

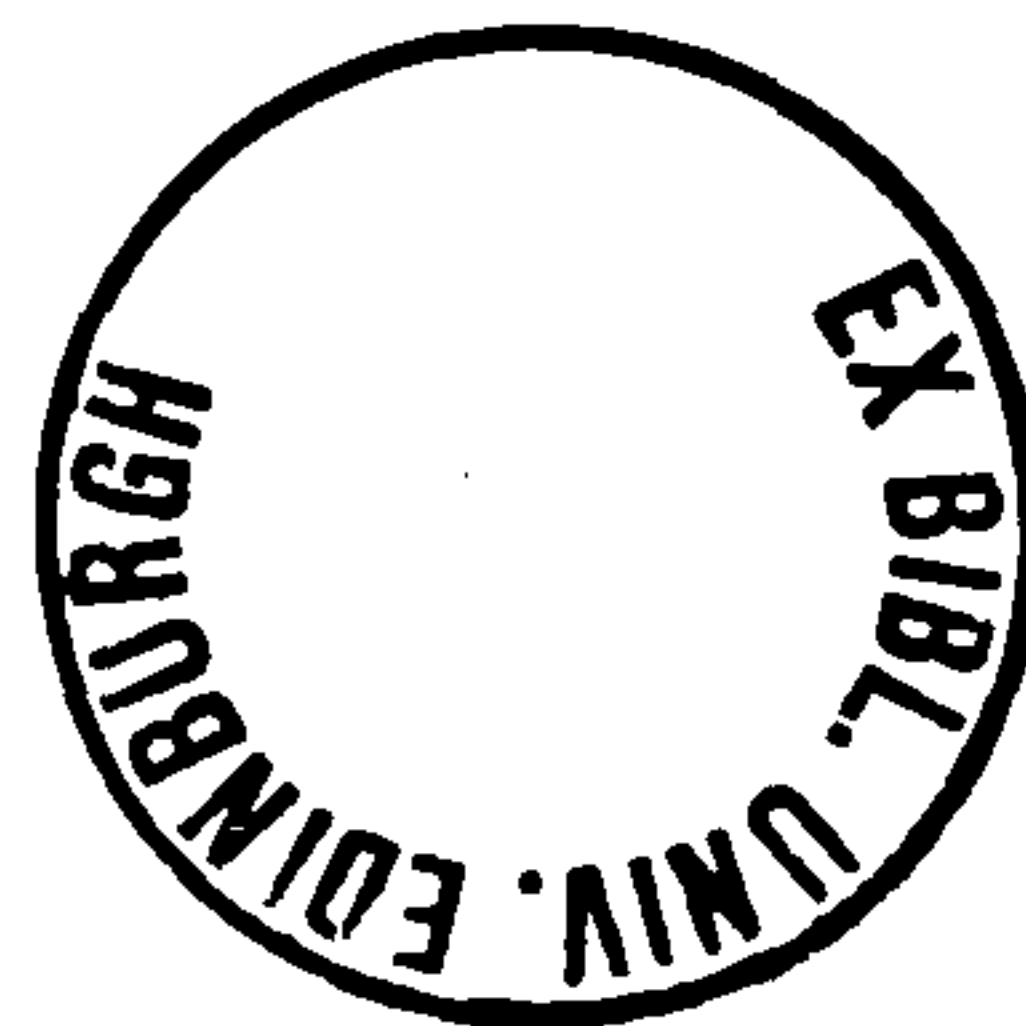
THE CONSTRUCTION AND EXPRESSION OF SCOTTISH PATRIOTISM  
IN THE WORKS OF WALTER SCOTT

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1988.



I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, and that the work it contains is entirely my own.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James F. Robertson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

James F. Robertson.

(November, 1988.)

## ABSTRACT

The thesis analyses the nature and significance of patriotism in the poetry, fiction and political and historical writings of Walter Scott. It begins with a survey of the "problem" of Scottish patriotism and Scott's relation to it. From his own age to the present day, Scott has generally been seen as a great Scottish patriot, but it has not often been clear what is meant by this description, since the idea of Scottish patriotism has, politically and culturally, been far from simple in the context of post-Union Britain. In the 20th Century nationalist and left-wing oriented criticism of Scott has further complicated the issue, and indeed though most modern literary studies of the Waverley Novels have identified various kinds of dualism, these have never been fully explained within a context of patriotism.

The thesis contends that the need to find an acceptable form of patriotic expression was *the* fundamental motivation and impetus in most of Scott's work. The historical context of this claim is then described: from early historical works though to the social philosophising of the leading minds of the 18th-Century Enlightenment, the relationship between Scotland and Britain was of great importance; repeatedly Scottish writers developed different methods of allowing these two competing identifications to co-exist. It was Scott's deliberate and careful life-work to perfect the articulation of a symbiotic relationship between Scottish and British patriotisms, first through his poetical romances, then through historical fiction; finally he put his scheme to a political test in the episode of the Malachi Malagrowth letters of 1826. The bulk of the thesis traces this development, drawing evidence from the full range of Scott's writings.

The thesis argues that Scott's scheme required him to interpret Scottish history as belonging essentially to the past, culminating in the 18th Century with the Union and the 'Forty-five. This last also required him to promote Highlanders and Jacobites as the most unadulterated representatives of Scottish cultural expression. At the same time, through all his work a clear pattern is discernible in which Scott created for himself a role as bard, story-teller and historian of the Scottish nation: in this role he provided Scotsmen of his own and later generations with an ideological system designed to accommodate their sense of Scottish identity within the wider context of the British Empire. Only in the present century, as the Scottish-British political and cultural relationship has altered, has that system become less efficient, and it is in the light of these changes that the subtleties and complexities of Scott's patriotic achievement can best be seen.

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## Chapter One

### THE PROBLEM OF SCOTTISH PATRIOTISM

*"One never comes to the end of Scott."*<sup>1</sup>

"An imagination such as his," wrote John Gibson Lockhart, in the last pages of his *Life of Scott*, ". . . soon shaped out a world of its own - to which it would fain accommodate the real one. The love of his country became indeed a passion; no knight ever tilted for his mistress more willingly than he would have bled and died to preserve even the airiest surviving nothing of her antique pretensions for Scotland."<sup>2</sup> Thomas Carlyle, in his essay on Scott written in 1838 in response to the publication of Lockhart's biography, commented: "No Scotchman of his time was more entirely Scotch than Walter Scott: the good and the not so good, which all Scotchmen inherit, ran through every fibre of him."<sup>3</sup>

Neither Lockhart nor Carlyle, who of course had quite different levels of personal experience of the Great Unknown, were in any doubt as to Scott's patriotism and his "Scottishness", however they may have related these two ideas. The fact that they both applied these terms to Scott positively, indicates that they shared some idea of

what it meant to be Scottish and a patriot, or a Scottish patriot, or a patriotic Scotsman. Furthermore, though their assessments were retrospective, they presumably expected such terms to be of significance and relevance to their own and the next generation at least (they were both in their mid-forties). Lockhart certainly did:

. . . It is to be hoped that the spirit which breathes through his works may continue to act on our literature, and consequently on the character and manners of men. The race that grew up under the influence of that intellect can hardly be expected to appreciate fully their own obligations to it: and yet if we consider what were the tendencies of minds and works that, but for his, must have been unrivalled in the power and opportunity to mould young ideas, we may picture to ourselves in some measure the magnitude of the debt we owe to a perpetual succession, through thirty years, of publications unapproached in charm, and all instilling a high and healthy code; a bracing, invigorating spirit; a contempt of mean passions, whether vindictive or voluptuous; humane charity, as distinct from moral laxity as from unsympathizing austerity; sagacity too deep for cynicism, and tenderness never degenerating into sentimentality: animated throughout in thought, opinion, feeling and style, by one and the same pure energetic principle - a pith and savour of manhood; appealing to whatever is good and loyal in our natures, and rebuking whatever is low and selfish.

Had Sir Walter never taken a direct part in politics as a writer, the visible bias of his mind on such subjects must have had a great influence; nay, the mere fact that such a man belonged to a particular side would have been a very important weight in the balance. His services, direct and indirect, towards repressing the revolutionary propensities of his age, were vast - far beyond the comprehension of vulgar politicians.<sup>4</sup>

All this merely expanded upon the theme established at that Edinburgh dinner in February 1827 when Scott publicly admitted to the authorship of the Waverley Novels, where it was declared "the name of SCOTT . . . will become familiar like a household word. We have heard the confession from his own immortal lips . . . and we cannot dwell with too much, or too fervent, praise on the merits of the

greatest man whom Scotland has produced."<sup>5</sup> But what was the measure of this national greatness? How was Scott's patriotism to be defined? In what way were such ideas conceived, and in what way applicable to Walter Scott? And how, if at all, did Scott himself treat of and develop them in his poetry, his fiction, his presentation of history and his political opinions?

The importance of these questions goes far beyond an understanding of Scott himself. In Paul H. Scott's assessment *Walter Scott and Scotland* (1981) it is stated that "Scott's writing is closely involved with the Scottish condition," and that, in particular, "Scotland's loss of independence" was "a constant preoccupation of Scott and the emotional force behind much of his work. . . ." Paul Scott's purpose in looking at Scott from this point of view was partly "to rescue Scott from the clutches of the unionists who have sought to represent him as one of themselves."<sup>7</sup> This latter was in response to a review of the book by Andrew Noble, who suggested that Scott, "for an over-long period, let us off the hook of our national dilemma by suggesting that we could divorce our feelings for Scotland from our practical, often self-seeking, activities"; and Noble doubted we could be sure that, when "Mrs Thatcher led the ruddy ranks of the Unionist Party at Perth in singing 'Land of Hope and Glory' . . . Sir Walter's great head would not have provided a stolid but prominent back-cloth to the leader's savage angularity were he still with us."<sup>8</sup>

This is just one example demonstrating not only that considerable significance can be attached to the terminology under discussion in the present day, but that the figure of Scott is still seen to be intimately related to questions of Scottish patriotism, independence and less easily definable questions of the Scottish "condition", "character" or, more vaguely still, of "Scottishness". Other modern writers have also linked Scott to these ideas: Allan Massie, writing in 1987, called him "the greatest of Scottish writers, and the greatest of Scotsmen."<sup>9</sup> An identical judgment was passed earlier in the year in the education columns of the *Glasgow Herald*: "Walter Scott was not only one of our greatest writers, he was also one of the greatest and best Scotsmen that ever has been."<sup>10</sup> Scott's reputation seems assured, but there remains some doubt as to what it consists of.

As a further instance of the sort of use of language which may perhaps be illuminated by reference to Scott's own language and ideology, a quotation from Lord Grimond, on the House of Lords vote which delayed the sell-off of the Trustee Savings Bank in Scotland in April 1985, is apposite: it was, he said, an issue on which "all of us who are not Scottish Nationalists but are Scottish patriots, coalesce."<sup>11</sup> Why this separation of the sentiment of patriotism from the condition, whether actual or aspired to, of political nationhood with which it is normally associated? Why did Lord Grimond make such a distinction - one which he clearly believed would be understood by other Scots - instead of one between, say, . . . but between what?



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There is no easy substitute. Lord Grimond was apparently distinguishing between two kinds of patriots, those for whom acceptance of the Union was an integral part of their Scottish patriotism, and those whose Scottish patriotism explicitly rejected that Union. How did that distinction come about, and what sustains it? It is the purpose of this thesis to relate these questions to the life and work of Walter Scott.

Any ideas about forms of Scottish identity and patriotism, must be determined by a combination of political, cultural and socio-economic considerations, which in turn are likely to inform ideas about history - about Scottish history in particular but also about the general development of human society. Not only do such concerns intrinsically characterise *any* view of the past, they are also central to most of Scott's writing. James T. Hillhouse, in his adulatory volume of 1936, *The Waverley Novels and their Critics*, was well aware of the wide canvas necessary for a full appreciation of these ideas:

The feeling that the Scotch novels are great historical documents, while it is not at all new, is much stronger than ever before. It has close connections, of course, with the current conceptions of Scott's philosophy and ideas. Indeed, just as the really penetrating discussions of his style turn very soon into considerations of his depth and wisdom and philosophical connotations, so also do the finer discussions of his history converge to the same point. That is, fundamentally of course, there is no real separation between questions of style, philosophy, and history. Scott's history is very little a matter of mere factual accuracy; in his best work, the Scotch novels, it is a matter of the deeper realities of the Scotch character.<sup>12</sup>

One reason why Hillhouse felt justified in discussing Scott in these all-encompassing terms was because, reading through the critical heritage, he realised that, from the earliest of Francis Jeffrey's reviews of the poems and novels in *The Edinburgh Review*, such concerns had commonly been linked by Scott's most astute readers, including Lord Cockburn, Thomas Carlyle, Leslie Stephen and Walter Bagehot. Even, or perhaps especially, where their conclusions were unfavourable, as when Carlyle regretted Scott's having "no message whatever to deliver to the world"<sup>13</sup>, a concern for such issues is evident. Leslie Stephen's comment made towards the close of the century is also revealing, since it implies that, whatever Scott's moral or other worth, his place in the structure of society could be disturbed only at risk to the whole edifice: "We cannot afford to surrender our faith in one to whom, whatever his permanent merit, we must trace so much that is characteristic of the mind of the nineteenth century."<sup>14</sup> In the Twentieth Century, too, various writers have turned to Scott, if not in faith, then to seek explanations through him of what they have continued to see as major matters of concern for and about Scotland. As a means of identifying the interests of this study, a survey of the ideas of some of these writers is here in order.

## II

The most famous (or infamous) debate about literature in Scotland in this century arose out of the publication in 1936 (the year of J.T. Hillhouse's book) of Edwin Muir's *Scott and Scotland*. This clever but flawed short study examined a set of problems for modern Scottish writers which Muir felt could be usefully illustrated by reference to, among others, Scott. The subtitle of the book was "The Predicament of the Scottish Writer", which Muir did not think had changed much since Scott's own day. Muir was puzzled by what he considered to be the riddle of Scott, how to account for "a very curious emptiness which I felt behind the wealth of his imagination."<sup>15</sup> As Muir noted, he was not the only critic to have felt such unease reading Scott, but unlike some of the others he sought an explanation for it beyond the man and his work, and "was forced to account for the hiatus in Scott's endowment [of genius]" by the fact that

he spent most of his days in a hiatus, in a country, that is to say, which was neither a nation nor a province, and had, instead of a centre, a blank, an Edinburgh, in the middle of it. But this Nothing in which Scott wrote was not merely a spatial one; it was a temporal Nothing as well, dotted with a few disconnected figures arranged at abrupt intervals: Henryson, Dunbar, Allan Ramsay, Burns, with a rude buttress of ballads and folk songs to shore them up and keep them from falling. Scott, in other words, lived in a community which was not a community, and set himself to carry on a tradition which was not a tradition; and the result was that his work was an exact reflection of his predicament.<sup>16</sup>

Muir's description of the Edinburgh of the late Enlightenment and of *The Edinburgh Review* as a "blank" is both misleading and self-revealing of his own attitude to Scotland. But his general argument is worth looking at. It turns on language, on the contention that historical circumstances (most notably the anglicising influence of Reformation and Union) had arrested the development of Scots and led to a split between English and Scots usage in Scottish life and literature, which was effectively a division between head and heart: "the prerequisite of an autonomous literature is a homogeneous language"<sup>17</sup>, but while Scots was not able to express the intellect, yet it remained the language of the emotions. In this, Muir was taking a line also found in T.S. Eliot's essay "The Social Function of Poetry", in which it is stated:

A thought expressed in a different language may be practically the same thought, but a feeling or emotion expressed in a different language is not the same feeling or emotion. One of the reasons for learning at least one foreign language well is that we acquire a kind of supplementary personality; one of the reasons for not acquiring a new language *instead* of our own is that most of us do not want to become a different person.<sup>18</sup>

The Scots, thought Muir, were caught midway between two positions, their power to articulate their experience divided between an underdeveloped Scots and an English which did not yet fully belong to them. Until this division was resolved, Scotland would remain "in essence a barbarous country", and for all practical purposes the only language available to most Scots capable of being a "homogeneous language" (Gaelic was the alternative) was English.<sup>19</sup>

Muir tied this linguistic development to another idea, the Caledonian Antisyzygy, and because this idea has exercised the minds, not only of Muir and MacDiarmid, but of almost all who have approached the question of Scottish political, literary and cultural identity since, it must be brought into the discussion before we turn again to Scott. Since the term first appeared in George Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* in 1919, it has been subject to debate, confusion and misapplication, not least in relation to Scott: to outline it here will help to describe further the context in which this study places Scott.

Writing of what he saw as the compactness of Scottish literature, Gregory Smith noted that it was nevertheless "remarkably varied and that it becomes, under the stress of foreign influence and native division and reaction, almost a zigzag of contradictions." He went on:

The antithesis need not, however, disconcert us. Perhaps in the very combination of opposites - what either of the two Sir Thomases, of Norwich and Cromarty, might have been willing to call "the Caledonian antisyzygy" - we have a reflection of the contrasts which the Scot shows at every turn, in his political and ecclesiastical history, in his polemical restlessness, in his adaptability, which is another way of saying that he has made allowance for new conditions, in his practical judgement, which is the admission that two sides of the matter have been considered. If therefore Scottish history and life are, as an old northern writer said of something else, "varied with a clean contrair spirit," we need not be surprised to find that in his literature the Scot presents two aspects which appear contradictory.<sup>20</sup>

What Smith meant by this he described later as

. . . this strange combination of things unlike, of things seen in an everyday world and things which, like the elf-queen herself, neither earth nor heaven will claim. This mingling, even of the most eccentric kind, is an indication to us that the Scot, in that medieval fashion which takes all things as granted, is at his ease in both "rooms of life," and turns to fun, and even profanity, with no misgivings. For Scottish literature is more medieval in habit than criticism has suspected, and owes some part of its picturesque strength to this freedom in passing from one mood to another. It takes some people more time than they can spare to see the absolute propriety of a gargoyle's grinning at the elbow of a kneeling saint.<sup>21</sup>

The Scottish mind, in other words, moves with ease between the natural and the supernatural, between the concrete and the abstract. Hugh MacDiarmid used Gregory Smith's thesis as a kind of manifesto for the Scottish Literary Renaissance, and, as Kenneth Buthlay has shown, injected it with great effect into the centrepiece of that movement, the poem *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*.<sup>22</sup> But, transformed into a diagnosis of an entire society, the Caledonian Antisyzygy could acquire extraordinary dimensions. MacDiarmid, again, made use of it in a vision of Scotland's future that foresaw national rejuvenation in terms of an alliance of "the Clyde Rebels, the Scottish Home Rule Movement, the 'Irish Invasion' of Scotland, and the campaign to resuscitate Braid Scots and Gaelic", with the possible assistance of "the Pictish rather than the Gaelic elements in Scottish culture" and an emphasis on the growth of Irish Catholicism as likely to undo "those accompaniments of the Reformation which have lain like a blight on Scottish arts and affairs!"<sup>23</sup>

To be fair, MacDiarmid elsewhere wrote that to blame Scottish anti-aestheticism on Calvinism alone was "stupid", and that it was

"quite unjust to attribute to Calvinism a crude Philistinism which was, in fact, bred by the Industrial Revolution and aggravated by the loss of our own national roots."<sup>24</sup> Edwin Muir was less forgiving of the Reformation's "rigours of Calvinism", believing them to have destroyed Renaissance Scotland's "high culture of the feelings as well as of the mind", but, as already noted, he took a rather different view of what Gregory Smith had identified:

What took its [Renaissance culture's] place was either simple irresponsible feeling side by side with arid intellect, or else that reciprocally destructive confrontation of both for which Gregory Smith found the name of 'the Caledonian Antisyzygy': a recognition that they are irreconcilable, and that Scottish life is split in two beyond remedy."<sup>25</sup>

Gregory Smith, however, had described a *combination* of opposites, not their division. Muir's adoption and adaptation of the term for his own purpose (which was to treat Scott as a symbol of a greater Scottish problem) shows that the context in which Scottish national consciousness and literature meet contains its own set of totems and beliefs; but that these are not always shared or valued equally.

But what has all this to do with Walter Scott? As Muir himself half-admitted, as far as his linguistic argument was concerned the answer was - virtually nothing, at least not directly: "I have said nothing about Scott's relation to the Scottish vernacular, since his relation to the society or no-society in which he lived seemed to me of far more importance."<sup>26</sup> Muir claimed that Scott's Scots was "far better than his English", but that he used it only "for the simplest purposes of pathos and humour", while "for the structural, the

unifying, part of his work he relied upon English."<sup>27</sup> The importance of this linguistic dualism for Muir was that it symbolised Scott's acceptance of the established order of the British present, embellished by a sensitive, emotional nostalgia for the Scottish past. But, as Allan Massie has pointed out, Muir is cheating his own argument here, for the English-Scots split in Scott's works does not follow the same patterns as the split between head and heart, or between his allegiance to Britain and to Scotland. "It is too simple to say that Scots think in one language and feel in another," says Massie; "the beauty of Muir's antithesis has been too easily accepted."<sup>28</sup> The real significance of *Scott and Scotland*, and the reason why it is discussed here, is precisely that Muir wrote it not simply to put forward a view on Walter Scott, but to put forward a view about the problems of Scotland and Scottish literature, and the political and philosophical ideas underlying them - in other words, those same interwoven concerns which had attracted the attentions of Lockhart, Carlyle and Hillhouse before him. For Muir, as for these others, Scott was a key, or a symbol. More specifically, to quote Allan Massie again, Muir was determined "to use Scott as a stick with which to beat MacDiarmid"<sup>29</sup>, and it is scarcely surprising, then, to find that MacDiarmid, in turn, used Scott as a target for the kind of vituperative anti-Unionist rhetoric in which he revelled and excelled.

MacDiarmid's long poems of the 'Twenties and 'Thirties were of course intended precisely to restore to Scots (in however synthesised a form) the discursive, intellectual potential which Muir accused it



of lacking. Again, there is nothing in this which, superficially, has anything to do with Walter Scott, until one realises that MacDiarmid's motivation was intensely political, not just from an anti-Unionist position but from an anti-capitalist, revolutionary one (the construction of his remark about anti-aestheticism, quoted above, bears this out). In his poetry language was expressly used as a political weapon, while he attacked the works of Scott for being intrinsically pro-Unionist and conservative. Thus in his autobiographical *Lucky Poet* (1943), which, like Muir's book, also bears a significant subtitle ("A Self-study in Literature and Political Ideas"), he called the Waverley Novels "the great source of the paralysing ideology of defeatism in Scotland, the spread of which is responsible at once for the acceptance of the Union and the low standard of nineteenth-century Scots literature. . . ." So, again, the figure of Scott seems inseparable from the attempts of later Scots to define or redefine their sense of Scottish identity and the political context in which that identity existed.

This is a recurring theme in most serious analyses of Scottish affairs in recent years, and Scott has almost always been found a place in it. Thus, in his 1985 John P. Mackintosh Memorial Lecture "Ancient Britons and the Republican Dream", Neal Ascherson talked of English historiography, where "Druids", in order to justify the existence and form of British institutions, organised the historical perspective into a sacred landscaped garden, inviolable by change, and he contrasted it with the Scots' "chaotic" vision of the Scottish past. Here, he said,

Time is not generally used to enforce perspective, and instead there is a scrap-book of highly-coloured, often bloody scenes or tableaux whose sequence or relation to one another is obscure. But there is a source of energy in this dislocation. . . . What is more intense appears to be in some way nearer; its impact is not diminished by informed distancing. I take for example the tableau of the murder of Archbishop Sharp on Magusmuir which has so powerfully seized the imagination of Scottish writers. Innocent of context, stripped of explanations, this murder takes place always now, in our Scotland, the contorted face of Hackston who has bungled the killing and is now urging his horse to stamp on Sharp's head is your face and my face; when the screaming is finally over and they open Sharp's little snuffbox to find his familiar, we all hear distinctly the noise of the bumble-bee escaping from the box and spiralling away across the heather. Walter Scott tried to play the Druid, to organise scenes like these into a mere heritage and say that they were over. But he did not really succeed, and they are not over.<sup>31</sup>

There are several points of interest in this passage, for instance, the idea that history, as a continuum which *per se* is related to and influential upon the perceptions of the present, can be a source either of stultifying resignation or of vital energy. But why should Ascherson have taken the Magusmuir assassination, which surely seized the imagination of Walter Scott as much as it did any other writer's<sup>32</sup>, as an illustration of his case that Scott somehow removed the significance of such events for us? It is hard to match Scott's descriptions of them for high colour and bloodiness, and it is only through Scott that many of them have come down to us at all. Ascherson's complaint against Scott, however, is that he "tried to play the Druid": somehow, he attempted to dissociate his readers (and so, in time, all of us) from these events, to effect a divorce between the present and the past. This is a contention of

crucial significance, as will become evident as this discussion progresses.

It is not only Ascherson who has stressed the importance of historical perceptions in either buttressing or undermining present political conditions. Tom Nairn, in investigating the rise of bourgeois nationalisms in Wales and Scotland in the late Twentieth Century from a Marxist standpoint, came to similar conclusions about the hegemonic structure of British society.<sup>33</sup> For Nairn, the political development of the British state after 1688 was characterised by a two-party equilibrium "formed to promote stability at the expense of adventure."<sup>34</sup> The real threat to the state in modern times has come, in his opinion, not from the intelligentsia or the proletariat, but from peripheral nationalists who can foresee the ultimate failure of empire-substitutes like North Sea Oil and the EEC to preserve the status quo, while such foresight is obscured in England by "the reinforced archaic solidarity of metropolitan society." The peripheral societies, by contrast, "in spite of their modern political subservience, still retain an alternative historical reality and a potentially different vision of things."<sup>35</sup>

For this kind of argument to be at all tenable, Nairn needed to explain why in the Nineteenth Century, "the age of nationalism", nationalism had failed to develop politically in Scotland as it had all over the rest of Europe. For, compared to the Slav nationalities, to Greece, Ireland or Poland, "Scotland appears not as notably defective but, on the contrary, as almost uniquely well equipped for the nationalist battles ahead."<sup>36</sup> Scotland had only

recently ceased to be a wholly independent state, had preserved more or less intact its religious, cultural and legal institutions, contained a dynamic, rising middle class and an intelligentsia unrivalled during most of the Eighteenth Century anywhere in Europe, and possessed a vast store of folklore and traditions one element of which was "an ancient, rankling hostility to the English, founded upon centuries of past conflict." Scotland did not perhaps have "a really separate majority language", and, although it did have two languages, Gaelic and Scots, which were distinct from the English of the dominant power, neither was to remain the preferred tongue of that middle class which, if Scotland's had been a model case, might have been at the head of any nationalist political movement. Nevertheless "there was no doubt at the beginning of the 19th century . . . that 'Scotland' was a distinct entity of some kind, felt to be such both by the people living in it and by all travellers who ventured into it from outside."<sup>37</sup>

Why, then, in such circumstances, was political nationalism conspicuous only by its absence in Scotland? Nairn answers: "If, in a European land so strikingly marked out for nationalism, nationalism failed to materialize, then it can only be because the *real* precipitating factors of the nationalist response were not there." If nationalism is "in essence one kind of response to an enforced dilemma of 'under-development'", then Scotland was unique in missing out on the concurrent growth of bourgeois capitalism with nationalist ideology. For Scotland, in the Eighteenth Century, developed into a modern society *before* the new age of nationalism, yet without being

itself a nation-state. In Nairn's view, Scotland was *the* great success story of the Enlightenment outside "the great revolutionary centres":

Only one society was able to advance, more or less according to [the Enlightenment's] precepts, from feudal and theological squalor to the stage of bourgeois civil society, polite culture, and so on. Only one land crossed the great divide *before* the whole condition of European politics and culture was decisively and permanently altered by the great awakening of nationalist consciousness.<sup>38</sup>

And yet, ironically, no country contributed so much so directly to the formation of that nationalist consciousness, which was also a romantic consciousness, as Scotland, especially in literature; and in that contribution the works of Walter Scott were foremost.

For Nairn, Scott played the role of "Valedictory Realist", embodying in his writing the dissociation of the national past from the commercial present which characterised Scotland's Eighteenth-century experience:

For Scott, the purpose of his unmatched evocation of a national past was never to revive it: that is, never to resuscitate it as part of political or social mobilization in the present, by a mythical emphasis upon continuity between (heroic) past and present. On the contrary: his essential point is always that the past really is gone, beyond recall. The heart may regret this, but never the head. . . . For all its splendour, his panorama of the Scottish past is valedictory in nature. When he returns to the present - in the *persona* of his typical prosaic hero-figure - the head is in charge. It speaks the language of Tory Unionism and "progress": the real interests of contemporary Scotland diverge from those of the auld sang.<sup>39</sup>

This ran completely counter to the trend of nationalist romantic historicism elsewhere in Europe - "the whole point of cultural nationalism there was the mythical resuscitation of the past, to serve present and future ends." Scott, as far as Scotland was concerned, in effect pronounced "a great elegy":

But the point of an elegy is that it *can* only be uttered once. Afterwards it may be echoed, but not really added to.

Consequently, Sir Walter's towering presence during the vital decades of the early 19th century is not only consistent with the absence of a subsequent romantic-national culture: to a large extent, it explains that absence. The very nature of his achievement - whether in terms of his own politics, or in terms of his typical plots and characters - cut off such a future from its own natural source of inspiration. It cut off the future from the past, the head from the "heart" (as romanticism now conceived this entity).<sup>40</sup>

But clearly a romantic ideology did arise among the Scots of both the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries - Jacobite, Ossianic, Burnsian, Scottian, whatever its character; and Nairn does not deny this. On the contrary, this was part of a developing continental movement which reached its apogee in the mid-Nineteenth Century:

The new romantic *consciousness* of the past was, in itself, irresistible. As a matter of fact, from Ossian to Sir Walter himself, Scotland played a large part in generating and diffusing it for the rest of Europe. What mattered in Scotland itself, however, was to render this awareness *politically* null - to make certain that it would not be felt that contemporary Scotland should be the independent continuation of the auld sang. The whole emotional point of nationalism was to feel just that: our future development must spring out of this, *our* inheritance from past generations, with its special values, etc. Hence, what the new British-Scots middle class had to do was separate the inevitable new popular-national consciousness from action. One might say, very approximately: separate its heart from its head.<sup>41</sup>

It has been useful to quote so extensively from Nairn, because he employs so much of the terminology common to analyses of the "Scottish condition". His reliance on the "head and heart" division not only echoes Edwin Muir, it is also typical of most modern literary criticism of the fiction of Scott - a subject to be discussed next. This opposition of emotion or passion to reason is a recurring theme, which needs to be explored in a wider context than that of the Waverley Novels, for example by looking at the Scottish Enlightenment's handling of questions of virtue and patriotism, which preceded, and influenced the form of, Scott's works. And indeed, Nairn, in summing up his position, specifically links the emergence of an ideology of "circumscribed patriotism" in the age of Scott to events in the age of Enlightenment, thus emphasising the necessity of seeing Scott's development of ideas of patriotism in a long historical perspective. On this note, we may conclude this section with a final quotation from Nairn's *Break-up of Britain*:

Because Scotland had already advanced so far, so fast - to the watershed of development and beyond - it simply did not need the kind of cultural development [i.e. politically active romantic nationalism] we are concerned with. It had overleapt what was to be (over the greater part of Europe) the next "natural" phase of development. Its previous astonishing precocity led it, quite logically, to what appears as an equally singular "retardation" or incompleteness in the period which followed. This can only have happened because, at bottom, certain material levers were inoperative in the Scottish case; and they were inoperative during the usual formative era of romantic nationalism because they had already performed their function and produced their effect earlier, in the quite different culture-world of the 18th century.<sup>42</sup>

### III

J.T. Hillhouse's contention that, in assessing Scott, there is "no real separation between questions of style, philosophy, and history" has had considerable support in the bulk of criticism which followed the historicist judgments of Georg Lukács and David Daiches in the 1950s. Scott's literature was explicitly related to his own historical circumstances and to his perception of those which had existed before. But whereas Lukács' work suffers from a lack of understanding of the particular context of Scottish history (with unsettling observations like, "It is no accident that this new type of novel arose in England"<sup>43</sup>, and his confusion of chronology in the settings of *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*<sup>44</sup>) Daiches' carries more authority because he is careful to place Scott's achievement within that context. Daiches' picture of Scott's fiction is of a number of contradictions arising out of Scott's ambivalent relationships with the past and with Scotland, typified by his description of Scott as "a lover of the past combined with a believer in the present, and the mating of these incompatible characters produced the tension which accounted for his greatest novels."<sup>45</sup> This emphasis on tensions, or contradictions, or dualism, is the dominant feature of most subsequent criticism - as Donald Devlin wrote of Daiches in 1968, "Much criticism of the *Waverley* Novels has since been in many ways a series of footnotes to his comments"<sup>46</sup> - and it is important to see why this is, and whether such an emphasis is sufficient to explain fully the nature and significance of Scott's patriotism.



When Scott viewed history, according to Daiches, he saw a division between past and present which his view actually bridged, and this was the essential quality of his historical imagination. This bridging occurred in ways that were tied in with Scott's own personality as practising lawyer-cum-antiquarian-cum-romancer: "there was still a possibility of successful rebellion in Waverley's day, but none in Scott's. It was too late for Scott to become a Jacobite, even temporarily, so he let Waverley do it for him."<sup>47</sup> (Daiches' rhetoric is misleading here, for in fact one of the major themes of *Waverley* is that the 'Forty-five had *no* chance of success, was a dream, a delusion, "an action arising from mistaken virtue".<sup>48</sup>) Scott had, then, at bottom, a tremendous feeling for "ordinary daily life" and thus he was "able to suppress the implicit tragic note in so many (but not all) of his novels and leave the reader at the end to put heroic ideals behind him with a sigh and turn with a smile to the foibles of ordinary humanity."<sup>49</sup> In this sense Scott was "antiromantic": his best novels

. . . attempt to show that heroic action, as the typical romantic writer would like to think of it, is, in the last analysis, neither heroic nor useful, and that man's destiny, at least in the modern world, is to find his testing time not amid the sound of trumpets but in the daily struggles and recurring crises of personal and social life.<sup>50</sup>

On this reading, the character who really typifies Scott's philosophy is not one like Redgauntlet, but Jeanie Deans.

Daiches extends his argument by stressing the prime importance of this theme, its strength in overcoming the weaker machinery of

Scott's novel-form. Writing in particular of *Guy Mannering* but also in general of the other novels, he comments:

. . . the formal plot is merely a device for bringing the necessary characters and situations into the novel: it is not a plot in the Aristotelian sense at all, but merely a stage contrived to accommodate the appropriate actors. Yet the action is not episodic: it all contributes to a central pattern which is not, however, that laid down by the external plot.<sup>51</sup>

This central pattern is the heroic past/commercial present dualism mentioned above. But is it correct to see this dualism, which is certainly present and indeed prevalent, as the central pattern of Scott's work, rather than as an offshoot, or a symptom, of something more fundamental? It is true that the more one reads and rereads the *Waverley Novels*, one becomes aware of a recurring set of themes, especially in the early Scottish books, and that these can usually be seen as manifestations of some sort of dualistic tension. But if that central, unifying pattern is based upon the tension between the ancient-heroic and the modern-commercial, and on Scott's personal ambivalence in dealing with the past, it seems an extraordinarily simple device for sustaining, generation after generation, approval of the complex picture of Scottish history which is presented in a dozen novels and short stories - to say nothing of the non-Scottish novels, the epic poems, and the histories. For, in terms of selling books, of being read and accepted down the years, Scott was very far from being, to paraphrase Neal Ascherson, "a failed Druid", however we may measure his historiographical achievement today. Can this success be explained by saying that Scott, in articulating a neurotic

relationship with the past of his own, happened in so doing to strike a chord of sympathy with the reading public at large? Is it not more likely, as Nairn posited, that he in fact provided the expression of an ideology of national identity - neurotic, it may be - suitable for the political and cultural condition of Nineteenth and early Twentieth-century Scotland? To find an answer to these questions, it is necessary to look at the Daiches position in more detail.

In the first place, the past-present antithesis does not properly explain those novels which are not about late-Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Scotland. Daiches actually concedes this: Scott wrote *Ivanhoe*, he says, as

. . . a straight novel of the age of chivalry without any attempt to relate it to what had hitherto been the principle theme of his prose-fiction - the relations between the old heroic Scotland and the new Anglicized, commercial Britain. A novel like *Ivanhoe*, though it has qualities of its own, is much more superficial than any of the Scottish novels, and is written throughout on a much lower plane. Scott did not, in fact, know the Middle Ages well and he had little understanding of its social and religious life .  
. . . .<sup>52</sup>

It is strange that Daiches should add this rather lame explanation, instead of making the obvious connection, as others have done, by substituting the Saxons for Scotland and the Normans for Britain, the growth of feudalism for that of commerce. It is especially strange since his thesis lends itself so readily to such a connection. It would then lead to a definite reason *why* the Scottish novels are the best: Scott's proximity to and emotional involvement

with the subject sharpens and increases their intensity. To quote Daiches himself:

. . . it was the complex of feelings with which he contemplated the phase of Scottish history immediately preceding his own time that provided the point of view which gave life - often a predominantly tragic life - to these novels. Underlying most of these [Scottish] novels is a tragic sense of the inevitability of a drab but necessary progress, a sense of the impotence of the traditional kind of heroism, a passionately regretful awareness of the fact that the Good Old Cause was lost forever and the glory of Scotland must give way to her interest.<sup>53</sup>

Old heroic Scotland, then, was "doomed after the Union of Parliaments of 1707 and doubly doomed after the Battle of Culloden in 1746; the aftermath of 1707 is shown in *The Heart of Midlothian* and of 1746 in *Redgauntlet*."<sup>54</sup> Daiches' interpretation of the Waverley Novels correctly identifies the crucial *Scottish* element but fails to explain it adequately. Again, he puts into different words his idea of Scott as believer in the present and lover of the past when he calls him "both the prudent Briton and the passionate Scot . . . . Civilization must be paid for by the cessation of the old kind of heroic action . . . ." <sup>55</sup>: that distinction between prudence and passion, so reminiscent of Muir's split between head and heart, does persist in appearing significant, and indeed it will, in broad terms, remain at the centre of this study's analysis of Scott's ideology of patriotism.

These various statements from David Daiches, all contained within one essay, indicate that his idea of a dualism in Scott is not very precise and relies heavily on metaphor. It is true that it

identifies a number of straining contradictions and balanced oppositions which appear to add up to a general heroic past/commercial present antithesis. But this is too vague and at the same time too narrow a perspective, and anyway the antithesis can equally well be seen as a synthesis: there is no more real evidence in the Waverley Novels to suggest that Scott's love of the past was incompatible with his belief in the present than there is to demonstrate that he had little problem reconciling them, and that his ease in doing so partly accounts for his sympathetic treatment of the past's doomed figures. Another description of Scott's attitude to the passage of history is this: his novels record "the modulation of a heroic into a commercial civilization with reluctant approval."<sup>56</sup> Since this was also written by David Daiches, in 1955, we can begin to see that it is more his style of interpretation that is persuasive than the argument itself. Daiches has successfully delineated the *character* and *themes* of Scott's fiction, without fully explaining why these are as they are: one feels that his commentary is correct, but without being sure why. Tom Nairn's thesis offers some clues; the Muir-MacDiarmid controversy some others. My intention is to look in depth at Scott's *construction* of patriotism, which I believe is the key to the problem. This is not to diminish the value of the insights which Daiches has given, but to speculate that the tensions he emphasises as being central to Scott's fiction should really be seen in a much wider perspective.

Following his lead, however, almost every modern critic has acknowledged some form of dualism in Scott. Balance and

contradiction are in effect symptoms of the same phenomenon. Thus A. O. J. Cockshut writes that, if Scott had "unique qualifications" for the task of reconciling the Hanoverian dynasty to the Scottish people, he was also "in the grip of internal contradictions."<sup>57</sup> And yet, though he was "a man driven by many contradictory impulses" he was not "a divided man".<sup>58</sup> Cockshut's meaning eventually emerges: it is Scott's very contradictions that enable him to be the great reconciler, whether magnificent or absurd, for example during the Royal Visit to Edinburgh of 1822:

Was it a far-sighted, statesmanlike (and very effective) reconciliation of the ancient antagonisms of Scotland, and was the play-acting a legitimate appeal for a serious and humane purpose to the imagination of the public? Or was Scott with the King's help the founder of the bogus tradition of Scotsmanship that can be studied in the advertising pages of expensive American magazines? Perhaps the answer is "both", and, if so, then the ambiguity corresponds to the ambiguity in Scott's own mind.<sup>59</sup>

In the same way, Cockshut admits some truth in Edwin Muir's head-versus-heart diagnosis of Scott (and, coincidentally, of Scotland), but turns it upside-down (or right way up again!), claiming that he "brought the intelligent academic mind and the feeling heart to bear *together*"; he, as it were, exploited the existing linguistic and cultural divisions between Hume and Burns for "artistic gain".<sup>60</sup> This is Scott's "dual method", his "double vision"; these his "two voices".<sup>61</sup> So, throughout the novels he plays the roles of medievalist and entertainer, prophet and social commentator, romancer and realist, novelist and historian; the Author, as mediator,

balancing his way through the past onto the safe middle-ground of the present.

Edgar Johnson, in his bicentenary essay "Scott and the Corners of Time", takes a similar view:

Scott led a dual life, one as a legal functionary, man of affairs, public-spirited citizen, and prominent figure much in the world's eyes, the other as poet, imaginative writer, and reflective thinker exploring in the solitude of his spirit the meaning of human experience. But he was no divided man, no split personality; fundamentally the public figure and the private, the man of action and the man of vision, were one, bringing a single though widely comprehensive gaze to bear on both the outer world around him and the inner world of thought and feeling.<sup>62</sup>

Janet Adam Smith, writing on "Scott and the Idea of Scotland", also points out the reconciliation of opposites: "If the Forty-five was to be presented to English readers - and to Whiggish Scots - as noble, if mistaken, to readers with Jacobite sympathies it must be shown as mistaken, if noble."<sup>63</sup> And Lars Hartveit's study sets out to describe an "antithetic pattern" of illusion and reality which "emanates from and corresponds to the duality which has been found at the heart of Scott's vision." This "vision of reality depends on tensions and conflicting tendencies which can ultimately be traced to a common source: his 'divided allegiance' between the romantic and the prosaic and the prudent."<sup>64</sup>

Ambivalence, division, tension, balance, reconciliation - all these are aspects of a dualism in Scott's work that can scarcely be denied, even though it be only loosely defined. In the same way that the combination/division formulations of the Caledonian Antisyzygy

are simply interpretations taken from a single source, so these recurring themes are expressions of a single idea. Indeed, there is even confusion between the notions of Antisyzygy and Dualism, so that their meaning has been obscured by excessive critical exploitation. When applied to Scott, these terms no longer enlighten, because the sheer quantity of his writing, in all its depth, density, and extent, with all its double-life of romance and realism, heroism and moderation, dream and reality, past and present, private and public, Highland and Lowland, means that evidence for any case can almost always be found. Scott has been used, as has been described already, as both weapon and target, in a debate that encompasses history, literature, philosophy and politics, and which is as alive today as it was during his own lifetime.

Put in its crudest terms, this debate is about how to be Scottish. Scott addressed, and provided a solution to this problem, and this is why he has earned the praise and gratitude of so many other Scots down the years. It is also why, as his solution has become less and less effective in the changing political circumstances of the Twentieth Century, the issue has retained a strong contemporary relevance. To understand the context in which Scott addressed it, and hence how he solved it, we must return to the period of the Enlightenment, to what Tom Nairn described as "the quite different culture-world of the 18th century."



## Chapter Two

### THE PATRIOTIC LEGACY OF THE SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT

*"There is no European nation which, within the course of half a century or little more, has undergone so complete a change as this kingdom of Scotland."*<sup>1</sup>

So wrote Scott in the postscript to *Waverley*, in a passage which will certainly require more detailed commentary in a later chapter. But Scott's observation, however striking, was not unique. In the Eighteenth Century, prominent thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment were well aware of the pace of social and economic change in their own country. Indeed, a major concern of the intellectual inquiries of Hume, Smith, Ferguson, Robertson and others was to explain the development of society, its progress from one stage to another, and the historical circumstances which enabled such progress; and it has been argued that "it was Scotland's own social transformation which inspired this distinguishing interest of the Scottish Enlightenment."<sup>2</sup> How far this was the case is a subject of some debate among modern historians, but what is not in doubt is that the question touched on at the end of the last chapter - "how to be Scottish" - was one which the very nature and scope of their

inquiries obliged many of these intellectuals to address. From a state of political independence in the Seventeenth Century, Scotland was developing economically and politically in such a way as would "enable it to participate fully in the joint British enterprise of industrial revolution and empire."<sup>3</sup> Scottish identity had to be in a condition to cope with that challenge, and so serious thought had to be given to what form of patriotic response would most effectively answer it.

As John Robertson, among others, has shown, in Scotland the heritage of patriotism as a political and cultural concept can be identified as emanating from two main sources. On the one hand there was the classical republican strain, which came down to Eighteenth-century Scots via Machiavelli, James Harrington and - crucially - Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun. On the other hand, Scottish identity was linked to a "distinctive martial heritage"<sup>4</sup>, derived from the historic defence of the nation's independence against England (and, to a lesser extent, France). These two lines of thought, whether in alliance or opposition, were fundamental to the context in which patriotism was discussed, whether that context were the debate over the Union or - a related topic - over the desirability of a Scottish Militia. The idea of Scottish patriotism was thus bound to be of great political relevance when the question of the day was whether, or to what extent, the Scots should compromise their national independence for the sake of peace, security, and economic advantage.

Andrew Fletcher cast these debates in classical republican terms. He drew extensively on the anti-Hobbesian thought of James

Harrington, who had propounded that in his Commonwealth of Oceana the mutual benefits enjoyed by a citizenry owning limited and roughly equivalent amounts of property would foster an appreciation of their perhaps austere but free existence and hence encourage them to protect it against attempts, internal or external, to disrupt the balance of property and power. But, as Roger Mason has amply demonstrated,<sup>5</sup> the other canon of Scottish political thought - differently constructed and determined largely by the realpolitik of Anglo-Scottish war and monarchical government - also had its influence. The long struggles in the Middle Ages against English aggression, and the absence (until papal recognition in 1329 of Scotland's right of independence) of *religious* authority to back their case, had schooled the Scots in producing detailed "historical" justifications for their position - often as responses to the equally spurious "history" concocted by English propagandists. Thus the ancient genealogy of the Scottish royal line, stretching back to the Egyptian princess Scota, was affirmed in order to "prove" the antiquity of Scottish independence and thus counter Geoffrey of Monmouth's version of early British history, according to which the entire island was once ruled by one king, Brutus. In John of Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, produced between 1384 and 1387, the Scota legend was first given written historical credence in a deliberate attempt to discredit the Brutus story. Scotland, according to Fordun, had *always* been an independent nation, and, with the events of the Fourteenth Century, this independence became a central theme of Scottish patriotism. It was allied, for obvious reasons, to equally strong sentiments of anglophobia. The

relationship between martial virtue and political patriotism had already been given literary expression in the previous decade by John Barbour's *Bruce*, in which, according to Roger Mason, "chivalric idealism is deliberately tempered by patriotic ideology"<sup>6</sup>. These are the opening lines:

Storyss to rede ar delitabill,  
Supposs that thai be nocht bot fabill;  
Than suld storyss that suthfast wer,  
And thai war said on gud maner,  
Have doubill plesance in heryng.  
The first plesance is the carpyng,  
And the tothir the suthfastnes,  
That schawys the thing rycht as it wes;  
And suth thyngis that ar likand  
Tyll mannys heryng, ar plesand.  
Tharfor I wald fayne set my will,  
Giff my wyt mycht suffice thartill,  
To put in wryt a suthfast story,  
That it lest ay furth in memory,  
Swa that na lenth of tyme it let,  
Na ger it haly be forzet.  
For aulde storys that men redys,  
Representis to thaim the dedys  
Of stalwart folk that lywyt ar,  
Rycht as thai than in presence war.<sup>7</sup>

Thus Barbour consciously sets out to use history to inform contemporary patriotic consciousness, and the poem's realism pollutes the "rarefied atmosphere of continental chivalric romanticism."<sup>8</sup>

Barbour was concerned at the moral degradation of his own age in comparison with the "stalwart folk" of the age of Bruce, and such concern would become a familiar characteristic of other appeals to Scottish patriotism over the centuries. In the aftermath of the feudalistic mass-sacrifice of the Scottish court at Flodden in 1513, two historical views of Scotland contended for the mind of the

political nation: the one represented by John Mair's *History of Greater Britain* of 1521, and the other by Hector Boece's *Scotorum Historiae* of 1527.

Boece, like Barbour before him, depicted the noble behaviour of the "eldaris" of Scotland in contrast to the present generation's "intemperance". That Scotland's independence was preserved was due, not to any "manlie prowis of our self" but to the sloth of its southern neighbour.<sup>9</sup> "What rudimentary temporal perspective the *History* has," Mason comments, "is provided by the notion of cyclical decay and regeneration, luxury and the consequent corruption being the causal agents in the decline of virtue."<sup>10</sup> Boece, and his translator into Scots John Bellenden, located residues of the older heroic virtues in those parts of Scotland so remote as to have been relatively untainted by the luxury of the south - that is, in the Highlands and Islands. The manners of these parts should be emulated by the Lowlanders in order to regenerate the spirit of Scottish patriotism. John Mair, as we shall see, also pointed out these differences, but drew very different conclusions about what should be done about them. It is significant, however, that later writers, including George Buchanan, would also develop this "vision of primitive Celtic virtue"<sup>11</sup>, thus establishing a familiar pattern long before James MacPherson's *Ossian*.

Boece's traditionalist historical vision, and his concern to revitalise patriotic sentiments, meant that, far from questioning the evidence for the line of forty-five Scottish kings descended from *Scota*, he actually named forty of them and supplied a totally

fictitious account of their reigns. This deliberately records a cycle of vice and virtue, in order to show the relationship between political well-being, personal integrity and public morality, and in order to demonstrate how these in turn affected the nation's ability to counter English attempts to subjugate it. Naturally this sort of patriotic mythology was highly popular, and Boece's history remained a standard work until Buchanan's *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* of 1582 (which borrowed extensively from it) supplanted it. Political thought in Sixteenth-century Scotland was thus heavily influenced by what Mason calls an ideology of "patriotic conservatism" running through the Boece-Bellenden interpretation of history.

But there was the alternative view already mentioned, that of John Mair. Not only did Mair dismiss the forty kings legend, but he was notably less anglophobic and less inclined to play up the benefits of ancient martial virtue and valour. Mair did not consider himself any less a patriot than Boece, but he believed that Scotland stood to gain more from a close union with England than from remaining in embattled isolation from the southern neighbour. His *History of Greater Britain* was intended to show the progress of the two countries' histories developing towards a mutually beneficial union. He chronicled these histories separately and attacked the perpetuation of both the Scota and Brutus legends. It was not necessary to rely on legend in order to prove the ancient independence of Scotland, said Mair. At the same time he criticised the shortcomings of the Scottish polity, so that he both undermined some of the historical and ideological traditions which supported

Anglo-Scottish rivalry, and argued for a closer union on the grounds of mutual advantageousness. He asserted that all the original inhabitants of the British Isles were Britons: by implication, their descendants still were. Now "British", as other Scottish historians had realised, was a term used to describe the kingdom of the mythical Brutus, and was therefore rank with English imperialist overtones. But Mair, relying on the force of his demolition of that myth, "was prepared to ignore these patriotic cavils. . . . 'Britain' and 'Briton' were clearly the ideal linguistic tools for transcending the political and cultural barriers between Scots and English."<sup>2</sup>

Mair's view of the contemporary condition of Scotland was no more flattering and no less critical than that of Boece and Bellenden, but underlying it was a quite different vision of patriotic virtue. Where traditional patriotic conservatism looked to the Celtic strongholds to regenerate national virtue, Mair believed that the Lowlanders had far more in common with the English, and that a British Union would not only reduce Anglo-Scottish antagonism, but also lead in time to the manners of the "householding" or "civilised" southern Scots being extended to their "wild" relatives in the Highlands.

