

SIR WALTER SCOTT AND THE HIGHLANDS.

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Two Volumes

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Lorn M. Macintyre

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Doctor of Philosophy Degree

University of Glasgow  
Department of Scottish Literature.

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# CONTENTS

## Volume Two

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter 9	
Towards <u>The Lord of the Isles</u>	331
Chapter 10	
<u>The Lord of the Isles</u>	338
Chapter 11	
<u>Rob Roy</u>	383
Chapter 12	
<u>A Legend of Montrose</u>	431
Chapter 13	
<u>The Highland Widow</u> and <u>The Two Drovers</u>	461
Chapter 14	
<u>The Fair Maid of Perth</u>	498
Conclusion	537
Bibliography	561

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TOWARDS THE LORD OF THE ISLES

It will be recalled that in the summer of 1810, while Ballantyne's presses supplied a greedy public with The Lady of the Lake, Scott had quit Edinburgh for a short tour of the Inner Hebrides, through which The Lord of the Isles germinated. In early July of 1814, with Waverley, his first novel about to appear, Scott looked forward to an extended Hebridean tour. He had been invited to accompany the Commissioners of the Northern Lights on a tour of inspection on the Lighthouse Yacht. The leader of the party was Robert Stevenson, engineer extraordinary and grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson.

But this was not purely a pleasure trip, for on 22 July 1814 Scott wrote confidently from Abbotsford to Constable:

I really think that, with the advantage of my proposed tour - where we are to visit everything curious from Fife-ness to Greenock, whether on continent or island, I may boldly set considerable value on the fruit of my labours.

I therefore propose to close with your terms for half the work, you giving Longman the offer of an equal share with you. 1

Scott was agreeing to accept fifteen hundred guineas<sup>2</sup> for one half share of the copyright of The Lord of the Isles. He had been forced to take a drop of nine hundred pounds on his original offer, but the poem could still make him a lot of money.

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1. Grierson, Letters, vol. III, p. 469.

2. Payable in four promissory notes. The first two notes (for £760) were paid before the poem was published, and the remaining two shortly afterwards. Grierson, Letters, vol. III, p. 474.

The Lighthouse Yacht sailed from Leith on 29 July 1814. Its course was up the east coast of Scotland. It called at Orkney and the Shetland Islands, rounded the North cape and sailed down through the Hebridean archipelago. Lockhart prints a lengthy journal which Scott faithfully kept, obviously with the intention of preserving impressions for the poem, for this journal (along with memories of his 1810 voyage to Mull and Iona) is the basis of The Lord of the Isles. In fact, the poet might have been composing as he cruised, for on 6 September, when the yacht was lying off Campbeltown at the end of its six week voyage, he was able to report to Constable:

We have had a most delightful and instructive voyage, and have visited everything that is curious in the Scottish Isles from Shetland to Ilay, not to mention the Giant's Causeway on the Irish coast, which we saw yesterday. So I trust we shall be very soon ready to go to press with the Lord of the Isles. 3

It is the Hebridean and Clyde coast portions of the voyage that are of importance in examining the poem, since these areas feature prominently, and in some detail. These portions of Scott's journal will be examined when the poem is examined. Meantime, it is necessary to follow the development of the poem until its consignment to press.

Back in Edinburgh, Scott wrote to Morritt on 14 September. The voyage had given him material for the poem, but the poem had preceded the voyage.

My principal employment for the autumn will be reducing the knowledge I have acquired of the localities of the Islands into scenery and stage-room

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3. Grierson, Letters, vol. III, p. 489.

for 'The Lord of the Isles,' of which renowned romance I think I have repeated some portions to you. It was elder born than Rokeby though it gave place to it in publishing. 4

The Lord of the Isles has the same obscure creative history as The Lady of the Lake, Scott's first Highland poem in that the beginning of composition cannot be fixed with any accuracy. But there the similarity seems to end, for Scott went to the Trossachs in search of a theme, whereas before voyaging through the Hebrides he already had a theme, inspired by his 1810 Mull and Iona visitation. Writing to the Rev. R. Polwhele from Edinburgh in September 1814, Scott explained that his recent Hebridean voyage had been for the purpose of gathering local colour.

The greater part has been long written, but I am stupid at drawing ideal scenery, and waited until I should have a good opportunity to visit or rather re-visit the Hebrides, where the scene is partly laid. 5

The Lord of the Isles must have been progressing well, for Scott could write to Constable from Abbotsford on 17 September:

I find I can get it out by Xmas, which will be a great advantage to all concerned. 6

Despite the great financial success of Waverley, Scott proceeded with The Lord of the Isles, partly because he needed the money for land, and because he was more experienced in the medium of poetry. But he was short of material. On 7 November he wrote from Abbotsford to Joseph Train, antiquary:

I am very desirous to have some account of the present

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4. Grierson, Letters, vol. III, p. 498.

5. Ibid., p. 501.

6. Ibid., p. 499.

state of Turnberry Castle - whether any vestiges of it remain, what is the appearance of the ground, the names of the neighbouring places, etc. etc. 7

This information was for the closing stages of the poem. Maria Edgeworth had received a copy of the anonymously published Waverley, and had written in gratitude to James Ballantyne. In his reply Ballantyne informed her, without connecting Scott with Waverley:

Mr. Scott's poem, the Lord of the Isles, promises fully to equal the most admired of his productions. It is, I think, equally powerful, and certainly more uniformly polished and sustained. I have seen three cantos. It will consist of six. 8

It was, therefore, half finished two months after the completion of his Lighthouse Yacht voyage, despite business worries. Or, to put it more precisely, the poem had to advance rapidly because money was urgently required, for business as well as pleasure. Such pressures were a spur to Scott's muse, as is proved by a letter dated 10 November from Abbotsford to Daniel Terry. Scott refers to his recent voyage, and announces:

Since my return, I have fallen under the tyrannical dominion of a certain Lord of the Isles. Those Lords were famous for oppression in the days of yore, and if I can judge by the posthumous despotism exercised over me, they have not improved by their demise. The Peine forte de jure is, you know, nothing in comparison to being obliged to grind verses; and so devilish repulsive is my disposition, that I can never put my wheel into constant and regular motion, till Ballantyne's devil claps in his proofs ... 9

In other words, Scott was becoming a slave to the press which demanded back corrected proofs and clamored for more copy.

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7. Grierson, Letters, vol. III, p. 513.

8. Lockhart, Life, p. 303.

9. Ibid., p. 304.

Scott seems to have been pleased with both the progress of, and quality of his new poem, for on 11 November he wrote, lightly but obviously confidently, to his old friend Morritt:

My literary tormentor is a certain Lord of the Isles, famed for his tyranny of yore, and not unjustly. I am bothering some tale of him I have had long by me into a sort of romance. I think you will like it: it is Scottified up to the teeth, and somehow I feel myself like the liberated chiefs of the Rolliad, 'who boast their native philabeg restored.' I believe the frolics one can cut in this loose garb are all set down by you Sassenachs to the real agility of the wearer, and not the brave, free, and independent character of his clothing. It is, in a word, the real Highland fling, and no one is supposed able to dance it but a native. 10

Encouragement came from the Highlands, in the form of letters from the bizarre Glengarry. It seems that Scott had solicited Glengarry's help in getting the historical background to the poem, for having explained his direct descent from the Lord of the Isles,<sup>11</sup> Glengarry urges:

Angus More of the Isles is a subject worthy of your pen! 12

But this injunction did not come until 28 November 1814, when the poem was far advanced.

On 16 December Scott is able to write to Ballantyne, announcing that the last stanza of the poem had been sent,<sup>13</sup> and so it appears that the last three cantos were completed in the space of five weeks, an astonishing achievement considering that he was attending to his professional duties as well as having worked on the Life of Swift

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10. Lockhart, Life, p. 305.

11. Walpole, MS 3885, ff. 176. 12. Ibid, ff. 222.

13. Lockhart, Life, p. 305.



and on Guy Mannering, his second novel.<sup>14</sup>

In that same month, December 1814, John Ballantyne, Scott's effective, if flamboyant agent, had inserted the following advertisement in the Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany:

Mr. Scott's poem of The Lord of the Isles will appear early in January. The author of Waverley is about to amuse the public with a new novel, in three volumes, entitled Guy Mannering.

On 19 December Scott wrote to Constable. He needed money, but then, the poem was finished, apart from notes which James Ballantyne had asked him to add, not apparently to enlighten the reader, but to pad out.

Agreeable to what I mentioned last week I take the freedom to draw on you for £600 @ 6 months amount in copies of Lord of Isles. This will at my guess be @ £100 - over what is due upon the 4to. so must be considered to accot. of both editions. The whole is now set up except a sheet or two of notes which Mr. Ballantyne wishes me to add to bring the work to the size of Lady of /the/ Lake. He will have them this day. If the sale of the poem should so far disappoint that your bills do not come in to meet the above or nearly so any part of it may be renewed in terms of our bargain.

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Scott's punctuation may be primitive, but his meaning is plain. If the poem is a commercial failure, Constable will not get his cash back, but promissory notes. It was merely a matter of accommodation.

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14. Lockhart does not think that the writing of Guy Mannering was under way by this date. He claims that Scott often said it was 'the work of six weeks at a Christmas,' but it seems safe to assert that Scott had thought about the new novel which, Lockhart believes, was inspired by a letter from Joseph Train.

15. Grierson, Letters, vol. III, p. 528.

All the proofs seem to have been corrected by Christmas Day,  
when the poet wrote to Constable from Castle Street.

I am going to Abbotsford for the rest of this week  
to refresh the machine by a little exercise of  
which I have much need. 16

That extraordinary creative year duly closed, and The Lord of the  
Isles duly appeared in January 1815, as promised.

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16. Grierson, Letters, vol. III, p. 532.

**THE LORD OF THE ISLES**

It seems inevitable that Scott should have chosen the Lordship of the Isles as a theme for a long poem, since that despotic dynasty is surrounded by a glamour which must have satisfied the strong romantic instincts in the poet. Claiming as their progenitor Conn of the Hundred Battles (though their earliest origins are obscured by the mists of history),<sup>1</sup> these Lords held suzerainty over part of the western seaboard and isles of Scotland, and part of Ireland from the time of Somerled of Argyll (mid twelfth century) until 1493, when John, fourth and last Lord was forfeited and deprived of his titles and estates by James IV.

Some preliminary comparisons are in order here. The Lady of the Lake had been set in Perthshire and Stirlingshire, the perimeter of the Highlands, in the sixteenth century, when James V reigned. In The Lord of the Isles Scott moved west, and back two centuries. The poem is set in the Hebrides, and latterly in Ayrshire and Stirlingshire. In The Lady of the Lake James V shares the stage with the Douglas. In The Lord of the Isles the occupant of that office shares the stage with Robert Bruce. Marmion culminates in the battle of Flodden, The Lady of the Lake in that of Beal' an Duine, and The Lord of the Isles in Bannockburn.

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1. 'Fact and fiction are so often mixed together, and tradition so frequently conflicts with what is regarded as authentic history, that the task of the historian sometimes assumes great, perhaps unmanageable proportions.' Thus write the Rev. A. and Rev. A. Macdonald, joint authors of the massive three volumed history, The Clan Donald, published in Inverness at the close of the nineteenth, and the beginning of the twentieth century. It is a superb scholastic work crippled by the lack of an index.

It will be seen, therefore, that though he had shifted time and territory, Scott was working within a familiar framework in The Lord of the Isles. Thematically at least, it can be regarded as his most ambitious and emotionally appealing poem to date, since its dominant theme is no less than Scotland's successful struggle for independence. Thus, though some of its settings and personae are Highland, it is a poem about the whole of Scotland.

In the Advertisement to the poem, dated from Abbotsford on 10 December 1814, Scott makes no secret of at least two of his principal sources.

The story opens in the Spring of the year 1307, when Bruce, who had been driven out of Scotland by the English, and the Barons who adhered to that foreign interest, returned from the Island of Rachrin on the coast of Ireland, again to assert his claims to the Scottish crown. Many of the personages and incidents introduced are of historical celebrity. The authorities used are chiefly those of the venerable Lord Hailes, as well entitled to be called the restorer of Scottish history, as Bruce the restorer of Scottish monarchy; and of Archdeacon Barbour, a correct edition of whose Metrical History of Robert Bruce will soon, I trust, appear, under the care of my learned friend, Dr. Jamieson. 2

The other principal sources duly acknowledged in the notes to the poem are: Scott's own journal of the 1814 Lighthouse Yacht voyage, and certain MSS. (most notably the Red Book of Clanranald) to which Scott had access, either directly or through translations. There are also secondary sources (some of them used for The Lady of

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2. It duly appeared in Edinburgh in 1820, in two volumes, but only 250 copies were printed. The Rev. Walter W. Skeat wrote in the Preface to his 1894 edition for the S.T.S.: 'It is with something like a shock that one realises the fact that he had no particular acquaintance with Middle-English grammar, and sometimes misread some very easy words.'

the Lake) such as Martin's Description and Pennant's Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides.<sup>3</sup> Other sources cited by Scott (i.e. Rymer's Foedera) are magnifications from Dalrymple's (Lord Hailes) Annals of Scotland.<sup>4</sup>

The Red Book of Clanranald (or Leabhar Dearg) has already been cited as a principal source for the poem. Its twin is the Black Book of Clanranald. These MS. books in Gaelic were written by the MacVurichs,<sup>5</sup> the hereditary bards and historians of the family of Clanranald, originally the Lords of the Isles. Written up by various hands in Irish and English in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Black Book has an obscure history. It seems to have been lost to the scholastic world until the middle of last century, when Dr Skene<sup>6</sup> picked it up among old Irish MSS. on a Dublin book-stall.

The history of the Red Book is much clearer, since it figured in the Ossianic controversy. When James Macpherson went on a visit to Clanranald in 1760, he received, by authority of the chief, the Red Book from Neil MacVurich, nephew of the last great bard. Later, when Macpherson was accused of literary forgery, MacVurich swore that the 'author' of Ossian had only received the common-place book which

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3. It seems strange that the bibliophile did not possess a first edition (1703) of Martin's Description.

4. Scott uses the two-volumed 1776 edition of Hailes's Annals. Ease of access forces me to use the 1797 three volumed edition, which has additional appendices, but is textually similar.

5. Like many Gaelic names, the spelling varies.

6. 1809-1892. Scottish historian and Celtic scholar. Related to the Macdonnells of Glengarry, via Forbes of Pitsligo.

contained a history of the Macdonalds and Montrose. The real Red Book was in Edinburgh, in the possession of a Macdonald soldier, and it was supposed to contain some of the poems of Ossian.

There is conflicting evidence as to what Macpherson actually received from MacVurich, but it is significant that the only MS. recovered after Macpherson's death was the Red Book as we know it. The first thirty-two pages were missing, and an indeterminable number at the end.

The Red Book, as we will call it, after passing from the possession of James Macpherson, was much consulted, not only by the Ossianic disputants, but also by the historians of the country.

The Rev. Donald MacIntosh, of Gaelic proverb fame, made a transcript and translation of, at least, its historical portions; and this was the translation used by the various writers who quoted the book until Dr. Skene's latest work on Scotland. Sir Walter Scott quoted largely from the early portion of the history of the Macdonalds in the notes to his 'Lord of the Isles.' 7

Quoting a poem by Niall Mor MacVurich in a note to Canto Second, Scott acknowledges that he is using a translation by the Rev. Donald MacIntosh, who was prominent in the Ossianic controversy, and who contributed translations to the Highland Society of London's 1807 dissertation and edition of Ossian.<sup>8</sup> In my section on eighteenth century Gaelic literature I have already shown that Scott was a perfervid Ossianist from an early age, and though he reached the conclusion that Macpherson was a forger, it is somewhat ironic that

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7. Rev. Alexander Cameron, Reliquiae Celticae, (Inverness, 1894), vol. II, p. 141. This book contains a comprehensive account of the Clanranald books' histories, plus translations.

8. See my section on the Ossianic controversy.

The Lord of the Isles should be partly indebted to the disgraced 'poet' for his preservation of the Red Book, albeit in a mutilated form. In fact, Scott mixed Red Book material and Ossianic poetry in the making of The Lord of the Isles, as he had mixed Highland travelogues and Ossianic poetry in the making of The Lady of the Lake.

It is safe to assert that the greater part of our knowledge of the genealogies and lifestyles of dynasties such as the Lords of the Isles has come from surviving Gaelic MSS. The two most valuable extant MSS. are the Red Book of Clanranald (seventeenth century) and the Book of the Dean of Lismore (sixteenth century). Professor Derrick Thomson finds the latter book 'by far the richest source' of bardic poetry,<sup>9</sup> and not because it is older.

The mid-seventeenth-century MacEwen poets (if we are right in ascribing various Campbell panegyrics to them) have a leaning towards genealogy and chronicle, whereas the MacMhuirichs are clearly more attracted to lyricism. 10

There are also geographical differences, for

The Book of the Dean of Lismore is heavily biased towards works of Perthshire and Argyllshire origin. The Dean's collection only just impinges on Inverness-shire and the Hebrides, while the later MacMhuirich collections are biased towards the Macdonald lands in the islands. 11

It has already been shown that Scott used translations from the Red Book of Clanranald for The Lord of the Isles. But what of the Book of the Dean of Lismore as a source, and particularly of details of domestic opulence? Its history is interesting, for it was not

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9. Thomson, Introduction, p. 20.

10. Ibid., p. 25.

11. Ibid., pp. 20-21.



discovered until the second half of the eighteenth century. Though it was not published until 1862, a complete transcript was made in 1813 by Ewen Maclachlan of Aberdeen.<sup>12</sup> Considering that this transcript was made a year before the writing of *The Lord of the Isles*, is it possible that Scott had access to Maclachlan's translations?<sup>13</sup>

In the Advertisement to the poem Scott intimates that 'The story opens in the Spring of the year 1307.' Poetic licence permits Scott to change a name. In Note VII to Canto First he explains:

The representative of this independent principality /the Lordship of the Isles/ for such it seems to have been, though acknowledging the pre-eminence of the Scottish crown, was, at the period of the poem, Angus, called Angus Og; but the name has been, euphoniae gratia, exchanged for that of Ronald, which frequently occurs in the genealogy.

There is some confusion among historians as to the dates of Angus Og's succession and demise. According to the authors of The Clan Donald, when Angus Mor of Isla died towards the close of the thirteenth century, he divided his extensive territories thus:

Alexander succeeded him in Isla and other territories on the mainland of Argyll; Angus received the lordship of Kintyre; while the lands of Ardnamurchan were bestowed by King Balliol upon John Sprangach (the bold), the youngest of his sons. 14

Scott states that Angus Og was the 'representative' of the lineage in 1307, the year in which the poem opens, but according to the two Macdonald historians:

Angus Og Macdonald succeeded his brother Alexander, in 1308, both in his lands and in the chiefship of the Clan, 15

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12. Cameron, op. cit., vol. I, p. 1.

13. This large question is left open for Celtic scholars.

14. Clan Donald, vol. I, p. 84. 15. Ibid., p. 90.

and so Scott is a year premature. In terms of historical accuracy (in so far as that is possible, considering the genealogical obscurities), we must give prime place to The Clan Donald, since these learned authors (excellent Gaelic scholars) evaluated the works of earlier historians, and had access to charter chests.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from being a year out in the accession of Angus Og, Scott may be premature in his use of the title Lord of the Isles. Donald Gregory, whom Scott knew and encouraged,<sup>17</sup> published his History of the Western Highlands and Isles of Scotland, from A.D. 1493 to A.D. 1625 in 1836. It was by far the most detailed and accurate work on that region and period that had been written to date, but it came too late to be of use to Scott. The opening chapters give a brief chronology of events prior to 1493. Using the evidence of an indenture printed in an Appendix to Hailes's Annals of Scotland,<sup>18</sup> Gregory shows that John of Isla was the first to style himself Dominus Insularum, or Lord of the Isles. The indenture is dated 1354.<sup>19</sup> Because no one man possessed all of the isles, Gregory cautions:

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16. And particularly to the Sleat charter chest. The Sleat dynasty claimed to be the supreme chiefs of Clan Donald, and were ratified in this by Lyon Court (Scots Law Times, 1950), though the title of Lord of the Isles is vested in the Prince of Wales.

17. See section on the Ossianic controversy.

18. Annals, 1797 ed., vol. III, pp. 381-83. This indenture is not in the 1776 two volumed edition quoted from by Scott.

19. The two Macdonald historians counter by pointing out that 'Somerled himself, the modern founder of the family, is referred to again and again as both Dominus and Rex Insularum, and Reginald his son, as well as Donald his grandson, are referred to as Lords of Innsegall, or of the Isles.' Their source is the Chartulary of Paisley. Clan Donald, vol. I, p. 131.

it will readily be perceived that the boasted independence of the modern Lords of the Isles is without historical foundation. Prior to 1266, the Isles were subject to Norway; at that date, the treaty of cession transferred them to Scotland; and, ever since, they have remained subject to the latter crown, notwithstanding successive rebellions, instigated in every case by the government of England, in order to embarrass the Scots. 20

In 1306 Robert Bruce was crowned at Scone. In 1308 Alexander of Isla fought against him in the district of Galloway. Edward, Bruce's brother, was sent against Alexander and others, and, according to Fordun, took 'the Prince of the Isles' prisoner. Alexander escaped, secured himself in Castle Sween in North Knapdale, but Robert Bruce besieged the castle and took Alexander prisoner. He is said to have died in captivity in Dundonald Castle, Kintyre. In 1308 Angus Og succeeded his brother as chief of the clan. Angus's allegiance to Bruce dates from 1306. Before that time he, like his brother Alexander, acknowledged allegiance to the English crown, for

in 1301 we find him equally zealous with his brother in his efforts to hold the Western Isles of Scotland in subjugation to the English Crown, and along with Hugh Bisset he appears in a capacity somewhat similar to that which Alexander occupied four years previously. 21

After his defeat at Methven, and his defeat by John MacDougall of Lorn at Dalry, Bruce was forced to retreat. He reached the district of Kintyre and was hospitably received by Angus Og, Lord of Kintyre. This is borne out by Barbour:

Angus off Ile that tyme wes syr,  
And lord and ledar off Kintyr.  
The king rycht weill resawyt he;

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20. Gregory, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

21. Clan Donald, vol. I, p. 90.

And wndertuk his man to be:  
 And him and his, on mony wyss,  
 He abandownyt till his service.  
 And, for mar sekyrness, gaiff him syne  
 Hys castell off Donavardyne,  
 To duell tharin, at his liking.  
 Full gretumly thankyt him the ki [n] g;  
 And resawyt his seruice.

(The Bruce, Book III, ll. 659-69.)<sup>22</sup>

Bruce was first taken to Saddell Castle, but later transferred to Dunaverty, for greater security. Thereafter he sailed to Rachrin, which he quit in the spring of 1307, when The Lord of the Isles opens. Now that the historical background has been given, the poem can be discussed.

Like The Lady of the Lake, The Lord of the Isles has six Cantos, but whereas the former spanned a period of six days, with one Canto to a day, the latter spans a period of seven years, from 1307 to 1314, with no equal division of Cantos. At the opening of Canto First Scott employs the 'panning' technique which he used at the beginning of The Lay of the Last Minstrel and The Lady of the Lake. In The Lady Scott raises a stag-hunt to take the reader into the poem, geographically and thematically. The Lord of the Isles begins in the Borders, at autumn's end, with the wind rising, the sun sinking. But the 'minstrel strain,' that favourite device of Scott's, transports the reader westwards from this scene of desolation. This is a clever device in this context, for the theme of the poem is supposedly to be the Lord of the Isles, and, as previously pointed out, the praises of these rulers were sung by the MacVurich bards. It is possible, therefore, to see the long poem that follows as being

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22. The text being quoted from is that prepared by the Rev. Walter Skeat for the Scottish Text Society.

narrated by a bard, with accompanying licence. In this sense the panegyric is allowable.

The first section of Canto First ends, appropriately in Iona, 'Where rest from mortal coil the Mighty of the Isles,' a reference to the fact that several of the Lords are buried there.<sup>23</sup> We are in the west now, and the movement back in time is from the tomb to the chamber. There is corresponding movement of sound from silence to minstrel song. It is dawn, and the scene is Ardtornish Castle on the Sound of Mull, a seat of the Lord of the Isles. Scott sailed that way in the Lighthouse Yacht in 1814, but did not disembark.<sup>24</sup> An accompanying note describes Ardtornish's situation and history. It is perhaps best known in history for the treaty entered into, on 19 October 1461, between John, Earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles, and Edward IV, King of France and England, and Lord of Ireland. It shows the Lord of the Isles acting as an 'independent sovereign,' and has some relevance to the poem, though the treaty was negotiated one hundred and fifty years after the time of the poem. The treaty, and the fact that parliaments were convened at Ardtornish, show the castle's importance.

Scott's poetic description of 'rugged' Ardtornish and its environs shows that he had an eye for detail,<sup>25</sup> a keen sense of geo-

23. Lighthouse Yacht journal, 28 August 1814, Iona: 'the rustic step of the peasants and of Sassenach visitants is fast destroying these faint memorials of the valiant of the Isles.' Lockhart, Life, p. 287. Little did the poet realise that The Lord of the Isles, the steamboat guide, would bring a heavier traffic to the Lords' graves.

24. 31 August 1814, passing Loch Aline: 'These ruins are seen to most advantage from the south, where they are brought into a line with one high fragment towards the west predominating over the rest.' Lockhart, Life, p. 289.

25. We recall the scrupulous poet who catalogued the wild flowers at Rokeby.

graphy, and a retentive memory. A check of the poem's place-names against a map shows that Scott cannot be faulted.

The chiefs of Ross, Arran, Islay and Argyll are in attendance at Ardtornish, with their minstrels. But they are not gathered for a parliament. The occasion is a festive one, since the Maid of Lorn, sister<sup>26</sup> of the Lord of that ilk is about to be married. The massed minstrels summon her from sleep.

'Wake, Maid of Lorn!' 'twas thus they sung,  
And yet more proud the descant rung,  
'Wake, Maid of Lorn! high right is ours,  
To charm dull sleep from Beauty's bowers;  
Earth, Ocean, Air, have nought so shy  
But owns the power of minstrelsy.'

(I, 2, ll. 1-6)

In proof of their power, they sing of the deer, the seal and the eagle affected by the minstrel strain. This is closely in line with Gaelic poetry showing nature affected by man's moods.<sup>27</sup> The powerful seal's attraction to music is stated in the couplet:

Rude Heiskar's seal through surges dark  
Will long pursue the minstrel's bark.

(I, 2, ll. 11-12)

Note 11 explains that the source is a reference in Dean Munro's Description of the Western Isles of Scotland, called Hybrides, which the Dean travelled through in 1594.<sup>28</sup> As shown in the analysis of The

26. There is a slight obscurity at the beginning of the poem, caused by the Maid being referred to as the 'daughter' fostered by 'Proud Lorn' on Morag. But the Lord of Lorn in the poem is the brother.

27. The rivers are rising over the woods,  
There is a scarcity of fish in the bays;  
The fruitage is not found in the land,  
The roaring of the sea is very coarse.  
'Elegy for Sir Norman Macleod,' in the Red Book of Clanranald.

28 The Dean's Description is printed in Miscellanea Scotica. A

Lady of the Lake, Scott relied heavily upon Highland travelogues in composing his long poems, and novels also. The Dean's Description is one of the very few books available to Scott which deals with the period in which he was interested in The Lord of the Isles, and even then it is only an approximation, since it is over one hundred and fifty years later. Still, nature would not have changed in the remote Hebrides in these remote times. Under item 157 in his Description the Dean lists

Haysker. To the northwast fra this Kentnache of Ywist, be twavle myle of sea, lyes ane ile, callit Haysker, quherin infinit slaughter of selchis is.

The Minstrels' song conforms to the romantic pattern established in the earlier poems, and especially to that sung by Ellen at the beginning of The Lady of the Lake. But hers was an evensong to soothe weary hunters: the minstrels in the poem under discussion attempt to waken Edith, the Maid of Lorn by singing of her coming wedding.

'Wake, Maiden, wake! the hour is nigh,  
When Love shall claim a plighted vow.'

(I, IV, ll. 3-4)

They sing of the mustered galleys, the 'merry pibrochs.' But Edith is not enthusiastic, and her 'cold demeanour' kills the song. She is yet another languid heroine with strong Ossianic characteristics.<sup>29</sup> She is being dressed by her maids.

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Collection of Tracts relating to the History, Antiquities, Topography, and Literature of Scotland (Glasgow, 1818-20), vol. II.

ALC., this edition, also 1805 ed.

29. Though in fairness to Scott and other writers of romances, one must ask: could one really have a plain, or even ugly heroine? I am thinking, of course, of poetic Romances.

Her locks, in dark-brown length array'd,  
 Cathleen of Ulne, 'Twas thine to braid;  
 Young Eva with meet reverence drew  
 On the light foot the silken shoe,  
 While on the ancle's /sic/ slender round  
 Those strings of pearl fair Bertha wound,  
 That, bleach'd Lochryan's depths within,  
 Seem'd dusky still on Edith's skin.

(I, V, ll. 11-18)

In The Lady of the Lake Ellen has Lady Margaret as her female companion: in The Lord of the Isles, Edith of Lorn has Morag, her foster mother. Scott appreciates the strength of that relationship in the old Highlands.

(Strict was that bond - most kind of all -  
 Inviolatè in Highland hall -).

(I, VII, ll. 5-6)

Morag senses that Edith feels no joy at her imminent marriage. She leads her to a turret overlooking the Sound of Mull, a dramatic move that allows Scott to display his close knowledge of the region, though he only passed that way twice. The castles of Mingary and Dunstaff-<sup>30</sup>nage, places on the 1814 Lighthouse Yacht itinerary, are mentioned, and supported by Note 111, in which Scott takes the reader on a short voyage from Oban to Tobermory, thus reversing the 1814 route. Predictably, the details are accurate.

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30. 31 August 1814, off Mingary: 'The whole, as seen with a spy-glass, seems ruinous.' Lockhart, Life, p. 289.

1 September, having landed at Dunstaffnage: 'The shell of the castle, for little more now remains, bears marks of extreme antiquity.' Lockhart, Life, p. 290. This garrison gave shelter to the Stone of Destiny. Bruce's spurs are preserved as an heirloom by the Dunstaffnage family, though Scott did not see them. 'We were told of some ancient spurs and other curiosities preserved in the castle, but they were locked up.' Dunstaffnage might have been the model for a castle in A Legend of Montrose. See my section on this tale.



A reference in the text to Islay leads Scott to add Note IV. It was the power centre of the Lords of the Isles, and the property of Walter Campbell of Shawfield, Glasgow, a friend of Scott's. Once again Martin is Scott's authority. The author of the Description, a travelogue three hundred years' later than the time of the poem, describes Finlagan, Islay, where the despotic Lords held courts of justice, with juries. Scott quotes Martin in illustration of the regal aspirations of these Lords:

There was a big Stone of seven Foot square, in which there was a deep Impression made to receive the Feet of Mack-Donald; for he was crown'd King of the Isles standing in this Stone, and swore that he would continue his Vassals in the possession of their Lands, and do exact Justice to all his Subjects: and then his Father's Sword was put into his hand. 31

This ceremony is not mentioned in the text. In fact, the notes to the poem are for the most part composed of superfluous material which gives little or no backing to the text, at least in terms of the time in which the tale is set. But then, it will be recalled that Ballantyne had asked for additional notes to bring the volume up to a standard size.

Note V gives a short history of Mingary Castle, Ardnamurchan, ruined even in Scott's time, and once a stronghold of the MacIans, descendants of the Lords of the Isles. Scott states:

The last time that Mingary was of military importance, occurs in the celebrated Leabhar dearg, or Red-book of Clanronald, a MS. renowned in the Ossianic controversy

and to which Scott had access. His account of the capture of Min-

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31. Martin, op. cit., p. 241.

gary by Colkitto Macdonald in the Montrose Wars comes from an account (ascribed to Cathal MacVurich) in the Red Book. Once again these details are irrelevant to the substance of the text.<sup>32</sup> They show that Scott is short of contemporary material.

In her speech to Edith in the turret commanding a panoramic view of the Sound of Mull, Morag refers to her charge's marriage to

'The heir of mighty Somerled;  
 Ronald, from many a hero sprung,  
 The fair, the valiant, and the young,  
 LORD OF THE ISLES, whose lofty name  
 a thousand bards have given to fame,  
 The mate of monarchs, and allied  
 On equal terms with England's pride.'

(I, VIII, ll. 18-24)

This section merits two notes. Note VI is a short account of the lineage of Somerled, and comes from Lord Hailes.<sup>33</sup> Note VII explains that the Lord of the Isles at the time of the poem was Angus Og, rechristened Ronald for poetic purposes. But Ronald's marriage to the Maid of Lorn is fictive. In his genealogical account in the Red Book Cathal MacVurich records that Angus Og

married the daughter of Cuinnbhuighe O'Cathan. She was the mother of John, son of Angus, and it is with her came the unusual retinue from Ireland, viz., four-and-twenty sons of clan families, from whom sprang four-and-twenty families in Scotland. 34

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32. They may, however, have helped in the writing of A Legend of Montrose. See the relevant section.

33. 1164: 'Somerled invaded Scotland with a mighty force, and landed at Renfrew on the river Clyde. The inhabitants of the country repulsed his army with great slaughter. Somerled and his son Gil-lecolane were slain.' Hailes, Annals, vol. I, p. 121.

34. Dr. Cameron's translation is used here, since it is fuller and purer than that given by Scott in his note. Cameron, op. cit., vol. II, p. 159.

Ranald (Ronald in Scott's translation) was the grandson of Angus Og. According to MacVurich, Ranald was a pious man, an augmentor of churches and monasteries.

He bestowed an Unciata of land in Uist on the monastery of Iona for ever, in honour of God and Columba. 35

But he is not the Ronald of the poem in the sense that Scott scrambled dynasties.

In Note VII Scott states:

As I shall be equally liable to censure for attempting to decide a controversy which has long existed between three distinguished chieftains of this family, who have long disputed the representation of the Lord of the Isles, or for leaving a question of such importance altogether untouched, I chuse, in the first place, to give such information as I have been able to derive from Highland genealogists, and which, for those who have patience to investigate such subjects, really contains some curious information concerning the history of the Isles.

Scott's source, 'an ancient manuscript translated from the Gaelic,' is in fact the Red Book of Clanranald. The controversy surrounding the descent of the Lordship of the Isles centres on the three Macdonald families, Sleat, Clanranald, and Glengarry. As previously mentioned, Scott's friend Alastair of Glengarry, provider of whisky, dogs and anecdotes, published his claim to the Lordship in 1819, four years after The Lord of the Isles. It was (and still is, to some extent) a delicate controversy,<sup>36</sup> and Scott is cautious. Arguing for the legitimacy of the marriage of John, Lord of the Isles, and Anne, daughter of MacDougall of Lorn, Scott seems to favour the

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35. Cameron, op. cit., vol. II, p. 161.

36. For a fuller account of this complex dispute, see my ten-part series in the West Highland Free Press, May - July, 1974.

Sleat claim. But he avoids total commitment by insisting that

A humble lowlander may be permitted to waive the  
discussion.

To return to Morag and Edith in the Ardtornish turret. Edith is not impressed by Morag's eulogy on Ronald of the Isles. Her complaint is that familiarity has bred indifference. Since childhood she has been destined to be Ronald's bride, and he does not love her. It is a marriage of arrangement to preserve balances of power. It is also an unlikely marriage historically, since

We know that the relations of Angus with the Mac-Dugalls of Lorn were not of the friendliest, and that an old feud as to the possession of Mull had not yet been set at rest. 37

Although Ronald's broadsword

'... blazed in Scotland's war'  
(I, X, l. 8)

(as did Angus Og's on Bruce's side, after 1306), his return to his home territory to claim his bride is an anticlimax. To Edith

'... all that had been told  
Of his high worth seem'd poor and cold,  
Tame, lifeless, void of energy,  
Unjust to Ronald and to me!'

(I, X, ll. 19-22)

These are psychologically clumsy sentiments, an unsuccessful attempt to show the dichotomy between appearance and reality, between man of action and lover. Although Edith agrees to proceed with the arranged

37. Clan Donald, vol. I, p. 92.

MacDougall of Lorn was, of course, a bitter opponent of Bruce because of Bruce's murder of the Red Comyn, to whom Lorn was related by marriage. Barbour tells the story of Lorn's campaign against Bruce in Book III. He calls Lorn a 'capitale ennemy' of the king's.

marriage, Ronald is not there. His absence shows his indifference.

Note VIII gives the pedigree of the House of Lorn. A marriage detail by Lord Hailes is corrected by Scott from Wyntoun's Chronicle.<sup>38</sup> The history is contemporary. After Bruce's murder of the Red Comyn in the Dominican church at Dumfries,<sup>39</sup> Bruce and Lorn engaged in battle in the Pass of Brander, Taynuilt, through which Scott travelled on his 1810 journey (by horse) to Oban and Mull.<sup>40</sup> To Scott the Pass is 'wild and romantic,' a fair description of that mountainous region. As Barbour records,<sup>41</sup> Bruce routed the MacDougalls. Thereafter, Bruce captured Dunstaffnage Castle,<sup>42</sup> and received the surrender of the elder MacDougall, the younger having fled. Scott's account comes from Hailes and Barbour, and is background to the poem. But there is one small error. Dunollie Castle, visited by Scott in 1814, does not stand 'overlooking Loch Etive.'

Morag tells Edith to dispel her doubts. She points to Ronald's fleet setting sail from Aros Castle, across the Sound, in whose environs Scott was accommodated in 1810. Aros was another seat of the Lords of the Isles.<sup>43</sup>

38. Hailes says that Bruce married the aunt of the Red Comyn, but Wyntoun says she was the third daughter.
39. Lord Hailes rejects the tradition that Bruce proposed to the Red Comyn: 'Support my title to the crown, and I will give you my estate; or, give me your estate, and I will support your title to the crown.' Annals, vol. III, Append. VII, pp. 48-52. Bruce seems to have been guilty of an impulsive act.
40. At Taynuilt Scott may have met the prototype for his Highland Widow. See relevant section.
41. Barbour does not blame Lorn for deserting his men.
42. Bruce dated a charter at Dunstaffnage on 20 October 1310.
43. Famous (or notorious) in history for the 1608 trick perpetrated by Royal Lieutenant Ochiltree, who summoned the principal chiefs

In discussing The Lady of the Lake, it has already been asserted that Scott excels in scenic description, and particularly of a landscape in which there is strenuous human activity. Thus, in the poem under discussion:

'The shouting vassals man the oars,  
Behind them sink Mull's mountain shores,  
Onward their merry course they keep,  
Through whistling breeze and foaming deep.'

(I, XII, ll. 9-12)

The commentary is spoken by Morag from her Ardtornish vantage-point. She is on the other side, a kind of female bard announcing the approach of the dynamic suitor. The whole section describing the short but hazardous crossing from Aros to Ardtornish is in the celebratory spirit of Gaelic poetry.<sup>44</sup>

But Ronald's fleet is not the centre of attraction for Edith. She has been watching a 'lonely bark'

'That oft hath shifted helm and sail,  
To win its way against the gale.'

(I, XIII, ll. 3-4)

We are to take it, then, that Edith is a woman of feeling, not blinded by the glitter of power and wealth. Going back to Note III, we read:

When the weather is rough, the passage is both difficult and dangerous, from the narrowness of the channel, and in part from the number of inland lakes, out of which sally forth a number of conflicting and thwarting

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of the Isles to a court, and then, under pretext of offering them a sermon for the good of their savage souls, shipped them south on the Moon as prisoners. The Privy Council imprisoned them.

44. This will be elaborated on, when Bruce's voyage to Skye is discussed later in this section.

tides, making the navigation perilous to open boats.

Scott's knowledge of the tide-race in the Sound of Mull had come from personal experience, when he crossed from Oban in an open boat in 1810.<sup>45</sup>

As Edith watches anxiously, the narrative perspective shifts.

Amid the tide  
The skiff she mark'd lay tossing sore,  
And shifted oft her stooping side,  
In weary tack from shore to shore.

(I, XIV, ll. 1-4)

The poetry is phased to the slow progress of the boat. In contrast, Ronald's speeding fleet is described in swifter language, with brighter imagery. It is

Streamer'd with silk, and trick'd with gold,  
Mann'd with the noble and the bold  
Of Island chivalry.

(I, XV, ll. 4-8)

The imagery of silk and gold banners, steel lances and burnished hauberks is rooted in Gaelic poetry. In the prose poem 'The Army and Arming of the Last Lord of the Isles' in the Red Book we are shown some brilliantly decorative weapons. The warrior wears

A coat of mail, which was wide, well meshed,  
light, of substantial steel, beautifully wrought,  
gold ornamented, with brilliant Danish gems. 46

Consider the brosnachadh catha, an incitement to battle, a poem about

45. 'The placid state of the sea is very different from what I have seen it, when six stout rowers could scarce give a boat headway through the conflicting tides.' Lighthouse Yacht journal, Lockhart, Life, p. 290.

46. Cameron, op. cit., vol. II, p. 261.

the fleet of John MacSween of Knapdale, 'probably composed in 1310':

Tall men are arraying the fleet  
which takes its course on the swift sea-surface;  
every hand holds a trim warspear  
in the battle of targes, polished and comely.

The prows of the ships are arrayed  
with quilted hauberks as with jewels,  
with warriors wearing brown belts;  
Norsemen - nobles at that. 47

Ronald's 'armada' is gaudy, but Scott warns that

... with that skiff  
Abides the minstrel tale.

(I, XVII, ll. 11-12)

Fine descriptive poetry again, with the small boat in danger of foundering. The focus shifts to the occupants. There is 'that One' anxious about the safety of Isabel, terrified and exhausted, and 'the Leader'. The 'One' is not concerned for himself, for

'... on me  
Danger sits light by land and sea.'

(I, XIX, ll. 17-18)

'The Leader' advises that they seek shelter at Ardtornish, relying on the 'sacred' inviolability of Highland hospitality.<sup>48</sup> This they decide to do. A reference to plankton, 'lightnings of the wave,' allows Scott to pay tribute to his contemporary Coleridge's 'highly poetical ballad' 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' in Note IX. It is a good example of Scott promoting fellow authors.

47. Thomson, Introduction, p. 28. This is a translation from the Book of the Dean of Lismore, and Scott may have seen it. Even if he did not, he has reproduced the imagery and atmosphere of early Gaelic poetry.

48. The classic example of this in Highland history is the sanctuary given by Campbell of Inverawe to the murderer of his foster brother. See my section on The Highland Widow.



The small boat safely berths under Ardtornish. The entrance to the garrison is by a passage cut in the rock, and Scott adds note X, on the defence of Highland garrisons. Dunstaffnage had a draw-bridge, but Kismul, MacNeil's Barra fortress was on a small island. Scott quotes Martin, angry at not being ferried across to inspect Kismul because of a suspicious 'Cockman.'<sup>49</sup>

Although complete strangers, the 'Leader' and his storm-tossed party are welcome, for

'Be what ye will, Artornish Hall  
On this glad eve is free to all.'

