masterpieces of Charles Dickens. Meg Dods-- the culmination and embodiment of Scott's many landladies and "douce Scotch bodies" <sup>(1)</sup> in various walks of life, is equal to any of the later novelist's characters.

That Scott should have permitted his sheer good nature to have ruined what promised to be his greatest literary undertaking is most lamentable. True, the villain (Etherington) and his machinations are directly borrowed from Clarissa Harlowe, Clara Mowbray is modeled after Shakespeare's heroines, and such characters as Sir Bingo, Lady Binks, Lady Penelope, Mr. Meiklewan, Mr. Winterblossom, Dr. Quackleben and Captain MacTurk are supernumerary and have little or no connection with the main narrative. But the greatness of the story itself and the strength of the other characters would redeem these technical errors, were it not for the unskillful engineering of the catastrophe.

The blame for this great mistake lay more with Scott's publishers, Ballantyne and Constable--especially the former--, than with himself. Against his better judgment, the author changed his plan and thus fatally injured his story. Scott does not take his task seriously enough. Unfortunately, his manner of composition is too careless thruout. He rushes his plot along, writing for amusement, and sometimes, we fear, for money. He holds too low an opinion of the art of fiction, and so revises his work merely out of respect for the opinions of his friends. His disregard for all the technical laws of composition and failure to strive for the highest literary ideals permanently injures his story.

Clara's weak mental state and her strange conduct towards Etherington and Tyrrel is not warranted by the trick played upon her by the false brother. But

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Introduction to St. Ronan's Well, p. 6



as the plot was originally conceived, the mock marriage was not the extent of her wrong. She herself is clearly innocent. Her brain and heart are evidently harassed by some trouble which Scott has not described. Lockhart hints what this trouble was and it is more fully explained by Mr. J. M. Colly's note to the Athenaeum of February 4, 1873. In this volume extracts from the original proof sheets of St. Ronan's Well are printed. They reveal the fact that Clara had, before her marriage, compromised with Tyrell, her real lover. This fact, added to the knowledge of the false marriage, overthrew her mental balance. Had this bit of information been shared with Scott's readers, our opinion of the story would have been entirely altered, and Clara's tragedy would have been branded as one of the supreme dramatic efforts in modern romance.

To those who doubt the possibility of an author who is truly great possessing an unconscious technique, we wish to suggest that, even in the midst of his most hurried compositions, Scott frequently recalls himself and remarks upon the literary or technical methods he is employing. We have already stated that St. Ronan's Well was very hastily written. In the tenth chapter Scott says, "This digression is already too long-- I have said enough and more than enough." In Chapter XIV he writes, "We often find ourselves embarrassed in the course of a story, by the occurrence of an ugly hiatus, which we cannot always at first sight fill up, with the proper reference to the rest of the narrative." Again, in Chapter XVIII we are told that "Our history must now look a little backwards; and although it is rather foreign to our natural style of composition, it must speak more in narrative and less in dialogue, rather telling what happened, than its effect upon the actors. Our promise, however, is only conditional, for we foresee temptations which may render it difficult for us exactly to keep it." Finally, in Chapter XX, Scott says, speaking of the words "tripping it on the light, fantastic toe," - "I love a phrase that is not hackneyed."

Every novel of the series contains the same sort of interpolated comments and explanations as the foregoing. That Scott's success is due for the most part

to the natural workings of his genius grows more evident as we proceed. Nevertheless, we are obliged to acknowledge that a certain amount of his success depended not only upon his unconscious ability but upon careful and conscious technique.

Lady Louisa Stuart, in writing of Redgauntlet, Scott's next venture, said, "It has no story, no love, no hero-- unless Redgauntlet himself, who would be such a one as the Devil himself in Milton--; yet in spite of all these wants, the interest is so strong one cannot lay it down."<sup>(1)</sup>

This analysis is indeed true. Redgauntlet, told chiefly by means of letters and diaries, contains the most striking passages. The scene where the persecutors hold their appointed meetings and exult in their mirthless revels is difficult to surpass.

The description of Sir Peter Peebles is a masterpiece as a character sketch. The crazed litigant, the insane beggar, "as poor as Job and as mad as a March hare," dashing into the English magistrate's court for a warrant against his fugitive counsel is marvelous in its dramatic power. By the time we have finished the chapter Peter and his lawsuit have insinuated themselves so far into our thoughts that henceforth we assign him a distinct and unique place among the characters of fiction.