In putting the "British" case (against the propaganda of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Chronicles of England*, as published by Caxton in 1480, claiming that Scotland was a vassal kingdom), Mair stressed that even if a Scottish king (for example, John Balliol) had actually done homage to an English king, such a submission would be invalid because "a free king has no power at his own arbitrary pleasure to make his

people subject to another."<sup>13</sup> Mair thus did not seek to create a distinction between being "pro-British" and "pro-Scottish": he was as staunch a defender of Scotland's *historic* independence as anyone.

In any case, throughout the age of the Reformation the political language described above underwent various alterations, and, as the religious requirements of Calvinism and national covenants became more vigorously asserted in Scottish affairs, so much of this patriotic terminology was subsumed in a wider, apocalyptic vision of Scottish man's history and present purpose. Indeed, the theocratic aims of the Reformers became closely allied to those interests promoting the political benefits of a British union. Nevertheless, as both Mason and Arthur Williamson<sup>14</sup> have shown, patriotic conservatism as an ideological bulwark of Scottish political identity, was too well established to be completely eroded. It persisted in informing the political and religious life of Scotland, and, should anyone address himself to the history of the nation, was conspicuously evident in that history. It is not surprising, then, that a later generation of Scots, weighing up the pros and cons of the momentous step of parliamentary union, should refer to and enlarge upon that body of thought which was available to them in their national past, and which was so often specifically related to Anglo-Scottish relations and the possibility of a united Britain.



## II

The arguments which Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun brought to bear on the question of the Union contain elements of both the strands of Scottish thought on patriotism articulated in the works of Hector Boece and John Mair: traditional patriotic conservatism on the one hand, tempered with an unsentimental criticism of Scotland's economic and political limitations on the other. Indeed, for Fletcher, patriotism in its highest form might be said to be a combination of these two elements, manifesting themselves as love of country and duty to serve its interest. Thus he begins the first of his two *Discourses Concerning the Affairs of Scotland; Written in the Year 1698* with the following statement:

No inclination is so honourable, nor has anything been so much esteemed in all nations, and ages, as the love of that country and society in which every man is born. And those who have placed their greatest satisfaction in doing good, have accounted themselves happy, or unfortunate, according to the success of their endeavours to serve the interest of their country. For nothing can be more powerful in the minds of men, than a natural inclination and duty concurring in the same disposition.<sup>15</sup>

There is an implication in this that love of country alone is a powerful but irresponsible passion that achieves little unless linked to the constructive potential of virtuous behaviour, and this is borne out by the paragraph which follows:

Nature in most men prevails over reason; reason in some prevails over nature: but when these two are joined, and a violent natural inclination finds itself owned by reason, required by

duty, encouraged by the highest praises, and excited by the most illustrious examples, sure that force must be irresistible.<sup>16</sup>

Fletcher seems to be suggesting that "nature" and reason are separable ingredients in the constitution of the patriot, and while he does not develop this idea, it is worth noting since it recurs in altered forms in the writings of later Enlightenment figures, including Adam Ferguson, while the essence of David Hume's *Treatise* would be an investigation of the relationship between "nature" and "reason" as described by Fletcher.

Fletcher shared more, however, with Boece and Bellenden than with John Mair, and in particular he held with them the belief that from the corruption of the present age one could look back to an age of austere but successful patriotic virtue. This was a view of history derived in part from the writings of James Harrington, primarily his *Commonwealth of Oceana*, published in 1656 ostensibly in an attempt to describe the essential features of a successful republican commonwealth.<sup>17</sup> Harrington saw Western history in two distinct eras: the period of classical Greece and republican Rome was that of "ancient prudence"; but the establishment of the Roman Empire destroyed the "Empire of Lawes" which characterised that great age, and the incursions of the Germanic tribes at the end of empire signalled the arrival of "modern prudence", in which private interest and private force of arms - the "Empire of Men" - were dominant. For Harrington, only Machiavelli had attempted to recapture the values of ancient prudence, and this was reflected in the eternal perfection of the republic of Venice. He criticised the "Gothic balance" of

feudalism as leaving men half-servile and half-free, and he pinpointed the growth of luxury as a chief cause of men's willingness to surrender a part or the whole of their liberty.

Fletcher's historical view did not conflict with Harrington's: he agreed that the collapse of the Roman Empire had led to the establishment by the Germanic tribes of a form of government in which the newly acquired territory was divided by the king (formerly the general of the conquering army) among his barons (formerly his great officers), who made a similar division of land among lesser vassals, again in return for their military service. Thus, over some eleven hundred years, the feudal system evolved, in which society existed without a regular standing army, but with each rank of landed men owing military service to their superiors, and ultimately, when the defence of the country required it, to the king. But whereas James Harrington had been highly critical of this situation, Fletcher believed that it incorporated the elements of ancient republicanism by retaining a connection between property and defence of the kingdom, and that it guaranteed individual freedoms within the mutually dependent military system:

. . . this constitution of government put the sword into the hands of the subject, because the vassals depended more immediately on the barons than on the king, which effectually secured the freedom of those governments. For the barons could not make use of their power to destroy those limited monarchies, without destroying their own grandeur; nor could the king invade their privileges, having no other forces than the vassal of his own demesnes to rely upon for his support in such an attempt. 'e

J. G. A. Pocock has described Fletcher's neo-Harringtonian view as a "typically Whig slurring over of the dependence of tenant upon lord", by which he had "located the balanced commonwealth of armed freemen in the era of 'modern prudence' which, with its apparatus of king, lords, and commoners, Harrington had dismissed as an ill-regulated disequilibrium."<sup>19</sup> What, according to Fletcher, upset this balance was the Renaissance, and the rediscovery of ancient learning and luxury and the improvement of the arts, the effects of which were first apparent in Italy:

. . . as mankind from a natural propension to pleasure, is always ready to choose out of everything what may most gratify that vicious appetite; so the arts which the Italians first applied themselves to improve were principally those that had been subservient to the luxury of the ancients in the most corrupt ages, of which they had many monuments still remaining. Italy was presently filled with architects, painters, and sculptors; and a prodigious expense was made in buildings, pictures, and statues. Thus the Italians began to come off from their frugal and military way of living, and addicted themselves to the pursuit of refined and expensive pleasures, as much as the wars of those times would permit. This infection spread itself by degrees into the neighbouring nations.

This change of lifestyle was further exaggerated by the development of trade links with the East and the discovery of the New World:

By this means the luxury of Asia and America was added to that of the ancients; and all ages, and all countries concurred, to sink Europe into an abyss of pleasures; which were rendered the more expensive by a perpetual change of the fashions in clothes, equipage, and furniture of houses.<sup>20</sup>

The effect of this flood of luxury was to put the barons who wallowed in it into debt, obliging them to extract rent from their

vassals in lieu of military service. Thus the feudal army shrank and finally ceased to exist, and thus "the sword fell out of the hands of the barons. But there being always a necessity to provide for the defence of every country, princes were afterwards allowed to raise armies of volunteers and mercenaries."<sup>21</sup> As Pocock puts it, the freeman "sells the means of freedom to buy the materials of culture."<sup>22</sup> These, then, were the origins of the standing armies which Fletcher considered to be the chief threat to the kind of Gothic liberty which he held in such esteem.

Britain was in the fortunate position of being an island, so that national defence, a favourite excuse with absolute monarchies such as that of France for maintaining a standing army, could not so easily be claimed as justification for the hiring of mercenaries by the Crown. Furthermore, England had lost her European territories before the period of luxury commenced, while the presence of the Scottish border could not be invoked since the Scots themselves could not afford to keep a permanent army. From Scotland's own history, Fletcher gave the example of Mary of Guise's attempt to introduce a tax to pay for a mercenary army, and the response of the lesser barons to it in an "honourable and wise remonstrance" (the lords, said Fletcher, "by their silence betrayed the public liberty"):

. . . she was told, that their forefathers had defended themselves and their fortunes against the English, when that nation was much more powerful than they were at that time, and had made frequent incursions into their country: that they themselves had not so far degenerated from their ancestors, to refuse, when occasion required, to hazard their lives and fortunes in the service of their country: that as to the hiring of mercenary soldiers, it was a thing of great danger to put the liberty of Scotland into the hands of men, who are of no fortunes, nor have any hopes but in

the public calamity; who for money would attempt anything; whose excessive avarice opportunity would inflame to a desire of all manner of innovations, and whose faith would follow the wheel of fortune. That though these men should be more mindful of the duty they owed to their country, than of their own particular interest, was it to be supposed, that mercenaries would fight more bravely for the defence of other men's fortunes, than the possessors would do for themselves or their own; or that a little money should excite their ignoble minds to a higher pitch of honour than that with which the barons are inspired, when they fight for the preservation of their fortunes, wives and children, religion and liberty: that most men did suspect and apprehend, that this new way of making war, might be not only useless, but dangerous to the nation; since the English, if they should imitate the example, might, without any great trouble to their people, raise far greater sums for the maintenance of mercenary soldiers, than Scotland could, and by this means not only spoil and lay open the frontiers but penetrate into the bowels of the kingdom: and that it was in the militia of the barons their ancestors had placed their chief trust, for the defence of themselves against a greater power.<sup>23</sup>

This passage illustrates the importance for Fletcher of locating a historical context for his planned preservation of patriotic and virtuous ideals and sentiments in modern society. Not that he had any doubt about the irreversibility of the rise of commerce: Fletcher's readiness to address the issue - even to the extent of making extreme proposals for land clearance and forced labour in order to redistribute and employ the population to suit the changing economic circumstances - shows that he was very far from dreaming up anachronistic utopias. The point was to persuade his fellow-Scots that their success in coming to terms with the future would depend on their ability to adapt traditional values from the past, to follow historical precedents. Furthermore, it was vitally important that those precedents were correctly perceived:

Having shown the difference between the past and present government of Britain, how precarious our liberties are, and how

from having the best security for them we are in a hazard of having none at all; it is to be hoped that those who are for a standing army, and losing no occasion of advancing and extending the prerogative, from a mistaken opinion that they establish the ancient government of these nations, will see what sort of patriots they are.<sup>24</sup>

A misinterpretation of the past, then, could have disastrous consequences in the future.

Thus Fletcher's proposal for the establishment of one militia camp in Scotland and three in England, linked to an arrangement whereby independent parliaments would continue to exist in the two countries, was a deliberate attempt to reintroduce the martial aspects of the patriotic ethos that he considered to have been crucial to the maintenance of Scottish independence in the feudal period. Such a camp, he wrote,

would be as great a school of virtue as of military discipline: in which the youth would learn to stand in need of few things; to be content with that small allowance which nature requires; to suffer, as well as to act; to be modest, as well as brave; to be as much ashamed of doing anything insolent or injurious, as of turning their back upon an enemy; they would learn to forgive injuries done to themselves, but to embrace with joy the occasions of dying to revenge those done to their country: and virtue imbibed in younger years would cast a flavour to the utmost periods of life. In a word, they would learn greater and better things than the military art, and more necessary too, if anything can be more necessary than the defence of our country. Such a militia might not only defend a people living in an island, but even such as are placed in the midst of the most warlike nations of the world.<sup>25</sup>

For Fletcher, as Pocock has pointed out, the militia question was the key to a whole range of issues confronting society at the turn of the century. He had

elaborated the neo-Harringtonian perspective to the point where it exposed the most difficult of the many problems to perplex eighteenth-century social thought: the apparent incompatibility of liberty and virtue with culture, which, more than commerce itself, opened up the diversity of human satisfactions. The freeman must desire nothing more than freedom, nothing more than the public good to which he dedicated himself; once he could exchange his freedom for some other commodity, the act became no less corrupting if that other commodity were knowledge itself. The humanist stress on arms and land as the preconditions of individual civic and moral autonomy had heightened the dilemma of presenting it in an irreversible historical process. Virtue, in its paradigmatic social form, was now located in a past; but the era of freedom was also the era of barbarism and superstition, and the term 'Gothic' might, with excruciating ambivalence, be applied in both senses.<sup>26</sup>

In Scotland, following the Act of Union, this ambivalent view of the past would become a major characteristic of national expression.

### III

If Fletcher's ideas to some extent restated and enlarged upon the historical tradition of Boece and his successors, and also drew heavily upon a separate classical republican tradition, there were others who rejected his approval of the Gothic liberty and values of feudal Scotland, and who disputed his benevolent view of the nation's medieval history. They believed instead that Scotland had been as much a licentious (or "libertarian" in the sense that its baronial class was largely unhampered by moral or legal obligations) as a free country: the Earl of Cromartie shuddered at the catalogue of



former horrid wars, raperies, invasions, incursions, murders, exiles, imprisonment even of our sovereigns of which our ancient histories, while we were in a separate state gave us many and sad examples.<sup>27</sup>

It was not a sense of public virtue so much as heroic individualism which had characterised the Scottish baronage's preservation of Scottish independence against the English. Nor had the nature of the struggle and of the barons' social values resulted in any firm establishment of constitutional liberties. Even in the civil wars of the previous century it was religious independence that had been defended in Scotland while in England the battle was for parliamentary and constitutional rights.

Nevertheless, arising out of these divergent perceptions of the Scottish past, in much the same way as occurred with the historical views of Boece and Mair, was a shared concern - how to recapture the warlike heroic spirit of independence and adapt it to the modern commercial age. This meant, according to Nicholas Phillipson, "finding institutions which would release the patriotic zeal of the heirs of that old baronial class." Many pro-Unionists "believed that the patriotism and civic virtue of a citizen class could be released through non-political institutions . . ." <sup>28</sup> and expressed in a non-political language. The language of citizen-virtue was thus developed through the hugely popular medium of the essay, and through salons, clubs, societies and the universities - all institutions where a culture of conversation could thrive.

Concurrent with these innovations, emerging out of Fletcher's anti-Union pamphlets and persisting - in altered forms - right through to the age of Scott, was a long campaign for a Scottish militia. Fletcher had argued for militias and parliaments together for the different parts of the British Isles, but when the Militia debate was at its height in the 1750s and 1760s the emphasis switched to a desire among the Scots literati both to gain acceptance as *Britons* in the atmosphere of the Seven Years War against France and to provide an antidote to the embarrassment of the 'Forty-five, which they regarded as a terrible aberration from the general progress of modern society, but with which as Scots (rather than North Britons) they were unfortunately associated by the English. The 1757 Militia Act, which specifically excluded Scotland because of English suspicions of latent Jacobitism, aroused agitation for a Scottish militia, as Bruce Lenman puts it, "as much to underline the integration of Scotland into Great Britain as to defend the United Kingdom against its foes."<sup>29</sup> Alexander Carlyle, a leading Moderate minister and pro-militia pamphleteer, pressed for the right of Scots to enjoy "the highest privilege of Britons":

The genius of the Scotch never shone with greater lustre than now: in war and in letters we have acquired our share of glory, and our generous fellow-subjects of England meet us half-way in every step we take towards the full completion of the Union.<sup>30</sup>

But, in the same pamphlet, Carlyle warned that if Scottish "servility of mind" permitted the disgrace of exclusion from the Militia Act to

continue, "it had been good for Scotland, that there had been no Union."<sup>31</sup>

In the absence of a parliament, it was felt that a focus for patriotic sentiments was required, lest Scotland sink into a state of civic turpitude. The rise of commerce was both a challenge and a threat to the Scots. It challenged them to translate the ancient heroic virtues of their ancestors into forms suitable for, and worthy of, the modern age: its benefits threatened to leave them without an identity - neither Scottish nor British - if they failed to achieve this transition. A Scottish militia might provide such a focus, but it was not the only possibility. The same men who agitated for a militia through the Poker Club (formed on the conviction that "there could be no lasting security for the freedom and independence of these islands, but in the valour and patriotism of an armed people"<sup>32</sup>) were also working for other means of patriotic expression. A national literature was one very obvious outlet. Here the tension between celebrating the tradition of Scottish independence and seeking acceptance in the new British context through self-recommendation to the English became increasingly evident - for example in John Home's romantic tragedy *Douglas*, which was greeted when first performed in 1756 with patriotic fervour (though whether anybody really cried "Whaur's your Wullie Shakespeare nou?" is open to question<sup>33</sup>). Home, another minister enthusiastic for a Militia, depicted Scotland's independent past heroically, but also deplored the antagonism of centuries between England and Scotland, suggesting instead a new imperial vision:

A river here, there an ideal line,  
By fancy drawn, divides the sister kingdoms.  
On each side dwells a people similar,  
As twins are to each other; valiant both;  
Both for their valor famous thro' the world.  
Yet will they not unite their kindred arms,  
And, if they must have war, wage distant war,  
But with each other fight in cruel conflict.<sup>34</sup>

This interplay of patriotisms can be traced elsewhere in the literature of Eighteenth-century Scotland, for instance in James Watson's *Choice Collection of comic and serious Scots Poems both ancient and modern* of 1706-11, or in Allan Ramsay's similar collections, *The Ever Green* and *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, and his vernacular pastoral, *The Gentle Shepherd*, of 1725. Watson, as well as being a Jacobite, had the licence to reprint *The Spectator* in Edinburgh, and so was busily importing the polite culture of Addison and Steele from London while simultaneously promoting the literary tradition of Scotland. Likewise, Ramsay has been described as a "complex figure" who was both "an Augustan character trying to introduce the idiom of London's Age of Elegance into Edinburgh and the exponent and practitioner of a colloquial Scots vernacular . . . ." <sup>35</sup> The pastoral nostalgia of *The Gentle Shepherd* masks a concern for the attainment of a modern society of polite manners, as is brought out by the theme of the re-establishment of order after the chaos and oppression of war: coarseness, superstition and deceit are ultimately superseded by refinement, reason and truth, as summed up by the restored laird Sir William Worthy:

My friends, I'm satisfied you'll all behave,  
Each in his station, as I'd wish or crave.

Be ever virtuous, soon or late ye'll find  
Reward, and satisfaction to your mind.<sup>36</sup>

The play, then, is about the principles of virtuous civil behaviour, albeit in an idealised rural setting, to which Ramsay's public aspired. Yet, in spite of this central concern, and even though this same public was being encouraged to restyle itself as North British, *The Gentle Shepherd* (and indeed all of Ramsay's works) was unmistakably, emphatically, Scottish. Ramsay's sentimental Jacobitism and his placing of this fable of polite manners in a pastoral setting may be seen as different aspects of a desire to see Scotland both improved and restored to her national dignity.

Again, Burns' intense Scottish patriotism (in, say, "A Parcel of Rogues in a Nation") contrasts strongly with his occasional ultra-British salvoes such as "Does Haughty Gaul Invasion Threat?" But the most obvious and most immediately influential example was without doubt James Macpherson's "translations" of Ossian's epic poetry in the early 1760s. As Richard Sher has shown, the Ossian cult was the product of a deliberate campaign by a group of the Moderate, Edinburgh-based, pro-militia literati whose central aim was to promote heroic, patriotic virtue as the backbone of Scottish national identity in an age when that identity seemed under threat. Adam Ferguson (who not long after would look more closely than any other contemporary writer at the problem of the patriotic spirit in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society*), Hugh Blair, John Home and Alexander Carlyle all seized upon Ossian as the perfect instrument to further the patriotic cause. As Lowlanders (with the exception of

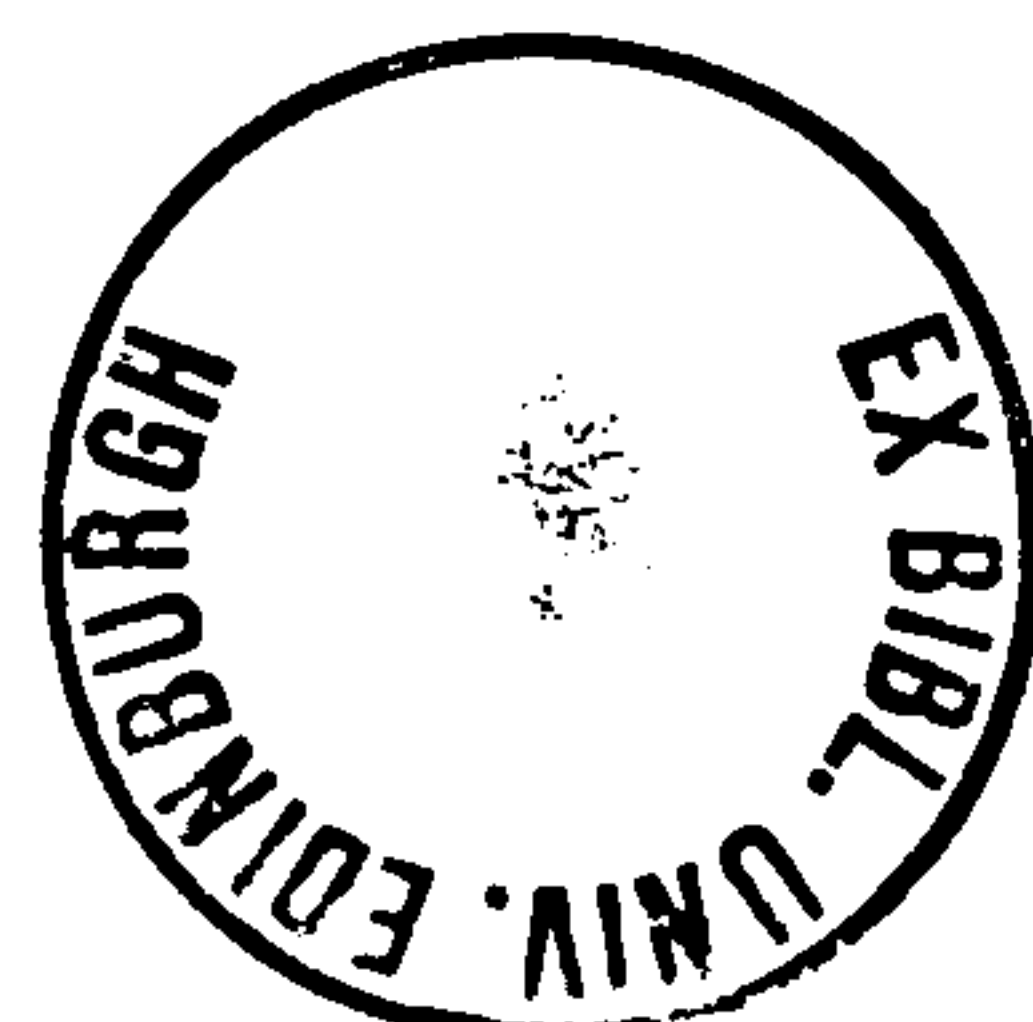
Ferguson) they yet showed none of the usual anti-Highlands prejudice: on the contrary, their purpose was well served by appropriating the trappings of Gaelic culture for general Scottish purposes. Macpherson's own literary inclinations - even before Ossian, in his poem *The Highlander* of 1758 - happily coincided with this patriotic purpose. Ossian offered a cultural expression of heroic virtues that was rooted in an ancient and unmistakably Scottish heritage - but which would not interfere at all with the progress of British commercial society. To quote Sher:

To the Moderate literati of Edinburgh and their kind, Ossian demonstrated the poetic genius of Scotland while projecting a particularly praiseworthy national image. It is an image in which the militarism and heroic virtue of a rude society coexist with the refinement and gentility of a more civilized era. It is a true golden age, not because it is free from warfare, but because it is peopled by a race of heroes who raise warfare to the highest level of virtue and nobility. "Effeminacy", luxury, and other manifestations of modern, commercial societies are completely unknown. Ossianic heroes reveal no traces of the personal flaws that mark the heroes in Homer's epics, and moral ambivalence is never apparent. Although Ossian's infatuation with heroic perfection is apt to strike modern readers as superficial, it was evidently quite appealing to contemporary readers seeking moral myths and lessons rather than complex character development and dramatic tension. And it was particularly attractive to a group of Scottish literati who believed that their country was in need of a healthy dose of primitive vitality and public virtue as a remedy for the ills of modernity.<sup>37</sup>

Or, as an anonymous supporter put it, "the national character [of Scotland] has always hinged, and always must, upon *arms* and *letters*."<sup>38</sup> As with the militia, Ossian was a powerful weapon against the prejudices of John Bull, a means of showing Scotland's fitness to participate on equal terms as a partner of the Union. By asserting the Scottish identity in both military and literary terms,

English mistrust of the Scots as crypto- or potential Jacobites could be used by the Scots in a campaign that was both ultra-British and yet fed on, even encouraged that mistrust: scratch a Scotsman and a hero with avenging claymore lay underneath. The warning was, "we Scots are not so far removed from savage heroism or nobility as you English", the obvious connection being the 'Forty-five, which these literati were nevertheless the first to disown. Here, long before Scott, are the discernible elements of a dualism among middling Scots - seeking acceptance as Britons but, when rebuffed by the English, having the fallback of Scottishness - alternately a "national cringe" and a "philabeg bluster". Scott would write that as a boy he soon tired of the "tawdry repetitions of the Ossianic phraseology"<sup>33</sup>, but he knew Ossian well, and his own works would perform a very similar function in succeeding generations - with, however, a great deal more skill, subtlety and style.

In fact, Scott was aware not only that Macpherson had largely manufactured the "translations" of Ossian, but also that there were fundamental "philosophical" faults in the poems which betrayed their false origins. In 1805, a year when Scott was himself engaged in constructing literary bridges between Scottish past and present in the form of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and the first draft of the opening pages of *Waverley*, he wrote a review of a new edition of the *Poems of Ossian* for Francis Jeffrey. In this, he explained that the kind of virtue with which Macpherson clothed his heroes belonged to the Eighteenth Century and was totally anachronistic. In a passage



whose "philosophical" theme would be repeated years later in the closing pages of *The Heart of Midlothian*, he wrote:

We would not wish the Gaël to misunderstand us. We do not affirm that their ancestors were incapable of generous or kindly feelings; nor do we insist that their poetry, to be authentic, should be devoid of occasional sublimity, or even elegance. We only say, that the character of all rude poetry, whether in diction or sentiment, is inequality; that bursts of generosity, flowing from the feeling of the moment, and not from the fixed principles acquired in a civilized society, will always be attended by an equally capricious and irregular exertion of the angry passions. We believe it is Byron who mentions, that an Indian, who had just saved his life, was going, an hour after, to murder him for throwing away a mussel shell. The passions and feelings of men in a savage state, are as desultory as their habits of life; and a model of perfect generosity and virtue, would be as great a wonder amongst them, as a fine gentleman in a birth-day suit. . . . Ossian, however gentle or generous his natural disposition, can hardly be supposed to have formed for his countrymen an ideal standard of perfection, depending upon a refinement drawn from the internal resources of his own mind, and inconsistent with all he witnessed around him.<sup>40</sup>

Poetic and historical progress, as Scott pointed out elsewhere\*, were intricately bound together. Scott, at the time of this review, was fast outstripping Macpherson's achievement in terms of literary skill, but he was not reluctant to acknowledge Ossian's patriotic success:

But while we are compelled to renounce the pleasing idea, "that Fingal lived, and that Ossian sung," our national vanity may be equally flattered by the fact, that a remote, and almost a barbarous corner of Scotland, produced, in the 18th century, a bard, capable not only of making an enthusiastic impression on every mind susceptible of poetical beauty, but of giving a new tone to poetry throughout all Europe.<sup>41</sup>

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\*See below, Chapter Three.



Amidst this flurry of Eighteenth-century patriotic activity, there appears a class dimension which, while not easy to define, should not be underestimated. What is going on is essentially an exercise among the literate, propertied, commercial and professional strata of Scottish society. The Highlander, disarmed, dispersed, stripped of his "bonnet, belt and swordie", was no longer a threat, but his image had enormous potential for a redefined sense of Scottishness. A kind of internal colonialism is in progress, as middling Scots adjust to being British by adopting a new Scottish consciousness and identity. Ossian is the most obvious symptom of this change. Writing of the years after 1760, Rosalind Mitchison has described this process as follows:

The improvers are becoming a well organised movement, and getting some successes. The "compleat the union" men have made a big splash. Some people in the central lowland valley are beginning to feel a sense of communal obligation to highlanders. And many of the upper class are trying hard, in a modern phrase, to see differentials perpetuated. The two last features become increasingly apparent as the century went on. Increasingly the highlander, no longer feared, was regarded as part of the community. Encouragement was given to this attitude by the vogue for Ossian, already underway by 1760. But I think it would be true to say that MacPherson's success with his Ossian writings was a symptom of the new attitude, combining sympathy, ignorance, optimism and romance, rather than simply a cause . . . . In the early part of the century those writers who had treated the highlander as a fellow citizen had been people who were landowners on or near the highland line. Their sympathy was tempered with knowledge. Now we get the beginnings of the modern romantic myth.

While the consciousness of common nationality was being extended to the highlander, it was being withdrawn from the bottom of the social scale. It was, increasingly, class divisions which came to obstruct national consciousness and solidarity, rather than political, religious or geographical.<sup>42</sup>

#### IV

The Militia issue and Ossian were, then, the most obviously patriotism-centred manifestations of the concern to establish standards of social behaviour and public virtue. This concern, and its patriotic connection, is also demonstrated in the sort of topics that we know were debated or proposed for debate by the Select Society, as in the following examples:

Whether the Difference of national characters be chiefly owing to the nature of different climates, or to moral and political Causes? (debated)

Whether a nation formed for war, or a nation formed for peace be most happy? (debated)

Can a Body Politick be virtuous as a Collective body?

Whether a standing Army, or a militia properly regulated, be most advantageous for Great Britain? (debated)

Whether a nation once sunk in Luxury & pleasure can be retrieved & brought back to any degree of worth & excellence? (debated)

Whether hath mankind decreased in stature, strength and virtue during 3000 years?

Whether has modern honour improved the human character? (debated)

Whether is a Nation in a State of Barbarity, or a Nation of Luxury and refined manners, the happiest? (debated)

Whether the strict principles of Virtue and Morality can be made consistent with commerce, or can be long preserved in a Commercial State?

Whether a commercial and military spirit can subsist together in the same nation? (debated)

Whether a nation may subsist without Public Spirit?<sup>43</sup>

All the leading thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment grappled with such ideas, and foremost among them was David Hume. If critics have experienced a certain uneasiness in assessing the work of Walter Scott, then many of Hume's contemporaries found themselves faced with a similar yet greater difficulty. None could deny his importance, indeed all acknowledged his unmatched genius; but the implications of much of what he wrote, for the sort of society these men desired, made it an absolute necessity for them to refute or at least qualify his arguments.

In his book *The Democratic Imagination in America*, Russell L. Hanson makes the following statement, which, though a simplistic view of Hume, admirably illustrates the alarm that his philosophy caused among his contemporaries, often as a result of just such oversimplification: ". . . in Hume's philosophy individuals appear as dangerous egoists driven by passion and self-interest. They threaten to destroy the very possibility of society, let alone commonwealth politics, unless virtue can be enlisted to restrain their actions."<sup>44</sup>

For Hume, our sense of vice and virtue is derived entirely from the passions, and in fact at an individual level morality is nothing more than the usual force of the passions: "all morality depends on the ordinary course of our passions and actions".<sup>45</sup> Public morality can be defined by extension from this view of our "*uncultivated*

nature".<sup>46</sup> Men in society learn through the exercise of their judgment and reason, and through their natural tendency to sympathise with others, how to co-exist: this is how codes and standards of behaviour develop. "The remedy, then," he writes, "is not deriv'd from nature, but from *artifice*; or more properly speaking, nature provides a remedy in the judgment and understanding, for what is irregular and incommodious in the affections."<sup>47</sup> Yet Hume has already established that "reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition," that it is impossible that "passion can be oppos'd by, or be contradictory to truth and reason," and that "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."<sup>48</sup> In other words, standards of public virtue cannot be identified *a priori*, but only through an empirical study of human behaviour in society, that is, through the Science of Man. However else Hume's *Treatise* differs from his later *Enquiries*, in this his attitude remains unchanged, for his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* is just such a study.

This approach was, one would think, entirely appropriate in an age of reason. Unfortunately it required Hume to attack religion as a basis of morality, which of course was to strike at the very heart of established beliefs and established conventions. "In later times," he wrote,

philosophy of all kinds, especially ethics, have been more closely united with theology than ever they were observed to be among the heathens; and as this latter science admits of no terms of composition, but bends every branch of knowledge to its own purpose, without much regard to the phenomena of nature, or to the

unbiased sentiments of the mind, hence reasoning, and even language, have been warped from their natural course, and distinctions have been endeavoured to be established where the difference of the objects was, in a manner, imperceptible. Philosophers, or rather divines under that disguise, treating of all morals on a like footing with civil laws, guarded by the sanctions of reward and punishment, were necessarily led to render this circumstance, of *voluntary* or *involuntary*, the foundation of their whole theory. Every one may employ *terms* in what sense he pleases: but this, in the mean time, must be allowed, that *sentiments* are every day experienced of blame and praise, which have objects beyond the dominion of the will or choice, and of which it behoves us, if not as moralists, as speculative philosophers at least, to give some satisfactory theory and explication.<sup>49</sup>

Hume argues that our sense of vice and virtue (blame and praise) is derived from the passions. *Public* morality evolves out of the interaction of different individuals' passions, as regulated by our natural sympathy for others, by our judgment, and by reason, "the slave of the passions". Justice, duty, honour - these are merely *social* conventions: remove man from society, and they become irrelevant and useless. They are neither God-given values, nor matters of choice or volition. Hume takes public virtue, then, at least partly out of our own hands, and completely out of God's, and shows it to be nothing but the extending and training of our private passions by means of our judgment into a system which enables us to exist as social beings. "Public utility," he says, "is the *sole* origin of justice. . ."<sup>50</sup>:

. . . the rules of equity and justice depend entirely on that particular state and condition in which men are placed, and owe their origin and existence to that utility, which results to the public from their strict and regular observance. Reverse, in any considerable circumstance, the condition of men: Produce extreme abundance or extreme necessity: Implant in the human breast perfect moderation and humanity, or perfect rapaciousness and

malice: By rendering justice totally *useless*, you thereby destroy its essence, and suspend its obligation upon mankind.<sup>51</sup>

The same applies to virtue: "It is the nature and, indeed, the definition of virtue, that it is a *quality of the mind agreeable to or approved of by every one who considers or contemplates it.*" So,

. . . as the mutual shocks, in *society*, and the oppositions of interest and self-love have constrained mankind to establish the laws of *justice*, in order to preserve the advantages of mutual assistance and protection: in like manner, the eternal contrarieties, in *company*, of men's pride and self-conceit, have introduced the rules of Good Manners and Politeness, in order to facilitate the intercourse of minds, and an undisturbed commerce and conversation.<sup>52</sup>

Hume's introduction of so many variables (including those of private and public languages) arose out of his contention that standards of vice and virtue can and do vary according to circumstances, and that any man's definition of these will also be governed by his relation to society. Here lay the great difficulty with Hume for many of his contemporaries. For if justice, and hence duty, honour and like concepts, could become irrelevant and useless, then there could be no eternal truths, no permanence in our idea of virtue. The most famous attack on Hume, James Beattie's *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* of 1771, aimed to demolish this particular aspect of scepticism: "in a subject of this kind," wrote Beattie, "there is great danger of our being imposed upon by words; we cannot therefore be too much upon our guard against that species of illusion."<sup>53</sup>

Hume was, in fact, redefining the principles determining human behaviour, and was very far from describing a collapse in morality. On the contrary, he went on to explain how in real life the mechanisms of human social behaviour worked in such a way that the rules of morality developed a compelling and regular hold upon our actions. Beattie, however, did not see this: he happily avowed his prejudices to be all in favour of truth and virtue: anybody who believed that truth and virtue were the "foundation of human happiness, and that on them depends the very existence of human society," must share those prejudices and therefore automatically side with him against Hume's pernicious scepticism.<sup>54</sup> It was Beattie's opinion that Hume had been granted more indulgence than his harmful ideas deserved: "Let me be treated with the lenity due to a good citizen," he declared, "no longer than I act as becomes one."<sup>55</sup>

Humean philosophy, not because of its optimistic conclusions but because of its emphasis on relativity in human behaviour, rocked the very possibility of a set of permanent patriotic principles, on which the community or nation of "good citizens" might build or maintain its identity and values. It is hardly surprising, then, that Ossian, or the idea of a militia, should have appealed to the Moderate literati. They saw them as means to the preservation of a public spirit in a commercial world which seemed likely to produce what Duncan Forbes has called "a second-rate sort of society full of second-rate citizens pursuing comparatively worthless objects."<sup>56</sup> Hume had brilliantly commandeered the terms of the debate about how national or communal shared beliefs, perceptions and standards arise

and develop. For him, it was largely a matter of adaptability, as man's social skills formed the moral behaviour that fitted his society. He had an optimistic view of human nature, of course - it was necessary to his philosophy - but this kind of conservative radicalism gave no guarantees that existing moral values would survive, which was unsettling to men who believed in the continued progress and improvement of their own society.

Hume thus seemed to many of his readers perverse in, as it were, desanctifying the values of the civilisation of which he was so eminent a representative: Beattie wondered,

. . . why is this author's character so replete with inconsistency! why should his principles and his talents extort at once our esteem and detestation, our applause and contempt! That he, whose manners in private life are said to be so agreeable to many of his acquaintance, should yet in the public capacity of an author, have given so much cause of just offence to all the friends of virtue and mankind, is to me, matter of astonishment and sorrow, as well as of indignation.

Hume, said Beattie, had "subverted principles which ought ever to be held sacred".<sup>57</sup> Dr Johnson brusquely voiced a sentiment widely held when he declared to Boswell, "Sir, Hume is a Tory by chance, as being a Scotchman; but not upon a principle of duty; for he has no principle. If he is any thing, he is a Hobbist."<sup>58</sup> And Scott, writing in 1827, made a similar objection, though on less partisan grounds:

The celebrated David Hume, the philosopher and historian, was certainly the most distinguished person in the cycle. That he was most unhappy in permitting the acuteness of his talents, and the pride arising from the consciousness of possessing them, to



involve him in a maze of sceptical illusions, is most undeniable; as well as that he was highly culpable in giving to the world the miserable results of his leisure.<sup>59</sup>

But though the unprincipled empiricism of Hume's analysis - or, rather, in which empiricism was the *only* principle - was unpalatable to some, there was a general, often grudging, admission of the cogency of his arguments which perhaps disguised a nagging idea that he was in many respects correct. Thus refutations or qualifications of Hume very often appear in terms of appeals to Truth, or to Common Sense, to the knowledge of the heart or of a Hutchesonian God-given moral sense: Beattie, again, stated, "Truth, like virtue, to be loved, needs only to be seen"<sup>60</sup>, and he accused Hume of linguistic trickery and ambiguity much as Hume had accused theologians of warping language and reasoning. Such arguments relied often as much on rhetoric as on reasoned evidence - but here we are entering upon a certain confusion: the calm, studied rationality of Hume's elevation of the passions contrasts strangely with the impassioned defence of traditional values of some of his opponents. When Sir Joshua Reynolds painted James Beattie in 1773, he romanticised the subject completely, entitling the painting "The Triumph of Truth" and showing the righteous hero Beattie presiding over the defeat of the shadowy sceptics Hume and Voltaire.

This tension between passion and reason as influences upon thought and behaviour characterises in many ways both the Enlightenment and the Romantic reaction to it. As we shall see, it is central to Walter Scott's language, as well as to his interpretation of

historical crises and the relationship of past to present. It is entirely fitting, in fact, that Scott should have used thought and language so typical of the Eighteenth-century Enlightenment to describe events and situations which would become the very models of the Nineteenth-century Romantic imagination. A useful way of linking Scott to the ideas about community and society of the Enlightenment is through the work of another Enlightenment figure, Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), who articulated better than anyone else the doubts of his generation about the future of society. As we have noted, Ferguson was a prominent champion both of a Scottish militia and of Ossian; and indeed so concerned was he to show that society's well-being depended on individuals' awareness of a community spirit with which they could readily identify, that his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* has been described as "an exercise in sublimated militia propaganda", emphasising "the need for public virtue and martial spirit and the dangers of the division of labor and excessive luxury".<sup>61</sup> Through Ferguson's *Essay* we can see the debt Scott owed to Enlightenment social thought and to philosophical history - a connection illustrated at a personal level by Scott's friendship with the Ferguson family.

Ferguson agreed with Hume that it was in society, and not in isolation, that man found the fullest expression of his nature, but he differed as to what that expression was or ought to be:

Mere acquaintance and habitude nourish affection, and the experience of society brings every passion of the human mind upon its side. Its triumphs and prosperities, its calamities and distresses, bring a variety and a force of emotion, which can only have place in the company of our fellow-creatures. It is here

that a man is made to forget his weakness, his cares of safety, and his subsistence; and to act from those passions which make him discover his force. . . .

That condition is surely favourable to the nature of any being, in which his force is increased; and if courage be the gift of society to man, we have reason to consider his union with his species as the noblest part of his fortune. From this source are derived, not only the force, but the very existence of his happiest emotions; not only the better part, but almost the whole of his rational character. Send him to the desert alone, he is a plant torn from its roots: the form indeed may remain, but every faculty droops and withers; the human personage and the human character cease to exist.<sup>62</sup>

But Ferguson was here praising the benefits of society in its most simple forms. He went on to develop a critique quite different from Hume's of the effects of more sophisticated commercial society upon men. He described how the expansion of commerce radically altered the individual's relationship to the community, indeed altered whole concepts of heroism, duty, honour, patriotism and kindred values. The division of labour and the self-interest of modern society caused alienation from that society, and reduced a person's obligations to it:

Men are so far from valuing society on account of its mere external conveniencies, that they are commonly most attached where those conveniencies are least frequent; and are there most faithful, where the tribute of their allegiance is paid in blood. Affection operates with the greatest force, where it meets with the greatest difficulties: In the breast of a parent, it is most solicitous amidst the dangers and distresses of the child: In the breast of a man, its flame redoubles where the wrongs or sufferings of his friend, or his country, require his aid. It is, in short, from this principle alone that we can account for the obstinate attachment of a savage to his unsettled and defenceless tribe, when temptations on the side of ease and safety might induce him to fly from famine and danger, to a station more affluent, and more secure. Hence the sanguine affection which every Greek bore to his country, and hence the devoted patriotism of an early Roman. Let those examples be compared with the spirit which reigns in a commercial state, where men may be supposed to

have experienced, in its full extent, the interest which individuals have in the preservation of their country. It is here indeed, if ever, that man is sometimes found a detached and solitary being: he has found an object which sets him in competition with his fellow-creatures, and he deals with them as he does with his cattle and his soil, for the sake of the profits they bring. The mighty engine which we suppose to have formed society, only tends to set its members at variance, or to continue their intercourse after the bands of affection are broken.<sup>63</sup>

Or again, on the relationship between virtue and the growth of society, Ferguson has this to say:

The wealth, the aggrandizement and power of nations, are commonly the effects of virtue; the loss of these advantages, is often a consequence of vice.

. . . The virtues of men have shone most during their struggles, not after the attainment of their ends. Those ends themselves, though attained by virtue, are frequently the causes of corruption and vice. Mankind, in aspiring to national felicity, have substituted arts which increase their riches, instead of those which improve their nature. They have entertained admiration of themselves, under the titles of *civilized* and of *polished*, where they should have been affected with shame; and even where they have for a while acted on maxims tending to raise, to invigorate, and to preserve the national character, they have, sooner or later, been diverted from their object, and fallen a prey to misfortune, or to the neglects which prosperity itself had encouraged.<sup>64</sup>

Corruption, according to Ferguson, is thus incidental to the civilising process, with consequent "remissness to the national spirit. The period is come, when, no engagement remaining on the part of the public, private interest, and animal pleasure, become the sovereign objects of care."<sup>65</sup> These assertions are based on empirical observation, like Hume's, but they are inspired by a quite different motivation: apprehension about the direction of society, rather than an easy, sceptical inquisitiveness into its constitution;

concern for the negative effects of modern social relationships, as opposed to a complacent reliance on society's ability to adapt its mechanisms to cope with changing circumstances.

At the heart of this sort of response to the perceived threats of Humean morality was an appeal to what were seen as traditional, historically validated values which, as we have seen, were derived from what were in some instances long-established precedents in Scottish political and social thought. The appeal of Ossian, the attraction of a militia of virtuous warrior-citizens, stemmed from the realisation that modern progress carried some awkward implications, not from any conviction that the general features of commercial civil society represented a deterioration from the violent and unstable past. And yet in that past might be found values and virtues worthy of translating into the present, and useful in giving society a sense of communal identity it might otherwise lack. Scottish patriotism, being in a strictly political sense now "of the past", was easily invoked in this cause. It could both bolster and, where necessary, temper the developing British imperialist ethos. The success of the Highland regiments during the Seven Years War was a perfect example of the ability of the British state to give new meaning and direction to a form of Scottish heroic virtue which had previously become both dangerous and useless.

A heroic, pre-modern Scottish spirit, then, was a means of entry to a new identity, preserving an honourable but now unattached kind of patriotism and placing it so that it complemented and reinforced the British ethos. But it was also a fallback, a safety-mechanism,

which could be operated whenever it looked as though the modern British identity might be faltering or becoming overbearingly anglicised. Thus in the course of the Eighteenth Century the Scots learned how to exist with their two patriotic identities more or less compatible with one another. Already a number of literary works had been produced which reflected this relationship. But as yet nobody had attempted a complete literary expression of the historical imagination which informed it.

## Chapter Three

### THE NATION AND THE BARD

"Each blank in faithless memory void,  
The poet's glowing thought supplied;  
And, while his harp responsive rung,  
'Twas thus the LATEST MINSTREL sung."

The competing and complementary claims of Scottish and British patriotisms discussed in the last chapter were so central to the intellectual and artistic life of late Eighteenth-century Scotland that it is no surprise to find them emerging in the early work of Walter Scott, in his collections of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-03) and in the first of his epic poems, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, published in 1805. While it would in any case be a fair assumption that Scott was familiar with the ideas of the preceding generation, there is in fact specific evidence in his own writing that these ideas formed a cultural and intellectual milieu in which he was entirely and comfortably at home.

In *Guy Mannering*, the lawyer Mr Pleydell gives Colonel Mannering, returned from India, some notes of introduction while he is in Edinburgh, "addressed to some of the first literary characters of

Scotland." The list is made up of those names which Scott evidently felt to have represented the spirit of the age: David Hume, John Home, Adam Ferguson, Joseph Black, Lord Kaimes, James Hutton, John Clerk of Eldin, Adam Smith and William Robertson. Mannering's reaction, and Scott's commentary, reinforce this view:

"Upon my word, my legal friend has a good selection of acquaintances; these are names pretty widely blown indeed. An East-Indian must rub up his faculties a little, and put his mind in order, before he enters this sort of society."

Mannering gladly availed himself of these introductions; and we regret deeply it is not in our power to give the reader an account of the pleasure and information which he received in admission to a circle never closed against strangers of sense and information, and which has perhaps at no period been equalled, considering the depth and variety of talent which it embraced and concentrated.<sup>2</sup>

Outwith his fiction, Scott repeated his roll-call of the famous. In 1819 he recalled in a letter to Lockhart that, "at an age not much younger than yours I knew Black, Ferguson, Robertson, Erskine, Adam Smith, John Home, etc., etc., and at least saw Burns . . ."<sup>3</sup>. Then, writing in 1821 on Henry Mackenzie (to whom he had dedicated *Waverley* seven years earlier) he described him as "the last link of the chain which connects the Scottish literature of the present age with the period when there were giants in the land - the days of Robertson, and Hume, and Smith, and Home, and Clerk, and Ferguson".<sup>4</sup> The repetition of these names suggests that at the very least Scott felt an obligation to them as well as a certain pride in having brushed shoulders with them. But elsewhere he makes a more detailed assessment - in his review of the *Works* of John Home (with an Introduction by Henry Mackenzie) in *The Quarterly Review* of June



1827. His remarks as to David Hume's misplaced genius have already been quoted.\* Although, as we have noted, some of the implications of Hume's arguments disturbed Scott, he saw him nevertheless as belonging to the same "school" as Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart, as though Hume had laid the groundwork for an acceptable social philosophy (before going off the rails as "the great Pyrrhonist"<sup>5</sup>) which had been tidied up by his successors. There is little doubt that Scott considered Hume's finest work to be his *History of England*, not his philosophical wandering in a "maze of illusions". It is also worth noting, however, the tone in which Scott describes these men, collectively the epitome of a civilised modern age: as "giants in the North", almost as ancient heroes of "their narrow, poor, and rugged native country". He adopts a language to characterise them as Scots which by 1827 had become an almost mandatory part of his writing style, a fact which imparts some irony to his criticism of Home's play "The Fatal Discovery" as a play "written in the false gallop of Ossianic composition, to which we must avow ourselves by no means partial."<sup>6</sup> This apart, however, Scott writes as one familiar and at ease with the intellectual legacy he describes:

There were men of literature in Edinburgh before she was renowned for romances, reviews and magazines -

"Vixerunt fortes ante Agamemnona;"

and a single glance at the authors and men of science who dignified the last generation, will serve to show that, in those days, there were giants in the North. The names of Hume, Robertson, Fergusson [sic], stand high in the list of British

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\*See above, pages 60-61.

historians. Adam Smith was the father of the economical system in Britain, and his standard work will long continue the text-book of that science. Dr Black, as a chemist, opened that path of discovery which has since been prosecuted with such splendid success. Of metaphysicians, Scotland boasted, perhaps, but too many: to Hume and Fergusson we must add Reid, and, though younger, yet of the same school, Mr Dugald Stewart. In natural philosophy, Scotland could present Professor Robeson [sic], James Watt whose inventions have led the way to the triumph of human skill over the elements, and Clerk of Eldin, who taught the British seaman the road to assured conquest. Others we could mention; but these form a phalanx, whose reputation was neither confined to their narrow, poor, and rugged native country, nor to England and the British dominions, but known and respected wherever learning, philosophy, and science were honoured.<sup>7</sup>

Later, Scott returns to this topic (after a discussion of John Home's achievements which includes an important paragraph on his position in 1745\*) in a summary which emphasises the personal links between Scott's generation and the Enlightenment proper:

He [Home] died the 5th September, 1808, in the 86th year of his age. It was impossible to lament the extinction of the wasted taper, yet there was a general feeling that Home's death closed an era in the literary history of Scotland, and dissolved a link which, though worn and frail, seemed to connect the present generation with that of their fathers.