(I, XXVII, ll. 5-6)

In creating suspense, Scott helps his readers towards identification of the new arrivals. The warder says gallantly:

'though ye had drawn a hostile sword  
'Gainst our ally, great England's Lord,  
Or mail upon your shoulders borne,  
To battle with the Lord of Lorn,  
Or, outlaw'd, dwelt by greenwood tree  
With the fierce Knight of Ellerslie,  
Or aided even the murderous strife,  
When Comyn fell beneath the knife  
Of that fell homicide the Bruce,  
This night has been a term of truce -'

(I, XXVII, ll. 7-16)

Preceded by the 'Seneschal,' the strangers are led into the baronial hall where the wedding feast is in progress. The audience numbers

... many a chief, the flower and pride  
Of Western land and sea.

(I, XXXI, ll. 16-17)

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49. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 91. MacNeil kept a herald, who called from the battlements, announcing that the world might eat, the great MacNeil having dined.

Canto Second opens with the elaborate feast supported by harps and the circulation of goblets. Such high living is well attested to in Gaelic poetry. Note II accompanies the couplet

'Fill me the mighty cup!' he said,  
'Erst own'd by royal Somerled.'

(II, IV, ll. 9-10)

Scott cites as an example of an heirloom drinking vessel the horn of Rory More, which he had seen at Dunvegan during the 1814 voyage.<sup>50</sup>

In illustration of the rapid circulation of the cup in Highland establishments, Scott gives an account from Martin which has already been quoted in this study in the Waverley section.

Presumably to show that his poetic description of a 'Hebridean festival' (the marriage of Edith) is not far fetched, Scott supplies a translation from the Red Book. It is by 'Niall Mor MacVurich for Rory Mor Macleod' of Dunvegan. The bard tells of six nights of riotous hospitality at Macleod's Skye seat, and he concludes with an arithmetical joke:

We were twenty times drunk every day  
To which we had no more objection than he had;  
Our food /mead?/ was in abundance which consisted of  
Four, three, seven along with six of varieties.  
Six nights. 51

Finally, Note II closes with a quotation from Dr Johnson on the 'hospitality and elegance of Raasay or Dunvegan',<sup>52</sup> a nice example of Scott

50. 23 August 1814, at Dunvegan: 'Within the castle we saw a remarkable drinking-cup, with an inscription dated A.D. 993, which I have described particularly elsewhere.' Lockhart, Life, p. 282. 'Elsewhere means in a note to The Lord of the Isles, and shows the connection between poem and journal.

51. Cameron, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 285-86.

52. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 174-75.

giving thanks for hospitality.

Note II illustrates how Scott is putting The Lord of the Isles together by the indirect use of material from various sources and centuries. In the first instance, he has the memories (augmented by his detailed journal) of the 1814 Lighthouse Yacht voyage. In the second instance, via MacIntosh's translation, he has access to a seventeenth century Gaelic elegy. In the third instance, Martin's Description continues to be a well used source, and Johnson's late eighteenth century Journey is quoted. All this material from various centuries is transferred back to the fourteenth century. If we add to the foregoing Hailes's Annals and Barbour's The Bruce, we have a composite picture of the poem's construction. This stated, from now on it is not intended to refer to every note which Scott supplies. Rather, it is intended to concentrate on the effectiveness of the text, and to refer to any unusual notes.

Despite the glitter of the bridal feast, Ronald is not happy.  
He broods.

By fits he paused, and harper's strain  
And jester's tale went round in vain,  
Or fell but on his idle ear  
Like distant sounds which dreamers hear.

(II, II, ll. 9-12)

Lorn, his brother-in-law to be, and De Argentine, an English ambassador,<sup>53</sup> note his mood. So does Edith his bride. Their eyes meet, and there is more than reproach in her glance.

Beneath the intolerable smart

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53. Like the majority of those mentioned in the poem, he was an actual historical figure. Hailes calls him 'a hero of romance in real life.' Annals, vol. II, p. 56 ff.

He writhed; - then sternly mann'd his heart  
 To play his hard but destined part,  
 And from the table sprang.

(II, IV, ll. 5-8)

The dramatic situation is one of high farce, clumsily handled, with Edith glaring, Ronald toasting his brother-in-law and drinking to the union of their houses. Enter the Abbot, announced by a bugle-call, and Ronald casts his goblet on the floor. But he is saved from the marriage ceremony by the introduction of the stormbound strangers.

The Seneschal hints that they are of high birth, despite their dishevelled appearance. Frowning Lorn whispers to De Argentine,

Then question'd, high and brief,  
 If, in their voyage, aught they knew  
 Of the rebellious Scottish crew,  
 Who to Rath-Erin's shelter drew,  
 With Carrick's out-law'd Chief?<sup>54</sup>

(II, IX, ll. 7-11)

The 'younger stranger' challenges Lorn, and announces that 'royal Bruce' is about to return and reclaim his kingdom. Tension is increased by a minstrel singing of 'The Brooch of Lorn,' snatched with Bruce's mantle by Lorn in a hand-to-hand encounter at Dalry, near Tyndrum.<sup>55</sup> Scott heard about this heirloom on his 1814 visit to Dunollie, but he did not see the brooch, which had been lost in an 'accidental fire.'<sup>56</sup>

54. The back-up note is a precis from Hailes. It deals with Bruce's career from Scone to Radrin. See Hailes, vol. II, pp. 1-20.

55. At the beginning of Book III Barbour deals with this battle, but he does not mention the loss of Bruce's mantle, and hence his brooch.

56. On the sacking of Gylen Castle, Kerrera, in 1647, the brooch fell into the hands of Campbell of Inverawe, Taynult. It was restored to the MacDougalls in 1826.

The reader does not need to be a seer to realise that 'the elder Leader' is in fact Bruce, and the 'younger stranger' his brother Edward. Isabel is their sister. Once again and very awkwardly (as in The Lady of the Lake) Scott's characters throw off their disguises in melodramatic language. By this crude device Scott has destroyed the historical authenticity of his theme. The Lord of the Isles had sheltered Bruce in Kintyre, and Lorn wrestled with him: therefore they would have both recognised him instantly. It can be argued, however, that the Lord of the Isles would not wish to identify Bruce in such hostile company. Predictably, Lorn is hysterical at the sight of Bruce, his mortal enemy.

'The Church of God saw Comyn fall!  
 On God's own altar stream'd his blood,  
 While o'er my prostrate kinsman stood  
 The ruthless murderer.'

(II, XV, ll. 17-20)

Hailes's account of the death of the Red Comyn forms Note VIII,<sup>57</sup> together with material from a History of the Presbytery of Penpont, an Advocates' Library MS. to which Scott had access.

Lorn has many loyal supporters among the guests, as has Ronald. They draw swords, but Edith appeals to De Argentine the Englishman to intercede in this Hebridean quarrel. There is a clumsy scene which is designed to add a new dimension to the plot, but which could confuse the reader. Speaking out aloud, Ronald confuses Edith with Isabel, Bruce's sister. We have to infer, therefore, that Ronald had previously met and fallen in love with Isabel, hence his reluc-

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57. Hailes, Annals, vol. I, p. 320. Two daggers did the deed, the second being wielded by one Kirkpatrick, who did not wish any doubt to be attached to Comyn's death.

tance to marry Edith.

De Argentine claims Bruce as a prisoner in the name of England, but the representative of the Siol Torquil protests.

'Somewhat we've heard of England's yoke!  
He said, 'and, in our islands, Fame  
Hath whisper'd of a lawful claim,  
That calls the Bruce fair Scotland's Lord,  
Though dispossess'd by foreign sword.  
This craves reflection ...'

(II, XX, ll. 12-17)

The appeal is to Scottish independence and chivalry. Scott is imposing southern manners on fierce Hebridean chiefs who preferred to reason with the sword, and who were only interested in their own independence. He is neutering a culture for the sake of providing a poem of manners.

The dispute is interrupted by the arrival of the Abbot, a holy man being a stock character in Scott's poetry. He hails from Iona, and is asked to decide the dispute. He hears the arguments.

Then Ronald pled the stranger's cause,  
And knighthood's oaths and honour's laws;  
And Isabel, on bended knee,  
Brought pray'rs and tears to back the plea;  
And Edith lent her generous aid,  
And wept, and Lorn for mercy pray'd.

(II, XXV, ll. 1-6)

Lorn is furious with his sister, sneering that he has brought her as a 'paramour'<sup>58</sup> to Ronald, who is indifferent, whereas Clifford of

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58. The word is backed up by Note XI, explaining that 'It was anciently customary in the Highlands to bring the bride to the house of the husband.' This explains why Edith awakens in Ardtornish, Ronald's seat. But Scott has to announce that there were 'trial' marriages in these rude times, with the 'period of cohabitation' sometimes lasting a twelvemonth. Are we to take it, then, that Edith is no longer virginal, having been enjoyed by Ronald? If so, one knows at this early stage of the poem that Scott must arrange a marriage to please his moral readers. There can be no question of Ronald marrying Isabel.

Cumberland genuinely wants her. She shall be his, Lorn determines.

In giving judgement, the Abbot appears to suffer a convulsion. He has heard Bruce's confession of anger through national pride.

'I only blame mine own wild ire,  
By Scotland's wrongs incensed to fire.'

(II, XXIX, ll. 10-11)

The poetry is pure nationalist propaganda, and it has its effect upon the Abbot. He who had planned to curse Bruce now blesses him in a long hysterical speech about Scottish freedom. There is a fade-out into Canto Third, where the audience's reaction to the Abbot's blessing is noted. The enraged Lorn is to remove his sister Edith from Ardtornish, but she has conveniently disappeared.

Here some resolution of the poem so far is in order. Since in his poetry he cannot be totally authentic in a historical sense, while at the same time satisfying the largest possible audience, Scott's difficulties begin when he is dealing with major historical figures such as Bruce. He was a freedom fighter, sometimes of impulsive and violent passion, as the murder of the Red Comyn shows. More than most, Bruce was blood, guts, passion and cunning. But in order to satisfy the moral and romantic expectations of his audience (established with The Lady of the Lake) Scott must force his hero into a strait jacket of conformity and chivalry. Inevitably, the result is high farce, and embarrassing sentiments from the mouth of a great warrior. In an indirect way the made-to-measure poetic model diminishes the credibility of the actual historical personality, and especially when the reader knows little or nothing about the real Bruce. That is the way in which Scott does damage to history. Most of what I have said about Bruce can also be said about the Lord of the Isles

in Scott's poem.

After Ronald's pledge of support at the beginning of Canto Third, the poem becomes an adventure story, its plot similar to The Lady of the Lake, and with the same improbabilities. Isabel is to be sent to the safety of Ireland, to be put into cold storage until recalled for the plot. Bruce and Ronald set sail for Skye. They disembark in the Loch Corruisk area, thus giving Scott an opportunity to use more material from the Lighthouse Yacht journal. He quotes from it in Note III.<sup>59</sup> The sheer desolation of the region impressed Scott.

- above, around, below,  
On mountain or in glen,  
Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower;  
Nor aught of vegetative power,  
The weary eye may ken. 60

(III, XIV, ll. 16-20)

During their sojourn on Skye Bruce and Ronald meet with bandits.

Note IV informs us that the encounter

is copied, with such alterations as the fictitious narrative rendered necessary, from a striking incident in the monarch's history, told by Barbour.

It comes from dramatic Book VII of The Bruce, in which John of Lorn puts the 'sleuth-hund' on Bruce's trail, but Bruce (in the best traditions of the detective story) wades water and evades it. But the itinerant king's troubles are not at an end, for Barbour tells

59. It is interesting to collate Scott's journal extract in Note III with Lockhart's version. Apparently the latter was not always pleased with his famous father-in-law's prose style. Lockhart, Life, p. 284.

60. 25 August 1814, Loch Corruisk: 'It is as exquisite as a savage scene, as Loch Katrine is as a scene of stern beauty.' Lockhart, Life, p. 284.



How the three men that bare the veddir schep  
thought to haf slayn kyng Robert Bruce. 61

(The Bruce, Book VII)

From the bandits the poetic Bruce inherits a mute page, lovely of countenance, who weeps intermittently throughout the rest of the poem. We recall the device of disguise plus the copious tears of The Lady of the Lake..

Edward arrives to inform his brother that the kingdom awaits its monarch. Edward has died in Cumberland while on his way to conquer Scotland. Bruce:

'Now, Scotland! shortly shalt thou see,  
With God's high will, thy children free,  
And vengeance on thy foes!'

(IV, IV, ll. 4-6)

Canto Fourth is largely taken up with Bruce's long and dangerous voyage by galley from Skye to Arran.<sup>62</sup> If this poetical voyage is plotted on a map alongside the actual voyage of the Lighthouse Yacht in 1814, it will be seen that the route is roughly similar in certain places. Because Scott is knowledgeable and confident of his subject, and because he is skilled in scenic description, the poetry is impressively realistic. The metre paces the swift progress of the galley, and the language reproduces the assistance of wind and sea.

Merrily, merrily bounds the bark,

61. But Bruce lost his foster brother in the brawl.

62. Bruce's homeward voyage from Rachrin to Arran did not, of course, include stops at Ardtornish and Skye.

'At the approach of spring he secretly passed over into the island of Arran.' Here Lord Hailes adds a footnote to the effect that he received aid from Christiana of the Isles. Fordun (L.xii.c.12) is Hailes's source. Hailes, Annals vol. II, p. 20.

She bounds before the gale,  
 The mountain breeze from Ben-an-darch  
 Is joyous in her sail!  
 With fluttering sound like laughter hoarse,  
 The cords and canvass strain,  
 The waves, divided by her force,  
 In rippling eddies chased her course,  
 As if they laugh'd again.

(IV, VII, ll. 1-9)

The same exhilaration of strong galley and strong men versus powerful sea and wind is to be heard in Alexander MacDonald's Birlinn of

Clanranald:

It was man's work to look in the face  
 of the fiery torrents,  
 phosphorous sparks of flame  
 on each mountain,  
 The waves in the lead, high, grey-haired,  
 with their harsh roaring,  
 the following waves in their troughs rumbling  
 and loud-lowing. 63

It must be admitted, however, that Bruce's voyage from Skye to Arran is smoother than that of the Clanranald birlinn from South Uist to Carrickfergus.

The notes to this section are a useful guide for the reader.

For example:

On Scoreigg next a warning light  
 Summon'd the warriors to the fight;  
 A numerous race, ere stern Macleod  
 O'er their bleak shores in vengeance strode.

(IV, IX, ll. 11-14)

Note V supports this stanza by a quotation from Scott's Lighthouse Yacht journal in which he describes the incineration, in a cave, of

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63. Thomson, Introduction, p. 178. Since this poem was first published (in Gaelic) in the Eigg Collection of 1776, it is possible that Scott saw a translation.

the Macdonalds of Eigg by Macleod.<sup>64</sup> As the galley passes Colonsay, Scott sees the opportunity for paying tribute to his brilliant friend John Leyden, author of a ballad 'Macphail of Colonsay, and the Mermaid of Corriecrekin' (Note VII). But

A distant and a deadly shore  
Has Leyden's cold remains!

(IV, XI, ll. 27-8)

a reference to the scholar-doctor's death by fever in a foreign library.

Instead of rounding the Mull of Kintyre, Bruce's galley enters West Loch Tarbert and is dragged across land to the Sound of Bute. It seems far fetched, but in Note VIII Pennant is Scott's authority. He had heard of vessels of ten tons being dragged in that way.<sup>65</sup> Better still for the purposes of the poem, Barbour states that Bruce used that route and method.

Till the Tarbard thai held thar way  
In galayis, ordanit for thair fair:  
Bot thame worthit draw thar schippes thar.  
And a myle wes betuix the seis,  
And that was lownyt all with treis.

(The Bruce, Book XV, ll. 276-280)

But this occurred a few years later than his descent on Arran after quitting Rachrin.

As they head for Arran, Ronald announces that Edith has left Ardtornish. He asks for Isabel's hand, but Bruce answers that it

64. Even this grisly scene of strewn bones could not stop Scott the souvenir gatherer. 'I brought off, in spite of the prejudices of our sailors, a skull, which seems that of a young woman.' Lockhart, Life, p. 286.

65. Pennant, 1772, Tour, pp. 166-7.

is a matter for the church. Isabel is in fact near at hand, in the convent of St Bride. The convenient retreat is a favourite device for Scott heroines. Ronald's sentiments about Isabel are heard by the mute page, who weeps copiously. The poetic effect is ludicrous.

... through his fingers, long and slight,  
Fast trill'd the drops of crystal bright.

(IV, XVI, ll. 9-10)

This description of physical delicacy in an apparent male is a prompt to the slow-witted reader. Ronald wishes to take the weeping 'boy' as his page, but Bruce insists that he go to attend Isabel in the convent. What can one say but that the poetry is dull narrative, the plot absurd?

They land, and Bruce blows his bugle three times. Douglas, De la Haye, Lennox, Boyd and other supporters imagine it is the enemy, but Lord James has heard it before. He orders:

'Each to Loch-Ranza's margin spring;  
That blast was winded by the King!'

(IV, XVIII, ll. 19-20)

The episode is from Barbour, but from Book IV, and not Book V, as Scott's Note X shows.

James of Douglas herd him blaw,  
And he the blast all soyn can knaw,  
And said, 'suthly, yon is the kyng,  
I knaw lang quhill syne his blawyng.'

(The Bruce, Book IV, ll. 500-504)

There is an emotional reunion of Bruce and his followers. Scott launches into a panegyric on the glamour of war, but he is careful not to confine his praise to Scotland.

Warriors! - and where are warriors found,

If not on martial Britain's ground?

(IV, XX, ll. 13-14)

This allows Scott to put in a plea for the liberator of Scotland.

... blame ye, then, the Bruce, if trace  
Of tear is on his manly face,  
When, scanty reliques of the train  
That hail'd at Scone his early reign,  
This patriot band around him hung,  
And to his knees and bosom clung?

(IV, XX, ll. 21-6)

He is the father-figure. Even the most critical Sassenach reader is forced by Scott to acknowledge Bruce's appeal, and the sincerity of the struggle for independence.

Bruce visits his sister Isabel in the convent and explains Ronald's suit. But she rejects him.

'This answer to Ronald given -  
The heart he asks is fix'd on heaven.'

(IV, XXVII, ll. 1-2)

But there is a possibility of her rejecting the veil if he lays at her feet the ring, marriage contract, and a 'fair acquittal' of his commitment to Edith of Lorn. Conveniently placed. that he might hear this generous consideration of Edith's prime claim, the mute page springs forward, embracing Isabel. But Bruce has weightier matters on his mind.

'O Scotland! shall it e'er be mine  
To wreak thy wrongs in battle-line,  
To raise my victor head, and see  
Thy hills, thy dales, thy people free, -  
That glance of bliss is all I crave,  
Betwixt my labours and my grave!'

(IV, XXX, ll. 22-7)

Such sincere and serious sentiments are depreciated by being set in the same section as the absurd antics of the mute page. The two

themes cannot balance. That is the price Scott pays for pleasing his female readers.

The farce of Isabel and the page is continued in Canto Fifth. Isabel finds a letter, plus a ring, apparently from Edith, renouncing her claim to Ronald. A shrewd critic of Scott's work, James Ballantyne, was apparently worried by the credibility of this scene. Scott replied in annoyance:

It is quite impossible to alter Bruce's speech & more than impossible to take away the letter. The art of writing not universal was however perfectly known among females of high rank. How could Isabel recognize a ring she had never seen & how long conversations & interviews would be necessary to clear the matter up. It may not be. You blame me for introducing dialogue but you /are/ not aware that the incidents which must be known would be still flatter in the mouth of the author himself than in those of the actors. I mention this only to show that when I am dull there is a design. 66

This was the sorry state Scott's romantic plot had reached because of its absurdity. The speech by Bruce referred to seems to be the one delivered when Isabel sends Father Augustine after the defected page.

'O wild of thought, and hard of heart!  
Answer'd the Monarch, 'on a part  
Of such deep danger to employ  
A mute, an orphan, and a boy!'

(V, X, ll. 1-4)

Bruce's speech is directed at Edward, who has sent the page with a 'written mandate' to Cuthbert at Carrick.

We need not dwell on the adventures of the mute page, or on the accompanying notes, which deal with Arran and its history. As the

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66. Grierson, Letters, vol. IV, p. 2.

end of the poem approaches, the notes become thinner and less informative, proof that they are padding for the sake of the standard sized book. Note VI, on the tradition of the 'wond'rous light' that guided Bruce to Carrick, is acknowledged as being supplied by Joseph Train, the excise man and antiquary. Train heard the folk-tale that it had been kindled by 'supernatural power.' Barbour records that Bruce was inspired to storm Turnberry Castle, his maternal home, by the sight of a signal-fire:

Hym thocht weill that he saw a fyre,  
By Turnbery byrnand weill schyre;  
And till his mense can it schaw;  
Ilk man thocht weill that he it saw.

(The Bruce, Book IV, ll. 618-21)

Scott makes Edward say:

'For, see! the ruddy signal made,  
That Clifford, with his merry-men all,  
Guards carelessly our father's hall.' 67

(V, IX, ll. 17-19)

Deceived by the light, they sail. The poetry becomes of a high order because Scott is dealing with strong brave men in a realistic setting. Tension is maintained by reference to nature.

Wild scream the dazzled sea-fowl gave,  
Dropp'd from their crags on plashing wave,  
The deer to distant covert drew,  
The black-cock deem'd it day, and crew.

(V, XIII, ll. 27-30)

The mute page is seized as a spy, and is to be executed, but Ronald saves him: but better to draw a veil over the embarrassing scene of the mute stopping 'himself' from mouthing Ronald's name.

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67. Lord Hailes follows Barbour's tradition. Annals, vol. II, p. 21.

The storming of Turnberry is well described, showing Scott's fascination with the arts of war. Man and animal mingle in the bloody fray.

The startling horses plunged and flung,  
Clamour'd the dogs till turrets rung,  
Nor sunk the fearful cry,  
Till not a foeman was there found  
Alive, save those who on the ground  
Groan'd in their agony!

(V, XXXI, ll. 29-34)

This is action poetry with a strong auditory element. But, as Note VIII warns, the cry that

The Bruce hath won his father's hall!

is fanciful. Scott has followed 'the flattering and pleasing tradition' of capture because his story dictates and the reader expects.

The fact is, that he /the Bruce/ was only strong enough to alarm and drive in the out-posts of the English garrison, then commanded, not by Clifford, as assumed in the text, but by Percy. Neither was Clifford slain upon this occasion, though he had several skirmishes with Bruce. He fell afterwards in the battle of Bannockburn. 68

That battle is the main subject of Canto Sixth. With Bruce on the ascendancy, Scott cannot resist proud assertion of his nationality.

Such news o'er Scotland's hills triumphant rode,  
When 'gainst the invaders turn'd the battle's scale,

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68. Lord Hailes: Bruce 'attacked the English, carelessly cantoned in the neighbourhood of Turnberry, put them to the sword and pillaged their quarters. Percy, from the castle, heard the uproar, yet durst not issue forth against an unknown enemy. Bruce, with his followers, not exceeding three hundred in number, remained for some days near Turnberry; but succours having arrived from the neighbouring garrisons, he was obliged to seek shelter in the mountainous parts of Carrick.' Annals, vol. II, p. 21.



When Bruce's banner had victorious flow'd  
 O'er Loudon's mountain, and in Ury's vale;  
 When English blood oft deluged Douglas-dale,  
 And fiery Edward routed stout St. John ...

(VI, I, ll. 19-24)

This precis of history speeds us towards Bannockburn. It will be recalled that The Lady of the Lake spans six days, with one Canto to a day. The Lord of the Isles covers seven years, from 1307 to 1314. The first five Cantos cover the year 1307, and the seven years up to Bannockburn are compressed into Canto Sixth. With such a tight schedule, we appreciate that Scott cannot develop his plot in detail, and that the major share of space must be devoted to Bannockburn. The battle-cry of Canto Sixth is a compression of Hailes and Barbour.

But before speeding up his narrative, Scott must tie up loose ends of the plot. Her page's disguise shed, and her speech restored by Bruce's successes, Edith dwells in harmony with Isabel in the convent. The latter takes holy orders, thereby leaving the Maid of Lorn free for Ronald. The moralist may be satisfied, but the credibility of Scott's plot suffers further (if that is possible), since he fails to explain how Edith has become enamoured of Ronald (or vice versa).

And what of the Lord of the Isles, who is, after all, the donor of the poem's title? In the long list of Bruce's successes, he does not rate a mention, and so we are safe in assuming that Bruce is now in firm command of the poem.

O who may tell the sons of fame,  
 That at King Robert's bidding came,  
 To battle for the right!

(VI, V, ll. 15-17)

The poem hurries towards the climax of Bannockburn. But this

massive and emotive theme must not be allowed to dwarf the theme of love, or impede its course. So Edith must again don the page disguise and go to Bannockburn to test Ronald's love, and at King Robert's suggestion!

The Bruce provides a graphic and detailed account of the battle of Bannockburn, and Scott made use of it. The Lowland men are well represented, and

With these the valiant of the Isles  
Beneath their chieftains rank'd their files,  
In many a plaided band.

(VI, XI, ll. 8-10)

Scott is following history closely, for

Angus Og and his Islesmen, variously estimated at from 5000 to 10,000 men, were an indispensable factor in determining the fortunes of the day. 69

Barbour confirms the Lord of the Isle's leading role:

The ferd battale the nobill kyng

Tuk till hym-self in gouernyng,  
And had in-till his cumpany  
The men of Carryk all halely,  
And of Argile and of Kentyre,  
And of the Ylis, quhar-off wes syre  
Anguss of Ylis and But, all tha.  
He of the playne-land had alsua  
Of armyt men ane mekill rout;  
His battale stalward wes and stout.  
He said, the rerward he vald ma,  
And evyn forrouth hym suld ga  
The vaward, and on athir hand  
The tothir battalis suld be gangand  
Behynd, on syde a litell space;  
And the kyng, that behynd thaim was,  
/Suld/ se quhar thair was mast mystir,  
And relief thaim vith his baneir.

(The Bruce, Book XI, ll. 330-47)

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69. Clan Donald, vol. I, p. 96.

The battle is well staged in Scott's poem, and is scripted like a film, with views from both sides, close-ups of hand-to-hand fighting, and long shots of arrows seeking their targets. There is a kind of sound-track also.

Forth whistling came the grey-goose wing,  
As the wild hail-stones pelt and ring  
Adown December's blast.

(VI, XXII, ll. 14-16)

Then a static image:

Each by his steed dismounted, stood  
The Scottish chivalry.

(VI, XXII, ll. 22-3)

In Scotland's hour of greatest victory Scott has no desire to belittle the other side. The English king's presence is noted.

Fair was his seat in knightly selle,  
And in his sprightly eye was set  
Some spark of the Plantagenet.

(VI, XIV, ll. 10-12)

The day, however, is Bruce's.

High in his stirrups stood the King,  
And gave his battle-axe the swing.  
Right on De Boune, the whiles he pass'd  
Fell that stern dint - the first - the last! -

(VI, XV, ll. 21-24)

Then disaster in a stirring masculine scene: Bruce throws away his 'gory axe' and takes the mute page's hand. He calls him 'young Amadine.'

History has told us the result of this battle, and in this instance Scott has no desire to distort history. The English are routed, and Bruce slays De Argentine, the English ambassador who was at the Ardtornish wedding feast. The poem is becoming circular. After

the realistic heat of battle, insipidity. For the last time Edith sheds her disguise and Ronald, Lord of the Isles, kneels in subjugation to her. The conversion is not explained. Bruce decides to stage a 'solemn mass' at Cambuskenneth, to give grateful thanks for victory, and to have the Maid of Lorn and the Lord of the Isles married.

Predictably, the reviews were by no means rapturous. The Edinburgh Review for February 1815, contained a brilliant analysis of the poem, and an exhibition of its many faults. The first was that it was less interesting than The Lady of the Lake or Marmion, and for the following reasons, according to Jeffrey, the reviewer.

There is a less connected story - and, what there is, is less skilfully complicated and disentangled, and less diversified with change of scene, or variety of character. In the scantiness of the narrative, and the broken and discontinuous order of the events, as well as the inartificial /sic/ insertion of detached descriptions and morsels of ethical reflection, it bears more resemblance to the earliest of the author's greater productions; and suggests a comparison, perhaps not altogether to his advantage, with the structure and execution of the Lay of the Last Minstrel: - for though there is probably more force and substance in the latter parts of the present work, it is certainly inferior to that enchanting performance in delicacy and sweetness, and even - is it to be wondered at after four such publications? - in originality.

(pp. 273-74)

Having noted that the title The Lord of the Isles does not twin with The Lady of the Lake (assuming that was Scott's intention), the reviewer further notes that the title does not correspond with the contents, a point I have already made.

It is no unusual misfortune, indeed, for the author of a modern Epic to have his hero turn out to be a secondary personage, in the gradual unfolding of the story, while some unruly underling runs off with the whole glory and interest of the poem, (p. 274)

the 'unruly underling' being Bruce.

The reviewer finds the language of the poem 'less flowing and easy than usual,' and in fact degenerating into 'absolute poorness' in places. The narrative is frequently flat and heavy through a too faithful adherence to 'authentic history,' so that the poem reads like a chronicle. But a 'more serious and general fault' is dealt with, and it relates to what I have said elsewhere in this study about Scott's ambivalent attitude to the 1707 Union. The poem is not 'sufficiently national.' It

breathes nothing either of that animosity towards England, or that exultation over her defeat which must have animated all Scotland at the period to which he refers, and ought consequently to have been the ruling passion of his poem. Mr. Scott, however, not only dwells fondly on the valour and generosity of the invaders, but actually makes an elaborate apology to the English for having ventured to select for his theme a story which records their disasters. (p. 276)

Scott's manipulation of the Ronald-Edith-Isabel triangle is criticised.

The lovers of poetry have a particular aversion to the inconstancy of other lovers; - and especially to that sort of inconstancy which is liable to the suspicion of being partly inspired by worldly ambition, and partly abjured from considerations of a still meaner selfishness. We suspect, therefore, that they will have but little indulgence for the fickleness of the Lord of the Isles; who breaks the troth he has pledged to the heiress of Lorn, as soon as he sees a chance of succeeding with the king's sister; and comes back to the slighted bride, when his royal mistress takes the vows in a convent, and the heiress gets into possession of her lands, by the forfeiture of her brother.

(p. 294)

The reviewer, however, has failed to follow up Scott's reference (in Note XI, Canto Second) to 'trial' marriages and 'cohabitation.': Jeffrey obviously disapproved of Scott's new poem.

Lastly, there is a criticism which has nothing to do with the quality of the poem, but is nevertheless valid.

The notes are too long - and the volume a great deal too expensive. (p. 294)

Ballantyne's insistence on padding had not been effective.

Though less severe, George Ellis in the Quarterly Review for July 1815, was still critical. Scott is taken to task for speed and carelessness of composition.

Authors will not, any more than other men, bestow upon their wares a greater degree of polish and perfection, than their customers generally require; and since all that the purchasers of poetry seem now to insist upon is an interesting story, spirited narrative, and good and picturesque descriptions of visible objects, it cannot be expected that poets should feel very anxious to furnish them with any thing besides. (pp. 287-88)

Scott was responsible for the creation of this throwaway market for poetry. Complaining that the poets of his age are unwilling to undertake 'the nine years labour' of revising their long productions, Ellis states that Scott has

no adequate inducement for devoting himself to so irksome an occupation (p. 288)

because he is writing 'to please himself and his contemporaries.' The result is carelessness.

Ellis finds an imbalance between character and speech, and (as I have previously argued) a fatal imbalance between the 'two independent plots' of the poem.

The liberation of Scotland by Bruce has not naturally any more connection with the loves of Ronald and the Maid of Lorn, than with those of Dido and Aeneas; nor are we able to conceive any possible motive which should have induced Mr. Scott to weave them as he has done into

the same narrative, except the desire of combining the advantages of an heroic, with what we may call, for want of an appropriate word, an ethical subject; an attempt which we feel assured he never would have made had he duly weighed the very different principles upon which these dissimilar sorts of poetry are founded. (p. 307)

The argument of thematical imbalance concludes:

had Mr. Scott introduced the loves of Ronald and the Maid of Lorn as an episode of an epic poem upon the subject of the battle of Bannockburn, its want of connection with the main action might have been excused in favour of its intrinsic merit; but by a great singularity of judgement, he has introduced the battle of Bannockburn as an episode in the loves of Ronald and the Maid of Lorn. (p. 308)

The long poem Scott had demanded such a huge advance for was a comparative failure and the last of its kind. Lockhard reproduces a touching story from a Memoranda prepared by James Ballantyne. Scott was in his library, working on the third volume of Guy Manner-  
ing when Ballantyne called to inform him of public reaction to The  
Lord of the Isles.

'Well, James,' he said, 'I have given you a week - what are people saying about the Lord of the Isles?' I hesitated a little, after the fashion of Gil Blas, but he speedily brought the matter to a point - 'Come,' he said, 'speak out, my good fellow; what has put it into your head to be on so much ceremony weth me all of a sudden? But, I see how it is, the result is given in one word - Disappointment.' My silence admitted his inference to the fullest extent. His countenance certainly did look rather blank for a few seconds; in truth, he had been wholly unprepared for the event; for it is a singular fact, that before the public, or rather the booksellers, had given their decision, he no more knew whether he had written well or ill, than whether a die out of a box was to turn up a size or an ace. However, he instantly resumed his spirits, and expressed his wonder rather that his poetical popularity should have lasted so long, than that it should have now at last given way. At length he said, with perfect cheerfulness, 'Well, well, James, so be it - but you know we must not droop, for we can't afford to give over. Since one line has failed, we must

just stick to something else:' - and so he dismissed me, and resumed his novel. 70

There would be no more long Highland poems, that market having been exhausted. But Scott had found another 'line,' the writing of novels. The anonymous Waverley was a best seller, and Guy Mannering was about to appear, continuing the profitable disguise of anonymity. There was still plenty of literary material in the Highlands, however, and the public would devour in prose what they would not take in poetry.

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70. Lockhart, Life, p. 309.



ROB ROY

As I have stated, it was inevitable that Scott would choose The Lord of the Isles as a poetic theme. Even more inevitable was his choice of Rob Roy as a fictive theme. In fact, it is surprising that this theme did not take precedence over Waverley. As a boy Scott had sat on Stewart of Invernahyle's knee, hearing, no doubt, how the Appin chieftain had defeated Rob Roy at swordplay at Balquhider, a victory Scott duly notes in his Introduction to his novel.<sup>1</sup> Since youth Scott had made numerous forays into Perthshire, the Highland brigand's territory, and he had listened avidly to local legend.

It was not until 1817, relatively late in Scott's career as a 'Highland' writer, that he decided to make Rob Roy the theme of a novel, and even then it was Constable who supplied the title, a service gratefully acknowledged by the author in his Introduction. Having received a legacy of some £3,000 from his brother the Major, Scott was not hard pressed for cash at this time, but he still drove a hard bargain. Before Constable had appeared at Abbotsford to hear about a new novel from 'the author of Waverley,' Scott had already fixed the terms in his shrewd brain. He communicated his demands to John Ballantyne his agent. Grierson's dating for this Abbotsford letter is 4 May 1817.

My sum is £1700 payable in May: a round advance by'r lady but I think I am entitled to it considering what I have turnd off hitherto on such occasions. 2

In addition the 'usual quantity' of unsaleables from the Ballantyne

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1. As previously pointed out, Invernahyle may have been claiming an Ardsheal victory as his own.
  2. Grierson, Letters, vol. I, p. 515.

publishing house - '£600 for 6000 copies' - was to be included in the Rob Roy agreement. Constable was too grateful for having been brought back into favour to object, and John Ballantyne would gleefully record that he gained 'above' £1,200 for negotiating the new novel.<sup>3</sup>

There is some evidence in Scott's letters that Rob Roy, in prose or poetry, might have supplanted the 1810 poetic publication The Lady of the Lake. Scott was in Perthshire, collecting local atmosphere for The Lady, and thematic conflict is hinted at in a letter to Southey from Ashestiel on 10 September 1809.<sup>4</sup>

Since I heard last from you I have been enjoying myself al fresco on the banks of Loch Lomond... I met with an old follower of Rob Roy, who had been at many a spreagh (foray) with that redoubted free-booter, and shewd me all his holds. 5

Similarly, to Robert Suretees from Ashestiel on 17 September of that same year:

I have been spending some time on the banks of Loch-lomond lately, where I have heard so many stories of raids, feuds, and creaghs, that they have almost unchained the devil of rhyme in my poor noodle. I saw an old man, who had assisted the chief of the Macgregors, called Them Dhu, or Black-Knee, in one of the last forays. 6

If Scott was not actually planning Rob Roy, in poetry or prose, at this time, he was certainly laying in literary stores for the future - for 1817, to be exact, when he decided to make a novel out of Rob Roy's career, amongst other things.

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3. Grierson, Letters, vol. I, p. 514.

4. Grierson's dating.

5. Grierson, Letters, vol. II, p. 235.

6. Grierson, Letters, vol. II, pp. 246-47.

Rob Roy is an example of a novel founded largely on oral tradition, for the simple reason that there were no publications Scott could refer to for facts about his subject's life. A catch-penny pamphlet published in 1723, when Rob Roy was still alive, purported to give a biography of the Highland brigand. It was pretentiously entitled The Highland Rogue, or, the Memorable Actions of the celebrated Robert Macgregor, commonly called Rob Roy. Scott had studied this spurious publication, and added it to his Abbotsford library. It has been attributed to Defoe, but not by Scott. In his Introduction Scott explains how little use The Highland Rogue was to him in the composition of his novel. It is

a catch-penny publication, bearing in front the effigy of a species of ogre, with a beard of a foot in length; and his actions are as much exaggerated as his personal appearance. Some few of the best known adventures of the hero are told, though with little accuracy; but the greater part of the pamphlet is entirely fictitious. It is a great pity so excellent a theme for a narrative of the kind had not fallen into the hands of De Foe, who was engaged at the time on subjects somewhat similar, though inferior in dignity and interest.

(p. lxxx)

But Scott did not dismiss The Highland Rogue out of hand. As will be shown shortly, he seems to have lifted ideas for the character of Bailie Nicol Jarvie from this catch-penny pamphlet.

Written sources containing the character and actions of Rob Roy would not have been of much assistance to Scott in the creation of his novel, since these, had they existed, would have been based on oral tradition.<sup>7</sup> Scott had had a long association with Rob

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7. Rob Roy went out to the world as 1817 ended. It is interesting to note that 1818 brought two new books on the Highland brigand. These were: Historical Memoirs of Rob Roy and the Clan

Roy country, and had been absorbing oral traditions on the outlaw since youth. Over the years these traditions would have been gathered together and given form by Scott's creative consciousness, and therefore we would expect the committal of them to paper to be a comparatively easy and fluent process. This is partly borne out by the absence of back-up notes for Rob Roy, a welcome change after the profusion of often irrelevant notes in his previous works about the Highlands. There are some notes to Rob Roy, but these are scattered throughout the text, and therefore much more easily absorbed than a bulky appendix.

The Magnum Opus edition of Rob Roy carries a lengthy Introduction in which Scott reveals most of his sources for the novel, as well as supplying additional information. Since this Introduction was not prepared for the early editions of the novel, one can appreciate that the reader ignorant of Highland history, and especially of Clan Gregor history, would have had serious difficulties in understanding parts of the texts. These difficulties were further increased by the absence of notes, and by a trick perpetrated by Scott in the Advertisement. He claims to have received

a parcel of Papers, containing the Outlines of this narrative, with a permission, or rather

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Macgregor by K. Macleay, M.D., and The Trials of James, Duncan, and Robert McGregor, three Sons of the Celebrated Rob Roy ... to which is prefixed a Memoir relating to the Highlands, with anecdotes of Rob Roy and his family. Whether these were inspired by, or written at the same time as Scott's novel is worthy of bibliographical investigation. Certainly they contain information which Scott either did not make use of, or did not know.

Donald Gregory published his Historical Notices of the Clan Gregor in 1831. Scott encouraged him to continue with Highland history. (Grierson, Letters, vol. XII, p. 23).

with a request, couched in highly flattering terms, that they might be given to the Public, with such alterations as should be found suitable. (p. iv)

Probably fearing that this reference to private written sources would frighten off the reader, Scott added a footnote to the Magnum Opus edition to the effect that

the communication alluded to is entirely imaginary.

Before embarking on an examination of the novel, it is instructive to note that Scott was not the first author to bring Rob Roy to the attention of the southern public. It will be recalled that Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy toured the Highlands in 1803, and that they had investigated Rob Roy country. Visiting the Highland outlaw's supposed grave, Wordsworth had felt inspired to record his reactions in balladic form. The result was 'Rob Roy's Grave,' a somewhat embarrassing panegyric which compares the Highland outlaw to Robin Hood.

For thou wert still the poor man's stay,  
The poor man's heart, the poor man's hand;  
And all the oppressed, who wanted strength,  
Had thine at their command.

This, then, was the romantic concept of Rob Roy before Scott wrote his novel. It has to be pointed out, however, that though Rob Roy is the title of the novel, he is not the sole theme, and perhaps not the most important one. As well as describing the career of Rob Roy, the writing of the novel also gave Scott the opportunity to deal with the '15 rebellion, thereby creating a parallel work for Waverley, which was about the '45 rebellion. The relationship between these two historical novels is an important one, and their similarities sometimes become incestuous.

In terms of incorporating several related themes into the one novel, the choice of Rob Roy as a theme was a cunning one. In Waverley the estate of Tully-Veolan was situated on the Highland-Lowland boundary. In Rob Roy the juxtaposition is between constructive commercial activity and the destructive martial activity of the Highlands. Rob Roy is taken as a test-case.

He owned his fame in a great measure to his residing on the very verge of the Highlands, and playing such pranks in the beginning of the 18th century, as are usually ascribed to Robin Hood in the middle ages, - and that within forty miles of Glasgow, a great commercial city, the seat of a learned university. (Intro., p. viii)

Scott's obsession is with the disunited kingdom.

It is this strong contrast betwixt the civilized and cultivated mode of life on the one side of the Highland line, and the wild and lawless adventures which were habitually undertaken and achieved by one who dwelt on the opposite side of that ideal boundary, which creates the interest attached to his name. (p. viii)

But in many respects Rob Roy was a special, and not a test-case. He was more than the product of his time: he was very much a product of history, and of the history of a certain clan in a certain part of the Highlands. In his Introduction Scott gives a lengthy account of the trials and tribulations of the Clan Gregor. That they were truculent and sometimes cruel, even in victory, is certain. Their policy was one of persistent feuding with their neighbours, and in particular the Grahams and the Colquhouns, clans with whom the Macgregors shared the Highland boundary. Add to this frequent forays over the Highland line, and we can appreciate what a menace they were. In fact, their predatory actions frequently attracted the attention and censure of the Privy Council, who

issued Letters of Fire and Sword against them. The battle of Glenfruin was fought between the Macgregors and their mortal enemies the Colquhouns. After this battle, eleven score<sup>8</sup> Colquhoun widows are said to have ridden to Stirling on white palfreys, bearing bloody shirts on poles as proof to the monarch of the brutality of the Macgregors. James VI's reaction was an Act of the Privy Council dated 3 April 1603. It submitted the Macgregors to the final and unique indignity of having their very name abolished. The choice was clear - a change of name or death. Other severe Acts followed.