Without doubt the historical basis of Redgauntlet, as many of Scott's other works, is thoroughly untrustworthy. Like Kenilworth and Woodstock, it has the most serious errors in this respect. In fact, it is doubtful if Scott ever really concerned himself about the chronology of his stories. He cared little for the mere history of medieval life. Its chivalry, its adventure, its aristocratic sentiment, and its military picturesqueness, were the elements that held his attention and interest. It is but natural that these same elements are the ones which cause the modern world to read and enjoy Scott with an eagerness that is ever new.

(1) Familiar Letters, Vol. II, p. 208

Although we have a few remarkable exceptions in the novels written during the last seven years of Scott's life, as a whole his works were not on a par with those written when family cares and financial difficulties were not weighing so heavily on his spirit. The Tales of the Crusaders, composed of The Betrothed and The Talisman, seem to mark a transitional stage between Scott's middle and later years. The author had "sinkings of the heart" about these stories. When he saw the former in print, he was inclined to suppress it, but finally decided that its weaknesses might be concealed by the merits of its companion. Though the latter work is by far the superior, we notice a weakening of technique, a falling off in power of dramatic ability, and a gradual denouement in scenic effect in Scott's workmanship. The sweep and breadth of line that were so characteristic of the earlier works are lacking. Elements of hesitation and uncertainty are evident. Scott no longer wrote entirely to please himself but rather to suit the public, and never knew whether his efforts were to be successful or not. Naturally such a feeling led to an overstudied technique, not so much of style as of general construction. This deplorable condition is only too true in the majority of the later Waverley novels.

In November, 1835, Scott wrote in his diary, "I have resolved to practice economics." The following year he spoke of himself as "a beggar". Lady Scott's illness at this time also greatly depressed him. The copyright of Woodstock, for which he received nine thousand pounds in 1836, put him, temporarily, on his feet. This, followed by The Two Drovers, The Highland Widow, and The Surgeon's Daughter, made him more hopeful regarding his literary endeavors.

In 1828, however, he began to decline rapidly in health, and the effect of his illness is most marked in his writings. The Fair Maid of Perth, Anne of Geierstein, Count Robert of Paris, and Castle Dangerous, reveal a weakness that was not entirely mental, one that was caused not merely by anxiety or worry. A stroke of paralysis had left him in a state of continual ill-health from which he never completely recovered.

Woodstock, written immediately after The Tales of the Crusaders, is unquestionably the greatest work of this last period. Despite the fact that Scott averaged at least thirty pages a day in its compilation, it excels all its contemporaries in vivid personal portraiture, realistic description, dramatic power, and high moral tone. Note the combination of truth, ease, and dramatic action in the following brief paragraph:-

"Everard aimed at the bosom, and discharged the pistol. The figure waved its arm in an attitude of scorn, and a loud laugh arose, during which the light, as gradually growing weaker, glanced and glimmered upon the apparition of the aged knight, and then disappeared. Everard's life-blood ran cold to his heart. 'Had he been of human mold,' he thought, 'the bullet must have pierced him; but I have neither will nor power to fight with supernatural beings.'"

In the early stages of writing Woodstock, Ballantyne's usual adverse criticisms worried the author. Lockhart relates that Scott often expressed a wish to "open up a good vein of interest which would breathe freely." <sup>(1)</sup> As he wrote on, it appears that his task lightened and the conclusion is happily brought about.

Ballantyne's chief criticism was that Scott had imitated Mrs. Radcliffe in the so-called supernatural scenes. The answer to this superficial objection is best found in Scott's own words:- "My object is not to excite fear of supernatural things in my reader but to show the effect of such fear upon the agents in the story-- one a man of sense and firmness (Colonel Everard)-- one a man unhinged by remorse (Harrison)-- one a stupid uninspiring clown (Desborough)-- one a learned and worthy, but superstitious, divine (Holdenough)." <sup>(2)</sup> This Scott exonerates himself, if not from the influence of the Gothic School, at least from an imitation of its members.