We have promised to take . . . some notice of the literary society of Scotland at the time when Home was so important a member of it, and which has been so interestingly treated by Mr Mackenzie, who, in his own connection with the preceding age, must be perhaps addressed as *Ultime Scotorum*.<sup>8</sup>

Again, the notion of Scotland as a nation of the past invades these sentences, and it is emphasised at the conclusion of the review with a remark which almost seems to belittle - or to mythologise - all

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\*Quoted below, at head of Chapter Six.

that Scott has already said in praise of Home and his fellow-giants:

It is time to conclude this old-fashioned Scottish gossip, which after all, in a literary journal of the present day, sounds as a pibroch might do in the Hanover Square concert-rooms.<sup>29</sup>

The Edinburgh intelligentsia of the second half of the Eighteenth Century had striven to build a culture appropriate to modern commercial society, and clearly had established the foundations of what would be Scott's own understanding of history and society. He describes nevertheless - admittedly towards the end of his life - not only this age as past and separate from his own, but also its last survivor as "Ultime Scotorum", and he praises its principal figures in terms more suited to ancient heroic than to modern intellectual achievements. That he should adopt this tone, even for such a recent period, is characteristic of an attitude to Scotland which will become clear in the course of this study. It makes an early appearance in the publication of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, informing the motivation and intentions of Scott as editor, and complicating what might seem on the surface to be a simple reaction against the consuming forces of modern society.

"In the text and notes of this early collection," wrote Lockhart in 1833, "we can now trace the primary incident, or broad outline of almost every romance, whether in verse or in prose, which Sir Walter built in after life on the history or traditions of his country."<sup>30</sup> In this sense the *Minstrelsy* was a writing apprenticeship for Scott, but it also served a more general purpose in the way that earlier

literary exercises, including James Macpherson's and Allan Ramsay's, had done - namely it was an assertion of Scottish patriotism in response to the perceived erosion of Scottish culture emanating from England. Thus Scott hoped to

contribute somewhat to the history of my native country; the peculiar features of whose manners and character are daily melting and dissolving into those of her sister and ally. And, trivial as may appear such an offering to the manes of a kingdom, once proud and independent, I hang it upon her altar with a mixture of feelings which I shall not attempt to describe.''

How Scott envisaged the sum of those feelings may be seen in the phrase, a "patriotic zeal for the honour of the Scottish Borders"<sup>12</sup>, which he applied to his friend John Leyden's enthusiasm in collecting ballads for the *Minstrelsy*; but why there was such a "mixture of feelings" which he would not or could not describe, is another matter relating to the relationship between Scott's ideas of Scottish and British patriotism.

In his Introduction to the *Poetical Works*, Lockhart quotes the comments of William Motherwell, editor of another collection of balladry published in 1827. For Motherwell, Scott's editorial work had evidently acquired - and would acquire still more - the characteristics of a patriotic *ideology*. Lockhart, in quoting Motherwell, was of the same opinion. Scott was seen by them to have fulfilled a patriotic duty, the true appreciation of which lay in the fact that his subject belonged to a bygone age, as though Scotland were best understood as a memory or myth:

Fortunate it was for the heroic and legendary song of Scotland that the work was undertaken, and still more fortunate that its execution devolved upon one so well qualified in every respect to do its subject the most ample justice. Long will it live, a noble and interesting monument of his unwearied research, curious and minute learning, genius, and taste. It is truly a patriot's legacy to posterity; and as much as it may now be esteemed, it is only in times yet gathering in the bosom of futurity, when the interesting traditions, the chivalrous and romantic legends, the wild superstitions, the tragic songs of Scotland, have wholly failed from living memory, that this gift can be duly appreciated. It is then that these volumes will be conned with feelings akin to religious enthusiasm, that their strange and mystic lore will be treasured up in the heart as the precious record of days for ever passed away - that their grand stern legends will be listened to with reverential awe, as if the voice of a remote ancestor from the depths of the tomb, had woke the thrilling strains of martial antiquity. <sup>13</sup>

By 1830, when he wrote the "Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry" which prefaced the first volume of the collected *Poetical Works* of that year, Scott himself was putting an overtly patriotic interpretation on the work he had undertaken as an editor and poet. This essay concentrates on explaining the development of national poetry, first in general speculative terms, then with specific relevance to Scotland. It is followed by the original 1802 Introduction to the *Minstrelsy*, which sketches several centuries of the history of the Scottish Borders. These two pieces, in fact, complement each other as a model of the philosophical history developed by the historians of the Enlightenment. Indeed, Scott spells out the direct relationship between this kind of history and the art of poetry itself in the course of the 1830 essay:

. . .the investigation of the early poetry of every nation, even the rudest, carries with it an object of curiosity and interest. It is a chapter in the history of the childhood of society, and its resemblance to, or dissimilarity from, the popular rhymes of other nations in the same stage, must needs illustrate the ancient

history of states; their slower or swifter progress towards civilisation; their gradual or more rapid adoption of manners, sentiments, and religion. The study, therefore, of lays rescued from the gulf of oblivion, must in every case possess considerable interest for the moral philosopher and general historian.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, Scott makes allusions in this essay which give a strong indication of his perception of his own relationship to such a national poetic tradition, and so it is worth outlining its main themes:

It would be throwing away words to prove [he writes] what all must admit, the general taste and propensity of nations in their early state, to cultivate some species of rude poetry. When the organs and faculties of a primitive race have developed themselves, each for its proper and necessary use, there is a natural tendency to employ them in a more refined and regulated manner for purposes of amusement. The savage, after proving the activity of his limbs in the chase or the battle, trains them to more measured movements, to dance at the festivals of his tribe, or to perform obeisance before the altars of his deity. From the same impulse, he is disposed to refine the ordinary speech which forms the vehicle of social communication betwixt him and his brethren, until, by a more ornate diction, modulated by certain rules of rhythm, cadence, assonance or termination, or recurrence of sound or letter, he obtains a dialect more solemn in expression, to record the laws or exploits of his tribe, or more sweet in sound, in which to plead his own cause to his mistress.<sup>15</sup>

From here, Scott soon moves to considering the development of poetry-making as a distinct profession, and it is here that a certain amount of self-allusion becomes apparent.

It is indeed easily discovered, that the qualifications necessary for composing such poems are not the portion of every man in the tribe; that the bard, to reach excellence in his art, must possess something more than a full command of words and phrases, and the knack of arranging them in such form as ancient examples have fixed upon as the recognised structure of national verse. The tribe speedily become sensible, that besides this degree of mechanical facility, which (like making what are called

at school nonsense verses) may be attained by dint of memory and practice, much higher qualifications are demanded. A keen and active power of observation, capable of perceiving at a glance the leading circumstances from which the incident described derives its character; quick and powerful feelings, to enable the bard to comprehend and delineate those of the actors in his piece; and a command of language, alternately soft and elevated, and suited to express the conceptions which he had formed in his mind, are all necessary to eminence in the poetical art.<sup>16</sup>

The aside concerning school nonsense verses links these basic requisites of the bardic profession to Scott's own youth in which, as recalled in the *Ashiestiel* memoir of 1808, he saw the early beginnings of his own development as a poet. Aged between seven and ten, we learn, he had established his role in the seasonal occupations of the High School tribe: "in the winter play hours, when hard exercise was impossible, my tales used to assemble an admiring audience round Lucky Brown's fire-side, and happy was he who could sit next to the inexhaustible narrator."<sup>17</sup> A few years later, we find, he had possession of the "mechanical facility" upon which finer poetic qualities could be imposed, and again a direct connection with the broader concerns of History is made:

My memory . . . seldom failed to preserve most tenaciously a favourite passage of poetry, a play-house ditty, or, above all, a Border-raid ballad; but names, dates, and the other technicalities of history, escaped me in a most melancholy degree. The philosophy of history, a much more important subject, was also a sealed book at this period of my life; but I gradually assembled much of what was striking and picturesque in historical narrative; and when, in riper years, I attended more to the deduction of general principles, I was furnished with a powerful host of examples in illustration of them. I was, in short, like an ignorant gamester, who kept up a good hand until he knew how to play it.<sup>18</sup>

The parallel maturations of the tribal bard and the bardic Scott continue towards their respective peaks of achievement. "Above all," he states in the "Introductory Remarks",

to attain the highest point of his profession, the poet must have that original power of embodying and detailing circumstances, which can place before the eyes of others a scene which only exists in his own imagination. This last high and creative faculty, namely, that of impressing the mind of the hearers with scenes and sentiments having no existence save through their art, has procured for the bards of Greece the term of *Ποιητής*, which, as it singularly happens, is literally translated by the Scottish epithet for the same class of persons, whom they termed the *Makers*. The French phrase of *Trouveurs*, or *Troubadours*, namely, the *Finders*, or *Inventors*, has the same reference to the quality of original invention proper to the poetical art, and without which it can hardly be said to exist to any pleasing or useful purpose. <sup>19</sup>

In the Ashestiel autobiography, by comparison, we find that by his late teens Scott had that very "original power", and specifically as a bard or raconteur of historical tradition, not as, say, a painter, for he could not master that art:

. . . the wandering over the field of Bannockburn was the source of more exquisite pleasure than gazing upon the celebrated landscape from the walls of Stirling castle. I do not by any means infer that I was dead to the feeling of picturesque scenery; on the contrary, few delighted more in its general effect. But I was unable with the eye of a painter to dissect the various parts of the scene, to comprehend how the one bore upon the other, to estimate the effect which various features of the view had in producing its leading and general effect. . . . But shew me an old castle or a field of battle, and I was at home at once, filled it with its combatants in their proper costume, and overwhelmed my hearers by the enthusiasm of my description. In crossing Magus Moor, near St Andrews, the spirit moved me to give a picture of the assassination of the Archbishop of St Andrews to some fellow-travellers with whom I was accidentally associated, and one of them, though well acquainted with the story, protested my narrative had frightened away his night's sleep. I mention this to shew the distinction between a sense of the picturesque in action and in scenery. If I have since been able in poetry to



trace with some success the principles of the latter, it has always been with reference to its general and leading features, or under some alliance with moral feeling; and even this proficiency has cost me study.<sup>20</sup>

Scott's preference for and higher valuation of the historical act over the landscape is important, for he wished to emphasise the intimate relationship between a nation's history and its poetry, and, by extension, between the nation and its bard.\* This, again, he does both through generalisation and with particular reference to Scotland, as the following two passages demonstrate:

Here, therefore, we have the history of early poetry in all nations. But it is evident that, though poetry seems a plant proper to almost all soils, yet not only is it of various kinds, according to the climate and country in which it has its origin, but the poetry of different nations differs still more widely in the degree of excellence which it attains. This must depend in some measure, no doubt, on the temper and manners of the people, or their proximity to those spirit-stirring events which are naturally selected as the subject of poetry, and on the more comprehensive or energetic character of the language spoken by the tribe. But the progress of the art is far more dependent upon the rise of some highly-gifted individual, possessing in a preeminent and uncommon degree the powers demanded, whose talents influence the taste of a whole nation, and entail on their posterity and language a character almost indelibly sacred. In this respect Homer stands alone and unrivalled, as a light from whose lamp the genius of successive ages, and of distant nations, has caught fire and illumination; and who, though the early poet of a rude age, has purchased for the era he has celebrated, so much reverence, that, not daring to bestow on it the term of barbarous, we distinguish it as the heroic period.<sup>21</sup>

And:

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\* But he could utilise picturesque scenery - for example in the waterfall scene in Chapter XXII of *Waverley* - to lend weight to his historical or moral theme.

We may now turn our eyes to Scotland, where the facility of the dialect, which cuts off consonants in the termination of the words, so as greatly to simplify the task of rhyming, and the habits, dispositions, and manners of the people, were of old so favourable to the composition of ballad-poetry, that, had the Scottish songs been preserved, there is no doubt a very curious history might have been composed by means of minstrelsy only, from the reign of Alexander III in 1285, down to the close of the Civil Wars in 1745. That materials for such a collection existed, cannot be disputed, since the Scottish historians often refer to old ballads as authorities for general tradition. But their regular preservation was not to be hoped for or expected. Successive garlands of song sprung, flourished, faded, and were forgotten, in their turn; and the names of a few specimens are only preserved, to show us how abundant the display of these wild flowers had been.<sup>22</sup>

The relationship between nation and bard posed a problem for Scott if he were successfully to fulfil that role (and, as we shall see, as early as *The Lay of the Minstrelsy* he had this in mind): the kind of events which inflamed his imagination had not occurred in Scotland for nearly sixty years, and indeed he would have had to look to Europe and the exploits of *British* armies for a contemporary inspiration of patriotic poetry. But heroic patriotic sentiment, for many decades, had been associated by Scottish writers with Scottish, rather than British characteristics, and the imaginative leap that Scott would have had to make would have unbalanced the delicate relationship between the two that had been built up in the cultural milieu of Enlightenment Scotland.\* It was far more appropriate to construct a patriotic literature around events with which he was imaginatively much more familiar; furthermore, given that they were firmly in the past and could be, in terms of political and national

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\* An interesting attempt to make that leap does occur, however, in the poem "The Dance of Death" of 1815, for which see below, pp. 105-6.

interest, distinguished from the British present, such events from Scottish history could be given a full patriotic interpretation by a bard without prejudicing his commitments to modernity.

The great vehicle for transposing these bardic sentiments from the age to which they belonged to the one in which Scott existed was the printed word. Indeed, the other main theme of the "Introductory Remarks" is a discussion of various printed collections of ballads and songs, and of the effects on the oral tradition of "modernising, degrading and vulgarising"<sup>23</sup> through the centuries. In the *Tales of a Grandfather*, (in the chapter on the progress of civilisation) Scott emphasised the crucial importance of printing thus:

In a word, the printing-press is a contrivance which empowers any one individual to address his whole fellow-subjects on any topic which he thinks important, and which enables a whole nation to listen to the voice of such individual, however obscure he may be, with the same ease, and greater certainty of understanding what he says, than if a chief of Indians were haranguing the tribe at his council-fire. Nor is the important difference to be forgotten, that the orator can speak only to the persons present, while the author of a book addresses himself, not only to the race now in existence, but to all succeeding generations, while his work shall be held in estimation.<sup>24</sup>

Scott's aim with the *Minstrelsy* was, as we have seen by his own admission and by the applause of others, to preserve the poetic relics of his nation: as such, it was inspired by a patriotic motive. But this preservation was also an acknowledgement that such patriotism had only an indirect relevance to events in the present:

Like the natural free gifts of Flora, these poetical garlands can only be successfully sought for where the land is uncultivated; and civilisation and increase of learning are sure

to banish them, as the plough of the agriculturist bears down the mountain daisy.<sup>25</sup>

In this context the accusation levelled at Scott by James Hogg's mother has a fierce irony:

. . . there war never ane o' my sangs prentit till ye prentit them yoursel', an' ye hae spoilt them awthegither. They were made for singin' an' no for readin'; but ye hae broken the charm noo, an' they'll never [be] sung mair. An' the worst thing of a', they're nouter richt spell'd nor richt setten doun.<sup>26</sup>

The irony lies in the fact that for the old woman her songs were part of a living tradition; for the would-be bard that tradition was dying and in need of resuscitation and relocation to suit the age. They saw the same songs but with different visions. Scott's vision was informed by the uneasy combination of patriotisms which he inherited from the preceding generation of intellectuals and writers; and that division in turn would inform his own work as he set about the task of writing the nation's new Muse.

## Chapter Four

### THE POET AS PATRIOT

*"This is poetry, Lucy," said Ravenswood; "and in poetry there is always fallacy, and sometimes fiction."*<sup>1</sup>

Much as Scott had both praised the intellectual achievements of the Scottish Enlightenment, in his review of Home's *Works*, and yet appeared to imbue it with a heroic and remote character on account of its being a Scottish phenomenon, so in the 1830-1831 Introduction to *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* Scott drew a pointedly *national* picture of the fate of the second edition of the *Minstrelsy*:

The demand in Scotland had been supplied by the first edition, and the curiosity of the English was not much awakened by poems in the rude garb of antiquity, accompanied with notes referring to the obscure feuds of barbarous clans, of whose very names civilized history was ignorant.<sup>2</sup>

Though this recollection, penned some twenty-seven years after the event, was not entirely accurate,<sup>3</sup> it indicates further the extent to which a fixed image of Scotland in its relation to England had developed in Scott's mind during the course of his life. In

addition, it illustrates a constant concern in all of Scott's work - to present Scotland to modern society, specifically to British society, in such a way as both to distinguish and to preserve his country's history, experience and characteristics. To stress in retrospect that these things held little or no interest for the English was a reassuring way of emphasising national differences, even though Scott's foremost intent was to establish an acceptable and accepted place for Scots within the context of modern Britain. The literary experience of the Eighteenth Century contained elements of this tension between self-recommendation and defensiveness, as we have seen, and it characterised Scott's motivations in writing on Scotland, whether in verse or prose, fiction or history.

For instance, in a more explicit articulation than anything in the Introduction to the *Minstrelsy*, Scott wrote in the 1829 General Preface to the *Waverley Novels* that he was impressed by the novels of Maria Edgeworth,

whose Irish characters have gone so far to make the English familiar with the character of their gay and kind-hearted neighbours of Ireland, that she may be truly said to have done more towards completing the Union than perhaps all the legislative enactments by which it has been followed up.

He felt that

something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland - something which might introduce her natives to those of the sister kingdom in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles.<sup>4</sup>

Such was also at least part of his intention in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which was published in January, 1805.

Lockhart's description of the origins of this seminal work is not irrelevant to the foregoing discussion, and his remarks on the poet's relationship to its material and to past and present are positively illuminating:

The lovely Countess of Dalkeith hears a wild rude legend of Border *diablerie*, and sportively asks him to make it the subject of a ballad. . . . A single scene of feudal festivity in the hall of Branksome, disturbed by some pranks of a nondescript goblin, was probably all that he contemplated; but his accidental confinement in the midst of a volunteer camp gave him leisure to meditate his theme to the sound of the bugle; - and suddenly there flashes on him the idea of extending his simple outline, so as to embrace a vivid panorama of that old Border life of war and tumult, and all earnest passions, with which his researches on the "Minstrelsy" had by degrees fed his imagination, until even the minutest feature had been taken home and realized with unconscious intenseness of sympathy; so that he had won for himself in the past, another world, hardly less complete or familiar than the present. . . . By such steps did the Lay of the Last Minstrel grow out of the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border. . . .

. . . in truth, what is it that gives to all his works their unique and marking charm, except the matchless effect which sudden effusions of the purest heart-blood of nature derive from their being poured out, to all appearance involuntarily, amidst diction and sentiment cast equally in the mould of the busy world, and the seemingly habitual desire to dwell on nothing but what might be likely to excite curiosity, without too much disturbing the deeper feelings, in the saloons of polished life? Such outbursts come forth dramatically in all his writings; but in the interludes and passionate parentheses of the Lay of the Last Minstrel we have the poet's inner soul and temperament laid bare and throbbing before us. <sup>5</sup>

In the Preface, Scott makes it clear that he is aware that the language, themes and contexts of time and place in the poem are

intricately bound up - that, to recall that phrase of J.T. Hillhouse's, "there is no real separation between questions of style, philosophy and history." "The Poem, now offered to the Public," he writes,

is intended to illustrate the customs and manners which anciently prevailed on the Borders of England and Scotland. The inhabitants, living in a state partly pastoral and partly warlike, and combining habits of constant depredation with the influence of a rude spirit of chivalry, were often engaged in scenes highly susceptible of poetical ornament. As the description of scenery and manners was more the object of the Author than a combined and regular narrative, the plan of the Ancient Metrical Romance was adopted, which allows greater latitude, in this respect, than would be consistent with the dignity of a regular Poem. The same model offered other facilities, as it permits an occasional alteration of measure, which, in some degree, authorizes the change of rhythm in the text. The machinery also, adopted from popular belief, would have seemed puerile in a Poem which did not partake of the rudeness of the old Ballad, or Metrical Romance.

For these reasons the Poem was put into the mouth of an ancient Minstrel, the last of the race, who, as he is supposed to have survived the Revolution, might have caught somewhat of the refinement of modern poetry, without losing the simplicity of his original model.<sup>6</sup>

So the audience of 1805 is to have it both ways - a romance from the heroic past tuned, like Ossian before it, to the sensitivities of the present. Reviewers of the time picked up on this aspect of the poem, Francis Jeffrey's remarks being among the most perceptive:

We consider this poem as an attempt to transfer the refinements of modern poetry to the matter and the manner of the ancient metrical romance. The author, enamoured of the lofty visions of chivalry, and partial to the strains in which they were formerly embodied, seems to have employed all the resources of his genius in endeavouring to recall them to the favour and admiration of the public, and in adapting to the taste of modern readers, a species of poetry which was once the delight of the courtly, but has long ceased to gladden any other eyes than those of the scholar and the antiquary. This is a romance, therefore, composed by a minstrel



of the present day; or such a romance as we may suppose would have been written in modern times, if that style of composition had continued to be cultivated, and partaken consequently of the improvements which every branch of literature has received since the time of its desertion.<sup>7</sup>

Jeffrey, however, was not impressed by some aspects of Scott's exercise, as he explained towards the end of his review:

. . . we really cannot so far sympathise with the local partialities of the author, as to feel any glow of patriotism or ancient virtue in hearing of the *Todrig* or *Johnston* clans, or of *Elliot*s, *Armstrong*s, and *Tinlinn*s; still less can we relish the introduction of *Black John of Athelstane*, *Whitslade the Hawk*, *Arthur-fire-the-braes*, *Red Roland Forster*, or any other of those worthies who

"Sought the beeves that made their broth,  
In Scotland and in England both,"

into a poem which has any pretensions to seriousness or dignity. The ancient metrical romance might have admitted these homely personalities; but the present age will not endure them; and Mr Scott must either sacrifice his Border prejudices, or offend all his readers in the other parts of the empire.<sup>8</sup>

But whereas Jeffrey concluded that Scott's Border partisanship would hinder his aspirations to be heard as a *national* bard, or at least in a wider context, *The British Critic* took an opposing view:

It is a very legitimate part of the skill of a poet when he is able to exalt his own family friends, at the same time that he displays his inventive and amusing powers. This Mr Scott has completely effected in the present poem; which is no less a celebration of the Scotts of Bucleugh, or Buckleuch, and among them of Sir Walter Scott, from whom, we presume, both his names are derived, than an illustration of those manners with which he made us acquainted in his delightful "*Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*;" and, at the same time, a fair victory over his old bards in their own style of composition.

And in a footnote the reviewer added: "The present poem is the best of all possible comments on the Border Minstrelsy."<sup>9</sup>

The relationship between past and present is not, however, quite so straightforward. The poem's central theme is that "patriotic zeal for the honour of the Scottish Borders"<sup>10</sup> which also belonged to the *Minstrelsy*, and this heroic Scottish patriotism complements and reinforces the modern British patriotism to which Scott refers in the 1830 Introduction,<sup>11</sup> and which so obsessed him in his activities with the volunteer cavalry (first formed in 1797 against the threat of invasion from France) during this period.\* But in the body of the poem this mutual reinforcement of patriotisms appears *not* to take place. On the contrary, just as the literati who pressed for a Militia in the 1760s had learned to use their sense of Scottish identity as an emotional yet apparently antagonistic support for their efforts to become Britons, so Scott asserts the ancient heroic values of the Scottish past through the words of his Minstrel, who has supposedly wandered from one age to another through the 1689 Revolution. Thus, at the close of the fifth Canto, when the audience in the poem poses a perfectly rational question - based on what might be considered modern "commercial" considerations - to the Minstrel,

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\* See, for example, Lord Cockburn's *Memorials of His Time*, p.195f.: "Walter Scott's zeal in the cause was very curious. He was the soul of the Edinburgh troop of Midlothian Yeomanry Cavalry. It was not a duty with him, or a necessity, or a pastime, but an absolute passion, indulgence in which gratified his feudal taste for war, and his jovial sociableness. [etc.]"

they get an impassioned and peculiarly individualistic kind of patriotic response:

The Aged Harper, howsoe'er  
His only friend, his harp, was dear,  
Liked not to hear it ranked so high  
Above his flowing poesy;  
Less liked he still, that scornful jeer  
Misprized the land he loved so dear;  
High was the sound, as thus again  
The Bard resumed his minstrel strain.<sup>12</sup>

And then follows the famous passage,

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land!<sup>13</sup>

Of this section, *The British Critic* wrote:

But the flight the most delightful to our feelings, in all this pleasing poem, is the opening of the sixth canto, where the Minstrel sings of patriotism. . . . Whether the Minstrel be supposed to utter these sentiments, or Mr Scott himself, they are highly appropriate, highly honourable, and in no small degree poetical.<sup>14</sup>

But though these lines are often quoted as being Scott's hymn of patriotism, it is not the song of a citizen for his nation, but of an individual, crying the love of the "Land of brown heath and shaggy wood, / Land of the mountain and the flood".

. . . Caledonia! stern and wild,  
Meet nurse for a poetic child!<sup>15</sup>

is not a nation but a landscape, and consequently Scott's attachment to it cannot be public-spirited and virtuous, but private and passionate. Doubly important, this Minstrel celebration is there not just because Scott is trying to express the feelings of a pre-modern heroic age: he himself *is* the Minstrel, celebrating these sentiments in the quite different context of the commercial world. The poem concludes:

Hush'd is the harp - the Minstrel gone.  
And did he wander forth alone?  
Alone, in indigence and age,  
To linger out his pilgrimage?  
No: - close beneath proud Newark's tower  
Arose the Minstrel's lowly bower . . .<sup>16</sup>

In these lines, as Lockhart observed, Scott embodied what was "the chief day-dream of Ashestiel"<sup>17</sup> (the house on the south bank of the Tweed where he was then living). As Lockhart paraphrased the last lines of the *Lay*,

There would he sing achievement high  
And circumstance of chivalry, . . .  
And Yarrow, as he rolled along,  
Bear burden to the Minstrel's song.<sup>18</sup>

Scott once claimed in a letter to Wordsworth that by writing the *Lay* he had "expelled from my brain the Fiend of Chivalry",<sup>19</sup> but this was disingenuous, at least in part; for he had also taken it upon himself to be a time-travelled Minstrel, celebrating the sentiments of old Scotland in an age without minstrels.

It is worth comparing the sentiments of the *Lay* with the quite different form of *British* patriotism expressed in *Marmion; a Tale of Flodden Field*, which appeared three years later. Here the relationship between past and present is apparent in the Introductions to the six Cantos addressed to various of Scott's friends. The first of these begins with such descriptions of picturesque scenery as might be expected from the author of the *Lay*. But Scott's despair at the ravages of Napoleon in Europe intrudes on these scenes of Scottish winter, and the season takes on a figurative aspect:

But oh! my country's wintry state  
What second spring shall renovate?  
What powerful call shall bid arise  
The buried warlike and the wise; \*  
The mind that thought for Britain's weal,  
The hand that grasp'd the victor steel?  
The vernal sun new life bestows  
Even on the meanest flower that blows;  
But vainly, vainly may he shine,  
Where glory weeps o'er NELSON'S shrine;  
And vainly pierce the solemn gloom,  
That shrouds, O PITT, thy hallow'd tomb!<sup>20</sup>

His "country" here is not Scotland, but has become Britain, and the poet calls upon the spirits of Pitt, Nelson and, less eulogistically, Fox, as inspirations for the living:

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\* The original manuscript's lines here bear comparison:

"What call awakens from the dead  
The hero's heart, the patriot's head?"<sup>21</sup>

Deep graved in every British heart,  
O never let those names depart!<sup>22</sup>

Pitt is described as a selfless man of public virtue, who

Spurn'd at the sordid lust of pelf,  
And served his Albion for herself . . .<sup>23</sup>

And Fox, for at last standing firm against France, gets his place in  
Scott's gallery of British honour: at his tomb,

. . . where the end of earthly things  
Lays heroes, patriots, bards, and kings

Scott asks that here,

If ever from an English heart,  
O, *here* let prejudice depart,  
And, partial feeling cast aside,  
Record that Pitt a Briton died!<sup>24</sup>

British patriotism seems a different creature altogether from  
Scottish, and strangely inappropriate in a poetic romance set in  
Sixteenth-century Scotland, as Francis Jeffrey was keen to point out  
in his review. In the 1808 "Advertisement" prefacing the poem, Scott  
wrote that, "the present story turns upon the private adventures of a  
fictitious character; but is called a Tale of Flodden Field, because  
the hero's fate is connected with that memorable defeat, and the  
causes which led to it . . . ." <sup>25</sup>, suggesting that he was aware of  
potential difficulties in the arrangement. This was not good enough  
for Jeffrey:

. . . we must object, [he wrote] both on critical and national grounds, to the discrepancy between the title and the substance of the poem, and the neglect of Scottish feelings and Scottish character that is manifested throughout. Marmion is no more a tale of Flodden Field, than of Bosworth Field, or any other field in history. The story is quite independent of the national feuds of the sister kingdoms; and the battle of Flodden has no other connexion with it, than from being the conflict in which the hero loses his life. Flodden, however, is mentioned; and the preparations for Flodden, and the consequences of it, are repeatedly alluded to in the course of the composition. Yet we nowhere find any adequate expressions of those melancholy and patriotic sentiments which are still all over Scotland the accompaniment of those allusions and recollections. No picture is drawn of the national feelings before or after that fatal encounter; and the day that broke for ever the pride and the splendour of his country, is only commemorated by a Scottish poet as the period when an English warrior was beaten to the ground. There is scarcely one trait of true Scottish nationality or patriotism introduced into the whole poem; and Mr Scott's only expression of admiration or love for the beautiful country to which he belongs, is put, if we rightly remember, into the mouth of one of his Southern favourites. Independently of this, we feel that too little pains is taken to distinguish the Scottish character and manners from the English, or to give expression to the general feeling of rivalry and mutual jealousy which at that time existed between the two countries.<sup>26</sup>

Jeffrey's criticism, as usual, is not only penetrating, but has a way of anticipating many of the points which subsequent critics - and not just of Scott - also find of central importance. It also demonstrates that there was an alternative view of the Scottish past to be had, not only by the likes of Mrs Hogg, but among the new literati and bourgeois heirs of the Enlightenment. Years later, as we shall see, John Galt would make a full-scale attempt to offer an alternative fictional view of Scottish history to that of Scott, but by the time he wrote *Ringan Gilhaize* in 1823 the Waverley flood was all but overwhelming.

As for Scott's mixing modern politics into the poem, Jeffrey did not mince his words, attacking not only Scott's handling of patriotic sentiments but also the form of the six Epistles which precede each Canto:

The last, which is about Christmas, is the worst; though the first, containing a threnody on Nelson, Pitt and Fox, exhibits a more remarkable failure. We are unwilling to quarrel with a poet on the score of politics; but the manner in which he has chosen to praise the last of these great men, is the more likely, we conceive, to give offence to his admirers, than the most direct censure. The only deed for which he is praised, is for having broken off the negotiations for peace; and for this act of firmness, it is added, Heaven rewarded him with a share in the honoured grave of Pitt! It is then said, that his errors should be forgotten, and that he *died* a Briton - a pretty plain insinuation, that, in the author's opinion, he did not live one; and just such an encomium as he himself pronounces over the grave of his villain hero Marmion.\* There was no need, surely, to pay compliments to ministers or princesses, either in the introduction or in the body of a romance of the 16th century. Yet we have a laboured lamentation over the Duke of Brunswick, in one of the epistles; and, in the heart of the poem, a triumphant allusion to the siege of Copenhagen - the last exploit, certainly, of British valour, on which we should have expected a chivalrous poet to found his patriotic gratulations. We have no business, however, on this occasion, with the political creed of the author; and we notice these allusions to objects of temporary interest, chiefly as instances of bad taste, and additional proofs that the author does not always recollect, that a poet should address himself to more than one generation.<sup>27</sup>

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\* The relevant lines are:

" . . . He died a gallant knight,  
With sword in hand, for England's right."<sup>28</sup>



Lockhart's biography defends Scott against the slur of unScottishness, missing Jeffrey's points entirely, and supporting Scott's *passionate* approach to Scotland. In a letter to Anna Seward in 1807, Scott wrote that "at Flodden 'all was lost *but our honour*' an exception which includes everything that is desirable for a poet."<sup>29</sup> For Lockhart, Scott had

poured out all the patriotic enthusiasm of his soul in so many passages of *Marmion*, which every Scotchman to the end of time will have by heart; painted the capital, the court, the camp, the heroic old chieftains of Scotland, in colours instinct with a fervour that can never die; and dignified the most fatal of her national misfortunes by a celebration as loftily pathetic as ever blended pride with sorrow, - a battle-piece which even his critic had pronounced to be the noblest save in Homer!<sup>30</sup>

And he went on:

The feelings of political partisanship find no place in this poem; but though Mr Jeffrey chose to complain of its "manifest neglect of *Scottish* feelings," I take leave to suspect that the boldness and energy of *British* patriotism which breathes in so many passages, may have had more share than that alleged omission in pointing the pen that criticised *Marmion*. Scott had sternly and indignantly rebuked and denounced the then too prevalent spirit of anti-national despondence; he had put the trumpet to his lips, and done his part at least to sustain the hope and resolution of his countrymen in that struggle from which it was the doctrine of the *Edinburgh Review* that no sane observer of the times could anticipate anything but ruin and degradation. He must ever be considered as the "mighty minstrel" of the Antigallican war; and it was *Marmion* that first announced him in that character.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, though Jeffrey was right about Scott's mishandling of Scottish sentiments, he was wrong in thinking that Scott was writing for only one generation, and Lockhart correct in his belief that

Scott's formulation of Scottish patriotism would last a very long time indeed.

There is still further evidence in *Marmion* that Scott sought to differentiate between the subject of his writing - the Scottish past - and the British activities of the present which he so enthusiastically supported. In the Epistle to William Erskine, which precedes the third Canto, Scott responds to Erskine's plea that he should address his heroic verse to the martial deeds of "our later time". His argument is that his modest powers of composition are directed by the "secret power" of kinship, memory, and love of one's country:

But say, my Erskine, hast thou weigh'd  
That secret power by all obey'd,  
Which warps not less the passive mind,  
Its source conceal'd or undefined;  
Whether an impulse, that has birth  
Soon as the infant wakes on earth,  
One with our feelings and our powers,  
And rather part of us than ours;  
Or whether fitlier term'd the sway  
Of habit form'd in early day?  
Howe'er derived, its force confest  
Rules with despotic sway the breast,  
And drags us on by viewless chain,  
While taste and reason plead in vain.<sup>32</sup>

Given this circumstance beyond his control, in other words, Scott has little option but to associate his poetry, and therefore his image of Scotland, with wild passion, wild landscape and the wild past:

For me, thus nurtured, dost thou ask  
The classic poet's well-conn'd task?  
Nay, Erskine, nay - On the wild hill  
Let the wild heath-bell flourish still;  
Cherish the tulip, prune the vine,  
But freely let the woodbine twine,

And leave untrimm'd the eglantine:  
Nay, my friend, nay - Since oft thy praise  
Hath given fresh vigour to my lays;  
Since oft thy judgment could refine  
My flatten'd thought, or cumbrous line;  
Still kind, as is thy wont, attend,  
And in the minstrel spare the friend.  
Though wild as cloud, as stream, as gale,  
Flow forth, flow unrestrain'd, my Tale!<sup>33</sup>

Through the rest of the major poems a distinction between patriotisms - which remain, however, mutually supportive - continues, at differing levels of intensity. The potential of the Highlands and of Highlanders for enhancing a patriotic ideology suited to his increasingly valedictory view of Scotland was first realised by Scott in *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), of which he wrote in 1830:

The ancient manners, the habits and customs of the aboriginal race by whom the Highlands of Scotland were inhabited, had always appeared to me peculiarly adapted to poetry. The change in their manners, too, had taken place almost within my own time, or at least I had learned many particulars concerning the ancient state of the Highlands from the old men of the last generation. I had always thought the old Scottish Gael highly adapted for poetical composition. The feuds, and political dissensions, which, half a century earlier, would have rendered the richer and wealthier part of the kingdom indisposed to countenance a poem, the scene of which was laid in the Highlands, were now sunk in the generous compassion which the English, more than any other nation, feel for the misfortunes of an honourable foe. The Poems of Ossian had, by their popularity, sufficiently shown, that if writings on Highland subjects were qualified to interest the reader, mere national prejudices were, in the present day, very unlikely to interfere with their success.<sup>34</sup>

This was a theme to which Scott was to return often, notably in the *Magnum Opus* Introduction to *Redgauntlet* of 1832.

Scott's earlier excursions into epic verse had established him as the leading "minstrel" of the age. The implicit significance of the

opening and conclusion of *The Lady of the Lake* is that his poetic powers are now *required* to waken ancient "Caledon" - indeed, the mystic symbolism is scarcely less subtle in its evocation than the misty machinery that animates Brigadoon:

Harp of the North! that mouldering long hast hung  
On the witch-elm that shades Saint Fillan's spring,  
And down the fitful breeze thy numbers flung,  
Till envious ivy did around thee cling,  
Muffling with verdant ringlet every string, -  
O minstrel Harp, still must thine accents sleep?  
Mid rustling leaves and fountains murmuring,  
Still must thy sweeter sounds their silence keep,  
Nor bid a warrior smile, nor teach a maid to weep?

Not thus, in ancient days of Caledon,  
Was thy voice mute amid the festal crowd,  
When lay of hopeless love, or glory won,  
Aroused the fearful, or subdued the proud . . . .

O wake once more! how rude soe'er the hand  
That ventures o'er thy magic maze to stray;  
O wake once more! Though scarce my skill command  
Some feeble echoing of thine earlier lay:  
Though harsh and faint, and soon to die away,  
And all unworthy of thy nobler strain,  
Yet if one heart throb higher at its sway,  
The wizard note has not been touched in vain.  
Then silent be no more! Enchantress, wake again!<sup>35</sup>

And the close:

Harp of the North, farewell! The hills grow dark,  
On purple peaks a deeper shade descending;  
In twilight copse the glow-worm lights her spark,  
The deer, half-seen, are to the covert wending.  
Resume thy wizard elm! the fountain lending,  
And the wild breeze, thy wilder minstrelsy . . .

Hark! as my lingering footsteps slow retire,  
Some spirit of the Air has waked thy string!  
'Tis now a seraph bold, with touch of fire,  
'Tis now the brush of Fairy's frolic wing.  
Receding now, the dying numbers wring  
Fainter and fainter down the rugged dell,  
And now the mountain breezes scarcely bring

A wandering witch-note of the distant spell -  
And now, 'tis silent all! - Enchantress, fare thee well!<sup>36</sup>

Interestingly, the tone of this poem, and perhaps its avoidance of questions of politics, pleased Jeffrey more than its predecessors. His review, in effect, applauds Scott for dealing expertly with the frivolous.<sup>37</sup> But it was more the setting of the poem which had determined its tone, which fitted in with Scott's developing patriotic dualism. This was made evident with the publication of *The Vision of Don Roderick* in 1811, in which, indeed, Scott calls on the ancient heroic spirits of Scotland - and of the "Celtic fringe" generally - to inspire in him (and other "weak minstrels of a laggard day"<sup>38</sup>) a strain to match the exploits of Wellington and the British army in their support of the Portuguese and Spanish in the Peninsular War:

Ye mountains stern! within whose rugged breast  
The friends of Scottish freedom found repose;  
Ye torrents! whose hoarse sounds have soothed their rest,  
Returning from the field of vanquish'd foes;  
Say have ye lost each wild majestic close,  
That erst the choir of Bards or Druids flung;  
What time their hymns of victory arose,  
And Cattrath's glens with voice of triumph rung,  
And mystic Merlin harp'd, and grey hair'd Llywarch sung!

O! if your wilds such minstrelsy retain,  
As sure your changeful gales seem oft to say,  
When sweeping wild and sinking soft again,  
Like trumpet-jubilee, or harp's wild sway;  
If ye can echo such triumphant lay,  
Then lend the note to him has loved you long! . . .

Hark, from yon misty cairn their answer tost:  
"Minstrel! the fame of whose romantic lyre,  
Capricious-swelling now, may soon be lost,  
Like the light flickering of a cottage fire:  
If to such task presumptuous thou aspire,  
Seek not from us the meed to warrior due:  
Age after age has gather'd son to sire,

Since our grey cliffs the din of conflict knew,  
Or, pealing through our vales, victorious bugles blew."<sup>39</sup>

The "old traditional lore" of Scotland is decayed, and the poet is advised to search in Spain and Portugal for his theme. This of course he does, and the result is a cacophony of battle-sounds and images, with the red cross of the Union flag the symbol of freedom and patriotism, and the representative soldiers of England, Scotland and Ireland almost caricatures of heroes. The poem draws to a conclusion of such rampant British military chest-thumping that it makes Lockhart's contention regarding *Marmion*, that any apparent diminution of *Scottish* feelings in that poem could be put down to the energy of its *British* patriotism, seem needlessly apologetic by comparison. Jeffrey said of *Don Roderick*: "All, from first to last, is loud, and clamorous, and obtrusive, - indiscriminately noisy, and often ineffectually exaggerated."<sup>40</sup> And he also pointed out the incompatibility of the motivation behind the poem with its artistic integrity, explaining that Scott, having reached "a description of the constituent parts of the British army,"

. . . suddenly checks himself, and recollects that fiction should not be allowed to mix with the records of recent heroism; and, abruptly dismissing *Don Roderick*, with the vault, and its statues and visions, closes the poem with a few patriotic lines in his own character, and with announcing his intention to be still more patriotic in the Conclusion.

This Conclusion is rightly so called - inasmuch as it concludes the poetical part of the volume before us; but it really might have performed this office, with equal propensity, to any other poetical work whatsoever. It has not, from beginning to end, the least connexion with, or allusion to, *Don Roderick* and his adventures; but consists of a splendid versification of Lord Wellington's official despatches . . .<sup>41</sup>

Scott, then, had attempted to relocate the heroic sentiments with which he imbued the Scottish past in the British present, but the clumsy machinery of his appeal to the Mountain Spirit demonstrated that the relationship between the two was more subtle than to allow such a crude transposition. But in his own mind Scott's sense of British patriotism was perfectly clear. As he wrote to Joanna Baillie in October 1812:

My only ambition is to be remembered if remembered at all as one who knew and valued national independence and would maintain it in the present struggle to the last man and the last guinea though the last guinea were my own property and the last man my own son.<sup>42</sup>

In the later poems a further element in the development of Scott's ideology of patriotisms becomes evident: more and more, sentiments relating to a sense of being Scottish take on, not just the attribute of passion, but also that of private, individual, or self-oriented concern; while the sense of Britishness becomes associated more with reason and reasonableness and public duty.

Even in *The Lord of the Isles*, with Bruce as a central figure and the setting the War of Independence, where Scott was obviously obliged to deal directly with ideas of Scottish patriotism, the relationship between privately and patriotically inspired deeds is not seriously addressed. When, in the second Canto, Bruce's identity is discovered by his enemies in the Castle of Artornish, an argument central to this very problem develops, as the Abbot, present to

officiate at a wedding, is obliged to pass judgment on Bruce as a committer of sacrilege, a murderer and a rebel. Bruce's defence is to cast his own action at Dumfries - the murder of Comyn - in the light of patriotic duty, but that duty appears in the long term only to postpone, not to negate, the individual guilt he suffers:

No selfish vengeance dealt the blow,  
For Comyn died his country's foe.  
Nor blame I friends whose ill-timed speed  
Fulfilled my soon-repent'd deed,  
Nor censure those from whose stern tongue  
The dire anathema has rung.  
I only blame mine own wild ire,  
By Scotland's wrongs incensed to fire.  
Heaven knows my purpose to atone,  
Far as I may, the evil done,  
And hears a penitent's appeal  
From papal curse and prelate's zeal.  
My first and dearest task achieved,  
Fair Scotland from her thrall relieved,  
Shall many a priest in cope and stole  
Say requiem for Red Comyn's soul,  
While I the blessed cross advance,  
And expiate this unhappy chance,  
In Palestine, with sword and lance.<sup>43</sup>

But, though Scott thus creates an opportunity to address seriously this private-public interaction, he balks at it, relying instead on a quasi-miraculous experience mixed with an injection of impassioned wildness into the person of the priest, so that he who should be judge becomes temporarily an Abbot of Unreason and is in that condition able to applaud Bruce's struggle:

Like man by prodigy amazed,  
Upon the King the Abbot gazed;  
Then o'er his pallid features glance,  
Convulsions of ecstatic trance.  
His breathing came more thick and fast,  
And from his pale blue eyes were cast  
Strange rays of wild and wandering light;



Uprise his locks of silver white,  
Flush'd is his brow, through every vein  
In azure tide the currents strain,  
And undistinguish'd accents broke  
The awful silence ere he spoke.<sup>44</sup>

It should be noted that the Abbot conjoins the shame, fame and honour of Scotland to those of Bruce by the devices of rhetoric, not by any doctrinal or philosophical argument; and, indeed, his assured appeal to the historical verdict of future ages makes such arguments superfluous; Scott's purpose here is to mythologise the past, not to address its real issues:

Avenger of thy country's shame,  
Restorer of her injured fame,  
Bless'd in thy sceptre and thy sword,  
De Bruce, fair Scotland's rightful Lord,  
Bless'd in thy deeds and in thy fame,  
What lengthen'd honours wait thy name!  
In distant ages, sire to son  
Shall tell thy tale of freedom won,  
And teach his infants, in the use  
Of earliest speech, to falter Bruce.  
Go, then, triumphant! sweep along  
Thy course, the theme of many a song!  
The Power, whose dictates swell my breast,  
Hath bless'd thee, and thou shalt be bless'd!<sup>45</sup>

This passage sets the standard for others that deal with Scottish patriotism, for example in Canto III, when Bruce watches through the night consumed by

. . . the patriot's burning thought,  
Of Freedom's battle bravely fought,  
Of castles storm'd, of cities freed,  
Of deep design and daring deed,  
Of England's roses reft and torn,  
And Scotland's cross in triumph worn,  
Of rout and rally, war and truce, -

As heroes think, so thought the Bruce.<sup>46</sup>

And where a more public-spirited sentiment informs Bruce's patriotism, notably in Canto IV which contrasts him with his more fiery brother Edward<sup>47</sup>, the idea of the selfless warrior is extended to the modern soldiers of "martial Britain's ground"<sup>48</sup>. Indeed, by the beginning of Canto VI Scott is explicitly comparing the early victories of Bruce with those which led to the defeat of Napoleon:

O who, that shared them, ever shall forget  
The emotions of the spirit-rousing time,  
When breathless in the mart the couriers met,  
Early and late, at evening and at prime;  
When the loud cannon and the merry chime  
Hail'd news on news, as field on field was won,  
When Hope, long doubtful, soar'd at length sublime,  
And our glad eyes, awake as day begun,  
Watch'd Joy's broad banner rise, to meet the rising sun!

. . . .  
Her downcast eye even pale Affliction rears,  
To sigh a thankful prayer, amid the glee,  
That hail'd the Despot's fall, and peace and liberty!

Such news o'er Scotland's hills triumphant rode,  
When 'gainst the invaders turn'd the battle's scale . . .<sup>49</sup>

For *The Monthly Review*, this passage conjured up images of "men with broad sheets of foolscap scored with victories round their hats, and horns blowing loud defiance in each other's mouth, from the top to the bottom of Pall-Mall", and it asked plaintively, ". . . what has all this to do with Bannockburn?"<sup>50</sup> The answer lay later in the poem, when Scott, as if to justify the Scots' struggle to the modern age, asks England to understand Bannockburn in British terms:

Yet mourn not, Land of Fame!  
Though ne'er the leopards on thy shield  
Retreated from so sad a field,

Since Norman William came,  
Oft may thine annals justly boast  
Of battles stern by Scotland lost;  
Grudge not her victory,  
When for her freeborn rights she strove -  
Rights dear to all who freedom love -  
To none so dear as thee!<sup>51</sup>

This provoked a number of reviewers to point up the defects of the "very elements of the poem" - even Scott's friend George Ellis in *The Quarterly Review* was unenthusiastic: he questioned the inappropriateness of combining the two themes of "the liberation of Scotland" and "the loves of Ronald and the Maid of Lorn", especially in such a way as to introduce Bannockburn as a mere episode in the affairs of the latter.

To say nothing of the obvious preposterousness of such a design, abstractedly considered, the effect of it has, we think, decidedly been to destroy that interest which either of them might separately have created; or if any interest remain respecting the fate of the ill-requited Edith, it is because at no moment of the poem do we feel the slightest degree of it respecting the enterprise of Bruce.<sup>52</sup>

Once more, however, it was Jeffrey's criticism which dealt most effectively with the "national" question:

The fictitious part of the story is, on the whole, the least interesting - though we think that the author has hazarded rather too little embellishment in recording the adventures of the Bruce. There are many places, at least, in which he has evidently given an air of heaviness and flatness to his narration, by adhering too closely to the authentic history; and has lowered down the tone of his poetry to the tame level of the rude chroniclers by whom the incidents were originally recorded. There is a more serious and general fault, however, in the conduct of all this part of the story, - and that is, that it is not sufficiently national - and 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. We hope this extreme courtesy is not intended merely to appease critics, and attract readers in the southern part of the island, - and yet it is difficult to see for what other purposes it could be assumed. Mr Scott certainly need not have been afraid either of exciting rebellion among his countrymen, or of bringing his own liberality and loyalty into question, although, in speaking of the events of that remote period, where an overbearing conqueror was overthrown in a lawless attempt to subdue an independent kingdom, he had given full expression to the hatred and exultation which must have prevailed among the victors, and are indeed the only passions which can be supposed to be excited by the story of their exploits. It is not natural, and we are sure it is not poetical, to represent the agents in such tremendous scenes as calm and indulgent judges of the motives and merits of their opponents; and, by lending such a character to the leaders of his host, the author has actually lessened the interest of the mighty fight of Bannockburn, to that which might be supposed to belong to a well-regulated tournament among friendly rivals.<sup>53</sup>

Yet, as we have seen, Scott's portrayal of Scottish patriotism was far from passionless: the flaw in it lay in the formlessness of that passion, in Scott's failure to relate it to the historical context and the public concerns which inspired it. The self-recommending and apologetic appeal to England, then, only partially explains the dissatisfaction it aroused in Jeffrey and others: the reverse of that coin was the individualistic, irrational ideology of Scottish sentiment which was becoming a regular feature of Scott's work, so much so that it was this which Lockhart thought most characteristic amid the ultra-British bombast of *The Field of Waterloo*, published some ninth months after *The Lord of the Isles*:

The descent is indeed heavy from his Bannockburn to his Waterloo: the presence, or all but visible reality of what his dreams cherished, seems to have overawed his imagination, and tamed it

into a weak pomposity of movement. The burst of pure native enthusiasm upon the *Scottish* heroes that fell around the Duke of Wellington's person, bears, however, the broadest marks of the "Mighty Minstrel":

- "Saw gallant Miller's fading eye  
Still bent where Albyn's standards fly,  
And Cameron, in the shock of steel,  
Die like the offspring of Lochiel," &c. . . .<sup>54</sup>

These brief allusions contrast markedly with the general tone of the piece, as amply demonstrated by the concluding stanzas:

Now, Island Empress, wave thy crest on high,  
And bid the banner of thy Patron flow,  
Gallant Saint George, the flower of Chivalry,  
For thou hast faced, like him, a dragon foe,  
And rescued innocence from overthrow,  
And trampled down, like him, tyrannic might,  
And to the gazing world mayst proudly show  
The chosen emblem of thy sainted Knight,  
Who quell'd devouring pride, and vindicated right.