At the Restoration, a grateful Charles restored the name Macgregor because of their Royalist support, but they were penalised again, and in Rob Roy's time were renowned (and feared) as a fierce clan.

It can be seen, therefore, that the Macgregors were a unique clan because of their reputation and geographical location. Other clans further west might have been just as fierce and predatory, but being out of sight, they were to some extent out of mind, whereas the Macgregors were prominently placed on the Highland-Lowland boundary, where their deeds (even against their own kind, other clans) attracted the censure of the south.

This is the historical background to Scott's subject. But the novel does not begin in the Highlands: nor is Rob Roy the initial

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8. Scott's figure. Macleay's is more conservative. He claims sixty widows, and eleven score bloody shirts. Macleay says that on the return journey the 'grieving' widows got drunk and brawled among themselves, proof that it was a put-up job. Macleay, Rob Roy, 1881 ed., pp. 78-79.



subject. Scott's literary device is an epistollic and retrospective one.

Tobias Smollett's novel Humphrey Clinker (1771) was also in the epistolatory style, and like Rob Roy, it moved from England up into the Highlands. Moreover, Smollett like Scott mixes fact and fiction by transmitting history in factual form, lecture-style, through fictive characters. But it would be dangerous to take the comparison further. Unlike Rob Roy, a very little part of the action of Humphrey Clinker takes place in the Highlands, and even then Smollett does not stray far from Cameron House, the family seat on the shores of Loch Lomond. Where Scott is kind, Smollett is caustic, for reasons of clan rivalry, no doubt. Given Scott's social connections, one could not conceive of him describing Inveraray as 'a place of very little importance,' as Smollett does. Where Scott stays neutral, Smollett is prejudiced, referring to the 'barbarous' Macgregors, and insisting that

The chieftainship of the Highlanders is a very dangerous influence operating at the extremity of the island, where the eyes and hands of government cannot be supposed to see and act with precision and vigour.

(Folio Club ed., 1955, p. 269)

Yet the defeat of the Jacobites in the '45 prompted this same Smollett to pen the moving 'Tears of Scotland.' We see, therefore, that he shared a trait with Scott - ambivalent feelings towards his native land. For present purposes, however, it is sufficient to note the aforementioned connections between Rob Roy and Humphrey Clinker, but with the caution that Smollett cannot be considered to be a Highland novelist in the sense that he set a large part of his fiction in that region.

In Rob Roy Frank Osbaldistone<sup>9</sup> is writing to his friend Will

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9. As Anderson shows, the name Osbaldistone seems to have been

Tresham, and recalling his youth. Frank is the son of a successful London broker, but he does not want to follow in his father's footsteps. Rather, he wishes (through an allowance) to use part of his father's fortune on leisure and artistic pursuits. So far he is self-educated as regards artistic subjects, but he wants to go to university to learn more. There is, in fact, something of the poetic dreamer in him, and so he reminds us of Waverley.

One of the major themes of Rob Roy is the right of property; how acquired; and how held on to. Thus old Osbaldistone tells Frank:

'what I have is my own, if labour in getting, and care in augmenting, can make a right of property.'

(I, p. 28)

We will have occasion to contrast this proud assertion with Rob Roy's 'right of property.'

Frank finds it impossible to fall in with his father's demands that he should enter the business with a view to succession. It is not conviction, but pride that keeps him out.

... pride - pride, the source of so much that is good and so much that is evil in our course of life, prevented me. (I, p. 33)

Again, pride (often blind) is central to our understanding of Rob Roy's personality.

Edward Waverley the dreamer is sent north to his uncle's estate, and so is Frank Osbaldistone the dreamer, the young man who scribbles poetry in a business daybook. Both of these young men seem to have

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lifted by Scott from Somers Tracts, which he edited. It appears in vol. VII, p. 108 as Osbaldstone. Anderson, op. cit., Pt. III, p. 167.

little strength of character or independence, for they allow themselves to be directed, even although a conflict of interests is created. Frank's failure is serious because he is sent north, supported by money (his father's) from the commercial world he rejects. At least his father recognises that the indolent dreamer must be subsidised. Frank is therefore parasitic upon his father and society, yet another parallel with Rob Roy.

On the road north Frank encounters Morris, a frightened man with a precious portmanteau. He has some fun at Morris's expense. Enter Mr Campbell, cattle dealer, which Rob Roy Macgregor (Campbell)<sup>10</sup> was in the early days, in association with the Duke of Montrose, until the defection of Rob Roy's partner brought bankruptcy and turned embittered Macgregor into a bandit.<sup>11</sup> Thus we must keep in mind Francis Hart's reminder that the Highland grievances that led to the '15 are not those that turned Rob Roy into an outlaw.<sup>12</sup>

Like old Osbaldistone, Rob Roy has a commercial philosophy. Discussing southern cattle markets, he asserts:

'wise folks buy and sell, and fools are bought  
and sold,' (I, p. 50)

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10. He took the name Campbell, not only because his own was proscribed and debased, but also because he sought, and eventually received, the protection of the Duke of Argyll. It suited Argyll to harbour and encourage an adversary of his old enemy, the Duke of Montrose. Of this, more later.

11. As an Appendix to his Introduction Scott incorporates documents to show the extent (at least £1,000) of Rob Roy's failure as a cattle dealer. His defection, and not his partner's, was advertised in the Edinburgh Evening Courant in June 1712. We may take it, therefore, that Scott is describing Rob Roy before this fatal date.

12. Hart, op. cit., p. 32.

a statement old Osbaldistone would have agreed with.

We first encounter Rob Roy on business in the south (in Darlington, to be exact), and he is easy and affable, an estimation that tallies with the folk tales told about the cattle dealer before he turned bandit. The point is that he seems to be the first Highlander whom Frank has encountered, and Frank is suitably impressed, a reaction that allows Scott to show southern prejudices to the Highlander.

Frank says:

All our family renown was acquired, - and all our family misfortunes were occasioned, - by the northern wars.

Warmed by such tales, I looked upon the Scottish people during my childhood, as a race hostile by nature to the more southern inhabitants of this realm; and this view of the matter was not much corrected by the language which my father sometimes held with respect to them. He had engaged in some large speculations concerning oak-woods, the property of Highland proprietors, and alleged, that he found them much more ready to make bargains, and extort earnest of the purchase-money, than punctual in complying on their side with the terms of the engagements.

The Scotch mercantile men, whom he was under the necessity of employing as a sort of middle-men on these occasions, were also suspected by my father of having secured, by one means or other, more than their own share of the profit which ought to have accrued. (I, p. 53)

Not only the Highlands, but all Scotland is accused by old Osbaldistone of sharp business practice. Anderson shows<sup>13</sup> that the idea of a southern businessman buying up Highland woods before 1716 (when the York Buildings Company acquired certain forfeited estates) is based on fact. One Mason, an Englishman, is on record as having been engaged in such acquisitions as early as 1632.

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13. Anderson, op. cit., Pt. III, p. 172.

With regard to the novel, our interest lies in Scott's demonstration that English merchants treated the Scots with suspicion almost as soon as the supposedly mutually advantageous Union was concluded. In terms of the general theme of this study, Scott shows the Highland proprietors as having a shrewd business sense despite the backward reputation of their region. He goes further in Rob Roy and shows the common people of the Highlands easily corrupted by southern money. When the Bailie has difficulty in gaining admission to the Clachan of Aberfoyle, he converts a Gaelic speaking 'brat' to instant English with a bribe.<sup>14</sup> Similarly with Dougal, Rob Roy's henchman. Frank slips the Highlander a couple of guineas in appreciation of his services.

He no sooner felt the touch of the gold, than he sprung twice or thrice from the earth with the agility of a wild buck, flinging out first one heel and then another, in a manner which would have astonished a French dancing-master. (II, p. 322)

Rob Roy is protective towards the blackmail money he levies by protecting his neighbours' cattle. His cash is kept in a special sporran with a secret lock. This overt symbol of Highland caution (or is it meanness?) as regards money is murderous, for it has a built-in pistol to dissuade the unauthorised tamperer.<sup>15</sup>

But it is not only the Highlanders who respond to gold in Rob Roy. Andrew Fairservice the gardiner is a dour Lowlander who supplies information in accordance with the weight of coin in his palm, and Frank liberally spends his father's hard-earned money on romantic gossip about Diana Vernon.

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14. Vol. II, p. 162

15. Vol. II, p. 292.

Dining in alien Darlington, Rob Roy refuses to be drawn on the subject of politics. The parallel scene in Waverley is in the Tully-Veolan inn where tempers become heated and which leads to the sword-fight between the Baron and Balmawhapple. The argument at the Darlington dinner table is between the relative merits of Whig and Tory, and Rob Roy is called upon to arbitrate. He does so very cunningly, perambulating in classic Highland fashion so that neither side loses face.

'I havena much dubitation that King George weel deserves the predilection of his friends; and if he can haud the grip he has gotten, why, doubtless, he may make the gauger, here, a commissioner of the revenue, and confer on our friend, Mr. Quitam, the preferment of solicitor-general; and he may also grant some good deed or reward to this honest gentleman who is sitting upon his portmanteau, which he prefers to a chair: And, questionless, King James is also a grateful person, and when he gets his hand in play, he may, if he be so minded, make this reverend gentleman archprelate of Canterbury, and Dr. Mixit, chief physician to his household, and commit his royal beard to the care of my friend Latherum. But as I doubt mickle whether any of the competing sovereigns would give Rob Campbell a tass of aqua-vitae, if he lacked it, I give my vote and interest to Jonathan Brown, our landlord, to be the King and Prince of Skinkers, conditionally that he fetches us another bottle as good as the last.' (I, p. 57)

At this stage we learn nothing about Rob Roy's politics. In fact, we do not even know at this stage (or are not supposed to know: but, like all Scott's mysteries, this one is easily solved) that Campbell is Rob Roy. We suspect, however, that Frank, who had disliked all Scotsmen (which includes Highlanders) because of his father's commercial suspicion of them, likes Campbell.

Frank moves north to his uncle's estate. Predictably, Scott's scenic descriptions are evocative, and (one suspects) with a symbolic function. As he approaches the source of his heritage ('the abode

of my fathers'), the streams brawl and purl, and always with 'active motion.' It will be remembered that a stag hunt took us into The Lady of the Lake: a fox hunt leads Frank to Osbaldistone Hall, North-umberland. His horse

pricked up his ears at the enlivening notes of a pack of hounds in full cry, cheered by the occasional bursts of a French horn, which in those days was a constant accompaniment to the chase.

(I, p. 62)

Is Frank being presented with a preview of the Jacobite hunt to come?

The fox has run its course.

His drooping brush, his soiled appearance, and jaded trot, proclaimed his fate impending; and the carrion crow, which hovered over him, already considered poor Reynard as soon to be his prey. (I, p. 63)

Frank meets Diana Vernon, her predictable beauty

enhanced by the animation of the chase and the glow of the exercise, mounted on a beautiful horse, jet black, unless where he was flecked by spots of the snow-white foam which embossed his bridle.

(I, p. 64)

Diana is no languid beauty, but a woman of action. Any attempt to make Miss Belsches, Scott's lost love, Diana's model is abortive. More fruitful is a search for her historical prototype. She is closely related to Flora Mac-Ivor in Waverley, for they are both fanatical Jacobites who will take to the field, if necessary. There is a convincing case for seeing Diana as being modelled on Lady Anne Macintosh of Moy Hall, the '45 heroine. In the absence of her husband Aeneas on the Hanoverian side, the lovely Colonel Anne raised recruits with kisses and went to join the Jacobites. Taken prisoner after Culloden, she was treated somewhat roughly, but she never forfeited her courage or dignity. One could well imagine Colonel

Anne asserting, as Diana asserts:

'I am no fine lady, to be terrified to death with law books, hard words, or big wigs.' (I, p. 104)

Frank calls Diana the 'colonel of a regiment of horse' (I, p. 101), further proof of her kinship to Lady Anne; and Diana keeps as the symbol of her destiny the sword of her ancestor.

The beautiful Diana has a domineering masculine personality. She can manipulate men and events. Frank admires her 'superior manliness' (I, p. 241), a somewhat disconcerting trait which Helen, Rob Roy's wife, has in a high degree. Diana's personality has, to a certain extent, been shaped by Rashleigh. In contrast to her, he is extremely ugly, if not physically deformed - a Northumbrian Richard III, in fact. But he is clever, and has been bred (or bred himself) for the Catholic church.

Like Flora Mac-Ivor in Waverley, Rashleigh has had to be his own tutor. Like Waverley with Rose Bradwardine, Rashleigh appoints himself Diana's tutor. Her curriculum is orientated towards reason.

'Science and history are my principal favourites; but I also study poetry and the classics.'

(I, p. 149)

She is being educated for a purpose, as a companion for Rashleigh, in the same way that Rose was educated for a purpose by her father the Baron. Diana is deeply suspicious of Rashleigh. She confides to Frank (who suffers intellectually from a comparison with Rashleigh) that her tutor's 'game is man' (I, p. 97). Diana keeps Rashleigh's company and studies with him though she dislikes him because their goals are similar. By her own admission she is

'the bride of Heaven, betrothed to the convent from the cradle,' (I, p. 244)



as Flora Mac-Ivor apparently was. Devoutly Catholic, Diana is a woman of action. She craves the restoration of the Jacobite monarchy, and will work towards this end. Rashleigh wants to be much more than a priest. He wants to be one of the major policy makers at the Jacobite Court.

'My family interest at a certain exiled court is high, and the weight which that court ought to possess, and does possess, at Rome, is yet higher - my talents not altogether inferior to the education I have received.'

(I, p. 171)

He will use Catholicism to further his own ambitions.

The hedonistic way of life at Osbaldistone Hall is very similar to the hedonistic way of life at Tully-Veolan, and, as regards comic attributes, the Baron and Sir Hildebrand are brothers. An old soldier gone to seed,

Sir Hildebrand retained much of the exterior of a gentleman, and appeared among his sons as the remains of a Corinthian pillar, defaced and overgrown with moss and lichen, might have looked, if contrasted with the rough, unhewn masses of upright stones in Stonehenge, or any other druidical temple.

(I, p. 76)

Sir Hildebrand has stupid, dissipated sons, too addicted to the chase and the bottle. Rashleigh is the odd man out: he cannot afford to waste time on such pursuits. Waverley got drunk in Luckie Macleary's charge-house and quarrelled with Balmawhapple. Frank gets drunk at Osbaldistone Hall and strikes Rashleigh. Both quarrels are made up (by the Baron and Sir Hildebrand), but the reader suspects that there will be trouble in the future: such is Scott's worn-out plot mechanism. There are not only striking similarities between the structure and plot of Waverley and Rob Roy:

worse, Scott is repeating himself by shuffling the same types of characters in the same situations.

Andrew Fairservice the gardener is slightly more sane than Davie Gellatley in Waverley, though both are cunning. Fairservice, a Lowlander in the service of a Northumbrian squire, is easily made vocal by a show of money. He has a hatred of Catholics and Jacobites. Fairservice has something momentous to tell Frank concerning the character of Diana Vernon. Money is passed in this deliberately drawn-out scene in which Scott shows himself to be psychologically perceptive about the traits of some of his fellow Scots. At the end Fairservice reveals that Diana is a Jacobite, and Frank replies:

'Pshaw! a Jacobite? - is that all?' (I, p. 92),

the point being that Frank does not understand the implications of Jacobitism. Fairservice closes the conversation with:

'Aweel, it's the warst thing I ken about the lassie, howsoe'er.' (I, p. 92)

As E.M. Tillyard has stated:

The masterly Scots dialect of Andrew Fairservice prepares us both for the transfer of the scene to Scotland, and for the prolonged and consummate speech of the novel's main character, Bailie Nicol Jarvie. 16

We are to conclude that Frank, like Waverley, is naive. Or is it that Frank sees no threat in Jacobitism? In Rob Roy (as in Waverley) Jacobitism is equated with Catholicism, though Protestant Jacobites were not unknown in history. The religious issue is an important one in Rob Roy. In the course of this study I have

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16. E.M.W. Tillyard, The Epic Strain in the English Novel, (London, 1958), p. 102.

already quoted Scott's Journal assertion that he could not vote for the Catholic Emancipation Bill because he held popery

to be such a mean and depriving superstition.

There is no doubt that Rob Roy is an anti-Catholic, anti-cleric novel. Father Vaughan is the mysterious presence (the furtive back-door visitor) at Osbaldistone Hall. Frank is suspicious of him. He is held in high respect in Northumberland among his fellow Catholics, certainly, but he

did not altogether lack those peculiarities which distinguish his order. There hung about him an air of mystery, which, in Protestant eyes, savoured of priestcraft. (I, p. 233)

Moreover

He had the well-bred, insinuating, and almost flattering address, peculiar to the clergy of his persuasion, especially in England, where the lay Catholic, hemmed in by penal laws, and by the restrictions of his sect and recommendation of his pastor, often exhibits a reserved, and almost a timid manner, in the society of Protestants; while the priest, privileged by his order to mingle with persons of all creeds, is open, alert, and liberal in his intercourse with them, desirous of popularity, and usually skilful in the mode of obtaining it. (I, p. 234)

If this is not Scott speaking through a persona, then we are to presume that Frank has a contempt for Catholics, or at least the priesthood. But Frank's contempt is unconvincing because unnatural in terms of the novel's evolution. After all, if he had preconceived attitudes to Catholicism (and to Jacobitism, with which it is equated in the novel) before he came to Osbaldistone Hall, he would have reacted against Diana Vernon, despite her beauty. It has already been shown that Diana's Jacobitism (revealed by Fairservice) means nothing to Frank. Furthermore, in the end he marries Diana,

a Catholic.

Scott puts more anti-Catholic propoganda in Frank's mouth. On the subject of Father Vaughan's and Diana's intimacy, he complains:

I recollected, however, on reflection, that I had once or twice discovered signs pass betwixt them, which I had at the time supposed to bear reference to some hint concerning Miss Vernon's religious observances, knowing how artfully the Catholic clergy maintain, at all times and seasons, their influence over the minds of their followers.

(I, pp. 235-36)

Fairservice is even more anti-Catholic. The symbol Scott sets up is an effective one. Frank records:

While I paced the green alleys, debating these things pro and con, I suddenly lighted upon Andrew Fairservice, perched up like a statue by a range of bee-hives, in an attitude of devout contemplation; one eye, however, watching the motions of the little irritable citizens, who were settling in their straw-thatched mansion for the evening, and the other fixed on a book of devotion, which much attrition had deprived of its corners, and worn into an oval shape; a circumstance, which, with the close print and dingy colour of the volume in question, gave it an air of most respectable antiquity. (I, p. 251)

Fairservice proceeds to interpret the symbol of which he is a part. Frank has been to church, but Fairservice expresses his contempt of the ritualistic pomp of the Church of England, with

'the curate linking awa at it in his white sark yonder, and the musicians playing on whistles, mair like a penny wedding than a sermon.' (I, p. 252)

But worse than this is the Mass. The 'busy' bees are compared to the Jacobites swarming in the north as they prepare for rebellion. Then Fairservice negates the symbol. He will not allow the comparison. As a gardener he loves the activity of nature, the productive

swarming of the bees, but

'God sain them! that I suld even the puir things  
to the like o' papists.' (I, pp. 252-53)

With his dog-eared 'book of devotion', close printed, scanned with one eye (a symbol of diminution), and with his love of gossip and money, Fairservice the old-style Scottish Presbyterian is a dangerous hypocrite. His hatred of Catholicism therefore seems natural, but Frank's contempt for the Catholic clergy (if not for Catholicism in general) is forced and artificial, making us suspect that Scott is putting personal prejudices in the mouth of a character. In fact, the end result is distasteful.

Morris is robbed of his portmanteau, and he accuses Frank, who must go before Justice Inglewood, a dissipated non-juror who was forced to become a J.P. because his fellow landlords wanted the game-laws enforced. Anderson argues:

In this matter, Inglewood is impersonating our old friend the Master of Sinclair, who says 'I must take oaths to King George ... because nobody of our party would accept of being Justice of Peace if I did not, and in that case the whole country would be left to the mercy of the Whigs.' 17

Jobson, Inglewood's malicious clerk wishes to detain Frank, but Jobson is called away and Rob Roy arrives to set Frank at liberty.

Muddled, Inglewood says:

'you are welcome as ever Scot was to England, and that's not saying much.' (I, p. 126)

Scott shows a Highlander coming down to England shortly after the

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17. Anderson, op. cit., Pt. III, pp. 167-68. Sinclair, Memoirs p. 12.

controversial Union and affecting the course of the law of the land, an unlikely state of affairs considering that the united kingdoms were left with separate laws, and that the Highlanders were regarded as being little more than savages because so little was known about them. One grants that Rob Roy the 'North Briton' is a cattle dealer who knows the North of England, but Justice Inglewood does not know him. By cross-examining the agitated Morris, Rob Roy acts out the role of the lawyer (Inglewood's role, really), and his verdict is accepted by Inglewood. What sways the issue is a piece of paper Rob Roy presents to the Justice. It is a reference from the Duke of Argyll, testifying to Rob Roy's 'good lineage, and peaceable demeanour' (I, p. 129). That Rob Roy was under the protection of Argyll is well attested to by history. In his Autobiography and Memoirs the eighth Duke of Argyll records a visit to Inveraray of Mrs Harriet Stowe, the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin. He showed her Rob Roy's 'cottage' hard by Inveraray, and having paid tribute to

the extraordinary truth of Sir Walter's touches, even the most incidental, in the picture he presented of the times, 18

the Duke proceeds to express surprise that Scott had access to information on the 'local connection' between Argyll and Rob Roy.

There was, indeed, one inference from Rob Roy's cottage which Mrs. Stowe must have been disposed to draw, and that was the curious accuracy of Walter Scott in the reproaches which he makes some of his characters throw against my ancestor, John, Duke of Argyll and Greenwich, for affording protection and shelter to the famous outlaw. It was impossible that Rob Roy should have lived so long within about six miles of Inveraray Castle, without the fact being

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18. George Douglas, eighth Duke of Argyll, op. cit., vol. II, p. 60.

known to that Duke, and for some reason or another the famous Rob must have been allowed to remain unmolested in his safe and picturesque retreat. I felt under no need of solving this curious problem for my American friend. As herself a great writer of fiction, she knew the incidental liberties consistent with substantial truth, and she probably thought little of the problem why men like Rob Roy were more than tolerated 150 years ago. 19

Scott's 'inside' information as to the relationship between the chief of Clan Campbell and Rob Roy obviously came from Lady Charlotte Campbell (later Bury), at whose feet the young Scott used to sit, repeating ballads and poems to her, as the eighth Duke records. Scott's deep debt to Lady Charlotte is recorded in a letter to her of 23 January 1831.

Your Ladyship does me great wrong if you suppose I can ever for a moment forget the value & kindness of your approbation bestowed so generously when my friends were few & my prospects less cheering than they afterwards turned out. 20

The Duke of Argyll's recommendation is sufficient to make Inglewood commit the declarations to the flames. It was the matriarchal Miss Vernon who pled for Frank's release, and Rob Roy who procured it. Frank, therefore, is like Waverley. He has to be helped out of predicaments by the efforts of others. He is weak, but Rob Roy is shown to be powerful.

In considering the character of Jobson, the Justice's clerk,

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19. George Douglas, eighth Duke of Argyll, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 62-63.

20. Grierson, Letters, vol. XI, p. 464, from Walpole, MS 3916, ff. 1. On 12 March 1830 Lady Charlotte had written Scott, requesting a puff for a forthcoming work on the three great Tuscan sanctuaries, Laverna, Camaldoli, and Valombrosa. She told Scott: 'Your word of praise is literally a Bag of Gold,' and so we have the aristocracy begging a favour from Scott, instead of vice versa. See Walpole, MS.3912, ff. 233.

we have to return to the Catholic question, which pervades this novel. As an administrator of the law Jobson should be neutral, but, as he warns Diana,

'there are laws against papists, which it would be well for the land were they better executed.'

(I, p. 138)

He then proceeds to quote statutes. By going to Inglewood, Frank was anxious to answer to the letter of the law in the matter of Morris, but Diana is contemptuous of Jobson's threats. She sees herself as being outside the laws because the laws put her there. She interprets them as being

'A sort of Protestant penance for my Catholic errors, I suppose.' (I, p. 139)

Ranking in importance with, and related to the themes of religion and law in Rob Roy is the theme of national politics. The novel is set soon after the Union, on the eve of a rebellion which (in some quarters at least) would be an attempt to separate the two kingdoms by dismissing the Hanoverian succession. Before the novel moves into Scotland we are given previews of the way of life and character of that country. When Frank questions Rob Roy's role in procuring his liberation, Rashleigh replies:

'You do not know the genius of that man's country, sir ... discretion, prudence, and foresight, are their leading qualities; these are only modified by a narrow-spirited, but yet ardent patriotism, which forms as it were the outmost of the concentric bulkwarks with which a Scotchman fortifies himself against all the attacks of a generous philanthropical principle. Surmount this mound, you find an inner and still dearer barrier - the love of his province, his village, or, most probably, his clan; storm this second obstacle, you have a third - his attachment to his own family - his father, mother, sons, daughters, uncles, aunts, and cousins, to the ninth generation. It is within these limits that a



Scotchman's social affection expands itself, never reaching those which are outermost, till all means of discharging itself in the interior circles have been exhausted. It is within these circles that his heart throbs, each pulsation being fainter and fainter, till, beyond the widest boundary, it is almost unfelt. And what is worst of all, could you surmount all these concentric outworks, you have an inner citadel, deeper, higher, and more efficient than them all - a Scotchman's love for himself.'

(I, pp. 157-58)

The metaphor may be unsatisfactory, but the meaning is plain: the Scots psychology, which scales down from 'ardent patriotism' to self-love, is too complex for Frank to penetrate, though Rashleigh, the English outsider, believes that he has penetrated it. In other words, though Scotland is joined to England in economic marriage, culturally and socially Scotland is a closed kingdom enjoying a separate existence. What Scott has put into Rashleigh's eloquent mouth is a subtle argument against the Union, or at least an argument showing that there cannot be total union.

Using Rob Roy as a starting point, the Union question is debated. Diana insists that Rashleigh's estimation of the Scottish psychology is neither true nor useful. Rashleigh supports his argument by claiming that he knows

'the country and people intimately, and the character is drawn from deep and accurate consideration.'

(I, p. 158)

Both Rashleigh and Diana have strong opinions about Scotland, because they both have vested interests in its destiny. They are acquainted with the northern kingdom at first hand, Diana by birth, Rashleigh by design, but Frank's opinion has been formed by others.

'I must own I was bred up with no very favourable idea of our northern neighbours' (I, p. 162)

and so he represents the Englishman (and they were in the majority) who condemns Scotland through a lack of knowledge, and without going to see for himself.

Fairservice is an early Scottish Nationalist. He laments the loss of harmony when the Scottish parliament was moved south to amalgamate with the English.

'When we had a Scotch Parliament ... (and deil rax their thrapples that reft us o't) they sate dously down and made laws for a hail country and kinrick, and never fashed their beards about things that were competent to the judge ordinar o' the bounds.'

(I, p. 216)

Or, Fairservice on cheating the revenue:

'It's a mere spoiling o' the Egyptians,' replied Andrew; 'puir auld Scotland suffers eneugh by the blackguard loons o' excisemen and gaugers, that hae come down on her like locusts since the sad and sorrowfu' Union.' (II, p. 16)

Strong Nationalist sentiments, certainly, and surprisingly modern. But Fairservice cannot see that the Jacobite disturbances will help the Nationalist cause because he equates Jacobitism with Catholicism.

'The priests and the Irish officers, and thae papist cattle that hae been sodgering abroad, because they durstna bide at hame, are a' fleeing thick in Northumberland e'enow - and thae corbies dinna gather without they smell carrion.' (II, p. 19)

Daiches is correct in claiming that

One of Scott's most unattractive characters (he is the degenerate scion of the Covenanting tradition, while the Bailie is its more attractive heir: Calvinism and commerce often went together), Andrew has a flow of insolent, complaining and generally irritating conversation which is nevertheless irresistible. 21

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21. D. Daiches, 'Scott's Achievement ...', p. 112.

Fairservice and Rashleigh are violent extremists, but Bailie Nicol Jarvie is shrewdly moderate. He is in many respects the most satisfactory because best finished character in the novel, even including Rob Roy. The Bailie seems to have been suggested by an incident recorded in The Highland Rogue, the catch-penny pamphlet.

Rob Roy's

creditors grew almost past hopes of recovering their money; they offered a large reward to any that should attempt it successfully ... at length a Bailiff, who had no small opinion of his own courage and conduct, undertook the affair. Having provided a good horse, and equipped himself for the journey, he set out without any attendance, and in a few hours arrived at Craigroyston, where, meeting with some of Rob Roy's men, he told them he had business of great importance to deliver to their master in private. Rob Roy, having notice of it, ordered them to give him admittance. As soon as he came in, the Captain demanded his business: Sir (says the other), though you have had misfortunes in the world, yet knowing you to be in your nature an honourable gentleman, I made bold to visit you on account of a small debt, which I don't doubt you will discharge if it lies in your power. - Honest friend (says McGregor), I am sorry that at present I cannot answer your demand, but if your affairs will permit you to lodge at my house tonight, I hope by tomorrow I shall be better provided ... Rob then caused an old suit to be stuffed with straw and hung from a tree, informing the bailiff that this was the corpse of a bailiff who had dunned him for debt; the man fled in terror. (p. 28)

Scott cunningly gives the Bailie both Lowland and Highland ancestry. Since these separate traditions integrate to give him a shrewd, stable, kindly and forward-looking disposition, he can safely be seen as a symbol of the new-style Scotland which was to have (ideally) been produced by the Union.

It is instructive to compare the Bailie, a Scottish businessman, with old Osbaldistone, an English businessman. We remember that old Osbaldistone boasted:

'what I have is my own, if labour in getting, and care in augmenting, can make a right of property.' (I, p. 28)

The Bailie boasts:

'I am a carefu' man, as is weel kend, and industrious, as the hale town can testify; and I can win my crowns, and keep my crowns, and count my crowns, wi' ony body in the Saut-Market, or it may be in the Gallowgate. And I'm a prudent man, as my father the deacon was before me....'

(II, pp. 75-76)

The Bailie, who epitomises the Protestant Ethic, truly knows himself. By harking back to his father, he expresses a belief in the moral tradition of fair trading and success through industry and application. To him, morality and money are one. The first commandment is: to lend is to trust.

'I maun hear naething about honour - we ken naething here but about credit. Honour is a homicide and a bloodspiller, that gangs about making frays in the street; but Credit is a decent honest man, that sits at hame and makes the pat play.' (II, p. 122)

It is the emergence of the new-style commercial transaction that is being stressed here. Money is working for man, and not man for money through investment and interest which demand no sweat from the brow. Ironically, it was the generosity of this system of credit that ruined Scott.

The Bailie is a traditionalist. He follows the biblical dictate of 'Six days shalt thou labour,' for on the seventh day he rests and eats in preparation for the coming commercial week. Scott shows the strictness of the Scottish sabbath. He himself had experienced it as a child in Edinburgh, and rebelled against it. It is significant that on this day of rest Frank meets a disguised person (through a mystery voice in the crypt of the Laigh Kirk) who will

ultimately lead Frank to his father, but only after many trials.

Scott seeks to explain the dourness of the Scottish character by showing that the appeal of the sermon was more rational than emotional. Frank the outsider analyses:

The Scotch, it is well known, are more remarkable for the exercise of their intellectual powers, than for the keenness of their feelings; they are, therefore, more moved by logic than by rhetoric, and more attracted by acute and argumentative reasoning on doctrinal points, than influenced by the enthusiastic appeals to the heart and to the passions, by which popular preachers in other countries win the favour of their hearers. (II, pp. 35-36)

This is one of these 'psychological' inserts with which the novel abounds, and which throws the personalised narrative out of focus. Moreover, truth is sometimes distorted for the sake of didactics. We see these two faults occurring together in the scene in which the Bailie lectures Frank and Owen (chief clerk of old Osbaldistone's firm, and mediator between Frank and his father) on the commercial prosperity of Glasgow. But the Bailie is being a seer here, for such prosperity did not come until decades later - until after the '45, in fact. As a Glasgow historian has noted about the effect of the Union on that city:

This development of trade did not, of course, come about quite immediately. In common with the other royal burghs of the country, Glasgow continued for some time to suffer from severe depression. The Union at first, indeed, rather increased than diminished its burdens. 22

Scott makes the Bailie boast about

the opening which the Union had afforded to trade

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22. George Eyre-Todd, History of Glasgow (Glasgow, 1934), vol. III, p. 73.

between Glasgow and the British colonies in America and the West Indies. (II, p. 119)

Reference is also made to Glasgow's trade with such north of England towns as Manchester, Sheffield, Newcastle and Liverpool. As he boasts, the Bailie is reproducing, almost verbatim, a passage in A Tour through Great Britain ... 'by a Gentleman', 4th edition, 1748, of which the first edition was by the ubiquitous Defoe.<sup>23</sup>

Glasgow's trade did not begin to grow until the suppression of the '45 brought peace. Why, then, does Scott make the Bailie a man of commerce in advance of his time? Once again one suspects that Scott is settling an internal quarrel within his own personality by showing the advantages of the Union. To do this, he must distort history, and in distorting history he is guilty of giving false information to his readers, the majority of whom would not have appreciated his fictive licence, since the novel carries so few notes.

We can test this critical hypothesis by examining the Bailie's attitude to the Union. En route to the Highlands, garrulous Fair-service refers to the Union, using the symbol of a cast horseshoe. The Bailie sharply rebukes him.

'Whisht, sir! - whisht! It's ill-scraped tongues like yours, that make mischief atween neighbourhoods and nations. There's naething sae gude on this side o' time but it might hae been better, and that may be said o' the Union. Nane were keener against it than the Glasgow folk, wi' their rabblings and their risings, and their mobs, as they ca' them now-a-days. But it's an ill wind blows naebody gude - Let ilka ane roose the ford as they find it - I say, Let Glasgow flourish!' (II, p. 148)

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23. This borrowing was first pointed out by Robert Chambers in his Illustrations of the Author of Waverley, (London & Edinburgh, 1884), p. 110 ff.

According to the Bailie's logic (based on his own and Glasgow's prosperity, historically premature, as we know), the Union ought to be applauded, or at least given a chance to succeed. He ends his harangue against Fairservice with the rhetorical question:

'Now, since St. Mungo caught herrings in the Clyde, what was ever like to gar us flourish like the sugar and tobacco-trade? Will ony body tell me that, and grumble at the treaty that opened us a road west-awa' yonder?' (II, p. 148)

Scott takes further liberties with history. Mention has already been made of the purchase of Highland woods by southern speculators. Old Osbaldistone is one of these. The Highland proprietors had been paid in bills of exchange, but they had raised money on the bills and squandered it. As Anderson points out:

By engineering the ruin of Osbaldistone and Tresham, Rashleigh hoped to raise claims against these Highland proprietors which they could not meet, and thus drive them into rebellion. There were also hopes of a disastrous run on the Bank of England when the rebellion should break out. 24

This was possible, but did not actually occur, though, as previously pointed out, Highland woods were being bought up by English speculators as early as 1632. Scott seems to be anticipating the controversy caused by the acquisition of forfeited estates in the Highlands after the '15 by the York Buildings Company. In terms of the stability of the Bank of England, Lockhart of Carnwath claims that there was a run on the Bank in 1708, when the Old Pretender's fleet appeared in the Firth of Forth.<sup>25</sup> The fear of ruin through

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24. Anderson, op. cit., Pt. III, p. 172.

25. Anderson, op. cit., Pt. III, p. 172. George Lockhart of Carnwath, Memoirs concerning the Affairs of Scotland ..., (London, 1714), pp. 367-68.

money raised on bills of exchange and squandered could have come straight out of Scott's own experience, for though he had survived several crises, the fatal promissory notes showed no sign of disappearing.

Since the Bailie is in favour of the Union, we expect him to deplore the divisive policies of the Jacobites. Like old Osbaldistone, the Bailie believes that the right to property is a sacred one. This is violated by those who rob Morris of his portmanteau, thus provoking the outburst from the Bailie:

'But now, I doubtna, it has been Rashleigh himself, or some other o' your cousins - they are a' tarr'd wi' the same stick - rank jacobites and papists, and wad think the government siller and government papers lawfu' prize.' (II, p. 136)

Like Fairservice and Jobson, the Bailie equates Jacobitism with Catholicism. His condemnation, political and religious, is not stated at length because it is implicit in his nature and profession. The idea of unruly clans congregating on the Highland-Lowland border must be abhorrent to the Bailie, since that threatens the commercial stability of Glasgow. Unlike Rashleigh, there is no way in which the Bailie could benefit from a Jacobite rebellion. He has, after all, given his seal of approval to the Union.

The Bailie sees Scotland (albeit annexed to England) split into two distinct conflicting cultures, the Lowlands and the Highlands, with the latter less civilised. His prejudice is clearly stated to Frank.

'I like a lad that will stand by his friends in trouble - I aye did it mysell, and sae did the deacon my father, rest and bless him! But ye suldna keep ower muckle company wi' Hielandmen and thae wild cattle. Can a man touch pitch and no be defiled? - aye mind that.' (II, p.91)



But the Bailie is a man of contradictions, despite his firm opinions. He is a self-made man, and socially enjoys the status of that new urban breed, the merchant class. But he is also a blood relative of Rob Roy's, a gentleman (however minor) by birth. When it suits him, the Bailie can acknowledge (but obliquely: he is subtle) his relationship to Rob Roy.

'Rank?' said Mr. Jarvie; 'he's a Hieland gentleman, nae doubt - better rank need nane to be; - and for habit, I judge he wears the Hieland habit amang the hills, though he has breeks on when he comes to Glasgow; - and as for his subsistence, what needs we care about his subsistence, sae lang as he asks naething frae us, ye ken.' (II, p. 101)

This passage reminds us (as if we need reminding) that the Bailie is a humorous character, despite his stress on the moral rule: each to his own, to preserve his own. This is also old Osbaldistone's attitude, even to his own son.

To the Bailie, the Highlands have their own moral standards, though they are a part of Scotland. Questioned about Rob Roy's honesty, he concedes that he has

'a kind o' Hieland honesty - he's honest after a sort, as they say.' (II, p. 123)

Though the Bailie has lost money to Rob Roy, he is unwilling to condemn him. Despite his stated obsession with money and credit, the Bailie keeps his head separate from his heart. What his head loses, his heart absorbs philosophically, writing off losses to human weakness.

'He has a gude heart, puir Robin; and though I lost a matter o' twa hunder pund wi' his former engagements, and haena muckle expectation ever to see back my thousand pund Scots that he promises me e'enow, yet I will never say but what Robin means fair by a' men.' (II, p. 123)

But the Bailie objects to Rob Roy's political activities. He claims that the freebooter has been

'the prime agent between some o' our Hieland chiefs and the gentlemen in the north o' England,' (II, p. 136)

an assertion that is not supported by history. Rob Roy certainly armed his clan for the Jacobite cause, and marched into Monteith and Lennox<sup>26</sup> to put down resistance, but he was no negotiator. In fact, the most serious historical distortion in Rob Roy is in Scott's account of preparations for the rising. Rob Roy is shown as being active in the Highlands, and Rashleigh in the north of England, as though these were the nerve centres of Jacobite activity. But as Sir Charles Petrie has stated:

The risings in the North of England and in Scotland were to be purely subsidiary, and James himself was to land near Plymouth. 27

Most of the agitations were in the west of England. Sir Charles again:

The evidence leaves little doubt but that the responsibility for the failure of the Jacobite efforts in the South and West of England must primarily be laid at the door of the Duke of Ormonde. The preparations there were far more complete than in the North and in Scotland, and they constituted a model of organization compared with what was done in anticipation of The Forty-Five, 28

which was primarily done in the Highlands.

Before the Bailie and Frank penetrate the Highlands in search of Rashleigh and the missing business papers, the Bailie delivers a

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26. Macleay, op. cit., p. 198.

27. Sir Charles Petrie, The Jacobite Movement, (London, 1959), p. 222.

28. Petrie, op. cit., p. 235.

lecture on the Highlands, past and present. It will be remembered that Scott used this question and answer method to transmit information to the reader in Waverley. Rose and the Baron explain to Waverley the meaning of such terms as black-mail. The Bailie does likewise, and both Frank and Owen are his audience. The Bailie explains the hereditary jurisdictions privileges, which were not to be abolished until after the second Jacobite rebellion:

'there's nae bailie-courts amang them - nae magistrates that dinna bear the sword in vain, like the worthy deacon that's awa' - and, I may say't, like mysell and other present magistrates in this city - But it's just the laird's command, and the loon maun loup; and never another law hae they but the length o' their dirks - the broadsword's pursuer, or plaintiff, as you Englishers ca' it, and the target is defender; the stoutest head bears langest out - and there's a Hieland plea for ye.'

(II, pp. 124-25)

The point here is that the Highland chiefs appoint themselves within their own despotic system of law, whereas the Bailie has been duly elected to serve.

Much of the information (and some of it is dull) about the Highlands which we get from the Bailie has already been transmitted in Waverley. But in case the readers of Rob Roy have not read the first novel, 'The Author of Waverley' finds it necessary to repeat himself by filling in the historical background. Besides, Rob Roy lacks notes. The Bailie mentions the fact that the Highlands have been kept quiet since the battle of Killiecrankie (1689) by southern hush money distributed by the Earl of Breadalbane (or said to have been distributed by him: he seems to have kept most of it), an artificial state of affairs conducive to rebellion (Rob Roy, II, p. 135). The Bailie gives some statistics on the state of the Highlands in 1715. His speech contains verbatim quotations from a MS. by Graham

of Gartmore on the causes of rebellion in the Highlands. The MS. was written about 1747, and is added, by courtesy of Scott, to the 1818 annotated edition of Burt's Letters which Robert Jamieson the ballad collector issued.<sup>29</sup> Obviously Scott was looking at this MS. when he was writing Rob Roy, for the figures (the Highland population is given as 230,000, of which 57,500 are fighting men) of MS. and novel tally.

One of the most successful scenes in Rob Roy is the fight at the Clachan of Aberfoil. The Bailie defies the warning of the peeled willow-wand placed across the half-open door of the inn,<sup>30</sup> which meant that Highlanders were drinking and were not to be disturbed. The interior of this inn is almost a reproduction of the one at Tully-Veolan, and both are run by women. The drinking Highlanders have their dirks stuck in the board by their elbows, a disconcerting custom recorded by Burt.<sup>31</sup>

The Bailie and his party are made to feel strangers by the landlady's qualified refusal to fetch food.

'She didna ken,' she said, 'she wasna sure there was ony thing in the house,' and then modified her refusal with the qualification, - 'that is, ony thing fit for the like of us.' (II, pp. 167-68)

This, of course, is ambiguous. It might mean that the Highland inn is too humble for the southern travellers, or that the southern travellers are too finicky for the type of food served. It is in touches (all too rare, unfortunately) such as this that Scott shows his deep perception.

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29. And for which Scott, very familiar with the Letters, furnished notes.