The Two Drovers, The Highland Widow and The Surgeon's Daughter, all written in 1827, are not of sufficient importance technically to require individual attention. They are simple tales rather well told, but in no respect particularly

(1) Lockhart, Vol. VIII, p. 193

(2) Journal, p. 103

striking. The Surgeon's Daughter caused Scott more concern than the other two stories. The conclusion did not please him. He felt that the Indian portion introduced was too bright and glaring to be pleasing to a person of sensitive literary tastes.

The Fair Maid of Perth also caused its author great perplexity. He was unable to write with real inspiration. He managed, however, to turn out about forty printed pages a day whenever it occurred to him that each three-volume novel brought about four thousand pounds. Despite this somewhat artificial encouragement, the tale is more delightful than we should expect because of its varied narrative and strong character contrasts. The novel lacks depths of feeling. There is no passion in it. When we consider Scott's great sufferings, both physical and mental, we are surprised that it contains the spirit that it does. The concluding scene is filled with all sorts of battle and homicide-- a rather futile effort of the author to disguise the monotony of several preceding events that have taken place.

Anne of Geierstein differs from the other novels because of its Swiss setting. Its scenery, based upon the knowledge Scott derived from books and several of his friends who had traveled on the continent, is remarkably real. Unfortunately, the story moves so slowly that we cannot really become interested in it. We agree with Scott that we go "mussing" around indefinitely. <sup>(1)</sup> The old Troubadour King was a clever idea that came too late, while the "Vehme-gericht"-- the secret tribunal-- is a failure as far as plot is concerned. Wherever Scott abides by historical details he is safe, but such imaginary and awesome scenes as the "Vehme-gericht" lack the true poetic imagery necessary for their permanent success.

Scott's health for the remainder of his life was so impaired by paralysis and apoplexy that his two last novels are but shadows of his finer works. Count Robert of Paris and Castle Dangerous constitute the fourth series of the Tales of My Landlord. The former is a tale of Byzantine history, the latter a Scotch story

(1)

Lockhart, Vol. IX, p. 271

of the fourteenth century. Neither work is fully completed or revised. Scott began to remodel them while in Italy, but was obliged to give up his undertaking because of his extreme ill health.

We refrain from the pitiful task of comparing the quality of these novels with those written when Scott's genius was at its height. In The Lives of the Novelists, Scott remarks that "the last of a series of novels should be unquestionably the best."<sup>(1)</sup> It is truly sad that illness prohibited Scott from living up to his ideal in this respect. Fortunately, the author of the Waverley Novels is not judged by his last feeble efforts.

Several important facts as to what Scott actually did may be deduced from this survey of the Waverley Novels. Scott was primarily a creative writer. The very type of novel he employed was of his own invention. By enlarging his mechanical apparatus and extending the sympathies of his readers, he introduced this new type of fiction-- the historical novel-- and proved to the nineteenth century that the past was not a lifeless period of mere abstractions, but a thriving world of living men and women. Scott was not only the founder of the historical school of novelists, but he was the school for many years. "He was literally 'The Heir of the Ages'".<sup>(2)</sup> His antiquarian knowledge seemed inexhaustible. This extensive information is most evident in the variety of settings, characters, and incidents which adorn his tales.

As we have noted, the Waverley novels range over a wide extent of time and space. Ivanhoe, laid in the twelfth century, is perhaps the earliest, while St. Ronan's Well is contemporaneous with the author. Nineteen out of twenty-nine novels have scenes laid in Scotland. Five are laid in England. One-- The Fortunes of Nigel-- has much of Scottish circumstance in it. Two have scenes laid upon the Continent. One of these, Quentin Durward, has a Scotchman for a hero.

(1)

Lives of the Novelists, p. 278

(2)

Art of the Novelist.- Amalia B. Edwards in Contemp. 66: 225

Three are Oriental in their background and references. One of these, The Talisman, is dedicated to the adventure of a Scotchman. Though the author does not hesitate to throw an occasional novel back into the Gothic times, he prefers ground nearer to his own age, where he can blend the interest of romantic adventure with that of more modern representations of manners."Scott was emphatically a man of his own time and his own country, with the limitations and the prejudices of the eighteenth century and of the British Isles."<sup>(1)</sup>

The actual descriptions waver between the real and the ideal. Scott does not actually copy his landscapes, manor-houses and castles directly from life. He is, however, familiar with the scenes which furnish him the leading outlines for his word pictures. The heath, the mountain, and the castle are accurately drawn, but we are interested in them only as a background for the narrative Scott portrays. These settings harmonize well with the characters and, by affecting the incidents and determining the situations, give a pleasing unity to the Border tales.