Yet 'mid the confidence of just renown,  
Renown dear-bought, but dearest thus acquired,  
Write, Britain, write the moral lesson down:  
'Tis not alone the heart with valour fired,  
The discipline so dreaded and admired,  
In many a field of bloody conquest known;  
- Such may by fame be lured, by gold be hired -  
'Tis constancy in the good cause alone,  
Best justifies the meed thy valiant sons have won.<sup>55</sup>

In Scott's poems there is no such "good cause" or "moral lesson" for Scottish patriotism, and indeed "the heart with valour fired" is sufficient in itself to explain the sentiments of Scottish heroes. Miracle or mystery may be employed to illuminate, or obscure, this peculiar detachment of the fighting spirit, as in the poem "The Dance of Death", also published in 1815, which tells of the vision of one

"grey Allan", a Highland soldier whose sentry duty the night before Waterloo is disturbed by omens of his own death:

But there are sounds in Allan's ear,  
Patrol nor sentinel may hear,  
And sights before his eyes aghast  
Invisible to them have pass'd,  
    When down the destined plain,  
'Twixt Britain and the bands of France,  
Wild as marsh-borne meteors glance,  
Strange phantoms wheel'd a revel dance,  
    And doom'd the future slain. -  
Such forms were seen, such sounds were heard,  
When Scotland's James his march prepared  
For Flodden's fatal plain. . .<sup>56</sup>

Here again, the potential of the Highlander in the patriotic ideology is utilised; as it had already been in *The Lady of the Lake*, and also - again with visionary or mystical overtones - in *Waverley*, through the device of the Bodach Glas.<sup>57</sup>

That such elements were peculiar to Scott's presentation of the *Scottish* past is made even clearer when one considers a letter of 1813 (that is, some two years before the appearance of *The Lord of the Isles*, but when Bruce was being considered as a possible candidate for poetic treatment [see below]), in which he rejects the idea of a poem on Alfred the *English* patriot because romance should not detract from the "majesty of history":

In the first place it has always seemed to me that the majesty of history is rather injured than improved by the ornaments of poetical fiction and that where historical characters are introduced it ought only to be incidentally and in such a manner as not to interfere with established truth. But besides the patriotism of Alfred as an enlightened legislator and great warrior is not of a nature suited to my limited powers of poetical description. A philosophical poet might make a great deal of the establishment of the wise Saxon code and the expulsion of the

Danes but a romancer must have a canvas of a much more limited scale and varied and rapid interest.<sup>58</sup>

Against this background phrases like "Robert Bruce, who recovered Scotland from the English yoke", and "William Wallace the great champion of our freedom", have a somewhat empty ring to them.<sup>59</sup>

If, in *The Lord of the Isles*, Scott dealt unsatisfactorily with the relationship between private and public activity, *Rokeby*, which appeared two years earlier in 1813, exhibits more subtlety and success in the same task. In fact, as Scott recorded in the 1830 Introduction, the subject of Bruce had come first to his mind, but, "supposing that an English story might have more novelty . . . the precedence was given to 'Rokeby'."<sup>60</sup> Here, passion and selfishness are set against the background of public causes and national strife in the English Civil War. Scott evidently believed the poem a failure, and it is revealing that he imputes one cause of this to the problems of treating of public affairs rather than primitivism: *Rokeby*, the Yorkshire estate of John Morritt,

united the romantic beauties of the wilds of Scotland with the rich and smiling aspect of the southern portion of the island. But the Cavaliers and Roundheads, whom I attempted to summon up to tenant this beautiful region, had for the public neither the novelty nor the peculiar interest of the primitive Highlanders. This, perhaps, was scarcely to be expected, considering that the general mind sympathizes readily and at once with the stamp which nature herself has affixed upon the manners of a people living in a simple and patriarchal state; whereas it has more difficulty in understanding or interesting itself in manners founded upon those peculiar habits of thinking or acting, which are produced by the progress of society.<sup>61</sup>

The villains of the poem, Oswald Wycliffe and more especially Bertram Risingham, personify the "evil passions" of greed and selfishness, cruelty (Risingham) and cowardice (Wycliffe).<sup>62</sup> These passions are the antithesis of the causes which inform the confrontation of the Civil War, as is made plain by Bertram's derisive description of Marston Moor:

". . . On Marston heath  
Met, front to front, the ranks of death;  
Flourish'd the trumpets fierce, and now  
Fired was each eye, and flush'd each brow;  
On either side loud clamours ring,  
'God and the Cause!' - 'God and the King!'  
Right English all, they rush'd to blows,  
With nought to win, and all to lose.  
I could have laugh'd - but lack'd the time -  
To see, in phrenesy sublime,  
How the fierce zealots fought and bled,  
For king or state, as humour led;  
Some for a dream of public good,  
Some for church-tippet, gown and hood,  
Draining their veins, in death to claim  
A patriot's or a martyr's name."<sup>63</sup>

The alienation of evil from the main current of society is to appear again and again in Scott's novels, notably in *Old Mortality* and *The Heart of Midlothian*. When, in Canto III, Risingham is approached by Guy Denzil to lead his outlaw band, this idea of social exclusion is emphasised:

". . . Not far there lurk a crew  
Of trusty comrades, stanch and true,  
Glean'd from both factions - Roundheads, freed  
From cant of sermon and of creed;  
And Cavaliers, whose souls, like mine,  
Spurn at the bonds of discipline.  
Wiser, we judge, by dale and wold,  
A warfare of our own to hold,  
Than breathe our last on battle-down,  
For cloak or surplice, mace or crown.



Our schemes are laid, our purpose set,  
A chief and leader lack we yet."<sup>4</sup>

This accords completely with Risingham's own ambitions:

"Even now," thought Bertram, "passion-stirr'd,  
I call'd on hell, and hell has heard!"<sup>5</sup>

There is a fair case for claiming *Rokeby* as the first Waverley Novel - for into this turmoil, stirred up by individuals driven by passion and enthusiasm rather than by prudence and reason, it throws weak young heroes and heroines, overburdened with sensitive imaginations. Wycliffe's son Wilfrid is the most obvious example, and indeed, though considerably more feeble, this love-struck dreamer is at no great remove from that "sneaking piece of imbecility"<sup>6</sup> Edward Waverley, due to make his appearance the following year:

Thus wore his life, though reason strove  
For mastery in vain with love,  
Forcing upon his thoughts the sum  
Of present woe and ills to come,  
While still he turn'd impatient ear  
From Truth's intrusive voice severe.  
Gentle, indifferent, and subdued,  
In all but this, unmov'd he view'd  
Each outward change of ill and good:  
But Wilfrid, docile, soft, and mild,  
Was Fancy's spoil'd and wayward child;  
In her bright car she bade him ride,  
With one fair form to grace his side,  
Or, in some wild and lone retreat,  
Flung her high spells around his seat,  
Bathed in her dews his languid head,  
Her fairy mantle o'er him spread,  
For him her opiates gave to flow,  
Which he who tastes can ne'er forego,  
And placed him in her circle, free  
From every stern reality,

Till, to the Visionary, seem  
Her day-dreams truth, and truth a dream.<sup>67</sup>

Like his successors in the Waverley Novels, Wilfrid possesses a heightened sense of justice, the Humean social virtue par excellence, which distinguishes him from the various villains into whose company he falls.<sup>68</sup> It marks him apart too from the young minstrel Edmund, potentially of similar character, but whose outlawish circumstances have stripped him of social virtues<sup>69</sup>:

But principles in Edmund's mind  
Were baseless, vague, and undefined.  
His soul, like bark with rudder lost,  
On Passion's changeful tide was tost;  
Nor Vice nor Virtue had the power  
Beyond the impression of the hour;  
And, O! when passion rules, how rare  
The hours that fall to Virtue's share!<sup>70</sup>

*Rokeby* demonstrates that Scott had the capacity to address himself to these complex problems - the interaction of a private-public antithesis within a context of moral and social issues - but that he had exploited the epic poem form too effectively as a minstrel of romance and chivalry to do this well.\* Between *Rokeby* and *The Lord*

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\* A striking example of the bard overruling the historian in Scott occurs in a letter to Morritt written as he commenced *Rokeby*: "By which party was Barnard Castle occupied? It strikes me that it should be held for the parliamt. Pray help me in this by truth or fiction or tradition. I care not which if it be picturesque."<sup>71</sup>

This reminds us of nothing so much as Monkbarns' advice to Lovel in Chapter XIV of *The Antiquary* - "you are a poet . . . as little bound down to truth or probability as Virgil himself. You may defeat the Romans in spite of Tacitus."<sup>72</sup>

*of the Isles*, however, (and after a couple of false starts some years earlier) he found a prose-form which enabled him to articulate more fully his ideology of a tension between private passion and public virtue, and in which he could unite this concern with his well-developed vision of the relationship of the Scottish past to the British present. This form was the historical novel, and, in *Waverley*, published in 1814, Scott presented a unique mixture of fact and fiction, history and fantasy, prudence and passion, which perfectly encapsulated the interaction between his Scottish and British patriotisms.

## Chapter Five

### THE BOUNDARIES OF SCOTTISH HISTORY

*"symbiosis, a mutually beneficial partnership between organisms of different kinds: esp. such an association where one lives within the other."* (Chambers 20th Century Dictionary)

Scott's well-known dismissive modesty in commenting upon his trade as a writer of romance requires that caution be exercised when searching such commentary for evidence of more serious cultural and patriotic concerns. Nevertheless, the extent to which he did comment, often in the guise of characters invented for that very purpose, like "Laurence Templeton"<sup>1</sup> or "Captain Clutterbuck"<sup>2</sup>, and in particular the care and time he expended in preparing the Magnum Opus edition towards the end of his life, indicate that he did think that his fiction deserved to be considered as a complete body of work and given the authorial stamp of approval for the benefit of posterity. As Jane Millgate has commented:

in collecting and annotating his writings in this way Scott was implicitly assigning to fiction a status previously reserved for poetry and drama, and to the productions of a living author a treatment normally accorded only to the achievements of the great masters of the past.<sup>3</sup>

This was all hardly surprising in one who, fully aware that the printed page now immortalised not merely a tale but the way of its telling, had aspired to be the nation's modern Minstrel, and gone on to become its chief of story-tellers.

Yet, in the Advertisement to the General Preface, he characteristically inverted this design, so that the intention behind the revision of the Novels became, as he claimed, to "render them in some degree deserving of a continuance of the public favour with which they have long been honoured ever since their first appearance."<sup>4</sup> Again, as Millgate has said, we should not be fooled by Scott's reticence:

For although Scott's introductions and notes were engagingly modest and even self-deprecating - thus diminishing the impression of egotism - they in no way compromised the statement made by the very fact of bringing his novels together as an *oeuvre*.<sup>5</sup>

The object was "to heighten and finish the picture"<sup>6</sup>, according to Scott, and to achieve this he made a deliberate attempt to "historicise" his fiction as fully as possible, just as he had done with the *Minstrelsy* and his own poems. The plan was to publish

the various legends, family traditions, or obscure historical facts which have formed the ground-work of these Novels, and to give some account of the places where the scenes are laid, when these are altogether, or in part, real; as well as a statement of particular incidents founded on fact; together with a more copious Glossary, and Notes explanatory of the ancient customs and popular superstitions referred to in the Romances.<sup>7</sup>

This combination of Romance with History is crucial to Scott's purpose, and it is therefore important to examine his understanding of both these terms.

Fortunately, we have a very detailed source for his ideas on Romance in the Essay on that subject, first published in the supplement to the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1824. The Introduction deals unhesitatingly with definitions, and there is no doubt that, as between Novels and Romances, Scott would have placed his fiction (with the single exception of *St. Ronan's Well*, which had been published the previous year) firmly in the second category:

Dr Johnson has defined Romance, in its primary sense, to be "a military fable of the middle ages; a tale of wild adventures in love and chivalry." But although this definition expresses correctly the ordinary idea of the word, it is not sufficiently comprehensive to answer our present purpose. A composition may be a legitimate romance, yet neither refer to love nor chivalry - to war nor to the middle ages. The "wild adventures" are almost the only absolutely essential ingredient in Johnson's definition. We would be rather inclined to describe a *Romance* as "a fictitious narrative in prose or verse; the interest of which turns upon marvellous and uncommon incidents;" being thus opposed to the kindred term *Novel*, which Johnson has described as "a smooth tale, generally of love;" but which we would rather define as "a fictitious narrative, differing from the Romance, because the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events, and the modern state of society."<sup>e</sup>

It is highly significant that Scott should specify both prose and verse as vehicles for Romance, and that he should identify "wild adventures" and "marvellous and uncommon incidents" as its chief characteristics. As we shall see, it is through such incidents that he differentiates the past from the present - "the modern state of society" - in the *Waverley Novels*. But there is more to this than a

mere difference of style, as between, for example, his own "Big Bow wow strain" and Jane Austen's "talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life", which he mentions in his Journal for 14th March 1826, on re-reading *Pride and Prejudice*.<sup>3</sup> As he goes on to say in his Essay, Romance, like poetry, is intricately bound up with History:

The progress of Romance, in fact, keeps pace with that of society, which cannot long exist, even in the simplest state, without exhibiting some specimens of this attractive style of composition. It is not meant by this assertion, that in early ages such narratives were invented, as in modern times, in the character of mere fictions, devised to beguile the leisures of those who have time enough to read and afford them. On the contrary, Romance and real history have the same common origin. It is the aim of the former to maintain as long as possible the mask of veracity; and indeed the traditional memorials of all earlier ages partake in such a varied doubtful degree of the qualities essential to those opposite lines of composition, that they form a mixed class between them; and may be termed either romantic histories, or historical romances, according to the proportion in which their truth is debased by fiction, or their fiction mingled with truth.<sup>10</sup>

We have seen how, in his poetic output, Scott grew less and less concerned to separate Romance from History, especially when dealing with Scottish subjects. Nevertheless he retained at least an academic belief in such a distinction - a belief which was connected also with his understanding of historical change and the important concept of Chivalry. For example, in the same year that he wrote the Essay on Romance, he was also concerned that the "more colourful" title *Redgauntlet* which James Ballantyne persuaded him to substitute for *Herries*, the working-title of the novel then in progress, "might mislead people into expecting a tale of chivalry."<sup>11</sup> Chivalry was

another of the several topics on which Scott wrote major essays, this one being for the 1818 supplement to the Encyclopedia Britannica. Its interesting relationship to the discussion in Chapter Two of virtue and patriotism as terms basic to earlier perceptions of historical development, demands that we look closely at this Essay.

If Fletcher of Saltoun had, to paraphrase J.G.A. Pocock, "slurred over" the Harringtonian distinction between "ancient" and "modern prudence" in order to explain and defend what he considered the crucial political characteristic - "Gothic" virtue - of the medieval period,<sup>12</sup> Scott emphasised the idea of *chivalry* as a key to understanding the medieval period. His Essay was specifically concerned with

the peculiar meaning given to the word in modern Europe, as applied to the order of knighthood, established in almost all her kingdoms during the middle ages, and the laws, rules, and customs, by which it was governed. Those laws and customs have long been antiquated, but their effects may still be traced in European manners; and, excepting only the change which flowed from the introduction of the Christian religion, we know no cause which has produced such general and permanent difference betwixt the ancients and moderns, as that which has arisen out of the institution of chivalry.<sup>13</sup>

Having pointed out that the word "chivalry" was derived from the French *chevalier* and thus signified "cavalry", Scott continued:

But in the middle ages, the distinction ascribed to soldiers serving on horseback assumed a very peculiar and imposing character. They were not merely respected on account of their wealth or military skill, but were bound together by a union of a very peculiar character, which monarchs were ambitious to share with the poorest of their subjects, and governed by laws directed to enhance, into enthusiasm, the military spirit and the sense of personal honour associated with it.<sup>14</sup>



The chivalric ethos, according to Scott, adapted these primitive heroic virtues so that "military valour" was blended with "the strongest passions which actuate the human mind, the feelings of devotion and those of love. The Greeks and Romans fought for liberty or for conquest, and the knights of the middle ages for God and for their ladies." Scott thus played down the social and political benefits which Fletcher ascribed to the feudal system:

Loyalty to their sovereigns was a duty also incumbent upon these warriors; but although a powerful motive, and by which they often appear to have been strongly actuated, it entered less warmly into the composition of the chivalrous principle than the two preceding causes. Of patriotism, considered as a distinct predilection to the interests of one kingdom, we find comparatively few traces in the institutions of knighthood.<sup>15</sup>

The Essay goes on to chart the decline of Chivalry:

But as, in practice, every institution becomes deteriorated and degraded, we have too much occasion to remark, that the devotion of the knights often degenerated into superstition, - their love into licentiousness, - their spirit of loyalty or of freedom into tyranny and turmoil, - their generosity and gallantry into hare-brained madness and absurdity.<sup>16</sup>

Still, as chivalric precepts became outmoded and unsuitable for the emerging ethos of the nation-state, they were transformed by being linked to other values - Christianity, for example, justifying military prowess and self-defence through patriotism: "The fervent sentiments of devotion which direct men's eyes toward heaven, were then justly invoked to unite with those which are most valuable on earth, - the love of our country and its liberties."<sup>17</sup> Furthermore,

some effects of Chivalry survived and were adapted for modern usage, much as Fletcher and his contemporaries had desired for ancient heroic virtues generally. Duelling, for instance, "a usage, at once so ridiculous, and so detrimental to the peace and happiness of society," had to give way to "the progress of common sense. . . .

At the same time, the habits derived from the days of chivalry still retain a striking effect on our manners, and have fully established a graceful as well as useful punctilio, which tends on the whole to the improvement of society. Every man enters the world under the impression, that neither his strength, his wealth, his station, nor his wit, will excuse him from answering, at the risk of his life, any unbecoming encroachment on the civility due to the weakest, the poorest, the least important, or the most modest member of the society in which he mingles. All, too, in the rank and station of gentlemen, are forcibly called upon to remember, that they must resent the imputation of a voluntary falsehood as the most gross injury; and that the rights of the weaker sex demand protection from everyone who would hold a good character in society. In short, from the wild and overstrained courtesies of Chivalry has been derived our present system of manners. It is not certainly faultless, and it is guarded by penalties which we must often regret as disproportionately severe. Yet it has a grace and dignity unknown to classic times, when women were slaves, and men coarse and vulgar, or overbearing and brutal, as suited their own humour, without respect to that of the rest of their society.<sup>12</sup>

The system of social behaviour so described should be instantly recognisable to anybody familiar with the easily affronted sensibilities of the Waverley Novels' young heroes. But, novels aside, Scott was well aware of the *political* values which Andrew Fletcher had claimed historically for the Gothic age. His discussion, in one of the heavier sections of the *Tales of a Grandfather*, of differences between Scottish and English political institutions in the reign of James VI and I, would surely have been

applauded by Fletcher as illustrating why he was opposed to the Union and in favour of militias. Scott wrote that,

. . . on succeeding to the English throne, James found himself at the head of a nobility who had lost both the habit and power of contesting the pleasure of the sovereign, and of a wealthy body of commons, who, satisfied with being liberated from the power of the aristocracy, were little disposed to resist the exactions of the Crown.

His ancient kingdom of Scotland was in a directly different situation. The feudal nobility had retained their territorial jurisdictions, and their signorial privileges, in as full extent as their ancestors had possessed them, and therefore had at once the power and the inclination to resist the arbitrary will of the sovereign, as James himself had felt on more occasion than one. Thus, though the body of the Scottish people had not the same protection from just and equal laws, as was the happy lot of the inhabitants of England, and were much less wealthy and independent, yet the spirit of the constitution possessed all the freedom which was inherent in the ancient feudal institutions, and it was impossible for the monarch of Scotland so to influence the Parliament of the country, as to accomplish any considerable encroachment on the privileges of the nation.

It was therefore obvious, that besides the numerous reasons of a public nature for uniting South and North Britain under a similar system of government, James saw a strong personal interest for reducing the turbulent nobles and people of Scotland to the same submissive and quiet state in which he found England. . . .<sup>19</sup>

The implicit pride with which Scott recorded such Scottish "spirit" is not dampened by his retrospective acceptance of the "reasons of a public nature" for the Union, just as his admiration for chivalric principles is not diminished by his historical account of their decline. Similarly, where Fletcher had attacked the fatal effects of luxury upon Gothic liberty, Scott on balance approved of the influence of the Renaissance and Reformation upon the medieval mind. "In fact," he wrote,

it was not merely the changes which had taken place in the constitution of armies and fashion of the fight, nor the degraded and weak state of the nobles, but also, and in a great degree, the more enlightened manners of the times, and the different channels into which enthusiasm and energy were directed, which gradually abolished the sentiments of Chivalry. We have seen, that the abstract principles of Chivalry were, in the highest degree, virtuous and noble, nay, that they failed by carrying to an absurd, exaggerated, and impracticable point, the honourable duties which they inculcated. Such doctrines, when they fail to excite enthusiasm, become exploded as ridiculous. Men's minds were now awakened to other and more important and complicated exercises of the understanding, and were no longer responsive to the subjects which so deeply interested their ancestors of the middle ages. Sciences of various kinds had been rekindled in the course of the sixteenth century; the arts had been awakened in a style of perfection unknown even to classical ages. Above all, religion had become the interesting study of thousands. . . .<sup>20</sup>

In the vacuum created by the decline of Chivalry, the forces of civilisation and progress were set against those of violence, self-interest and superstition - a confrontation characterised by the sorts of historical crises around which the Author of *Waverley* constructed his fictional *romances*:

From these circumstances, the total decay of chivalrous principle is sufficiently evident. As the progress of knowledge advanced, men learned to despise its fantastic refinements; the really enlightened undervaluing them, as belonging to a system inapplicable to the modern state of the world; the licentious, fierce, and subtle, desiring their abrogation, as throwing the barriers of affected punctilio betwixt them and the safe, ready, and unceremonious gratification of their lust or their vengeance.<sup>21</sup>

If these Essays demonstrate Scott's familiarity with concepts that were both crucial to his own writing and to his historical view, equally there is no doubt of his awareness of the philosophy of History itself as a legacy of the Enlightenment. His appreciation of

the Scottish Enlightenment as a period of intellectual excellence has already been described. The basic principles of History - including the Four Stage Theory of society moving through hunting, pasturage and agriculture to commerce - as developed by William Robertson, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, John Millar and others, were accepted by Scott, and informed his imaginative reconstruction of the past, although when at the height of his fictional powers he apparently had no intention of engaging in "any proper historical labour, for which I have neither time, talent, nor inclination."<sup>22</sup> He believed, when he wrote this (1816), that it would take ten years to write one good History of Scotland. Financial pressures after 1826, and the realisation that his enormous memory of facts and anecdotes would in fact minimise the arduousness of the task, combined to help him produce two (admittedly of very variable quality) in the space of three years - the *Tales of a Grandfather* and the adult version, *The History of Scotland*, which he was commissioned to write for Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopaedia. In both these productions three features predominate: the general principles of Philosophical History; the question of Scotland's independence and its relations with England; and, connecting these two, the progress of Scottish history towards its *termination* with the Union and the 'Forty-five Rising.

The fullest and best-known evidence of Scott's familiarity with Philosophical History comes in the first chapter of the Second Series of the *Tales*, "Progress of Civilisation in Society", of which the following is an extract. For example, one passage in it explains the origin of ranks and the division of classes (he uses the term in a

sense not very different from that of later Nineteenth-century and Marxist writers), within the larger framework of economic change. The development of trade and money transactions, he says, soon destroys the "equality of ranks which prevails in the early stage of society". The "attainment of learning" has a similar effect:

Those who receive a good education by the care of their parents, or possess so much strength of mind and readiness of talent as to educate themselves, become separated from the more ignorant of the community, and form a distinct class and condition of their own; holding no more communication with the others than is absolutely necessary.

In this way the whole order of society is changed, and instead of presenting the uniform appearance of one large family, each member of which has nearly the same rights, it seems to resemble a confederacy or association of different ranks, classes, and conditions of men, each rank filling up a certain department in society, and discharging a class of duties totally distinct from those of the others. The steps by which a nation advances from the natural and simple state . . . into the more complicated system in which ranks are distinguished from each other, are called the progress of society, or of civilisation. It is attended, like all things human, with much of evil as well as good; but it seems to be a law of our moral nature, that, faster or slower, such alterations must take place, in consequence of the inventions and improvements of succeeding generations of mankind.

And Scott caps this explanation with an obvious reference to the philosophical debate underlying the militia issue:

In the early state of society, every man in the tribe is a warrior, and liable to serve as such when the country requires his assistance; but in progress of time the pursuit of the military art is, at least on all ordinary occasions, confined to bands of professional soldiers, whose business it is to fight the battles of the state, when required, in consideration of which they are paid by the community, the other members of which are thus left to the pursuit of their own peaceful occupations. This alteration is attended with more important consequences than we can at present pause to enumerate.<sup>23</sup>

As to the progress of *Scottish* history through the long period of national independence towards British union, the Preface to the *Tales* makes this delineation clear:

If time and other avocations permit, it is the author's purpose to carry this little work down to the period of 1748 [the Abolition of Heritable Jurisdictions], when the two sister nations became blended together in manners as well as by political ties. The task will afford an opportunity to show the slow and interrupted progress by which England and Scotland, ostensibly united by the accession of James the First of England, gradually approximated to each other, until the last shades of national differences may be almost said to have disappeared.<sup>24</sup>

Signposts pointing towards this conclusion occur throughout the three series of the *Tales*. The very title of the first chapter - "How Scotland and England came to be separate Kingdoms" - implies that history's course towards this end was indeed "interrupted", not to say wayward. And the text itself expands the theme:

Now, as these two nations live in the different ends of the same island, and are separated by large and stormy seas from all other parts of the world, it seems natural that they should have been friendly to each other, and that they should have lived as one people under the same government. Accordingly about two hundred years ago, the King of Scotland becoming King of England, as I shall tell you in another part of this book, the two nations have ever since then been joined in one great kingdom, which is called Great Britain.

But, before this happy union of England and Scotland, there were many long, cruel, and bloody wars between the two nations. . . .<sup>25</sup>

Chapter VI concludes in disapproval of Edward I's attempts to subjugate Wales and Scotland, in large part because his methods are seen to have delayed the "happy prospect" of union:

Perhaps Edward thought to himself, that, by uniting the whole island of Britain under one king and one government, he would do so much good by preventing future wars, as might be an excuse for the force and fraud which he made use of to bring about his purpose. But, my dear child, God, who sees into our hearts, will not bless those measures which are wicked in themselves, because they are used under a pretence of bringing about that which is good. We must not do evil even that good may come of it; and the happy prospect that England and Scotland would be united under one government, was so far from being brought nearer by Edward's unprincipled usurpation, that the hatred and violence of national antipathy which arose betwixt the sister countries, removed to a distance, almost incalculable, the prospect of their becoming one people, for which nature seemed to design them.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, the moral tenor of this directly contradicts that of an earlier passage on the Norman Conquest, which, Scott wrote,

though a most unhappy and disastrous event at the time it took place, rendered England, in the end, a more wise, more civilised, and more powerful country than it had been before; and you will find many such cases in history, my dear child, in which it has pleased the providence of God to bring great good out of what seems, at first sight, to be unmixed evil.<sup>27</sup>

When Scott comes to write about the Union, it is this latter argument which he deploys.

But, to continue the signposting: the first series of the *Tales* ends with this paragraph:

James arrived in London on the 7th of May, 1603, and took possession of his new realms without the slightest opposition; and thus the island of Great Britain, so long divided into the



separate kingdoms of England and Scotland, became subject to the same prince. Here, therefore, must end the TALES of your GRANDFATHER, so far as they relate to the History of Scotland, considered as a distinct and separate kingdom.<sup>28</sup>

The second series takes up from this point with the chapter on the "Progress of Civilisation in Society", a civilising process specifically related to the Union of Crowns at the chapter's end:

I have called your attention at some length to this matter, because you will now have to remark, that a material change had gradually and slowly taken place, both in the kingdom of England, and in that of Scotland, when their long quarrels were at length, in appearance, ended, by the accession of James the Sixth of Scotland to the English crown, which he held under the title of James the First of that powerful kingdom.<sup>29</sup>

By the beginning of the next century, disputes over the succession were threatening the progress of history. Scott's language accentuates a divide between the prudence of accepting that progress and the passionate "high spirits" that opposed it:

If, after the death of Queen Anne, the Scottish nation, instead of uniting in choosing the Electress Sophia, should call to the crown the titular Prince of Wales, the two kingdoms would again be separated, after having been under the same sway for a century, and all the evils of mutual hostilities betwixt the two extremities of the island, encouraged by the alliance and assistance of France, must again distract Great Britain. It became necessary, therefore, to try every species of persuasion to prevent a consequence fraught with so much mischief. . . .

The dispute betwixt the two nations was embroiled during the recess of Parliament by intrigues. . . . Every thing seemed tending to a positive rupture between the sister kingdoms; and yet, my dear child, it was from this state of things that the healing measure of an incorporating Union finally took its rise.<sup>30</sup>

The narrative continues in similar tone, describing

two high-spirited nations, whose true interest it was to enter into the strictest friendship and alliance, but whose irritated passions for the present breathed nothing but animosity . . . . The scheme of a Union was to be proceeded upon, like that of breaking two spirited horses to join in drawing the same yoke, when it is of importance to teach them, that by moving in unison, and at an equal pace, the task will be easy to them both.

It was necessary to show the English people that, "if the Scots were not allied with them in intimate friendship, they might prove dangerous enemies."<sup>31</sup> A few pages later, on the question of the number of MPs to represent Scotland at Westminster, Scott puts a different weight on the linguistic balance: "With more prudence, perhaps, than spirit, the majority of the [Scots] commissioners chose to yield the point rather than run the risk of frustrating the Union entirely."<sup>32</sup> But there is no doubt, at the end of Scott's long and detailed analysis of the period of Union, that historically he rejects the forces that would have prevented "this great national act". They are the forces of "passion and prejudice", "resentment" and "zeal", terms which Scott associated with the anti-progressive in all his writing. However he may have understood and sympathised with such feelings, his historical judgment is quite unambiguous:

On the 1st of May, 1707, the Union took place, amid the dejection and despair which attend on the downfall of an ancient state, and under a sullen expression of discontent, that was far from promising the course of prosperity which the treaty finally produced.

And here I must point out to you at some length, that, though there never could be a doubt that the Union in itself was a most desirable event, yet by the erroneous mode in which it was pushed on and opposed by all parties concerned, such obstacles were

thrown in the way of the benefits it was calculated to produce, as to interpose a longer interval of years betwixt the date of the treaty and the national advantages arising out of it, than the term spent by the Jews in the wilderness ere they attained the promised land. In both cases the forwardness and passions of men rejected the blessings which Providence held out to them. . . .

. . . nor was it until half a century had passed away, that the Union began to produce those advantages to Scotland which its promoters had fondly hoped, and the fruits of which the present generation has so fully reaped. We must seek in the temper of the various parties interested in carrying on and concluding this great treaty, the reasons which for so many years prevented the incalculable benefits which it was expected to bestow, and which have since been realised.<sup>33</sup>

It was Scott's great imaginative grasp of the historical ideas of the Enlightenment which enabled him to show such empathy with the "temper of the various parties", both those who "pushed on" and those who "opposed" the Union. This imagination allowed him both to be unequivocal in his appreciation of the Union, and yet to describe it, as he did in a letter to Maria Edgeworth in July 1825, as "an event which had I lived in that day I would have resigned my life to have prevented but which being done before my day I am sensible was a wise turn."<sup>34</sup> Scott's complete dissociation of the British present from the Scottish past is exemplified by such a statement. P.H. Scott has written of this letter that it is "the most he ever said in favour of the Union, and it is a rather back-handed approval"<sup>35</sup>. As to the first claim, the passages quoted above demonstrate that appreciation of the Union was essential to Scott's perception of history, and, as to the second, the "back-handedness" disappears when the dissociation of past from present is seen as an integral part of that historical perception. However distasteful some may find it, the evidence throughout Scott's writing shows that his acceptance of

the Union was not grudging but appreciative. This, of course, was far from preventing him "toning up", as keenly as any Eighteenth-century proponent of a Scottish militia, his Scottish sentiments in the interests of a patriotic symbiosis.

This has an important bearing upon our reading of Scott. When P.H. Scott correctly points out Scott's "vigorous robust and realistic manner" in writing of the methods used to press the Union on the Scots, he does not see that the tone of these passages is indignant precisely because it relates to a Scottish *past*. "If Scott's account is blunt and honest," says P.H. Scott, "it is not dispassionate; the strength of his feelings is apparent in the force, rhythm and alliteration of his language."<sup>36</sup> But the undoubted power, and the extent - "And so on for more than thirty pages"<sup>37</sup> - of the writing does not diminish Scott's ultimate acceptance and approval of the Union. Indeed, it reinforces it by emphasising the gap between past passions and present prudence.

A parallel can be drawn with two other sections of the *Tales*. The first concerns the early feudal claims on Scotland made by the English Crown. Scott was almost as desperate as, say, Hector Boece to dismiss utterly these claims. The Scottish kings, Scott explained, had extended their dominion into the northern provinces of England:

After much fighting and disputing, it was agreed that the King of Scotland should keep these English provinces. or such parts of them as he possessed, not as an independent sovereign, however, but as a vassal of the King of England; and that he should do

homage for the same to the English King, and attend him to the field of battle when summoned. But this homage, and this military service, were not paid on account of the kingdom of Scotland, which had never since the beginning of the world been under the dominion of an English King, but was, and had always remained independent, a free state, having sovereigns and monarchs of its own. . . .

The English Kings, however, occasionally took opportunities to insinuate, that the homage paid by the Scottish Kings was not only for the provinces which they at this time possessed in England, but also for the kingdom of Scotland. The Scottish Kings, on the contrary, although they rendered the homage and services demanded, as holding large possessions within the boundaries of England, uniformly and positively refused to permit it to be said or supposed, that they were subject to any claim of homage on account of the kingdom of Scotland.<sup>38</sup>

For the successful operation of Scott's dual patriotism, informed as it was by his historical view, such an absolute affirmation of the ancient independence of Scotland was essential. Without this, the Union would be less comprehensible, a political event tacked on to an uncertain progress of events, instead of being the end towards which Scottish history was bound from the outset.

Likewise, in what is perhaps the most powerful part of all the *Tales*, the chapter on the Massacre of Glencoe, Scott's moral outrage does not detract from his general understanding that the "civilisation" of the Highlands was as natural to historical progress as was the Union. Indeed, as has already been seen in the case of the Eighteenth-century infatuation with Ossian, an imaginative appropriation of Highland culture was integral to the development of a British-Scottish patriotic ethos. Scott adopted this attitude with his usual historical empathy, and of course it was central to his fiction, to *Waverley* in particular. When, near the end of the *Tales*, he described the destruction of the clan system, his judgment

included such events as Glencoe in its emphatic rejection of the past:

With whatever sympathy, therefore, we may regard the immediate sufferers, with whatever general regret we may look upon the extinction, by violence, of a state of society which was so much connected with honour, fidelity, and the tenets of romantic chivalry, it is impossible, in sober sense, to wish that it should have continued, or to say that, in political wisdom, the Government of Great Britain ought to have tolerated its longer existence.<sup>39</sup>

In this, as in many other instances, the evidence of the *Tales*, which might be suspect as having been written for a child, supports views expressed by Scott at various times throughout his career. On the Highland question, a letter of 1811 from him to Elizabeth, Marchioness of Stafford and Countess of Sutherland, is characterised by precisely the same arguments and language as are found in the *Essays on Chivalry and Romance* and in the *Tales*:

I have very little doubt that your ladyship's patriotic attempts to combine industry with such reliques of ancient manners, as still dignify the highlanders who have the good fortune to be under your protection, will succeed, though perhaps not with the rapidity that your philanthropy may anticipate. It has taken a generation to convert a race of feudal warriors (for such were highlanders prior to 1745) into a quiet and peaceable peasantry, and perhaps it may take as long to introduce the spirit of action and persevering exertion necessary to animate them in their new profession. Man is in general a vile prejudiced animal, and although I think Scotchmen more open to conviction (when she appears with self interest in her hand) than most other folks, yet even with them pride and passion will sometimes turn both visitors out of doors. In the mean time a new race is gradually arising who will be trained to those sentiments and habits which the present state of society requires, and which it is your ladyships wish to introduce, and who will, in the course of twenty years, look back with wonder at the prejudices of their fathers, and with gratitude to their mistress who pursued their welfare in spite of themselves.<sup>40</sup>

David Daiches has suggested that "it is grossly unfair to reduce the attitude to his country of a great historical novelist to a simplified statement written for a child", although this has not discouraged him from quoting extensively from the *Tales of a Grandfather* in dealing with this question.<sup>41</sup> It is, of course, perfectly legitimate to do so. The *Tales* may be simplified, but they are far from infantile, and, coming as they do in that period when Scott was assessing the significance of his life's work through the *Magnum Opus*, they are an important representation - a distillation, almost - of his overview of the Scottish past. This, in spite of his disclaimer in the Prefatory Letter to the Third Series:

Like most men of some experience in life, I entertain undoubtedly my own opinions upon the great political questions of the present and future times; but I have no desire to impress these on my juvenile readers. What I have presumed to offer is a general, and, it is hoped, not an uninteresting selection of facts, which may at a future time form a secure foundation for political sentiments.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, he went on to emphasise, "I have not deserted my banners, because I have not at this time and place thought it necessary to unfurl them." He had excluded "political discussions" from the *Tales*, but he had not, of course, excluded his belief in History as a process of development which continued in spite of, rather than as, the struggles of opposed human forces:

In more mature years, the juvenile reader will have an opportunity of forming his own judgment upon the points of controversy which have disturbed our history; and I think he will

probably find that the spirit of party faction, far from making demi-gods of the one side, and fiends or fools of the other, is itself the blot and stain of our annals - has produced under one shape or other its most tragic events - has blighted the characters of its best and wisest statesmen, and perhaps reserves for Britain at a future day, a repetition of the evils with which it has already afflicted our fathers.<sup>43</sup>

The spectre of political reform or revolution haunts this last speculation, and it will be interesting to consider later how far Scott dissociated Scotland's past from the present precisely because he feared the mischief which interpretations of such a continuum might promote. For now, however, we can underline the important features of the *Tales* by referring to the adult version, *The History of Scotland* of 1830, in which the same concerns are again prominent.

In the Advertisement, Scott states that his task was made easier by having recently completed the *Tales*, although he claims that "the object and tenour of these two works are extremely different." The adult history, in fact, is intended to fulfil the role hinted at above, to "supply the reader of more advanced age truths with which he ought to be acquainted, not merely as relating to one small kingdom, but as forming a chapter in the general history of mankind."<sup>44</sup> But this wider perspective again serves only to support the idea of Scottish history being directed ultimately towards the Union. The degree to which Scotland's history had engaged the attention of the world, Scott writes, was due to the

extreme valour and firmness with which in ancient times the inhabitants defended their independence against the most formidable odds, as well as to the relation which its events bear to the history of England, of which kingdom having been long the



hereditary and inveterate foe, North Britain is now become an integral and inseparable part by the treaty of union.<sup>45</sup>

If the signposts towards union are less clearly visible than in the *Tales*, this is explained to a large extent by the fact that the *History* only goes as far as the Union of Crowns in 1603. The same language and themes are, however, in evidence. For example, if modern Scots were to relate to the kind of dualistic patriotism that the Union required, their sentiments relating to *pre-Union* Scotland should be unequivocal and unblemished. This is why Scott is once again determined to quash any notion that Henry II's exaction of homage from his captive William the Lion in 1174 had the least legitimacy about it:

A feudal dependence could only have been created by cession of land which had originally been English, or by restoring that which had been conquered from Scotland. But England could have no title to homage for provinces which, having never possessed, England could not cede, and having never conquered, could not restore.<sup>46</sup>

Again, the idea of history beating a *wayward* path towards a "natural" British union is also very strong. On Anglo-Scottish relations at the time of Flodden, Scott writes:

War was almost constantly the state in which the sister kingdoms stood in relation to each other, so much so, that the two portions of the same island most fitted by their relative position to be governed by the same laws and rules might be considered as looking upon each other in the light of natural enemies.<sup>47</sup>

A few pages later, concluding the first volume, he relates this idea to the arrival of Protestantism:

Both England and Scotland received in secret the doctrines of the reformers, and in both they triumphed still further over the ancient religion. But the circumstances, manner, and modification in which the protestant faith was introduced and received in the two kingdoms were so different, as seemed at first rather to separate them from each other than to bring nearer the natural and advantageous measure of their union. Heaven, in its own good time, had reserved this consummation as the happy point to which the nations were at length to be conducted by a series of transactions which promised a very different event.<sup>48</sup>

The same tone appears in the second volume, on the 1545-46 period of the Rough Wooing, and is reminiscent of John Home's "ideal line, by fancy drawn" in *Douglas*\*:

Many of the English officers had committed insolencies and atrocities during their hour of success which the Scots could not forgive; and not only did the latter themselves refuse quarter to the English, but there were instances of their purchasing English prisoners from the French, merely, like Indian savages, to have the pleasure of putting them to death. To such a height of animosity had mutual ravages and constant injuries heated the national resentment of two countries, which, save for an imaginary line of boundary, were in fact the same people.<sup>49</sup>

As the History nears 1603, Scott relates incidents that are almost allegories of this theoretical point. The tale of Kinmont Willie is one such example, which has added personal significance since it relates to the Scotts of Buccleuch. In 1596, Kinmont Willie Armstrong, a follower of Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch, the keeper of

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\* See above, page 48.

Liddesdale and warden of the border, was captured by the English on the Scottish side of the Liddle and taken to Carlisle. The English act amounted to an infringement of the accepted method of settling border disputes then in operation. "The lord of Buccleuch," Scott writes, "was by no means of a humour to submit to an infraction of national rights, and a personal insult to himself. On this occasion he acted with equal prudence and spirit."<sup>50</sup> He entreated the governor of Carlisle Castle to release Willie, but, being refused, he raised a force of three hundred, invaded the castle and freed him himself.

The general spirit of the people of Scotland received the account of this stratagem of war with the highest applause. It seemed a revival of the ancient spirit which had so long enabled Scotland to protect her independence against a superior enemy; and the common saying among the people was, that such an act of vassalage had not been performed in Scotland since the time of sir William Wallace.<sup>51</sup>

Elizabeth of England, however, was "highly offended", and "required that the person of Buccleuch should be surrendered to England, to be treated according to his demerits." Scott concludes the episode as follows:

To escape the risk of displeasing Elizabeth, James . . . personally requested of Buccleuch that he would present himself of his own free will before the queen of England, under the assurance that he should be permitted to return in honour and safety. Buccleuch readily agreed to a compromise which was to satisfy Elizabeth's point of honour, and relieve James from a serious difficulty. It is said, by tradition, that when he presented himself before Elizabeth, the queen asked him, with the air of imposing dignity, which she knew so well how to assume, how he had dared commit so great an outrage in her dominions? "May it please you, madam," answered the border chief, "I know not the thing that a man dares not do." Elizabeth was pleased with his spirit; and

having detained him for some time at her court, dismissed him with tokens of honour and regard, thus extinguishing the last spark of that conflagration of hostility which had raged between England and Scotland for perhaps twenty centuries.<sup>52</sup>

Here, history written purportedly for adults is reduced to the anecdotal style of the *Tales of a Grandfather*. The Kinmont Willie event is presented as a symbol both of how Scottish "spirit" operated in the past, and, through the mechanism of Scott of Buccleuch calling the English Queen's bluff, of how it could and did cement the British union retrospectively and in the present. The mythologising of Scottish history by the national story-teller was thus not far removed from his achievements as a poet.

This mythology is underscored by the paragraphs which conclude the *History*, in which Scott, describing James VI's progress into England in 1603, relates "a Jacobite tradition, but [which] has generally been received as a real one". As James prepared to depart, there was seen among the festive crowd "one aged gentleman . . . attired in the deepest mourning":

Being asked the meaning of so unbecoming a dress on so happy an occasion: "I have known this road," he said, "to England; and have travelled it in my former days, as we now do, under the royal banner: I was then as well mounted and armed as became my fortune and quality; but we were then bent upon honourable war with our national enemies: at present, when we come to transfer our king to the English, and yield up to a people who could never conquer us in war the power of lording it over us as a province, I come in sorrow for my country's lost independence in a dress becoming one who waits upon the funeral of a mother."

The speech was certainly rash and prejudiced, yet it was not the less, in some sort, true; for many were the evils which attended the first junction of the kingdoms into one, and scarcely fewer those which attended the incorporating union which followed at the interval of a century. These disadvantages, indeed, were finally incalculably overbalanced by the subsequent benefits of

these important events; but the consideration would lead us much further than the limits of this work permit. We shall, therefore, only say, that king James entered the town of Berwick amid the thunder of the cannon planted to defend that town against his ancestors, and was received in the principal church by the bishop of Durham, who performed a thanksgiving service upon the occasion; - and with the sovereign's occupation of a more wide dominion over a wealthier people naturally closes the history of Scotland as a free and independent state.<sup>53</sup>

The style of Scott's writing in this passage mixes truth with tale to such an extent that they become almost indistinguishable. The "Jacobite tradition" is given the historian's stamp of approval. Furthermore, Scott consciously turns away from considering the Union's effects on Scotland, because to do so would infringe the limits of that form of Scottish patriotism which was so crucial a part of his acceptance of the British present. Thus the real divide becomes one of vocabulary: the Scottish past, whatever "truth" may be contained within it, is characterised by sentiments which are "rash and prejudiced". Any disadvantages which such sentiments may point to in the Union are therefore "incalculably overbalanced" by "subsequent benefits". Such a division of language, based as it is on the precepts of Philosophical History, charting mankind's progress through stages to the civilisation of commercial society, must place Scotland, certainly with the heroic, the poetic and the spirited, but also with the primitive, the wild, the violent, the passionate; thus the close of Scotland's history is "natural".

Finally, two further aspects of the *History* are worth commenting upon. The first concerns the development of Scottish patriotism during the Wars of Independence, and forms an interesting corollary

to what has already been said about Chivalry and Gothic virtue. Scott is insistent that this patriotism was a progressive force which overcame the less worthy, and in any case outmoded, values of feudal Chivalry, which were unable to inspire the nobility to resist Edward I. On the face of it, this is inconsistent with what he wrote in the *Tales* about the feudal spirit that persisted in Scotland under James VI contributing to an anti-Crown independent tradition among the nobles which had all but died out in England.\* However, since the historical consistency of Scott's work lies in first establishing the absolute independence of the Scottish kingdom and then charting the course of history towards the creation of the British united kingdom, it can be seen that there is no contradiction at all. Since the establishment of a free and independent Scotland was an essential prerequisite of his view of subsequent Scottish history moving towards the goal of Union, it is hardly surprising that Scott should take a constructive view of the patriotism which characterised the Wars of Independence. The relevant passages, starting with an explanation of why the nobility of Scotland mostly submitted to Edward I in 1296, are worth quoting at length:

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\* See above, page 119.

It must be generally allowed, that men of property, who have much to lose, are more likely to submit to tyranny and invasion than the poor peasant, who has but his knife and his mantle, and whose whole wealth is his individual share in the freedom and independence of the nation. But this will scarce account for the marks of vacillation and apostasy too visible in the Scottish nobility of this period, in these days of chivalry, when men piqued themselves on holding life in mean regard compared to the slightest and most punctilious point of honour. The following circumstances have suggested themselves in explanation of the remarkable fact.

The nobility of Scotland during the civil wars had, by the unvarying policy of Malcolm Cean-mohr and his successors, come to consist almost entirely of a race foreign to the country, who were not bound to it or to the people by those kindred ties which connect the native with the soil he inhabits, as the same which has been for ages perhaps the abode of his fathers. Two or three generations had not converted Normans into Scots; and, whatever allegiance the emigrated strangers might yield to the monarchs who bestowed on them their fiefs, it must have been different from the sentiments of filial attachment with which men regard the land of their birth and that of their ancestors, and the princes by whose fathers their own had been led into battle, and with whom they had shared conquest and defeat.

In fact, the Normans were neither by birth nor manners rendered accessible to the emotions which constitute patriotism. Their ancestors were those Scandinavians who left without reluctance their native north in search of better settlements, and spread their sails to the winds, like the voluntary exile of modern times, little caring to what shores they were wafted, so that they were not driven back to their own. The education of the Normans of the thirteenth century had not inculcated that love of a natal soil, which they could not learn from their roving fathers of the preceding ages. They were, above all nations, devoted to chivalry, and its doctrines and habits were unfavourable to local attachment. The ideal perfection of the knight-errant was to wander from land to land in quest of adventures, to win renown, to gain earldoms, kingdoms, nay empires, by the sword, and to sit down a settler on his acquisitions, without looking back to the land which gave him life . . . . The true knight-errant was, therefore, a cosmopolite - a citizen of the world: every soil was his country, and he was indifferent to the feelings and prejudices which promote in others patriotic attachment to a particular country.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, Scott goes on, it was hardly surprising that many of the "Scoto-Norman nobles" "took but a lukewarm share in defence of their

country", and that some were "guilty of shameful versatility" during the struggle for independence. "It was different with the Scottish nation at large"<sup>55</sup>, and with William Wallace, the new patriot, in particular:

This champion of his country was of Anglo-Norman descent, but not so distinguished by birth and fortune as to enjoy high rank, great wealth, or participate in that chilling indifference to the public honour and interest which these advantages were apt to create in their possessor. He was born in Renfrewshire, a district of the ancient kingdom of Strath-Clyde, and his nurse may have soothed him with tales and songs of the Welsh bards, as there is room to suppose that the British language was still lingering in remote corners of the country, where it had been once universal. At any rate, Wallace was bred up free from the egotistic and selfish principles which are but too natural to the air of a court, and peculiarly unfavourable to the character of a patriot.<sup>56</sup>

Scott saw the struggle for independence culminating at Bannockburn as the high point of Scottish history, the moment from which it was not only possible but natural to progress towards the Union. Thus a "Scoto-Norman" like Robert Bruce was swayed from indulging in inconsistent "active bursts of sudden enterprise" and from "the immediate pressure of his own interest"<sup>57</sup> by "those strong impulses, which often change the whole human character, and give a new and nobler direction to one who has till then only appeared influenced by the passions and versatility of early youth."<sup>58</sup> By the time of Bannockburn, this transformation has taken place, and indeed the patriot king, when he kills de Bohun, is able to utilise an "active burst of sudden enterprise" in the national interest:

The Scottish nobles remonstrated with Robert on the hazard in which he placed his person. The king looked at his weapon, and



only replied, "I have broken my good battle-axe." He would not justify what he was conscious was an imprudence, but knew, doubtless, like other great men, that there are moments in which the rules of ordinary prudence must be transgressed by a general, in order to give an impulse of enthusiasm to his followers.<sup>59</sup>

These passages indicate that Scott was well aware of the importance which a depiction of patriotism, and an understanding of its potential in the past, could have. All the more interesting, therefore, is that poetic interpretation, even avoidance, of the issue, which was apparent in *The Lord of the Isles* fifteen years earlier.