30. Pennant records this custom in his 1772 Tour, p. 49.

31. Burt, op. cit., vol. II, p. 119.

A fight breaks out, and the Bailie defends himself with a firebrand, a red-hot plough coulter, in fact. As Anderson shows, the Highland injunction:

'if ye be pretty men, draw!' (II, p. 170)

seems to have been suggested by the Memorie of the Somervilles, which Scott edited.<sup>32</sup> We see, therefore, his work as an editor supplying him with material for fiction, a measure of the man's remarkable memory.

The Bailie successfully defends himself with the firebrand, his sword having failed to leave its scabbard through disuse. Since it was his father's sword, we suspect a symbol. Moreover, the firebrand singes a plaid. If there is a symbol here, it has several facets. The sword stuck in its scabbard at a time of crisis shows that the old order will no longer serve. New weapons have to be looked for. In terms of the Highlands, this suggests imminent and violent change, which the Jacobite rebellions were to produce, and particularly the '45, when fire was one of the post-Culloden punitive measures. The smouldering Highland plaid might therefore be visionary, a form of second-sight. When one of the Bailie's opponents asks him to fight according to the rules the next time, with a sword instead of a firebrand, the Bailie replies:

'Conscience! ... every man maun do as he dow'  
(II, p. 173)

which can be taken as a warning of the coming disintegration of clan-ship within the Highlands because of rebellion and social change. A

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32. James Somerville, 11th Baron Somerville, Memorie of the Somervilles (Edinburgh, 1815), vol. II, p. 271. Anderson, op. cit., Pt. III, p. 172.

new age, demanding new rules and new weapons is being ushered in. The failure of certain critics to see depths in Scott's Highland scenes is epitomised by Tillyard's comment that

The fight at the inn at Aberfoil is superfluous - there is enough and more important fighting to come - a piece of irrelevant romantic sauce such as Scott thought himself obliged to supply lavishly to please his public. 33

Rob Roy himself is caught in the cross-fire of rebellion and social change. Since there is no stable place for him in the changing Highlands, he must move about as a freebooter. Scott shows him as a victim of adverse economic conditions because he took risks, whereas the Bailie is cautious. Rob Roy's ruin was the result of commercial over-extension in the south through trading in Highland cattle. Having pointed out that Rob Roy was generous in his business dealings, the Bailie explains that

'the times cam hard, and Rob was venturesome. It wasna my faut - it wasna my faut; he canna wyte me. I aye tauld him o't - And the creditors, mair especially some grit neighbours o' his, grippit to his living and land.' (II, p. 131)

This is a reference to the previously mentioned crisis in Rob Roy's business affairs (in 1712, it would seem), when his business partner is said to have defected, leaving Rob Roy with debts of around £1,000. The Duke of Montrose was a principal creditor, and he seized Rob Roy's lands. Embittered Macgregor's freebooting career is said to date from this distressing time. For fictive purposes Scott tones down his fierce freebooting activities and makes him a somewhat suave Jacobite agent, a man who can move freely between the

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33. Tillyard, op. cit., p. 98

Highlands and England on a pass provided by the Duke of Argyll.

Scott makes Rob Roy's wife Helen far more bitter than her husband. She is by far the strongest character in the novel, an Amazon who is a twin chieftain to her husband. As the Bailie tells Frank:

'The wife, man - the wife, - an awfu' wife she is. She downa bide the sight o' a kindly Scot, if he come frae the Lowlands, far less of an Inglisher, and she'll be keen for a' that can set up King James, and ding down King George.' (II, p. 139)

Helen Macgregor's hatred for those who are non-Highland (and this includes Lowlanders) is fanatical, and is the result of southern vengeance against her husband and his clan. Both Diana Vernon and Lady Anne Macintosh pale beside her. Helen is portrayed as a male.

She had a man's bonnet, with a feather in it, an unsheathed sword in her hand, and a pair of pistols at her girdle. (II, p. 211)

She is literally dressed to kill, and she participates in the Macgregor ambush to free Jarvie and company from the English. She might seem an extravagant creation, a blood-flecked Valkyrie who diminishes and discredits the other characters, male and female, in the novel. But in creating Helen Scott was showing a shrewd understanding of the Highland family and clan structure. That the Highlands were (and still are, to some extent) a matriarchal society is beyond dispute.

Helen Macgregor may not be historically authentic,<sup>34</sup> but she does have an energy possessed by no other character (including her

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34. She does seem to have invaded the traditional territory of the Highland male by composing a pipe tune.

husband) in the novel. Where the freebooter allows enemies to go free, his wife mercilessly murders them. In the absence of Rob Roy in captivity, Helen assumes the chieftainship, and has weak Morris drowned like a dog, despite Frank's plea for clemency. Helen's speech as Morris is thrown to his death is about Highland aristocratic despotism:

'you could live and enjoy yourself, while the noble-minded are betrayed - while nameless and birthless villains tread on the neck of the brave and the long-descended: you could enjoy yourself, like a butcher's dog in the shambles, battenning on garbage, while the slaughter of the oldest and best went on around you!'

(II, p. 236)

This is a crucial part of the novel, for Scott is showing how Highland aristocratic pride can degenerate into senseless spite and violence. This despotism arose with the hereditary jurisdictions, and ended with defeat in the '45. Since it was self-destructive, it could not have endured.

Rob Roy's reaction when he hears that Helen has had Morris put to death is one of vexation. He does not regret the death: he only regrets the method, and wished it had been by the ball or the blade. He will not condemn his wife. As he says:

'every wight has his weird, and we maun a' dee when our day comes - And naebody will deny that Helen MacGregor has deep wrongs to avenge.' (II, p. 280)

In fact, Rob Roy shares his wife's sentiments about the persecution of the Macgregors. He complains to Frank:

'What must it do then to men like us, living as our fathers did a thousand years since, and possessing scarce more lights than they did? - Can we view their bluidy edicts against us - their hanging, heading, hounding, and hunting down an ancient and honourable name, as deserving better treatment than that which enemies give



to enemies? - Here I stand, have been in twenty frays, and never hurt man but when I was in het bluid; and yet they wad betray me and hang me like a masterless dog, at the gate of ony great man that has an ill will at me.' (II, p. 305)

In other words, Morris the Hanoverian agent has suffered as Rob Roy would have suffered, had he been held in captivity. It is the old doctrine of an eye for an eye, etc. As the novel comes near its close, Scott expands on Rob Roy's character and shows that the freebooter is a romantic, living imaginatively in a lost past.

It will be remembered that the Macgregors were punished for their brutality in the battle of Glenfruin, when the widows carried the bloody shirts to Stirling. It is also alleged that clerical students who were innocent observers of the battle were butchered. The brutality of the Macgregors, even in victory, is portrayed in their conduct after their ambush of the English. Frank is the observer, and he cannot help expressing his feelings:

'I foresaw we should incur some danger on approaching the victors in the first flush of their success, which was not unstained with cruelty, for one or two of the soldiers, whose wounds prevented them from rising, were poniarded by the victors, or rather by some ragged Highland boys who had mingled with them.'

(II, p. 217)

Encountered on southern soil, Rob Roy seemed an attractive personality to Frank, but back home on Highland soil it is a different story. Though the freebooter helps Frank to recover his father's business papers, the young Englishman becomes disillusioned with the Highlander and his clan. He is much closer to the Bailie, who is progressive, a man who can see where improvements need to be made. After the '15 the Highlands were opened up by Wade's system of roads. The Bailie appreciates that good communications are vital, and pro-

poses a scheme for draining Loch Lomond to encourage trade between the Highland and Lowlands. Pennant mentions such a scheme.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the Bailie proposes to take Rob Roy's sons as 'prentices at the loom' (II, p. 290), a sensible scheme that makes Rob Roy react explosively in Gaelic. Pride warns him that his sons are bred for something better than commerce. But for what? In real life they were worse outlaws than their father.

Like so many of Scott's novels, Rob Roy speeds up, with a consequent telescoping of events as the end approaches. The actual rebellion is given very little space, only a two page precis by Sir Frederick Vernon, Diana's father. Having been in the Highlands with the Jacobites, Waverley joins them in rebellion, but Frank fights with the Hanoverians. In so doing he is opposing his old protector, Rob Roy. The celebrated freebooter was by no means a leading Jacobite in the '15, as the novel would have us believe. In fact, though Rob Roy was present with his clan at Sheriffmuir, he did not actually fight.

This unexpected conduct arose from two motives equally powerful, - a wish not to offend his patron, the Duke of Argyll, should he join the Earl of Mar, and that he might not act contrary to his conscience by joining Argyll against his expatriated king. 36

At the end of the novel it is the ubiquitous Rob Roy who saves the day and the estate for Frank by slaying Rashleigh at Osbaldistone Hall, thus smoothing the way for Frank's marriage to Diana Vernon. There are the same type of plot obscurities and absurdities we encountered at the end of Waverley. Scott has Sir Hildebrand's five

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35. Pennant, 1772, Tour and Voyage, pp. 175-76.

36. Macleay, op. cit., p. 200.

sons, plus the knight himself, conveniently killed off so that Frank can inherit the ancestral estate. Despite her claim to be 'the bride of Heaven, betrothed to the convent from the cradle,' Diana marries Frank. They live happily until she dies, and then he tells the story to Will Tresham, his friend.

The last words are about Rob Roy. The freebooter

died in old age and by a peaceful death, some time about the year 1733; and is still remembered in his country as the Robin Hood of Scotland, the dread of the wealthy, but the friend of the poor, and possessed of many qualities, both of head and heart, which would have graced a less equivocal profession than that to which his fate condemned him.

Old Andrew Fairservice used to say, that 'There were many things ower bad for blessing, and owre gude for banning, like ROB ROY,' (II, pp. 379-80)

which is to say nothing, really. Thus judgement on Rob Roy is left to the reader.

Having pointed out that Scott had not the 'temperament' for technicalities, Kurt Wittig asks:

What if the winding-up of Rob Roy is painful?  
After the feast we have had, surely we can fore-  
go the coffee! 37

As I suggested earlier in this section, though Rob Roy gives his name to the novel, he is not necessarily the principal character. In fact, in terms of appearances, the narrator Frank (who is always present) would qualify as the principal character, with Bailie Jarvie coming higher than Rob Roy. But it is fruitless to look for a principal character in Rob Roy. It is more a novel of ideas, with a

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37. K. Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature (Edinburgh and London, 1958), p. 226.

complex counterpointing of characters created to examine certain ideas, some of which had already been examined in Waverley. In Rob Roy Scott is interested in examining the implications of the Union, the Lowland/Highland cultural difference, and the Catholic question. In general the novel is concerned with cultural change and transition. What is being sought is harmony, which we get at the end, when the plot is neatly tied up. Frank, an Englishman, marries Diana, a Catholic of Scottish descent, and the union is a happy one. Rob Roy roams on, until he dies, naturally, of old age. One is confident that Bailie Jarvie (who has recovered his debt from Rob Roy) will prosper mightily, for, as Fleishman says, he signals the emergence of a new type of pragmatic modern man.<sup>38</sup> The barbaric murder of Morris, the most real incident in the novel, is forgotten, with Frank and the Bailie agreeing to say nothing. The virago Helen is heard no more.

Scott was well aware of the shortcomings of Rob Roy, and particularly with regard to the ending. Writing to Morrill from Edinburgh on 14 January 1818, the anonymous author expressed dissatisfaction over his latest creation.

I trust you have read Rob by this time. I did not much write him con amore and I think he smells of the cramp as the Bishop of Grenadas sermon did of the Apoplexy. Above all I had too much flax on my distaff and as it did not consist with my patience or my plan to make a fourth volume I was obliged at last to draw a rough coarse and hasty thread. 39

We have to remember, however, that Scott was far from well when he wrote Rob Roy. He was suffering from the severe stomach cramps

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38. Fleishman, op. cit., p. 71.

39. Grierson, Letters, vol. V, p. 50.

which would be diagnosed (but not until long after his death) as gall-stones. As Lockhart records:

The novel had indeed been 'a tough job' - for lightly and airily as it reads, the author had struggled almost throughout with the pains of cramp or the lassitude of opium. Calling on him one day to dun him for copy, James Ballantyne found him with a clean pen and a blank sheet before him, and uttered some rather solemn exclamation of surprise. 'Ay, ay, Jemmy,' said he, 'tis easy for you to bid me get on, but how the deuce can I make Rob Roy's wife speak, with such a curmurring in my guts?' 40

Despite these creative problems Rob Roy was a commercial success, the first edition of 10,000 being disposed of within a fortnight.<sup>41</sup> The critics were generally kind. The reviewer in the Edinburgh Review for February 1818, began:

This is not so good, perhaps, as some others of the family; - but it is better than any thing else; and has a charm and spirit about it that draws us irresistibly away from our graver works of politics and science, to expatiate upon that which every body understands and agrees in; and after setting us diligently to read over again what he had scarce finished reading, leaves us no choice but to tell our readers what they all know already, and to persuade them of that of which they are most intimately convinced. (p. 403)

The reviewer continues:

except that the subject seems to us somewhat less happily chosen, and the variety of characters rather less than in some of the author's former publications, we do not know what right we had to say that it was in any respect inferior to them. Sure we are, at all events, that it has the same brilliancy and truth of colouring - the same gayety of tone, rising every now and then into feelings both kindly and exalted - the same dramatic vivacity - the same deep and large insight into human nature - and the same charming facility which distinguish all the other works of this great master, and make the time in which he flourished an era never to be forgotten in the literary history of our country. (p. 404)

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40. Lockhart, Life, p. 357.

41. Ibid., p. 358.

High praise tempered with some humour, one suspects. The 'novelty' of the 'continued and unbroken narrative' is noted. Frank Osbaldistone and not Rob Roy is the 'discreet' hero. His 'character does not rise very notably above the plain level of mediocrity.' Diana Vernon has 'a more than masculine resolution, and more than feminine kindness and generosity of character,' but 'it is certain that there never could have been any such person.' The Bailie, who is an 'original', is 'an inimitable picture of an acute, sagacious, upright, and kind man, thoroughly low bred, and beset with all sorts of vulgarities.' 'Both he and Andrew are rich mines of the true Scottish language.' As to Rob Roy, 'we suspect most of his readers will be rather disappointed, both at the sobriety and caution of his ordinary demeanour, and at the lowliness of his original occupation.' Helen Macgregor is an 'Amazonian consort,' and 'The whole scene at the Clachan, as well as the march up the lake, and the sanguinary skirmish at the pass, are given with admirable spirit.'

The usually perceptive Jeffrey was the author of this socially supercilious review. He either did not see, or did not attempt to see, depths or subtle counterpointing in the novel. The review in the Edinburgh Magazine for January and February 1818, was less laudatory. Scott is taken to task for his worn-out plot devices,

when the events are made to turn in any considerable degree on the contents or the fate of pieces of parchment or bits of paper, whether locked up in caskets or scattered to the winds like the Sybil's leaves. (p. 149)

The Edinburgh Magazine reference is to the business papers stolen by Rashleigh. (Yet the modern critic Tillyard asserts: 'I find, con-

trary to John Buchan, that Rob Roy is superbly plotted.<sup>42</sup> The reviewer feels that Rob Roy is too full of commerce for clarity.

Mr. Owen's assets are about as puzzling and tedious as his great modern namesake's proposals for the amelioration of society, and we do not see how the one could have any more effect in stirring up the rebellion in 1715, than the other in removing, in 1818, all vice and misery, and the poor's rates. (p. 149)

As well as receiving superficial reviews, Rob Roy attracted the censure of Major Donald Macgregor, Blairgowrie, protesting (amongst other matters) about Scott et al blaming Dugald Ciar Mbor (the great mouse-coloured man), the Macgregor chieftain's foster-brother, for slaughtering the clerical students after the battle of Glenfruin. Scott reacted angrily.

I was the first literary man of modern days who chose the oppressed Clan as subjects of pity and sympathy. If I had sought to rake up such acts of violence & cruelty as the Criminal records /report/ against them there are very cruel stories told by the Lennox families against them. 43

But Scott duly acknowledged this correspondence in his Introduction to the Magnum Opus edition of the novel.

Scott claims that he treated 'the oppressed Clan as subjects of pity and sympathy' in his fiction. But what was his attitude to the Highlands in general as set out in Rob Roy? There is no easy answer

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42. Tillyard, op. cit., p. 99.

43. Grierson, Letters, vol. XII, p. 7.

Major Macgregor to Scott: 'I regret much that I was not aware of your intended introduction to Rob Roy, as I could have furnished you with an extremely curious and original Document ... 19 December 1829, Walpole, MS 3911, ff. 176.

John Gregorson of Ardtornish was another correspondent on Macgregor history. See Grierson, Letters, vol. XI, p. 288, p. 301.

because his attitude was fashioned by ambivalent feelings towards the Union. Clearly freebooters and soldiers, Highland or otherwise, held a strong fascination for Scott the Lowland lawyer, and this conflict between the Highland victim of historical circumstances and the Lowland law is yet another complication in Scott's personality. Though he does not condemn Rob Roy and his predatory way of life, he shows clearly that economic and legal progress will bring peace and prosperity, even although much romance is lost. The old lawless order as exemplified by Rob Roy must go. But Scott suggests a compromise. The genial Bailie Nicol Jarvie, duly elected Lowland law officer and enterprising trader, has Highland blood in his veins, but he keeps it well under control.

Rob Roy raises the question of Scott's linguistic fluency.

David Murison argues:

it is admitted by all critics now, and by most critics in his own day, that when he writes in Scots, the laboured stumbling that so often mars his English disappears and his natural excitement and vigour take command.

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But Scott was not the creator of the quaint speech of his Highland characters. As Murison says:

Servants, retainers, and such, like Ewan Dhu in Waverley, the Dougal cratur in Rob Roy, and Duncan Campbell in The Heart of Midlothian speak a kind of pidgin Scots, full of 'oichs' and 'her nainsels', which was a literary tradition for Highland speech, though quite unauthentic, long before Scott. 45

Lacking the real language of the Highlands, Scott could not avoid

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44. D. Murison, 'The Two Languages in Scott,' in Scott's Mind and Art, ed. A.N. Jeffares (Edinburgh, 1969), p. 220.

45. Murison, op. cit., pp. 225-26.



artificiality, despite his skill and humour, for

Unfortunately, being innocent of Gaelic, he has to make do with the theatrical inflated English he puts in the mouth of Helen MacGregor; nor is he very consistent about her husband, who speaks Scots when he is most animated. 46

Discussing Scott's use of 'heightened rhetorical language,' Thomas Crawford has made the important point that 'when the prophet is of Highland stock, the influence of Ossian is apparent.'<sup>47</sup>

But one Highlander was well pleased with the plot and language of Rob Roy. On 14 April 1818, Margaret Maclean Clephane wrote:

I did not like Rob Roy so well on the first reading as I did on the second, but now I admire it more warmly than I can tell you... the Gaelic so good - that one must suppose the author to be deep in Highland ways and in the language also - & this is no ordinary accomplishment. 48

But with Rob Roy Scott saw that the lucrative Highland well was fast drying up. He had abandoned Highland poetry for Highland fiction. He had covered the two Jacobite rebellions (critical periods in Highland history) in fiction. After Rob Roy there would be a two year gap until A Legend of Montrose in the Third Series of Tales of my Landlord. In that work there would be far more fact than fiction, or rather, fact transferred in large quantities from history books because Scott's own creative imagination seemed to be flagging, at least as regards the Highlands. He had told Morritt that he could not make Rob Roy run into a fourth volume. By the standards of Waverley and Rob Roy, A Legend of Montrose would be short indeed.

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46. Murison, op. cit., p. 226.

47. Crawford, op. cit., p. 76

48. Walpole, MS 8889, ff. 57.

A LEGEND OF MONTROSE

Scott had treated in fiction the two Jacobite rebellions, and the freebooter Rob Roy, all eighteenth century subjects, all highly amenable to presentation as adventure stories for both sexes. Rob Roy shows that he was interested in actual historical personalities as well as movements. But, as has been pointed out, Rob Roy is not the chief character of the novel.

Likewise with A Legend of Montrose, in the Third Series of Tales of my Landlord. With regard to the Highlands, this was Scott's next fictive effort after Rob Roy, a gap of two years separating them. Several characteristics must be noted. In the first instance, A Legend of Montrose is approximately half the size of the preceding Highland novels. In the second instance, Scott has gone back one century, to the seventeenth. In the third instance, the whole action takes place in the Highlands.

The lame Scott's fascination with the soldier and man of action has already been stressed. Free-ranging figures larger than life appealed to him, and just as the Lords of the Isles were an inevitable theme for poetry, and Rob Roy a subject for fiction, Montrose was a certain choice of the creative consciousness.

The name of James Graham, Marquis of Montrose<sup>1</sup> is associated in part with the Covenanters, that zealous religious group already treated by Scott in Old Mortality (1816), in the First Series of Tales of my Landlord. But that novel opened in the year 1679, when

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1. James Graham, fifth Earl and first Marquis of Montrose (1612 - 1650). Joined nationalist movement in 1637 in defence of Covenant, but in 1641 went over to the side of Charles I. Suppressor of the Covenanters in a series of brilliant battles, but executed as a traitor.

Montrose was almost twenty years dead, executed as a traitor to Scotland.

In A Legend of Montrose Scott went back to 1644, when a disguised Montrose entered Scotland to begin his brilliant military career. But, as has been said, Montrose is not the main character of this novel. There may be several reasons. For one thing, Scott had shown (in Waverley, most notably) that he needed space to evolve action and characterisation. This he denied himself in A Legend, which is only half the size of Waverley, most probably that A Legend and The Bride of Lammermoor might make a standard sized book. But in his biography of Scott John Buchan offers a better reason for Montrose not being accorded full fictive treatment.

Wisely Scott did not attempt a full portrait of Montrose, for, if he had, he must have failed. For one thing that great figure was still little realized by the world; for another Scott's genius did not lie in the understanding of the searching and introspective intellect and the character in whom pure reason becomes a flame fiercer than any romantic devotion. Nor could he have coped with the doubts and subtleties of Argyll. He chose an episode in which he could give rein to his fancy, and bring upon the stage as the central figure a Scottish mercenary drawn from his readings in Turner and Monro. 2

Buchan's judgement is sound, since he is the author of a classic biography of Montrose. Scott's aim was a dramatic story of the time of Montrose, and not a psychological study of the motivations of a Scots nobleman who began as a Covenanter and ended up by forfeiting his head for a selfish king, more English than Scottish. The kind of racy romantic novel which Scott wrote could not accommodate 'a searching and introspective intellect' in which 'pure reason' was

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2. Buchan, op. cit., p. 92. In the Red Book of Clanranald (with which, as has already been stated in The Lord of the Isles section, Scott was familiar) Montrose's Highland chronicler is the bard Cathal MacVurich. The Red Book is therefore a possible source for A Legend, emotionally if not factually, since MacVurich's chronicle reads like poetry.

supreme. In fact, Montrose and Scott are diametrically opposed. The first stands for reason and action, the second romance and neutrality. The first saw no contradiction in supporting Scotland and King Charles. The second saw no contradiction in supporting Scotland and the Hanoverian George IV, despite a strong streak of Jacobitism in his nature.

As with previous Highland novels, Scott cites his main sources in the Introduction to A Legend of Montrose. In the very first sentence he gives notice that Montrose is not his principal theme.

The Legend of Montrose was written chiefly with a view to place before the reader the melancholy fate of John Lord Kilpont, eldest son of William Earl of Airth and Menteith, and the singular circumstances attending the birth and history of James Stewart of Ardvoirlich, by whose hand the unfortunate nobleman fell.

Scott goes back to the reign of James IV, to a 'great feud' between the Drummonds and Murrays, two great Perthshire families. The Drummonds having incinerated well over one hundred Murrays in the kirk of Monivaird, one Murray was spared through one Drummond's humanity, but the charitable Drummond was forced to flee to Ireland to escape the wrath of his clan. On his return his family were known as the Drummond-Ernochs.

In the time of James VI one of the Drummond-Ernochs, a royal forester, was slain by a 'particular race' of the Macgregors, 'known by the title of MacEagh, or Children of the Mist.' The dead Drummond's head was severed, carried in a plaid to the house of Ardvoirlich, and set down on the table, with bread and cheese in its mouth. When the lady of the house saw her brother's head she went berserk, and fled into the woods, where she wandered, a 'raving maniac' for many a month. When she was brought home by her husband, she gave

birth to a male child, and seemed to recover her sanity.<sup>3</sup>

This child, James of Ardvoirlich, grew up into an immensely strong but surly man, given to violent fits of temper. He joined Montrose in 1644, just before Tippermuir. So did Lord Kilpont. Ardvoirlich was so close to the young Lord that he shared his confidence and his tent. Or, as Scott puts it in his Introduction, Ardvoirlich 'shared the confidence of the young Lord by day, and his bed by night.'<sup>4</sup> But the friendship was broken forever when Ardvoirlich stabbed Kilpont to death, and escaped to the Covenanters' camp.

Scott refers to a tradition that the stabbing occurred because Kilpont rejected Ardvoirlich's proposal to assassinate Montrose. But Scott is suspicious of this explanation, and furnishes a better one in a Postscript. This is in the form of a letter from Robert Stewart of Ardvoirlich, descendant of the assassin James. Anxious lest the proposal to assassinate Montrose will be accepted as historical fact by Scott's many readers, Stewart supplies 'the account of this affair as it has been handed down in the family.' He explains that Colkitto and his Irish had 'committed some excesses' on Ardvoirlich lands, and that the laird carried his complaint to Montrose. Not wishing to anger his savage Irish allies, Montrose took no action, and Ardvoirlich challenged Colkitto to single combat. Both were placed under arrest, on the advice of Kilpont. Ardvoirlich brooded on the matter, and, several days after the battle of Tipper-

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3. Scott told this story in his review of the Culloden Papers (Quarterly Review, January 1816, pp. 283-333). This review seems to have been a reservoir of plots and anecdotes for subsequent Highland works.

4. It is not clear if Scott is implying a homosexual connection, but a lovers' quarrel cannot be ruled out.

muir, accused Kilpont of preventing him from gaining satisfaction. Maddened by hurt pride and alcohol, Ardvoirlich stabbed Kilpont, and fled to the enemy camp.

Robert Stewart's family tradition does not affect the use of the quarrel as a framework for A Legend of Montrose, but it is quoted here because it illustrates how Highlanders read Scott's writings closely and wrote to him to correct errors he had made (however inadvertently) in portraying the history of their region and families. The fact that Scott prints Stewart's explanation in a Postscript shows how scrupulously fair Scott was in giving such correspondents their say.<sup>5</sup>

We see, therefore, that in A Legend of Montrose Scott was once again using Macgregor material, for this unruly Perthshire clan seems to have fascinated him above all others. The Drummond/Murray dispute, the 'Children of the Mist' Macgregor sept, and the Ardvoirlich/Kilpont tragedy form the plot basis of A Legend of Montrose. For fictive purposes the immensely strong and moody James of Ardvoirlich becomes the immensely strong and moody Allan McAulay, a second son. Allan has the added instability of second sight. Here Scott is shifting clans to suit his fictive purposes, for the MacAulays belonged to two regions only, Ardincaple in Dunbartonshire, and the Isle of Lewis. Lord Kilpont, heir to the Earl of Menteith, becomes the Earl of Menteith in the novel. Montrose is present, and the historical background for the two major incidents of the novel, the war conference of Highland chiefs, and the battle of Inverlochy, come from accepted accounts, most notably the Memoirs of the Most Renowned

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5. See the Rob Roy section.

James Graham, Marquis of Montrose,<sup>6</sup> translated from the Latin of the Rev. Dr. George Wishart, afterwards Bishop of Edinburgh. This book shows how Scott's historical based fiction could revive interest in certain periods of history and their chroniclers, thus sending the reader back to original sources. Constable brought out a new edition of Wishart's work in 1819, because, as the Preface explains,

the last series of the Tales of my Landlord will probably call the attention of the public towards the biography of the Marquis of Montrose.

It was a shrewd commercial move, and happened several times in Scott's career, with his fresh fiction giving neglected factual works a new lease of life. In this sense Scott had a beneficial effect on the study of history, though some readers may have preferred his Montrose to Wishart's.

But none of the aforementioned characters are candidates for principal character of A Legend of Montrose. This honour falls to one Captain Dugald Dalgetty, mercenary soldier. In his Introduction Scott shows that the character of Dalgetty is an amalgamation of two actual historical personalities, both soldiers of fortune who committed their experiences to paper. In 1829 the Bannatyne Club (founded by Scott in 1823) brought out the Memoirs of his own Life and Times, by Sir James Turner. Destined to be a Master of Arts, Glasgow, Turner decided to be,

if not an actor, at least a spectator of these wares which at that time made so much noyse over all the world. 7

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6. ALC., 1756 and 1819 eds.

7. Turner, op. cit., Part First, p. 3.



He crossed water to serve under the 'thrice famous Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden.'<sup>8</sup> In 1632 Turner tried to reach Hull to enlist for Charles I, but returned to Scotland to fight with the Covenanters. He was appointed Major of Lord Sinclair's regiment, and was sent to Ireland to aid the Ulster Scots against the Irish rebels. In 1644 he returned to Scotland. Turner wanted to join Montrose, but he remained in the Covenanting army which invaded England in 1645. Like Dalgetty, Turner fought in the Highlands, but on the other side. Turner considered Colkitto Macdonald, leader of the Irish faction, to be 'ordaind for destruction.'<sup>9</sup> He opposed Colkitto in the Kintyre campaign, and when the besieged castle of Dundaravety surrendered, 'everie mothers sonne' was 'put to the sword.'<sup>10</sup>

In his Memoirs Turner claims to have been a trusted agent enjoying the confidence of the highest. For instance:

I went by land to Holland, accompanied with Colonel Sibbald, who carried letters from Montrose both to Scotland and Ireland. From Roterdame I wrote with him to my wife at Edinburgh, to furnish him with a considerable peece of money, (for he was not well stored) which she did; and he had his heade chopd of not long after at the Crosse of Edinburgh; so I lost both my friend and my money. 11

Like Dalgetty's, Turner's utterances are often comic. There were certain discomforts to serving in the Highlands. Thus

I stayd a month in that toune /Aachen/ ... partlie to cure myself of a disease which is epidemicall allmost in the place from whence I brought it, the Hielands; I meane the ich or scab, the hote bathes of that citie being excellent for it. 12

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8. Turner, op. cit., Part First, p. 4.

9. Ibid., p. 45.

10. Ibid., p. 46.

11. Ibid., Part Second, p. 92.

12. Ibid., p. 116.

After the Restoration, in 1662, Turner was knighted, but in 1668 he was stripped of his commission for irregularities during his service in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright against the Covenanters. The charges included irregularities over the quartering of soldiers and the extraction of cess.

But, as Anderson argues,

Turner is not Dalgetty, however; Scott's great characters are always independent. Turner had some conscience, beyond the scruples of the mercenary soldier; he says he turned royalist in principle in 1644, although he did not change sides in practice till 1648, after Argyle's party 'obliged many officers, to ease the kingdom forsooth, to quit a third part of their pay voluntarily; for which simplicity the kirk cryd them up for good patriots, and this was enough to put these simpletons in the full possession of a fool's paradise.' 13

Scott borrowed some characteristics from Turner for Dalgetty, but the main prototype is undoubtedly Col. Robert Monro. In 1637 he published Monro His Expedition With the Worthy Scots Regiment..., a book with a very long title.<sup>14</sup> It is primarily a military manual, being intended for 'the use of all worthie Cavaliers favouring the laudable profession of Armes.' Monro served under Christian of Denmark and Gustavus of Sweden with 'MacKays Regiment, levied in August 1626.' Monro returned to Scotland in 1639 to take the Scottish side in the dispute with Charles I. In 1640 he was accused of acting with severity towards Aberdeen. He was sent under Leslie to Ireland to suppress the rebellion.

The rich military vocabulary employed by Dalgetty comes straight

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13. Anderson, op. cit., Pt. IV, p. 16. Turner, op. cit., Part First, p. 50.

14. It is given in the bibliography.

out of Monro, which abounds with sconces, stackets, caduacs, dorps, boors, and the black beer of Rostock. They share a veneration for 'the invincible King of Sweden of worthy memorie,'<sup>15</sup> the Lion of the North, etc. Of his hero Gustavus, Monro rhapsodises:

I could take Heaven and Earth, Sun and Moone, minerals &c. to witness that his Colours ever flourished and spread in the name of the Lord, and that his confidence was not set on the Arme of man, though he was a warrior from his youth up, he was the Captaine over Israell, whose fingers the Lord taught to fight, and to leade his people. 16

Anderson suggests a third historical personality who might have contributed to Dalgetty's character. This is the Master of Sinclair, previously referred to as a possible model for the Baron of Bradwardine's eccentric character in Waverley. Like both the Baron and Dalgetty, Sinclair is given to lecturing, and particularly on military matters.<sup>17</sup> We shall pick up some of these similarities in their proper place in the text.

A Legend of Montrose has a second Introduction which (unlike the main Magnum Opus Introduction) was prefaced to the text from the first publication of the novel. In this Introduction Scott uses several narrative perspectives. The Tales of my Landlord were not another offering of the 'Author of Waverley.' They were alleged to be collected by a fictitious schoolmaster called Cleishbotham of Gandercleugh. It is this gentleman who is the narrator of the

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15. Monro, op. cit., Part I, p. 3.

16. Monro, op. cit., Part II, p. 167.

17. Anderson, op. cit., Pt. IV, pp. 17-18.

Yet a further model for Dalgetty is Sir Roger Williams. Scott inserted his pamphlet on Actions in the Low Countries into Somers Tracts, Vol. I.

Introduction under consideration. Cleishbotham is explaining the collection of the legend that follows. He heard it from Sergeant More McAlpin, who had retired to enjoy his hard-won and carefully kept income

in the wild Highland glen, in which, when a boy, he had herded black cattle and goats, ere the roll of the drum had made him cock his bonnet an inch higher, and follow its music for nearly forty years.

(Intro., p. xxxv)

But the old soldier was not permitted to enjoy his retirement on his native heath. Scott makes a rare reference to the Clearances, which were increasing as the nineteenth century progressed. Sergeant More McAlpin came home, and

revisited the loved scene; it was but a sterile glen, surrounded with rude crags, and traversed by a northern torrent. This was not the worst. The fires had been quenched upon thirty hearths - of the cottage of his fathers he could but distinguish a few rude stones - the language was almost extinguished - the ancient race from which he boasted his descent had found a refuge beyond the Atlantic. One southland farmer, three grey-plaided shepherds, and six dogs, now tenanted the whole glen, which in his youth had maintained, in content, if not in competence, upwards of two hundred inhabitants. (Intro., p. xxxv)

Here Scott is telling a profound psychological truth: to the person in exile, the homeland is always more appealing and more beautiful than it is in reality. To return and find rocks where one expected flowers is a bitter disappointment, but to return and find the tribe cleared a tragedy. But for the Sergeant there is a small consolation. Convinced that her brother would return, his sister Janet resisted emigration, and

had consented, though not without a feeling of degradation, to take service with the intruding Lowlander, who, though a Saxon, she said, had proved a kind man to her.

(Intro., p. xxxvi)

Scott might seem to be softening the blow, but he will not desert the truth, despite the fact that some of the clearers (the Countess of Sutherland and Glengarry, for example) were personal friends, and still living when he wrote his Introduction. In an evocative passage he allows Janet to describe the sadness and poverty of native Highlanders usurped by Lowland sheep farmers.

She narrated at great length the vain offers they had made of advanced rent, the payment of which must have reduced them to the extremity of poverty, which they were yet contented to face, for permission to live and die on their native soil. Nor did Janet forget the portents which had announced the departure of the Celtic race, and the arrival of the strangers. For two years previous to the emigration, when the night wind howled down the pass of Balachra, its notes were distinctly modelled to the tune of, Ha til mi tulidh, (we shall return no more,) with which the emigrants usually bid farewell to their native shores. The uncouth cries of the Southland shepherds, and the barking of their dogs, were often heard in the mist of the hills long before their actual arrival. (Intro., pp. xxxvi-vii)

But the Lowland sheep farmers only came at the invitation of the chiefs, and Scott does not stop short in his criticism. The chief was,

by tradition and common opinion, held to represent the ancient leaders and fathers of the expelled fugitives,

(Intro., p. xxxvii)

and though Sergeant More had always taken pride in proving his descent from his chief, he must now forget his ancient kinship. But he is still loyal to tradition.

'I cannot curse him,' he said, as he rose and strode through the room, when Janet's narrative was finished - 'I will not curse him; he is the descendant and representative of my fathers. But never shall mortal man hear me name his name again.' And he kept his word; for, until his dying day, no man heard him mention his selfish and hard-hearted chieftain. (Intro., p. xxxviii)

The Sergeant decides that Janet should accompany him to Canada, in search of their own people, but he is delayed by bad weather at Gandercleugh, and decides to settle there. This 'steady jacobite' soon became a respected member of the village, because of his military experiences, and his monetary generosity in the Wallace Arms. He transmits to Cleishbotham many tales of the old times, and when he dies, Cleishbotham passes on A Legend of Montrose to us.

I have given the Introduction close consideration, not only because of Scott's narrative technique of introducing the Montrose tale to us, but also because the Introduction is an important piece of writing in its own right. The writing is rooted in reality, the history authentic, and the character of Sergeant More McAlpin well rounded. It shows clearly that Scott could have made a very evocative novel of the Clearances, exhibiting his deep understanding of the chief/clansman relationship, and the Highland/Lowland dichotomy.<sup>18</sup> In some ways, one wishes that he had extended the Introduction and forgotten about A Legend of Montrose. But after such promise, he retreated into history.

The first chapter proper of A Legend of Montrose is an account of the historical events, in both England and Scotland, prior to the emergence of Montrose as a Royalist military leader. Scott shows opinion strengthening for the recall of the Scots army under Leslie from England in order to support Charles I.

This plan was chiefly adopted by the northern nobility, who had resisted with great obstinacy the adoption of the Solemn League and Covenant, and by many of the chiefs

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18. See my Conclusion.

of the Highland clans, who conceived their interest and authority to be connected with royalty, who had, besides, a decided aversion to the Presbyterian form of religion, and who, finally, were in that half savage state of society, in which war is always more welcome than peace.

Great commotions were generally expected to arise from these concurrent causes; and the trade of incursion and depredation, which the Scotch Highlanders at all times exercised upon the Lowlands, began to assume a more steady, avowed, and systematic form, as part of a general military system. (p. 4)

Scott shows one chief holding the Highlands in check, for

the power of these disaffected clans was supposed to be broken, and the spirit of their chieftains intimidated, by the predominating influence of the Marquis of Argyle, upon whom the confidence of the Convention of Estates was reposed with the utmost security; and whose power in the Highlands, already exorbitant, had been still farther increased by concessions extorted from the King at the last pacification. (p. 5)

Argyll might have had more 'political enterprise than personal courage,' but he had an immensely powerful clan of many septs behind him to check unrest and aggression.

But, as Buchan states in his biography of Montrose, Argyll, the son of a Catholic, was a late convert to the Covenanting cause. It was not until the great Glasgow Assembly of 1638 that Argyll declared completely for the Covenant, and he never went back on his decision. Buchan argues with conviction that this was genuine spiritual conversion, and not shrewd support of the majority.<sup>19</sup> Writing to his son about the turbulent events of 1649, when arguments raged at the Hague and elsewhere over the terms and conditions for the restoration of Charles II, Argyll admitted that spiritual intuition and not political wisdom shaped his thoughts. Pondering 'Reformation,' he

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19. John Buchan, Montrose (London, 1928), pp. 92-3.

became distracted, and ... encountered so many difficulties in the way, that all remedies that were applied had the quite contrary operation; whatever therefore hath been said by me and others in this matter, you must refute and accept them as from a distracted man, of a distracted subject, in the distracted time wherein I lived. 20

Scott seems to be following Clarendon in accusing Argyll of being a man 'rather of political enterprise than personal courage.' Clarendon thought that Argyll

wanted nothing but honesty and courage to be a very extraordinary man, having all other good talents in a very great degree. 21

But Buchan cannot agree. He argues that

it is idle to deny courage, even of the rude physical kind, to a man who time and again risked his neck, who was prepared to meet an enemy in a duel, and who went without a tremor to the scaffold. As for honesty, there is little enough of the high and delicate kind at any time in the political game, and, if we define it as scrupulous loyalty to cause and colleague, it was a fruit which scarcely grew in seventeenth-century Scotland. In that mad kaleidoscope Argyll had as much of the rare commodity as most of his contemporaries. 22

I have quoted Buchan to show that Scott's historical judgements cannot be taken as being unchallengeable. It is possible that he is unconsciously generalising from Argyll to the whole Covenanting movement. As I have already shown, Scott was subjected to a rigorous Presbyterian upbringing by his father, against which he reacted, and he had no love for Catholics. In other words, Scott disliked

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20. Archibald Marquis of Argyll, Instructions to a Son (Glasgow, 1743), p. 5.

21. Edward Earl of Clarendon, The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England (Oxford, 1826), vol. 6, Bk. XII, p. 422.

22. Buchan, op. cit., pp. 93-94.



religious fanaticism. Likewise with political fanaticism. As he remarks in his first chapter to A Legend of Montrose:

The Prelatists and Presbyterians of the more violent kind became as illiberal as the Papists, and would scarcely allow the possibility of salvation beyond the pale of their respective churches. It was in vain remarked to these zealots, that had the Author of our holy religion considered any particular form of church government as essential to salvation, it would have been revealed with the same precision as under the Old Testament dispensation. Both parties continued as violent as if they could have pleaded the distinct commands of Heaven to justify their intolerance. (p. 9)

Scott was a Royalist, loyal to the House of Hanover, but sympathetic to the House of Stuart. He thought that the military profession was 'a bad education for a statesman in a free country.'<sup>23</sup> Argyll directed the affairs of Scotland by the force of his clan, it being estimated that he could put 5,000 men into the field. Within the Highlands he was a despot, with powers of 'pit and gallows' over clans other than his own. Such a man could not have appealed to Scott. As Buchan says:

[Argyll] had the chief's love of power, and it is possible that, as in Hamilton's case, visions of a crown may have haunted one who boasted that he was the 'eighth man from Robert Bruce.' 24

A Legend of Montrose opens in the momentous year 1644, when Montrose, disguised as a groom, came north to rendezvous with Col-kitto Macdonald, commander of the Irish force sent by the Earl of Antrim for the king's relief. The 'young gentleman of quality' (p. 13) leading the two servants is the Earl of Menteith. As they enter the Highlands they encounter a solitary horseman, a mercenary

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23. Journal, 8 October 1826.

24. Buchan, op. cit., pp. 92-3.

soldier well armed after the fashion of the period.<sup>25</sup> On the narrow path of history the confrontation is between the old and the new, between the 'richly embroidered' but flimsy buff coat of the Royalist, and the heavy serviceable armour of the Protectorate. It is the steel-clad man who shifts because (for the moment at least) he is outnumbered.

This is

'Ritt-master Dugald Dalgetty of Drumthwacket, who has studied humanity at the Mareschal-College of Aberdeen, and served half the princes of Europe!'

(p. 60)

The comic soldier of fortune has served under

'the banner of the invincible Gustavus, the Lion of the North, and under many other heroic leaders, both Lutheran and Calvinist, Papist and Arminian.'