Scott constantly felt that his natural talents were more fitted to the delineation of the picturesque in action than in scenery. That his plans for describing his settings were consciously adopted may be seen from his discussion of Byron's ability at description and his additional comments on the descriptive passages of medieval romance.<sup>(2)</sup>

In the criticism of Sir John Chiverton and Brambletye House, Scott acknowledges that he is obliged to use effort to depict scenery, whereas action seemed to develop naturally beneath his pen. He adds that it is ever his intention to avoid overloading his plots with confused detail or overemphasizing unimportant factors.

Despite this conscious attempt on the part of Scott, he succeeds in giving a most realistic picture of nature. The astonishing variety with which the ac-

(1) The Historical Novel--Brander Matthews. New York, 1901. p.13

(2) Review of Childe Harold, Canto III, in Edinburgh Quarterly, Oct., 1814

tual lineaments of a scene are portrayed, deceive us into believing-- contrary to the author's own confession-- that his hand was guided, not by a pre-conceived conception, but by a spontaneous force, originating from Nature herself.

This sense of reality finds play to a greater extent in Scott's characters than in his scenery, and in his actions even more than in his characters. Though his heroes are colorless and his heroines a matter of intellectual preference rather than passion, he succeeds in showing that human nature in all ages and all climes is, beneath the surface, fundamentally the same.

Doubtless, Scott limits himself in his choice of materials. Raleigh suggests that, "A record of the conversation among a party of ladies around the tea-table of a vicarage, by Sir Walter Scott, is a gem for which the collector of curiosities may search in vain."<sup>(1)</sup> On the other hand, in all descriptions of battles and enchantments not a line of weak sentiment or degrading motive in any action or personage is upheld by the author of the Waverley Novels. Scott's clear-cut morality never amounted to prudery, nor, on the other hand, did it leave any doubt in the reader's mind as to the reward of a virtuous deed.

As has been said, Scott makes no attempt at moralizing. His characters are portrayed in a wholly unconscious fashion. Lacking depth and subtlety, they do not concern themselves about the motives or the consequences of their actions. Introspection is as unknown to them as it is to Scott himself. The hidden meanings of philosophy and religion he did not penetrate. It was the literature of the open field, not of the sequestered cloister, that appealed to him. If the author of the Waverley Novels by his own writings encouraged the Gothic type of fiction in preference to the more purposeful novels or the quiet stories of domestic life and manners, we feel that it was unwittingly done. Scott was a man of action, not thought, and his novels unconsciously reflected his own character.

(1) Raleigh, A Study of the English Novel, p. 236. London, 1903



It seemed that Scott required a certain largeness of type, a strongly-marked personality, and a free and unrestrained out-of-doors life for his delineations. For this reason all his women characters, with the exception of Jeanie Deane, Madge Wildfire, and Lucy Ashton, were of little real interest to him. He rarely looked deeply into the intricacies and petty weaknesses of their lives. His zeal for describing the abstract and ideal rather than the concrete and real accounts for the superiority of his peasant girls over his court ladies. He views the former in a perfectly natural light, but the latter he worships so ardently that in his devotion he forgets to vitalize them to the reader.

What the personages of his stories did concerned Scott more than what they were. Consequently, he usually gives a brief introductory description of their personal appearance and characteristics and then promptly dismisses them. As the author intends, the characters are soon forgotten in the interest we have in their fate. The most fascinating task for Scott is his actual story-telling. With natural inclination for his guide, he "took the easiest path across country"<sup>(1)</sup> and in the course of eighteen years gave to the world a series of twenty-nine historical novels unsurpassed by any author before or since his day.

The Waverley Novels are complex, and often confused, in plot. All have double plots and some, such as Ivanhoe, have a main plot, an over-plot and an under-plot. But in every case we have at least the main plot, treating of the deeds of the aristocracy, and the sub-plot, dealing with the actions of the common people. Scott's most ingenious touches are found in the quiet humor or eccentricities of the personages in his sub-plots. Comedy is practically wanting in the more ideal characters of his main plots.