The second aspect is more a linguistic one. It should by now be apparent that Scott's vision of the past was informed to a very large extent by the division of his vocabulary into two tones, which, to use two of his commonest words, might be described as "rash" and "prudent". These tones are in opposition, and, in the *Waverley Novels*, it is this opposition which emphasises the separation of past and present, and which symbolises the differences between Scott's Scottish and British patriotisms. These vocabularies were, of course, firmly established by the time Scott wrote *The History of Scotland*, and the following three quotations exhibit some of its features, notably the idea that losers or perpetrators of violence are in fact not "sane". The past that does not succeed in relating to the present carries the taint of madness:

In the present times men do not enquire particularly into the religion of those with whom they have to transact affairs, unless their general business be otherwise connected with matters of the conscience. In the less fortunate age of which we are treating [the Sixteenth Century], the fact of belonging to a particular

communion gave even to the most liberal minds a general disposition favourable or unfavourable to an individual, as his faith in religious matters differed from or agreed with theirs. These strong opinions, which had an influence upon the dullest and most moderate minds, excited the bold and enthusiastic to a species of frenzy, which must account for men, otherwise humane and generous, giving way, in the supposed cause of religion, to acts of deceit and violence which they would otherwise have abhorred and condemned, soothing themselves with the apology that they might serve the cause of heaven meritoriously and conscientiously by engaging in enterprises which the spirit of the Gospel as well as its precepts do most emphatically condemn. Upon this principle we are to account for the many melancholy instances which occurred during the sixteenth century of men, otherwise wise, moderate, and virtuous, engaging in plots and conspiracies inconsistent with every idea of law, justice, and humanity.<sup>60</sup>

In fact, the celebrated Gowrie conspiracy, which we are now approaching, is one of those mysterious transactions of which we can never expect a complete explanation; since those who calmly investigate or peruse history can never conceive the power of false views and erroneous motives acting on the minds of men who, from strong and peculiar excitement, engage in dangerous, secret, and criminal adventures. They are generally undertaken by persons whose minds are so much warped at the moment from the natural and moral bias, that the actors cannot be properly termed sane, nor are the principles upon which they act such as can be estimated by men who, undisturbed by passion or prejudice, are in the ordinary possession of their reasoning powers.<sup>61</sup>

But the hopes upon which Athole and his grandson founded the subsequent part of their plot [to murder James I] seem to have been vague and uncertain to an extravagant degree, inducing us to believe, that, like other heated and fiery spirits in similar situations, those engaged in the bloody design must have worked themselves into the belief that the feelings of hatred towards James which animated their own bosoms were also nourished by the greater part of the conspiracy; a species of self-delusion common amongst men who engage in such desperate enterprises.<sup>62</sup>

Self-delusion, madness, dream and desperation are ideas to which Scott had given considerable space when he turned to writing historical fiction sixteen years earlier. In *Waverley* and subsequent novels, he had made them prominent among the hallmarks of Jacobitism.

## Chapter Six

### WAVERLEY: A TRAVELLER IN TIME

*"John Home's profession, as a presbyterian clergyman, his political opinions, and those of his family, decided the cause which he was to espouse, and he became one of the most active and eager members of a corps of volunteers, formed for the purpose of defending Edinburgh against the expected assault of the highlanders. Under less strong influence of education and profession, which was indeed irresistible, it is possible he might have made a less happy option; for the feeling, the adventure, the romance, the poetry, all that was likely to interest the imagination of a youthful poet, - all, in short, save the common sense, prudence, and sound reason of the national dispute, - must be allowed to have lain on the side of the Jacobites. Indeed, although mortally engaged against them, Mr. Home could not, in the latter part of his life, refrain from tears when mentioning the gallantry and misfortunes of the unfortunate leaders of the highland army; and we have ourselves seen his feelings and principles divide him strangely when he came to speak upon such topics."*

The Waverley Novels themselves are the most powerful and articulate testimony to the fact that Scott understood human behaviour in terms of an historical pattern or framework which owed its main features to the Philosophical History of the Scottish Enlightenment. There is seldom any doubt in these fictions that, whatever "wild adventures" (to recall Dr Johnson's definition of Romance) occur, the outcome

will be an assured, optimistic, reasonable and moderate conclusion in favour of modernity and progressive civilisation.

As Graham McMaster has shown<sup>2</sup>, Scott was in fact considerably less confident in his own society's ability to improve itself by the time he came to write the *Tales of a Grandfather* than he was when he produced the earlier and more successful of the *Waverley Novels*. Nevertheless, even in the *Tales* he (by implication) underlines the crucially important fact that his work was printed and would thus remain for posterity:

But it is evident that society, when its advance is dependent on oral tradition alone, must be liable to many interruptions. The imagination of the speaker, and the dulness or want of comprehension of the hearer, may lead to many errors; and it is generally found that knowledge makes but very slow progress until the art of writing is discovered, by which a fixed, accurate, and substantial form can be given to the wisdom of past ages. . . .

By the art of writing, a barrier is fixed against those violent changes so apt to take place in the early stages of society, by which all the fruits of knowledge are frequently destroyed, as those of the earth are by a hurricane.<sup>3</sup>

The idea that Scott, by writing about the violence of the past in the form of the historical romance, was also fixing a barrier against it, brings us to the special significance that his fiction holds for the presentation of the *Scottish* past. This is how one writer, Harry Shaw, has described Scott's approach to this matter:

The issue of Scotland's independence cuts deep in Scott; it involves the central dynamic of his fiction, its continual weighing of the past against the present. His mountain of prose writing creates a set of myths which attempt to deal with the problem of historical transitions like the one that incorporated Scotland into Great Britain. The most pervasive of these myths pits the heroic but violent world of the past against the modern

world, which is less glamorous and colourful, but which offers solid and substantial comforts, peace, prosperity, civilization. We are persuaded, not without regret, to acquiesce in the replacement of the old ways by the new.<sup>4</sup>

The more detailed and extended scope of prose fiction allowed Scott to pursue these themes both more subtly and more expansively, and consequently with greater effect, than had been possible in the epic poems. Since independent Scotland was identified as belonging only to the past, any patriotic sentiments relating *exclusively* to Scotland would also be tied to the past in his historical fiction. They would be associated too with just those elements of ancient heroic virtue which he argued in his *Histories and Essays* were either redundant or completely transformed in the modern world. Thus he allied Scottish patriotism in its ante- or anti-Union forms with the passionate, the individualistic, the fantastical and the imprudent. He showed these forms of patriotism to be doomed to disaster, and then, through the time-scales and mechanisms of his plots, and his oppositional use of language and characterisation, he enabled them to inform the present, in a dualistic mode that posed no political threat to a united Britain. On the contrary, this method reinforced the British condition, by providing an outlet for a patriotic identification which had at least the potential to destroy that condition. Imaginatively, then, Scott bound Scottish patriotism to the past, where it could be indulgently reckless and immune to public accountability. To fulfil its role as a complement and not an alternative to British patriotism, however, it must not take on a public role in reality, nor must it demonstrate an unbroken continuum

between the ante- or anti-Union past and the post- and pro-Union present. The development of this patriotic symbiosis is crucial to Scott's outpouring of historical fiction.

It has already been suggested that the work which Scott put into preparing the Magnum Opus indicates that he saw his collected fiction as being of no small significance to the future; and also that he carried over his aspirations to national bardship into his new role as "teller of tales". Again, his schoolday experiences have already been mentioned as part of a personal mythology supporting these aims. It is no surprise that they should reappear in the General Preface to the Magnum Opus (dated 1st January, 1829):

I must refer to a very early period of my life, were I to point out my first achievements as a tale-teller; but I believe some of my old schoolfellows can still bear witness that I had a distinguished character for that talent, at a time when the applause of my companions was my recompense for the disgraces and punishments which the future romance-writer incurred for being idle himself, and keeping others idle, during hours that should have been employed on our tasks. The chief enjoyment of my holidays was to escape with a chosen friend, who had the same taste with myself, and alternately recite to each other such wild adventures as we were able to devise.<sup>5</sup>

Further on, the stages by which he came to write *Waverley* are charted, providing more evidence of a conscious unity of purpose running through all his works:

It makes no part of the present story to detail how the success of a few ballads had the effect of changing all the purpose and tenor of my life, and of converting a painstaking lawyer of some years' standing into a follower of literature. It is enough to say, that I had assumed the latter character for several years before I seriously thought of attempting a work of imagination in prose, although one or two of my poetical attempts did not differ

from romances otherwise than by being written in verse. But yet I may observe, that about this time (now, alas! thirty years since) I had nourished the ambitious desire of composing a tale of chivalry, which was to be in the style of the *Castle of Otranto*, with plenty of Border characters and supernatural incident. . . .

This particular subject was never resumed, but I did not abandon the idea of fictitious composition in prose, though I determined to give another turn to the style of the work.

My early recollections of the Highland scenery and customs made so favourable an impression in a poem called the *Lady of the Lake*, that I was induced to think of attempting something of the same kind in prose. I had been a good deal in the Highlands at a time when they were much less accessible and much less visited than they have been of late years, and was acquainted with many of the old warriors of 1745, who were, like most veterans, easily induced to fight their battles over again for the benefit of a willing listener like myself. It naturally occurred to me that the ancient traditions and high spirit of a people who, living in a civilised age and country, retained so strong a tincture of manners belonging to an early period of society, must afford a subject favourable for romance, if it should not prove a curious tale marred in the telling.

It was with some idea of this kind that, about the year 1805, I threw together about one-third part of the first volume of *Waverley*.<sup>6</sup>

How completely Scott had perfected a vision of his own achievements in relation to Scotland is shown in this confusion of chronology: *The Lady of the Lake* was written in 1810, five years after this first attempt at *Waverley*. Nevertheless, this only serves to emphasise that for some considerable time the potentialities and limitations of both poetry and prose for his purposes were on Scott's mind. Indeed, on receiving the unfavourable opinion of a critical friend regarding the first chapters of *Waverley*, he threw it aside, since, "having then some poetical reputation, I was unwilling to risk the loss of it by attempting a new style of composition."<sup>7</sup> This, of course, was also the original motive for publishing *Waverley*

anonymously - "the consciousness that it was an experiment on the public taste which might very probably fail . . .".<sup>23</sup>

The General Preface, for all its concern with the question of why anonymity was subsequently preserved after that novel's success, makes no explicit mention of one likely motive: it would have run counter to Scott's authorial modesty to admit it in 1829, but "The Author of *Waverley*" was a title entirely suited to Scott's new-found role as national story-teller. Indeed, it immortalised and gave an air of mystique to that role, which certainly added to the evident enjoyment which Scott derived from the secret:

In my own person . . . as a successful author in another department of literature, I might have been charged with too frequent intrusions on the public patience; but the Author of *Waverley* was in this respect as impassible to the critic as the Ghost of *Hamlet* to the partizan of Marcellus.<sup>24</sup>

Such impassibility, while not essential, was certainly not disadvantageous to Scott's construction of patriotism.

It is the self-recommending, ingratiating aspect of Scott's dualistic patriotism which is most evident in the General Preface, in the famous passage concerning his rediscovery of the opening chapters of *Waverley*:

Two circumstances in particular recalled my recollection of the mislaid manuscript. The first was the extended and well-merited fame of Miss Edgeworth, whose Irish characters have gone so far to make the English familiar with the character of their gay and kind-hearted neighbours of Ireland, that she may be truly said to have done more towards completing the Union [of 1801] than perhaps all the legislative enactments by which it has been followed up.



Without being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact which pervade the works of my accomplished friend, I felt that something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland - something which might introduce her natives to those of the sister kingdom in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles.<sup>10</sup>

This was why Scott chose a young Englishman as hero - to take him on a tour of Scotland "sixty years since" as Scott wished him to see it. But that the idea of "completing the Union" should have recalled to mind a few chapters of manuscript, some eight years old, shows once again that the need satisfactorily to address the problem of Scottish-British relationships was central to Scott's creative impulses, whether in verse or prose. This has to be qualified, however, by noting, once again, a certain confusion of chronology. The eight-year gap alluded to above is derived from Scott's statement that the early portion of *Waverley* (of 1805) was "laid aside in the drawers of an old writing-desk, which, on my first coming to reside at Abbotsford in 1811, was placed in a lumber garret and entirely forgotten"<sup>11</sup>, until the end of 1813.<sup>12</sup> But the second circumstance which, he claims, reminded him of the manuscript, his attempt to complete "an unfinished romance, entitled *Queenhoo Hall*" found among the manuscripts of Joseph Strutt, whose antiquarian works Scott was editing for publication, dates at least five years earlier, to 1807-8<sup>13</sup>. Again, Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* had appeared in 1801, but her next successful *Irish* tale, *Ennui*, was not published until 1809, with *The Absentee* appearing in 1812. Even allowing for the faulty memories of 1830, these circumstances combine to support what

has already been suggested - that, for a long period before *Waverley* reached the public, Scott had been seeking a means of expressing the whole range of concerns which were fundamental to his patriotic stance: the relationship of Scotland to England and to Britain; the relationship of the past to the present; the philosophy of History; and the nature of Romance. Maria Edgeworth's novels and *Queenhoo Hall* were not, then, unrelated and coincidental spurs to the production of one fortuitously conceived novel, *Waverley*. They were part of a much wider, more intricate and more profound framework, as a careful reading of this part of the General Preface reveals. So it is that Scott (aided by a rather contrived but unchallengeable piece of personal mythology about fishing-tackle) manages with deceptive ease to telescope at least six years' worth of contemplation (1808-1814) into a few sentences, when, explaining that *Queenhoo Hall* was a failure because its style and language were too antiquarian and obscure, he goes on:

I conceived it possible to avoid this error; and, by rendering a similar work more light and obvious to general comprehension, to escape the rock on which my predecessor was shipwrecked. But I was, on the other hand, so far discouraged by the indifferent reception of Mr. Strutt's romance as to become satisfied that the manners of the middle ages did not possess that interest which I had conceived; and was led to form the opinion that a romance founded on a Highland story and more modern events would have a better chance of popularity than a tale of chivalry. My thoughts, therefore, returned more than once to the tale which I had actually commenced, and accident at length threw the lost sheets in my way.

I happened to want some fishing-tackle for the use of a guest, when it occurred to me to search the old writing-desk already mentioned, in which I used to keep articles of that nature. I got access to it with some difficulty; and, in looking for lines and flies, the long-lost manuscript presented itself. I immediately set to work to complete it according to my original purpose.<sup>14</sup>

The "original purpose" was, of course, to attempt a Highland subject (such as had been successful in *The Lady of the Lake*) in prose; but, as we have already noted the anachronisms of the General Preface, it is not unreasonable to see that purpose in the much wider perspective of Scott's symbiotic expression of patriotism.

The very first sentence of *Waverley* sets the tone for a novel which is a deliberate exposition of Scott's Scottish-British patriotism: "The title of this work has not been chosen without the grave and solid deliberation which matters of importance demand from the prudent."<sup>15</sup> As our reading of the *Waverley Novels* will show, "grave and solid deliberation" is a phrase absolutely typical of the "prudent" side of Scott's division of vocabulary. This opening tells the reader that, whatever "wild adventures" may be contained in this romance, they are to be reported with meticulous observation of a well-defined linguistic and historical divide. And yet the divide is to be bridged, by means of the originality of Scott's conscious combination of the factors we have noted above: political identity, time, History, Romance.

These factors inform, for example, the careful selection of title and sub-title. *Waverley* is chosen for the hero's name, for

what could my readers have expected from the chivalrous epithets of Howard, Mordaunt, Mortimer, or Stanley, or from the softer and more sentimental sounds of Belmore, Belville, Belfield, and Belgrave, but pages of inanity, similar to those which have been so christened for half a century past? I must modestly admit I am too diffident of my own merit to place it in unnecessary

opposition to preconceived associations; I have, therefore, like a maiden knight with his white shield, assumed for my hero, WAVERLEY, an uncontaminated name, bearing with its sound little of good or evil, excepting what the reader shall hereafter be pleased to affix to it. But my second or supplemental title was a matter of much more difficult election, since that, short as it is, may be held as pledging the author to some special mode of laying his scene, drawing his characters, and managing his adventures.<sup>16</sup>

Having then amused the reader with pastiches of what might be expected from subtitles like "a Tale of Other Days", a "Sentimental Tale" or "A Tale of the Times", he defines his novel in such a way as to have it occupy entirely new ground in relation to the present:

By fixing, then, the date of my story Sixty Years before this present 1st November 1805, I would have my readers understand, that they will meet in the following pages neither a romance of chivalry nor a tale of modern manners . . . . From this my choice of an era the understanding critic may farther presage that the object of my tale is more a description of men than manners. A tale of manners, to be interesting, must either refer to antiquity so great as to have become venerable, or it must bear a vivid reflection of those scenes which are passing daily before our eyes, and are interesting from their novelty.

The manners and fashion of the 1740s, according to Scott, are less amenable to display than either antiquity or modernity. And so he has decided to avoid these disadvantages by

throwing the force of my narrative upon the characters and passions of the actors; - those passions common to men in all stages of society, and which have alike agitated the human heart, whether it throbb'd under the steel corslet of the fifteenth century, the brocaded coat of the eighteenth, or the blue frock and white dimity waistcoat of the present day. Upon these passions it is no doubt true that the state of manners and laws casts a necessary colouring; but the bearings, to use the language of heraldry, remain the same, though the tincture may be not only different, but opposed in strong contradistinction. The wrath of our ancestors, for example, was coloured *gules*; it broke forth in acts of open and sanguinary violence against the objects of its

fury. Our malignant feelings, which must seek gratification through more indirect channels, and undermine the obstacles which they cannot openly bear down, may be rather said to be tinged *sable*. But the deep-ruling impulse is the same in both cases; and the proud peer, who can now only ruin his neighbour according to law, by protracted suits, is the genuine descendant of the baron who wrapped the castle of his competitor in flames, and knocked him on the head as he endeavoured to escape from the conflagration.<sup>17</sup>

This passage has caused some critics to question whether Scott really understood historical change in the terms of the Enlightenment's Philosophical History, or whether he was more inclined to a simple belief in unchanging human nature. Paul Scott rightly dismisses this subject as a "red herring".<sup>18</sup> Even if there were not a mass of material elsewhere to show that Scott was aware of the differences of various historical periods, here he still qualifies his phrase about "those passions common to men in all stages of society" by remarking on the "necessary colouring" cast upon them by "the state of manners and laws" - a qualification which would seem to encompass the essence of Philosophical History. It is more important to note that he offers an example of how similar sentiments may be differently expressed in different ages. Since Scotland is to be associated in *Waverley* with the past, and Britain with the present, this passage is an appropriate preliminary to the distinction between passion and prudence which characterises Scott's articulation of these associations in his fiction.

The most obvious moments at which this distinction is made come near the beginning and at the very end of the novel. The much-

criticised opening chapters are separated from the rest by an apology which, while it reiterates carefully the point about defining the historical context, also holds out the promise of romance:

I beg pardon, once and for all, of those readers who take up novels merely for amusement, for plaguing them so long with old-fashioned politics, and Whig and Tory, and Hanoverians and Jacobites. The truth is, I cannot promise them that this story shall be intelligible, not to say probable, without it. My plan requires that I should explain the motives on which its action proceeded; and these motives necessarily arose from the feelings, prejudices, and parties of the times. I do not invite my fair readers, whose sex and impatience give them the greatest right to complain of these circumstances, into a flying chariot drawn by hippogriffs, or moved by enchantment. Mine is a humble English post-chaise, drawn upon four wheels, and keeping his Majesty's highway. . . . but, with tolerable horses and a civil driver (as the advertisements have it), I engage to get as soon as possible into a more picturesque and romantic country, if my passengers incline to have some patience with me during my first stages.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, by contrast with the "terrestrial retardations" of such travel, Scotland is, despite Scott's protestations, intended to be a destination that will enchant. The extended metaphor of this paragraph confirms that it is not only Edward Waverley who is to make the journey into Scotland, but the novel's readers also, for whom it is also a journey into the past. Waverley is, then, not merely a young, mid-Eighteenth-century Englishman with a lively imagination and an incapacity to control the events that surround him; he is also a time-traveller, a representative of the modern British consciousness with which Scott believed the past, especially the Scottish past, should be viewed. This is made clear by the fact that the story finishes, not with the death of Fergus Mac-Ivor, nor even with the marriage of Edward and Rose, but with the restoration of

Tully-Veolan, and its establishment for the future as a secure piece of real estate in spite of its Jacobite trappings. One could even suggest that these trappings *enhance* the security of the British future, for they are fixed, - literally suspended - harmless but visible to all. The new addition to the dining-room, "which drew tears into the Baron's eyes", typifies this:

It was a large and spirited painting, representing Fergus Mac-Ivor and Waverley in their Highland dress, the scene a wild, rocky, and mountainous pass, down which the clan were descending in the background. It was taken from a spirited sketch, drawn while they were in Edinburgh by a young man of high genius, and had been painted on a full-length scale by an eminent London artist. Raeburn himself (whose "Highland Chiefs" do all but walk out of the canvas) could not have done more justice to the subject; and the ardent, fiery, and impetuous character of the unfortunate Chief of Glennaquoich was finely contrasted with the contemplative, fanciful, and enthusiastic expression of his happier friend. Beside this painting hung the arms which Waverley had borne in the unfortunate civil war. The whole piece was beheld with admiration and deeper feelings.

Men must, however, eat, in spite both of sentiment and vertu . . . .<sup>20</sup>

With that last sardonic remark Scott returns the reader to modern, unheroic reality. The mechanism is more subtle, but nevertheless fulfils the same function, as that of *The Lady of the Lake*: it provides an entry and exit to what is in effect a mythical place. But this does not mean that Scott is dismissing all that occurs therein, or the symbolism of the painting on the wall. On the contrary, he is underlining their importance for the British ethos, explaining the place of Scotland in relation to it. Myths are created for a purpose. Fergus and Edward are painted as large as life, they might almost walk off the wall and pick up the real

weapons beside them, but of course they cannot. They are, nevertheless, on display. Fergus may have been "unfortunate", and likewise the civil war, but both are thus made acceptable, since they appeal exclusively to the "deeper feelings" of those who have survived to enjoy the restored real estate. Having established these points, Scott can add a postscript which is another definition of the historical context:

There is no European nation which, within the course of half a century or little more, has undergone so complete a change as this kingdom of Scotland. The effects of the insurrection of 1745, - the destruction of the patriarchal power of the Highland chiefs, - the abolition of the heritable jurisdictions of the Lowland nobility and barons, - the total eradication of the Jacobite party, which, averse to intermingle with the English, or adopt their customs, long continued to pride themselves upon maintaining ancient Scottish manners and customs, - commenced this innovation. The gradual influx of wealth and extension of commerce have since united to render the present people of Scotland a class of beings as different from their grandfathers as the existing English are from those of Queen Elizabeth's time.<sup>21</sup>

That, for the purposes of Scott's patriotic symbiosis, Scotland was represented by Jacobitism (and Highlanders) in this novel, is demonstrated by this passage. It is specifically and solely with Scotland that it is concerned as being the locus of historical development. It is the Jacobites whose action precipitated the political and economic changes he lists, and it is they who remained apart from the English, and maintained "ancient Scottish manners and customs". To be a Jacobite, then, is to be truly Scottish, but to be a Jacobite is also, as we shall see, to enter a dreamlike world of passion and adventure, where public responsibility is distorted or misconceived. However, as with the Tully-Veolan portrait, this



Scottish identity, so firmly fixed in the past, also trails its feet in the present. Scott writes of our perception of these historical changes, that "like those who drift down the stream of a deep and smooth river, we are not aware of the progress we have made until we fix our eye on the now distant point from which we have drifted."<sup>22</sup> As Cairns Craig has suggested, this is an indication of a fundamental distinction that Scott makes between our perception of the past and our perception of the present:

The image of the amnesiac drift of progress offers vividly Scott's underlying sense that the entry into the modern world is an entry into a storyless environment. Narration and history are divorced for Scott: contemporary history is a silent drift, unparticularised by name or deed; narrative can only connect with a disconnected past. If history is narration then the present is post-history; it inhabits a new realm in which there is progress without narrative. At the very moment, therefore, at which history becomes in Europe a living force, the reality in which people live, act and die, Scott divorces the Scottish present from history.<sup>23</sup>

The closeness of this interpretation to that of Tom Nairn is instantly recognisable. Both treat Scotland's experience of historical development in the Eighteenth Century as unique among the nations of Europe, in particular among peripheral nations or those, to quote Nairn, "outside the great revolutionary centres"<sup>24</sup>. In this respect they are in complete agreement with the claim of Scott himself, that in half a century Scotland had undergone changes unmatched anywhere in the continent. But they challenge Scott's view that these changes constituted another world from that which culminated in the Union and the 'Forty-five, that it should be a necessary part of Scottish cultural and political consciousness to

separate these two worlds, and that history should therefore be suspended in Scotland when it was progressing everywhere else in Europe. The political implications of this truncated historical view will be investigated when we come to look at *The Visionary* and the *Letters of Malachi Malagrowth*. But our immediate concern is to build up a picture of the characteristics which informed Scott's fictional presentation of Scotland's past.

If the beginning and end of *Waverley* are carefully constructed - as in *The Lady in the Lake* - to lead the reader into and out of a romantic, mythical Scotland, the apogee of that expedition occurs in Chapter XXII ("Highland Minstrelsy"), when Waverley is enchanted by Flora Mac-Ivor's song and clarsach at the waterfall:

Edward thought he had never, even in his wildest dreams, imagined a figure of such exquisite and interesting loveliness. The wild beauty of the retreat, bursting upon him as if by magic, augmented the mingled feeling of delight and awe with which he approached her, like a fair enchantress of Boiardo or Ariosto, by whose nod the scenery around seemed to have been created an Eden in the wilderness.<sup>25</sup>

Of course Scott is exercising a certain irony in this description, (which he acknowledged in a footnote to be "too theatrical"<sup>26</sup>) partly because the reader knows that Flora has "set up" the scene, and partly in order to show the process of Waverley's mental involvement and subsequent disenchantment with the Jacobite cause. But in this context it is entirely apposite that Flora's preamble to the song by the waterfall should turn on the subject of bards and heroes:

"The recitation," she said, "of poems, recording the feats of heroes, the complaints of lovers, and the wars of contending tribes, forms the chief amusement of a winter fire-side in the Highlands. Some of these are said to be very ancient, and if they are ever translated into any of the languages of civilised Europe, cannot fail to produce a deep and general sensation. Others are more modern, the composition of those family bards whom the chieftains of more distinguished name and power retain as the poets and historians of their tribes. These, of course, possess various degrees of merit; but much of it must evaporate in translation, or be lost on those who do not sympathise with the feelings of the poet."<sup>27</sup>

Her version in English of the bard Mac-Murrough's composition is delivered at the waterfall because

"a Highland song would suffer still more from my own imperfect translation were I to introduce it without its own wild and appropriate accompaniments. To speak in the poetical language of my country, the seat of the Celtic Muse is in the mist of the secret and solitary hill, and her voice in the murmur of the mountain stream."<sup>28\*</sup>

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\* The location has a further significance, as both David Brown and D.D. Devlin have pointed out. The two streams by Glennaquoich are closely described by Scott, and Brown has written: "Scott's almost pedantic emphasis that 'these streams were also different in character', suggests that his intention is not merely picturesque." The stream up which Flora leads Waverley is that which is "rapid and furious, issuing from between precipices, like a maniac from his confinement, all foam and uproar." (D. Brown, *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, p.25-26). Devlin writes: "in the expression 'like a maniac' Scott suggests . . . that militant Jacobitism is madness." (Quoted by Brown, p.26)

Not surprisingly, the effect on Waverley is overwhelming. He (himself "like a knight of romance") has already seen Flora and her attendant Una appear upon a flimsy bridge "like inhabitants of another region, propped, as it were, in mid air"<sup>29</sup>. Now he experiences a "wild feeling of romantic delight", which "amounted almost to a sense of pain", as Flora sings.<sup>30</sup> Her "summons of heroes"<sup>31</sup> casts Waverley into a mental attitude in which heroism and reality are completely separated. By the end of the day, his mind is

agitated by a variety of new and conflicting feelings, which detained him from rest for some time, in that not unpleasing state of mind in which fancy takes the helm, and the soul rather drifts passively along with the rapid and confused tide of reflections than exerts itself to encounter, systematise, or examine them. At a late hour he fell asleep, and dreamed of Flora Mac-Ivor.<sup>32</sup>

Scott's hyperbolic claim, that these experiences of Waverley go beyond even "his wildest dreams", is highly significant. Such a state of delusion borders on insanity, and cannot be long sustained in one who is to survive, at the book's conclusion, beyond the mythical world of the past. Accordingly, four chapters later we find the heading, "An *Éclaircissement*", marking the beginning of Waverley's dissociation from heroism, dreaming, and history.

Of course, from the early chapters of the book the reader has been prepared for some kind of difficulty on the hero's part in distinguishing between fantasy and reality. Waverley is like Wilfrid Wycliffe in *Rokeby*, "Fancy's spoil'd and wayward child", and his education, consisting mainly of unregulated reading in the extensive

library of Waverley-Honour, is cited as a direct cause of his subsequent misguided career:

To our young hero, who was permitted to seek his instruction only according to the bent of his own mind, and who, of consequence, only sought it so long as it afforded him amusement, the indulgence of his tutors was attended with evil consequences, which long continued to influence his character, happiness, and utility.<sup>33</sup>

Thus his reading consists of romance and chivalry, and the great division that Scott makes in his novels, between passion and reason, becomes epitomised in his mind:

The earlier literature of the northern nations did not escape the study of one who read rather to awaken the imagination than to benefit the understanding. And yet, knowing much that is known but to few, Edward Waverley might justly be considered as ignorant, since he knew little of what adds dignity to man, and qualifies him to support and adorn an elevated situation in society.<sup>34</sup>

Thus the romantic orientation of Waverley's imagination, his propensity for indulging in "waking dreams", diminishes his "utility" as a member of the ascendant class in modern society. Furthermore, his "habits of abstraction and love of solitude" cause him to be ill at ease in society, and to believe himself unfitted for it. Scott does not mince his words, referring to "the dainty, squeamish, and fastidious taste acquired by a surfeit of idle reading" (in a chapter entitled "Castle-Building"), reminding us that his "sneaking piece of imbecility" remark in a private letter\* was not entirely flippant.

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\*See above, p. 109.

Family legends add to the imbalance of his mind, and, "As living in this ideal world became daily more delectable to our hero, interruption was disagreeable in proportion."<sup>35</sup> Scott's design in charting this development is entirely consistent with his siting of the novel within a carefully defined historical context: just as his vision of the Scottish past has a very real function to perform in relation to modern British society, so his depiction of the character of the hero who will make the journey into that past must reflect that relationship. This is made clear at the start of Chapter V, in which the possibility of infatuation with a woman is first linked to Waverley's fanciful mental condition:

From the minuteness with which I have traced Waverley's pursuits, and the bias which these unavoidably communicated to his imagination, the reader may perhaps anticipate, in the following tale, an imitation of the romance of Cervantes. But he will do my prudence injustice in the supposition. My intention is not to follow the steps of that inimitable author, in describing such total perversion of intellect as misconstrues the objects actually presented to the senses, but that more common aberration from sound judgment, which apprehends occurrences indeed in their reality, but communicates to them a tincture of its own romantic form and colouring. So far was Edward Waverley from expecting general sympathy with his own feelings, or concluding that the present state of things was calculated to exhibit the reality of those visions in which he loved to indulge, that he dreaded nothing more than the detection of such sentiments as were dictated by his musings. He neither had nor wished to have a confidant, with whom to communicate his reveries; and so sensible was he of the ridicule attached to them, that, had he been to choose between any punishment short of ignominy, and the necessity of giving a cold and composed account of the ideal world in which he lived the better part of his days, I think he would not have hesitated to prefer the former infliction. This secrecy became doubly precious as he felt in advancing life the influence of the awakening passions. Female forms of exquisite grace and beauty began to mingle in his mental adventures; nor was he long without looking abroad to compare the creatures of his own imagination with the females of actual life.<sup>36</sup>

His commission and subsequent departure to Scotland end any likelihood of a connection with his neighbour Miss Cecilia Stubbs, but Scott has nevertheless established a symbolism which he will exploit to the full in Edward's infatuation with Flora Mac-Ivor and his eventual attachment to Rose Bradwardine. All the points discussed in the foregoing paragraphs help to explain why, in a footnote added for the 1830 Magnum Opus, Scott rebutted the charge that the Introductory Chapters were tedious and unnecessary with the statement that "there are circumstances recorded in them which the author has not been able to persuade himself to retrench or cancel."<sup>37</sup>

Edward's arrival in Scotland marks the beginning of a new phase in his departure from reality: "He now entered upon a new world, where, for a time, all was beautiful because all was new."<sup>38</sup> The duties of military life, however, are not sufficient to satisfy the demands of his imagination. The "vague and unsatisfactory course of reading which he had pursued" had given him a "wavering and unsettled habit of mind", and this, combined with the "arrival of summer, and a curiosity to know something more of Scotland"<sup>39</sup>, leads him to Tully-Veolan and thence to his involvement with the Highlanders. It is no surprise to discover that Scott, in the setting of Tully-Veolan, connects the character of Waverley, "warm in his feelings, wild and romantic in his ideas and in his taste in reading, with a strong disposition towards poetry", to the (ironically depicted) old-world "stoical gravity" of Mr Bradwardine<sup>40</sup>, through the mutually acceptable medium of history. History, or Scott's vision of it, is

the pivot upon which this novel turns, as should by now be clear, and so the contact with history is crucial not only to the voraciously ill-read Waverley but also to the modern reader whom he represents:

But although Edward and he differed *toto cælo*, as the Baron would have said, upon this subject [the art of poetry], yet they met upon history as on a neutral ground, in which each claimed an interest. The Baron, indeed, only cumbered his memory with matters of fact, the cold, dry hard outlines which history delineates. Edward, on the contrary, loved to fill up and round the sketch with the colouring of a warm and vivid imagination, which gives light and life to the actors and speakers in the drama of past ages. Yet with tastes so opposite, they contributed greatly to each other's amusement. Mr Bradwardine's minute narratives and powerful memory supplied to Waverley fresh subjects of the kind upon which his fancy loved to labour, and opened to him a new mine of incident and of character. And he repaid the pleasure thus communicated by an earnest attention, valuable to all story-tellers, more especially to the Baron, who felt his habits of self-respect flattered by it; and sometimes also by reciprocal communications, which interested Mr Bradwardine, as confirming or illustrating his own favourite anecdotes.<sup>41</sup>

In other words, the Baron's "matters of fact" in history are easily susceptible to Waverley's romantic embellishments. Indeed, the true nature of Bradwardine's sense of history is revealed as an infatuation with anachronistic absurdities when he exercises his right, derived from feudal service, to undo the latchet of Prince Charles Edward's brogue in Chapter L, a chapter headed "Rather Unimportant". Fergus Mac-Ivor's dismissal of the Baron's insistence on this point is telling:

"Why, do you not see that the man's whole mind is wrapped up in this ceremony? He has heard and thought of it since infancy as the most august privilege and ceremony in the world; and I doubt not but the unexpected pleasure of performing it was a principal motive with him for taking up arms."<sup>42</sup>



Reading the *Gazette's* report of the ceremony later, Waverley himself, by this stage emerging from his own romantic infatuation with the Jacobite cause, indirectly pronounces dismissive judgment on the relevance of such chivalry, while being unwilling, like Fergus, to discard it as useless:

"Were it not for the recollection of Fergus's raillery . . . how very tolerably would all this sound, and how little I should have thought of connecting it with any ludicrous idea! Well, after all, everything has its fair as well as its seamy side; and truly I do not see why the Baron's boot-jack may not stand as fair in heraldry as the water-buckets, waggons, cart-wheels, plough-socks, shuttles, candlesticks, and other ordinaries, conveying ideas of anything save chivalry, which appear in the arms of some of our most ancient gentry."<sup>43</sup>

This attitude is not far removed from that which allows Jacobite arms and paintings to hang in Hanoverian dining parlours. And it is Waverley, of course, not Fergus Mac-Ivor, who survives into modernity.

But this is all in the future when Waverley first inhabits Tully-Veolan. Rose Bradwardine, whom he will eventually marry, is too mild and ordinary a character to symbolise the lure of the Scottish past for him. She lacks

the sort of beauty or merit which captivates a romantic imagination in early youth. She was too frank, too confiding, too kind; amiable qualities, undoubtedly, but destructive of the marvellous, with which a youth of imagination delights to dress the empress of his affections.

Waverley at this stage is "rather looking out for some object whose affection may dignify him in his own eyes than stooping to one who looks up to him for such distinction."<sup>44</sup> He finds just such an object, of course, in Flora Mac-Ivor - "precisely the character to fascinate a youth of romantic imagination." She is "bewitching", "an enchantress", and her perfection does indeed dignify Waverley's involvement with the Jacobite cause.<sup>45</sup>

For Flora is so idealised a character, especially in comparison with Rose, that her symbolism cannot be mistaken. Even next to her brother she represents an ideal to which he can only aspire:

His looks seemed to seek glory, power, all that could exalt him above others in the race of humanity; while those of his sister, as if she were already conscious of mental superiority, seemed to pity, rather than envy, those who were struggling for any farther distinction.

Moreover, her political position is so pure as to be virtually untainted by politics:

Her sentiments corresponded with the expression of her countenance. Early education had impressed upon her mind, as well as on that of the Chieftain, the most devoted attachment to the exiled family of Stuart. She believed it the duty of her brother, of his clan, of every man in Britain, at whatever personal hazard, to contribute to that restoration which the partisans of the Chevalier St George had not ceased to hope for. For this she was prepared to do all, to suffer all, to sacrifice all. But her loyalty, as it exceeded her brother's in fanaticism, excelled it also in purity.

In Flora, Scott tells us,

the zeal of loyalty burnt pure and unmixed with any selfish feeling; she would have as soon made religion the mask of ambitious and interested views as have shrouded them under the opinions which she had been taught to think patriotism.<sup>46</sup>

Again and again, in the three Jacobite novels (*Waverley*, *Rob Roy* and *Redgauntlet*), Scott emphasises the *mistaken* as well as the imprudent nature of such patriotic sentiments. He does not deride or attack Jacobitism on principle, but he makes it clear that its adherents were in a position which the progress of history could not favour. Those who would "survive" history - like *Waverley*, like Scott himself - were those who could accommodate such attachments to pre- or anti-Union Scotland within the elaborate compromise of sentiments and language which Scott had constructed, building on the experiences of the Enlightenment period. Flora's mistake is utterly complete and genuine: she could never conceive of it as being a mistake. This is why she is so attractive to *Waverley*, but it is also why she is associated with dream and unreality, and why she, "already conscious of mental superiority", sees that *Waverley's* involvement with the cause is not genuine, but an individual's brief excursion into what will eventually become a romantic picture of the past. The difference between Flora and Edward is that for the one the Jacobite cause is never a mistake, while for the other it is a mistake which can be used, after it is all over, to symbolise the Scottish past. Thus, in lamenting the decline of the character of "old Scottish cavalier", of which the Baron of Bradwardine was a fine example, Flora expresses hope for "a brighter day", when the Scottish country gentleman may again present a character fitting to his

station. The unspoken implication is that this day will come through the restoration of the Stuarts, but the conclusion of the novel demonstrates the "real" alternative. As Scott puts it: "Thus did Flora prophesy a revolution, which time indeed has produced, but in a manner very different from what she had in her mind."<sup>47</sup>

It is no coincidence that Scott follows this remark with Flora's description of Rose Bradwardine and her wifely attributes, and the ensuing hints about her future husband:

"That man," said Flora, "will find an inestimable treasure in the affections of Rose Bradwardine who shall be so fortunate as to become their object. Her very soul is in home, and in the discharge of all those quiet virtues of which home is the centre. Her husband will be to her what her father now is, the object of all her care, solicitude, and affection. She will see nothing, and connect herself with nothing, but by him and through him. . . . O that I were a queen this moment, and could command the most amiable and worthy youth of my kingdom to accept happiness with the hand of Rose Bradwardine!"

"I wish you would command her to accept mine *en attendant*," said Fergus, laughing.

I don't know by what caprice it was that this wish, however jocularly expressed, rather jarred on Edward's feelings, notwithstanding his growing inclination to Flora and his indifference to Miss Bradwardine. This is one of the inexplicabilities of human nature, which we leave without comment.<sup>48</sup>

In fact, Scott is using the novel-form to manufacture an explanation of this "inexplicability", for the marriage of Edward and Rose will of course justify Edward's feelings here. This love analogy reflects the wider historical and patriotic concerns of the book: the symbolic conclusion at Tully-Veolan, in which the surviving characters gaze "with admiration, and deeper feelings" upon the full-

length portrait of the past, justifies the romanticism of Scottish history. As Flora prophesies to Rose of this same conclusion, (which to her is the future):

"But high and perilous enterprise is not Waverley's forte. He would never have been his celebrated ancestor Sir Nigel, but only Sir Nigel's eulogist and poet. I will tell you where he will be at home, my dear, and in his place - in the quiet circle of domestic happiness, lettered indolence, and elegant enjoyments of Waverley-Honour. And he will refit the old library in the most exquisite Gothic taste, and garnish its shelves with the rarest and most valuable volumes; and he will draw plans and landscapes, and write verses, and rear temples, and dig grottoes; and he will stand in a clear summer night in the colonnade before the hall, and gaze on the deer as they stray in the moonlight, or lie shadowed by the boughs of the huge old fantastic oaks; and he will repeat verses to his beautiful wife, who will hang upon his arm; - and he will be a happy man."<sup>49</sup>

Waverley will be "in his place" in these circumstances, where sentiment, taste, station and historical time combine to form the location to which he is suited. The parallels with Scott's own life at Abbotsford are obvious.

But Waverley, when caught up in the Jacobite adventure, is not able fully to understand this. As Fergus Mac-Ivor remarks, urging him to marry Rose, "'you are not celebrated for knowing your own mind very pointedly."<sup>50</sup> This is consistent, since the Jacobites generally are depicted as acting under political and patriotic delusions, however admirable their motives may be. The Presbyterian Minister of Cairnvreckan, Mr Morton, talks of "misguided gentlemen . . . now in arms against the government, many, doubtless, upon principles which education and early prejudice have gilded with the names of patriotism and heroism". He speaks of youth, "misled by the

wild visions of chivalry and imaginary loyalty".<sup>51</sup> Later, the English prisoner Colonel Talbot makes the same point in arguing that Waverley should release himself from his "rash engagement": "'you are fighting against the real interests of your country; and . . . you ought, as an Englishman and a patriot, to take the first opportunity to leave this unhappy expedition before the snow-ball melts.'"<sup>52</sup> Scott is meticulous with the vocabulary of the prejudiced Talbot: earlier a letter from Waverley's commanding officer Colonel Gardiner has reminded him of his "duty as a man of honour, an officer, and a Briton".<sup>53</sup> The appeals to national identity may differ, but their message to Waverley is essentially the same: *you are in the wrong place.*

Flora also articulates, as it were on Waverley's behalf when he is "too much agitated by feelings of recent emotion" to "weigh the justice and the danger of the cause"<sup>54</sup>, the *prudent* position against involvement in it which forms one side of the linguistic balance of the novel. Edward is in fact not unaware of this position. Already encouraged by Fergus to avenge his personal and family grievances by overthrowing the Hanoverian government, he has "coolly" responded that "since the time of my grandfather two generations of this dynasty have possessed the throne".<sup>55</sup> But he suffers, like so many of Scott's young heroes, a curious debilitation when it comes to acting upon this knowledge - hardly surprising, if we think of him as a visitor from another age, and the knowledge therefore retrospective and anachronistic. On one occasion he contemplates "the strangeness of his fortune, which seemed to delight in placing him at the

disposal of others, without the power of directing his own motions".<sup>56</sup> Flora suggests that he is out of his depth, perhaps temporally ("so new to the world") as well as emotionally: ". . . how can I wish you, Mr Waverley, so new to the world, so far from every friend who might advise and ought to influence you, - in a moment, too, of sudden pique and indignation, - how can I wish you to plunge yourself at once into so desperate an enterprise?"<sup>57</sup>

Later, Waverley is able to argue the point to himself more fully, or, rather, Scott does it for him:

Whatever were the original rights of the Stuarts, calm reflection told him that, omitting the question how far James the Second could forfeit those of his posterity, he had, according to the united voice of the whole nation, justly forfeited his own. Since that period four monarchs had reigned in peace and glory over Britain, sustaining and exalting the character of the nation abroad and its liberties at home. Reason asked, was it worth while to disturb a government so long settled and established, and to plunge a kingdom into all the miseries of civil war, for the purpose of replacing upon the throne the descendants of a monarch by whom it had been wilfully forfeited?<sup>58</sup>

But in the meantime, he cannot take up Flora's proposal that he look to himself, not to her, for guidance in this matter: "a thousand circumstances of fatal self-indulgence have made me the creature rather of imagination than reason."<sup>59</sup> The resolution of this imbalance is the political and historical resolution that will emerge at the close of the novel. And the historical resolution is itself a division between imagination and reason. Discussing Waverley's declared attachment to Flora, Fergus asks: "'And is this your very sober earnest . . . or are we in the land of romance and fiction?'"

Edward replies, "My earnest, undoubtedly"<sup>60</sup>, but the reader knows perfectly well which land he is in as he says it.

The symbolism of Waverley's infatuation with Flora is again apparent in the second meeting between them at the waterfall, when she rejects his suit. Love and the cause are now inextricably linked, and from this perspective Hanoverian reality has become momentarily "like a dream":

Love, with all its romantic train of hopes, fears, and wishes, was mingled with other feelings of a nature less easily defined. . . . Sun-rise had seen him possessed of an esteemed rank in the honourable profession of arms, his father to all appearance rapidly rising in the favour of his sovereign. All this had passed away like a dream: he himself was dishonoured, his father disgraced, and he had become involuntarily the confidant at least, if not the accomplice, of plans, dark, deep, and dangerous, which must infer either the subversion of the government he had so lately served or the destruction of all who had participated in them.

For Waverley, to commit himself to the Jacobite cause is scarcely to act voluntarily, is bordering on insanity:

. . . to engage himself, with no other aid than his single arm, in the dangerous and precipitate counsels of the Chieftain, to be whirled along by him, the partaker of all his desperate and impetuous motions, renouncing almost the power of judging, or deciding upon the rectitude or prudence of his actions, this was no pleasing prospect for the secret pride of Waverley to stoop to.<sup>61</sup>

And indeed, though he is involved in the rebellion, Waverley is not able to accept such implications. He wants the romance of history, but not to be the victim of that romance. When Flora scorns



his "lukewarm adherence" to the cause, and his use of phrases like "a favourable opportunity" and "inclined in principles",<sup>62</sup> she is deriding the very idea of compromise, just as Redgauntlet derides the hesitations of Darsie Latimer in the later novel.<sup>63</sup> Scott, Waverley and the reader all admire Flora for her principles, and even look upon her as a model of selfless patriotism; but she is only believable so long as she inhabits that other world of the past. Upon his return to the Lowlands, Waverley's memory of Flora is enhanced by distance. "There are mists too in the mental as well as the natural horizon . . .", writes Scott, and

all that was commonplace, all that belonged to the every-day world, was melted away and obliterated in those dreams of imagination, which only remembered with advantage the points of grace and dignity that distinguished Flora from the generality of her sex, not the particulars which she held in common with them.<sup>64</sup>

This idealising of Flora's character enables Scott to articulate through her the prudence/passion dilemma of Waverley's position, in relation not only to herself but to the historical crisis in which he is embroiled. It is Scott speaking when Flora advises:

"But consult your own good sense and reason rather than a prepossession hastily adopted, probably only because you have met a young woman possessed of the usual accomplishments in a sequestered and romantic situation. Let your part in this great and perilous drama rest upon conviction, and not on a hurried and probably a temporary feeling."<sup>65</sup>

The balance between prudence and passion is reflected in the recurring theme of *dream*, of which we have already had several

examples, and with which Scotland, the past, the Highlands and Jacobitism are all associated. The theft of cattle from Tully-Veolan which indirectly leads Waverley to the Mac-Ivors is a case in point:

It seemed like a dream to Waverley that these deeds of violence should be familiar to men's minds, and currently talked of as falling within the common order of things, and happening daily in the immediate vicinity, without his having crossed the seas, and while he was yet in the otherwise well-ordered island of Great Britain.<sup>66</sup>

Then, on the way to Glennaquoich, Waverley is wrapped in "dreams of imagination" induced by "the full romance of his situation". "What a variety of incidents for the exercise of a romantic imagination . . . !" Scott half-ironically exclaims, in the anonymous authorial knowledge that history and fiction are equally at his disposal to create such an atmosphere.<sup>67</sup> At Cairnvreckan Waverley's life is again a dream<sup>68</sup>, and later, in Edinburgh, as the infatuation with Flora begins to wear off, we find that, "like one striving to recover the particulars of a forgotten dream, he would have given the world at that moment to have recollected the grounds on which he had founded expectations which now seemed so delusive."<sup>69</sup> The confusion of love with the cause is subtly played upon in this scene, since Waverley still has some way to go to extricate himself from the fantasy of the past, even though he is disenchanted of Flora:

"This, then, is an end of my day-dream!" Such was Waverley's first thought, and it was so exquisitely painful as to banish from his cheek every drop of blood.

"Good God!" said Rose Bradwardine, "he is not yet recovered!"<sup>70</sup>

Nor is he. On the eve of Prestonpans, he sees and hears Colonel Gardiner, his former commander, giving orders to the government troops, and, suffering pangs of patriotic guilt, "wished to awake from what seemed at the moment a dream, strange, horrible, and unnatural."<sup>71</sup> We have already stressed the importance of seeing Waverley as a representative from the present journeying into the past: on this reading, the idea of dream is highly appropriate, for it is only through the medium of fiction that Waverley can witness an event such as Prestonpans. In historical terms, *he is not really there*. This partially accounts for the curious reputation he gains in the Jacobite army for heroism and "distinguished bravery"<sup>72</sup>, when in fact he spends the entire battle attempting to save individual enemy officers and does not strike a single blow against the government.<sup>73</sup> It would be hard to accommodate acts of outright violence in the conclusion of the novel, and so Waverley is absolved from any such act. To be "out" in the 'Forty-five is one thing; to admit to violence in it upsets Scott's careful compromise. Nor will this line drawn at violence be crossed by Scott on a later occasion, in the *Letters of Malachi Malagrowth*.

For Waverley, the lessons of his retrospective venture into the past are positively portrayed. Returning to Tully-Veolan after Culloden, his character is "elevated": "'A sadder and wiser man,' he felt in internal confidence and mental dignity a compensation for the gay dreams which in his case experience had so rapidly dissolved."<sup>74</sup> But for those who were committed too heavily to the Jacobite cause,

whether through violence, self-interest or "mistaken virtue", there is little possibility of compromise or survival. For Flora Mac-Ivor, there is exile in a French nunnery - the first of several such fates for doomed characters in Scott's novels.<sup>75</sup> For Fergus, there is execution. But, as one motivated by ambition as much as honour, who, when seized by "a towering passion" could appear "demoniac", and who was subject - as no "prudential" hero could be - to superstitious delusions about healing spells and the spirit of the Bodach Glas, such a fate is only consistent with the vision of the past repeatedly projected by Scott in verse, history and fiction.<sup>76</sup> These are faults and delusions quite different from the frailties and fantasies of a lively imagination, and they are almost impossible to accommodate in any compromise with the present. "Mistaken virtue", on the other hand, is no disgrace<sup>77</sup>, and, as with characters like the Baron of Bradwardine, there is no such difficulty. Only when it is elevated to an ideal, as with Flora Mac-Ivor, is it resigned to the past forever.