(p. 18)

Colonel Robert Monro's written boasts are coming from the mouth of a fictive character. Impressed by his apparel and experience, Menteith asks Dalgetty to join the Royalist cause. He hears out Menteith's arguments, and says that his 'preference' will be determined 'Simply upon two considerations',

'Being, first, on which side my services would be in most honourable request; - And secondly, whilk is a corollary of the first, by whilk party they are likely to be most gratefully requited. And, to deal plainly with you, my lord, my opinion at present doth on both points rather incline to the side of the Parliament.' (pp. 31-32)

Dalgetty is here echoing Sir James Turner, who confesses:

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25. Dalgetty's accoutrements are given in detail, and are correct for the period, showing either Scott's sound memory or painstaking research. He was, of course, fascinated by military matters.

I had swallowed without chewing, in Germanie, a very dangerous maxime, which militarie men there too much follow; which was, that so we serve our master honestlie, it is no matter what master we serve. 26

But Dalgetty, newly returned from the Continental wars, has a sound reason for not joining the Royalist cause. As he explains to Menteith:

'Now, sir, you know the nature of our Highlanders. I will not deny them to be a people stout in body and valiant in heart, and courageous enough in their own wild way of fighting, which is as remote from the usages and discipline of war as ever was that of the ancient Scythians, or of the savage Indians of America that now is. They havena sae mickle as a German whistle, or a drum, to beat a march, an alarm, a charge, a retreat, a reveille, or the tattoo, or any other point of war; and their damnable skirlin' pipes, whilk they themselves pretend to understand, are unintelligible to the ears of any cavaliero accustomed to civilized warfare. So that, were I undertaking to discipline such a breechless mob, it were impossible for me to be understood; and if I were understood, judge ye, my lord, what chance I had of being obeyed among a band of half salvages, who are accustomed to pay to their own lairds and chiefs, allenarly, that respect and obedience whilk ought to be paid to commisionate officers.' (pp. 32-33)

Dalgetty is sceptical because he has seen the use of new weapons and techniques employed by the 'invincible Gustavus,' on whose military innovations Cromwell modelled his army. To the Highlanders with their broadswords and targes, Dalgetty with his armour, blunderbuss and talk of 'squaring' battalions is a futuristic figure. To Menteith he is an absurd figure, but realistic Montrose sees him as

'a man of the times ... and without such we should hardly be able to carry on our enterprise.' (p. 78)

Though he scorns a Highland command, Dalgetty is tempted by the

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26. Turner, op. cit., Part First, p. 14.

idea of leading the Irish soldiers sent by the Earl of Antrim. The point is that Dalgetty is an empiricist: he saw an Irish brigade fighting 'at the taking of Frankfort,' and they acquitted themselves well to the end, when they were put to the sword. Such an account of a gallant Irish regiment at the siege of Frankfort is to be found in *Monro*.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, Dalgetty's slogan is

'When cannons are roaring, and bullets are flying,  
The lad that would have honour, boys, must never fear  
dying'

which is to be found in *Monro* as

When Cannons are roaring, and bullets flying, he  
that would have honour must not feare dying. 28

Dalgetty goes with Menteith and company to a clan convention at the fortified house of Darnlinvarach, made secure for the war that must come, with 'stanchions of iron' crossed on the windows, 'like the gates of a prison' (p. 38). It therefore traps as well as repels, and is a symbol of the old, self-contained Highlands that can be starved out. Dalgetty refuses to commit his horse Gustavus to the care of attendants. Throughout the novel his principal concern (apart from pay, and lecturing others on the art of war) is for his horse. Colonel Robert *Monro*:

Having at this time left our horses and baggage to our  
enemies, I observed somewhat on the love of men to  
those beasts, and the love of beasts to their Masters,  
as worth the noting ... 29

But Dalgetty's motto is waste not, want not. Whenever the opportunity

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27. *Monro*, op. cit., Part II, p. 34.

28. *Monro*, op. cit., Part I, p. 65.

29. *Monro*, op. cit., Part I, p. 30.

arises, he fills his stomach for lean days to come, and when his horse is shot at the battle of Inverlochy, he saves the skin.

The interior of Darnlinvarach testifies to the instincts of its occupants, living and dead.

Twenty or thirty targets, as many claymores, with dirks, and plaids, and guns, both match-lock and fire-lock, and long-bows, and cross-bows, and Lochaber axes, and coats of plate armour, and steel bonnets, and head-pieces, and the more ancient habergeons, or shirts of reticulated mail, with hood and sleeves corresponding to it, all hung in confusion about the walls, and would have formed a month's amusement to a member of a modern antiquarian society. (p. 40)

Military purists will detect an error, deliberate or otherwise, in this Highland armoury. The firelock (wheellock and snaphance or flintlock) was by no means an 'antiquarian' weapon in the mid-seventeenth century, and especially not in the backward Highlands. It had superseded the matchlock, which was inefficient in inclement weather. In fact, Sir James Turner attributes the failure of the Scots in the Preston campaign to the action of rain on the matchlocks.<sup>30</sup> Dalgetty appreciated one of the secondary properties of the matchlock. Having escaped from Inveraray, he forgets the Children of the Mist are bowmen and not musketeers, and tells them to

'leave some lighted matches burning on the branches of the trees - it shows as if they were lined with shot.' (p. 217)

The success of the armies of the Parliament in the Civil Wars was in large part due to the firelock.<sup>31</sup> If this weapon had reached the Highlands by 1644, even as a fowling-piece, it would not have been

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30. Turner, op. cit., Part First, p. 59,

31. See C.H. Firth, Cromwell's Army, (London, 1902), chap. IV.

relegated to a wall. But Scott may be setting up a symbol of the old and the new, with the Highlands ignorant of the advantages of the new weapons.

The Darnlinvarach table cannot boast the plentiful variety of the Tully-Veolan table. But although the fare is plain, social segregation is still enforced by spaces between settings. Such is Highland pride. Enter Allan McAulay, as if in a trance.

An air of gloomy severity, the fruit perhaps of ascetic and solitary habits, might, in a Lowlander, have been ascribed to religious fanaticism; but by that disease of the mind, then so common both in England and the Lowlands of Scotland, the Highlanders of this period were rarely infected. They had, however, their own peculiar superstitions, which overclouded the mind with thickcoming fancies, as completely as the puritanism of their neighbours. (pp. 42-43)

As has been stated, James of Ardvoirlich is the historical prototype of Allan McAulay, and the story of the severed head<sup>32</sup> and the temporarily deranged mother, fictively embellished, is told by Menteith. We learn of the ancient and deadly feud between the McAulays and the Children of the Mist, a feud now conducted singlehanded by the distracted Allan. Add to this the diminutive and exquisite Annot Lyle, saved from Allan's dirk by Menteith's 'earnest entreaty' (p. 71). Like Flora Mac-Ivor in Waverley, Annot strums the harp to charm male auditors. This beautiful spoil from a McAulay raid is an orphan, her parentage a secret of the chief of the Children of the Mist. Both Menteith and Allan play for her hand. Such is the tattered romantic fabric of this tale of strong and

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32. This story of the severed head is also to be found in The Cid. See Scott's review of Southey's edition in the Quarterly Review, February 1809, p. 135.

rational Montrose, a disastrous element introduced by Scott to give his story the widest possible appeal. By so doing he diminishes historical authenticity.

Likewise with Dalgetty's seizure by, and imprisonment by the Marquis of Argyll. Scott's portrayal of Argyll detaining an ambassador is in line with his estimation of Argyll's character in the Introduction. Dalgetty's descent into an Inveraray dungeon which he shares with Ranald MacEagh, chief of the Children of the Mist is an unconvincing plot convention. The disguised Argyll's visit to the dungeon, and his apprehension by Dalgetty is an absurdity. To Scott, Argyll is entirely evil. The grisly symbol is seen by Dalgetty as he enters Inveraray.

At the gate of the castle another terrible spectacle of feudal power awaited him. Within a stockade or palisado, which seemed lately to have been added to the defences of the gate, and which was protected by two pieces of light artillery, was a small enclosure, where stood a huge block, on which lay an axe. Both were smeared with recent blood, and a quantity of saw-dust strewn around, partly retained and partly obliterated the marks of a very late execution. (p. 161)

To return to Darnlinvarach. The episode in which Musgrave bets the chief of McAulay that he has the bigger stock of silver, and in which Allan provides human candelabra, huge Highlanders with pine torches, is (as Scott acknowledges in a note) from a well-attested legend of the Keppoch family.<sup>33</sup> It is appropriate here, since the McAulay badge is pine. It shows Scott using oral tradition to advantage, since the episode is well presented and integrated, and it also gives him the opportunity to assert a fundamental law of Highland pride. Cancelling the bet, though it has been won, Allan

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33. Scott was fond of this anecdote, for it is told in the 1816 Culloden Papers Review.

speaks for his brother, the chief:

'It is enough that you claim no right to extract from him what is his own.' (p. 52)

The convention of chiefs at Darnlinvarach at which Montrose (hitherto Anderson the servant) casts off his disguise and exhibits his commission is fanciful, as is the presence of Sir Duncan Campbell, ambassador from Argyll, who proposes a mutual abstention from plunder. But as Anderson points out, Rae in his history of the '15 refers to a conference between rebel chiefs and a Sir Duncan Campbell, in which the rebels and not Campbell propose that no plundering should occur.<sup>34</sup> We see, therefore, that Scott (continuing his method in earlier Highland works) is shifting written material back one century for his Montrose tale, as well as incorporating oral Highland legends.

Scott seems to be incorporating material from his 1814 Lighthouse Yacht voyage. Ardenvohr, Sir Duncan Campbell's castle,

a gloomy square tower, of considerable size and great height, situated upon a headland projecting into the salt-water lake, or arm of the sea (p. 134

seems to be modelled on Dunstaffnage Castle, as Finden's engraving in the Magnum Opus edition suggests. Scott inspected this garrison in 1814.<sup>35</sup> It is here that Dalgetty is taken, prior to going to

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34. P. Rae, The History of the Rebellion; Rais'd against His Majesty King George I. By the Friends of the Popish Pretender. (London, 1746), pp. 288-9. ALC., 1718 and 1746 eds. Anderson, op. cit., Pt. IV, p. 14.

35. 'It is square in form, with round towers at three of the angles, and is situated upon a lofty precipice, carefully scraped out on all sides to render it perpendicular.' Dunstaffnage, 1 Sept. 1814. Lockhart, Life, p. 290.

In his study of Dunstaffnage Castle and the Stone of Destiny (Edinburgh, 1958), Dr Douglas Simpson argues that Scott was not the first novelist to take Dunstaffnage as a model for fiction. According to Simpson, Smollett beat Scott to Dunstaffnage, for



Inveraray. Inevitably, Sir Duncan is given a lecture on the defences of his garrison, with Dalgetty echoing the Master of Sinclair on the fortification of Perth.<sup>36</sup>

Recollecting schoolboy days in Edinburgh, Scott wrote:

I hated Presbyterians, and admired Montrose with his  
victorious Highlanders. 37

The extensive armoury of Abbotsford contained the sword a grateful Charles I had given to Montrose, which Scott treasured.<sup>38</sup> The description of the Royalist hero in A Legend of Montrose is a verbal portrait based on the painting by Honthorst for the Queen of Bohemia, in the collection of the Earl of Dalhousie. Scott describes him as he welcomes the Highland chiefs individually.

While he was engaged in these acts of courtesy, his graceful manner, expressive features, and dignity of deportment, made a singular contrast with the coarseness and meanness of his dress. (p. 104)

The 'constitution of iron,' the strength despite middle stature, and the uneven brown locks are noted. He is in striking contrast to the squinting Marquis of Argyll, Gilleasbuig Gruamach (Gillespie the Sullen), after his father. Scott eulogises on a greater Marquis:

Simpson is convinced that the castle in which Jeremiah Melford stopped at to attend a funeral and 'hunt the roebuck' was Dunstaffnage. In fact, using Smollett's fictive description, Simpson postulates the existence of a building (of which there is now no trace) between the gatehouse and the north-east tower. For this fascinating piece of research, see Simpson, pp. 57-60.

36. Anderson, op. cit., Pt. IV, pp. 17-18. Sinclair, Memoirs, pp. 197-99.

37. Autobiographical fragment, Lockhart's Life, p. 9.

38. 'I think a dialogue between this same sword and Rob Roy's gun might be composed with good effect.' Letter to Joanna Baillie, 4 April, 1812. Grierson, Letters, vol. III, p. 100.

Montrose might be termed rather a handsome, than a hard-featured man. But those who saw him when his soul looked through those eyes with all the energy and fire of genius - those who heard him speak with the authority of talent, and the eloquence of nature, were impressed with an opinion even of his external form, more enthusiastically favourable than the portraits which still survive would entitle us to ascribe to it. (p. 105)

In contrast to the ubiquitous Dalgetty, Montrose makes few appearances in the novel that bears his name. The episode of Montrose's brilliant military career selected for special treatment is the battle of Inverlochy, possibly his greatest achievement, since he was forced to march through the winter mountains to avoid being trapped between Baillie and Argyll. The Campbell chief panted for revenge, since Montrose and his fierce ragged Irish soldiery had appeared out of the hills above Inveraray, and streamed down to sack the township. Buchan's opinion is that

There seems to have been no special barbarity about the treatment of Inveraray. Here and there a refractory Campbell may have been dirked, but Alasdair's men sought victuals and cattle rather than blood. 39

Bishop Wishart dispassionately records the sack of Inveraray, and excuses it on the biblical injunction of an eye for an eye: the Irish under Colkitto

spared none that were fit to carry arms, and, in particular, they put to the sword all the men whom they met going in arms to the rendezvous appointed by Argyle; nor did they desist till they had driven all the men who were fit for service out of the country, or at least obliged them to retire to lurking holes known to none but themselves. They drove all their cattle, and burnt down their villages and cottages to the ground; thus retaliating upon Argyle the treatment he had given to others, he himself being the first

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39. Buchan, op. cit., p. 218.

who had practised this cruel method of waging war against the innocent country people by fire and devastation. 40

Argyll himself escaped by water, and Scott maintains that the punishment

fell heavily upon his country and clan, and the ravages committed by Montrose on that devoted land, although too consistent with the genius of the country and times, have been repeatedly and justly quoted as a blot on his actions and character. (p. 258)

Then Inverlochy. Scott's account is a detailed one, from the march through the mountains to victory on the shore. The framework is accepted historical accounts, on which is superimposed the hypothetical speech of actual historical personalities, and the fictive speech and actions of 'created' characters such as Dalgetty. The battle of Inverlochy stands as a self-contained and effective scene, and even the absurd Dalgetty is absorbed and rendered credible in the action.

The Chiefs of Glengarry, Keppoch and Lochiel, whose clans, equal in courage and military fame to any in the Highlands (p. 268)

answer the fiery cross to support the hard pressed Montrose. Argyll in his camp asks:

'what signifies it by whose hands the blood of the Grahames is spilt?' (p. 270)

Scott's focus moves easily from the individual to the massed armies. 'It was the second of February, 1645-46' (p. 272). Trumpets blaring, Montrose's Highland/Irish force descends to where the anxious Campbells muster on the shore.

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40. Wishart, op. cit., p. 108.

Their strife was accordingly desperate; and the clash of the swords and axes, as they encountered each other, or rung upon the targets, was mingled with the short, wild, animating shrieks with which Highlanders accompany the battle, the dance, or indeed violent exertion of any kind. (p. 278)

Wishart on Inverlochy:

Montrose's men fell in upon them furiously sword in hand, with a great shout, and advanced with such impetuosity, that they soon routed the whole army, and put them to flight, and pursued them for about nine miles, making a dreadful slaughter all the say. 41

In both poetry and prose, Scott has no equal in portraying battle scenes, and Inverlochy is a masterly reconstruction. Dalgetty loses his horse, but gains a knighthood. Ranald MacEagh is almost slain by Allan McAulay, and Sir Duncan Campbell made a prisoner. Scott uses victory to bring his story to a satisfactory conclusion. Once again Argyll escapes by water, leaving the Campbells to their fate,

And, in the opinion of many of the clan, even this heavy loss was exceeded by the disgrace arising from the inglorious conduct of their Chief. (p. 288)

Once again cautious Buchan must be quoted to challenge Scott's strong assertion.

Argyll had been persuaded by the Campbell chiefs to retire to his lymphad and take no part in the coming battle. There was little reason why he should, and charges of cowardice are foolish. Auchinbreck, not he, was in command; he was not by physique a useful fighting man, and he was still suffering from a damaged shoulder; he was the chief pillar of the Covenant in Scotland, and the head of a great clan; for him to risk his life, sword in hand, against desperate men was against every counsel of prudence and common sense. 42

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41. Wishart, op. cit., p. 113.

42. Buchan, op. cit., p. 225.

The dying chief of the Children of the Mist announces that Annot Lyle is Sir Duncan Campbell's sole surviving child. Menteith is to marry her, though the moody Allan loves her. Since the beginning of the story Allan has been haunted by a vision of

'a Gael, who seemed to plunge his weapon into the body of Menteith,' (p. 253)

and Ranald of the Mist, also a seer, has warned that it is Allan's own hand that will do the deed. The superstitious are satisfied, for Allan does dirk the bridegroom Menteith, but there is a subtle symbol here. Menteith is unharmed because he is wearing 'a light and ornamented cuirass' (p. 330) belonging to Dalgetty and concealed by a 'velvet coat.' Thus the armour of Gustavus's absurd disciple can deflect fate.

What is wrong with A Legend of Montrose? The answer lies in its length and structure. As has been said, Scott needed space to develop such a complicated if predictable plot, and this he denied himself, because the story was paired with The Bride of Lammermoor in the Third Series of Tales of my Landlord, and market size was satisfied. For the composition of A Legend of Montrose, an actual historical period was selected, with accompanying characters, and to this structure was added 'created' incidents and characters. Add to this temporal expansion and contraction for comic and dramatic purposes, and the 'filling in' of historical episodes. The result is that fact and fiction do not fuse. Indeed, far too much, in terms of time and incident, is packed into this short novel, and in places its dull historical stretches anticipate the Tales of a Grandfather. We might have had far more of the ragged but fearless Irish under their huge red-haired leader Colkitto Macdonald, a

legendary figure, for the Irish who cast stones when their crude weapons broke were the backbone of Montrose's army. We might have had far less of Dalgetty, superstition and romance, for, as the Inverlochy battle scene shows, Scott was capable of restaging battles for us.

Predictably, the reviews were far from laudatory. The Anti-jacobin Review for August 1819 dismissed the work in a single sentence, stating that if the reader 'nods over Montrose, he may well be excused.' The Monthly Review or Literary Journal for the same month took a similar line:

the story has little or no interest, and we therefore see no necessity for analysing it, the author himself having probably considered it rather as a picture of manners. (p. 399)

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine for June 1819 thought that Allan McAulay's 'gift' of the second sight

is not the means of producing a very impressive effect, although he has otherwise a good deal to do in the story. (p. 352)

The Quarterly Review did not deal with A Legend of Montrose until October 1821, in a general review of 'Novels, by the Author of Waverley.' The reviewer points out that in three years 'a line of three-and-twenty new novels has covered our table.' The Bride of Lammermoor is 'a tragedy of the highest order,' but A Legend of Montrose

will not detain us so long as its predecessors. It is, we think, inferior to them all. The plot, if it can be called one, is a fragment of the history of Montrose, without middle or end; to which two or three well-known stories of no great merit ... are, with new names and dates, inartificially stuck on. (p. 126)

Dalgetty is 'perhaps the best drawn character,' and McAulay and

MacEagh 'would have been fine characters in a poem.' The dying MacEagh's injunction to his son Kenneth to avenge the clan and continue the feud with the McAulays is questioned.

One cannot believe MacEagh's parting injunction to have been delivered - but it is a beautiful piece of Ossianic declamation. His vengeance on Allan McAulay is perhaps too artificial and too sentimental for the contriver - particularly as two of his enemies were to gain by it, much more than McAulay was to lose. (pp. 126-27)

Yet Coleridge, not the kindest of critics, judged A Legend of Montrose to be one of Scott's finest works because of the presence of Dalgetty. In marginalia he asserted:

If Sir Walter Scott could on any fair ground be compared with Shakespeare, I should select the character of Dalgetty as best supporting the claim. Brave, enterprising, intrepid, brisk to act, stubborn in endurance: these qualities, virtues in a soldier, grounded on wrong principles, but yet principles. Wrong / ? / indeed, but clear, intelligible, and of precalculable influence and in all circumstances coercive; and unbent by accident. I exceedingly admire Captain Dalgetty. 43

A Legend of Montrose has attracted much less modern criticism than the larger Highland works like Waverley and Rob Roy, but Francis Hart has made several interesting observations on the main characters. He argues that

Dalgetty is a guide used as a central observer. To judge him as hero is as much of a mistake as to judge Reuben Butter as hero in The Heart of Midlothian.<sup>44</sup>

Continuing his shrewd analysis, Hart cautions that Dalgetty is

'too big' for the book because he is neither rhetorically nor thematically suited to its personal center,<sup>45</sup>

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43. Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. T.M. Raysor (London, 1936), p. 328.

44. Hart, op. cit., p. 119.

45. Ibid., p. 123.

meaning that the story is out of focus. As for Allan McAulay, he

has come to represent in extreme form the heir whose whole identity is a fanatic projection of ancestral inhumanity, uniquely Highland in its force. 46

In mitigation of the failings of A Legend of Montrose, it must be pointed out that Scott was a sick man while the story was being written. The conscientious clerk was absent from his table at the Court of Session, and the policies of Abbotsford resounded with the agonies caused by gall-stones. Scott lay on a sofa, dictating to William Laidlaw and John Ballantyne. In the late spring of 1819 Lockhart visited him at Abbotsford. John Ballantyne had warned Lockhart that Scott's appearance was changed,

but it was far beyond what I had been led to anticipate. He had lost a great deal of flesh - his clothes hung loose about him - his countenance was meagre, haggard, and of the deadliest yellow of the jaundice - and his hair, which a few weeks before had been but slightly sprinkled with grey, was now almost literally snow-white. 47

Though Scott's decline in health and strength dated from this period, he could not stop writing because the urge was strong within him, and because Abbotsford was proving an endless expense. As regards the Highlands, there would be no more works for eight years. Redgauntlet (1824) cannot be considered as a Highland novel. Three years later Scott would produce two Highland stories which, taken together, are shorter than A Legend of Montrose, and because he had learned to discipline his material, he produced masterpieces.

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46. Hart, op. cit., p. 120.

47. Lockhart, Life, p. 398.



· THE HIGHLAND WIDOW

and

THE TWO DROVERS

In November 1825 Scott began to keep a journal, dutifully writing it up almost every day, and recording in it often trivial details of his day to day personal life as well as his diverse literary activities. He was then at the zenith of his fame as a man of letters, applauded by all Europe, the creator of a new genre in historical fiction. Abbotsford was more or less complete, and he was on intimate terms with the greatest in the land, the king included. Yet within a few months Scott's comfortable world was to crumble, and little would be salvaged. The ruin to himself and others is truthfully and painfully recorded in the Journal, a literary masterpiece as well as a document of great insight and integrity. Lockhart was certain that his father-in-law intended his Journal for the eyes of the world. He told Croker in 1853 that in his will Scott

distinctly directs what shall be done with the money that his executors shall obtain in respect of this and other manuscripts. 1

The Journal was yet another literary form for Scott therefore, but there are limitations to what a man will commit to paper, and especially if his factual writing of a personal nature is destined for publication. W. K. Anderson, editor of a splendid (and, one hopes, at last definitive) edition of the Journal argues that Scott

is much franker - and ruder - in his correspondence than in his Journal. For the characters of Mrs. Jobson, or Mrs. Thomas Scott, or his cousin Maxpople you have to go to the Letters; you can make no guess at them from the Journal. Obviously he had one eye on future publication, and had no wish to cause embarrassment to the people he wrote about or to his

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1. The Correspondence and Diaries of J.W. Croker, ed. L.J. Jennings, (London, 1884), vol. III, p. 294.

own family.<sup>2</sup>

He is, predictably, hardest on himself in the Journal.

The years 1825 and 1826 mark the two major tragedies of Scott's life. As 1825 ended it was evident that Ballantyne and Company, the Edinburgh printing firm in which he had long been a sleeping partner would go to the wall, brought down by ebullient Constable, and by the precarious state of the London money market. The complex story of Scott's crash is beyond the scope of this study. Eric Quayle has carefully researched it in The Ruin of Sir Walter Scott, but it is doubtful if the full story will ever be known. Sufficient to say that Scott was guilty of giving momentum to the insane merry-go-round of the promissory note by drawing against works still to be written. Abbotsford was built on bonds.

The stark Journal entry for Sunday, 18 December 1825 reads:

Ballantyne calld on me this morning. Venit illa  
suprema dies.<sup>3</sup> My extremity is come. Cadell has received letters from London which all but positively announce the failure of Hurst and Robinson so that Constable and Coy must follow and I must go with poor James Ballantyne for company. I suppose it will involve my all. 4

He admits his failings, but has faith in his ability to discharge his debts.

I have been rash in anticipating funds to buy land. But then I made from £5000 to £10,000 a year, and land was my temptation. I think no body can lose a penny, that is one comfort - Men will think pride has had a fall. Let them indulge their own pride in thinking that my fall makes them higher or seem

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2. Anderson, Journal, Intro., p. xviii.

3. 'That final day has come.'

4. Journal, pp. 38-39.

so at least. I have the satisfaction to recollect that my prosperity has been of advantage to many and that some at least will forgive my transient wealth on account of the innocence of my intentions and my real wish to do good to the poor. 5

Scott was being slightly premature with his confession, for the crash did not come until the middle of the first month of the new year. Scott's liability was a staggering £116,000. But instead of taking the easy exit of insolvency,<sup>6</sup> Scott was insistent that he would pay off his debts with his pen. A private trust was created, and Scott settled at his desk to trap inspiration. His high standard of living would have to fall dramatically, and his literary income go to the trust, but wily Cadell, who somehow survived the Constable bankruptcy, would keep him supplied with small sums for extras with a view to securing the copyright of all his works.

Death came hard on the heels of bankruptcy. Lady Scott had long been ailing with dropsy. She was sinking fast, and yet Scott left Abbotsford for Edinburgh, perhaps fleeing the grief he could not avoid. On Tuesday, 16 May 1826 he recorded in his Journal:

She died at nine in the morning after being very ill for two days - easy at last. 7

He was heartbroken, certainly, but we remember that he had once con-

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5. Journal, p. 39.

6. But bankruptcy would have involved the disposal of the treasured contents of Abbotsford, though not the property itself, which Scott had settled on his son. On 18 December he writes in his Journal: 'Yet to save Abbotsford I would attempt all that was possible. My heart clings to the place I have created.' The transfer of Abbotsford to his son throws a shadow on Scott's business practices, and takes him out of the ranks of the innocent, since he must have known Ballantyne and Company's precarious state.

7. Journal, p. 144.

fessed to Lady Abercorn in a letter:

Mrs. Scott's match and mine was of our own making and proceeded from the most sincere affection on both sides which has rather increased than diminished during twelve years' marriage. But it was something short of love in all its fervour which I suspect people only feel once in their lives. Folks who have been nearly drowned in bathing rarely venturing a second time out of their depth. 8

Despite death, and in order to begin the discharge of his massive debts, Scott resumed the pen. We are fortunate in being able to follow his creative proposals through the dense pages of the Journal. He was deep in his monumental Life of Napoleon which had been commissioned by Constable, but which would eventually be adjudged the property of Scott's trust. He was also searching for short fictive themes, and he hit on a Highland idea. The Journal entry for Saturday, 27 May 1826 reads:

A sleepless night - It is time I should be up and be doing and a sleepless night sometimes furnishes good ideas. Alas! I have no companion now with whom I can communicate to relieve the loneliness of these watches of the night. But I must not fail myself and my family and the necessity of exertion becomes apparent. I must try a hors d'oeuvre, something that can go on between the necessary intervals of Nap. Mrs. M.K.'s tale of the Deserter with her interview of the lad's mother may be made most affecting but will hardly endure much expansion. The frame work may be a highland Tour under the guardianship of the sort of postilion whom Mrs. M.K. described to me - a species of conductor who regulated the motions of his company, made their halts and was their Cicerone. 9

'Mrs. M.K.' was Mrs Murray Keith, landed proprietrix, an 'excellent friend'<sup>10</sup> of Scott's. She seems to have travelled extensively

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8. Grierson, Letters, vol. II, p. 287.

9. Journal, p. 150.

10. Introduction to Chronicles of the Canongate, p. xxxii, n. The Walpole Collection shows that she was a constant correspondent, by no means forced into a formal and servile role by Scott's ever increasing reputation. In fact, she sounds like a maiden aunt,

in Scotland, and given Scott an account of her observations. He duly acknowledges his debt to the lady in his Introduction to Chronicles of the Canongate:

In truth, the author had, on many occasions, been indebted to her vivid memory for the substratum of his Scottish fictions - and she accordingly has been, from an early period at no loss to fix the Waverley Novels on the right culprit. (pp. xxxii-iii)

Mrs Murray Keith recounted to Scott her 'tale of the Deserter' which she heard on a Highland tour. She was an artistic source for Scott, as Alexander of Invernahyle had been in the author's early days. But it was not a case of her recounted tale being transferred straight to paper, as the Journal entry for the following day, Sunday, 28 May shows. She supplied the framework, and Scott filled in, though he feared that his subject had been too well treated in fiction, by himself and others.

I wrote a few pages yesterday and then walkd. I believe the description of the old Scottish lady may do but the change has been unceasingly rung upon Scottish subjects of late and it strikes me that the introductory matter may be considered as an imitation of Washington Irving. Yet not so neither - in short, I will go on today, make a dozen of close pages ready, and take J. B's<sup>11</sup> advice. I intend the work as an olla podrida into which any species of narrative or discussion may be thrown. I wrote easily. 12

Mrs. Murray Keith had become Mrs Bethune Baliol, an 'old Scottish lady,' and the 'tale of the Deserter' was to be called The Highland Widow. Journal entries for Sunday, 18 June, and the following

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and can scold as well as praise. 'Dear Minstrel,' she addresses him, and the whole tone of her correspondence suggests that she was close to Scott. But her writing is very bad.

11. James Ballantyne.
12. Journal, pp. 150-51.

Wednesday<sup>13</sup> show that the story is going well. On Thursday 22 June one-third of volume one was completed and dispatched to Cadell.<sup>14</sup> By Friday 30 June he could record that about half of the first volume was done.<sup>15</sup> On Friday, 7 July he was correcting proofs,<sup>16</sup> but the following day he noted:

Wrote a good task this morning - I may be mistaken but I do think the Tale of Elspat McTavish in my bettermost manner but J.B. roars for chivalry; he does not quite understand that everything may be overdone in this world or sufficiently estimate the necessity of novelty. The highlanders have been off the field now for some time.

17

Scott had learnt the lesson of thematic over-exposure, and this was one instance in which James Ballantyne would be proved wrong. By Sunday, 9 July Scott reports that he is near the end of the first volume. But he was short of money.<sup>18</sup> There is no Journal entry for Saturday, 5 August, but on that day Scott wrote Cadell, asking him to pay £250, half the money promised for Chronicles of the Canongate.<sup>19</sup>

Scott seems to have put the Chronicles aside, to work on his Life of Napoleon, and perhaps to rest. On Sunday, 1 October he is at Abbotsford. He records good progress on Napoleon.

And then I will try something at my Canongate. They talk about the pitcher going to the well but if it goes not to the well how shall we get water? It will bring home none when it stands on the shelf I trow. 20

On Sunday, 8 October Cadell sent the second instalment (in bills and

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| 13. <u>Journal</u> , p. 159 and p. 160.                                    | 14. <u>Ibid.</u> , p. 161. |
| 15. <u>Ibid.</u> , p. 165.   | 16. <u>Ibid.</u> , p. 168. |
| 17. <u>Ibid.</u> , pp. 168-69.   | 18. <u>Ibid.</u> , p. 170. |
| 19. <u>Journal</u> , p. 181, and Grierson, <u>Letters</u> , vol. X, p. 88. |                            |
| 20. <u>Journal</u> , p. 206.   |                            |

money) of the advance on the Chronicles.<sup>21</sup> On Tuesday, 17 October there is an enigmatic Journal entry. Scott is in London.

I am something like Captain Bobadil who trained up a hundred gentlemen to fight very nearly if not altogether as well as myself. And so far I am convinced of this that I believe were I to publish Canongate Chronicles without my name (nomme de guerre I mean) the event would be a corollary to the fable of the peasant who made the real pig squeak against the imitator while the sapient audience hissed the poor grunter as if inferior to the biped in his own language. 22

Scott is having a change of heart. The original plan was to publish the Chronicles in a small edition for Scott's own benefit, and with no indication as to authorship. But he had sufficient business acumen to see that an edition of 8,000 by the author of Waverley would bring his trust £2,000, and £500 to himself.<sup>23</sup>

Cadell advanced a further £123 on the Chronicles, thus completing the second advance.<sup>24</sup> Back in Edinburgh, on Monday, 28 May 1827 Scott records that he is working hard. Napoleon was nearing completion, and thereafter?

What shall I have to think of when I lie down at night and awake in the morning? What will be my plague and my pastime? my curse and my blessing as ideas come and the pulse rises or as they flag and some thing like a snow haze covers my whole imagination. I have my highland tales - and then - never mind, sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. 25

On Thursday, 21 June 1827, Scott records that he has finished 'five leaves' of The Two Drovers, the last story in volume one of the Chronicles.<sup>26</sup> Five pages were written on Monday, 25 June.<sup>27</sup> By

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21. Journal, p. 209.

22. Ibid., pp. 213-14.

23. Journal, p. 214, n.

25. Ibid., p. 310.

24. Journal, p. 306.

26. Ibid., p. 318.

27. Ibid., p. 320.



Tuesday, 3 July he was working on the Introduction.<sup>28</sup> It was dispatched to James Ballantyne on Thursday, 5 July. He is not 'happy' because he has 'bile'.<sup>29</sup> Saturday, 7 July:

I workd away at the Chronicles. I will take pains with them. I will by Jove. 30

On Sunday, 15 July he was at Abbotsford, and could write with obvious satisfaction:

Achieved six pages to-day and finishd vol 1 of Chronicles. It is rather long but I think the last story /The Two Drovers/ interesting and it should not be split up into parts. J.B. will I fear think it low; and if he thinks so others will. 31

The following Sunday he recorded tersely:

James Ballantyne dislikes my drovers. But it shall stand. I must have my own way sometimes. 32

On Wednesday, 15 August he wrote 'nearly five pages' of the Chronicles at Abbotsford.<sup>33</sup> At last, on Sunday, 16 September, he could record in the Journal:

The Ladies went to church. I God forgive me finishd the Chronicles with a good deal assistance from Colonel Fergusson's notes about Indian affairs.

34

The First Series of the Chronicles of the Canongate was published in two volumes in November, 1827.<sup>35</sup> Though the work was as usual attributed to 'the Author of "Waverley" &c' on the title page, Scott

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28. Journal, p. 323.

29. Ibid., p. 324.

30. Ibid., p. 325.

31. Ibid., p. 328.

32. Journal, p. 331. For Scott's uncompromising reply, see Grierson, Letters, vol. X, p. 263.

33. Journal, p. 341.

34. Ibid., p. 352.

35. Lockhart, Life, p. 671.

shed his nominis umbra in an Introduction, thereby acknowledging his authorship of all the previous works. The Introduction opens in a light mood, taking its imagery from the world of the clown. Having suggested that his unmasking may 'endanger his popularity,' Scott insists that it is not a 'voluntary experiment,'

for it was my original intention never to have avowed these works during my lifetime, and the original manuscripts were carefully preserved, (though by the care of others rather than mine,) with the purpose of supplying the necessary evidence of the truth when the period of announcing it should arrive.<sup>36</sup> But the affairs of my publishers having unfortunately passed into a management different from their own, I had no right any longer to rely upon secrecy in that quarter.

(p. x)

But Scott does not tell his reader that he was a secret partner in his publishers, and that the 'management' changed because they went bankrupt, partly through his extravagance.

Scott unmask himself in the Introduction because Lord Meadowbank unmasked him (with Scott's consent) at the Theatrical Fund dinner in Edinburgh on 23 February 1827.<sup>37</sup> It was an anticlimax, of course, since even before the bankruptcy most people accepted that Scott was the anonymous author. But the unmasking before a mass audience, his readers, was a shrewd move, likely to boost sales and make money for his trust, since his financial embarrassment had been

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36. Scott shows his flair for advertising by adding a footnote to the *Magnum Opus* Introduction to the effect that his manuscripts were on the market. He calls it 'an addition, though a small one, to other annoyances.' Cadell and Scott's trustees bought back the copyrights of his earlier novels from Constable's trustees for £8,400 (see Journal entry, 20 December, 1827). But the actual manuscripts, which Scott had gifted to Constable, were sold for a few hundred pounds. Waverley fetched £18, and Rob Roy the top price of £50.

37. There is no Journal entry for this date.

given wide coverage by the newspapers and by rumour.

In his Introduction Scott thanks those who supplied him with material for writing.

I am bound to acknowledge, with gratitude, hints of subjects and legends which I have received from various quarters, and have occasionally used as a foundation of my fictitious compositions, or woven up with them in the shape of episodes. (pp. xii-iii)

He cites another source, for

Old and odd books, and a considerable collection of family legends, formed another quarry, so ample, that it was much more likely that the strength of the labourer should be exhausted, than that materials should fail. (p. xv)

He then proceeds to explain the origins of certain characters and incidents in his fiction. The story of Stewart of Invernahyle's activities in the '45, a source for Waverley, is repeated, but this time Scott says he heard it from Lord Kinedder.<sup>38</sup>

By the time he came to write the Second Series of the Chronicles of the Canongate, Scott had absorbed a massive amount of material on the Highlands through reading and conversation, and so he did not require reference works by his elbow to aid creativity. But the study of history is a constant process. Thus, as new books about aspects of the Highlands came on the market, they were read (and sometimes reviewed) before being added to the Abbotsford library. Inevitably information from the new publications was incorporated into Scott's fiction, and though it would be dangerous to assert that a new book prompted the writing of The Highland Widow and The Two Drovers, it is

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38. Here Scott ascribes the anonymous review of Tales of my Landlord in the Quarterly Review for January 1817 to Lord Kinedder, with Scott supplying certain information. Lord Kinedder's surname is Erskine.

clear that Scott drew heavily on Colonel David Stewart of Garth's two volumed Sketches of the Character, Manners, and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland which appeared from Constable in 1822. Colonel Stewart's work contains a mass of military information which must have been helpful to Scott, particularly in the composition of The Highland Widow. This is shown by Croftangry's introductory remark that

Much might have been made at an earlier time out of the history of a Highland regiment. (p. 240)

In turn Colonel Stewart pays tribute to 'the author of those exquisite pictures of life called the Scotch Novels' through his exhibition of 'the pleasing, the homely customs of our common nature.'<sup>39</sup>

The Magnum Opus edition of the stories comprising the Chronicles of the Canongate is heavily buttressed by Introductions and an Appendix to an Introduction. The aforementioned 1827 Introduction is preceded by a shorter one in which Scott explains his financial misfortunes.

In the pen of this nameless romancer, I seemed to possess something like the secret fountain of coined gold and pearls vouchsafed to the traveller of the Eastern Tale; and no doubt believed that I might venture, without silly impudence, to extend my personal expenditure beyond what I should have thought of, had my means been limited to the competence which I derived from inheritance, with the moderate income of a professional situation. (p. iv)

Considering that Abbotsford, the great public symbol of his success, was safe from his creditors, his assertion of renunciation in the face of financial ruin is scarcely accurate.

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39. Stewart, op. cit., vol. II, p. 444. ALC.

The author having, however rashly, committed his pledges thus largely to the hazards of trading companies, it behoved him, of course, to abide the consequences of his conduct, and, with whatever feelings, he surrendered on the instant every shred of property which he had been accustomed to call his own. 40

(pp. v-vi)

The transmission of The Highland Widow, the first story in the series, is via several hands. Donald MacLeish the postilion tells it to Mrs Bethune Baliol, and she passes it on to Mr Chrystal Croftangry, who relays it to the reader. The history of Croftangry forms a long and for the most part irrelevant run-in to the story of the 'Deserter.' Scott seems to be continuing in the same vein of the Introductions by appearing to draw on autobiographical material, sometimes of a painful nature. Croftangry is a young Edinburgh lawyer. He courts 'expensive society' in the city, and lavishes money on field sports at his Lanarkshire house.

My course of life could not last. I ran too fast to run long; and when I would have checked my career, I was perhaps too near the brink of the precipice.

(p. 5)

He becomes familiar with that part of Holyrood which was

a place of refuge at any time from all pursuit for civil debt. (p. 6)

As the Chronicles of the Canongate were about to go out to the world, Scott was being hounded by one Abud, a Jewish broker, for the sum of £1,500. Scott spent several sleepless nights awaiting the outcome.

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40. Though the terms of the trust were harsh, they gradually eased as income from Scott's pen paid dividends. Ironically, it was Sir William Forbes, who had won Williamina Belsches, who was made chairman of the creditors. Scott paid a dividend of 3s in the pound in December 1830, and could record in his Journal: 'the Creditors have testified their sense of my labours by surrendering my books, furniture, plate and curiosities' (p. 613).

On 1 November 1827 he wrote in his Journal:

I suppose that I, the Chronicler of the Canongate, will have to take up my residence in the Sanctuary for a week or so unless I prefer the more airy residence of the Calton jail or a trip to the Isle of Man. 41

But Sir William Forbes bought up Abud's bills and added them to the debts due to his bank.

The ruined Croftangry seeks and finds fortune abroad. He returns, and decides to buy back his estate, but local opinion is against him. The excesses of his youth have not been forgotten. Instead, he sets up house in the Canongate, and turns his attention to literary matters. Mrs Bethune Baliol, 'a person of quality and fortune' (p. 91) and 'an old Jacobite' (p. 114) agrees to help the aspiring author. She has lived long and has travelled extensively. Therefore she should be a fund of stories. Croftangry appeals to her:

'The Highlands,' I suggested, 'should furnish you with ample subjects of recollection. You have witnessed the complete change of that primeval country, and have seen a race not far removed from the earliest period of society, melted down into the great mass of civilisation; and that could not happen without incidents striking in themselves, and curious as chapters in the history of the human race.'

'It is very true,' said Mrs. Baliol; 'one would think it should have struck the observers greatly, and yet it scarcely did so. For me, I was no Highlander myself, and the Highland chiefs of old, of whom I certainly knew several, had little in their manners to distinguish them from the Lowland gentry, when they mixed in society in Edinburgh, and assumed the Lowland dress. Their peculiar character was for the clansmen at home; and you must not imagine that they swaggered about in plaids and broadswords at the Cross, or came to the Assembly-Rooms in bonnets and kilts.' (pp. 114-15)

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41. Journal, p. 371. This was no spurious fear, for Abud was in earnest.