The actual construction of the story is weakened by the author's too frequently taking the liberty of permitting a very considerable lapse of time to intervene in the midst of the narrative. This break is, in every case, made more

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(1) Lockhart, Vol. VIII, p. 350

marked by the deliberation and logical sequence with which the preceding and following parts of the story are related. Even a strict critic would class this as unconscious and inartificial. This characteristic of Scott's plot development was, no doubt, one of the secrets of his genius, but it was also one of his greatest limitations.

Scott is a master in his creation of his strong and thrilling situations, but he fails to hold the attention of his readers in his love episodes. Love, for Scott, was never the main topic of interest. He was much too concerned with public events, with "wappenschaws" and banqueting, with outlaws' revels and political riots to devote a considerable amount of time to the love episodes of single individuals. If it were not for a desire to please the taste of his readers, the threads of love-making that Scott does interweave in his narratives would doubtless be even more slender than those that now exist.

In contrast to this bright background of adventure, Scott introduces shadows of superstition, crime and fanaticism. The movements of such figures as his weird women, his bandits, and freebooters, are distinctly realistic. Such touches as Meg Merrilies' farewell to Ellangowan in Guy Mannering, Peter Peebles' lawsuit in Redgauntlet, or Maige Wildfire's crazed appeals in The Heart of Midlothian, are masterpieces of literary performance.

Though the Waverley Novels were hastily composed, they contain chapter after chapter of apparently irrelevant material. The author seems certain of finally gaining the attention of his readers. In the closing chapters we usually realize that the final catastrophe would have been less effective, were it not for much of this heaping up of seemingly trivial details.

The greatest objection to Scott's plot-formation is in the instances where he changes his original plan to suit his publishers or friends. In such novels as Ivanhoe and St. Ronan's Well, he underestimates the seriousness of his task and, following the line of least resistance, yields to a plan which he knows does not conform to the highest standard of art.

A desire to portray the right and fit in human action and yet to escape openly pointing a moral often caused Scott to blunder over the central incidents of his story. Instead of open moralizing we have a cut and dried scheme of rewarding and punishing. This is almost as objectionable as the frank didacticism which Scott opposed in the revolutionary and purpose novels of the eighteenth century. The picture Scott presents is either too bright or too dark. His constant desire to see virtue rewarded or vice punished leads him into as serious artistic mistakes as those committed as a result of the didacticism of his predecessors.

Whenever a character or situation demands it, Scott is ready and able to lay aside all minor considerations. He rises to sublime heights of expression, elevating his novel to a thing of world interest, raising his story from a mere chronicle of events to a marvelous performance and splendid pageantry. To suit the age for which he wrote, an age which really preferred artifice and melodrama to true art and drama, Scott often employed technical devices unworthy of his genius. This lamentable fact would greatly discount his novels, were it not for the accuracy of his settings, the humanness of his characters, and the ease of his narrative. These virtues overcome all the errors of his loose artistry and prove Scott a master in the practice of fiction writing.

The concluding chapter will be devoted to a comparison of Scott's theory of technical performance and the methods he employed in practice while compiling the Waverley Novels.

## CHAPTER V

## COMPARISON OF WHAT SCOTT DID AND WHAT HE SAID

The Introduction to this discussion has, we trust, shown the general conditions of the novel during the eighteenth century. The second and third chapters have revealed how profoundly Scott had investigated the principles and practices of other novelists before he struck out on a new path for himself. Chapter IV contains a summary of the main features of this new path. It is now our intention to compare Scott's theory and practice,- in order that we may determine the quality of the literary methods which he employed in his work.

The foregoing discussions and comparisons have brought to our attention a fact which, when once noticed, seems everywhere apparent,- that the characteristics which Scott especially admires and approves of in literature are those in which he himself excels. A knowledge of Scott's sincere and generous nature does not permit a narrow interpretation of his critical attitude. He does not sanction a particular style of composition because it resembles his own, nor does he reject another because it fails to comply with his individual methods of procedure. In fact, Scott writes easily in several styles. Hence, he has no object in selecting one to the exclusion of all others.

Unconsciously, however, Scott's preferences ever tend toward the type of novel that best portrays national manners. He feels that the author who most naturally and truthfully delineates his characters, in view of the background he has chosen for his tale, calls forth constant commendation from his readers. Other factors, of necessity, affect Scott's judgment. In the final analysis, however, it is not the question of how the story is told, but the story itself, that interests the author of the Waverley Novels.

