

Sir Walter Scott, *IVANHOE*. Edited by Ian Duncan. The World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1996. pp. xxxvii + 581. £2.99. ISBN 0 19 283172 0.

*Ivanhoe*, certainly one of the most influential and arguably one of the greatest novels of the nineteenth century, has waited a long time for a really good modern edition. A.N. Wilson's Penguin edition of 1982 (with its eloquent introduction) went some way towards filling the gap, and subsequent editors owe it a real debt, particularly for the notes. However, amongst its many helpful notes, it contains some inaccurate ones and others that are simply irritating (e.g. 'The Scotch [sic] often use nouns as verbs') and its text, based on Scott's final Magnum edition, could not take account of the Interleaved Set of the 1822 *Historical Romances* (in which Scott recorded the changes he wanted made in the Magnum) as it was then in private hands. Now, with the appearance of Ian Duncan's World's Classics volume we finally see an edition fully worthy of this important novel.

One of the strengths of the editions of Scott novels which have appeared in recent years in the World's Classics has been the quality of their introductions and Duncan's edition is no exception. Confidently recommended for so many years to younger readers as a well-told adventure story which need not provoke too much thought, *Ivanhoe* is, of course, a deeply ambivalent and therefore often disturbing work. Duncan brings out this ambiguity forcefully in a masterly discussion which deals with many different aspects of the novel and also, along the way, brings the reader's attention to some of the most recent writing on it. It is, for example, in many respects a Gothic novel, indeed a 're-Gothicization of historical fiction', but it shows at least a 'relative lack of concern' for some of the key elements of Gothic fictions, 'terror, psychopathology, the supernatural, and the uncanny'. It provides an immensely powerful statement of English cultural inclusivity which could be used to justify the imperial role Britain was taking on but also shows the 'limits and exclusions of this imperial cultural nationalism'. Again, while 'the marriage of Ivanhoe and Rowena ... rehearses a comic national-tale conclusion', the 'Gothic centre suggests the different history of a continuation of the history of conquest around the female body'. Finally, while the novel represents 'a conservative capture of the radical myth of the Norman yoke', it is also true that 'Scott co-opts Radical themes, but does not simply erase them, and they remain active in the text' so that it could be Ho Chi Minh's favourite reading (and Tony Blair's, for perhaps slightly different reasons). These are not all the topics covered in this packed introduction which also, amongst

other things, contains interesting comparisons between firstly women and the Jews and then the Jews and the Templars and some thought-provoking comments on the role of archaic English language. All this is presented in a style which takes account of recent critical discourse but is also accessible to those general readers a World's Classics volume will hopefully attract. (The splendid cover illustration of the Earl of Eglinton and Winton dressed for a modern tournament may also do its part in attracting readers.) If I have any criticism of the introduction it is of the last sentence which seems to me to unexpectedly deny the ambivalence which the remainder has so amply demonstrated: 'Aloof from utopian or apocalyptic consolations, this romance leaves us where it found us, in an untransfigured world.' I would rather argue that it is only one of the two endings of the novel, the Rebecca one, which leaves us in this state; the Rowena ending does offer us some hopes of a better world. There was never any possibility of a marriage of Rebecca and Ivanhoe, not only because Scott was fully aware of its historical impossibility, but also because they represent two different sides of the finally unresolved ambivalence of the novel.

Scott's text can be approached, as it were, from two directions: through the Magnum text, the final product of all the revision which went on in Scott's lifetime, or through the manuscript and its print embodiment, the first edition. Each of these routes has its own attractions and I have no desire to argue that one or other is superior although the first edition route has the advantage of being much less well travelled. Duncan's text (like most of the World's Classics editions) takes the Magnum route but it is not a simple reprint of that polished but still defective text. He has gone back to the Interleaved Set and follows Scott's corrections or the *Historical Romances* themselves where appropriate. This is what a careful editor working from the Magnum would want to do now that the Interleaved Set is at last available for scholarly examination. More problematical is the use of occasional readings from the manuscript, a state of the text separated by many layers of change from the Magnum. However, Duncan is, by his own admission, conservative in his recourse to earlier editions and the manuscript and what he essentially produces is a carefully and sensibly corrected Magnum text. Although he has not undertaken a full collation of all the various editions that appeared between the first edition and the Magnum (as he himself points out, generously directing the reader to my forthcoming Edinburgh Edition for further detail), Duncan produces a fundamentally accurate account of the textual development from manuscript to Magnum even if it is probably going a little too far to claim without qualification that 'The many discrepancies between manuscript and first edition ... by no means constitute trespasses upon authorial intention':

there are in fact many obvious cases of the manuscript's being misread and the subsequent survival of the non-authorial reading in all later editions. The Edinburgh Edition will tell this story in considerably more detail and introduce some qualifications but the fundamentals of the story are well represented here.

Another of the strengths of this edition is its full and helpful notes of which there are quite a few more than in the Penguin edition. Inevitably there are a few missed allusions but this will happen with any reader of a text so full of references to literary, historical and religious texts (a point I was very conscious of myself in finding some allusions I had overlooked). With a writer as profoundly intertextual as Scott the identification of such allusions is essential for the modern reader who is unlikely to have read some of the literary and historical texts which were in varying degrees familiar to Scott's original readers. The historical notes also help the reader assess some of Scott's liberties with historical facts and periods. As Duncan points out, Scott in writing *Ivanhoe* had to rely much more heavily on written sources than in his earlier Scottish novels and this perhaps makes it particularly important to recognise those sources. However, it would be a mistake to think he merely deposited unsifted historical material into the text of his novel. The imaginative use he made of the Templar Rule in creating the character and language of Beaumanoir is a good example of the creative energy he brought to the reworking of his source.

In short, in its handling of the text, its notes, its introduction and all its other editorial material this is an excellent piece of work, fully capable of allowing a new generation of readers to assess the continuing significance and interest of what was, for so long, Scott's most widely read novel.

*Flinders University*

GRAHAM TULLOCH