Scott is remembering his own literary career when he makes Mrs Baliol say:

'And you want to turn composer, my good friend, and set my old tales to some popular tune? But there have been too many composers, if that be the word, in the field before. The Highlands were indeed a rich mine; but they have, I think, been fairly wrought out, as a good tune is grinded into vulgarity when it descends to the hurdy-gurdy and the barrel-organ.' (pp. 116-17)

Though Croftangry manages to persuade her to make her memory available to him, he has to wait for the material. It is not until after her death that a packet is delivered to him. It contains 'several anecdotes respecting the Highlands' (p. 118) and the first one he transmits to us is The Highland Widow. It may be called an extended short story, since it runs to over one hundred pages. The 'memorandum' opens as a travelogue, and the period recalled is after the '45, with the Highlands pacified by Hanoverian rule. Mrs Baliol admits that 'the short Highland tour'

had become in some degree fashionable; but though the military roads were excellent, yet the accommodation was so indifferent that it was reckoned a little adventure to accomplish it, (p. 123)

a view shared by the majority of her fellow travellers, Dr Johnson included.<sup>42</sup> The stout lexicographer went on horseback, but Mrs Baliol is the more affluent traveller, a genteel female taking a carriage and post-horses north, and being directed by a guide.

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42. Leaving Fort Augustus on horseback, Johnson gave money to soldiers working on the road, in appreciation of its hard and level surface (Journey, pp. 73-74). But when he reached Glenelg Inn his mood changed. The first fault was that 'of the provisions, the negative catalogue was very copious,' and then the man 'black as a Cyclops from the forge' started up out of a bed the English travellers were to occupy (Journey, pp. 105-106).

Donald MacLeish was one of a race of post-boys, whom, I suppose, mail-coaches and steam-boats have put out of fashion. They were to be found chiefly at Perth, Stirling, or Glasgow, where they and their horses were usually hired by travellers, or tourists, to accomplish such journeys of business or pleasure as they might have to perform in the land of the Gael. (p. 124)

Perfectly familiar with the Highlands, Donald has fixed the itinerary, which includes the halting places. As well as knowing 'the traditional stories of the country' (p. 125), he has an additional qualification, for

There was some originality in the man's habit of thinking and expressing himself, his turn for legendary lore strangely contrasting with a portion of the knowing shrewdness belonging to his actual occupation, which made his conversation amuse the way well enough. 43

(p. 125)

Donald's 'only fault' was a weakness for 'doch-an-dorroch,' or 'mountain dew' (p. 127), and when so affected, stressed 'the importance of the family of MacLeish' (p. 128). Scott is creating a very credible Highland 'character' for our delight.

The route leads from Dalmally along Loch Awe side to Taynuilt, the way Scott went 'with his own horses' in 1810, shortly after the publication of The Lady of the Lake.<sup>44</sup> Mrs Baliol and her guide go through the dark Pass of Brander at the base of Ben Cruachan, where a field of cairns testifies to the bloody struggle between Robert Bruce

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43. One wonders if Scott has in mind his faithful Abbotsford servant cum friend Tom Purdie. 'What a blessing there is in a man like Tom whom no familiarity can spoil.' (Journal, 7 January, 1826). But in his Memoirs Dalgleish, Scott's butler, claims that Scott said that Tom could be trusted with anything, except a bottle of whisky. ('Memoirs of William Dalgleish, Butler to Sir Walter Scott,' Cornhill Magazine, June 1931, p. 742.)

44. Lockhart, Life, p. 197



and MacDougall of Lorn, two principal characters in The Lord of the Isles.

The travellers follow 'the course of the foaming and rapid Awe' (p. 131) to the hamlet of Taynuilt. At this point we see that Mrs Baliol's 'memorandum' bears a striking resemblance to a guide-book published by the Hon. Mrs Murray of Kensington in 1799. Both travellers are ladies of substance; both come by carriage; both take the same route via Dalmally; both use evocative language, and both admire the river Awe. Mrs. Murray:

From the eastern side, from where I saw it, the surface of the water near the river Awe appeared to me perfectly smooth; but it falls over a broad bed of rocks with peculiar force and astonishing rapidity, and then roars through a channel of rocks and loose stones until it is lost in Loch Etive. A few short periods of fair weather between the violent storms of rain, gave me an opportunity of seeing perfectly that part of Loch Awe, where the river Awe runs out of it. From that station the channel of the river seemed narrow; but of such a variety, grandeur, and beauty in the winding scenery about it, that nothing but the eye can take in. 45

Donald points out to Mrs Baliol hillsides denuded to supply fuel for the Bonawe iron furnace.<sup>46</sup> Thus industry, even on a small scale, has reached the Highlands, with attendant ravages. Mrs Baliol's attention is directed to

one large oak, which grew on the left hand towards the river. It seemed a tree of extraordinary magnitude and picturesque beauty, and stood just where there appeared to be a few roods of open ground lying among huge stones, which had rolled down from the mountain. (pp. 131-32)

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45. Hon. Mrs. Murray of Kensington, A Companion and Useful Guide to the Beauties of Scotland (London, 1799), pp. 353-54. It is interesting to note that the river Awe changed its course last century, after a huge storm.

46. The buildings at Taynuilt can still be seen.

Under this oak a 'female form' is seated,

with her head drooping, her hands clasped, and a dark-coloured mantle drawn over her head, exactly as Judah is represented in the Syrian medals as seated under her palm-tree. (p. 135)

Her name is Elspat MacTavish, or 'the Woman of the Tree' (p. 136).

Mrs Baliol asks about her sanity, and Donald answers:

'No - she is not mad ... for then it may be she would be happier than she is; though when she thinks on what she has done, and caused to be done, rather than yield up a hair-breadth of her ain wicked will, it is not likely she can be very well settled.'

(p. 135)

According to an unpublished MS. about the pools of the river Awe, Elspat MacTavish had an actual historical model.

On the west side of the Bridge of Awe is the stump of an old oak tree which was only some little time back /1936/ cut down by the County road workmen. This is where the old woman Ailie MacCallum, the ruins of whose house are beside the Fanans road cottage, used to sit in her old age watching the carriages and coaches pass. Sir Walter Scott saw her and spoke to her, and she is said to be the prototype of his Highland Widow. Her husband and his people were smallholders at Shellachan and before she left Shellachan she saved a gauger's life. At peat cutting time all the men were at the moss except herself and a taciturn sort of half-witted man. On this particular day she saw the half-wit running hard into the barn. As she suspected something amiss she ran also, and found him on the top of an exciseman, trying hard to cut his throat with an old scythe blade. She grasped the man by the hair of the head and pulled him off the exciseman. The last she saw of the gauger was his figure disappearing fast through the door. 47

Mrs Baliol gives Elspat gold, and gets her story from Donald.

It is a tragic story. Elspat is the widow of Hamish MacTavish Mhor, a cateran after the style of Rob Roy Macgregor. Hamish's

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47. K. Murray, schoolmaster, Taynuilt, Pools of the River Awe, 1936, unpublished MS. in my possession.

life was turbulent and dangerous, his habits being of the old Highland stamp, which esteemed it shame to want any thing that could be had for the taking. Those in the Lowland line who lay near him, and desired to enjoy their lives and property in quiet, were contented to pay him a small composition, in name of protection money, and comforted themselves with the old proverb, that it was better to 'fleece the deil than fight him.' Others, who accounted such composition dishonourable, were often surprised by MacTavish Mhor, and his associates and followers, who usually inflicted an adequate penalty, either in person or property, or both. (pp. 143-44)

As MacTavish Mhor resembles Rob Roy, so Elspat resembles his Amazonian wife Helen in supporting the predatory policies of her husband, for

In weal or woe, through every species of fatigue, difficulty, and danger, Elspat was his faithful companion. (p. 144)

Scott's thesis in this story is a simple but profound one: as times change, so people must change with them, or perish. The '45 was a time of transformation brought about in the first instance by an impulsive rising within the Highlands which was to prove self-destructive. After the harsh suppression of the last Jacobite rebellion Hamish is declared an outlaw, a 'traitor to the state,' 'a robber and a cateran' (p. 145). History closes in on him. When he is surprised by a detachment of Red Soldiers in a 'strong pass on the skirts of Ben Cruachan' (p. 145) Elspat supports him until he is struck down, for he would never surrender. She settles into a hermitical existence in a hovel in the shadow of Cruachan, and there raises MacTavish Mhor's sole heir. She continues her late husband's method of raising subsistence.

From Lowlanders she sometimes demanded tribute, rather than requested alms. She had not forgotten she was the widow of MacTavish Mhor, or that the child who trotted by her knee might, such were her imaginations, emulate one day the fame of his father, and command the same influence which he had once exerted without control. (p. 146)

It will be remembered that Rob Roy seemed to have roughly similar plans for his sons when he refused Bailie Jarvie's offer of apprenticeship in Glasgow.

But as Hamish Bean approaches manhood, with

all the agility, if not all the strength, of his formidable father, upon whose history and achievements his mother dwelt, (p. 147)

he sees clearly that his father's hazardous trade cannot be revived because it is both 'dangerous and discreditable' (p. 147). Social status as well as personal safety must be considered in the new order.

If Hamish was

to emulate his father's prowess, it must be in some other line of warfare, more consonant to the opinions of the present day. (p. 148)

Hamish's solution to the reconciliation of past and present is to enlist in a Hanoverian regiment.<sup>48</sup> Ironically, he is pushed towards this because of his mother's 'imperious authority' (p. 149). With great skill and insight, Scott is recreating the archetypal matriarch whose pride and influence helped to destroy the old Highlands. Hamish attempts to make his mother confine her activities to the hearth:

'Be silent, mother, or speak of what you understand ... and that is of the distaff and the spindle.' (p. 151)

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48. Explaining the recruiting procedure for the Forty-Second Regiment in the 1770s, Colonel Stewart writes: 'Officers with parties were detached on the recruiting service, to those districts of the Highlands where they had acquaintance and influence. Their object was speedily obtained: young men were proud of belonging to the corps, and old men regarded it as a representative and memorial of the achievements of their forefathers' (Stewart, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 353).

But MacTavish Mhor's fighting companion has no interest in improving their hovel. She answers angrily:

'I tell you, Hamish, I know a hundred-fold more of swords and guns than you ever will.' (p. 151)

The result is that Hamish leaves for Dumbarton, to enlist in a regiment being levied in the Highlands by Campbell of Barcaldine.<sup>49</sup>

She sees him off with a curse:

'may the road you are going be the track of your funeral!' (p. 151)

But dutiful Hamish sends home gold via one MacPhadraick, a tacksman.

Elspat reacts hysterically:

'he has sold himself to be the servant of the Saxons, and I shall never more behold him!' (p. 153)

MacPhadraick quietens her, telling her that Hamish will explain when he comes home shortly. She waits, watching the road from the south.

She who had

feared less for her son's life than for his dishonour, (p. 156)

so great is her obsession with the past, now believes that he has at last taken up his father's profession. Scott explains the north/south split.

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49. Strange, but Scott makes Elspat and her son beholden to Campbell of Barcaldine, though their smallholding is actually on the land of Campbell of Inverawe. Duncan Campbell of Barcaldine (circa 1716-1784), brother of the Appin Murder victim, purchased the estate of Barcaldine from his half-brother John, a captain in the Argyll Militia. Duncan had five sons, four of whom served in the army. Presumably Scott is referring to Duncan's offspring when he makes Hamish say: 'Barcaldine's son is made a leader and with him I have enrolled myself.' (p. 168). Scott could have made the story much more dramatic by making Campbell of Inverawe the patron of the MacTavishes. Inverawe fought with the Forty Second Regiment in America, and fell there. For the eerie circumstances of his death, see note 51.

She had been taught to consider those whom they called Saxons, as a race with whom the Gael were constantly at war, and she regarded every settlement of theirs within the reach of Highland incursion, as affording a legitimate object of attack and plunder. Her feelings on this point had been strengthened and confirmed, not only by the desire of revenge for the death of her husband, but by the sense of general indignation entertained, not unjustly, through the Highlands of Scotland, on account of the barbarous and violent conduct of the victors after the battle of Culloden. (pp. 156-57)

Elspat's ambitions for her son relate to her own lowly state. She has been 'indigent, neglected, oppressed,' (p. 157), and the son could replace the father as her protector and provider, but only in the role of the cateran contemptuous of the new southern laws. Scott here inserts a brilliant image of oppression. On the road which Elspat watches so compulsively,

the solitary traveller trudged listlessly along in his brown lowland great-coat, his tartans dyed black or purple, to comply with or evade the law which prohibited their being worn in their variegated hues. The spirit of the Gael, sunk and broken by the severe though perhaps necessary laws, that proscribed the dress and arms which he considered as his birthright, was intimated by his drooping head and dejected appearance. (p. 162)

Hamish comes home to announce that he is to 'go against the French in America' (p. 166) with Barcaldine's regiment. Her matriarchalism is memorably shown in the climactic utterance:

'Enlisted! ... against my will - without my consent - You could not - you would not,' - then rising up, and assuming a posture of almost imperial command, 'Hamish, you DARED not!' (p. 166)

His argument against her obsession with the dead freebooter, his father, is the central thesis of the story:

'how shall I convince you that you live in this land of our fathers, as if our fathers were yet living? You walk as it were in a dream, surrounded by the phantoms of those who have been long with the dead. When

my father lived and fought, the great respected the  
Man of the strong right hand, and the rich feared him.

(p. 167)

It is all finished. Argyll and Seaforth have withdrawn their protection, and the land is conquered, with the chiefs dead or in exile.

'We may mourn for it, but we cannot help it. Bonnet, broadsword, and sporran - power, strength, and wealth, were all lost on Drumossie-muir.' (p. 168)

In this passage, as in the whole sad story, Scott shows that he fully understands and sympathises with the plight of the post '45 Highlands, but the realist in him insists that to look back is fatal. Likewise with Colonel Stewart of Garth, who sees positive advantages to the nation resulting from Highland pride. He argues:

The feudal system, or patriarchal government of the clans, however startling and inconsistent the proposition may appear to many, generated and cherished a spirit of independence and self-respect, which, in a very eminent degree, tended to preserve correct principles and character; it also secured to the Highlanders an education which fitted them for the station they were destined to hold in civil and military society. They were taught to believe themselves descended of persons distinguished for bravery and virtue from a remote antiquity. Hence the desire of preserving the honour of a respected ancestry stimulated them to daring actions in the field, as the dread of being a reproach to their memory deterred from the commission of crime in civil life. 50

Hamish's is a reasonable point of view that possessed Elspat cannot accept. She finds southern authority intolerable. When Hamish explains that he will be punished as a deserter if he does not return to his regiment, she scorns him. Yes, the Highland chiefs punished those who disobeyed, but, she insists,

'the chiefs were noble in their ire - they punished

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50. Stewart, op. cit., vol. II, p. 69.

with the sharp blade, and not with the baton. Their punishment drew blood, but they did not infer dishonour. Canst thou say the same for the laws under whose yoke thou hast placed thy freeborn neck?' (p. 173)

Pretending to accept him in the new role of a Saxon soldier, she lavishes food and attention on him. But on the evening before his departure, he returns from fishing the Awe and meets a ghost,<sup>51</sup>

who first pointed to Elspat's hut, and made, with arm and head, a gesture prohibiting Hamish to approach it, then stretched his hand to the southward, with a motion which seemed to enjoin his instant departure in that direction. (pp. 183-84)

It is the ghost of his father, warning him to get clear of Elspat's destructive influence. This is a masterly touch, adding another dimension to the story, a hint that Elspat might have been the ruin of MacTavish Mhor.

Hamish does not heed the apparition, and Elspat administers a powerful sleeping draught which detains him beyond his leave. He is now a deserter, and a party is sent in search of him. Desertion being a growing problem, the commanding General

gave out in orders that the first Highlander who might either desert, or fail to appear at the expiry of his furlough, should be brought to the halberds, and punished. 52

(p. 190)

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51 One of the most famous Highland ghost stories concerns Inverawe House, across the river from Elspat's reputed hovel. Campbell of Inverawe was harbouring his foster-brother's murderer, but the shade of the dead Campbell appeared and demanded that his slayer, one McNiven, be given up. Inverawe refused for reasons of honour, and the ghost warned: 'we shall meet again at Ticonderoga,' a name totally unknown to Inverawe. But that was where he was to fall, years later, struck down by a shade, it would seem. See Lord Archibald Campbell's Records of Argyll, pp. 136-43.

52. Colonel Stewart of Garth: 'To the young Highlanders the dread of corporal punishment not only checks their military propensity, and prevents their entering the army, but it conveys to their



Elspat urges him to flee into the mountains, but Hamish will await his fate. His plea shows that she had destroyed that which she held precious:

'you have taken my life; to that you have a right, for you gave it; but touch not my honour! It came to me from a brave train of ancestors, and should be sullied neither by man's deed nor woman's speech.'

(p. 204)

But Hamish cannot escape her fatal influence. The party of soldiers sent to apprehend him is led by Sergeant Allan Breack Cameron. Armed by his mother, Hamish holds them at bay, his pride hurt by 'the unfriendly speed' (p. 209) of his comrades' approach. Incited by his mother, he shoots the Sergeant dead. Her slogan, which made him pull the trigger, was:

'Now, spare not your father's blood to defend your father's hearth!' (p. 210)

Having failed to make a new life for himself, Hamish Bean is taken to Dumbarton to be executed. She hurries over the hills to save him, demanding food in the name of her feared husband. But she is too late. She meets the minister of Glenorchy, who informs her that her beloved son is now a corpse.

Scott has set himself the formidable task of showing the mental turmoil of a mother who is obviously approaching insanity, but he

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minds a greater degree of horror and shame than even death itself. When a Highlander is brought to the halberts, he considers himself as having lost his caste. He becomes, in his own estimation, a disgraced man, and is no longer fit for the society of his friends. To them, therefore, or to his native country he can never return. The halberts have ruined many a good soldier, and have prevented many a good man from becoming a soldier' (Stewart, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 213-4).

succeeds. He has had considerable practice in portraying insane and suicidal women, beginning with Blanch of Devan in The Lady of the Lake, followed by the crazed wandering McAulay mother in A Legend of Montrose. Helen Macgregor in Rob Roy may not be insane, but she has delusions of grandeur. Blanch's tragedy is about betrayed love, but both the McAulay mother and Elspat MacTavish are studies of the mother/son syndrome. The McAulay woman is mad before she gives birth, but Elspat's grown-up son unbalances her.

Elspat's hysterical debate with the minister on matters theological in the eerie Argyllshire glen is the high point of her story. Her torrent of speech shows that she hates all forms of authoritarianism, including the priest-ridden structure of the Roman Catholic church. Because she rebels against everything except the past, she has nothing positive to grasp at in her grief, and therefore she is doomed. When she learns from the minister that her frantic journey to Dumbarton is futile, she delivers a terrible curse:<sup>53</sup>

'May the tongue that tells me of his death and of my own crime, be withered in thy mouth - or better, when thou wouldst pray with thy people, may the Evil One guide it, and give voice to blasphemies instead of blessings, until men shall fly in terror from thy presence, and the thunder of heaven be launched against thy head, and stop for ever thy cursing and accursed voice! Begone, with this malison! - Elspat will never, never again bestow so many words upon living man.' (pp. 229-30)

She keeps her word. We are brought up to Croftangry's time

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53. One of the most terrible curses in Highland history was uttered by the Brahan Seer against the Seaforth Mackenzies, when he was being burnt in pitch for having told the truth about a vision. He predicted all kinds of physical deformities for the Seaforths. In parts of the Outer Hebrides, the curse is still feared, and is an integral part of Gaelic culture.

Elspat's curse is an invitation to the Devil to possess the Divine.

by his statement that Elspat's death occurred

several years after she had attracted the attention  
of my excellent friend Mrs. Bethune Baliol. (p. 230)

Dying and watched over by two women, she simply wandered out into the  
night

that the death-struggle might take place in some  
secret den, where, in all probability, her mortal  
relics would never meet the eyes of mortals.

(p. 233)

She dies like a wounded animal, therefore.

The Two Drovers, the companion story to The Highland Widow in  
the Chronicles of the Canongate is much shorter, though just as effec-  
tive, with Scott achieving an impressive economy of theme and style.  
The theme is the same as in The Highland Widow, but this time the  
principal character is a man. The old order has changed but Robin  
Oig McCombich cannot adapt, and like Elspat, he is made to pay a  
terrible price for his Highland pride.

Croftangry introduces the story to us. Scott his creator  
seems to be thinking of his own literary exploitation of the High-  
lands when he writes:

Now, the Highlands, though formerly a rich mine for  
original matter, are, as my friend Mrs. Bethune Bal-  
iol warned me, in some degree worn out by the incess-  
ant labour of modern romancers and novelists, who,  
finding in those remote regions primitive habits and  
manners, have vainly imagined that the public can never  
tire of them; and so kilted Highlanders are to be found  
as frequently, and nearly of as genuine descent, on the  
shelves of a circulating library, as at a Caledonian  
ball. (p. 240)

Having speculated that

Much might have been made at an earlier time out of

the history of a Highland regiment, (p. 240)

and having referred to works by Mrs Grant of Laggan<sup>54</sup> and General Stewart of Garth,<sup>55</sup> Croftangry gives us the tale of The Two Drovers.

Its subject is the droving trade, one of the most vital export industries of the Highlands. As Haldane explains:

By the start of the 18th century ... the gradual emergence of more peaceful conditions had made it possible for cattle to be taken for sale to the Lowlands by long and perilous droving operations, and with the settlement of the Highlands after the Rising of 1745 this droving trade rapidly expanded. Its growth and prosperity were at this time greatly stimulated by the growth of London and of the industrial towns in the Midlands and north of England and the increase of population in central Scotland, and soon the growing needs of the navy and army still further increased the demand for Highland beef. From now on till other forms of transport and other means of marketing cut into the trade, the early autumn months saw growing numbers of cattle passing in slow-moving droves from all parts of the Highlands to the chief markets at Crieff and Falkirk and on across the Border to England. This droving traffic was hard and rough for men and beasts alike. It was highly speculative too. Money was often quickly made and as quickly lost. A few of the large dealers made fortunes, but for one who prospered there were many who failed, bringing down in their fall others inextricably involved with them in the peculiar complexities of droving finance. 56

Scott gives a short dissertation on droving, pointing out how suitable the Highlanders were for that trade because of their hardiness, 'patient endurance and active exertion' (p. 244). They must

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54. Letters from the Mountains. Her letters in the Walpole Collection show that if she was not unbalanced like Elspat, she was certainly eccentric. On 27 April 1827 (MS 3904, ff. 126) she delivers a long written lecture to Scott on second sight, and a letter of March 1828 (MS 3907, ff. 350) begins: 'Do not be alarmed. I am not going to make a request of any kind ...' She then proceeds to write on superstitions. It seems she was seeing things. Her material is interesting enough, but it came too late in Scott's literary career to be of much use to him, especially in a Highland context.

55. Sketches of ... The Highlanders.

56. Haldane, op. cit., p. 186.

know the routes perfectly, and be prepared to sleep with their cattle, no matter the weather, to protect them from reivers. They carried a 'few handfulls of oatmeal' (p. 244), and a ram's horn of whisky for regular use. Most important was the sgian dhu 'concealed beneath the arm, or by the folds of the plaid' (p. 244), since it was the only method of defence. In his 1816 Culloden Papers review Scott had treated the same subject, but with a bigger weapon:

When the low country drovers and graziers met their highland customers at the trysts of Donne, and elsewhere on the borders, affronts were sometimes offered on the one hand, and on the other the claymore made its instant appearance. (p. 295)

But in The Two Drovers, Scott sketches contentment.

A Highlander was never so happy as on these occasions. There was a variety in the whole journey, which exercised the Celt's natural curiosity and love of motion; there were the constant change of place and scene, the petty adventures incidental to the traffic, and the intercourse with the various farmers, graziers, and traders, intermingled with occasional merry-makings, not the less acceptable to Donald that they were void of expense; and there was the consciousness of superior skill; for the Highlander, a child amongst flocks, is a prince among herds, and his natural habits induce him to disdain the shepherd's slothful life, so that he feels himself nowhere more at home than when following a gallant drove of his country cattle in the character of their guardian.

(pp. 244-45)

Robin Oig McCombich is not a 'large dealer,' but he is a successful one.

He was a topping person in his way, transacted considerable business on his own behalf, and was intrusted by the best farmers in the Highlands, in preference to any other drover in that district. (p. 246)

Scott derives his character from a familiar clan. Robin is a Macgregor, and his father enjoyed a 'particular friendship' (p. 246)

with Rob Roy, cattle rustler. Robin Oig reverses the reiving procedure by driving cattle out of the Highlands, but he still feels the 'pride of birth' (p. 247) and kinship with the famous cateran.

It is the day following Doune Fair, and Robin Oig is about to drive a large drove south. In The Highland Widow Hamish Bean was warned to take the road south by the apparition of his father: in The Two Drovers Robin Oig is warned by 'auld Janet,' spawife, his father's sister:

'go not this day to England!' (p. 250)

She has snatched his dirk from his plaid and seen on it:

'Blood, blood - Saxon blood again.' (p. 250)

Lowland farmers and women are watching, and Robin is embarrassed by his grandaunt's absurd prophecy. Since she insists, his only concession to the second sight is to give his dirk into the care of Hugh Morrison, a fellow drover.

Scott introduces another character to balance Robin Oig. He is Harry Wakefield, a young Englishman,

well known at every northern market, and in his way as much famed and honoured as our Highland driver of bullocks. (p. 252)

Though they are technically business rivals, they are close friends, so close that Robin attempts to teach Harry Gaelic. The point is that they need each other, for Robin knows the Highlands intimately, and Harry that land lying on the 'right side of the Border' (p.254). It is to their mutual benefit that they remain friends.

But there is a misunderstanding in Cumberland over the allocation of overnight grazing. They both strike bargains simultaneously,

Robin with the proprietor, Harry with the manager. The result is that they are both allocated the same field. Harry's drove is already grazing, but he has to drive it off to other pastures to make way for Robin's.

Robin Oig saw what had happened with regret, and hastened to offer to his English friend to share with him the disputed possession. But Wakefield's pride was severely hurt, and he answered disdainfully, 'Take it all man - take it all - never make two bites of a cherry - thou canst talk over the gentry, and blear a plain man's eye - Out upon you, man - I would not kiss any man's dirty lachets for leave to bake in his oven.' (p. 259)

Robin offers to help Harry settle his herd elsewhere, but the Englishman will have none of it. Harry says that the Highlander should be 'ashamed' to look him in the face (p.259), a remark that strikes at Robin's pride.

'I am ashamed to look no man in the face,' said Robin Oig, something moved; 'and, moreover, I will look you in the face this blessed day, if you will bide at the Clachan down yonder.' (pp. 259-60)

Robin receives a hostile reception at the alehouse where the drovers gather, but his Highland pride has been badly hurt, and his attitude is 'undaunted' and 'haughty' even (p. 262). The assembled company incites Harry. Despite this he attempts to shake hands, but Robin cannot forget his earlier attitude. A fight is proposed, but Robin still has reason with him:

'To be peaten like a dog,' said Robin; 'is there any reason in that? If you think I have done you wrong, I'll go before your shudge, though I neither know his law nor his language.' (pp. 265-66)

Robin, the new-style Highlander, product of the post '45 peace, is willing to put himself at the mercy of southern law, on alien soil. But then, he believes he is in the right, and he must have satis-

faction somehow.

There is no alternative but to fight, and Harry, who is much bigger and stronger, thrashes the Highland drover. The drovers laugh at the beaten Robin, but the landlord's wife warns Wakefield when he says that Robin 'will never keep malice':

'Do not trust to that - you do not know the dour temper of the Scots, though you have dealt with them so often. I have a right to know them, my mother being a Scot.' (p. 269)

Robin's reaction to his humiliation at English hands is one of anger:

'That I should have had no weapon,' he said, 'and for the first time in my life! - Blighted be the tongue that bids the Highlander part with the dirk - the dirk - ha! the English blood! - My Muhme's word - when did her word fall to the ground?'

(p. 270)

From now on everything is predetermined, for Robin and the reader. The enraged drover hurries to Hugh Morrison and, on the pretext of having enlisted in the Black Watch, retrieves his dirk. He returns to the alehouse and commands Harry:

'stand up, if you be a man!' (p. 274)

Benign with beer, and harbouring no hard feelings, Harry comes forward to shake hands. For the second and last time Robin refuses the hand of friendship.

'Tis not thy fault, man, that, not having the luck to be an Englishman, thou canst not fight more than a school-girl.' (p. 274)

But there is no humour in the situation for humiliated Robin.

'I can fight ... and you shall know it. You, Harry Waakfelt, showed me to-day how the Saxon churls fight - I show you now how the Highland Dunnie-wassel fights.'

(pp. 274-75)



Elspat MacTavish, symbol of the pride-crazed Highland past put a gun in her disgraced son's hands. His pride also pricked, he shot a fellow soldier with whom he was friendly. Hamish Bean's crime, the consequence of having been prevented from making a new life beyond the Highlands, and of having his honour ruined, occurred on his home soil, on his own hearth, in fact. Robin Oig McCombich, sensitive to insult, and possessed by retrospective Highland pride has a dirk put in his hand by pride and fate. Robin Oig's crime, the consequence of spontaneous combustion of his pride, and the failure to find a healing way for insulted honour, occurs on English soil. With one blow which jars on bone Harry Wakefield, fellow drover and good friend is stabbed to death. Hamish Bean ignored the warning of his father's ghost, but Robin Oig did make some concession to fate by giving his dirk into another's care. His sacrifice was not sufficient. Hamish Bean surrenders quietly to military discipline, which means a firing squad. Robin Oig throws his dirk into the fire and says:

'take me who likes - and let fire cleanse blood if it can.' (p. 275)

He will face English justice, but he is calm. The biblical equation is an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. When the peace-officer says that Robin's crime must be 'sorely answered,' the apparently unrepentant drover replies:

'Never you mind that - death pays all debts; it will pay that too.' (p. 276)

In other words, the ultimate Highland payment for a crime done, or a wrong righted by a crime is life itself, a terrible price Robin Oig is prepared to pay. With consummate skill, through using restrained

language, and saving involved psychological explanation, Scott shows the drover at peace with himself and the world. In his serenity Robin makes us suspect that he knew his grandaunt's prophecy would come true. The price he accepts for settled honour is the sentence of fate. Elspat MacTavish would accept the same bargain, though she could not see her son's death by execution as a fair settlement.

Scott closes The Two Drovers by staging Robin Oig's trial. The intriguing question is: is the crime one of murder, or manslaughter? No doubt the reader returns the latter verdict. Much of the Judge's address to the jury is legal jargon, for Scott loved to write about the mechanisms of his own profession, though his subject here is English law. The judge goes from the particular to the general, from the present to the past.

'It is true, we may repeat to ourselves, in alleviation of this poor man's unhappy action, that his case is a very peculiar one. The country which he inhabits was, in the days of many now alive, inaccessible to the laws, not only of England, which have not even yet penetrated thither, but to those to which our neighbours of Scotland are subjected, and which must be supposed to be, and no doubt actually are, founded upon the general principles of justice and equity which pervade every civilized country. Amongst their mountains, as among the North American Indians, the various tribes were wont to make war upon each other, so that each man was obliged to go armed for his own protection. These men, from the ideas which they entertained of their own descent and of their own consequence, regarded themselves as so many cavaliers or men-at-arms, rather than as the peasantry of a peaceful country.' (p. 282)

Robin Oig could not accept the English tradition that a quarrel could be settled with fists and not weapons. With his Highland pride and his method of fighting he tried to put himself above the law. But no man is above the law. Accepting that 'the opinions and sentiments' of the old lawless Highlands 'must still continue to influence the present generation,' the judge cautions that they

'cannot, and ought not, even in this most painful case ... alter the administration of the law, either in your hands, gentlemen of the jury, or in mine.' (p. 283)

Scott poses the dilemma of the man straddling past and present. He might live imaginatively and morally in the past, but because he lives physically in the present, he must conform to its laws. It is a message that goes far beyond the Highlands. It has to do with empires and how they are administered.

The judge concludes his long address:

'I repeat, that this unhappy man ought personally to be the object rather of our pity than our abhorrence, for he failed in his ignorance, and from mistaken notions of honour. But his crime is not the less that of murder, gentlemen, and, in your high and important office, it is your duty so to find.' (pp. 283-84)

There is no middle way. The old Highlands are legally dead. Such men as McCombich must either conform or face the consequences. But Robin Oig, like Elspat, cannot be saved spiritually. He is executed, still speaking the simple equation:

'I give a life for the life I took ... and what can I do more?' (p. 284)

Thus Scott closes his tale, leaving the reader to solve the moral problem.

On Wednesday, 7 November 1827, in his cramped Edinburgh accommodation, the widower Scott recorded in his Journal that he was beginning the Second Series of the Chronicles of the Canongate, 'the first having been well approved.'<sup>57</sup> The reviewers gave the First Series a wide and rapturous reception, partly because Scott's self-unmasking

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57. Journal, p. 375.

in the Introduction was newsworthy. The two Highland tales were highly praised, but The Highland Widow received the most attention. The reviewer in the Literary Gazette for Saturday, 3 November 1827, proclaimed that

Nothing more finished and perfect was (perhaps) ever executed by the pencil of Sir Walter Scott than his picture of this dame and her establishment. (p. 709)

It continued:

The Highland Widow is a narrative of great interest and excitement, and not the less so on account of the reader's very soon anticipating the catastrophe, though, of course, it is impossible to foresee its particular circumstances. (p. 709)

The Gentleman's Magazine for November 1827, admired the economy and style of Elspat's story:

the incidents are few, but they are wrought into a story of surpassing beauty by the hand of the master. (pp. 444-45)

But the reviewer in the London Magazine for the same month seemed to take some objection to the social status of the Highland characters.

The subject ... is simple in its form, and low in its actors; but it is nevertheless worked up to a high pitch of interest. (p. 418)

The modern critic G.M. Young has summed up the story's mechanism:

I need not remind you how large a place - some readers find it too large - the law and its humours occupy in Scott's pages, but I should like to point out how the discipline, the legal discipline, operates in shaping that masterpiece of character and contrast, The Two Drovers: the wonderful economy with which the narrative is managed, how we are told all we need to know and no more, and how we are compelled to hold our judgement until the tale is completed. 58

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58. G.M.Young, 'Scott and the Historians,' in Last Essays (London, 1950) p. 33.

As has been already stated, Scott feared that Ballantyne would find The Two Drovers 'low,' and the printer duly did. The Gentleman's Magazine reviewer also saw the dangers, but thought they had been avoided, for Robin Oig's tale is

one which the talents of Sir Walter Scott alone could have redeemed from vulgarity; in his hands, however, it is full of absorbing interest, and the nice distinctions which the code of religion no less than that of the law, establishes between murder and manslaughter, are in the mouth of a Judge very eloquently expounded.

(p. 445)

The patronising criticism seems to call for a return of the old socially acceptable favourites, well-born Waverley, beautiful Flora and sensible Rose, not to mention fierce Fergus. But Scott had moved on from romance to realism, from aristocrat to artisan. The London Magazine reviewer showed a sympathetic understanding of Scott's intentions in The Two Drovers, despite the 'low' status of its characters. Recognising the importance of the story, the magazine gave it a pre-publication review, followed by the complete text, reprinted from the London Weekly Review, whose editor had obtained the unpublished sheets from Paris.

It shows that the author of Waverley is again on his old ground, and again unrivalled - again animated by a spirit, and charged with a knowledge of the subject, which always render him the irresistible master of the feelings of the reader. The character of Robin Oig ... is a most skilful and a most powerful delineation. Skilful in its combination of the two men - the proud Highland gentleman, and the humble Scotch drover; and powerful in its representation of the force of national prejudice, and the strength of individual passion. (p. 342)

For political as well as literary reasons, The Highland Widow and The Two Drovers are important stories, for they show Scott painfully aware of, and deeply sympathetic to the problems of common

people in a period of transition in Highland history. They are both masterpieces, but perhaps The Two Drovers, shorter and more fluid in its narration is the greater story. Thomas Crawford makes the important point that

The short stories 'A Highland Widow' and 'The Two Drovers' are thematic microcosms of much that is most vital in Waverley, Rob Roy, The Bride of Lammermoor, and Red-gauntlet; they stem from the same preoccupations as these novels. 57

Scott had found a new genre, but he could not pursue it per se and in peace because he had huge debts to pay with his pen. Long three volumed novels had given him riches and ruined him because he demanded payment in advance to raise Abbotsford and buy land. Scott had made money out of his two Highland tales, and he stayed in that lucrative region.

Scott's literary exploitation of the Highlands had begun with the long poem The Lady of the Lake, set in Perthshire in the sixteenth century. As his literary career closed in ruins, he returned to that Highland county, and went back two centuries in time to write The Fair Maid of Perth, the novel which forms the Second Series of the Chronicles of the Canongate. It was his last Highland work, but he had lost the Midas touch when he needed it most.

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57. Crawford, op. cit., p. 57.

THE FAIR MAID OF PERTH

On Wednesday, 7 November 1827 Scott settled down in his Edinburgh study to begin a review of Sir Henry Steuart's Planter's Guide for the Quarterly, but a lack of reference books coupled with the need for money to discharge his massive debts drove that industrious writer to a new task.

As I did not wish to leave the mind leisure to recoil on itself I immediately began the 2nd Series of the Chronicles of Canongate, the first having been well approved. 1

Working from morning until night 'with little intermission' the following day, Scott 'only finished nine pages.'<sup>2</sup> It being a 'new task,' the imagination was sluggish. But it was to prove a false start, as well as a slow one. The Second Series, like the First, was to consist of short stories, and the tale Scott was writing was My Aunt Margaret's Mirror. It was completed on Monday, 3 December,<sup>3</sup> but then came bad tidings. On Tuesday, 11 December, Scott came home from court to

a formal communication from Ballantyne enclosing a letter from Caddel of an unpleasant tenor. It seems Mr. Cadell is dissatisfied with the moderate success of the 1st Series of Chronicles and disapproving of about half the volume already written of the second Series obviously ruing his engagement. 4

On the following day Scott addressed a letter to Ballantyne. In discharging debt with his busy pen, the Author of Waverley has obviously exhausted his artistic resources. He admits:

I have not at present the means of restoring the appetite of the public if possible by a fast of

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1. Journal, p. 375.

2. Ibid., p. 375.

3. Ibid., p. 388.

4. Ibid., p. 393.



a year or two - for I hold a fallow break to be the only remedy for exhausted ground and that is not always successful.

This far from taking me by surprize or giving me annoyance I was sure the day must come and therefore no way disconcerted on being informed that it has come for I am not conscious that any degree of pains which I can bestow is like to mend the matter. 5

The letter closes pessimistically, with Scott afraid that 'the presses must suffer by an inter-regnum.' The Journal entry for that depressing day ends with the boast: 'They cannot say but what I had the crown.'<sup>6</sup>

But in creativity as in cash, Scott always had something in reserve. There is a new story on the stocks, and like the more lucrative ones of his long career, it has a Highland theme. Having counted the contents of his purse on Wednesday, 5 December (a week before Cadell's condemnation of My Aunt Margaret's Mirror) Scott announces:

I did a good deal in the way of preparing my new tale and resolved to make some thing out of the story of Harry Wynd. The North Inch of Perth would be no bad name and it may be possible to take a difference betwixt the old highlander and him of modern date. The fellow that swam the Tay and escaped would be a good ludicrous character. But I have a mind to try him in the serious line of tragedy. 7

But the new story was to be more than another Highland historical drama. As he grew older and more tolerant of others through his financial follies, Scott surveyed the history of his own family. The moral hypothesis which is to be central to the new story is set up in the Journal.

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5. Grierson, Letters, vol. X, pp. 329-30.

6. Journal, p. 393.

7. Ibid., pp. 389-90.

Suppose a man's nerves supported by feelings of honour or say by the spur of jealousy supporting him against constitutional timidity to a certain point then suddenly giving way - I think something tragic might be produced. James Ballantyne's criticism is too much moulded upon the general taste / e / of novels to admit (I fear) this species of reasoning. But what can one do? I am hard up as far as imagination is concerned yet the world calls for Novelty. Well - I'll try my brave coward or cowardly brave man. Valeat quantum. 8

Just before the publication of the 'new tale,' Scott confided to Lockhart that Conachar the 'brave coward or cowardly brave man' was based on his brother Daniel. He seems to have disgraced himself in Jamaica, and to have come home as a burden to his family. In letters to George Ellis Scott calls Daniel his 'relation' and not his brother, and it is a measure of Scott's disillusionment that he did not attend Daniel's funeral. But in his 'new tale' a wiser and sadder Scott created the character Conachar to forgive the long dead Daniel. As Scott told Lockhart:

'My secret motive, in this attempt, was to perform a sort of expiation to my poor brother's manes. I have now learned to have more tolerance and compassion than I had in those days. 9

The 'new tale' was to be called Saint Valentine's Eve, 'a good title by the way,'<sup>10</sup> Scott noted. As the season of good cheer approached, the lonely widower wielded the pen in his Edinburgh study,<sup>11</sup> the failure of My Aunt Margaret's Mirror apparently forgotten. Having celebrated Christmas at Abbotsford, he returned to the 'black frost' of Edinburgh. But the dark financial skies were

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8. Journal, p. 390.

9. Lockhart, Life, p. 681.

10. Journal, p. 396.

11. Ibid., p. 397.

away from court.

I nibbled for an hour or two at Napoleon then took handsomely to my gears and wrote with great ease and fluency six pages of the Chronicles. If they are but tolerable I shall be satisfied. In fact such as they are they must do, for I shall get warm as I work as has happend on former occasions. The fact is I scarce know what is to succeed or not, but this is the consequence of writing too much and too often. I must get some breathing space. But how is that to be managed? There is the rub. 16

As the presses speed up, the phrase 'wrought hard'<sup>17</sup> begins to be used. 'The fountain trickles free enough.'<sup>18</sup> By Monday, 21 January, two-thirds of the first volume is completed.<sup>19</sup> He is writing 'manfully'<sup>20</sup> and the first volume is almost completed. But he is uncertain.

Am I satisfied with my exertions? -So so- Will the public be pleased with them? - Umph. I doubt the bubble will burst. 21

But he has made a bargain with Cadell, and must stand by it. The first volume is finished 'before breakfast' on Tuesday, 5 February.

I am but indifferently pleased. Either the kind of thing is worn out or I am worn out myself or, lastly, I am stupid for the time. The book must be finishd however. 22

James Ballantyne has practical criticisms to make, including the comment that Louise, the glee-maiden is anxious too early in the day (in I, chapter XII) about her night's lodgings. Scott gives an elaborate explanation about the setting sun, then tells him:

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16. Journal, p. 416.

18. Ibid., p. 416.

20. Ibid., p. 420.

22. Ibid., p. 423.

17. Ibid., p. 416.

19. Ibid., p. 417.

21. Ibid., p. 421.

apply [it] as you please to the text for you who see the doubt can best clear it ... 23

The creative process continues, and the second volume is begun.<sup>24</sup>

But Ballantyne is not enthusiastic. He

blames the Ossianick monotony of my principal characters. Now they are not Ossianick. The language of the Ossianic poetry is highly figurative; that of the Knights of chivalry may be monotonous and probably is but it cannot be Ossianic. Sooth to say, this species of romance of chivalry is an exhaustible subject. It affords materials for splendid description for once or twice but they are too unnatural and formal to bear repetition. We must go on with our present work however valeat quantum. Mr. Cadell, less critical than J.B., seems pleased. The world will soon decide if I get on at this rate for I have finishd four leaves to-day notwithstanding my attendance on the court. 25

Scott wrote on.<sup>26</sup> But the plot began to fankle.