At one point Scott writes: "It is not our purpose to intrude upon the province of history."<sup>78</sup> But of course, in one sense, that is precisely what he does in *Waverley*, and, to a lesser extent, in the subsequent novels. He does not interfere with historical fact, but, by mixing it with fiction, he rewrites history, bringing the past to life for the modern reader. But he achieves this by intruding modern perceptions into the body of history, and, in particular, by using a highly intricate interpretation of the relationship between Scotland and Britain, passion and prudence, and dream and reality to inform

the relationship between past and present. The result is an arrangement which enables the reader to travel imaginatively into the past while remaining divorced from it in everyday life; to romanticise it without feeling responsible to it, or obligated by it. As Scott put it in a letter of 1813, "I am not the least afraid nowadays of making my feelings walk hand in hand with my judgement though the former are Jacobitical and the latter inclined for public weal to the present succession . . .".<sup>73</sup>

Since Scott was building upon the dualistic patriotism initiated in the post-Union years of the Eighteenth Century, such an exercise was likely to prove particularly successful in a Scottish context. In the historical novel, he had found a form almost perfectly suited to this purpose, and, over the next few years, would produce a corpus of history, romance, myth, and morality, which embodied his ideology of patriotisms in tandem. We have already examined the conclusion of *Waverley* in the dining parlour at Tully-Veolan, but perhaps another paragraph illustrates more clearly the cumulation of our various themes into a firm statement about the relationship of past to present. It comes at the close of Chapter LX, when Waverley is in hiding in Cumberland, and (allowing for the particular meaning of the word "history" in this instance) it puts as firm a division between the romantic past and the real present, and all their respective associations, as appears anywhere else in the novel:

In this lonely and secluded situation, without the advantage of company or conversation with men of cultivated minds, the arguments of Colonel Talbot often recurred to the mind of our hero. A still more anxious recollection haunted his slumbers - it was the dying look and gesture of Colonel Gardiner. Most devoutly

did he hope, as the rarely occurring post brought news of skirmishes with various success, that it might never again be his lot to draw his sword in civil conflict.\* Then his mind turned to the supposed death of Fergus, to the desolate situation of Flora, and, with yet more tender recollection, to that of Rose Bradwardine, who was destitute of the devoted enthusiasm of loyalty, which to her friend hallowed and exalted misfortune. These reveries he was permitted to enjoy, undisturbed by queries or interruption; and it was in many a winter walk by the shores of Ulswater that he acquired a more complete mastery of a spirit tamed by adversity than his former experience had given him; and that he felt himself entitled to say firmly, though perhaps with a sigh, that the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced. . . ."

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\* (To draw it is all he has done!)

## Chapter Seven

### FURTHER EXCURSIONS: *GUY MANNERING* AND *THE ANTIQUARY*

*"With personal predilections stronger probably than those of Hume himself, our great Magician of Romance gave a local and abiding reality to the received perversions of history; and threw over them that dangerous charm which his unrivalled genius alone could bestow. Our recent history, in fact, has been obscured by the pen of Walter Scott, just as the Wars of the Roses lie entombed under the dramatic fables of Shakspeare."*

At the end of the last chapter, it was argued that Scott's historical imagination brought the past to life for the modern reader by "intruding modern perceptions into the body of history". An observer with essentially *prudential* values was introduced into a past characterised by passion and violence, where he discovered that his imagination's penchant for romance and fantasy could be indulged safely, provided that his return to the present was accompanied by an affirmation of the primacy of prudence in modern *reality*. Furthermore, the romantic construction of the past which this exercise allowed, although by its nature necessitating that the perception of the past be "divorced" from the present, could also be used to inform the attitudes of Scots who found their Scottish and

British sentiments potentially at odds. The weight of Scott's presentation of Scottish history, whether in poetry, history or fiction, tended to emphasise its finite nature, its conclusion at some point (with co-ordinates at 1707 and *circa* 1745) during the first half of the Eighteenth Century, and so expressions of Scottish patriotism would naturally be allied with the passionate, individualistic or irresponsible characteristics of that presentation of the past, while British patriotism would align with the reasonable, publicly virtuous, prudential values of the present. As has already been suggested, these sorts of preoccupations were not original to Scott, but his broader and progressively more sophisticated elaboration of them was unique. Because this development hinges so much upon the relationship which Scott established in his work between present and past, it is worth looking in more detail at this subject before moving on to some of the other Waverley Novels dealing with Scottish history.

In December 1819, after a succession of nine "Scottish Novels" ("as they were then exclusively termed"<sup>2</sup>), Scott broke new ground with the publication of *Ivanhoe*. In his 1830 introduction to this novel, Scott explained that he made this change of course because he felt that, "in confining himself to subjects purely Scottish, he was not only likely to weary out the indulgence of his readers, but also greatly to limit his own power of affording them pleasure."<sup>3</sup> His original intention, in departing from those Scottish subjects "with which the Author was most intimately and familiarly acquainted"<sup>4</sup>, was to publish under a new name, but he was persuaded against this, and



indeed, any fears that his skills at combining historical fact with romance might fail when applied to English history were proved groundless by the popularity of *Ivanhoe* and some of the later English novels. "*Ivanhoe*", he wrote, "was highly successful upon its appearance, and may be said to have procured for its Author the freedom of the rules, since he has ever since been permitted to exercise his powers of fictitious composition in England as well as Scotland."<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, as we have seen, "The Author of *Waverley*" was essentially a persona connected with Scott's *Scottish* aspirations, and consequently his preoccupation with patriotic concerns (Scottish and British) was absent in the context of the English past. Instead, in *Ivanhoe*, he concentrated on contrasting "the Saxons, by whom the soil was cultivated, and the Normans, who still reigned in it as conquerors, reluctant to mix with the vanquished, or acknowledge themselves of the same stock. . . .

It seemed to the Author that the existence of the two races in the same country, the vanquished distinguished by their plain, blunt, homely manners, and the free spirit infused by their ancient institutions and laws; the victors, by the high spirit of military fame, personal adventure, and whatever could distinguish them as the flower of chivalry, might, intermixed with other characters belonging to the same time and country, interest the reader by the contrast, if the Author should not fail on his part.<sup>6</sup>

There would seem to be an obvious parallel here with the contrast between Highlander and Lowlander in *Waverley* and others of the Scottish novels. The racial characteristics are not the same, nor are they distributed in any related pattern, but the *contrast* seems similar. But this is a misconception. David Daiches, as has already

been noted, described *Ivanhoe* as "a straight novel of the age of chivalry" which bore no relation to "what had hitherto been the principal theme of his prose-fiction - the relations between the old heroic Scotland and the new, Anglicized, commercial Britain." *Ivanhoe*, according to Daiches, "is much more superficial than any of the Scottish novels, and is written throughout on a much lower plane."\* While I have expressed reservations about the main emphases of Daiches' interpretation of Scott, it is certainly true that the crucial missing element which sets *Ivanhoe* apart from its predecessors is the question of the Scottish/British patriotic relationship. This is not to say, however, that Scott simply disposed of the closely related past/present tension when he turned to English medieval history in his fiction. In fact, the shift made Scott address himself directly to this problem, since the past had to be redefined outwith a specifically *Scottish* context. As he recorded in 1830, Scotland "had been of late used so exclusively as the scene of what is called historical romance, that the preliminary letter of Mr. Laurence Templeton became in some measure necessary."<sup>7</sup> It was to this "Dedicatory Epistle to the Rev. Dr. Dryasdust, F.A.S.", which prefaces *Ivanhoe*, that Scott advised his readers to turn for a full explanation of the problem.

In this preface, Scott adopted the identity of one Laurence Templeton, who sought to vindicate to his "grave antiquary" friend, Dr Jonas Dryasdust, his attempt to write a romance from ancient

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\* See above, p. 23.

English historical materials. On a previous occasion, when these two had discussed the "Scottish Novels" which had already appeared, Dryasdust had evidently been of the opinion

. . . that the charm lay entirely in the art with which the unknown author had availed himself, like a second M'Pherson, of the antiquarian stores which lay scattered around him, supplying his own indolence or poverty of invention by the incidents which had actually taken place in his country at no distant period, by introducing real characters, and scarcely suppressing real names. It was not above sixty or seventy years, you observed, since the whole north of Scotland was under a state of government nearly as simple and as patriarchal as those of our good allies the Mohawks and Iroquois. Admitting that the Author cannot himself be supposed to have witnessed those times, he must have lived, you observed, among persons who had acted and suffered in them; and even within these thirty years, such an infinite change has taken place in the manners of Scotland that men look back upon the habits of society proper to their immediate ancestors as we do on those of the reign of Queen Anne, or even the period of the Revolution.<sup>8</sup>

In short, Dr Dryasdust had used the historical argument of the postscript in *Waverley* to claim that Scotland was infinitely more capable of providing material for romances than England, where "civilisation has been so long complete, that our ideas of our ancestors are only to be gleaned from musty records and chronicles", and not from recent memory.<sup>9</sup> This is a comparison which Scott had discussed already in the first chapter of *The Heart of Midlothian*.<sup>\*</sup> It was the proximity of the Scottish past, in other words, which made it so susceptible to romantic exploitation.

Curiously, however, and in spite of Dr Dryasdust's purportedly

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\* See below, Chapter Ten.

anti-romantic persuasions, this proximity seems only to have exaggerated the mythological, magical character of Scottish history. Furthermore, this character was further enhanced by *patriotic* sentiments apparently absent in England. Thus Templeton's suggestion that "the patriots of England deserve no less their renown in our modern circles than the Bruces and Wallaces of Caledonia"<sup>10</sup> had been coldly received by Dryasdust:

To match an English and a Scottish author in the rival task of embodying and reviving the traditions of their respective countries would be, you alleged, in the highest degree unequal and unjust. The Scottish magician, you said, was, like Lucan's witch, at liberty to walk over the recent field of battle, and to select for the subject of resuscitation by his sorceries a body whose limbs had recently quivered with existence, and whose throat had but just uttered the last note of agony. . . . The English author, on the other hand, without supposing him less of a conjuror than the Northern Warlock, can, you observed, only have the liberty of selecting his subject amidst the dust of antiquity, where nothing was to be found but dry, sapless, mouldering, and disjointed bones, such as those which filled the valley of Jehoshaphat. You expressed, besides, your apprehension that the unpatriotic prejudices of my countrymen would not allow fair play to such a work as that of which I endeavoured to demonstrate the probable success.<sup>11</sup>

This was because the English reader, "surrounded by all the comforts of an Englishman's fireside", was "not half so much disposed to believe that his own ancestors led a very different life from himself" as he was "to believe the strangest things that could be told him of a people wild and extravagant enough to be attached to scenery so extraordinary" as the Highlands of Scotland.<sup>12</sup> Templeton nevertheless declares his "resolution to overleap the barriers which your prudence has raised", by attempting a romance based on the English past.<sup>13</sup> Both Dryasdust and Templeton, then, in whom are

personified the two sides of Scott's debate about historical presentation, acknowledge that Scotland's history is more suitable to fictional exploitation than England's, and that this is in some degree owing to different patriotic attitudes. The way in which their views are *not*, in fact, mutually incompatible is reminiscent of the common ground found between the Baron of Bradwardine and Edward Waverley, or, as we shall see in *The Antiquary*, between Jonathan Oldbuck and the young Mr Lovel. In fact, they are both created by Scott just so that through their dispute he can reach this common ground. It is against this background that he wrote (and, in the 1830 Introduction, referred the reader to) Templeton's justification of historical fiction - a justification which became necessary only when he turned to English history for his source (his "mine"<sup>14</sup>) of material.

For, until *Ivanhoe*, the whole corpus of Scott's writing was concentrated on depicting the Scottish past, and there was no difficulty in his mind as to how this should be presented to contemporary Britain. Patriotic considerations overrode all others. He was more cautious on new territory. David Brown, noting the same development, has suggested that, before *Ivanhoe*,

Scott's approach to the question of historical authenticity in the major Scottish novels seems to have been intuitive rather than conscious. . . . Certainly, in breaking with the Scottish milieu in *Ivanhoe*, Scott's imaginative grasp of his material was for the first time revealed as insecure, and he may have faced the problems posed by the novel theoretically in the Dedicatory Epistle because he felt he had been unable to solve them in practice, in the novel itself. The result is that the Dedicatory Epistle is only superficially a defence of *Ivanhoe*: Scott's confident style fails to conceal his own doubts.<sup>15</sup>

So it is a more restrained Scott, alias Templeton, who defends himself against the charge of "the severer antiquary" that, "by thus intermingling fiction with truth, I am polluting the well of history with modern inventions, and impressing upon the rising generation false ideas of the age which I describe." He cannot, he admits, "pretend to the observation of complete accuracy, even in matters of outward costume, much less in the more important points of language and manners." But then, he goes on, it would serve no purpose to do so: "It is necessary, for exciting interest of any kind, that the subject assumed should be, as it were, translated into the manners, as well as the language, of the age we live in."<sup>16</sup> This was a principle not followed by "the late ingenious Mr. Strutt", who, in his *Queenhoo Hall*,

in distinguishing between what was ancient and modern, forgot, as it appears to me, that extensive neutral ground, the large proportion, that is, of manners and sentiments which are common to us and to our ancestors, having been handed down unaltered from them to us, or which, arising out of the principles of our common nature, must have existed alike in either state of society. . . .

The passions, the sources from which these [sentiments and manners] must spring in all their modifications, are generally the same in all ranks and conditions, all countries and ages; and it follows as a matter of course that the opinions, habits of thinking, and actions, however influenced by the peculiar state of society, must still, upon the whole, bear a strong resemblance to each other. . . .

It follows, therefore, that of the materials which an author has to use in a romance, or fictitious composition, such as I have ventured to attempt, he will find that a great proportion, both of language and manners, is as proper to the present time as to those in which he has laid his time of action."<sup>17</sup>

Much of this, of course, is familiar from the General Preface, where *Queenhoo Hall* is discussed, and from the first chapter of *Waverley*. The "principles of our common nature", the "passions common to men in all stages of society", both here and in *Waverley*, appear as Scott's key to presenting and understanding the past. The difference, however, is that, with *Ivanhoe*, no patriotic dualism is necessary, whereas with *Waverley* it is fundamental and, furthermore, is closely linked to emphasising *differences* between past and present. Scotland's past is considered natural territory for fictional romance, but when he turns his attention to England's Scott feels it necessary to justify what we have termed "intruding modern perceptions into the body of history". By contrast, *The Antiquary* (1816) was prefaced with the simple explanation:

The present Work completes a series of fictitious narratives intended to illustrate the manners of Scotland at three different periods. *Waverley* embraced the age of our fathers, *Guy Mannering* that of our own youth, and the *Antiquary* refers to the last ten years of the eighteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

The patterns of theme, form and language which we traced in *Waverley* are repeated in varying degrees of strength throughout the succeeding Scottish Novels, in most of which Scott's dualistic patriotism is again the dominant feature. Chief among these novels are: *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816), *Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1818), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), and *Redgauntlet* (1824), although it should be noted that other minor novels, and some of the stories of the *Chronicles of the Canongate*, exhibit the same characteristics. Some of these works can be dealt

with quite briefly, while two in particular, *The Heart of Midlothian* and *Old Mortality*, deserve more detailed attention.

## II

In *Guy Mannering* (or *The Astrologer*), both the eponymous hero and the young Vanbeest Brown travel, like Edward Waverley, into a Scotland which, though at first its attraction is merely romantic, becomes, as the novel unfolds, the locale for their self-discovery. As in *Waverley*, however, this growing self-awareness is not accompanied by a readjustment of their attitude to Scotland: rather, it remains a place, a *scene*, where passion, romance and the mystique of the past can complement the prudent modern conclusion of the book.

The very existence of the Auld Place next to the New Place at Ellangowan symbolises this relationship. Colonel Mannering, on his first visit, is struck by the ruins of old buildings, towers and beacons along the Galloway coastline:

Ellangowan Castle was by far the most extensive and important of these ruins, and asserted from size and situation the superiority which its founders were said once to have possessed among the chiefs and nobles of the district. . . .

A scene so different from what last night's journey had presaged produced a proportional effect upon Mannering. Beneath his eye lay the modern house - an awkward mansion, indeed, in point of architecture, but well situated, and with a warm, pleasant exposure. "How happily," thought our hero, "would life glide on in such retirement! On the one hand, the striking remnants of ancient grandeur, with the secret consciousness of



family pride which they inspire; on the other, enough of modern elegance and comfort to satisfy every moderate wish."<sup>19</sup>

Twenty-one years later, Vanbeest Brown (who is, unbeknown to himself, Harry Bertram, the heir to Ellangowan) is also attracted, from a boat, by the sight of the Auld and New Places together on the coast. His musings, having landed, are highly ironical:

"And the powerful barons who owned this blazonry," thought Bertram, pursuing the usual train of ideas which flows upon the mind at such scenes - "do their posterity continue to possess the lands which they had laboured to fortify so strongly? or are they wanderers, ignorant perhaps even of the fame or power of their forefathers, while their hereditary possessions are held by a race of strangers? Why is it," he thought, continuing to follow out the succession of ideas which the scene prompted - "why is it that some scenes awaken thoughts which belong as it were to dreams of early and shadowy recollection, such as my old Bramin *moonshie* would have ascribed to a state of my previous existence?"<sup>20</sup>

And he goes on in an attempt to connect these ideas with the location of Ellangowan, from which, of course, he was abducted at the age of five.

This is only what one might expect in the circumstances, but with Guy Mannering (like Brown, recently returned from India) there is a similar reaction, as he contemplates purchasing the place:

It may seem strange that Mannering was so much attached to a spot which he had only seen once, and that for a short time, in early life. But the circumstances which passed there had laid a strong hold on his imagination. There seemed to be a fate which conjoined the remarkable passages of his own family history with those of the inhabitants of Ellangowan, and he felt a mysterious desire to call the terrace his own from which he had read in the book of heaven a fortune strangely accomplished in the person of the infant heir of that family, and corresponding so closely with one which had been strikingly fulfilled in his own.<sup>21</sup>

This refers, of course, to the astrological prophecies made by Mannering himself at Harry Bertram's birth, and indeed, while the superstitious and astrological elements are not essential to the mechanics of the plot, they certainly inform the *mood* of the novel, the events and coincidences of which are so far-fetched that such a mood is necessary to sustain the plot. Scott manipulates the novel-form to play upon the inexplicability of these ideas just as he did with Waverley's feelings for Rose Bradwardine. Yet, having made such use of them, Scott implicitly dismisses them in the last line of the book, when Colonel Mannering, asked by Mr Pleydell if he will repair the old tower "for nocturnal contemplation of the celestial bodies", replies: "No, no, my dear Counsellor! Here ends THE ASTROLOGER."<sup>22</sup>

This exploitation of romance and mystery, only to be followed by their rejection as the narrative unfolds (reminding us again of Cairns Craigs' remarks on the narrative past and the storyless present\*) occurs at other levels. We know, for example, that the Guy Mannering of middle-age has not always been a figure of fatherly sternness and prudence, and in one of his daughter Julia's letters this is made explicit: "He has, too, a tinge of romance in his disposition; and I have seen the narrative of a generous action, a trait of heroism, or virtuous self-denial, extract tears from him which refused to flow at a tale of mere distress."<sup>23</sup> But when, with Bertram's true identity revealed, Julia is reconciled to her father,

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\* See above, p. 157.

and declares, "let me but have your approbation and my own, and there is no rule you can prescribe so severe that I will not follow", Mannering's response is to put away the past and say, "I trust we shall not call upon you for anything too heroic."<sup>24</sup>

Again, Vanbeest Brown's persistent love for a woman above his class is explained by his arrival, at the novel's conclusion, in what is clearly his proper *place* and station. This is a pattern familiar from *Waverley*, while the parallel attainment by a lost heir of both self-knowledge and rightful status also has a precedent in Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*. As Mannering says, "Henry Bertram, heir of Ellangowan, whether possessed of the property of his ancestors or not, is a very different person from Vanbeest Brown, the son of nobody at all."<sup>25</sup> And yet his inheritance would be incomplete if its modern attractions were not enhanced, like Tully-Veolan by its painting, by the ruins of the Auld Place, what Bertram himself describes as "that worm-eaten hold of ragged stone". His newly-discovered sister sees "the seat of their ancestors" more symbolically:

"God knows, my dear brother, I do not covet in your behalf the extensive power which the lords of these ruins are said to have possessed so long, and sometimes to have used so ill. But, O that I might see you in possession of such relics of their fortune as should give you an honourable independence . . . ."<sup>26</sup>

Bertram, as Lieutenant Brown, has been, then, on a journey not unlike that undertaken by Edward Waverley. Of course Waverley was never in doubt as to his family and inheritance, but his adventures

did put the latter at risk, and certainly he was *misplaced* during most of the narrative of the novel. Lieutenant Brown comes home by a different route, but the signposts are the same: romance and passion are opposed to reality and prudence. This is emphasised in one of Julia Mannering's letters to her friend Matilda Marchmont:

"I remember, in our stolen voyages to the world of fiction, you always admired the grand and the romantic, - tales of knights, dwarfs, giants, and distressed damsels, soothsayers, visions, beckoning ghosts, and bloody hands; whereas I was partial to the involved intrigues of private life, or at farthest to so much only of the supernatural as is conferred by the agency of an Eastern genie or a beneficent fairy. . . . So that, upon the whole, Matilda, I think you should have had my father, with his pride of arms and of ancestry, his chivalrous point of honour, his high talents, and his abstruse and mystic studies. You should have had Lucy Bertram too for your friend, whose fathers, with names which alike defy memory and orthography, ruled over this romantic country, and whose birth took place, as I have been indistinctly informed, under circumstances of deep and peculiar interest. You should have had, too, our Scottish residence, surrounded by mountains, and our lonely walks to haunted ruins. And I should have had, in exchange, the lawns and shrubs, and green-houses and conservatories, of Pine Park, with your good, quiet, indulgent aunt, her chapel in the morning, her nap after dinner, her hand at whist in the evening, not forgetting her fat coach-horses and fatter coachman."<sup>27</sup>

It appears from this, that for Julia Mannering at least Scotland represents a level of romance which is at once more unsettling and less fantastical than that of genies and fairies. And yet, since the novel is set in Scotland (is about, according to Scott, Scottish manners) she is obliged to accommodate Scottish romance into her preferred reality. To some extent she can achieve this through the character of Vanbeest Brown, whom she excludes from her proposed exchange with Matilda since he offers a compromise: "his good-humour, lively conversation, and open gallantry suit my plan of life as well

as his athletic form, handsome features, and high spirit would accord with a character of chivalry."<sup>28</sup>

Brown, in fact, has already pondered more specifically on the nature of the patriotic ambivalence confronting him as one not English. In a letter to his Swiss friend Captain Delaserre, he discusses the terms on which he is acceptable to the English as an officer of the *British* army:

"And you and I, Delaserre, foreigners both - for what am I the better that I was originally a Scotchman, since, could I prove my descent, the English would hardly acknowledge me a countryman? - we may boast that we have fought out our preferment, and gained that by the sword which we had not money to compass otherwise. The English are a wise people. While they praise themselves, and affect to undervalue all other nations, they leave us, luckily, trap-doors and back-doors open, by which we strangers, less favoured by nature, may arrive at a share of their advantages."<sup>29</sup>

A little later, at Hadrian's Wall, the thoughts prompted by the site are undercut by Scott exactly as he undercut the significance of the Tully-Veolan painting:

"And this, then, is the Roman Wall," he said, scrambling up to a height which commanded the course of that celebrated work of antiquity. "What a people! whose labours, even at this extremity of their empire, comprehended such space, and were executed upon a scale of such grandeur! . . . Their fortifications, their aqueducts, their theatres, their fountains, all their public works, bear the grave, solid and majestic character of their language; while our modern labours, like our moderns tongues, seem but constructed out of their fragments." Having thus moralised, he remembered that he was hungry, and pursued his walk to a small public-house, at which he proposed to get some refreshment.<sup>30</sup>

By becoming laird of Ellangowan, Brown (now Bertram) both reasserts his Scottish nationality and satisfactorily achieves the balance between the usual opposites (romance and reality, passion and prudence, past and present) which are the hallmarks of a Waverley Novel. One of the few explicit expressions of Scottish patriotism in the book, Sir Robert Hazlewood's attempt to attach *public* significance to his son Charles' accidental shooting by Brown, is by contrast unsubtle and absurd, and is intended to be read as such, since Scott describes Sir Robert as both "dull" and "pompous":

"Really, sir," replied [Charles] Hazlewood, "in what so intimately concerns myself - "

"Sir, it does not concern you but in a very secondary degree; that is, it does not concern you, as a giddy young fellow who takes pleasure in contradicting his father; but it concerns the country, sir, and the public, sir, and the kingdom of Scotland, in so far as the interest of the Hazlewood family, sir, is committed and interested and put in peril, in, by, and through you, sir."<sup>31</sup>

The patterns thus identified in *Guy Mannering* clearly operate at a private level compared with the war scenarios of *Waverley* or *Old Mortality*. But they are essentially the same patterns, with questions of patriotic identity, though less prominent, still exercising a crucial influence. The Mannerings and Bertrams are accommodated in the post-narrative present in much the same way as the Waverleys and Bradwardines before them. The villains of *Guy Mannering*, Dirk Hatteraick and Gilbert Glossin, and the heroic but wild and exotic gypsy Meg Merrilies, are killed off and thus remain permanently fixed in the narrative past. This, too, is a familiar outcome in Scott's fiction.

### III

Like *Guy Mannering*, Scott's third novel does not deal with public affairs directly, although the threat of French invasion does attain some prominence towards the end of it. But, the activities of Mr Dousterswivel notwithstanding, *The Antiquary* is informed by a much lighter and more ironical scepticism than its predecessor - not only as far as superstition and Dousterswivel's bogus "philosophy" are concerned, but also with regard to the historical assertions of Jonathan Oldbuck and his antiquarian adversary Sir Arthur Wardour. In fact, the setting of the novel in "the last ten years of the eighteenth century"<sup>32</sup>, one generation on from *Guy Mannering* and two from *Waverley*, encourages the idea that Scott faithfully charted a historical progression and change of manners over a period of some sixty years, and that this added scepticism forms a part of this project. The postscript to *Waverley* also enhances such a view. And yet we have already seen that the motivation behind *Waverley* was more a desire to give the Scottish past a certain kind of relationship to the British present than to depict it unromantically and realistically. The patterns of language and themes which Scott employed to achieve this were also apparent in *Guy Mannering*, and it is therefore no surprise to find them again in *The Antiquary*.

An additional dimension, highlighted in the 1816 Introduction, is the relationship of *passion* to social class. Scott claims that the "lower orders" are "the class of society who are the last to feel the

influence of that general polish which assimilates to each other the manners of different nations". Passionate self-expression characterises this absence of polish, he continues:

Among the same class I have placed some of the scenes in which I have endeavoured to illustrate the operation of the higher and more violent passions; both because the lower orders are less restrained by the habit of suppressing their feelings, and because I agree with my friend Wordsworth that they seldom fail to express them in the strongest and most powerful language.

Furthermore, Scott believes that this class characteristic is also a Scottish national characteristic:

This is, I think, peculiarly the case with the peasantry of my own country, a class with whom I have long been familiar. The antique force and simplicity of their language, often tinged with the Oriental eloquence of Scripture, in the mouths of those of an elevated understanding, give pathos to their grief and dignity to their resentment.<sup>33</sup>

This is a passage of considerable interest. We have already seen how Scott makes passion - the following of individual impulses and enthusiastic principles - a fundamental of Scottish patriotism and of the past, and how he links prudence - an understanding of what is to the *real* benefit of society *and* self - to the British present. Always Scott laments the passing of Scottish manners, the Scots language, and in general the decline of "poor old Scotland" as a national entity. Here, however, he is clearly admiring the retention by the Scottish "lower orders" of their ability to express passionate feelings, and admiring it as a *national* characteristic. His faith in the peasantry (rather than the emerging industrial working classes)



is evident here as elsewhere as a Scottish patriotic faith. Yet the themes of his Scottish novels associate such sentiments irrevocably with the past, while his own social position and British patriotism are allied with those very classes which have acquired or are acquiring polish at the expense of national characteristics. The frustrations that this paradox aroused can be seen in *The Antiquary* in his sympathetic treatment of such peasant figures as the Mucklebackits, in his depiction of Edie Ochiltree as the voice of old Scotland, and in the humorous but also at times biting descriptions of some of the characters with more "polish". This latter aspect was to be fully developed in Scott's only attempt at a truly contemporary novel, *St. Ronan's Well* (1824).

The theme of antiquarianism running through the novel reflects a series of compromises by individuals between the past and the present. The most obvious case is Jonathan Oldbuck himself, whose hobby constitutes a gentle mockery of the past. In his possession calthrops from Bannockburn or thumb-screws "which had given the Covenanters of former days the cramp in their joints" are invested with comic attributes.<sup>34</sup> His appropriation for his own of what he believes to be the site of the battle of Mons Graupius is another example. For him, the ditch forming part of the ancient Roman camp is clearly marked: if his guest Lovel cannot see it, then his vision must be indistinct.<sup>35</sup> And not only Lovel:

"It is astonishing how blind we professed antiquaries sometimes are; Sir Robert Sibbald, Saunders Gordon, General Roy, Doctor Stukeley, why, it escaped all of them. . . . At length - I am almost ashamed to say it - I even brought my mind to give acre for acre of my good corn-land for this barren spot. But then it was a

national concern; and when the scene of so celebrated an event became my own I was overpaid. Whose patriotism would not grow warmer, as old Johnson says, on the plains of Marathon?"<sup>36</sup>

Even the "authentic" voice of old Scotland, Edie Ochiltree's "Prætorian here, prætorian there, I mind the bigging o't", is rejected by Oldbuck: his own version of the past is preferred.

More importantly, Oldbuck is quite happy to rewrite history, and coincidentally to fix its locations on highly dubious evidence, in order to satisfy his own historical fancy rather than establish the truth. As he contemplates the epic poem which Lovel is to write under his direction, he excites his own imagination:

"It should be something at once solid and attractive; none of your romances or anomalous novelties, I would have you take high ground at once. Let me see. What think you of a real epic? the grand old-fashioned historical poem which moved through twelve or twenty-four books. We'll have it so; I'll supply you with a subject - the battle between the Caledonians and Romans - *The Caledoniad; or, Invasion Repelled*. Let that be the title; it will suit the present taste, and you may throw in a touch of the times."

"But the invasion of Agricola was *not* repelled."

"No; but you are a poet, free of the corporation, and as little bound down to truth or probability as Virgil himself. You may defeat the Romans in spite of Tacitus."<sup>37</sup>

Oldbuck thus seeks to engage poetry to overturn history. In spite of the facts, he tells Lovel, "ye may unwittingly speak most correct truth". Yet his notions of poetry are artless: "You will choose blank verse, doubtless? It is more grand and magnificent for an historical subject; and, what concerneth you, my friend, it is, I have an idea, more easily written."<sup>38</sup>

Of course, Oldbuck's character is deliberately drawn humorously by Scott, but he is by no means entirely dismissive. Some of this modest artlessness is reminiscent of Scott himself, and Oldbuck shares his views anent the authenticity of Macpherson's Ossian and the ancient line of Scotland's kings. Again, however, in the very live controversy over Mary Stuart, Oldbuck's views are at odds with Scott's own - all of which indicates that the humour lies, not in the historical interpretations put upon these various topics, but in the disputes arising from them. Here, of course, Scott is less charitable to Oldbuck's protagonist in these matters, Sir Arthur Wardour.

Sir Arthur's successful accommodation of Jacobite sympathies within an appreciation of present political realities is, again, lightly depicted, but the weight of prudent approval in the balanced sentence with which Scott sums up the knight's position is unmistakable:

. . . Sir Arthur continued to pray for the house of Stuart even after the family had been extinct, and when, in truth, though in his theoretical loyalty he was pleased to regard them as alive, yet in all actual service and practical exertion he was a most zealous and devoted subject of George III.<sup>39</sup>

Elsewhere, his Jacobitism is described as "being now a sort of speculative opinion merely - the shadow of a shade."<sup>40</sup> The behaviour of his father Sir Anthony, an enthusiastic *talker* in support of Jacobitism whose zeal, in 1745, "became a little more moderate just when its warmth was of most consequence"<sup>41</sup>, is a significant

precedent to this situation. Indeed, the arrest and imprisonment of the two Wardours as potential rebels, depriving them of the freedom to take positive action on behalf of the Jacobite cause and thus, after its failure, *securing* their freedom, could be said to leave them in much the same position as Edward Waverley, whose involvement in the 'Forty-five was made acceptable largely by his own lack of control over his actions. Nor does the similarity end here: the debts which bring (temporary) disaster upon Sir Arthur tellingly illustrate that "ruin by law" which Scott refers to in the first chapter of *Waverley* as a modern equivalent of violent assault.<sup>42</sup> The changed circumstances are spelled out in this conversation between Wardour and Oldbuck:

" . . . When I was sent to the Tower with my late father, in the year 1745, it was upon a charge becoming our birth - upon an accusation of high treason, Mr. Oldbuck. We were escorted from Highgate by a troop of life-guards, and committed upon a secretary of state's warrant; and now, here I am, in my old age, dragged from my household by a miserable creature like that (pointing to the messenger), and for a paltry concern of pounds, shillings, and pence."

"At least," said Oldbuck, "you have now the company of a dutiful daughter and a sincere friend, if you will permit me to say so, and that may be some consolation, even without the certainty that there can be no hanging, drawing, or quartering on the present occasion."<sup>43</sup>

It is of course highly appropriate that it was Oldbuck's father who, as Provost of Fairport in 1745, "exerted himself with much spirit in favour of King George",<sup>44</sup> and was in fact responsible for arresting the Wardours. Contemporary divisions between the families are less drastic, centring on, for example, the origins of the Picts

- a dispute which hinges on the Gothic or Celtic etymology of the single surviving word of the Pictish language<sup>45</sup> - or on the existence of some or any of "that formidable bead-roll of one hundred and four kings of Scotland, received by Boethius, and rendered classical by Buchanan, in virtue of whom James VI. claimed to rule his ancient kingdom. . ."46. The overriding feature of the relationship, then, is a "spirit of mutual accommodation".<sup>47</sup> By contrast, Lord Glenallan, a recluse who re-emerges into society after some twenty years, finds such accommodation almost impossible, and "the manners of the world . . . equally strange and displeasing." The sensation he experiences is, by now, a familiar one: "He seemed to himself like a man in a dream, or one whose brain was not fully recovered from the effects of an intoxicating potion."<sup>48</sup>

When dreaming becomes a part of the novel's plot, however, the reader is enabled to acquiesce in the dream's relevance while accepting the "rationalist" explanation which Scott, through Oldbuck, offers. After his night in the Green Chamber, Lovel asks Oldbuck for his opinion of dreams, and the Antiquary replies:

"Of dreams, you foolish lad! why, what should I think of them but as the deceptions of the imagination when reason drops the reins? I know no difference betwixt them and the hallucinations of madness: the unguided horses run away with the carriage in both cases, only in the one the coachman is drunk, and in the other he slumbers."<sup>49</sup>

Thus Lovel's dream, explained but not dismissed, *informs* the plot without contributing anything vital to it. Dousterswivel's activities, on the other hand, are more decisively shown to be

fraudulent, but here the effect is to point up the delusion of Sir Arthur Wardour, a man beguiled both by Dousterswivel and a false image of history. For Oldbuck, the Adept is "as apocryphal" as "Mair and Boece, the Jachin and Boaz, not of history but of falsification and forgery." Sir Arthur cannot accept this:

"Why then, Mr. Oldbuck," said Sir Arthur, "not to awaken old disputes, I suppose you think that, because I believe in the ancient history of my country, I have neither eyes nor ears to ascertain what modern events pass before me?"<sup>50</sup>

The inference is obvious, but Sir Arthur is not alone in his disposition to see only what he wishes to see. Oldbuck's infatuation with the site of Mons Graupius has already been mentioned. His unrealistic view of warfare, both past and present, is also displayed in his conversation with his nephew, Captain Hector M'Intyre, who himself suffers from an (almost) unshakeable faith in Macpherson's Ossianic fragments:

". . . How animating, for example, at the conclusion of a weary march, to find yourself in the vicinity of a Runic monument, and discover that you had pitched your tent beside the tomb of a hero!"

"I am afraid, sir, our mess would be better supplied if it chanced to be in the neighbourhood of a good poultry-yard."

"Alas, that you should say so! No wonder the days of Cressy and Agincourt are no more, when respect for ancient valour has died away in the breasts of the British soldiery."

"By no means, sir - by no manner of means. I daresay that Edward and Henry, and the rest of these heroes, thought of their dinner, however, before they thought of examining an old tombstone. But I assure you we are by no means insensible to the memory of our fathers' fame; I used of an evening to get old Rory M'Alpin to sing us songs out of Ossian about the battles of Fingal and Lamon Mor, and Magnus and the spirit of Muirartach."<sup>51</sup>

Hector, when challenged to defend Macpherson's translations,

stoutly abode the storm; like many a sturdy Celt, he imagined the honour of his country and native language connected with the authenticity of these popular poems, and would have fought knee-deep, or forfeited life and land, rather than have given up a line of them.<sup>52</sup>

Hector's Celtic loyalties, in fact, are no more absurd than Oldbuck's admiration for the Goths. But Hector, "the Hotspur of the North"<sup>53</sup>, is portrayed as a *mock* Highland hero whose hotheadedness is humorously misdirected by comparison with, say, the fierce pride of Fergus Mac-Ivor: *his* lost cause, a defeat at the fore-paws of a beached seal, stands in marked contrast to the retreat from Derby.

The various antics of these "gentles" continue against a background of real life, with its mix of hard work, shared tragedy and worldly commonsense, as experienced by the "lower orders". The loss of the Mucklebackits' son Steenie is the episode which most clearly justifies the passage in the Introduction about the pathos of grief and the dignity of resentment, but Edie Ochiltree, an almost constant witness to the major events of the story, represents an alternative view of those events. Whether he is deflating Oldbuck's claims for the *prætorium*, or attempting to intercede in the "madness" of the duel between M'Intyre and Lovel<sup>54</sup>, Edie's is a voice of reason and sanity. This is at first glance an unusual role for a character intended to represent a traditional kind of Scotland - for Scott's explanation in the Magnum Opus Introduction leaves no doubt that his

pedigree is of considerable importance: "Many of the old Scottish mendicants were by no means to be confounded with the utterly degraded class of beings who now practise that wandering trade." Edie is placed among the "race of Jockies" now "long extinct in Scotland"<sup>55</sup>, whose history "vindicate[s] Edie Ochiltree's right to the importance assigned him".<sup>56</sup> But Edie differs from characters such as Meg Merrilies and Evan Dhu Maccombich, not only in his prudence, but also in the fact that he survives at the end of the novel. Furthermore, he survives, as do all the main characters, firmly accommodated within a British patriotic context, during the false alarm of French invasion. His solid Scottish virtues would later be more fully expressed in the character of Jeanie Deans.

Scott's authorial voice, which is less prominent in this novel than in most, helps to strengthen this British context, for example: "This news gave a different turn to the conversation, which ran upon national defence, *and the duty of fighting for the land we live in*, until it was time to part."<sup>57</sup> All the main male characters turn out for this purpose: Even Edie demonstrates that he has "the country to fight for, and the burnsides that I gang daundering beside, and the hearths o' the gudewives that gie me my bit bread, and the bits o' weans that come toddling to play wi' me when I come about a landward town"<sup>58</sup>. Oldbuck, who has earlier been appalled at the jingoistic atmosphere of Edinburgh - "the worst sort of frenzy, a military frenzy" - and whose idea of patriotism appears to extend no further than to "pray heartily for our sovereign, pay scot and lot, and grumble at the exciseman"<sup>59</sup>, buckles on his sword at last, and



applauds Edie's spirit: "Bravo, bravo, Edie! The country's in little ultimate danger when the beggar's as ready to fight for his dish as the laird for his land."<sup>60</sup> Captain M'Intyre, Sir Arthur Wardour, Bailie Littlejohn and Lord Glenallan, all of whose characters or politics might have dampened their enthusiasm for military duty, all report for the defence of Fairport, while the wanderer in search of his heritage, Lovel, turns out to be none other than Major Neville, officer in charge of that part of the coast, and Glenallan's long-lost son. Indeed, it transpires that only Dousterswivel, in addition to his fraudulence, is no "sound friend to government"<sup>61</sup> and as a consequence is to be "sent back to play the knave in his own country."<sup>62</sup> Edie Ochiltree, meanwhile, "the most important man that ever wore a blue-gown", seems set to settle permanently in the vicinity as the novel closes.<sup>63</sup> In short, although *The Antiquary* may not demonstrate so obvious a shift from exotic, romantic, passionate past to reasonable, prudential present, the conclusion is as British in its tenor as any of the Waverley Novels.

## Chapter Eight

### OLD MORTALITY: CONTROVERSY OVER THE COVENANTERS

"Considering [Scott's] warm and kindly heart, and intimate acquaintance with the habits, wants, and virtues of the lower orders, it is wonderful how little is to be found in his pages of generous sympathy with the struggles of an oppressed people, or of pride in the liberty of that country, the manners and history of which he has illustrated in his immortal fictions. His predilections always lean to the monarch, however arbitrary - his antipathies rest with the people, however greatly wronged. . . . Thus, whether it be the misguided Mary, or the profligate Charles, or the bloody persecuting Claverhouse, there is always a glitter of romance thrown round them by his brilliant pen, quite sufficient to cast all their faults into the shade; while he cannot describe the persecutions of the Covenanters without smothering sympathy with ridicule. His Cavaliers, in short, however worthless, are always attractive; his Roundheads, however meritorious, are absurd or repulsive. Yet the delineation, in its details, is so true to nature, if not to fact, that it is impossible to resist the impressions made by it."

With *Old Mortality*, published with *The Black Dwarf* as the first series of "Tales of My Landlord" in December, 1816, Scott returned wholeheartedly to the domain of public affairs, situating his story amid the religious strife and civil war of the 1670s. Lockhart noted that, unlike *Waverley*, which was based on "the fervid dreams of his boyhood" and on oral accounts of the 'Forty-five passed directly to him, or *Guy Mannering* and *The Antiquary*, in which he "embodied

characters and manners familiar to his own wandering youth", *Old Mortality* was "the novelist's first attempt to re-people the past by the power of imagination working on materials furnished by books."<sup>2</sup> Lockhart's emphasis on the word "novelist" is interesting: he considered that this book marked Scott's maturation into a *constructive* writer of romance, rather than one who, however successfully, simply ransacked the well-stocked store of his own imagination to produce his epic poems and earlier fiction:

To reproduce a departed age with such minute and life-like accuracy as this tale exhibits, demanded a far more energetic sympathy of imagination than had been called for in any effort of his serious verse. It is indeed most curiously constructive for any student of art to compare the Roundheads of Rokeby with the Bluebonnets of *Old Mortality* . . . notwithstanding all that has been urged against him as a disparager of the Covenanters, it is to me very doubtful whether the inspiration of romantic chivalry ever prompted him to nobler emotions than he has lavished on the re-animation of their stern and solemn enthusiasm. This work has always appeared to me the *Marmion* of his novels.<sup>3</sup>

That Lockhart should have, on the one hand, considered that the demands of "reproducing a departed age" in this novel represented a new and different challenge for Scott from the "inspiration of romantic chivalry", while on the other hand denominating it "the *Marmion* of his novels", suggests that for his biographer at least Scott's transition from national bard to national story-teller was complete, and completely successful: his ability and authority in presenting the Scottish past, Dr Thomas M'Crie notwithstanding, was henceforth almost unchallengeable. This is borne out by the evident delight and *certainty* with which Lockhart recorded the origination of *Old Mortality* in a conversation between Scott and Joseph Train (whose

information on Old Mortality is contained and acknowledged in the Magnum Opus Introduction to the novel) in May, 1816. The talk turned on the character of Graham of Claverhouse, which Scott said had been "foulyly traduced" by the accounts of the chroniclers of Kirk history:

"Might he not," said Mr Train, "be made, in good hands, the hero of a national romance as interesting as any about either Wallace or Prince Charlie?" "He might," said Scott, "but your western zealots would require to be faithfully portrayed in order to bring him out with the right effect." "And what," resumed Train, "if the story were to be delivered as if from the mouth of *Old Mortality*? Would he not do as well as *the Minstrel* did in the Lay?" . . . I think there can be no doubt that . . . to this intercourse with Mr Train we owe the whole machinery of the Tales of my Landlord, as well as the adoption of Claverhouse's period for one of its first fictions.<sup>4</sup>

This passage further illustrates the ease with which Scott's formula for depicting the past could blur distinctions between fiction and fact, myth and reality. We have already seen how, even in the (later) *History of Scotland*, such subtle confusion was characteristic of his style. The added interest with regard to *Old Mortality* is that, through both Dr M'Crie's criticisms and the counter-novel *Ringan Gilhaize* produced by John Galt in 1823, alternative views were given which nevertheless were unable to make much headway against the Waverley tide. These alternatives will be discussed later.

Of one thing there is no doubt. In spite of the tortuous route by which the story reaches the reader, ostensibly from the anecdotes of Robert Paterson (Old Mortality), via the manuscripts of the deceased Peter Pattieson as edited by the Gandercleugh schoolmaster Jedediah

Cleishbotham and published under the title "Tales of My Landlord" (a variation on the anonymity which enhanced the mythical aspect of Scott's story-telling) - in spite of this, the style and themes of the book are those established in its predecessors. There is no attempt, in other words, to speak with the voice or mind of Old Mortality. On the contrary, Peter Pattieson declares:

"My readers will of course understand that in embodying into one compressed narrative many of the anecdotes which I had the advantage of deriving from Old Mortality, I have been far from adopting either his style, opinions, or even his facts, so far as they appear to have been distorted by party prejudice. I have endeavoured to correct or verify them from the most authentic sources of tradition, afforded by the representatives of either party."<sup>5</sup>

Pattieson (or Scott) is determined, it seems, to be scrupulous in presenting a fair picture of both sides:

"Although I am far from venerating the peculiar tenets asserted by those who call themselves the followers of those men, and whose intolerance and narrow-minded bigotry are at least as conspicuous as their devotional zeal, yet it is without depreciating the memory of those sufferers, many of whom united the independent sentiments of a Hampden with the suffering zeal of a Hooper or Latimer. On the other hand, it would be unjust to forget that many even of those who had been most active in crushing what they conceived the rebellious and seditious spirit of those unhappy wanderers, displayed themselves, when called upon to suffer for their political and religious opinions, the same daring and devoted zeal, tinged, in their case, with chivalrous loyalty, as in the former with republican enthusiasm."<sup>6</sup>

In fact, in the scheme of Scott's linguistic balancing-act, the phrases and adjectives of this passage belong entirely to that part of his vocabulary which we associate with the passionate past. By

and large, *Old Mortality* deals evenly with, say, Balfour of Burley and Graham of Claverhouse because it depicts them as figures of the past, in contrast to the moderate and prudent Henry Morton, who survives, after a period in exile, into the post-1688 period. At the start of Chapter XXXVII, Scott "craves the privilege" of the tale-teller not to be "tied down . . . to the unities of time and place", and "entreat[s] the reader's attention to the continuation of the narrative, as it starts from a new era, being the year immediately subsequent to the British Revolution." Scotland, he continues, had "narrowly escaped the horrors of a protracted civil war" through the "prudent tolerance" of King William, and

men, whose minds had been disturbed by the violent political concussions and the general change of government in church and state, had begun to recover their ordinary temper, and to give the usual attention to their own private affairs in lieu of discussing those of the public.<sup>7</sup>

The comedown from "violent concussions" (akin to madness?) to prudence, from public to private concerns, is abrupt, making a clear distinction between what has gone before and what is to follow (although a careful reading of these paragraphs shows Scott jumping back and forth chronologically in order to emphasise the distinction). Even Robert Paterson is bundled out of a narrative formed ostensibly from his own accounts - those holding true to the Covenant, it is said, "sunk into the scattered remnant of serious, scrupulous, and harmless enthusiasts of whom *Old Mortality*, whose legends have afforded the groundwork of my tale, may be taken as no bad representative."<sup>8</sup> Given this familiar past-present division, and

bearing in mind the Scottish-British division that normally parallels it, the use of the *English* historical figures Hampden, Hooper and Latimer to point up the "virtues" of the Covenanters is not without significance. The "action" of *Old Mortality*, however, takes place entirely within the context of a *Scottish* past.

The hero of the novel, Henry Morton, appears to be made of stronger stuff than, say, Edward Waverley, or that other sneaking piece of imbecility, Frank Osbaldistone in *Rob Roy*. Finding himself isolated among warring extremists, Morton makes a principle out of moderation - which, however, also makes him somewhat anachronistic in the setting. He contrasts nicely with the innkeeper Niel Blane, "a good-humoured, shrewd, selfish sort of fellow, indifferent alike to the disputes about church and state, and only anxious to secure the good-will of customers of every description."<sup>9</sup> Blane takes the middle-road through expediency and indifference, whereas Morton's yardstick for action derives from "those feelings of natural humanity which Heaven has assigned to us as the general law of our conduct"<sup>10</sup> - a kind of Hutchesonian moral sense. Impassioned heroism abounds in *Old Mortality*, no more so than in the characters of the two protagonists Burley and Claverhouse, and Morton seems to represent their extremes centred, moderated and, as a result, modernised.

Morton is a "mild, romantic, gentle-tempered youth" suddenly compelled by events to take on the "labours and cares" of "active manhood", to be "earnestly engaged in affairs of a public nature"<sup>11</sup> - and so it becomes apparent that he does not differ so very greatly from Edward Waverley. If Waverley was a tourist from the modern age,

so the Hutchesonian anachronism of Morton's moral stance seems to indicate a half-modern temperament thrust back into a past heroic context: modern perceptions again intruding into the body of history. When the preacher Ephraim Macbriar is tortured and executed after Bothwell Brig, "dying with the same enthusiastic firmness which his whole life had evinced", there is unconscious irony in Morton's reaction:

"Marvellous firmness and gallantry!" said Morton, as he reflected upon Macbriar's conduct; "what a pity that with such self-devotion and heroism should have been mingled the fiercer features of his sect!"<sup>12</sup>

For, historically, (as Morton fails to appreciate) it is that very combination which determined the shape of Macbriar's life and led to his death. Scott's is thus a very different fictional reconstruction of the mind of a Covenanter, governed by modern observations, from that attempted by John Galt in *Ringan Gilhaize*. The present/past antithesis dominates Scott's vision: Morton's epitaph for Macbriar could equally apply to Burley or Claverhouse, or even, though with less accuracy, to Lord Evandale.