Scott's criticisms, both of other novelists and of himself, clearly show that he has an extensive knowledge of the methods governing literary composition. In view of his hasty and careless manner of writing, his novels reflect many characteristics of technical performance which he not only admires in the works of other fiction writers but also admits that he desires in his own works. Scott is ever borne along by the interest his scenes, characters, or story furnish for himself. So it frequently occurs that, when he would write one thing, a mysterious power seizes him and he writes as if compelled by an external force, inserting material entirely foreign to his original wish or intention. His first scheme or plan is often forgotten, especially if he has managed to effect some ingenious stroke of delineation. He is so well pleased with the effect that he at once repeats it in more varied phrases.

Scott seems unable to remain impersonal when a bit of portrayal appeals to him. He constantly intervenes between his characters and his readers to enjoy with the latter what he considers objects of interest or amusement. This conscious characterization destroys the unity and dramatic effect of the novels and makes us aware of a superfluous presence among the fictitious personages of his plots. For these reasons, we have said that Scott does not always secure the results he desires. Unfortunately, we feel that, had he taken his task more seriously, this flagrant weakness would have been avoided. Had Scott been willing to sacrifice the pleasure he derived from rapid composition, we might have received from his pen a series much more perfect technically than the Waverley Novels. Had he not disdained to revise his first drafts, many wearisome passages might have been omitted, errors in style corrected, inconsistencies weeded out, and plots more perfectly unified and arranged. In this way Scott would have obtained as happy and felicitous outlines for his plots as did his predecessor, Fielding, whom he so greatly admired for this very virtue of composition. But perfection of form is not in any way characteristic of Scott. His very style, tautological, loose, and rambling, is but part of his nature and of the novels

he creates. The sweep and vigor of his imagination, from the knightly deeds of King Richard in Ivanhoe to the humorsome actions of Meg Dods in St. Ronan's Well, is too unrestrained to admit of any pause for care over minute details. The search for a single word or term is unknown to him.

Scott delights in relating his tale and regrets when it has reached a conclusion. His chief motive is to amuse his readers. For this reason, he directs his attention to the major lines of his performance, thinking that "When people once take an interest in a description they will swallow a great deal which they do not approve or nor understand."<sup>(1)</sup>

The foregoing considerations necessarily affected Scott's technique to a marked degree. Whenever he fails it is due not to ignorance, but to carelessness; not to lack of information, but to indifference.

That Scott excels all his predecessors in antiquarian lore is evident both from what he says and from what he does. His claims in the General Preface and his boasts in the Journal as to his extended knowledge of ancient manners and people are amply vindicated in the Waverley series.

Gothicism and Medievalism, as represented by the members of the School of Terror, affect him to a limited extent. He admires the introduction of the supernatural element wherever it can be managed with a comparative degree of ease and accuracy. When, however, he attempts to introduce it into his own novels, it has a false note. More sane than the wild imaginings of Mrs. Radcliffe or Horace Walpole, it is also more artificial. Scott is not a metaphysician. He lacks the ability to speculate and investigate causes for anything, be it a ghost or a moral decision. Consequently, he cannot explain his supernatural elements if he would. He does not possess the subtle art of delineating mystery. There is too much daylight in his imagination for spectres to be quite at home in his scenes. This accounts for the signal failure of The White Lady of Avenel in The Abbot.

(1)

Journal, Vol. II, p487. Jan. 14, 1828, (old edition)

The revolutionary novel receives but little praise from Scott, and we do not find its influence making any permanent impression upon him. Though he admires the realistic manner in which Bage, Holcroft, and others of this democratic school delineate their actual experiences, he objects to the pedagogical way in which they deal with social problems. Scott was neither a moralist nor a philosopher. He does not deal in speculations or philanthropy, fine sentiments, or new doctrines. He is content to enjoy and reverence ancient manners, customs, rites and institutions with the same simple loyalty as did his ancestors before him.

Psychology is rarely found in the Waverley Novels. Aside from a slight suggestion here and there-- possibly most evident in The Heart of Midlothian--, Scott does not investigate the inner thoughts or feelings of his characters. This coincides with all his criticism of fiction, especially the Novel of Sentiment. The efforts such writers as Thomas Sterne and Henry MacKenzie seem overdrawn to Scott. He disapproves of their extreme moralizing and aesthetic raptures concerning the passions or emotions of mankind. In his own works, Scott attempts to show that might does not make right and that virtue is always rewarded, but his simple statement of truths is vastly different from the effusive sentimentalizing of his predecessors, the members of the "purpose" school.