I am watching and waiting till I hit on some quaint and clever mode of extricating but do not see a glimpse of any one. James B. too discourages me a good deal by his silence, waiting I suppose to be invited to disgorge a full allowance of his critical bile. But he may wait long enough for I am discouraged enough. 27

The disadvantage of Scott's swift cycle of press feeding and proof correction was that he could not go back in the story to make plot changes. When the roads led to blind alleys, he was forced to blaze new trails. His predicament can be seen in his Journal entry for Friday, 22 February.

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23. Grierson, Letters, vol. X, p. 376. But this was apparently Cadell's criticism, for the letter is in his hand, with a note overleaf in which Ballantyne states his determination 'to send no criticisms to the Author, but my own.'
24. Journal, p. 424.
25. Journal, p. 426. For Scott's reply see Grierson, Letters, vol. X, p. 382.
26. Journal, p. 429. 27. Ibid., p. 431.

J.B. is outrageous about the death of Oliver Proudfoot, one of the characters. But I have a humour to be cruel -

His business 'tis to die. 28

Scott usually gave close attention to Ballantyne's criticism, but on this occasion he had to be overruled, for

I cannot afford to be merciful ... it would cost my cancelling half a volume. 29

The presses are fed, and proofs corrected.<sup>30</sup> Macdonald of Staffa, Scott's old friend supplies 'some gaelick words which I wanted'<sup>31</sup> for the story, which is stretching into a novel. Then, on Sunday, 24 February, Scott announces that his difficulties are at an end.

For this two or three days I have been at what the Critick calls a deadlock - all my incidents and personages run into a gordian knot of confusion to which I could devise no possible extrication - I had thought on the subject several days with some /thing/ like the despair which seized the fair princess commended by her ugly step-mother to assort a whole garret full of tangled silk threads of every kind and colour when in comes prince Percinet with wand, whisks it over the miscellaneous mass, and lo! all the threads are as nicely arranged as in a seamstress's housewife. 32

By Tuesday, 26 February a confident Scott is 'nearly half a volume' before the press,<sup>33</sup> though he has written 'almost nothing' that day. Sunday, 2 March:

A day of hard work with little interruption and completed Vol 2nd. I am not much pleased with it. It wants what I desire it to have, and that is passion.<sup>34</sup>

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28. Journal, p. 432.

29. Grierson, Letters, vol. XII, p. 458

30. Journal, p. 432.

31. Ibid., p. 433.

32. Ibid., p. 433.

33. Ibid., p. 434.

34. Ibid., p. 436.

He works assiduously at his task through March,<sup>35</sup> completing the third and final volume of the troublesome tale. On Thursday, 13 March he adjourns to his beloved Abbotsford, where the writing routine was

From seven to half past nine ... From eleven or thereby to one or two ... seven till nine, write two pages more. From nine to quarter past ten lounge, read the papers and then go to bed. If your story be tolerably formed you may I think keep at this rate for twelve days which would be a volume. But no brain could hold it out longer. 36

By Monday, 17 March he is wondering about

the way of winding up the story. There are always at the end such a plaguy number of stitches to take up in the story which usually are never so well done but they make a botch. I will try if the segar will inspire me. Hitherto I have been pretty clear and I see my way well enough, only doubt of making others see it with sufficient simplicity. 37

But the creative timetable is proving too strenuous, and the next day he has palpitations.<sup>38</sup> Remembering his creditors, the brave disciplined writer resumes, and by Thursday, 20 March can announce:

The volume is finishd, all but one fourth or somewhat shorter. Four days should dispatch it easily...

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Scott had decided to call the novel The Fair Maid of Perth, with St. Valentine's Eve retained as a subtitle. The Journal entry for Saturday, 22 March begins:

Had a packet from James - Low about the novel but I had another from Cadell equally y uppish. 40

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35. Journal, pp. 436-443.

37. Ibid., p. 445.

39. Ibid., p. 446.

36. Ibid., p. 444.

38. Ibid., p. 445.

40. Ibid., p. 446.

The shrewd publisher wants three novels in eighteen months, and will pay well. Scott strives to complete the task in hand, and on Thursday, 27 March approaches conclusion. But he is not confident.

We now appropinque an end. My story has unhappily a divided interest. There are three distinct strands of the rope and they are not well twisted together - Ah Sirs, a foul fawt as Captain Jamy says. 41

Two days later The Fair Maid of Perth is finished. From contemplation to completion it had taken almost four months, during which time Scott was engaged on other literary projects.

As its title implies, The Fair Maid of Perth is a novel about the Highlands. It is Scott's last Highland work, and it circularises his career as a writer of Highland themes. That career had begun in 1810 with the poem The Lady of the Lake, set in the sixteenth century. Eighteen years later, near the end of a distinguished life darkened by bankruptcy, Scott returned to the Highlands in search of gold. The novel The Fair Maid of Perth is set in the fourteenth century, and, like The Lady of the Lake, most of the action takes place in Perthshire, the county Scott had been exploring since youth. He is on familiar territory, therefore, though the century is distant, and so some research was necessary. But before citing the major historical sources for The Fair Maid of Perth, it is important to examine a task Scott was engaged on shortly before the novel's conception, since it undoubtedly aided the writing of the novel.

Scott had conceived the Tales of a Grandfather as a series to teach his grandson Johnnie, Lockhart's ailing child, Scottish history from early times. The first series was written between June,

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41. Journal, p. 448 (Henry V, iii. 2).

1827<sup>42</sup> and November of that same year.<sup>43</sup> It was published in December, the month in which Scott started to plan The Fair Maid of Perth. Since the First Series of the Tales of a Grandfather covered the turbulent reign of Robert III, the time in which The Fair Maid of Perth is set, it is obvious that the novel benefited from his recent historical researches.<sup>44</sup> But this was a series designed for young people, and Scott had to keep the history simple and shallow. He needed deeper, more detailed sources for The Fair Maid of Perth, and he knew where to go for them.

By 1827 the Abbotsford library was a magnificent collection of books and manuscripts, covering all aspects of learning, but particularly strong on Scottish subjects.<sup>45</sup> In addition, he had access to unpublished manuscripts in the Advocates' Library, and either he or an amanuensis may have taken advantage of this privilege in planning and writing The Fair Maid of Perth.<sup>46</sup> Unpublished Advocates' Library manuscripts which contained material on fourteenth century ecclesiastical history, an important part of the novel, included: Registrum episcopatus moraviensis;<sup>47</sup> Extracta e Variis cronicis Sco'cie;<sup>48</sup> and Liber Pluscardenis.<sup>49</sup> Scott would have had no difficulty with the Latin language, since he had been schooled in it, and

42. Journal, p. 319.

43. Ibid., p. 372.

44. We note, however, that the popular First Series was revised for a second edition. See Journal, p. 405.

45. The Abbotsford library explains part of his debts.

46. As already suggested, Scott seems to have done the same (but with Gaelic MSS) in composing The Lord of the Isles. The extent of Scott's employment of amanuenses is obscure.

47. Published by the Bannatyne Club in 1837.

48. Published by the Abbotsford Club in 1842.

49. First published in its entirety by F.J.H. Skene in the series The Historians of Scotland, vol. VII, Edinburgh, 1877, vol. X, 1880.



since his profession required proficiency. Unfortunately, he expected his readers to be equally fluent. Note I to Volume 2, chapter XVIII of the novel contains a long and difficult quotation from Fordun. Likewise with a Remission printed by Lord Hailes in his Remarks on the History of Scotland,<sup>50</sup> and quoted by Scott in the same note.

The Fair Maid of Perth was written late in Scott's career, by which time he had a formidable knowledge of Scottish history, allied to a remarkable memory, and the ability to research at speed, as the preparation of his Napoleon proves. A comprehensive library completed these aids to the creative imagination. Since some of the Abbotsford Library historical holdings duplicate fourteenth century material, it is difficult, if not impossible, to be precise about Scott's sources for the novel, assuming, of course, that the facts were not already fixed in his memory. For general history he had to hand<sup>51</sup> in his library: Walsingham, Historia Brevis T.W. ab Edward I. ad Henricum V;<sup>52</sup> Rymer's Foedera;<sup>53</sup> Pinkerton, Vitae Antiquae Sanctorum ... Scotia<sup>54</sup> and History of Scotland.

The principal event round which The Fair Maid of Perth is constructed is the pitched battle between the Clan Quhele and the Clan Kay (Chattan) within an enclosure on the North Inch at Perth, on 28 September 1396, with Robert III a spectator. As Scott says in his

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50. Edinburgh, 1773. Strange, but the Abbotsford Library lacked this valuable reference work.

51. When Scott was in Edinburgh, books were fetched or carried from Abbotsford.

52. ALC., 1574 ed.

53. ALC., 1739-45 Hague ed.

54. ALC., 1789 ed.

## 1831 Preface:

The well-authenticated fact of two powerful clans having deputed each thirty champions to fight out a quarrel of old standing, in presence of King Robert III., his brother the Duke of Albany, and the whole court of Scotland, at Perth, in the year of grace 1396, seemed to mark with equal distinctness the rancour of these mountain-feuds, and the degraded condition of the general government of the country; and it was fixed upon accordingly as the point on which the main incidents of a romantic narrative might be made to hinge.

(pp. iii-iv)

For background to these Highland disturbances, Scott had in his library a History of the Feuds and Conflicts among the Clans (1031-1619),<sup>55</sup> from a MS. of the time of James VI. As his Preface and Notes show, the main sources for his account of the 1396 clan contest are: Boece's History and Chronicles of Scotland;<sup>56</sup> Wyntoun's Cronykil of Scotland;<sup>57</sup> and Fordun's Scotichronicon.<sup>58</sup> There is, however, a controversy surrounding the identities of the contending clans. Scott's debate in his 1831 Preface shows his deep interest in, and wide knowledge of the contest. He cites Wyntoun; Boece; Fordun; Mackay's History of the House and Clan;<sup>59</sup> Douglas's Baronage of Scotland;<sup>60</sup> Bishop Lesley's Historie of Scotland;<sup>61</sup> and Buchanan's History of Scotland.<sup>62</sup> Scott inclines to the view that the Clan Quhele were the Lochiel Camerons. For the Clan Kay,

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55. ALC., Glasgow, 1764.

56. ALC., 1821 ed., trans. Bellenden. Preface and vol. 2, N., Ch. XVII.

57. ALC., 1795, Macpherson's ed. Preface.

58. ALC., 1747-59 ed. A. Goodall. Preface.

59. ALC., 1829 ed. For Preface.

60. ALC., 1798 ed. For Preface.

61. ALC., 1830 Bannatyne Club edition. For Preface.

62. ALC., 1672 ed. For Preface.

Tytler favours the Davidsons.<sup>63</sup>

The other main incident of The Fair Maid of Perth is the murder (by starvation) of the young Duke of Rothesay, heir to the throne. Scott's acknowledged sources for this crime are: Lord Hailes, Remarks on the History of Scotland;<sup>64</sup> Boece's History and Chronicles of Scotland;<sup>65</sup> Wyntoun's Cronykil of Scotland;<sup>66</sup> and Fordun's Scoti-chronicon.<sup>67</sup> It is seen, therefore, that the clan battle and the murder have common sources.

But having fixed the historical background in his imagination, and elected characters, actual and fictive, Scott needed detailed information on the layout, social structure and trading activities of fourteenth century Perth, the novel's pivot. This he obtained from two sources. In Edinburgh in 1638 there was published a curious poem by one Henry Adamson entitled Muses Threnodie, etc.<sup>68</sup>

It contains 'observations' on the 'most remarkable antiquities of Scotland, especially at Perth.' Scott drew heavily on it. His second source was David Morrison, junior, bookseller, Secretary to the Antiquarian Society of Perth, of which Scott was an honorary member. Morrison's memorial on old Perth forms the majority of the supporting Notes of the novel, with Scott gratefully acknowledging

63. Tytler, History of Scotland, ed. cit., vol. III, p. 764. For Scott's favourable review of Tytler, see the Quarterly Review, Nov. 1829, pp. 328-59. Scott rebuked him for being 'saucy' towards the venerable Hailes. See Journal, p. 533n, pp. 543, 544, 548.

64. N. I, vol. 2, Ch. XVIII, on Rothesay's murder.

65. N. I, vol. 2, Ch. XVIII, on Rothesay's murder.

66. N. I, vol. 2, Ch. XVIII, on Rothesay's murder.

67. N. I, vol. 2, Ch. XVIII, on Rothesay's murder.

68. ALC., 1774 Perth, ed. James Cant. For the full ponderous title, see the bibliography.

his correspondent.<sup>69</sup>

It will be recalled that as The Fair Maid of Perth approached completion, Scott complained that

all my incidents and personages run into a gordian knot of confusion.

These plotting difficulties might have been the result of liberties he was forced to take with historical chronology. Though the records show that the North Inch clan contest took place in 1396, and the murder of Rothesay in 1402, Scott reverses the events, and brings them much closer in order to accommodate his hero, Henry Gow, or Smith. As Morrison's Note shows,<sup>70</sup> the 'Gow Chrom or Bandy-legged Smith of St. Johnston' is not a Scott original. He is remembered in Perth legend as the 'outsider' who volunteered to enter the clan contest because there was a man short on the Clan Kay side through desertion. The contest was held up, but as the Muses Thronodie records:

Thus as the question stood, was found at length,  
One Henry Wind, for triall of his strength  
The charge would take, a saddler of his craft,  
I wot not well whether the man was daft,  
But for an half french crown he took in hand,  
Stoutly to fight so long as he might stand,  
And if to be victorious should betide him,  
They should some yearly pension provide him.

Scott's choice of the town of Perth for the setting of his last Highland novel is a fitting one. It is situated on the Highland/

69. Grierson does not print any correspondence from Morrison at the time of the novel's composition. But in Letters, vol. XI, (pp. 52-55) Scott gratefully acknowledges receipt of the Transactions of the Literary and Antiquarian Society of Perth, Vol. I, 1827. This volume (ALC) contains a letter from Scott - the letter Grierson prints, in fact.

70. Vol. II, n. 1, Ch. I.

Lowland border, and depends upon both regions for its survival. The presence of the extravagant Lowland court in the Perth environs is a positive advantage, since the court encourages the establishment of skilled trades. But the proximity of the Highlands is a serious threat to the town's peace and prosperity. The danger is not only one of occasional forays, since internal disturbance inevitably over-spills. Scott explains the constant menace of the clans in his

Tales of a Grandfather:

Upon the whole, you can easily understand, that these Highland clans, living among such high and inaccessible mountains, and paying obedience to no one save their own chiefs, should have been very instrumental in disturbing the tranquillity of the kingdom of Scotland. They had many virtues, being a kind, brave, and hospitable people, and remarkable for their fidelity to their chiefs; but they were restless, revengeful, fond of plunder, and delighting rather in war than in peace, in disorder than in repose. 71

This is the nervous setting of The Fair Maid of Perth. The weak and vacillating Robert III is in residence in a monastery in the Perth region with his dissipated court, and beyond the mountains despotic chiefs rule their primitive barbarous clans. Such a situation must inevitably erupt. Meantime, Scott concentrates on the town, using the information Morrison supplied to him.

After Croftangry's Introduction, Scott devotes Chapter I to a panegyric on the beauties of Perthshire. The reader is guided to the town via the Wicks of Baiglie.<sup>72</sup> As the quarry in The Lady of

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71. Edinburgh, 1836, vol. I, pp. 192-93.

72. Inevitably, Scott got into trouble for preferring one Perthshire view to another. Being one hundred years dead, he had no defence. See Dundee Courier and Advertiser, 19 September, 1932, p. 6, cc. 3-4, 'How Scott mislead tourists. Where one of the most beautiful viewpoints is.'

the Lake was the running stag, leading the reader to the beautiful Ellen relaxing in a rural setting, in The Fair Maid of Perth the reader is led to the urban residence of Catharine, or Katie Glover,

universally acknowledged to be the most beautiful young woman of the city or its vicinity, and whose renown, as the Fair Maid of Perth, had drawn on her much notice from the young gallants of the Royal Court, when it chanced to be residing in or near Perth. (I, p. 27)

Ellen was of noble birth, but Catharine is only a burgess's daughter, and she knows her place. This concept of station within the social hierarchy is a very important one in the novel, and it operates at different levels. Henry Smith explains the Highland/Lowland contrast of aristocrat and artisan, with the Highlander, however poor, conscious of his status as a clan member. He tells Simon Glover:

'Bethink you, I am myself a maker of gauntlets. But the dignity of your ancient craft removes not my wonder, that the father of this Conachar suffered his son to learn a trade of any kind from a Lowland craftsman, holding us, as they do, altogether beneath their magnificent degree, and a race of contemptible drudges, unworthy of any other fate than to be ill used and plundered, as often as these bare-breeched Dinnie-wassals see safety and convenience for doing so.'

(I, p. 116)

We remember Rob Roy's reluctance to let his sons go as Lowland apprentices to Bailie Jarvie.

Catharine knows her social limitations, for she

showed no inclination to listen to any gallantry which came from those of a station highly exalted above that which she herself occupied; and though probably in no degree insensible to her personal charms, seemed desirous to confine her conquests to those who were within her own sphere of life.

(I, pp. 27-28)

Henry Smith is of her 'sphere,' and yet she cannot pledge herself to

him, despite the fact that her father (who has no social ambitions for her) desires the match. Like earlier Highland heroines, Catharine seems destined for the convent, and like her prototypes, she contemplates the cloisters because they offer sanctuary from a painful decision involving human relationships. She rejects Henry because he is a brawler. He uses the weapons he makes to defend Perth against Highland aggression, and in this role is a highly respected citizen. She hints at the only way to her heart:

'Abjure the sins of pride and anger, which most easily beset thee - fling from thee the accursed weapons, to the fatal and murderous use of which thou art so easily tempted.' (I, p. 54)

Henry's dilemma is established early in the novel. He is loved and respected by Simon Glover for the very qualities that Catharine rejects him for. This is a brilliant piece of plotting on Scott's part, for in this love story one partner must concede. Henry cannot. The manufacture and testing of weapons is his trade, and the defence of Perth his moral duty. He is trapped in the strict, almost incestuous social structure of fourteenth century Perth. Both Henry Smith and Simon Glover are burgesses, responsible for the welfare of the town, which includes Catharine. When Henry the swordsman saves the Fair Maid from predatory Ramorny (the debauched Rothesay's agent) on St Valentine's morning by cutting off Ramorny's hand, he is doing no more than his duty. Simon seizes the advantage of the bloody fray to force his daughter's hand in favour of her champion.

'There is not an instant to lose, she is up and almost dressed. - Come on, man. She shall see thee with thy good weapon in thy hand, and with villain's

blood on thy fingers,<sup>73</sup> that she may know what is the value of a true man's service. She has stopped my mouth over long with her pruderies and her scruples. I will have her know what a brave man's love is worth, and a bold burgess's to boot.' (I, pp. 87-88)

But though grateful, Catharine still cannot concede. The sixteenth century Ellen had as her confessor the old minstrel Allan Bane: the fourteenth century Catharine from the same county has the Carthusian monk Father Blair as her tutor cum confessor. Being the complete pacifist, the Father cannot bless Catharine's union with the brawling smith. He tells her:

'Thy parent, I know, less nice in thy behalf than I am, countenances the addresses of that fierce and riotous reveller, whom they call Henry of the Wynd. He is rich, it may be; but a haunter of idle and debauched company - a common prize-fighter, who has shed human blood like water. Can such a one be a fit mate for Catharine Glover?' (I, pp. 294-95)

I have already indicated anti-Catholic attitudes in Rob Roy. The same is true of The Fair Maid of Perth, in which Scott portrays the disturbing and dishonest paradox of that wealthy church. As Scott says of the ineffectual Robert III:

It followed as a matter of course, that the clergy of the Catholic Church acquired influence over a man whose intentions were so excellent, but whose resolutions were so infirm. (I, p. 184)

The paradox of greed and piety is expressed by the Prior:

'It is one thing to employ the revenues of the Church, which are so much larger than monks ought to need or wish for, in the suitable and dutiful reception of your royal Majesty, and another to have it wrenched from us by the hands of rude and violent men, whose love of rapine is only limited by the extent of their power,' (I, pp. 190-91)

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73. This might be taken as an image for the loss of virginity.



a reference to the Black Douglas and his retinue having 'taken up forcible quarters in the Monastery of Aberbrothock' (I, p. 189).

Scott shows these wealthy inhabitants of the cloisters as lacking in human compassion. The scene is one in which authorial anger is just below the surface. Louise the wandering glee-maiden has the added disadvantage of being a foreigner in dangerous fourteenth century Scotland, and the moral test Scott devises is a memorable one. At least the dissipated Duke of Rothesay has sufficient feeling to hear her song and pay handsomely for it, whereas the Black Douglas would have her whipped. When Henry Wynd is asked to conduct her to safety, selfishness and social awareness make him reject Rothesay's commission.

Henry Smith was, as we have seen, sufficiently rash and daring when weapons were in question. But he had also the pride of a decent burgher, and was unwilling to place himself in what might be thought equivocal circumstances by the sober part of his fellow-citizens.

(I, p. 228)

At last shame forces him to relent, and he and Louise are led out of the monastery by a secret passage. When Louise asks Brother Cyprian if she might halt in the chapel to don her mantle in disguise, his answer shows the remoteness and inhumanity of his order:

'The Chapel of Holy St Madox is no tiring-room for jugglers and strollers to shift their trappings in. I will presently show thee a vestiary more suited to thy condition.' (I, p. 233)

The monk's lack of compassion, and the Catholic church's failure to minister to the weak and worldly are memorably summed up by the glee-maiden being shown a 'charnel-house, half filled with dry skulls and bones' (I, p. 234). Brother Cyprian's pronouncement is cold and cruel:

'Why, thou child of vanity, the remains on which thou lookest are but the earthly attire of those who, in their day, led or followed in the pursuit of worldly pleasure. And such shalt thou be, for all thy mincing and ambling, thy piping and thy harping; thou, and all such ministers of frivolous and worldly pleasure, must become like these poor bones, whom thy idle nicety fears and loathes to look upon.' (I, p. 234)

It is this cold strict church, suppressor of human feeling, that has Catharine Glover in its power. Her tutor is the renegade Brother Blair. He realises that

'as the Church waxeth rich, her doctrines have unhappily become dim and obscure, as a light is less seen if placed in a lamp of chased gold, than beheld through a screen of glass.' (I, p.291)

But Brother Blair is insistent: he will not break with his order. Instead, as an 'inside' agent he will work towards the restoration of the 'purity' of his church, and the return of the 'primitive simplicity' of priesthood (I, p. 291). In other words, Brother Blair wishes to push his church back to the dark ages of fanaticism, and hence further away from human need. His call for a renunciation of things material includes his demand that Catharine take holy orders, and so deprive herself of the comfort and companionship of a husband.

The Fair Maid of Perth is therefore about man's (and woman's) commitment to a world struggling to emerge from the dark ages of superstition and strife. It is about spirituality versus practicality, the hermit versus the man of action. Certainly the Glover wishes his daughter to observe the Catholic faith, but he disallows the self-sacrifice and fanaticism of the cloisters. His attitude to his church is a healthy one. Though he attends regularly, he has been known to jest about the church 'at the ale-bench,

or over a pottle pot of wine, or in right sure company' (II, p. 147). When he is accused of heresy, he flees to the friendly Highlands, where Brother Blair is in hiding.

This is a novel of subtle contrasts, with the glee-maiden Louise set against the reluctant lover Catharine, with the cowardly impulsive Conachar contrasted with brave reliable Henry, and with the pathetic Oliver Proudfoot contrasted with both. The concept of profession is an important one in the novel, with a subtle network of symbolism. Francis Hart has called attention to the hand/glove symbol as a moral basis of the novel.<sup>74</sup> As Simon Glover says:

'Brave men fight with their hands - cowards employ their feet in flight. A glove is borne aloft, a shoe is trampled in the mire; - a man greets a friend with his open hand; he spurns a dog, or one whom he holds as mean as a dog, with his advanced foot. A glove on the point of a spear is a sign and pledge of faith all the wide world over, as a gauntlet flung down is a gage of knightly battle.'

(I, pp. 115-116)

Sir John Ramorny loses his hand when attempting to abduct Catharine, and thereafter must fight with his warped mind. The loathesome apothecary Dwining<sup>75</sup> uses drugs to gain superiority over others. But his profession is all illusion. He cannot restore Ramorny's severed hand, and when he saves the murderer Bonthron from strangulation on the gallows, it is not by magic but by a concealed harness.

The Fair Maid of Perth has much to do with moral courage and

74. Hart, op. cit., pp. 243-44.

75. Dwining = a wasting illness. For Scott's extensive use of self-interpreting names, see Coleman Parsons, 'Character Names in the Waverley Novels', P.M.L.A., March 1934, pp. 276-294. Waverley is the most famous example. In the Gaelic Mac means 'the son of', and so expresses clan continuity, pride and heredity (Hamish Mac-Tavish). In The Fair Maid, Glover and Smith point to profession, as in the Gaelic Mac An t-Saoir, meaning the son of the carpenter.

honour, and Conachar is a major character. Heir to a clan chiefship, Conachar has been sent to Perth to learn a trade under Simon Glover. But he cannot settle to the pacific, almost feminine profession of glove making. Jealous of Henry's attentions to Catharine, Conachar attacks him, but is no match for the burly smith, supreme in the masculine skills of the anvil. Conachar's easy defeat calls into question his potency. His master is angry.

'I thought,' said Simon Glover, rather seriously, 'that all this was to be laid aside, when at earnest intercession I took you under my roof. I thought that when I undertook, being very loath to do so, to teach you an honest trade, we were to hear no more of hunting, or hosting, or clan-gatherings, or any matter of the kind?' (I, p. 112)

But Conachar has a fatal pride of race. It was, as he points out, an arrangement between his father and Glover in which he had no say. However, he is sure that his father the chief will repay the Glover's kindness with cattle and hides, a bargain that is an insult.

The point is that Conachar is like Catharine: he seems to have no settled place in the tightly knit community of Perth. As a boarded-out Highlander, he is an enemy in the Perth camp, and reliant upon the Glover burgess's protection. Roaming Highlanders are suspected of the attempt to abduct Catharine. As a citizen says:

'It's a shame the breaches in our walls are not repaired, and that these land-louping Highland scoundrels are left at liberty to take honest men and women out of their beds any night that is dark enough.' (I, p. 85)

Henry Smith has 'no good-will to the Highland race' (I, p. 70). Though Conachar is no threat to him in a brawl, he recognises that

he is a strong contender for Catharine's hand. The smith recognises that his strength and professional skill are a disadvantage in the subtle strategy of winning a woman over. Conachar might not be able to fashion a pair of gloves, but, as Henry tells his master,

'he has no bleared eyes, - no hands seared with the hot iron, and welked by the use of the fore-hammer, - no hair rusted in the smoke, and singed in the furnace, like the hide of a badger, rather than what is fit to be covered with a Christian bonnet.' (I, p. 68)

The philosophical problem Scott is debating is the equation of the outer being, the body, with the inner, the mind and sensibilities. The smith is brave and kind hearted, but his strong body testifies to truculence. Conachar is physically delicate, but his words express spite and contempt. But Conachar's attitude is only a defence mechanism. As Hart has said, the young Highlander

is proud and afraid in a world where the good man's only alternatives are the brute strength of Smith and the life of monastic withdrawal desired by the maid all three court. 76

Catharine may be the most beautiful woman in Perth, but she has no wish to trade on her beauty. Her father's idea is that her beauty and Henry's physical strength make a perfect match, but Catharine desires something deeper and finer. The most brilliant portrayal of the difficulties of reconciling the outer and inner man is the character of poor Oliver Proudfoot, bonnet maker. Though his sentiments suggest physical bravery, he is easily defeated in combat. Ironically, when he borrows Henry's armour to protect himself from the nocturnal revellers who have already humiliated him

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76. Hart, op. cit., p. 237.

(I, ch. XVI) he is struck down from behind. The murder is Scott's profound warning about the limits of physical appearance.

Henry the smith has a low opinion of those who inhabit the mountains north of Perth, and he considers that

'the drubbing of a Highlandman is a thing not worth mentioning.' (I, p. 46)

His contemptuous attitude seems contradictory, since the Highlanders are feared as fighters. But Henry, who casts himself in the role of defender of Perth and its honour, disallows the idea of Highland honour. He has the prejudices of an artisan in an urban community in its slow evolution from the lawless savagery of its rural surroundings. In other words, Perth is the last outpost of civilisation before the primitive Highlands, but it is still part of the Highlands. Simon Glover recognises and takes advantage of this fact. Though the unruly Highlands threaten the peace and prosperity of Perth, the Glover has no scruples about buying skins, the raw commodities of his craft, from the Highlanders. When he says that 'Highlandmen give good bargains,' the prejudiced Henry answers that

'They can afford them ... for they sell nothing but stolen gear.' (I, p. 67)

The Glover's reply reminds us of the shrewd Bailie of Rob Roy:

'Well, well, - be that as it may, it is not my business where they get the bestial, so I get the hides.' (I, p. 67)

Like Bailie Jarvie, Simon Glover is the progressive trader, the man who sees a middle way. But Henry does not recognise that the swords he shapes on his anvil are the commodities which keep the Highlands unruly, and a menace to Perth. In other words, his craft is a destructive one. The stability and development of Perth are threat-

ened by the very weapons he makes, and which he defends the fair city with. This is memorably shown in the incident in which Henry (via Norman of the Hammer) gives Conachar, new chief of the Clan Quhele, the finest mail shirt he has ever fashioned, but only on condition that Conachar will fight him (II, ch. XVI).

His father having died, Conachar returns to the Highlands, to lead the Clan Quhele. His change of territory seems to produce a change of personality. Dressed in tartan and eagle feather a la Fergus Mac-Ivor, Conacher tells an astonished Catharine:

'Conachar is no more, unless in regard to the wrongs he has sustained, and the vengeance which they demand. I am Ian Eachin MacIan, son of the Chief of the Clan Quhele. I have moulted my feathers, as you see, when I changed my name. As for these men, they are not my father's followers, but mine. You see only one half of them collected; they form a band consisting of my foster father and eight sons, who are my body-guard, and the children of my belt, who breathe but to do my will. But Connachar,' he added, in a softer tone of voice, 'lives again so soon as Catharine desires to see him; and while he is the young Chief of the Clan Quhele to all others, he is to her as humble and obedient as when he was Simon Glover's apprentice.'

(I, pp. 305-06)

But despite the splendour of his dress and the arrogance of his sentiments, Conachar is a reluctant chief. It is late in the novel before we get his story from the Glover, his Lowland foster father. The circumstances of Conachar's birth are similar to those assigned to Allan McAulay in A Legend of Montrose. Like McAulay, Conachar was born to a fugitive mother after a bloody clan battle. The wife of the clan Quhele chief,

then near the time of giving birth to an infant, fled into the forest, attended by one faithful servant and his daughter. (II, p. 161)

In deriving this story, Scott may have had the wife of Charles

Stewart of Ardsheal, Invernahyle's blood relative, in mind. Tradition has it that after the '45 Lady Ardsheal gave birth in a barn while the redcoats under Captain Caroline Scott demolished Ardsheal House.

#### The young Conachar

was nursed with the milk of a doe, which the forester who attended her [his mother] contrived to take alive in a snare. (II, pp. 161-62)

This symbol of delicacy is strengthened by an ancient clan Quhele prophecy

that the power of the tribe should fall by means of a boy born under a bush of holly, and suckled by a white doe. (II, p. 162)

This is the reason why Conachar is sent into the care of Simon Glover.

Conachar's recall to his clan coincides with disturbances in the Highlands. The chief culprits are the clan Chattan and clan Quhele, and their quarrel claims the king's attention. In Robert III's council the Prior explains his reasons for fearing the warring clans.

'The fiery cross hath flitted about like a meteor in every direction, and awakened strange and unknown tribes beyond the distant Murray Frith - may Heaven and St. Dominic be our protection! But if your lordships cannot find remedy for evil, it will spread broad and wide, and the patrimony of the Church must in every direction be exposed to the fury of these Amalekites, with whom there is as little devotion to Heaven, as there is pity or love to their neighbours - may Our Lord be our guard! - We hear some of them are yet utter heathens, and worship Mahound and Ter-magaunt.' (I, pp. 267-68)

Thus an acquisitive church uses ignorance and superstition to portray the Highlanders, an ironic comment on Scott's part, considering that the south (which included the Lowlands) regarded the High-



landers as being savages, even up until the time of the '45. But Scott exposes this judgement at a distance. While the court is arranging the contest between the clan Quhele and clan Chattan in the hope that they will annihilate one another, Simon Glover and Catharine are being denounced as heretics. Unlike the closeted Prior, the Glover has had first-hand experience of the Highlands, and he speaks well of them, explaining that

'it hath chanced with me to have great dealings with these men; and I can take it on my salvation, that you nowhere find more just and honourable traffickers, or by whom a man may more easily make an honest penny. I have made in my day several distant journeys into the far Highlands, upon the faith of their chiefs; nor did I ever meet with a people more true to their word, when you can once prevail upon them to plight it in your behalf.' (II, pp. 160-61)

This handsome statement carries the suggestion that the Glover has had the best of the bargain in the Highlands. It is yet another example of Scott's genius in portraying the coexisting strengths and weaknesses of human nature. An entirely convincing character, the Glover is a glib one, with the security of his gold taking priority over his piety. Like Bailie Jarvie in Rob Roy, Simon Glover is the new-style trader, letting profit overrule prejudice. The bourgeois Glover preaches democracy, for faith as well as free speech.

'This has never been the land or the people over whom priests could rule in the name of Rome, without their usurpation being controlled. If they are to punish each honest burgher who says the monks love gold, and that the lives of some of them cry shame upon the doctrines they teach, why truly, Stephen Smotherwell will not lack employment - and if all foolish maidens are to be secluded from the world because they follow the erring doctrines of a popular preaching friar, they must enlarge the nunneries and receive their inmates on slighter composition.' (II, p. 152)

The Glover's motive in dissuading his daughter from assuming the veil is not only a matter of paternal possessiveness. But at

least he is frank enough to give voice to his fear. As he tells

Catharine:

'the old Glover is thought rich, and his wealth would follow his daughter to the convent of Elcho, unless what the Dominicans might claim as their own share.'

(II, p. 151)

Though clearly not as miserly as Henbane Dwining, Simon Glover echoes old Obaldistone's maxim that

'what I have is my own, if labour is getting, and care in augmenting, can make a right of property.'

Indeed, the plot strands of the novel are so well intertwined that the reader can imagine the Glover willing to let Henry Wynd marry the well-dowered Catharine because the son-in-law will protect the Glover's property and Perth.

Ironically, it is the much maligned Highlands that give sanctuary to the Glover, his daughter, and the fugitive monk Clement Blair. In this respect, the Glover's fair trading practices in the Highlands as a purchaser of skins pay off, and Blair, who can expect no mercy from his brotherhood, is not molested. Though the new chief Conachar sometimes received rough usage from his Lowland 'father,' Highland honour makes him treat the Glover well. Then again, he has a vested interest in protecting the father for the sake of the daughter.

The novel follows Simon Glover into the Highlands. But he is no innocent abroad. After half a century of reading and listening, Scott gives his generous impression of the old Highlands:

The danger from the warlike and uncivilized inhabitants of these wilds would have appeared to another at least as formidable as the perils of the journey. But

Simon's knowledge of the manners and language of the people assured him on this point also. An appeal to the hospitality of the wildest Gael was never unsuccessful; and the kern, that in other circumstances would have taken a man's life for the silver button of his cloak, would deprive himself of a meal to relieve the traveller who implored hospitality at the door of his bothy. The art of travelling in the Highlands was to appear as confident and defenceless as possible; and accordingly the Glover carried no arms whatever, journeyed without the least appearance of precaution, and took good care to exhibit nothing which might excite cupidity. (II, p. 172)

Having given the Glover safe conduct instructions, Scott must make him stop to admire the view of a county and river the author had known intimately and loved since childhood.

Indifferent to natural beauty at any time, Simon Glover was now particularly so; and the only part of the splendid landscape on which he turned his eye was the angle or loop of meadow land, where the river Tay, rushing in full-sworn dignity from its parent lake, and wheeling around a beautiful valley of about a mile in breadth, begins his broad course to the south-eastward, like a conqueror and a legislator, to subdue and to enrich remote districts. (II, p. 174)

The materially minded Simon must attend to this moving symbol because it leads back to Perth and safety, though it rises in the turbulent Highlands.

But the Glover, like Bailie Jarvie, is only in the Highlands to beg a favour. As he tells Niel Booshalloch, a 'village Eumaeus':

'I would not, at my years, quit my own chimney corner in Curfew Street, to bask me in the beams of the brightest sun that ever shone upon Highland heather. The very truth is, I come hither in extremity - my foes have the advantage of me, and have laid things to my charge whereof I am incapable, even in thought.' (II, p. 178)

His appeal does not go unanswered, with Booshalloch asserting:

'And for your innocence or guilt, it concerns not the case, - or rather, he [Conachar] ought the more to shelter you if guilty, seeing your necessity and his risk are both in that case the greater.' (II, p. 179)

The parallel here is with the monastery that gives sanctuary, and the specific incident is the attempted abduction of the Glover's daughter by Ramorny and company.

The Glover is privileged to watch the funeral of Conachar's father, his old friend, but from a distance. Through the stranger's eyes, Scott gives us a view of a Highland community in these violent primitive times. There is a hint of anger in his tone, the conviction that constant feuding retards civilisation. As Burt and other travellers saw in the eighteenth century, the women do all the work, while the men go to war.

Hamlets were seen, especially on the northern margin of the lake, half hid among the little glens that poured their tributary streams into Loch Tay, which, like many earthly things, made a fair show at a distance, but, when more closely approached, were disgusting and repulsive, from their squalid want of the conveniences which attend even Indian wigwams. They were inhabited by a race who neither cultivated the earth, nor cared for the enjoyments which industry procures. The women, although otherwise treated with affection, and even delicacy of respect, discharged all the absolutely necessary domestic labour. The men, excepting some reluctant use of an ill-formed plough, or more frequently a spade, grudgingly gone through, as a task infinitely beneath them, took no other employment than the charge of the herds of black cattle, in which their wealth consisted. At all other times, they hunted, fished, or marauded, during the brief intervals of peace, by way of pastime; plundering with bolder license, and fighting with embittered animosity, in time of war, which, public or private, upon a broader or more restricted scale, formed the proper business of their lives, and the only one which they esteemed worthy of them. (II, pp. 183-84)

In this central passage of the novel, Scott compares the well organised, commercially prosperous Perth with the backward bankrupt Highlands. His verdict is clear: the warring must cease, and the men take up the ploughshares to make a better life. In terms of the use of perspectives, this passage compares with the one in

Waverley in which the young Englishman approaches Tully-Veolan.

The barge that conveys the body of the clan Quhele chief to its last resting place is similar to the one that sailed through Canto Second of The Lady of the Lake, with Roderick in command. In a fine piece of descriptive writing of auditory as well as visual imagery from a distance, Scott describes the cried coronach and the crescendo of mourning voices.

In the meantime the piercing din of the war-pipes became louder and louder, and the cry from the numberless boats which followed that from which the black banner of the Chief was displayed, rose in wild unison up to the Tom-an-Lonach, from which the Glover viewed the spectacle. The galley which headed the procession, bore on its poop a species of scaffold, upon which, arrayed in white linen, and with the face bare, was displayed the corpse of the deceased Chieftain. (II, pp. 185-86)

The inauguration of Conachar is combined with the funeral feast. Scott shows his deep understanding of Highland psychology.

The Scottish Highlanders appear to regard the separation of friends by death, as something less absolute and complete than it is generally esteemed in other countries, and converse of the dear connexions, who have sought the grave before them, as if they had gone upon a long journey in which they themselves must soon follow. (II, p. 198)

As has been shown throughout this study, Scott was no stranger to the staging of Highland feasts in poetry as well as prose, and the one in The Fair Maid of Perth is superbly arranged in a sylvan setting, with the guests seated according to their rank. As an old friend of the chief's, the Glover is given special treatment, and has bread, a rare commodity in the Highlands in these times. But in this pleasant setting, with plenty of food and drink, the Glover is reminded of the main activities of the feasting Highlanders. The bower in which he dines is decorated like the interior of Darnlinvarach,

the McAulay fortified house in A Legend of Montrose. The Glover sees the skins in which he trafficks, but

The most remarkable part of these ornaments was a number of Highland shirts of mail, with steel-bonnets, battle-axes, and two-handed swords to match, which hung around the upper part of the room, together with targets highly and richly embossed. (II, p. 203)

The array is an omen of the contest to come. So is the Booshalloch's complaint about Conachar's failure to acknowledge his and the Glover's presence.

'These are changed days, friend. His father, rest his soul, would have spoken to us both; but these are bad manners which he has learned among you Sass-enachs in the Low Country.' (II, p. 203)

The Glover gets confirmation of his former apprentice's inability to assume the onerous duties of chiefship, and thus confirmation of the Booshalloch's accusation. Conachar has not been bred to the profession of arms, and he confesses to the Glover:

'Father, I am - a COWARD! - It is said at last, and the secret of my disgrace is in keeping of another!'

(II, p. 224)

The Glover's question is a reasonable one: why would such a weak chief wish Catharine to become his wife, considering the insecurity of his situation? Conachar's answer testifies to his depth of feeling. He could have drawn strength from the Fair Maid, whereas Henry Wynd the smith is strong already. Conachar wants to follow the path of peace, the path that Catharine wanted the Smith to follow.

Scott complained that there were 'always at the end such a plaguey number of stitches to take up' in a story, but in The Fair Maid of Perth he succeeds admirably, considering the plotting complexities. As the climax of The Lord of the Isles was the battle

of Bannockburn, so the climax of the novel is the bloody clan struggle on the North Inch. The Duke of Rothesay, who tried (by Scott's well used method of disguise) to seduce Catharine, is dead, and her forgiveness was to feed him till the end. Henry Wynd is fashioning his finest ever steel coat in the hope that he can fight Conachar.

The Palm Sunday clan contest is one of the great scenes in Scott's prose. He captures the milling crowds making a holiday out of strife and death on a day blessed by the Church of Rome. High Mass is heard in the Dominican and Carthusian monasteries, and yew branches in lieu of palms are carried. Henry Wynd is there, and he sees his mortal enemy,

the Glover's apprentice stripped of his mean slough, and blazing forth as a chieftain, who, by his quick eye and gallant demeanour, the noble shape of his brow and throat, his splendid arms and well-proportioned limbs, seemed well worthy to hold the foremost rank among men selected to live or die for the honour of their race. (II, p. 336)

We are reminded of poor Oliver Proudpute in the smith's armour.

Conachar has also confessed his cowardice to his foster father Torquil, who watches him closely. Then comes Henry's opportunity to engage with Conachar. The clan Chattan lacks a member, and the smith is enlisted. Folk tradition conveniently helps Scott to tie up the final threads of his intricate plot. A last beautiful touch: Proudpute's widow breathlessly arrives with the smith's armour which her husband had been wearing on the night he was murdered.