The character of Claverhouse, which Scott was so interested to draw fairly, is constructed of a "combination of opposites" which makes Gregory Smith's Caledonian Antisyzygy look endearingly simple. In attempting a scrupulously balanced picture, Scott almost unbalances his usual distinction between characters of the heroic past and those more prudent characters who survive beyond the past. Thus the "severity of his character" is concealed beneath "gentleness



and gaiety of expression" and features of "even feminine regularity". "But under this soft exterior was hidden a spirit unbounded in daring and in aspiring, yet cautious and prudent as that of Machiavel himself." This is a mixture of attributes not to be found in Scott's descriptions of an equally ambitious man like Fergus Mac-Ivor. The fact that Claverhouse is a real historical figure, whose character Scott must therefore attempt to *place* in history, explains this in part:

Profound in politics, and imbued, of course, with that disregard for individual rights which its intrigues usually generate, this leader was cool and collected in danger, fierce and ardent in pursuing success, careless of facing death itself, and ruthless in inflicting it upon others. Such are the characters formed in times of civil discord, when the highest qualities, perverted by party spirit and inflamed by habitual opposition, are too often combined with vices and excesses which deprive them at once of their merit and of their lustre.<sup>13</sup>

In one scene, when Claverhouse is persuaded by Lord Evandale to spare Morton's life in return for a previous obligation, it seems that his behaviour is entirely *dispassionate*: he calls Evandale "absolutely mad", and advises him: ". . . should you wish in your future life to rise to eminence in the service of your king and country, let it be your first task to subject to the public interest and to the discharge of your duty your private passions, affections, and feelings."<sup>14</sup> But of course Claverhouse, as he speaks, is himself putting a private debt of honour before his perceived public duty - which is, in any case, soon shown to be a form of personal

enthusiasm. At Drumclog, Evandale is cautious about attacking and slaughtering the Covenanters, "misguided men, who, after all, are Scotchmen and subjects of King Charles as well as we are." "Rebels! Rebels! and undeserving the name either of Scotchmen or of subjects," retorts his commander.<sup>15</sup> Claverhouse's sense of public duty is a far cry from the restrained moderation of Henry Morton.

This is made explicit in the conversations between the two after Morton's rescue from the hands of the Covenanter survivors of Bothwell Brig. Three of these Covenanters are summarily executed by order of Claverhouse: "habit, duty, and necessity reconcile men to everything", says the latter. "I trust," responds Morton, "they will never reconcile me to such scenes as these." Claverhouse then goes on to describe his careless attitude to death, concluding:

"When I think of death, Mr. Morton, as a thing worth thinking of, it is in the hope of pressing one day some well-fought and hard-won battle, and dying with the shout of victory in my ear; *that* would be worth dying for, and more, it would be worth having lived for!"

Here, Scott is playing a trick identical to that in *Waverley* whereby Fergus Mac-Ivor's fate is "prophesied". Indeed, the ghostlike figure of the dying Habakkuk Mucklewrath, as he summons Claverhouse to appear before God's tribunal, fulfils a function identical to that of the Bodach Glas:

At the moment when Grahame delivered these sentiments, his eye glancing with the martial enthusiasm which formed such a prominent feature in his character, a gory figure, which seemed to rise out

of the floor of the apartment, stood upright before him, and presented the wild person and hideous features of the maniac so often mentioned. His face, where it was not covered with blood-streaks, was ghastly pale, for the hand of death was on him.

Madness is summoning Claverhouse to his place in a wild and irrational past, and, just to rub home the point, Scott shows the scene from Morton's future (post-Killiecrankie) perspective also:

Morton was much shocked at this extraordinary scene, and the prophecy of the dying man, which tallied so strangely with the wish which Claverhouse had just expressed; and he often thought of it afterwards when that wish seemed to be accomplished.<sup>16</sup>

In the very next chapter, Scott makes it clear that, however great his admiration for Claverhouse\*, it does not allow him to present him as a character able to survive the past, even though his non-survival is an actual historical event which needs no "justification". It is his fanaticism, and his kinship with another non-survivor, which Scott emphasises:

The gentleness and urbanity of [Claverhouse's] general manners, the high and chivalrous sentiments of military devotion which he occasionally expressed, his deep and accurate insight into the

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\* "As for my good friend Dundee . . . I admit he was *tant soit peu sauvage* - but he was a noble savage; and the beastly Covenanters against whom he acted, hardly had any claim to be called men, unless what was founded on their walking upon their hind feet. You can hardly conceive of the perfidy, cruelty, and stupidity of these people, according to the accounts they have themselves preserved. But I admit I had many cavalier prejudices instilled into me, as my ancestor was a Killiecrankie man." (Lockhart, *Life*, Vol. III, pp. 34-35.)

human bosom, demanded at once the approbation and the wonder of those who conversed with him; while, on the other hand, his cold indifference to military violence and cruelty seemed altogether inconsistent with the social, and even admirable, qualities which he displayed. Morton could not help in his heart contrasting him with Balfour of Burley; and so deeply did the idea impress him, that he dropped a hint of it as they rode together at some distance from the troop.

"You are right," said Claverhouse, with a smile - "you are very right, we are both fanatics; but there is some distinction between the fanaticism of honour and that of dark and sullen superstition."

It is no surprise to find that Claverhouse is "inspired with enthusiasm" by the "true chivalrous feeling" of Froissart.<sup>17</sup>

Much of what applies to Claverhouse applies to Balfour of Burley. Again, in his arguments with Morton, we find "public interest" a thin disguise for fanaticism - a reminder of the various "masks of patriotism" in *Waverley*<sup>18</sup>. For Morton, "it is not surprising that a natural sense of the injuries of my country, not to mention those I have sustained in my own person, should make me sufficiently willing to draw my sword for liberty and freedom of conscience."<sup>19</sup> He remains aloof from religious enthusiasm, however. Burley, in persuading Morton to be an officer in the cause, plays upon his patriotism, arguing that "when the affairs of the nation were at such a desperate crisis, minute differences of opinion should not prevent those who, in general, wished well to their oppressed country from drawing their swords in its behalf." Morton's reluctance to get involved - based on doubts couched in the typically cautious vocabulary of prudence, "whether the present attempt was likely to be supported by the strength sufficient to ensure success, or by the wisdom and liberality of spirit necessary to make a good use of the

advantages that might be gained" - is in fact outweighed as much by his sense of suffering personal wrongs as by patriotic sentiments, and also by the "precarious and dangerous situation in which he already stood with relation to the government": all factors which also persuaded Waverley, under identically insidious pressure from Fergus, to enlist in the Jacobite cause.<sup>20</sup>

However, unlike Waverley, Morton remains emotionally detached from the cause in which he is caught up. He remembers that "the way was opened to the former liberation of Scotland by an act of violence which no man can justify - the slaughter of Cumming by the hand of Robert Bruce", and thus joins the Covenanters while disapproving of the murder of Archbishop Sharp. "I am willing," he says, "to contribute everything within my limited power to effect the emancipation of my country", but he disapproves, "in the utmost degree, of the action in which this rising seems to have originated".<sup>21</sup> He is "better satisfied with the general justice of the cause which he had espoused than either with the measures or the motives of many of those who were embarked in it."<sup>22</sup> These reservations suggest a character displaced in time, witnessing events with the thinly disguised benefit of hindsight. Morton supports certain general principles but is cautious of personal involvement, of soiling his hands in historical activity. If he can somehow bide his time, he may never have to do so. And this is exactly what happens. Ten years later, when he again comes face to face with Burley, by now a deranged and solitary champion of the Covenant in hiding in a cave, we find that in the intervening years Morton's

perceptions have come into their own. The zealous Burley is now seen to be living in the past:

"This might have been all well some years since," replied Morton; "and I could understand your argument, although I could never acquiesce in its justice. But at this crisis it seems useless to you to persevere in keeping up an influence which can no longer be directed to an useful purpose. The land has peace, liberty, and freedom of conscience, and what would you more?"

Burley in his delusion prefigures the character of Redgauntlet, and indeed the parallel with the Jacobite cause is explicit:

"You have neither men nor means, Mr. Balfour, to disturb the government as now settled," argued Morton; "the people are in general satisfied, excepting only the gentlemen of the Jacobite interest . . ."<sup>23</sup>

A modern kind of pragmatism emerges in full in Morton in these changed circumstances: what commitment he had to the cause in the past has disappeared; the past is now represented by insanity.

Nevertheless, it has to be said that in the earlier part of the book Morton's principled defence of freedom and justice for the individual is at times robust. His determination "at least as far and as long as possible, to unite the duties of a good Christian with those of a peaceful subject" (which Burley interprets as a desire "to serve both God and Mammon")<sup>24</sup> does lead him to take positive decisions in favour of the Covenanters, although, as with Waverley and other heroes, his freedom of action is often severely restricted by circumstances (such as being held prisoner) outwith his control.

An over-scrupulous respect for the law leads him to declare, when held by Claverhouse, that "were he a civil officer of the law, I should know my duty was submission", but his patriotism ("madness" in the circumstances, according to Major Bellenden) manifests itself less prudently, as he warns Claverhouse to be aware "there are yet Scotsmen who can assert the liberties of Scotland."<sup>25</sup> Morton's misplaced situation in the middle of a struggle between extremes is explained at some length by Scott, and among the signposts recognisable from *Waverley* is an "imperfect and limited education", which has contributed to a "diffidence and reserve" which conceal his "talent and firmness of character":

The circumstances of the time had added to this reserve an air of indecision and of indifference; for, being attached to neither of the factions which divided the kingdom, he passed for dull, insensible, and uninfluenced by the feeling of religion or of patriotism. No conclusion, however, could be more unjust; and the reasons of the neutrality which he had hitherto professed had root in very different and most praiseworthy motives. He had formed few congenial ties with those who were the objects of persecution, and was disgusted alike by their narrow-minded and selfish party-spirit, their gloomy fanaticism, their abhorrent condemnation of all elegant studies or innocent exercises, and the envenomed rancour of their political hatred. But his mind was still more revolted by the tyrannical and oppressive conduct of the government, the misrule, license, and brutality of the soldiery, the executions on the scaffold, the slaughters in the open field, the free quarters and exactions imposed by military law, which placed the lives and fortunes of a free people on a level with Asiatic slaves. Condemning, therefore, each party as its excesses fell under his eyes, disgusted with the sight of evils which he had no means of alleviating, and hearing alternate complaints and exultations with which he could not sympathise, he would long ere this have left Scotland had it not been for his attachment to Edith Bellenden.<sup>26</sup>

Again, as in *Waverley*, the love interest symbolises the eventual triumph of moderation. In a crucial soliloquy after his first

encounter with Balfour, Morton's sentiments of Scottish patriotism are aroused by the state of madness around him, and yet he is so alienated by the enthusiasms of competing extremisms that he is driven to a decision to enlist as a mercenary abroad. His only hope lies with Edith, and yet in such circumstances these hopes are doomed. This passage, too, requires to be quoted at length:

"Farewell, stern enthusiast," said Morton, looking after him [Balfour]; "in some moods of my mind how dangerous would be the society of such a companion! If I am unmoved by his zeal for abstract doctrines of faith, or rather for a peculiar mode of worship . . . can I be a man and a Scotchman, and look with indifference on that persecution which has made wise men mad? Was not the cause of freedom, civil and religious, that for which my father fought; and shall I do well to remain inactive or to take the part of an oppressive government if there should appear any rational prospect of redressing the insufferable wrongs to which my miserable countrymen are subjected? And yet, who shall warrant me that these people, rendered wild by persecution, would not, in the hour of victory, be as cruel and intolerant as those by whom they are now hunted down? What degree of moderation or of mercy can be expected from this Burley, so distinguished as one of their principal champions, and who seems even now to be reeking from some recent deed of violence, and to feel stings of remorse which even his enthusiasm cannot altogether stifle? I am weary of seeing nothing but violence and fury around me - now assuming the mask of lawful authority, now taking that of religious zeal. I am sick of my country, of myself, of my dependent situation, of my repressed feelings, of these woods, of that river, of that house, of all but Edith, and she can never be mine! Why should I haunt her walks? Why encourage my own delusion, and perhaps hers? She can never be mine."<sup>27</sup>

While escorting Edith to safety from the siege of Tillietudlem, Morton, under disguise, has an opportunity to present a "patriotic" case for his involvement with the Covenanters: "You think it impossible . . .", he asks, "for any one to serve in our ranks, having the weal of his country sincerely at heart, and conceiving himself in the discharge of a patriotic duty?" Edith responds: "It



might be imprudent, while so absolutely in your power . . . to answer that question." When pressed, however, she frankly rejects the rebels' claims on patriotism, and, still unaware that she is speaking to Morton, resents their influence on

"one of early talent, high faith, pure morality, and warm affections. Can I approve of a rebellion which has made such a man, formed to ornament, to enlighten, and to defend his country, the companion of gloomy and ignorant fanatics or canting hypocrites, the leader of brutal clowns, the brother-in-arms to banditti and highway murderers?"

And yet, although apparently also rejecting Morton's assertion that "the guilt of civil war . . . lie[s] at the door of those who provoked it by illegal oppression", Edith does implicitly agree with him, by replying that "the guilt must lie with them who first drew the sword". Indeed, she states that Morton might "atone for the evil he has done" by "lending his efforts to restore the blessings of peace to his distracted countrymen, and to induce the deluded rebels to lay down their arms."<sup>27A</sup> Thus peace in the future will replace present madness - the most extreme representative of the rebels, Habakkuk Mucklewrath, is presented as totally insane - and thus Edith's moderate hopes complement the moderation which still underpins Morton's unwilling involvement with the Covenanters, by offering a re-oriented version of his perception of delusion and reality.

As in *Waverley*, it requires a break from violence, and the deaths of the major "heroic" protagonists of the past (Burley, Claverhouse, Evandale), to enable a rational, prudential future to emerge out of

the chaotic and delusive past which is the background of four-fifths of the book. Morton, on his return to Scotland, is actually mistaken by Edith Bellenden for a ghost, which prompts Lord Evandale generously to declare, "She shall never . . . look on her engagement with me as the means of fettering her to a union the idea of which seems almost to unhinge her understanding."<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile Edith's attempts to dissuade Evandale from raising the country for the Stuart cause (in 1689, after Killiecrankie) are couched in language again familiar from *Waverley* vis-a-vis the Jacobite cause: "an adventure so rash", "a part of such dreadful moment", "this desperate course with desperate men"<sup>29</sup>. Edith is also aware that her own *moderate* interaction with Evandale is to cause "the wreck of all that is manly and noble!"<sup>30</sup> That moderating influence has already been at work however: Morton, returning to the site of Bothwell Brig, "once the scene of slaughter and conflict", has found it "as placid and quiet as the surface of a summer lake"<sup>31</sup> - an image of restoration like that of Tully-Veolan. By the end of the novel, history has killed off Claverhouse at Killiecrankie, and Scott's fiction has likewise disposed of Burley and Evandale, to make way for the Presbyterian-Episcopalian reconciliation symbolised by Morton's union with Edith. Thus the valedictory hope expressed by Peter Pattieson in the first chapter, that the struggles of the past are long buried, is brought to fruition:

We may safely hope that the souls of the brave and sincere on either side have long looked down with surprise and pity upon the ill-appreciated motives which caused their mutual hatred and hostility while in this valley of darkness, blood, and tears. Peace to their memory! Let us think of them as the heroine of our

only Scottish tragedy entreats her lord to think of her departed sire: -

O rake not up the ashes of our fathers!  
Implacable resentment was their crime,  
And grievous has the expiation been.<sup>32</sup>

Thus even the souls of the protagonists, like Old Mortality, have been commandeered to look back upon their own actions as irrevocably consigned to the past. Somehow "we" and they should look back in unity at their misconceived and useless struggles, take no sides and draw no conclusions except that all that was over. The quotation adapted from Home's *Douglas*<sup>33</sup> is most appropriate - but, as we shall see, not everybody swallowed the idea that the present was united against an unfortunate past. According to Thomas M'Crie, such "affected whining, and glaring self-contradiction, - in the language of tragedy, too, - " transparently failed to picture "the genuine history of these times":

"Oh rake not up the ashes of our fathers!"

Your fathers! If you mean the Presbyterians, they acknowledge you not; and if their persecutors, you only are to blame for the stirring of those ashes with which time was gradually and slowly covering the memory of their infamous deeds.<sup>34</sup>

Thus it is possible to see why Scott was accused of having manipulated a precious part of Scottish history in the interests of romantic fiction. With hindsight, the interests of his wider patriotic concerns are also apparent.

## II

The debate stirred up by *Old Mortality* ranged over many of the themes of this study, and is therefore worth looking at in some detail. The criticisms levelled at Scott by Dr Thomas M'Crie, though argued with considerable intelligence, were essentially a defensive reaction to Scott's portraiture of the Covenanters. John Galt, on the other hand, in his novel *Ringan Gilhaize*, not only attempted to *explain* the character and beliefs of the Covenanters, but in so doing produced a completely new and even unique form of historical fiction. Furthermore, in response to M'Crie's attack, which began to appear in the form of a long review in *The Christian Instructor* for January 1817, and continued in the next two issues, Scott was himself obliged to defend his work in *The Quarterly Review*, and made some illuminating remarks in the course of that defence.

Introducing M'Crie's review of the *Tales of My Landlord* in his collected *Works*, his son and editor, also Thomas M'Crie, captures the tone of the debate admirably:

In the Tale of *Old Mortality*, "The Great Unknown" had intruded into ground still held sacred in Scotland, and represented the heroes of the Covenant as little better than madmen, fanatics, and cut-throats. He had besides employed all the charms of his pen to throw an air of attractive romance around the character of Claverhouse, the bitter persecutor of the Covenanters, who, from the deep share he took in the sanguinary proceedings of that unhappy period, was long held in abhorrence throughout Scotland, under the designation of "Bloody Claverse."<sup>35</sup>

The younger M'Crie described the confrontation between Scott and his father as "no ordinary contest" in which "the type of ancient feudalism was seen pitted against the representative of its old adversary, the Whiggism of the Covenant."<sup>36</sup> To extend the political confrontations of Scottish history into the contemporary period in this way contrasts markedly with Scott's usual differentiation of past from present. Writing in 1856, the younger M'Crie even identified a *national* reason for keeping his father's "Vindication of the Covenanters" in the public view:

But though Presbyterians in general, and indeed all north of the Tweed who were acquainted with the facts, hailed this Vindication with delight, and even while enjoying the Tale make all allowances for the exaggerations of the novelist, it is otherwise with English readers. Few of them have seen this Review; and the greater part, utterly incognisant of the genuine history of the times, have taken their impressions of the character and the principles of men, and of the struggles and sufferings of the period, from the racy and romantic exhibitions of *Old Mortality*, actually receiving these as the truthful delineations of history! Nothing could more clearly evince the necessity of such an exposure; nothing more completely justify the protest taken by the reviewer against the tendency of such historical pantomimes, in which truth is sacrificed for the amusement of holiday readers; nothing more strikingly shows the expediency of giving more extended circulation to the Vindication before us, which is as much required now as it was at the period of its first appearance.<sup>37</sup>

M'Crie's review begins by remarking on the frivolity of most contemporary novels, and, by implication, of the tastes of their readers and the designs of the authors. This leads him to say that, considering "the mass of insipid, stupid, and pernicious productions with which our circulating libraries are stuffed", he is not greatly surprised to find

a man of genius and taste . . . choosing to send the offspring of his fancy into the world without his name, or under a false one, contented with enjoying his reputation, and the other fruits of his labour, *incognito*, and concealing himself from the public by means of a complicated piece of literary machinery.<sup>38</sup>

He then goes on to comment on the first three Waverley Novels, which, he is in no doubt, originate from the same pen as the *Tales of My Landlord* (he is, of course, in no doubt either that Scott is the Author of *Waverley*). This is a means of approaching the controversy over *Old Mortality* which Scott himself adopted in his response to M' Crie.

M' Crie demonstrates considerable skills in analysing the nature of Scott's historical fiction. On *Waverley*, for example, he comments:

The principal character in it wants those great qualities which are essential to a hero; his conduct justly subjects him to the suspicion of cowardice; and he becomes a deserter and a rebel, without the excuse of being actuated by principle or conviction; - a piece of management on the part of the author, which can only be accounted for on the supposition, that he was not unwilling that the chief honour should be transferred to another individual, [i.e. Charles Edward] whom, even in these times, it would not have been prudent or becoming to have proclaimed as the hero of this story.

In spite of such faults, M' Crie believed, the author of *Waverley* had "given an interest to the work which cannot fail to make it be read with pleasure", especially by "skilfully combining his fabulous narrative with the interesting history of the Rebellion, and the fates of the adventurous and unfortunate Chevalier".<sup>39</sup> His handling of this mix of history and fiction in *Old Mortality*, however, was

much less to M'Crie's liking. "Real history" was integral to the story: the author

has not taken occasion to make transient allusions to the characters and manners of the age; but it is the main and avowed object of his work to illustrate these, and to give a genuine and correct picture of the principles and conduct of the two parties into which Scotland was at that time divided.

It was therefore not enough for the author to "keep within the bounds of probability, - he must conform to historic truth":

If he introduces real characters, they must feel, and speak, and act as they are described to have done in the faithful page of history, and the author is not at liberty to mould them as he pleases, to make them more interesting, and to give greater effect to his story. The same regard to the truth of history must be observed when fictitious personages are introduced, provided the reader is taught or induced to form a judgment from them of the parties to which they are represented as belonging.

These were the "laws of the kind of writing under consideration", M'Crie declared, and the author's offences against them were "neither few nor slight".<sup>40</sup>

Remembering Scott's own ideas about the writing of historical fiction (as expressed in the Dedicatory Epistle to *Ivanhoe* and elsewhere), it is not surprising that he fails to satisfy these very different standards. For Dr M'Crie, his "false and distorted view of men and measures" cannot be excused on the grounds that the work

displays great talents; that it contains scenes which are described with exquisite propriety and truth; that the leading facts in the history of those times are brought forward; that the author has condemned the severities of the government; that he is

often in a mirthful and facetious mood; and that some allowances must be made for a desire to amuse his readers, and to impart greater interest to a story, which, after all, is for the most part fictitious. . . . It is not upon sentiments transiently expressed, but upon the impression which the whole is calculated to make, that our judgment must be formed.<sup>41</sup>

"The whole", however, is constructed of various scenes, on many of which M'Crie turns his attention in order to refute Scott on points of detail. "For the sake of giving effect to a particular scene," he complains, "the author does not hesitate to violate historic truth and probability, and even to contradict his own statements and admissions." The case of Mause Headrigg is most effectively dealt with in this way:

Mause is a favourite character with the author, and out of her mouth he intended to pour the greatest quantity of his ridicule upon the Covenanters. Here, then, we might have expected consistency. But how does the case stand? Mause was an old professor of religion, and also an old residenter on the estate of Tillietudlem. She had long attended conventicles, but she had conducted herself quietly, and prudently, and inoffensively; for, had she done otherwise, the zealous lady Margaret Bellenden, who was accustomed to visit her, and to gossip with her for half an hour at a time, must have long before discovered her principles and her character. But no sooner does she fall under the management of our author, than she becomes all at once frenzied, and having lost the command of herself, and being wholly possessed by the fanatical spirit of the tale, she not only incurs the wrath of the old lady with whom she had been "a sort of favourite," but by her wild and uncontrollable raving, expels herself and her son from every harbour, and exposes all who were so unfortunate as to receive her, to the greatest distress and peril. What must we infer from this incongruous and conflicting representation? That the conduct of the discreet Mause, previous to "the 5th of May 1679, when our narrative commences," exhibits the genuine picture of the Presbyterian character, as it existed at that period, and the description of her mad behaviour after that period, is the distorted caricature of the same class of persons as now presented in *Old Mortality*?<sup>42</sup>



Again, says M'Crie,

the scene at Milnwood, when Henry Morton is taken prisoner, is the only one in the work which could properly be intended to represent the depredations of the soldiery, and is evidently given by the author as a specimen of the whole. But here every circumstance is so arranged, as to diminish the impression which the reader might have conceived of the excesses committed on such occasions.

The soldiers, according to the critic, appear to conduct themselves "with great moderation", apart from calling insolently for various kinds of drink - but with such effect that the reader is in fact "mightily pleased to see the claret of the old miser [Morton's uncle] quaffed, and his musty bottles emptied". Morton is carried off, but largely as a result of "the ridiculous, extravagant, and raving rhapsodies" of Mause, so that the reader is "bribed" "to think lightly of the whole persecution, by putting a laughable and ludicrous description of the sufferings of the Covenanters into the mouth of old Mause." "Thus the tragic scenes of military violence, described by the faithful page of history, sink, in the mimic representation of our author, into a mere farce!"<sup>43</sup>

M'Crie applies the same criticism to the scene at Tillietudlem in which Morton confronts Claverhouse for the first time:

This is evidently introduced by the author as a fair representation of the cruelties with which Grahame was chargeable. But how unlike the truth! Does Claverhouse shoot Morton with his own hand? O horrid! No. Is Morton shot at all? No. How, then, does he escape with his life? Is he rescued from death by the sudden advance of his friends, the Whigs? Not at all. The author is more sparing and judicious in the use of poetic machinery than old dotting Homer, who is ever depriving his heroes of the glory of a victory, or of an act of clemency, by imputing these to the intervention of one or other of his officious gods. Something of

this kind was highly proper, and it is not withheld, when Morton was afterwards to be saved from the bloody fangs of the savage fanatics at Drumshinnel [the farmhouse from which Claverhouse rescues him]. But it was quite unnecessary and superfluous to have recourse to any such expedient on the present occasion.<sup>44</sup>

Rather, says M'Crie, four chapters are expended in arranging the plot so that, instead of a last-minute rescue or a quick execution, Morton is spared through the intercession of Edith and the convenience of a private debt of honour reluctantly paid by Claverhouse to Evandale. Thus, "we never once feel any apprehension for [Morton's] fate, nor think that he is in the least danger from the severity of Claverhouse."<sup>45</sup> On the contrary, the scene serves to illuminate the character of Claverhouse (which, of course, Scott maintained had been "foulyly traduced"), his "patriotism and disinterestedness, as well as his bravery", and who will later descend on Drumshinnel "like a protecting angel, to save the innocent." Morton, M'Crie points out, is treated by him, after this last incident, "rather as a friend and companion than a prisoner; and while he enjoys the company of 'this remarkable man,' is delighted and astonished 'by the varied play of his imagination, and the depth of his knowledge of human nature!'"<sup>46</sup>

Returning to "the impression which the whole piece is calculated to make", M'Crie declares that "the general tendency of the work" is "unfavourable to the interests of religion and political freedom" - a fact which contradicts the author's own sentiments condemning persecution, tyranny and military oppression.<sup>47</sup> This anomaly arises, it seems, because the author sees with "the eye of a poet"<sup>48</sup>, and fails to put his tale within a true historical context. Thus:

One conspicuous fault in this tale lies in its not giving a view of the state of the Presbyterians previous to the time that it commences, and of the sufferings which they had endured from the Government. It begins with an account of the assassination of Archbishop Sharp, and of the insurrection of the Presbyterians; but it throws no light upon the causes which drove them to this extremity.

(By contrast, Galt in *Ringan Gilhaize* found it necessary to go right back to the Reformation to establish the context of *his* Covenanters!) "The necessity of this is so exceedingly obvious," says M'Crie, "that it is difficult to suppress the suspicion that the information was intentionally kept back."<sup>49</sup> Whether this is true or not, there is no doubt that Scott's omission enabled him to portray his Covenanters as he did:

In general they are either fools or madmen, or hypocrites and rogues, and for the most part they are a compound of both. Look upon them, and you instantly recognise the Puritan and precisian. Approach nearer and examine them more narrowly, and you find them to be wild enthusiasts and gloomy fanatics. They express themselves, even in their ordinary conversation, in a strange, ridiculous, and incoherent jargon, compounded of Scripture phrases, and cant terms peculiar to their own party opinions in ecclesiastical polity. They are utterly destitute of all knowledge of civil rights, and of any enlightened regard to the principles of political liberty. They are of disloyal principles, and rancorous in their political hatred. They are enemies to all elegant studies, as well as innocent recreations. Amidst all their affected preciseness, and claims to superior godliness, they are selfish, and do not scruple to have recourse to base and wicked means to advance the good cause, or to promote their own interest. They are as much disposed to persecute as their adversaries. They are destitute of military talents, and show themselves as incapable of vindicating their claims in the field as of recommending themselves to the Government by the moderation and mildness of their behaviour. In fine, many of them have imbibed the principles of assassination, and are prepared to act upon them.<sup>50</sup>

Obviously M'Crie's points were and remain open to dispute, and indeed Scott addressed some of them in his own review in the *Quarterly*. What is important, however, is that M'Crie was articulating a vision of the past utterly different from that of Scott. In it, the Covenanters were intrinsically, even exclusively, linked with the struggles of their age for civil liberties and political freedom; and hence the supposed impartiality of Scott's post-Enlightenment authorial objectivity was, according to M'Crie, really a failure to appreciate the true character of the period:

A spirit of indifference to religion incapacitates a person in a great measure for doing justice to our history during the 16th and 17th centuries. Religion had such an influence on all the revolutions of that period, and its disputes were so much involved in all the great political questions which were then agitated, that it is impossible to give a just view of the latter, without an extensive and accurate acquaintance with the former.

This, it seems, required an imagination that could free itself from the restraints of the present age as much as sympathise with a particular set of religious tenets. Scott doubtless agreed with his critic that

there is a wide difference between the consulting of books and manuscripts in order to acquire what may be called the *facts* of a period, and a consulting of these in order to ascertain the *character* of the age, including the opinions, talents, acquirements, and moral qualities of the principal persons who figured in it.<sup>51</sup>

It was in depicting that *character*, however, that their historical perceptions differed absolutely.

If it was Scott's purpose in his first three novels to try to show Scotland and its people in a more favourable light to the English, that programme seemed to have undergone a change of emphasis with *Old Mortality*. His depiction of the Covenanters was more grotesque, and less likely to arouse English sympathies, than that of the Jacobites or the more private worlds of *Guy Mannering* and *The Antiquary*. Scott's wish to rehabilitate Claverhouse's character in Scottish opinions would indicate that he was concerned less with a presentation of Scottish manners than with what he saw as the truth of Scottish history, but, as M'Crie pointed out, this resulted in reinforcing erroneous English ideas about the character of the Covenanters:

We would be ashamed of being found to cherish a spirit of narrow and illiberal nationality, especially towards the natives of our sister kingdom; but we confess that we have felt proud of the superior knowledge which our countrymen have displayed of the history of England, compared with the knowledge which Englishmen have of ours; and we feel proportionally humbled when we perceive a Scotsman retailing English blunders, and dressing the most crude materials with laborious trifling, to feed English prejudices at the expense of his country's honour.<sup>52</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that the central character of Henry Morton, whose survival in the aftermath of the destruction of the opposing fanaticisms follows so closely the pattern of rehabilitation usual in Scott's fiction, totally failed to impress Dr M'Crie. The excuse that a good story was thus made was not allowed: indeed, for M'Crie, the "fictitious form" which Scott found so useful in his interpretation of Scottish history only aggravated the errors of that

interpretation.<sup>53</sup> M'Crie's opinion of Morton highlighted the idea that he was *misplaced* when among the Covenanters:

He was a Presbyterian neither in principle nor in spirit; he joined them from accident and irritation; he was never happy till he was delivered from their society, and found himself under the protection of the amiable and accomplished Claverhouse. . .

On the other hand Scott had drawn those whom "the good people of Scotland . . . have been accustomed to rever as patriots" as "mad enthusiasts".<sup>54</sup> His failure to explain properly the facts behind their activities only served to accentuate the weakness of Morton's central role:

Had he only introduced the leading facts in a conversation between Morton and a rational Presbyterian (if such a personage could have entered into the author's conception), he might have given a higher tone to his work, and invested his nominal hero with the real character of a patriot, instead of making him a mere everyday person of romance - a puppet, alternately agitated by love, and jealousy, and personal resentment, and a vague and feeble wish for fame.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, at the heart of M'Crie's rejection of Scott's novel lay a concern that the nature of patriotism had been falsified. In creating a hero whose character demonstrated at every juncture that he was, for the purposes of fiction, artificially divorced from the events in which he appeared to be involved, Scott had betrayed the reality of the Scottish past. This was a powerful critique, and one which Scott failed to refute, largely because it was disguised by the theological overlay in which M'Crie wrapped it. Indeed, if it can be

argued from a modern perspective that Scott's brand of dualistic patriotism was intrinsically stagnatory because of its retrospectiveness, the same could be said of the Presbyterian theocratic patriotism of, if not M'Crie himself, then of one such as the Reverend Dr James Kerr, who as late as 1895 in his Preface to *The Covenants and the Covenanters* felt that it was relevant to remind "the *British* nation" as follows:

The obligation of these national Covenants on the British nation still has been oftentimes demonstrated by indisputable arguments. The Word of God teaches in the most pointed manner this principle of devolving Covenant obligation. The God of Israel threatened His people with chastisement for breaking the Covenant He had made with their fathers four hundred years before. The Covenanters themselves bound their posterity to God by express words in their bonds . . . . *These deeds were as national as any in the statute-book* and therefore they are obligatory still, for the nation in its corporate character is the same now as three hundred years ago. Their perpetual obligation may be resisted, as it often is, on the plea that a people have no right to bind posterity. *But should such a plea be declared valid, then society would be thrown into the wildest disorder and temporal ruin would overtake millions. . . .* These deeds of the Covenanters, and the heritage secured by them, were obtained through the noblest sacrifices. They were deeds presented before the Throne, and registered in the Court of heaven, and those who repudiate them incur the risk of an awful forfeiture.<sup>56</sup>

That Kerr could extend this argument, which even in Scott's day would have baffled most of the Protestant faithful of England, to encompass the "British nation", provides a curious alternative to the kind of twin-track patriotism which Scott had perfected as a means of entry for Scots into a British patriotic condition. The two viewpoints, so utterly at odds, might serve as good illustrations of Tom Nairn's first two "Dreams of Scottish Nationalism" - Reformation

and Romanticism - in confrontation.\* There is a more subtle difference between them, however: the Reformation view might be said to make a false construction of the present, Romanticism to do likewise for the past.

It is in this respect, of seeking a continuum between the past and present, that one can turn with some relief to the work of John Galt. In his review of *Old Mortality*, M'Crie had remarked that, in spite of its title, "the greater part of it is of such a quality as cannot be supposed to have been furnished by that or any other zealous or venerable Covenanter."<sup>57</sup> Galt's *Ringan Gilhaize*, by contrast, attempted to reproduce what the "editing" of Peter Pattieson (that is, of Scott himself) had eradicated - the voice and mind of a Covenanter. This required an act of imagination of a different sort altogether from that which inspired Scott's authorial "objectivity". As Galt explained in his *Literary Life*:

I have supposed a Covenanter relating the adventures of his grandfather who lived during the Reformation. It was therefore

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\* Tom Nairn, "The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism" in *New Left Review*, No. 49 (May/June, 1968), pp. 3-18. Nairn acknowledged a positive side to the Reformation Dream when he noted that it produced not just an institution - the Kirk - but a theocratically inspired social system: "It provided a positive, partly democratic, intelligible social order that struck deep roots in a population whose historical experience until then had been a concentrated dose of everything worst about mediaeval Europe: dearth, weak central power, rapacious struggles for position, Church corruption, brigandage and wars. The divine, black dream divorced from time was also a form of civilisation." Later, of course, Nairn sees it transformed into "a detestable and crippling burden against which every form of creative culture has had to fight for life . . .", but this does not excuse the failings of the Romantic dream, dominated by Scott: "Elsewhere, the revelation of the romantic past and the soul of the people informed some real future - in the Scottish limbo, they were the nation's reality." (pp. 6-7)



necessary that I should conceive distinctly what a Covenanter would think of a Reformer in the church, to enable him to relate what such a person would do in the time of John Knox. There was here, if I may be allowed the expression, a transfusion of character that could only be rightly understood by showing how a Reformer himself acted and felt in the opinion of a Covenanter. To enable the reader to estimate the invention put forth in the work, and to judge of the manner in which the Covenanter performed his task, I made him give his autobiography, in which was kept out of view every thing that might recall the separate existence of John Galt.<sup>58</sup>

The effect of adopting this method was to suggest that the prejudices of a Tory landed gentleman of 1816 had no more historical validity - indeed, less - than the prejudices of a Seventeenth-century Covenanter. Ringan's voice recalled those vulgar legends and popular accounts in which, as Scott believed, Claverhouse's character had been "fouly traduced". In this sense, Galt's novel is, as Patricia Wilson has written, "a splendid example of realistic folk history"<sup>59</sup>. It differs only in its more adventurous style and subject matter from those other Scottish novels - including the most famous, *Annals of the Parish* - which he preferred to describe as "theoretical histories of society"<sup>60</sup>. For it attempts to witness historical events through the subjective experience of the participants: to complete Patricia Wilson's description, it is a book "wherein the people, the events and the movements which brought about social, economic, political and religious change in Scotland between 1558 and 1696 assume importance primarily by their impact on three, or possibly five, generations of the Gilhaize family."<sup>61</sup>

The use of the first-person narrative is crucial in offering a radically different picture of history. As Charles Swann writes: "By

choosing to tell Ringan's story in the first person, Galt is claiming that he can imaginatively repossess the past."<sup>62</sup> By contrast with Scott's only novel written in the first-person throughout, *Rob Roy*, Galt's achievement is complete. As we shall see, Frank Osbaldistone is perhaps the most vapid and insignificant of all the Waverley-style heroes: he writes as an outsider and observer, in a manner almost indistinguishable from that of "The Author of *Waverley*". From the outset of *Ringan Gilhaize*, on the other hand, the reader is left in no doubt of Ringan's involvement in his story - even in the events of his grandfather's time:

It is a thing past all contesting, that, in the Reformation, there was a spirit of far greater carnality among the champions of the cause, than among those who in later times so courageously, under the Lord, upheld the unspotted banners of the Covenant. This I speak of from the remembrance of many aged persons, who either themselves bore a part in that war with the worshippers of the Beast and his Image, or who had heard their fathers tell of the heart and mind wherewith it was carried on, and could thence, with the helps of their own knowledge, discern the spiritual and hallowed difference. But, as I intend mainly to bear witness to those passages of the late bloody persecutions in which I was myself both a soldier and a sufferer, it will not become me to brag of our motives and intents, as higher and holier than those of the great elder Worthies of 'the Congregation.' At the same time it is needful that I should rehearse as much of what happened in the troubles of the Reformation, as, in its effects and influences, worked upon the issues of my own life. For my father's father was out in the raids of that tempestuous season, and it was by him, and from the stories he was wont to tell of what the government did, when drunken with the sorceries of the gorgeous Roman harlot, and rampaging with the wrath of Moloch and Belial, it trampled on the hearts and thought to devour the souls of the subjects, that I first was taught to feel, know, and understand, the divine right of resistance.<sup>63</sup>

Galt manages the difficult task of imposing unity on a story covering a hundred and thirty-eight years not by relying solely on

the voice of a single man, Ringan, but, as Patricia Wilson puts it, "by having one theme running through it, the theme of the abuse of authority and the need to resist it. . . ." <sup>64</sup> Thus the character of Ringan informs the reader of this theme, and is in turn informed by it: to quote Charles Swann again, "Galt so manages to control his story that we do not identify with [Ringan], or necessarily approve his sentiments, but understand him in the context of his history - which may not be the same as Ringan's sense of his history." <sup>65</sup> Galt himself was at pains to dissociate himself from the spirit of the book: "The sentiments which it breathes are not mine, nor the austerity that it enforces, nor at all the odour of the piety with which the enthusiasm of the hero is tinged." <sup>66</sup> Politically, too, Galt was more cautious and conservative in his views than the tenor of the postscript to *Ringan Gilhaize* would suggest. <sup>67</sup> This only makes his achievement seem more remarkable, for when Charles Swann, criticising *Old Mortality*, asks, "Do we ever see why anyone might want to be a Covenanter?" <sup>68</sup>, the affirmative answer lies with John Galt. *Ringan Gilhaize* supplies the comprehensive picture of both the historical context and a Covenanting character which was absent from Scott's work.

Galt recorded in his *Literary Life* that *Ringan Gilhaize*

was certainly suggested by Sir Walter Scott's *Old Mortality*, in which I thought he treated the defenders of the Presbyterian Church with too much levity, and not according to my impressions derived from the history of that time. Indeed, to tell the truth, I was hugely provoked that he, the descendant of Scott of Harden, who was fined in those days forty thousand pounds Scots for being a Presbyterian, or rather for countenancing his lady for being so, should have been so forgetful of what was due to the spirit of that epoch, as to throw it into what I felt was ridicule. <sup>69</sup>

But Galt, in answering Scott, did not write a novel merely more sympathetic to the Covenanters. It involved a completely different form of historical fiction - one which was ill-received by both critics and the reading public at the time of publication. Thus Francis Jeffrey's complaint that the book had "no interesting complication of events or adventure, and no animating development or catastrophe" was irrelevant to Galt's purpose: Paul Scott is correct in his view that Jeffrey was "condemning *Ringan Gilhaize* for not being a novel of a different kind," and that "he failed to recognise Galt's success in achieving what he set out to do."<sup>70</sup> Galt himself, believing *Ringan* to be "my best", nevertheless had to be content with the hope that "whatever may be the blindness of the present age, thank God there will be a posterity".<sup>71</sup>

Jeffrey, in any case, was wrong. The novel does reach a catastrophe (even if it defies the conventions of a *Waverley*-style plot) in the accumulation of disasters which destroy Ringan's family and drive him to near-insanity and to the act of assassination. This is the great difference between Galt and Scott. It is inconceivable that one of Scott's heroes, however much he might be influenced by dream, misplacement in time and place, or delusion, should under such conditions perform such an irrevocable act. The contrast between *Waverley*, who never strikes a blow for the Jacobite cause in which he is embroiled, and Ringan, who finally assassinates Scott's Jacobite hero Claverhouse, could not be clearer. While Henry Morton's moderation, his reluctance to be involved, derive from his being more

akin to the reader than to the characters surrounding him, Ringan is driven by his experience to real participation in the events of the novel and of history - even to becoming the "historical" agent who shoots Claverhouse at Killiecrankie. He is *changed* by the course of his history, becoming "an infirm, grey-haired man, with a deranged head and a broken heart"<sup>72</sup>. His appalling sufferings - for example, the sight that greets him through the Edinburgh tolbooth window - would seriously disrupt the role played by any of Scott's observer-heroes:

At that moment a shriek of horror rose from all then looking out, and every one recoiled from the window. In the same instant a bloody head on a halbert was held up to us. - I looked - I saw the ghastly features, and I would have kissed those lifeless lips; for, O! they were my son's.<sup>73</sup>

Galt, without approving the extremism of the Cameronians, brought to his novel that understanding of the inextricable relationship between religion and politics in the Seventeenth Century which Dr M'Crie believed to be lacking in Scott. Thus religious faith not only becomes Ringan's means of mental support in the face of public oppression and personal disaster, it also commits him to radical political activity and to his act - an act of both private vengeance and public justice - at Killiecrankie. Such a confusion of private and public motivation runs counter to the fundamentals of Scott's dualistic mode, which involves a rigorous separation of these elements as well as of the past from the present. In the climax to

the novel, the different approach is obvious, as all these elements conjoin:

Then I heard a great shouting on the right, and looking that way, I saw the children of the Covenant fleeing in remnants across the lower plain, and making toward the river. Presently I also saw Mackay with two regiments, all that kept the order of discipline, also in the plain. He had lost the battle. Claverhouse had won; and the scattered firing, which was continued by a few, was to my ears as the rivetting of the shackles on the arms of poor Scotland for ever. My grief was unspeakable.

I ran to and fro on the brow of the hill - and I stamp with my feet - and I beat my breast - and I rubbed my hands with the frenzy of despair - and I threw myself on the ground - and all the sufferings of which I have written returned upon me - and I started up and I cried aloud the blasphemy of the fool, "There is no God."

But scarcely had the dreadful words escaped my profane lips, when I heard, as it were, thunders in the heavens, and the voice of an oracle crying in the ears of my soul, "The victory of this day is given into thy hands!" and strange wonder and awe fell upon me, and a mighty spirit entered into mine, and I felt as if I was in that moment clothed with the armour of divine might.

I took up my carabine, which in these transports had fallen from my hand, and I went round the gable of the house into the garden - and I saw Claverhouse with several of his officers . . .

. . . and I prepared for the third time, and when all was ready, and Claverhouse was coming forward, I took off my bonnet, and kneeling with the gun in my hand, cried, "Lord, remember David and all his afflictions," and having so prayed, I took aim as I knelt, and Claverhouse raising his arm in command, I fired. In the same moment I looked up, and there was a vision in the air as if all the angels of brightness, and the martyrs in their vestments of glory, were assembled on the walls and battlements of heaven to witness the event, - and I started up and cried, "I have delivered my native land!" But in the same instant I remembered to whom the glory was due, and falling again on my knees, I raised my hands and bowed my head as I said, "Not mine, O Lord, but thine is the victory!"

. . . Thus was my avenging vow fulfilled, - and thus was my native land delivered from bondage.<sup>74</sup>

"I have not taken up the avenging pen of history, and dipped it in the blood of martyrs, to record only my own particular woes and

wrongs", Ringan states earlier in the book<sup>75</sup> Just as he was concerned to show the interaction of private and public worlds, Galt could not resist adding a highly political postscript to his novel. Beginning with a defence of his use of Scots\* in a work which was "historical" rather than "local" - a use in narrative as well as dialogue, it should be added, which further distinguishes his writing from Scott's formal English authorial narration - Galt moves on to link the language question with some remarks about "the Scottish political character". The truth was, he said, that

an elementary difference exists in the public feelings of the two nations quite as great as the idioms of their respective dialects. The English are a justice-loving people, according to charter and statute; the Scotch are a wrong-resenting race, according to right and feeling; and the character of liberty among them takes its aspect from that peculiarity.<sup>76</sup>

To rub home the point, Galt appended the entire text of the Declaration of Arbroath (which he also makes Ringan quote from in the novel<sup>77</sup>), the most famous articulation of the Scottish people's long-established right of *political* resistance. "Servile loyalty is comparatively rare among us," says Galt<sup>78</sup>. The construction of Scott's fiction, by contrast, reveals a deep antipathy to such politicising of the Scottish past, especially in a period of considerable social and political unrest.

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\* Scott, interestingly, thought that Galt "Out-Scottifies the Scotch dialect". (*Letters*, Volume VIII, p. 146.)

Galt's novel demonstrated that an alternative fictional view of that past was possible. Sir George Douglas, who edited a reprint of *Ringan Gilhaize* in 1899, wrote that "Galt laid bare the soul of the Covenanting movement [which] . . . Scott in *Old Mortality* most signally failed to do." And he went on:

For in that novel - in place of Galt's subtle and penetrating analysis of the motives which animated the Covenanters nobly to dare and nobly to endure - we find the author contents himself with using the characteristics and the disturbances of the time for the mere purpose of providing incident and adventure, and a strong local colour for his puppets - in a word, for the most ordinary and conventional purposes of the romantic novelist. Nor is this the only instance of such psychological obtuseness in his work. That, in spite of this initial and damning defect, he does succeed in producing a fine novel, is but one more proof of the amazing fecundity of his genius. None the less does the fact remain that it is a novel, so to speak, without a soul - that, so far from being of the essence of the Covenant, the Burleys, Mucklewraths, Mauses and MacBrairs [sic] are but so many of its accidents, and that thus the main issues of the historical drama are not involved in the romance.<sup>79</sup>

If the historical romance were to play a part of any dignity in our literature, said Douglas, who titled his Introduction "A Neglected Masterpiece", it would have to be grafted upon the stock supplied by *Ringan Gilhaize* rather than on that supplied by *Old Mortality*. But, as Douglas' title implied, it was Scott's fiction which had struck the more resonant chord among the reading public. Francis Jeffrey did not hesitate to judge the Author of *Waverley*'s historical imagination superior to that of the author of *Ringan Gilhaize*. The latter, he wrote, in a suitably chivalric metaphor, had "evidently gone beyond his means in entering the lists with the master of



*historical* romance; and must be contented, therefore, to follow his footsteps in the more approachable parts of his career."<sup>80</sup>

What is most noticeable about Scott's own defence (disguised as criticism) of *Old Mortality* in *The Quarterly Review* of January 1817 is how, starting with observations not dissimilar to those made by M'Crie, he comes to conclusions about the relationship of past and present quite different from those contained in Galt's work of six years later. Where M'Crie, for example, had seen a certain charm in Waverley's fabulous involvement with the Jacobite rebellion, Scott in his review also remarked on this combination of fiction and fact:

These coincidences between fiction and reality are perhaps the very circumstances to which the success of these novels is in a great measure to be attributed: for, without depreciating the merit of the artist, every spectator at once recognises in those scenes and faces which are copied from nature an air of distinct reality, which is not attached to fancy-pieces, however happily conceived and elaborately executed.<sup>81</sup>

Scott's criticism of the first three Waverley Novels in fact hardly differs from M'Crie's:

Our author has told us it was his object to present a succession of scenes and characters connected with Scotland in its past and present state, and we must own that his stories are so slightly constructed as to remind us of the showman's thread with which he draws up his pictures and presents them successively to the eye of the spectator. . . . Probability and perspicuity of narrative are sacrificed with the utmost indifference to the desire of producing effect; and provided the author can but contrive to "surprise and elevate," he appears to think that he has done his duty to his public.

. . . In addition to the loose and incoherent style of the narration, another leading fault in these novels is the total want of interest which the reader attaches to the character of the hero. Waverley, Brown, or Bertram, in *Guy Mannering*, and Lovel in the *Antiquary*, are all brethren of a family; very amiable and very

insipid sort of young men . . . . His chief characters are never actors, but always acted upon by the spur of circumstances, and have their fates uniformly determined by the agency of the subordinate persons. This arises from the author having usually represented them as foreigners to whom every thing in Scotland is strange, - a circumstance which serves as his apology for entering into many minute details which are reflectively, as it were, addressed to the reader through the medium of the hero.<sup>82</sup>

Likewise, the "traditions and manners of the Scotch were so blended with superstitious practices and fears" that many more such incidents appear in these novels "than seem either probable or natural to an English reader." But had this been otherwise, Scott observes of his own work, "his story would have lost the national cast, which it was chiefly his object to preserve . . .".<sup>83</sup> Again, he demonstrates that some of the more exotic characters of the early novels, such as Bradwardine, David Gellatley, Meg Merrilies and Pleydell, had their originals in well-documented fact. Generally, however, though the *incidents* of the novels "are frequently copied from *actual* occurrences", "the characters are either entirely fictitious, or if any traits have been borrowed from real life . . . they have been carefully disguised and blended with such as are purely imaginary."<sup>84</sup>

This explanation is important because, in examining *Old Mortality*, Scott applies the same argument to justify his portrayal of the Covenanters. His preachers, then, are fictitious, but their different characters reflect the various Covenanting types and traits for which Scott (as reviewer) finds evidence in history. But in delineating the stages by which the Covenanting mind progresses towards total insanity Scott was scarcely addressing the much wider

questions which M'Crie had raised, and certainly was not attempting an "inside view" of that mind, as Galt would later do:

The author of *Old Mortality* has drawn a lively sketch of their distracted councils and growing divisions, and has introduced several characters of their clergy, on each of whom religious enthusiasm is represented as producing an effect in proportion to its quantity, and the capacity upon which it is wrought. It is sincere but formal in the indulged Presbyterian clergyman, Poundtext, who is well-meaning, and faithful, but somewhat timorous and attached to his own ease and comfort. The zeal of Kettledrummy is more boisterous, and he is bold, clamorous, and intractable. In a youth called MacBriar, of a more elevated and warm imagination, enthusiasm is wild, exalted, eloquent, and impressive; and in Habbakuk [sic] Mucklewrath it soars into absolute madness.<sup>25</sup>

This scale of derangement extends to Burley in his cave, "this moody maniac"<sup>26</sup> whose mind is "tottering on the verge of insanity"<sup>27</sup>. All that Scott writes of his own characterisation is, of course, accurate; but it does not answer, but merely confirms the wider criticisms of M'Crie.