(1)

Maria Edgeworth's Irish stories, Scott tells us, inspired him to write Scotch tales of a similar type. The author's attempts to emulate Miss Edgeworth exceed his highest expectations. We recall Miss Edgeworth because of her connection with Scott and the Waverley Novels; her earlier efforts are made memorable by his later replicas of them.

Thruout Scott's various critical writings, especially The Lives of the Novelists, he seldom condemns the form in which an author presents his narrative. He

(1)

Introduction to Waverley Novels, p. 10

approves of a story that is told by means of letters or diaries. Richardson, who employed this method, receives the highest praise from Scott. Whenever an author tells his story as if he himself knows the facts, Scott commends him. Defoe's tales are told in this fashion and his journalistic style wins Scott's admiration. Again, a narrative may be related by means of a chief character. This method was (1) also used by Richardson. It, too, is sanctioned in The Lives of the Novelists. Scott himself uses the first method in Redgauntlet, the second in Kenilworth, and the third in Guy Mannering. This fact is an additional proof that his theory and practice are highly consistent.

Though the content of the Waverley Novels in no way resembles the quiet stories of Jane Austen, Scott's rough "bow-wow" style occasionally reveals delicate touches which are quite evidently the result of Miss Austen's influence. The great power and perfect truth with which she delineated the stratum of society she had chosen for her particular field is highly praised by Scott in his Journal. (2)

The various contrivances and machinations which novelists employed to make their settings more attractive, their characters more vital, and their plots more happily contrived, Scott introduces into the Waverley Novels with an added zest peculiar to himself. His constant approval of the singular devices used by other writers for advancing interest or heightening effects is paralleled in his own efforts. A remarkable instance of Scott's cleverness in this respect is found in Kenilworth, where our curiosity is aroused at the outset by the single line, "No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope?"

Novelty in his own compositions or the works of others is the characteristic that wins Scott highest approbation. If an author possesses the ability to paint his scenes realistically, to lend spirit to his dialogue, to rehearse his story

(1) Lives of the Novelists, p.20

(2) Journal, p. 155



with ease and truth, thus lending variety to his composition, Scott does not condemn his work because of an occasional slip of the pen, a grammatical error, or a failure to account for the actions delineated. The low aesthetic ideal Scott holds regarding fiction does not demand from him, either in theory or practice, an insistence upon methods or standards. Scott consciously chooses the folly and falsity of romance to the beauty and sincerity of realism, because it is easier to depict. This scarcely seems consistent with his love of truth and simplicity. In delineation, however, Scott does not realize this obligation and unwittingly takes the "cross-country" path simply because it is less arduous-- because he refuses to devote to his productions the care or pains they required.

What, then, shall we say in answer to our question regarding Scott's novels? Are they the result of an original genius finding its expression thru unconscious practice, or of a studied method accepted as the outgrowth of a conscious theory? In any of the Waverley Novels we have chosen for our discussion we have found two significant factors: the unconscious play of the author's imagination, and the conscious workings of a literary technique. That the second factor greatly affects the first is evident to any close student of the series. Though it restricts the author, its actual influence is not extensive. Scott is too broad-minded and too open-hearted to permit himself to be seriously hampered by any fixed rules. His chief desire is to entertain his readers with an upright and honest type of fiction. Since he feels that originality may be killed by a too conscientious adherence to all the paraphernalia of criticism, he spends little time in re-writing or revising his novels.

With these ideas uppermost in his mind, Scott performs his double task as a critic and an author of novels. In the first role he ventures upon a practice comparatively new to the people of his age. His Lives of the Novelists, the first published criticism of English fiction, awards him a high place among the foremost critics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As an author, by means of the historical novel, a form which Scott himself originated, he reveals to the

world that human nature under all conditions is essentially the same, that the experiences of men and women have much in common, whether lived in medieval camp or modern court, in Scottish Highlands or on Alpine cliffs.

Scott does not preach. He does not moralize. But, by letting his sane and healthy spirit permeate his fiction, he unconsciously teaches his readers that life is really easier and better than we are wont to believe it. This is Scott's message, and with its simple presentation he is satisfied.

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