The battle begins. The image of the wielded sword is one of automation, as if the bearer's mind is disengaged from the body's bloody business.

For an instant or two the front lines, hewing at each other with their long swords, seemed engaged in a succession of single combats; but the second and third ranks soon came up on either side, actuated alike by the eagerness of hatred and the thirst of honour, pressed through the intervals, and rendered the scene a tumultuous chaos, over which the huge swords rose and sunk, some still glittering, others streaming with blood, appearing, from the wild rapidity with which they were swayed, rather to be put in motion by some complicated machinery, than to be wielded by human hands. (II, pp. 350-51)

The ponderous blooded blade hacking at static limbs is the symbol of the destructive futility of Highland pride.

The Gaelic slogan ('Far eil air son Eachin! II, p. 356)<sup>77</sup> gives authenticity to the contest. Henry Wynd is 'wounded in many places' (II, p. 357) but he is intent on hacking a path to Conachar. But first he has to contend with Torquil, the foster father, who falls. At last the smith and Conachar are face to face. The young chief is alone.

Perhaps this was enough to bring his constitutional timidity to its highest point; or perhaps he recollected at the same moment that he was without defensive armour, and that a line of enemies, halting indeed and crippled, but eager for revenge and blood, were closely approaching. It is enough to say, that his heart sickened, his eyes darkened, his ears tingled, his brain turned giddy - all other considerations were lost in the apprehension of instant death; and drawing one ineffectual blow at the Smith, he avoided that which was aimed at him in return, by bounding backward; and ere the former could recover

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77. Captain McKenzie of the Celtic Society and the Seventy Second Regiment 'told me a MacLean story which was new to me. At the battle of Sheriffmoor that Clan was commanded by a chief called Hector. In the action as the Chief rushed forward he was frequently in situations of peril. His foster father followed him with seven sons whom he reserved as a bodyguard - whom he threw forward into the battle as he saw his chief pressed. The signal he gave was 'Another for Hector.' The youths replied 'Death for Hector' and were all successively killed' (Journal, 17 Oct 1827).



his weapon, Eachin had plunged into the stream of the Tay. (II, pp. 364-65)

The Tay leads to the Highlands, but one cannot swim against time and fate. There is no way back to honour for Conachar, the Lowland-weaned chief. He appears at Campsie, where Catharine and her new friend, the glee-maiden Lousie, are strolling in safety. He appeals to the Fair Maid. He has done what she had asked Henry Wynd to do.

'I have, rather than strike a blow at my enemy, given up all that a man calls dearest - I have lost honour, fame, and friends.' (II, p. 389)

This living, but utterly ruined embodiment of her passive philosophy then disappears out of her life.

What possible other ending than marriage between Henry Wynd and Catharine? Having lived through the moral fable, they both benefit from it. Henry's confession is:

'I should blush to say, Catharine, that I am even sick of the thoughts of doing battle. Yonder last field showed carnage enough to glut a tiger. I am therefore resolved to hang up my broadsword, never to be drawn more unless against the enemies of Scotland.' (II, p. 391)

But Catharine has learned to compromise. She has seen the treacherous Ramorny murder Rothesay, and she now knows that the nation needs champions. Her answer is:

'And should Scotland call for it ... I will buckle it round you.' (II, p. 392)

And her commitment to the cloisters? Catharine has inherited Dwinning's fortune, and it will go to the church for 'soul masses' for those slain by Henry.

If the moral tale is to have a meaning, it must have immunity

from time. Thus Scott ends with the note that from the union and issue of the strong and the beautiful (both tempered by tragedy)

several of the most respected houses in Scotland  
... and many individuals, distinguished both in  
arts and arms (II, p. 393)

have sprung.

Though there had been difficulties and doubts over the writing, Scott was satisfied with the reception of The Fair Maid of Perth. Praise was a spur in the face of bankruptcy and failing health. His Journal entry for Thursday, 5 June 1828, is buoyant:

Cadell breakfasted in great spirits with the success of the Fair Maid of Perth. A disappointment being always to be apprehended I too am greatly pleased that the evil day is adjourned for the time must come, and yet I can spin a tough yarn still with any one now going. 78

A letter 'Circa 5th to 9th June 1828'<sup>79</sup> to his son-in-law Lockhart shows that he was determined his pen would pay his debts.

The Fair Maid has had great acceptance here & gives me encouragement to think I may work out my temporal salvation which I shall scarce think accomplished till I do no [t] owe £100 in the world. 80

Writing to Mrs Hughes on 26 June, he revealed:

I am glad you like the Gow Chrom. He is rather a favourit [e] of my own. But Henry Wynd's insouciance always delighted me in the story. A man who plunged into such a mortal combat without knowing which side he was fighting on must have been a queer fellow any how. 81

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78. Journal, p. 489.

79. Grierson's dating.

80. Grierson, Letters, vol. X, p. 428.

81. Ibid., pp. 447-48.

The reviewers gave The Fair Maid of Perth a rapturous welcome. Their tendency was to quote and not criticise, but the Gentleman's Magazine for June 1828, paid tribute to the plotting skills.

It is a most successful effort of genius, and is destined to an immediate and abiding popularity. One reason we think may be found for the breathless interest of this story, in the circumstance from the first to the last, the stage is crowded with characters who are destined to act most important parts in the drama, and that we are no sooner withdrawn from a scene of overpowering excitement, than another is presented, which satisfies us for the absence of the character we have lost; and yet each and all are engaged in the development of the plot, and fall naturally and unconstrainedly into an harmonious whole. The consistency of each is beautifully sustained, not only by action, but by appropriate language. The female characters are unusually few, but in the heroine Catherine Glover, we have one of the brightest conceptions of female loveliness and purity, combining all that is chivalrous with all that is natural, that poet or painter ever drew. (p. 531)

In writing a novel set in the fourteenth century Highlands, Scott realised that there would be difficulties in finding an 'appropriate language.' To forestall criticism, he makes Croftangry say in his introductory remarks:

I have not placed in the mouth of the characters the Lowland Scotch dialect now spoken, because unquestionably the Scottish of that day resembled very closely the Anglo-Saxon, with a sprinkling of French or Norman to enrich it. Those who wish to investigate the subject, may consult the Chronicles of Winton, and the History of Bruce, by Archdeacon Barbour. But supposing my own skill in the ancient Scottish were sufficient to invest the dialogue with its peculiarities, a translation must have been necessary for the benefit of the general reader. The Scottish dialect may be therefore considered as laid aside, unless where the use of peculiar words may add emphasis or vivacity to the composition.

The great Goethe found no difficulty with the dialogue. In fact, he considered The Fair Maid of Perth to be an almost flawless work of art. The German writer rhapsodised:

How it is done! That is a hand! For the whole is a solid plot, and in detail not a stroke but leads to the goal! .. Dialogue and descriptive presentation equally excellent! His scenes and situations resemble paintings by Teniers. In the arrangement of the whole they show the acme of art, the individual figures have a speaking truthfulness, and the execution extends with artistic affection to the minutest parts. 82

More so than most of Scott's novels, The Fair Maid of Perth has been seriously neglected by modern readers and critics. Yet on a light reading level it is a fast moving and exciting adventure story. Several readings and a close study convince us that it is a novel of depth and integrated ideas. Though it is an exposition of the destructive futility of Highland pride, its themes are not territorially limited. The lens widens to show vagaries common to humanity.

In his fine study of Scott Francis Hart has devoted space to an analysis of The Fair Maid of Perth, and he sees its scope of reference and meaning in the following terms:

the book transcends Scott's customary Highland-Lowland contrast, and Glover's major thematic significance is realized only when, in two closely related scenes, he confronts his daughter's priestly mentor and her Highland suitor. Here he reflects on the nature of courage, which is what this study of war and peace is ultimately about - courage, and the conflicting demands of peace and honor upon both the coward and the brave man. 83

The Fair Maid of Perth is the last, and undoubtedly one of the finest of Scott's extended Highland works. As I have shown, there are similarities between, and borrowings from earlier Highland works, poetic as well as fictive. But The Fair Maid of Perth is better

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82. G.H. Needler, Goethe and Scott, (Toronto, 1950), p. 87.

83. Hart, op. cit., p. 239.

made than its predecessors. James Ballantyne's criticism about the 'Ossianick monotony' of its principal characters is unfair. Catharine is more convincing than Ellen, and Conachar more human than Roderrick. Likewise, Robert III is more real than the disguised James V. The fictive characters are superior to the poetic ones because their frailties are exposed in credible situations.

Several factors combine to make The Fair Maid of Perth a major novel. In the first instance, Scott had had many years of intimacy with that shire. In the second instance, oral history and reading, refined by time, integrated in his creative consciousness. In the third instance, the need to make his peace, if only in memory, with his erring brother Daniel made him emotionally involved with at least one character. We dare not say that Catharine, who rejected the smith because she wanted something finer, was modelled on Williamina Belsches, who rejected the apprentice lawyer, perhaps because her family wanted someone socially finer for her. At any rate, the aging ruined Scott never forgot Miss Belsches, his lost love, as his reunion with her mother, and the letters in the secret drawer in his Abbotsford desk show.

Whatever the story of Williamina, Scott's love for the Highlands stayed constant. Only a man who had a deep affection for, and a profound understanding of the Highlands could have written The Fair Maid of Perth, even if money to discharge debt was the primary motive of composition. Though the clans hack each other to pieces, and Conachar plunges into disgrace, there is some dignity in destruction.

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## CONCLUSION

We have followed Scott's career as a chronicler of the Highlands from the first long poem The Lady of the Lake (1810) to the last novel The Fair Maid of Perth (1828). In this short span of eighteen years, Scott produced eight extended Highland works<sup>1</sup> in both poetry and prose, a tribute to his industry and inventiveness. Where possible, historical sources, friendships and Highland journeys which helped to shape and give direction to the Borderer's creative impulses have been noted. In the tracking of historical sources James Anderson in his thesis<sup>2</sup> on Sir Walter Scott and History (1965) has done valuable work, though one suspects that the full extent of Scott's borrowings will never be completely catalogued. This scholastic difficulty is a tribute to the extent of Scott's reading in several languages.

What conclusions can be drawn from my study? With regard to Scott's selection and assimilation of sources, a general rule can be safely postulated: as his literary career progressed, with more and more background reading, journeys to the Highlands, and new friendships formed, he became better and better at selecting and integrating sources. But from this rule, and from what follows in this conclusion, the long Highland poems must be excluded. There are only two of these, and in both instances Scott obviously had difficulty with the integration of inspiration and information, as the buttresses of dubious notes slapped on at the ends show. The

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1. Excluding Redgauntlet, but including The Highland Widow and The Two Drovers.

2. As already stated, compressed into a series of articles for Studies in Scottish Literature, 1966-68.

notes are there because Scott was not confident about the historical material in the text, and in particular about the content of The Lord of the Isles. The strong lyrical force of his language carries before it the flotsam of his historical allusions, creating a whirlpool effect in the reader's mind. The glittering banquets and whirling battles block out reality, and when the scene settles, there sits the immaculate unreal maiden, with or without harp. In these aristocratic dominated epics, the mediaeval Highland world of poverty, strife and bloody steel is censored. In Scott's two long Highland poems, glamour and gentility triumph over truth and realism, with special effects such as seers, disguised maidens and monarchs keeping the action going. The poems are without insight because Scott could not serve two masters simultaneously: he could not satisfy his public and be faithful to history. But, as Thomas Crawford wisely reminds us, though we may see the majority of Scott's long poems as being largely throwaway, lyrics from them survive as songs, and now stand independent of the poems they first appeared in.

There are literally scores of fine stanzas and lines scattered throughout Scott's numerous lyrics, and a handful of songs as perfect as any ever written in Scotland.

Crawford cites the coronach 'He is gone on the mountain' in Canto Third of The Lady of the Lake.<sup>3</sup>

As has been shown, Scott turned from poetry to prose in his portrayal of the Highlands. We note, however, a transference in terms of languid Ossianic heroine and big battle scene. Prose was a more

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3. Crawford, op. cit., p. 34.



suitable medium for his imagination, perhaps because it forced him to slow down and focus his language. This meant that the language had to be tailored to the theme, and not vice versa, a process that allowed him more scope for selection and integration of historical material. Each new novel brought increasing skill. Scott's mastery of Highland material can be demonstrated by a comparison of Waverley (1814) with The Fair Maid of Perth (1828). Waverley is a rag-bag of sources, with allusions and anecdotes drawn from different centuries, whereas The Fair Maid is an ordered novel. By the time he came to write The Fair Maid, Scott knew where source material was to be found, at his elbow in the Abbotsford library, in manuscript archives, among Highland friends, and in retentive memory. He knew how to integrate this material with the products of his imagination. His confidence is reflected in the control and quality of his writing, and in particular in superb plotting. It seems to follow, therefore, that if The Fair Maid had had a Highland successor, it would have been an even finer work. But there is a paradox here, for as Scott became more and more skilled in the craft of fiction, his Highland themes retreated in time. In The Fair Maid of Perth he went back to the fourteenth century, two centuries earlier than The Lady of the Lake, his first extended Highland work. As I shall argue shortly, Scott's retreat into the sanctuary of the mediaeval world in his last Highland work was a retreat from controversy, for the contemporary theme of the Clearances clamored for a sympathetic pen. He could have gone forward with the social realism and tragedy of The Highland Widow and The Two Drovers, but instead he went back, to find a marketable theme that would not offend his Highland aristocratic friends in the

dark hour of his financial (and, to some extent, social) fall. Once again remote Highland history was his crutch.

There has been a great deal written about the relationship between Scott's fiction and history, and in this debate the Highland novels (and in particular Waverley and Rob Roy) have received much attention. But the critical debate is not primarily about the relationship of such works to Highland history: it is about their relationship to human history in general. The leader of this critical faction is the Hungarian Georg Lukacs, and his complex study of The Historical Novel has been very influential in shaping modern Scott criticism.

Lukacs's method is to argue from a Marxist base, and to use generalisations to cover certain of the Waverley Novels simultaneously. According to Lukacs and his followers, the historical implications of Waverley and Rob Roy go far beyond the region they portray. That is why Lukacs hails Scott as being

the great poet of past ages, the really popular por-  
trayer of history. 4

To Lukacs, the author of Waverley and other works was the first and foremost chronicler of eighteenth century Scotland, or more specifically, the Highlands:

it is in his unforgettable portrayal of the survivals of gentile society, of the Scottish clans where the poetry of his portrayal of past life chiefly lies. Here in material and subject-matter alone, there is present such a powerful element of the heroic period of mankind, that Scott's novels at their height do indeed approach the old epics. Scott is a giant discoverer and awakener of this long vanished past. It is true that the eighteenth century already loved and

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4. Lukacs, op. cit., p. 56.

enjoyed the poetry of primitive life. And in the wave of enthusiasm for Homer, in Homer's ousting of Virgil as the model, there is undoubtedly a dawning awareness of this infant period of mankind. Important thinkers such as Ferguson even saw the relationship between the Homeric heroes and the American Indians. Nevertheless this predilection remained abstract and moralizing in quality. Scott was the first actually to bring this period to life, by introducing us into the everyday life of the clans, by portraying upon this real basis both the exceptional and unequalled human greatness of this primitive order as well as the inner necessity of its tragic downfall. 5

This is the panoramic view of Scott's achievement as a historical novelist, the assertion that (though rooted in the Highlands) Waverley and Rob Roy surmount territorial boundaries to carry a meaningful message to mankind. Lukacs's assumption is that the Highlands are a model for other cultures.

But there are several dangerous assumptions in this passage. The first is that the unique situation of chief and clansman in the eighteenth century Highlands can be generalised into a concept of an 'infant period of mankind', considering that the '45 was only sixty years since Scott's time, and 230 since our own. The second is best put in a question. In this 'primitive order' of the Highland clans, was it the chief, or the clansman, or both, who displayed an 'exceptional and unequalled human greatness'? Evan Dhu certainly did in the face of death, but so did Fergus, his chieftain. The third assumption (also made by David Craig and others) is that there was an 'inner necessity' for the 'tragic downfall' of the 'primitive life' of the clans. But the '45 was no implementation of a death-wish. It was an internal rising, not only for the sake of the Highlands, but for the Stuart succession, and hence the whole of Britain.

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5. Lukacs, op. cit., p. 56.

It was a vigorous campaign that clearly could have succeeded, had the Prince been prepared to appoint a military leader of the calibre of the 'gentle Lochiel', and had the expected French aid materialised. It was a campaign crushed by external forces in the brutal form of English militia, and not by an 'inner necessity' of defeat and destruction in the fated Highland consciousness. It follows that if the '45 had succeeded, the old order in the Highlands would have prevailed, since Charles Edward Stuart would have been deeply indebted to the chiefs, who would have received monetary rewards and strengthened their positions. The idea that the Highlands were doomed by a death-wish is a romantic idea imposed from the outside, and by Scott in the first instance, since Lukacs (along with so many others) is interpreting Highland history as portrayed by Scott in Waverley and Rob Roy, works of fiction. We are therefore back with the question concerning the relationship between fact and fiction in the historical novel.

Lukacs argues that

What matters ... in the historical novel is not the re-telling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events. What matters is that we should re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality. And it is a law of literary portrayal which first appears paradoxical, but then quite obvious, that in order to bring out these social and human motives of behaviour, the outwardly insignificant events, the smaller (from without) relationships are better suited than the great monumental dramas of world history. 6

In other words, Lukacs is arguing that history can best be awakened through the medium of fiction by a concentration on the external actions (some of them trivial) of the proletariat. This

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6. Lukacs, op. cit., p. 42.

method takes us back to the grass roots, and makes Evan Dhu more important than Fergus. But it is not all licence: 'the poetic awakening' must take place in reality, for

The historical novel ... has to demonstrate by artistic means that historical circumstances and characters existed in precisely such and such a way. 7

We have come to the crux of the question about fact and fiction. How does the reader reach this 'historical reality'? Assuming that he knows little or nothing about the period he is reading about in fiction, is he simply to take the novelist's portrayal as being accurate because the novelist concentrates on

the outwardly insignificant events, the smaller (from without) relationships?

Quite obviously there is no built-in check in this method, and so the factually ignorant reader can be deceived through distortion or omission. He can be persuaded through fiction to accept an interpretation of a period of history which is at variance with the facts as passed down to us. This is dangerously close to the idea of propaganda, of brain-washing even, and so the reader must know the general facts about the period being awakened for him in fiction. The axiom surely is that atomic or trivial details do not matter, but that general facts and ideas must conform to the historians' accounts. Scott himself was worried about the masking effect fiction could have on studies of the period it portrayed. In his essay on Fielding he expressed the fear that fiction was

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7. Lukacs, op. cit., p. 43.

apt to generate an indisposition to real history,  
and useful literature. 8

The implication is that the licence allowable in the 'poetic awakening' of a people and a place can supplant the real history. Disconcerting evidence of this comes from a study of steamboat guides of the nineteenth century, in which Scott's poetic account of The Lord of the Isles replaces the account from historical sources. The Steam Boat Companion of 1820 carried a quotation from The Lord of the Isles on its title-page.

The same dangerous process is obviously at work in the critical minds of Lukacs and his followers. What has happened is this: they are raising a leaning tower on foundations of straw. They stress the immunity of Scott's historical fiction to time and place, and yet their test of the historical authenticity of Waverley, Rob Roy and other works on a regional basis (the root of their argument) is to accept that the history in these works of fiction is accurate. Though they might wish to argue for universal application, these critics must accept that works like Waverley and Rob Roy are, in the first instance, regional works. They relate to the Highlands in so far as they deal with real periods and real persons. Furthermore, Waverley refers to a particularly sensitive period of Highland history.

As well as accepting Scott's historical interpretation of the eighteenth century Highlands in Waverley and Rob Roy, Lukacs makes a glaring factual error which invalidates his critical argument.

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8. Misc. Prose Works, Vol. 3, pp. 121-22. Reprinted in Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction, ed. Joan Williams, (London, 1968), p. 54.

It relates to the dating of Rob Roy, and is to be found in the following passage which is a classic example of the application of Marxist philosophy where it cannot fit.

With the suppression of the uprising of 1745 - which is depicted in Waverley - the real downfall of gentile society in Scotland begins, says Engels. Several decades later (in Rob Roy) we see the clans already in a state of complete economic dissolution. One character in this novel, the shrewd merchant and bailiff of Glasgow, Jarvie, clearly sees that it has become a matter of economic necessity for the clans to wage their desperate and hopeless battles on behalf of the Stuarts. They are no longer able to maintain themselves on the basis of their primitive economy. They possess a surplus population, permanently armed and well seasoned who cannot be put to any normal use, who must resort to plunder and pillage, and for whom an uprising of this kind is the only way out of a hopeless situation. Thus we have already an element of dissolution, the beginnings of class-uprooting which were as yet absent from the clan picture of Waverley. 9

Apart from the fatal error of placing Rob Roy historically after Waverley, Lukacs's confusion comes from his unwillingness or inability to break down the British Isles into the various countries and regions which formed the nation and with which Scott is concerned in his fiction. It is nonsense to see the misplaced Rob Roy as dealing with an attempt

to restore outdated Absolutism in an already far advanced capitalist England. 10

The '45 did not bring down the 'gentile society' of all Scotland, only of the Highlands, since some of the Lowland lairds were on the winning side. Nor is Lukacs correct in applying such socialist terms as 'class-uprooting' to the eighteenth century Highlands. The two Jacobite rebellions were not proletariat inspired, a surge from

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9. Lukacs, op. cit., p. 58.

10. Ibid., p. 57.

grass-roots level. They were instigated by a small number of the upper class, partly for personal motives, and partly for the political purpose of restoring the Stuarts to the joint thrones of England and Scotland. In these rebellions the wishes and needs of the proletariat were not taken into consideration. The 'gentle Lochiel' was one of the leaders in the '45, and he is said to have raised his clan by threats to cattle and next-of-kin. The proletariat followed their chiefs into rebellion, not because they believed or understood the purpose of the rebellions, but because they were joined to their chiefs by allegiances that went far back into the mists of time, and were not amenable to reason. If Lukacs the Marxist is praising the Highland proletariat for their spontaneous allegiance to an elite, namely the chiefs, then surely he must also praise the Russian people for their allegiance to the Czar and his court. But Highland traditionalists need not worry, for Devlin delivers a timely warning:

Scott cannot be taken over by the Marxists, though his understanding of the relationship between the individual and society is such that a Marxist interpretation of Scott's historicism can carry conviction. 11

The last part of this quotation shows a common fault of modern Scott criticism: too much theorising, based on suspect historical foundations. When the critic's or commentator's theme is the Highland content of Scott's fiction (and this is seldom, hence the reason for the lack of critical references in this thesis), we all too often get fanciful theories of a political, or sociological basis. Consider, for instance, this pronouncement by the prominent con-

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11. Devlin, op. cit., p. 44.



temporary critic Avrom Fleishman:

Scott wrote a novel on each of the Jacobite rebellions of the eighteenth century, and this group - generally considered his most characteristic and finest works of art - also shows him at his most accomplished as a social historian. Together these novels constitute a history of the major trends in the transition from a pre-industrial and semi-feudal society to a recognisably modern, commercial one. That this happens to be Scotland's should not blind us to the novel's relevance to the broad pattern of modern European development. 12

Generalised criticism in the style of Lukacs. But when did the Highlands (the theme and setting of Waverley and Rob Roy) develop a 'modern, commercial' society - unless, of course, one includes the tourist trade inspired by Scott's works? Moreover Waverley and Rob Roy are not exhaustive treatments of the two Jacobite rebellions: they do not deal in depth with the whole spectrum from the rumblings of rebellion to the legislative consequences of brutal suppression.

Of overseas critics (and there have been many) Francis Hart is undoubtedly the best Scott commentator, perhaps because he sees similarities between the Deep South situation and the old Highlands, in the master/slave relationship. Scott himself recognised another American comparison: the Indians and the Highlanders. In his Dedicatory Epistle to Ivanhoe he wrote:

It was not above sixty or seventy years ... since the whole north of Scotland was under a state of government nearly as simple and patriarchal as those of our good allies the Mohawks and Iroquois.

One warns, however, that the Deep South and Indian comparisons are only allowable on certain levels, an assertion that brings us back to a final comment on the relationship of Scott's fiction to Highland

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12. Fleishman, op. cit., p. 69.

history.

Take Waverley, his most famous Highland work. When the great Goethe insisted that it was

to be placed alongside the best things that have  
ever been written in the world, 13

his enthusiasm came from its novelty, and not from its accuracy. In fact, Goethe was praising it irrespective of its historical accuracy, with which the German did not have first-hand familiarity. In other words, in the minds of its admirers, Waverley stands as a work of art independent of the history of the region on which it is based. But this cannot be. Whether Lukacs and his followers like it or not, the fact is that in Waverley Scott was portraying a particular period of history which had been well documented. He gave an interpretation of the Highlands at a certain crucial and sensitive period of their history to a mass audience scattered over the nineteenth century, literate world. Moreover, this interpretation is likely to have become fact in the minds of his readers, since the majority of them could have known little or nothing about Highland history, apart from the Lowlander and English, that is, and we have seen that they were not too well disposed to the Highlands. Jacobitism is one of the most manipulated words in language. Since the theme of the '45 and its aftermath was such a sensitive one, Scott was in a predicament. To make light of the subject would be comparable to treating Belsen with humour.

Scott did not make light of the subject, despite the comic elements in Waverley. Nor did he distort the facts, for (as I have

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13. Needler, op. cit., p. 88

shown in my commentary on the novel) he more or less faithfully reproduced the historians of the time, lacing his account with folk stories, anecdotes from friends, and plunderings from Highland travelogues. His method of conciliation was far more subtle. He worked by a process of omission, of which the most serious was Culloden and its aftermath, since it ushered in the subjects of atrocity and social destruction. What Scott skirted was the norm. Most of the landed rebels in the '45 had their estates looted and then forfeited, but the Baron Bradwardine's is quickly renovated and restored. He did not treat of 1748, the real end of the '45, when the hereditary jurisdictions were abolished, and legislative power for Highland administration passed out of the hands of the chiefs to the Lowland Court of Session. In his portrayal of the campaign up to Culloden, he gave so much to the Highlands in terms of sympathy and understanding, but he kept much back, perhaps because the sensitive subject of his first novel was only sixty years since. It is only the gap between the present and the First Great War, and that is still a sensitive topic to many.

It is this concern with decorum coupled with an avoidance of the in-depth investigation throughout Scott's work that provoked E.M. Forster's famous outburst:

He is seen to have a trivial mind and a heavy style. He cannot construct. He has neither artistic detachment nor passion, and how can a writer who is devoid of both, create characters who will move us deeply? Artistic detachment - perhaps it is priggish to ask for that. But passion - surely passion is lowbrow enough, and think how all Scott's laborious mountains and scooped out glens and carefully ruined abbeys call out for passion, passion, and how it is never there! If he had passion he would be a great writer - no amount of clumsiness or artificiality would matter then. But he only had a temperate heart and gentlemanly feelings, and an intelligent affection for the countryside: and this is not

basis enough for great novels. And his integrity - that is worse than nothing. It satisfied his highest needs and he never dreamt that another sort of loyalty exists. 14

One must endorse part of this fierce criticism, for Scott did deny his characters convincing life. Rose Bradwardine is a porcelain maiden; the real Rob Roy, ragged freebooter, is neutered and refined for fiction; Fergus Mac-Ivor comprises a Raeburn canvas. Yet the Highlanders' notorious reputation was based on blood, guts and brawling, and the women were certainly not serene still-lives. In seeking order and decorum for the sake of sales, Scott seriously distorted Highland history. But how exactly did he do this? As I have said, he worked by a process of omission and absolution, such as avoiding Culloden in Waverley and giving the rebel Baron back his estates in the same novel. Likewise, with his manipulation of Rob Roy's character, and the end of the '15. It was not lack of insight that made him take this avoiding action for, as I have shown throughout this study, Scott clearly understood certain aspects of Highland psychology. He was not frightened to show the weaknesses, as well as the virtues of the Highlanders. In Waverley and Rob Roy primarily the Highlander's deep love of money, and his speed of action on a show of money cannot be faulted. Aristocratic arrogance is explained through the character of Fergus Mac-Ivor in Waverley. Highland matriarchal strength and possessiveness which can approach madness as well as hardness are memorably portrayed in the characters of Helen Macgregor in Rob Roy, and Elspat MacTavish in The Highland Widow.

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14. E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, (London, 1964), pp. 38-39.

Highland pride is examined in the character of Robin the drover in The Two Drovers. Highland pride of strength is shown in the character of Henry the smith in The Fair Maid of Perth; and pride of race coupled with honour could not be better shown than through the speech of Evan Dhu at his chieftain's trial in Waverley. Highland superstition which can border on mental instability, if not insanity is inspected in the character of Allan McAulay in A Legend of Montrose. The list is endless, and all the Highland works contain such profound insights, almost as if Scott, in listening to, and reading about the Highlanders, had become one himself. Though he did not have the Gaelic language he understood Highland humour, an essential part of the Gael's personality.

But the crucial point is that Scott's insights are intermittent, and not consistent. They come, and like the shooting star, they dazzle us for several seconds. Then we are back with farcical situations, almost as if Scott was embarrassed by his occasional illuminations. If truth becomes too painful, or if offence looms, he retreats into laughter and lightness, thereby detracting from his insights. When we scrutinise a Scott work as a whole, we see that his insights are debased by the long stretches of comic, but often tedious narrative between them. We see that Scott is avoiding seriousness. He has the psychological insight essential for a deep scrutiny of the Highland character, but he is prevented from going into the depths, of examining historical cause and effect (however frightening), because of the way his plots are arranged, and because of the expectations of his readers. To stay at a superficial level for most of the time was to satisfy his public, the buyers of his novels, the builders of Abbotsford. Highland

passion in its crudest and most truthful form was not called for; nor was Highland treachery and Highland ruin. That is why Forster's criticism is just. For Scott the novelist, to be entirely faithful to Highland history was to be unpopular; and to be unpopular was to be poor.

But this failure to portray the Highlands with integrity and insight does not refer to all Scott's Highland works. Of the eight, I maintain that The Highland Widow, The Two Drovers and The Fair Maid of Perth are by far the best, the first two with even greater possibilities because they are the germs of potentially monumental novels, despite the sparsity of character and plot. But perhaps it is these qualities, combined with their mature seriousness, that make them memorable stories, close enough to Scott's own lifetime as to be almost contemporary. The same cannot be claimed for The Fair Maid of Perth, though it is superbly plotted and balanced, and profound in its moral philosophy. These works are a triumph, but they are also a tragedy in that they show what Scott could have achieved, had the desire for money and status not pushed on his pen in his early career, creating Waverley and Rob Roy, monuments to concession.

But there is a deeper reason than maximum royalties for the mannered novels and the aristocratic mockery of *Abbotsford*. Scott's wish not to offend living Hanoverians (to whom he had become socially equal by the brilliance of his pen) dated back to the Union of 1707. David Daiches is one of the foremost modern Scott critics, perhaps because he is Scottish, with a deep knowledge of the real history lying behind the Scott novels, including the Highland ones. Daiches has suggested:

Scott's aim in much of his writing was a healing one: to present the glamour of Scottish history and landscape, with the heroic violence that made part of the glamour modulated quietly into the past tense, so that Scotland could be seen as now part of a peaceful and enlightened Britain. 15

But before Scotland and England could be portrayed in happy union, in fiction if not in fact, the Highlands and Lowlands, for long bitter enemies, had to be integrated. This need for national reconciliation relates to a split within Scott's own personality. As his letters, Journal and writings show, the quarrel was between the shrewd Hanoverian head of the cautious lawyer cum calculating creative writer, and the Jacobite heart that yearned for personal freedom and the romantic rebellious past, plus a proper place in the 'society' of the present. Edwin Muir is one of the most distinguished critics Scotland has produced, but he could err, which he did, grievously, in Scott and Scotland, where he questioned the modern creative act in the Scots language. In that same book Muir put too much emphasis on Scott's life, and not enough on his work. He followed others (and caused others to follow him) by seeing Miss Belsches, Scott's lost love, lurking behind every novel. But Muir did make a substantial contribution to Scott criticism in a series of lectures. He showed his agreement with Forster by arguing that

Scott was not devoted to the art of writing with the fanaticism of a modern novelist like Joyce, nor prepared to offer up to it his buried secrets.<sup>16</sup>

Muir also maintained that Scott's

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15. Daiches, Sir Walter Scott and his World, p. 83.

16. Edwin Muir, 'Walter Scott: the man' in Sir Walter Scott Lectures 1940-48 (Edinburgh, 1950) p. 62.

ambition was not to be known as a great writer, but to achieve a distinguished position in society and to live a life of traditional grandeur in the Border country and of social influence in Edinburgh. 17

Thomas Crawford, another major critic, has taken the condemnation further by claiming that Scott

had little of the artist's dedication to perfection which characterises the literary hero of modern times, and none of the ruthlessness which will sacrifice wife and children, wealth and success to satisfy creative needs. Instead, he became a slave to the business man's neurotic compulsion to work, and to the dreams behind that compulsion. Scott's tragedy was that, as a creative artist, he 'sold out.' 18

Crawford's conclusion sounds harsh, but one cannot quarrel with it.

Robert C. Gordon is even blunter. He believes that

Scott's worst faults as a novelist resulted, not from headlong work habits, but from a degree of contempt for his class and for his public that occasionally allowed commercial considerations of a cheap sort to rule his imagination. 19

But Edwin Muir went even further. In an essay which deserves to be reprinted, this usually mild critic launched a fierce attack on Scott's contribution to the craft of fiction. Muir wrote:

The eighteenth-century English novel was a criticism of society, manners and life. It set out to amuse, but it had a serious intention; its criticism, however wittily expressed, was sincere, and being sincere it made for more civilized manners and a more sensitive understanding of human life. Scott marks a definite degeneration of that tradition: after him certain qualities are lost to the novel which are not recovered for a long time. The novel becomes the idlest of all forms of literary art, and by a natural consequence the most popular. Instead of providing an intelligent crit-

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17. Muir, op. cit., p. 66.

18. Crawford, op. cit., p. 16.

19. Gordon, op. cit., p. 6.



icism of life, it is content to enunciate moral platitudes, and it does this all the more confidently because such platitudes are certain to be agreeable to the reader. It skims over every aspect of experience that could be obnoxious to the most tender or prudish feelings, and in fact renounces both freedom and responsibility. Scott, it seems to me, was largely instrumental in bringing the novel to that pass; with his enormous prestige he helped to establish the mediocre and the trivial.

How much of the moral responsibility for this rests on him, and how much on his age, which was awakening to gentility, it is probably impossible to determine. The fact remains that all that Scott wrote is disfigured by the main vice of gentility: its inveterate indifference to truth, its inability to recognize that truth is valuable in itself. 20

Muir's accusation of Scott's 'divided allegiance' was quoted in the Introduction to this study. Support for it comes from Daiches, who claims that Scott was

two men .... He was both the prudent Briton and the passionate Scot. 21

He might have yearned for the high romance of Scotland's (or more precisely, the Highlands') past, but he was a Lowlander and a lawyer. With its Rob Roy curios and its resident piper, Abbotsford was the mockery of a Highland mansion; but it was also the first stopping place for the famous and influential on their visits to Scotland. Supposedly the friendly and gracious symbol of the land that lay beyond, the Border mansion of Abbotsford was largely built on mercantile money, irregularly if not illegally acquired. Abbotsford made Scott the social climber a laird, and the baronetcy confirmed his social status, but the blank shields painted over with clouds

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20. E. Muir, 'The Waverley Novels. Scott and Tradition.' In Towards a New Scotland, ed. J.H. Whyte (London, 1935) p. 53.

21. Daiches, 'Scott's Achievement ...', p. 67.

showed the pathetic self-deception of his position.

With the Court long since removed from Edinburgh, Scott's honours could not come from his native land. As his letters show, he knew how to seek favours for himself and others from those in high places in London. The most pathetic symbol of his quest for status, and his veneration of the status quo is the precious wine glass he sat on when the King came to Edinburgh, to witness the Highland circus mustered by Scott to please the monarch and the writer's influential Highland friends.<sup>22</sup>

The Union had to work, and Scott was one of the Hanoverian monarch's most loyal subjects in Scotland. Consider the propaganda planted in Tales of a Grandfather, the historical series Scott wrote for his grandson Johnnie and other children.

It was not, however, till the accession of his late Majesty /George III, 1760/ that the beneficial effects of this great national treaty were generally felt and recognised. From that period there was awakened a spirit of industry formerly unknown in Scotland; and ever since, the two kingdoms of England and Scotland, incalculably to their mutual benefit, have been gradually forgetting former subjects of discord, and uniting cordially as one people, in the improvement and defence of the island which they inhabit. 23

If there is a final test of the integrity of Scott's attitude towards the Highlands, it must lie in the question: why did he not write about the Highlands as he found them, in his own time? David Craig's complaint is that

If Scott had been more aware of the society around

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22. The Marquess of Breadalbane, for instance, whose ancestor was deeply involved in another 'reception,' the Massacre of Glencoe. See Walpole, MS. 3895, f. 85.

23. Vol. IV, p. 105.

him, he might have been less prone to the irresponsibility of romance-writing and plot-making; and a proper awareness need not have precluded a deep feeling for the past. 24

After all, Scott had the ear of the world. He was one of the few writers of history whose pen could move men physically, as he did in 1810 when his Lady of the Lake sent the tourists north. Likewise with his defence of the Scottish bank note system. With his reputation made, Scott could have afforded to ignore popularity by championing the cleared Highlands. His writing had focused the attention of the world on the Highlands, albeit of the past. Why not direct his readers' attention to the injustices and cruelties of the clearances in an attempt to stop them? For such was the worldwide popularity of the writer, stop them he might easily have done through his eloquence. That Scott was capable of writing a contemporary novel is shown by St. Ronan's Well (1823). That he was capable of commentating on the contemporary situation in the Highlands is shown in his Introduction to A Legend of Montrose, where he notes with regret the clearing of the glens. But this question brings us back to consideration of Scott as a social animal, and his 'divided allegiance.' Patrick Sellar had been tried and acquitted early in Scott's literary career, a case that must have interested Scott. In the clearances there was the theme for a great and tragic novel, perhaps a more important theme than the '45, but then, the public (who were to build Abbotsford) would not pay for too much suffering. Besides, Scott was friendly with the Duchess of Sutherland and Glengarry, two of the most notorious

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24. Craig, op. cit., pp. 155-6

clearers. As the Walpole correspondence shows, Scott was on easy and intimate terms with Elizabeth Gordon, Countess of Sutherland, Marchioness of Stafford, 1st Duchess of Sutherland, 'Ban mhorair Chataibh,' 'the Great Lady of Sutherland' in the Gaelic. A Lincoln's Inn lawyer who turned to estate management, James Loch became Commissioner of the huge Stafford estates, and with Patrick Sellar set about systematically clearing Sutherland. Local opinion was outraged at Loch's brutal methods of eviction, but local opinion had no powerful voice to transmit its protests to London. In a letter to Scott (already quoted in my introduction) 'the Great Lady' Loch's employer, wrote mildly:

I have great hopes at present from the abilities of this Mr. Young, of considerable improvements being affected in Sutherland without routing and destroying the old inhabitants. 25

History tells us just how far Loch went. His 'scorched earth' policy got into the newspapers of the time, and they duly reported the constant departures of emigrant ships from the Sutherland coast. Scott must have been painfully aware of what was going on in that large northern county, a county his son-in-law Lockhart had an interest in in 1824, when an attractive sheriffdom fell vacant in that area of the Highlands. Naturally Scott sought the support of the Duchess in Lockhart's favour, and she lent a sympathetic ear,<sup>26</sup> but Lockhart did not get the post, and went on to better things.

As I said earlier, from our vantage point of more than a century's remove, we can look at the Sutherland clearances calmly and

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25. Walpole, MS. 3881, f. 89.

26. Walpole, MS. 3899, f. 269.

dispassionately with the assistance of Richard's Leviathan of Wealth, but in Scott's time the clearances there were a violently controversial topic, more a matter of burning crofts and starving dispossessed wanderers, than an economic solution to a centuries-old problem. After the humanitarian introduction to A Legend of Montrose, it is distressing to find Scott writing to Maria Edgeworth (author of Castle Rackrent) on 23 July 1830, towards the close of his life:

It is vain to abuse the gentlemen for this clearing which is the inevitable consequence of a great change of things. 27

Such is Scott's weak epitaph on the Highlands. But this man of two minds had put it better earlier. It is fitting to end this study with the closing quotation from the 1816 review of the Culloden Papers. Two years after the publication of Waverley, his first and most successful Highland novel, Scott was reviewing a collection of papers dealing with the '45. Fact and fiction struggled in his conscience, and fact won. In what he wrote he recognised his own failings towards the Highlands, but he also recognised that he could not use the truth in a novel.

In many instances, highland proprietors have laboured with laudable and humane precaution to render the change introduced by a new mode of cultivation gentle and gradual, and to provide, as far as possible, employment and protection for those families who were thereby dispossessed of their ancient habitations. But in other, and in but too many instances, the glens of the highlands have been drained, not of their superfluity of population, but of the whole mass of the inhabitants, dispossessed by an unrelenting avarice, which will be one day found to have been as shortsighted as it is unjust and selfish. Meanwhile, the

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27. Grierson, Letters, vol. XI, p. 380. See also Letters, II, p. 207; III, p. 226.

highlands may become the faery ground for romance and poetry, or subject of experiment for the professors of speculation, political and economical. - But if the hour of need should come - and it may not, perhaps, be far distant - the pibroch may sound through the deserted region, but the summons will remain unanswered. The children who have left her will re-echo from a distant shore the sounds with which they took leave of their own -

Ha til, ha til, ha til, mi tulidh! - 'We return  
- we return - we return - no more!' (p. 333).

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clearing. Scott's trustees had declared a massive dividend of over £36,000, and he and shrewd Cadell had bought back the copyrights of his earlier novels. The way was now clear for the Magnum Opus.

Scott's trouble was that he had too many tasks going at the one time. The writing of Saint Valentine's Eve was slowing down.<sup>12</sup>

Tuesday, 15 January 1828:

James Ballantyne and Mr. Cadell dined with me to-day and talkd me into good humour with my present task which I had laid aside in disgust. It must however be done though I am loth to begin to it again. 13

The following day:

When I came home I set to work but not to the Chronicles. I found a less harassing occupation in correcting a volume or two of Napoleon in a rough way. My indolence if I can call it so is of a capricious kind - it never makes me absolutely idle but very often inclines me, as it were from mere contradiction's sake, to exchange the task of the day for something which I am not obliged to do at the moment or perhaps not at all. This is too silly though and must be disused.

14

The new year has not brought inspiration, and Scott is uncertain of his story. On 18 January he orders James Ballantyne:

I return the proofs of tales & send seven leaves copy of Saint Valentine. Pray get on with him in case we should fall through again. When the press does not follow me I get on slowly and ill & put myself in mind of Jamie Balfour who could run when he could not stand still - We must go on or stop altogether. 15

Scott was creatively at his most confident when racing the press.

The day previous to the above letter to Ballantyne, he had stayed

12. Journal, p. 414.

13. Ibid., p. 416.

14. Journal, p. 416.

15. Grierson, Letters, vol. X, p. 364. Journal, p. 416.