In this larger context, Scott suggests that the failures of "what are called Historical Romances" are due not to "any inherent and constitutional defect in the species of composition itself" (as M'Crie, at least with regard to *Old Mortality*, contended), but to bad craftsmanship - such "unpardonable sins against good taste" as, for example, if "the manners of different ages are injudiciously blended together" or "if in the portraiture of real character the truth of history be violated . . .".<sup>28</sup> That word "injudiciously" reminds us that Scott, in the Dedicatory Epistle to *Ivanhoe*, actually considered it necessary to the success of such writing that "the subject assumed

should be, as it were, translated into the manners, as well as the language, of the age we live in."<sup>29</sup> He is concerned, then, with the method of fiction-writing rather than with M'Crie's points of principle, and it is from this pragmatic position that he moves to conclude that "the author of these works" has avoided the faults of others and thus "takes his seat on the bench of the historians of his time and country":

At once a master of the great events and minuter incidents of history, and of the manners of the times he celebrates, as distinguished from those which now prevail - the intimate thus of the living and of the dead, his judgment enables him to separate those traits which are characteristic from those which are generic; and his imagination, not less accurate and discriminating than vigorous and vivid, presents to the mind of the reader the manners of the times, and introduces to his familiar acquaintance the individuals of his drama as they thought and acted.<sup>30</sup>

This, Scott, said, was especially true of *Old Mortality*. His review, in fact, is an ingenious defence of his presentation of the Scottish past by reference, not to, say, the principles of *Philosophical History*, but to the craft of historical fiction. It is an indication of how well he had developed this craft that he now considered it to warrant him a seat on the bench of historians. The difference between his approach and John Galt's in 1823 is underlined by his remarks on the "poetic" attractions of the Covenanted period: the near-collapse of Scottish society he ascribes almost entirely to the Covenanters, while the main theme of *Ringan Gilhaize* emphasises their crucial role in upholding "the liberty of the people". Clearly, in this review, the patriot and poet in Scott receive

different messages from the past; or rather, the poet celebrates a different kind of patriotism:

We have trespassed too unmercifully on the time of our gentle readers to indulge our inclination in endeavouring to form an estimate of that melancholy but, nevertheless, most attractive period in our history, when by the united efforts of a corrupt and unprincipled government, of extravagant fanaticism, want of education, perversion of religion, and the influence of ill-instructed teachers, whose hearts and understandings were estranged and debased by the illapses of the wildest enthusiasm, the liberty of the people was all but extinguished, and the bonds of society nearly dissolved. Revolting as all this is to the patriot, it affords fertile material to the poet.<sup>91</sup>

## Chapter Nine

### *ROB ROY: A RECAPITULATION*

*"Scott again, the ever delightful man, sane, courageous, admirable; the birth of Romance, in a dawn that was a sunset; snobbery, conservatism, the wrong thread in History, and notably in that of his own land."*

*Rob Roy*, which was published on 31st December 1817, appears as a kind of clearing-house for the various inter-related themes of the previous novels. The same elements occur - the tension between passion and prudence being especially marked - but the relationships between them are defined with considerable latitude, as if Scott, aware of their accumulation in his fiction up to that point, were seeking to clarify them for himself. The four main male characters (excluding the villain, Rashleigh Osbaldistone), Frank Osbaldistone, Rob Roy MacGregor, Bailie Nicol Jarvie and Andrew Fairservice, all articulate at different moments different aspects of Scott's patriotic system, while each disagrees fundamentally with some aspect of the behaviour and attitude of the others. In returning to a Jacobite setting Scott was returning to what was - as *Waverley* had demonstrated - the most fertile field for the working-out of these

ideas, and in selecting the exploits of a near-legendary but also historical figure as the background for this exposition he was once again able to create a successful mix of fiction and fact. *Rob Roy*, then, is like a revised version of *Waverley* in which the accumulated themes of the other Scottish Novels are also incorporated.

This is evident even in the choice of title. "Never let me have to write up to a name," Scott is reported to have said of "Rob Roy", rejecting it when first suggested by Constable.<sup>2</sup> But he had already successfully made use of a similar proposal in the case of "Old Mortality", a name which, like Rob Roy, had also "maintained a wonderful degree of importance in popular recollection."<sup>3</sup> This is a far cry from the caution behind his choice of *Waverley*. Again, as with the "Tales of my Landlord" Scott invented a further source beyond his own anonymity as the "Author of *Waverley*": the Author had received, he explained, from an "unknown and nameless correspondent"<sup>4</sup>,

a parcel of papers containing the outlines of this narrative, with a permission, or rather with a request, couched in highly flattering terms, that they might be given to the public, with such alterations as should be found suitable. These were, of course, so numerous that, besides the suppression of names and of incidents approaching too much to reality, the work may in a great measure be said to be new written.

An additional footnote in the Magnum Opus edition admitted the "entirely imaginary" nature of this communication.<sup>5</sup> Scott thus gave himself more or less *carte blanche* to manipulate the background of the 'Fifteen and of Rob Roy's existence as he wished for the purposes

of his fiction. His critic Dr M'Crie would doubtless have had no quarrel with this approach to such peripheral subject-matter, for,

When the scene is laid in a remote and fabulous period, or when the merits and conduct of the men who are made to figure in it do not affect the great cause of truth and of public good, the writer may be allowed to exercise his ingenuity, and to amuse his readers, without our narrowly inquiring whether his representations are historically correct or not.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to note that, by the time of the *Magnum Opus*, this relationship between fact and fiction was made explicit in the extraordinarily long Introduction to the novel in which the life of the real Rob Roy is documented. "No introduction can be more appropriate to the work", wrote Scott, "than some account of the singular character whose name is given to the title-page . . ."<sup>7</sup> The facts of the past by this time serve simply to justify the events recorded in the *fictional* reconstruction. In the *Magnum Opus* Introduction, accordingly, Rob Roy personifies the contrast between two sets of opposing elements crucial to Scott's patriotic symbiosis:

He owed his fame in 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. Thus a character like his, blending the wild virtues, the subtle policy, and unrestrained license of an American Indian, was flourishing in Scotland during the Augustan age of Queen Anne and George I. Addison, it is probable, or Pope, would have been considerably surprised if they had known that there existed in the same island with them a personage of Rob Roy's peculiar habits and profession. It is this strong contrast betwixt the civilised 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.<sup>8</sup>



The "ideal boundary", then, is more than geographical: it represents a meeting of "wild virtues" and "the civilised and cultivated mode of life" of the modern age.

In adopting the first person for his narrative, Scott certainly did not forego his habit of "reflectively addressing the reader" through the medium of an insipid traveller-hero.\* On the contrary, as Frank Osbaldistone explains to his friend Will Tresham, one advantage of addressing his Memoirs to "a dear and intimate friend" is "that I may spare some of the details, in this case unnecessary, with which I must needs have detained a stranger from what I have to say of greater interest."<sup>9</sup> The reader, then, whether a "stranger" or not, is to be brought with the minimum delay to the action of the tale. Scott is thus relying on his public's familiarity with the kind of novel he writes: he does not feel it necessary to labour the points about Frank's (the narrator's) background, education and poetic imagination as he did about Edward Waverley's, since his readers should know by now what to expect in the character of the hero. It is, however, important to note that Frank has no knowledge of Scotland and its people, and yet "from an early period they had occupied and interested my imagination"<sup>10</sup>: partly from the legends of his old Northumbrian nurse Mabel Ricketts (her judgments formed on the southern side of that other "ideal boundary", the Border); and partly from the commercial prejudices of his father. "Such seeds of

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\* See above, p. 246.

national dislike remained between the two countries, the natural consequences of their existence as separate and rival states," writes Frank in old age; and, with cunning use of footnote, Scott denounces "a demagogue" (Wilkes) for having recently blown "these sparks into a temporary flame"<sup>11</sup>: a judgment entirely consistent with his historical perception of the Union and his later remarks in the *Letters of Malachi Malagrowth*.

Frank, more perhaps even than Waverley, is a time-traveller, and this in spite of the first-person narrative - a feature neutralised by the fact that Frank has written it in old age, with all the other characters now dead - "an old man's stories of a past age"<sup>12</sup>. His role, then, in effect, is to be the reader moving on the page: "I was born a citizen of the world, and my inclination led me into all scenes where my knowledge of mankind could be enlarged."<sup>13</sup> "I felt as if I were leaving behind me comfort, opulence, the charms of society, and all the pleasures of cultivated life", he says, as he moves north from London. The image of striking out into the past like "an unfortunate navigator who daringly unloosed from its moorings a boat which he was unable to manage, and thrust it off into the full tide of a navigable river", reminds us - because it contrasts so strongly - of the image of "amnesiac drift" with which Scott associated progress *out of* the past in the postscript to *Waverley*. Frank, as though "adrift in a strong current", finds himself "driving, without a compass, on the ocean of human life."<sup>14</sup> He has made a choice between passion (or the Muse of Poetry, "the very coquette who had led me into this wilderness"<sup>15</sup>) and prudence

(the opportunity to participate in his father's successful commercial ventures), and is fully aware of this choice. He has opted to do without the compass, at least on his journey of discovery into the past.

Yet Frank has a great respect for the commercial character, which, as he says,

connects nation with nation, relieves the wants and contributes to the wealth of all; and is to the general commonwealth of the civilised world what the daily intercourse of ordinary life is to private society, or rather, what air and food are to our bodies.<sup>16</sup>

His father, on the other hand, "as a man of business, looked upon the labour of poets with contempt".<sup>17</sup> Considering his son's execrable verses "To the memory of Edward the Black Prince" this is perhaps understandable. It is, however, on account of Frank's preference for poetry that his father dismisses him as "mad, actually insane"<sup>18</sup>, and packs him off to the North where he evidently thinks such a person belongs. This is, indeed, a view shared by Frank, whose imagination is easily inspired by the spirit of adventure: "I approached my native north, for such I esteemed it, with that enthusiasm which romantic and wild scenery inspires in the lovers of nature."<sup>19</sup>

As in *Waverley*, the love interest of the novel parallels the hero's progress from modern reality into romantic, dreamlike past. Frank's very first impression of Die Vernon is of "a vision that passed me"<sup>20</sup>; in a short space she becomes "my beautiful apparition"<sup>21</sup>; and her "extreme beauty" and "romantic and mysterious

situation" are among those attributes which more than reconcile him to a prolonged residence in his uncle's house: "If Osbaldistone Hall had been Athens in all its pristine glory of learning, and inhabited by sages, heroes, and poets, I could not have expressed less inclination to leave it."<sup>22</sup> "Love without hope or purpose, and curiosity without any rational or justifiable purpose" contribute to a general "agitation of the passions" in the build-up to Frank's departure for Scotland.<sup>23</sup> When Die Vernon redirects his energies from the composition of dire heroic verse - or, as Andrew Fairservice says, the "silly clinkum-clankum things that he ca's verse"<sup>24</sup> - it is to save his father from ruin. As it transpires, this will be effected not through a return to London and commercial endeavours there, but by actions in Scotland which are linked to his father's business concerns by the most tenuous of plots. The tenor of Die's advice is thus far more important than its content:

"Everything is possible for him who possesses courage and activity," she said, with a look resembling one of those heroines of the age of chivalry whose encouragement was wont to give champions double valour at the hour of need; "and to the timid and hesitating everything is impossible, because it seems so."<sup>25</sup>

And yet there is a certain confusion, since the love between this pair both complements the wild adventures in which they are to be involved and threatens to interfere with the successful outcome of those adventures. Die's response to Frank's "half-declaration of love"<sup>26</sup> seems to reinforce this confusion - "'This is folly!' she exclaimed - 'this is madness! . . . Hear me, sir! . . . and curb this unmanly burst of passion.'"<sup>27</sup> In fact, the confusion performs the

same function as dream in *Waverley*: at another point, when Frank believes that his love has been rejected, he declares, "I awake from a pleasant but most delusive dream"<sup>28</sup>. At base, then, the same elements are in conflict. Their interview concludes in this way:

Prudence, and the necessity of suppressing my passion and obeying Diana's reiterated command of "Leave me! leave me!" came in time to prevent any rash action. I left the apartment in a wild whirl and giddiness of mind, which I in vain attempted to compose when I returned to my own.

A chaos of thoughts intruded themselves on me at once, passing hastily through my brain, intercepting and overshadowing each other, and resembling those fogs which in mountainous countries are wont to descend in obscure volumes and disfigure or obliterate the usual marks by which the traveller steers his course through the wilds.<sup>29</sup>

The familiar opposing vocabularies of passion and prudence are displayed here to the full; nor should it escape notice that Scotland, to which all the characters will shortly be removed, is one of those "mountainous countries" where the fogs descend. Die Vernon is the symbol of this opposition, as the "subject of doubt" becomes a relief from the concerns of "propriety or prudence":

Of what nature could those mysteries be with which she was surrounded as with an enchanter's spell, and which seemed continually to exert an active influence over her thoughts and actions, though their agents were never visible? On this subject of doubt my mind finally rested, as if glad to shake itself free from investigating the propriety or prudence of my own conduct, by transferring the inquiry to what concerned Miss Vernon. "I will be resolved," I concluded, "ere I leave Osbaldistone Hall, concerning the light in which I must in future regard this fascinating being, over whose life frankness and mystery seem to have divided their reign, the former inspiring her words and sentiments, the latter spreading in misty influence over all her actions."<sup>30</sup>

Die Vernon is a less obvious symbol than Flora Mac-Ivor in part because her eventual marriage to Frank Osbaldistone requires her to have, as it were, a foot on each side of the divide. Although her destiny throughout the novel is repeatedly stated to be a foreign cloister, in fact she shares the fate which befalls Flora only temporarily, until her reunion with Frank. He is really no more of a match for the active and unfeminine Miss Vernon, whom he is misguided enough to describe at one point as a "silly, romping, incorrigible girl"<sup>31</sup>, than Edward Waverley would have been for Flora; and this partly accounts for the book's hurried and patched-up ending. In the body of the novel, while Frank is being "acted upon by the spur of circumstances",\* Die is recovering his father's bills of credit, the "MacGuffin"† of the plot, and the irony of this role is not lost on her:

"You see, my dear coz, I was born to be your better angel. Rashleigh has been compelled to yield up his spoil, and had we reached this same village of Aberfoil last night, as we purposed, I should have found some Highland sylph to have wafted to you all these representatives of commercial wealth. But there were giants and dragons in the way; and errant-knights and damsels of modern times, bold though they may be, must not, as of yore, run into useless danger. Do not you do so either, my dear coz."<sup>32</sup>

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\* See above, p. 246.

† This was Alfred Hitchcock's word for "the device, the gimmick, if you will, or the papers the spies are after", in his films. For Hitchcock, "a MacGuffin is actually nothing at all": "The only thing that really matters is that in the picture the plans, documents, or secrets must seem to be of vital importance to the characters. To me, the narrator, they're of no importance whatever." (François Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, [New York, 1985], p. 138.)

Die is a difficult character because she has both this modern sensibility of the unreality of their situation, and yet can speak *with complete commitment* in the next breath from the other side of the "ideal boundary". To speak thus both for the doomed and for the survivors is almost unique in Scott, yet this is what she does, as she bids farewell for ever to the man she will eventually marry:

"Yes, Frank," she said, "*for ever!* There is a gulf between us - a gulf of absolute perdition; where we go, you must not follow; what we do, you must not share in. Farewell; be happy!"<sup>33</sup>

Compared with this declaration of Jacobitism their marriage is utterly unimportant. It is a rushed job - wooing, wedding, married life and Diana's death are dealt with in three and a half lines, followed immediately by the words, "I have no more of romantic adventure to tell"<sup>34</sup> - and it is the valedictory nature of their relationship which prevails in the reader's mind: "And, dear, dear Frank, once more fare thee well!"<sup>35</sup> For all purposes other than mere plot (never a high priority for Scott), Diana "the fair huntress"<sup>36</sup> is as unobtainable as Flora the mountain bloom.

Apart from Rashleigh (a pastiche of a villain), his unfortunate five brothers (despatched in a single page to facilitate Frank's coming in to his inheritance - another instance of Scott's galloping disregard for the dignity of the plot which for sheer nerve it is difficult not to admire), and some minor characters such as the traveller Morris, there is no dramatic division between the figures of the past and those of the present (those who survive) as occurs in

the earlier novels. This, again, is in part due to the narrative structure, the fact that the action continues almost to the last page, where the aged Frank Osbaldistone breaks off, having nothing further to communicate to his friend Will Tresham that he does not already know. The book's ending, however, in spite of its sharpness, is not very different in import from its predecessors'. It is as if, in his brief editorial explanation, Scott is declaring a reluctance to go over well-trodden ground: "[Here the original manuscript ends somewhat abruptly. I have reason to think that what followed related to private affairs.]"<sup>37</sup>

And indeed, in the bulk of the novel Scott's familiar preoccupations are clearly in evidence, most obviously perhaps in the Glasgow prison scene. Typically, Frank is led to the tolbooth through a series of "strange incidents which again, without any demerits of my own, threatened to place me in a dangerous and disagreeable collision with the laws of a country which I visited only in the capacity of a stranger."<sup>38</sup> He is led there by a disguised Rob Roy, whose character is a celebration of heroic individualism and of disdain for the very formal legalism which Nicol Jarvie and Frank respect; a disdain which attracts the inevitable accusation of madness from Jarvie<sup>39</sup>; an individualism which belongs to the "puir auld Scotland" of the past, the "merry warld when every man held his ain gear wi' his ain grip"<sup>40</sup>. "He that is without name," Rob declares, "without friends, without coin, without country, is still at least a man; and he that has all these is no more."<sup>41</sup> Or, the implication is, rather less. Other oppositions pile up on



top of this one in the prison scene - between Highlander and Lowlander, Jacobite and Whig, Papist and Presbyterian, reiver and weaver, poet and merchant. But there is not so much opposition as variation among such characters as Rob Roy, Bailie Nicol Jarvie and Andrew Fairservice. A brief study of each should demonstrate this.

Rob Roy, for all his heroic qualities, is also as quick-witted and calculating as his kinsman Jarvie. He is a Jacobite, but his own interest is kept sufficiently separate to preclude the kind of total commitment of a Fergus Mac-Ivor when the 'Fifteen breaks out. His exploits might fill a book, according to Jarvie (and of course they do) - "and a queer ane it wad be, as gude as Robin Hood or William Wallace"<sup>42</sup> - but "the truth is, that Rob is for his ain hand . . . he'll take the side that suits him best . . ." <sup>43</sup> This is the Bailie's description, though to Frank there is something more mythical about Rob's unusual, long-armed physique:

it gave something wild, irregular, and, as it were, unearthly to his appearance, and reminded me involuntarily of the tales which Mabel used to tell of the old Picts who ravaged Northumberland in ancient times, who, according to her tradition, were a sort of half-goblin, half-human beings, distinguished, like this man, for courage, cunning, ferocity, the length of their arms, and the squareness of their shoulders.<sup>44</sup>

It is this side of Rob which is repeatedly stressed. He is a man trapped by the past - "that which has forced me to become what I am"<sup>45</sup>:

"Can I forget that I have been branded as an outlaw, stigmatised as a traitor, a price set on my head as if I had been a wolf; my family treated as the dam and cubs of the hill-fox, whom all may

torment, vilify, degrade, and insult; the very name which came to me from a long and noble line of martial ancestors denounced, as if it were a spell to conjure up the devil with?"

No, he cannot forget, and this identification with a past which is quite alien to Frank is expressed most effectively through a rage that seems daemonic:

. . . his light grey eyes contracting alternately and dilating their pupils, until they seemed actually to flash with flame, while he thrust forward and drew back his foot, grasped the hilt of his dirk, extended his arm, clenched his fist, and finally rose from his seat.

"And they *shall* find," he said, in the same muttered but deep tones of stifled passion, "that the name they have dared to proscribe - that the name of MacGregor - *is* a spell to raise the wild devil withal. *They* shall hear of my vengeance that would scorn to listen to the story of my wrongs . . . . They that scoffed at the grovelling worm and trode upon him may cry and howl when they see the stoop of the flying and fiery-mouthed dragon. . . ."46

Rob is clearly man enough for such an existence. So, too, is his wife Helen, the one character - "lofty, unbending, and resolute"<sup>47</sup> - unmistakably in the mould of the past, her guiding principle simply revenge. When Rob says, "we are a rude and an ignorant, and it may be a violent and passionate, but we are not a cruel, people . . . . But we have been a persecuted generation"<sup>48</sup>, it is literally a generation gap which he highlights. For he is "vexed for the bairns", knowing that they will not survive "living their father's life".<sup>49</sup> Thus, as with Diana's marriage to Frank, the fact that Rob survives the tale to die in peaceful old age scarcely obscures his isolation from the future.

True to the form of Scott's compromise, Rob is bound not only to the past but to the landscape:

". . . the heather that I have trod upon when living must bloom ower me when I am dead; my heart would sink, and my arm would shrink and wither like fern in the frost, were I to lose sight of my native hills . . ." <sup>50</sup>

This is a different attitude to Frank's, as he travels down Loch Lomond:

. . . I felt something soothing in the magnificent scenery with which I was surrounded; and thought, in the enthusiasm of the moment, that, had my faith been that of Rome, I could have consented to live and die a lonely hermit in one of the romantic and beautiful islands amongst which our boat glided.

And this is different again from the Bailie's speculations on draining the loch and converting it to cropland.<sup>51</sup> Jarvie is a magnificent but ill-fitting figure: despite his vigour and faith in the future, it should be remembered that as far as Scott's presentation of Scotland is concerned, it is Frank's romantic view of the Trossachs which prevails: the time-traveller provides the best map for other tourists.

Jarvie puts no faith in heroic values. "Honour," he tells Frank, after the latter's duel with Rashleigh, "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."<sup>52</sup> At the same time he retains something of the heroic in his business methods and in his feelings towards Rob:

" - it's a queer thing, I say, but I think the Hieland blude o' me warms at thae daft tales, and whiles I like better to hear them than a word o' profit, Gude forgie me! But they are vanities - sinfu' vanities; and, moreover, again the statute law - again the statute and gospel law."<sup>53</sup>

These are sentiments that would never be entertained by, say, Frank's father. Jarvie, like Die Vernon, seems to be somewhere astride the dividing line between Rob Roy country and the commercial world of Osbaldistone and Tresham. There is some difference between the Bailie's view as expressed above and Mr Osbaldistone's view, as expressed by Frank, that "mercantile credit is as honour", but one can just about equate the two. It is more difficult to believe that the Bailie, "if declared insolvent, would sink into the grave, oppressed by a sense of grief, remorse, and despair, like that of a soldier convicted of cowardice, or a man of honour who had lost his rank and character in society."<sup>54</sup> Scott acknowledges this at one point when he makes Frank observe:

Although, like my father, he considered commercial transactions the most important objects of human life, he was not wedded to them so as to undervalue more general knowledge. On the contrary, with much oddity and vulgarity of manner, with a vanity which he made much more ridiculous by disguising it now and then under a thin veil of humility, and devoid as he was of all the advantages of a learned education, Mr. Jarvie's conversation showed tokens of a shrewd, observing, liberal, and, to the extent of its opportunities, a well-improved mind.<sup>55</sup>

It is Jarvie's attitude to the Union which has attracted much critical attention, especially as it seems to be directly opposed to that of Andrew Fairservice. However, bearing in mind that Scott's

own attitude was at the heart of the patriotic symbiosis which informs his work, the two viewpoints are really more complementary than antipathetic. Both attitudes are articulated regularly throughout the novel, but most coherently in the following famous passage:

And as he [Jarvie] was well acquainted with the ancient history of his district, he saw with the prospective eye of an enlightened patriot the buds of many of those future advantages which have only blossomed and ripened within these few years. I remarked also, and with great pleasure, that, although a keen Scotchman, and abundantly zealous for the honour of his country, he was disposed to think liberally of the sister kingdom. When Andrew Fairservice (whom, by the way, the Bailie could not abide) chose to impute the accident of one of the horses casting his shoe to the deteriorating influence of the Union, he incurred a severe rebuke from Mr. Jarvie.

"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 nowadays. But it's an ill wind blows naebody gude. Let ilka ane roose the ford as they find it. I say, 'Let Glasgow flourish!' whilk is judiciously and elegantly putten round the town's arms by way of bye-word. Now, since St. Mungo catched 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?"

Andrew Fairservice was far from acquiescing in these arguments of expedience, and even ventured to enter a grumbling protest, "That it was an unco change to hae Scotland's laws made in England; and that, for his share, he wadna for a' the herring-barrels in Glasgow, and a' the tobacco-casks to boot, hae gien up the riding o' the Scots Parliament, or sent awa' our crown, and our sword, and our sceptre, and Mons Meg, to be keepit by thae English pock-puddings in the Tower o' Lunnon. What wad Sir William Wallace, or auld Davie Lindsay, hae said to the Union, or them that made it?"<sup>56</sup>

This passage is a fairly comprehensive rendition of the two voices of patriotic dualism, and requires little comment. Jarvie speaks

with hindsight, and points up the prosperity coming to Scotland through its participation in the expanding Empire. Fairservice's remarks (here and elsewhere) are delivered with equal force and spirit, in a vigorous Scots that helps to unify the two views. Without the few lines of English narrative in this passage, their language would combine the two voices as one. Scott, although he makes a great deal of fun of Fairservice, does not spare Jarvie either; and, of course, Andrew's grievances about the Scottish regalia and Mons Meg were close to the heart of Scott himself, a point underlined in his *Magnum Opus* footnote about these objects and their connection with the "odious surrender of national independence".<sup>57</sup> Still, Fairservice's energetic nationalism is not very constructive, and by the end of the novel he is back in a corner of Northumberland again, and doubtless still girning at the condition of Scotland: it is ironic that in *Malachi Malagrowther* in 1826 Scott would write that "we had better remain in union with England, even at the risk of becoming a subordinate species of Northumberland" than even hint at "the possibility of a rupture".<sup>58</sup> Is it significant that the last word or epitaph is given by Fairservice? "There were many things ower bad for blessing, and ower gude for banning, like ROB ROY."<sup>59</sup>

There is perhaps, another "last word" from Frank Osbaldistone. While Diana is able to reject the convent in favour of marriage because her father refers the matter "entirely to her own inclinations", Frank observes that "in joining [my father] with heart and hand in his commercial labours, I had sacrificed my own

inclinations."<sup>60</sup> It is one more sign of the gulf between the action of the novel, the past, and the modern situation to which Frank is always committed, to which he really belongs. Such a division was only what Scott's readers by now expected: it would become still more accentuated in future Scottish novels - and not only Scott's. The echo of Scott at the close of Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, a book very much in the mould of *Rob Roy*, is unmistakable: "The hand of Providence brought me in my drifting to the very doors of the British Linen Company's Bank."<sup>61</sup>

## Chapter Ten

### *THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN: THE TRAVELLER COMES HOME*

*"Never before had he seized such really noble features of the national character as were canonized in the person of his homely heroine: no art had ever devised a happier running contrast than that of her and her sister, or interwoven a portraiture of lowly manners and simple virtues, with more graceful delineations of polished life, or with bolder shadows of terror, guilt, crime, remorse, madness, and all the agony of the passions."*

Writing to Scott shortly after the appearance of *The Heart of Midlothian* in June 1818, Lady Louisa Stuart congratulated him "upon having effected what many have tried to do, and nobody yet succeeded in, making the perfectly good character the most interesting." A "common hand" would have managed only to attract "cold approbation" to Jeanie Deans while her sister Effie ran away with "our concern and sympathy" - "whereas Jeanie, without youth, beauty, genius, warm passions, or any other novel-perfection, is here our object from beginning to end." *Waverley* remained Lady Louisa's "first-love", but her delight in Scott's latest novel, which highlighted a great tension between two modes of behaviour and which seemed to surpass the novel-form, was not unique. *The Heart of Midlothian's*



articulation of the tension between prudence and passion, set in the context of an historical period in which Scottish national identity could be thoroughly explored, assured its success. Lockhart describes the novel as being "at once placed by acclamation in the foremost rank of his writings", and, having quoted Lady Louisa's letter, writes both of "the instantaneous English popularity of Jeanie Deans", and that "the admiration and delight were the same all over Scotland."<sup>2</sup>

If, in many respects, *The Heart of Midlothian* simply reiterates well-established themes (the contrasts noted by Lockhart, quoted at the head of this chapter, are of course familiar from the previous novels) it is also significantly different. This is largely because of the character of Jeanie Deans. Though the *effect* of her experiences may be similar to those of a standard (male) Scott hero, Jeanie is no Edward Waverley or Frank Osbaldistone, buffeted and controlled by the strength of the characters around her and by *their* historical circumstances. She is far more an *active* agent, who sets out to change, to achieve, to overcome difficulties. As Roderick Watson has written:

Jeanie Deans is quintessentially Scottish but there is no trace of the colourful "Scotch character" about her, and at last Scott has created a positive hero, central to the novel, who makes things happen and takes responsibility firmly into her own hands. Indeed, Jeanie and her father embody the Presbyterian strengths and the moral seriousness which Scott had failed to evoke in Henry Morton and the Covenanters of *Old Mortality*.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, her personality and methods of action are not in the same heroic mould as Fergus Mac-Ivor or Balfour of Burley. These are doomed to remain in the past, but Jeanie is a survivor. She does not, however, survive, like Niel Blane the innkeeper in *Old Mortality*, by expediency, but by adhering firmly to a set of principles; and these principles, in determining her behaviour, do not prohibit, indeed encourage her, successfully to combine heroism with modern prudence. Because she is deliberately depicted as representing the Scottish national character at its best, she is crucial to an understanding of Scott's construction of patriotism.

Another important point about Jeanie Deans is that she does not appear historically misplaced. She moves forward in time, and never looks on events with the detached observation of the earlier heroes (although Scott does manage to give an air of "reminiscence" to the description of the journey to London, by including excerpts from Jeanie's own "account of her pilgrimage", given at some unspecified later date<sup>4</sup>). Her blend of post-Covenanter religious virtue, post-Union Scottish patriotism, and early-Enlightenment moral sense - all given added references in, respectively, the characters of Davie Deans, the burghers of Edinburgh, and Reuben Butler - is fairly located at 1736. From this date, Jeanie progresses through fifteen years of Scottish history without jarring on that history, and, what is fascinating, Scott is at great pains to "place" her correctly at the end of this journey. Most of his conclusions occupy just a few pages or paragraphs and are concerned with tying up the loose ends of the plot and with differentiating the past from, rather than relating

it to, the present. In *The Heart of Midlothian* the last ten chapters, roughly one-fifth of the novel, are given over to the new life at Roseneath, and Jeanie's "wild adventures" might be said to finish even earlier, when she sits down in London to write to her father and to Butler about them. The unravelling of the Effie Deans-George Staunton plot, necessary though it is, is little more than a brief flurry on the surface of Jeanie's settled married life. We shall look at this section in more detail later, but for now it is enough to note that Jeanie's journey - like in effect but not in form to the journeys of *Waverley* and the rest - is one in which she learns to know her place in the world, to find it and to keep it. Since she represents Scotland, this theme is of major significance. Avrom Fleishman, in his study *The English Historical Novel*, has written:

. . . the keenest historical sense in the novel is provided by the drama of what Jeanie becomes, both as the embodiment of a previously aristocratic ethical ideal [i.e. heroism] and as a symbol of her society's progress from a lower to a higher stage of civilization. Jeanie . . . grows in stature until she attains the proportions of ethic heroism: she becomes the incarnation of Scottish society in its development in and beyond the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

This central concern is indicated in the *Magnum Opus* Introduction of 1830, in which Scott echoes his correspondent Mrs Goldie's opinion of Jeanie's prototype, Helen Walker, "who could unite so much prudence with so much heroic virtue."<sup>6</sup> Scott concludes his Introduction:

That a character so distinguished for her undaunted love of virtue lived and died in poverty, if not want, serves only to show us how

insignificant, in the sight of Heaven, are our principle objects of ambition upon earth.<sup>7</sup>

That much-admired alliance of "heroic virtue" with "prudence", and Scott's contradistinction between "love of virtue" and "ambition", are pointers to the theme that moral integrity and virtuous behaviour are found where the private is subsumed in the public interest. Nor is this an afterthought attached spuriously by a ruined Scott in his dying years. It is specified in the little moral exhortation at the very end of the novel itself:

READER - This tale will not be told in vain, if it shall be found to illustrate the great truth that guilt, though it may attain temporal splendour, can never confer real happiness; that the evil consequences of our crimes long survive their commission, and, like the ghosts of the murdered, forever haunt the steps of the malefactor; and that the paths of virtue, though seldom those of worldly greatness, are always those of pleasantness and peace.<sup>8</sup>

The private, modest family life of the Butlers at Roseneath is not in conflict with the public interest of post-'Forty-five Hanoverian Britain. Indeed, it is significant that when trouble comes to Roseneath in 1751 it is connected, through Effie Deans' lost son the Whistler, with Highland outlaws displaced by the 'Forty-five Rebellion - "mauraders, or men that had been driven to that desperate mode of life"<sup>9</sup>. This harmony between private and public life emerges from a previous period of conflict - one of those historical crises common to Scott's fiction. For, as the 'Forty-five is to *Waverley*, and the Covenanting troubles to *Old Mortality*, so the

Porteous Mob forms the principal historical context for the fictional events of *The Heart of Midlothian*.

In purely mechanical terms, the connection between the Porteous affair and the trial and reprieve of Effie Deans is minimal: it is true that Geordie Robertson is both the chief instigator of the riot and Effie's lover, and that her presence in the Tolbooth as well as Porteous' is part of his motivation in breaking into it. But this second point is alluded to only briefly, and much later:

I was at first uncertain what measures I ought to adopt for your sister's liberation, when the general rage excited among the citizens of Edinburgh on account of the reprieve of Porteous, suggested to me the daring idea of forcing the jail, and at once carrying off your sister from the clutches of the law, and bringing to condign punishment a miscreant who had tormented the unfortunate Wilson even in the hour of death, as if he had been a wild Indian taken captive by a hostile tribe. . . .<sup>10</sup>

In practice, towards the close of the book Robertson, now Sir George Staunton, has been so far removed from his involvement in the Porteous affair as either to weaken even that link with historical fact or to overstretch the most amenable reader's credulity. It should be remembered too that Scott appropriated the identity of a real individual, Robertson, and turned him into an alias for George Staunton, an aristocratic adventurer who was not even a genuine member of the Scottish criminal class. Thus history and fiction are completely - this is not to say unsuccessfully - intermingled.

In terms of theme and continuity, however, the connection between the great historical public crisis and the private crisis of Effie is much closer. Most obviously, she is saved from execution by a royal

pardon - the very thing which, when granted to Porteous, so incensed the Edinburgh mob that they took it upon themselves to administer justice upon him. It is between these two poles of justice and mercy that the novel's moral concerns are explored, and, in the absence of an observer-hero in the Waverley mould (Reuben Butler only partly fits this description), Scott's own reactions are more obvious than in any of the other novels. He understands but is appalled by the behaviour of the Porteous Mob: he can report and explain, but cannot condone, their actions. On the other hand he positively applauds Jeanie's scrupulously law-abiding pilgrimage to London and her simple appeal to the humanity of Queen Caroline. There is a profound symbolism in this contrast, reflecting the two sides of Scottish national behaviour which make up Scott's pattern of patriotic dualism: this will become clear later in this discussion.

Peter Pattieson's lengthy preamble gives a firm indication of how all this will be developed in the course of the novel. The conversation of the two young lawyers who are obliged to spend a night in Gandercleugh turns upon the reputation of the Edinburgh tolbooth, *The Heart of Midlothian*. It is soon clear that this "world within itself"<sup>11</sup> holds key elements of the story: the advocate Hardie proposes a "Last Speech, Confession, and Dying Words" of the Tolbooth, and Pattieson, "not without a secret view to my present task" (of producing a new Tale), asks what "variety of incident" could possibly be derived from such a work. "Infinite" responds Hardie. It should satisfy

even the public's all-devouring appetite for the wonderful and horrible. The inventor of fictitious narratives has to rack his brains for means to diversify his tale, and after all can hardly hit upon characters or incidents which have not been used again and again, until they are familiar to the eye of the reader, so that the development, *enlèvement*, the desperate wound of which the hero never dies, the burning fever from which the heroine is sure to recover, become a mere matter of course.<sup>12</sup>

"The end of uncertainty," he adds later, "is the death of interest; and hence it happens that no one now reads novels." He is obliged to admit to this activity himself, however, but claims to read "from habit and from indolence, not from real interest."<sup>13</sup> This passage shows once again Scott's awareness of the implications of his art-form, and that last comment nicely suggests the reason why he writes, and the public avidly devours, *historical* romances: the age of uncertainty is over.

Yet, the argument goes on, truth is stranger than fiction, and never stranger than in "the real records of human vagaries", books of case-law.<sup>14</sup> What is more, Scotland is a country in which truth is especially strange, because of the retarded rate of the civilising process there. "England has been much longer a highly civilised country; her subjects have been very strictly amenable to laws administered without fear or favour; a complete division of labour has taken place among her subjects", so much so that even the criminal class acts upon "regular habits and principles". England is

like a cultivated field - the farmer expects that, in spite of all his care, a certain number of weeds will rise with the corn, and can tell you beforehand their names and appearance. But Scotland is like one of her own Highland glens, and the moralist who reads the records of her criminal jurisprudence will find as many

curious anomalous facts in the history of mind as the botanist will detect rare specimens among her dingles and cliffs.

But Scotland is also a land where "the general morality of our people, their sober and prudent habits" are in contrast with the "wild and wayward starts of fancy and passion" which produce such unexpected events.<sup>15</sup> Thus does Scott not only contrast England with Scotland, but also indicate the historical progress his novel is about to trace: Scotland, civilised, will be symbolised in the model community of prosperity and improvement (including the agricultural improvement of the preceding similes) at Roseneath.

From this beginning, Scott moves to the Edinburgh of the Porteous Riot of 1736. The second chapter is straightforward enough in giving the background to what is to follow. The succeeding five chapters, however, are crucial to the way in which the novel unfolds. The Porteous riot, I shall argue, is a crisis of history in which the usual tensions of a Waverley novel fail to be resolved: as an actual historical protagonist Porteous is so central to the action that he can neither function as a spectator (a role filled instead by Reuben Butler) nor survive into the future by dint of being a "misplaced" character. In the aftermath chaos and uncertainty (symbolised by Effie's trial and condemnation for a crime of which she is innocent) predominate. The second section of the novel - in which Jeanie travels to London - is Scott's fictionalised way of remedying this situation. The final section, at Roseneath, involves a forward movement of time and shows how Scotland's political balance has been restored and Scottish patriotic impulses redirected into a prudential



form which has no need of law-breaking and riots. It is interesting how Scott uses a blend of fact and invention to chart this progress: from a very historicised beginning (Chapter Two) the book is gradually taken over by its fictional elements, so that the melodramatic conclusion has only the most tenuous relationship with the Edinburgh riot of the opening chapters.

In this context, then, Captain John Porteous appears as a Waverley-type hero gone badly wrong. The usual tendency to a wild imagination in youth is replaced by "a wild and irreclaimable propensity to dissipation", which drives him into military service abroad and to "an idle and wandering life." However, "his services were required by the magistrates of Edinburgh, in the disturbed year of 1715, for disciplining their City Guard" (mainly composed of Highlanders), and for twenty years he has held a commission in that body of men. He merited this promotion, Scott assures us, "only by his military skill, and an alert and resolute character as an officer of police"; nevertheless, his brutality is deemed "useful in his station", since his "harsh and fierce habits rendered him formidable to rioters or disturbers of the public peace."<sup>16</sup>

His position of authority, in fact, is his undoing: it places him in a public world which penalises rather than excuses his indulgence in the excesses of passion. To survive, Porteous would need either to be like Edward Waverley, protected from the consequences of such indulgence by his fictional irresponsibility and non-participation in historical events, or to be like those inmates of the Tolbooth who, when the mob breaks into it, vanish out of the public world into the

"dim receptacles of vice and infamy where they were accustomed to lurk and conceal themselves from justice."<sup>17</sup> Like his adversaries the rioters, however, Porteous' privately motivated actions take place before a standard of public behaviour which is not hidden in shadows: their respective actions must either fit the standard, or the standard must be invoked as a justification for their actions. This standard is normally represented by the law, but, in a moment of social crisis, the law loses its authority and appeals are made instead to natural justice, mercy and, significantly, patriotism.

Thus Porteous' "threats and imprecations" against any who might attempt to rescue the convict Wilson are private sentiments aroused in defence of a "legitimate" public action still to be undertaken, namely Wilson's execution. Scott deliberately draws out this division as a critique of the man's fitness for public duty:

In fact, if a good deal of determination and promptitude rendered Porteous, in one respect, fit to command guards designed to suppress popular commotion, he seems, on the other, to have been disqualified for a charge so delicate by a hot and surly temper, always too ready to come to blows and violence, a character void of principle, and a disposition to regard the rabble, who seldom failed to regale him and his soldiers with some marks of their displeasure, as declared enemies, upon whom it was natural and justifiable that he should seek opportunities of vengeance.<sup>18</sup>

Even before Wilson is hanged, therefore, Edinburgh's civic order is in a state of near-collapse. Not only are relations strained between Porteous and the Edinburgh Mob, but the city magistrates have also enraged their employee by having had a regular infantry regiment drawn up in reserve on the City Guard's own stamping-ground. These

inter-party tensions are symbolically reproduced in the physical appearance of Captain Porteous:

As he could not show his ill-humour to his patrons the magistrates, it increased his indignation and his desire to be revenged on the unfortunate criminal Wilson, and all who favoured him. These internal emotions of jealousy and rage wrought a change on the man's mien and bearing, visible to all who saw him on the fatal morning when Wilson was appointed to suffer. Porteous's ordinary appearance was rather favourable. He was about the middle size, stout, and well made, having a military air, and yet rather a gentle and mild countenance. His complexion was brown, his face somewhat fretted with the scars of the small-pox, his eyes rather languid than keen or fierce. [So far Porteous might be any moderate man well-suited to his official position.] On the present occasion, however, it seemed to those who saw him as if he were agitated by some wild demon. His step was irregular, his voice hollow and broken, his countenance pale, his eyes staring and wild, his speech imperfect and confused, and his whole appearance so disordered that many remarked he seemed to be "fey," a Scottish expression, meaning the state of those who are driven on to their impending fate by the strong impulse of some irresistible necessity.<sup>19</sup>

This is an extraordinary transformation, and Scott is clearly keen to emphasise it. Continuing in the same authoritative style with which he explained the word "fey", he writes: "One part of his conduct was truly diabolical, if, indeed, it has not been exaggerated by the general prejudice entertained against his memory."<sup>20</sup> Scott as "Author" appears to be tempering popular tradition with a modern historical objectivity here, in discussing Porteous' cruel use of the too small handcuffs on Wilson. Yet this does not prevent him from repeating the tradition in full - in fact, the added weight of his "authority" reinforces it. This is the very same technique of mixing myth with fact visible in the later Histories. At the same time, it prepares the way for the contrast between Porteous' "barbarous usage"

and Wilson's appeal to him as a "fellow-creature". Sympathy, and a shared sense of humanity, are the key elements of the virtue-standard around which the survivors of the novel, from Jeanie Deans to the turnkey Ratcliffe, will regroup and reorder Scottish society.

The overall impression of these chapters is of a society breaking down, of individuals and interest-groups overriding their acquiescence in the law because that standard of public behaviour, temporarily at least, is failing to satisfy either their particular or their collective interests. (Bartoline Saddletree is a pedantic buffoon because he insists on reciting the letter of the law long after it has ceased to apply.) When, after Effie's trial, Jeanie sets off on her "pilgrimage" to London, the process is seen in reverse: hers is a character whose consolidation of virtue consists in self-denial and deference to the highest powers in the land (furth of Scotland, in fact), and by such self-recommending supplication she manages to achieve her end - not justice, but *mercy*.

The disarray of society is well illustrated in the confused identities of the "mob", the "rioters" and the "citizens" of Edinburgh. Scott describes the mob as a cohesive body, conscious of itself as such: "The mob of Edinburgh, when thoroughly excited, had been at all times one of the fiercest which could be found in Europe; and of late years they had risen repeatedly against the government, and sometimes not without temporary success."<sup>21</sup> But the mob is not the same as the citizens - it is not composed of the likes of Saddletree, Plundamas, Mrs Howden and Miss Damahoy, and *normally*, we are told, their interests divide along class lines; between "the

rabble" and "the more decent class of citizens"<sup>22</sup>. On the other hand, a certain residue of common interest survives from the days when "the kingdom was a kingdom"<sup>23</sup>, and it is that sense of national community which provides much of the impetus for the anti-Porteous sentiments of the populace. This is by no means universal: the rioters who attack the Tolbooth are suspicious of "the higher orders of society"<sup>24</sup> while "several of the higher rank joined in a petition recommending Porteous to the mercy of the crown"<sup>25</sup>. But, from the Duke of Argyle's display of "national spirit"<sup>26</sup> to the mob's "calling on all true Scotsmen to join them"<sup>27</sup>, expressions of patriotism are fundamental to the whole affair.

The behaviour of the "mob" or "rioters", whatever its precise composition, can be traced through three distinct stages of development: first, the crowd at Wilson's execution, fired upon by Porteous; second, the crowd awaiting Porteous' own execution; and third, the crowd which breaks into the Tolbooth and itself carries out that execution. In the first stage, the mood is one of sullen acquiescence in the administration of the law:

The multitude, in general, looked on with deeper interest than at ordinary executions; and there might be seen on the countenances of many a stern and indignant expression, like that with which the ancient Cameronians might be supposed to witness the execution of their brethren, who glorified the Covenant on the same occasion, and at the same spot. *But there was no attempt at violence.* <sup>28</sup>

Scott has drawn a historical parallel with another recognisable cohesive group, one which had been ideologically, temperamentally and

even physically outwith society, and, furthermore, a group with specific claims on Scottish national feeling - but no more, so far, than that. The crucial point is that no violence is offered by the crowd. The impulse to act comes from another source, one very definitely outwith the bounds of society: from Robertson and his criminal friends. Wilson had been

suspended on the gibbet so long as to be totally deprived of life, when at once, as if occasioned by some newly-received impulse, there arose a tumult among the multitude. Many stones were thrown at Porteous and his guards; some mischief was done; and the mob continued to press forward with whoops, shrieks, howls, and exclamations.

It is this action which provokes Porteous' own "act of violence".<sup>29</sup>

Once the guards have fired, those in the "mob" cease to be isolated from their social superiors:

Among the many who had been killed and wounded by the unhappy fire, there were several of better rank; for even the humanity of such soldiers as fired over the heads of the mere rabble around the scaffold, proved in some instances fatal to persons who were stationed in windows, or observed the melancholy scene from a distance. The voice of public indignation was loud and general; and, ere men's tempers had time to cool, the trial of Captain Porteous took place before the High Court of Justiciary.<sup>30</sup>

Thus those physically and socially at a distance from the activities of the "mere rabble" find themselves in some sort of alliance with them. This common cause is further enhanced during the second stage of the crowd's behaviour, when they await the execution of Porteous himself.

Here the mood is of grim expectation:

The thirst of vengeance was in some degree allayed by its supposed certainty; and even the populace, with deeper feeling than they are wont to entertain, suppressed all clamorous exultation, and prepared to enjoy the scene of retaliation in triumph, silent and decent, though stern and relentless.<sup>31</sup>

Scott does not altogether approve of this mood: he does not approve of "men come to glut their sight with triumphant revenge." Indeed, he even suggests that Porteous' appearance would have altered their mood to one of sympathy and forgiveness, such being the "mutability of their sentiments". But the thwarting of their feelings, of whatever kind, causes a renewal of that expression of a common cause sparked off on the previous occasion. The first question asked, when Porteous fails to appear, transcends any private sentiments of vengeance: "Would they venture to defraud public justice?" And they use the same public language to suggest reasons why the magistrates might indeed seek to save Porteous:

Porteous had been a favourite officer of the magistracy of the city . . . . It was argued, too, that his conduct, on the unhappy occasion of Wilson's execution, was capable of being attributed to *an imprudent excess of zeal in the execution of his duty*, a motive for which those under whose authority he acted might be supposed to have great sympathy.<sup>32</sup>

Scott himself, in his description of the affair in the *Tales of a Grandfather*, shared that sympathy:

It appeared to her Majesty, and her advisers, that though the action of Porteous and his soldiers was certainly rash and unwarranted, yet that, considering the purpose by which it was

dictated, it must fall considerably short of the guilt of murder. Captain Porteous, in the discharge of a duty imposed on him by legal authority, had unquestionably been assaulted without provocation on his part, and had, therefore, a right to defend himself; and if there were excess in the means he had recourse to, yet a line of conduct originating in self-defence cannot be extended into murder, though it might amount to homicide.<sup>33</sup>

Imprudence, or rashness, and duty are normally opposed to one another in Scott's vocabulary system: they therefore arouse uneasiness when made to mix, and, with his fictional heroes, it is often the very tension between them which is resolved by the kind of compromise common to the novels' conclusions. With Porteous, of course, such a fictional compromise is impossible. Moreover, the Edinburgh mob's unpopularity with the government raises the argument to a political level, and eventually back into the language of Scottish patriotism. "Captain Porteous' violence", in government eyes, may almost be regarded as "good service", especially when "There is also a natural feeling, on the part of all members of government, for the general maintenance of authority . . . ."<sup>34</sup> This is in fact a necessary ingredient of good behaviour in civil society: a moderate conformist like Reuben Butler has exactly the same feeling for authority.<sup>35</sup>

Class-based sentiments again contribute something to the crowd's resentment<sup>36</sup>, but the semi-latent potential of patriotism unites the "assembled spectators of almost all degrees" when Porteous' reprieve is announced, in "a groan, or rather a roar of indignation and disappointed revenge . . . . But the shout was not repeated, nor did any tumult ensue, such as it appeared to announce." As before, the



crowd's frustration does not lead to violence; but now the patriotic impulse comes more quickly to the surface, linked to their sense of common humanity with the convict Wilson:

"This man," they said, "the brave, the resolute, the generous, was executed to death without mercy for stealing a purse of gold, which in some sense he might consider as a fair reprisal; while the profligate satellite, who took advantage of a trifling tumult, inseparable from such occasions, to shed the blood of twenty of his fellow-citizens, is deemed a fitting object for the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy. Is this to be borne? Would our fathers have borne it? Are not we, like them, Scotsmen and burghers of Edinburgh?"<sup>37</sup>

Still, with the removal of the scaffold the crowd begins to disperse. The common cause does not provoke immediate action. As in the first stage, it is an outside force which provides the catalyst. Several individuals are observed as it were recruiting among "those who appeared to be declaiming most violently against the conduct of government. These *active agents* had the appearance of men from the country, and were generally supposed to be old friends and confederates of Wilson, whose minds were of course highly excited against Porteous." Their action, that evening, will be decisive; their call on "all true Scotsmen" to join them a dynamic expression of patriotism compared with the petty ginnings of the "more decent class of citizens"<sup>38</sup> who tread their way back up the West Bow. Plumdamas, Mrs Howden and Miss Damahoy may rant at "the grit folk at Lunnon, where "naebody's nails can reach", and reminisce on "the gude auld time before the Union" when "the kingdom was a kingdom" and "Scotland was Scotland in these days" - but their complaints are tied to their own financial concerns, or to personal carping at the

Porteous family, not to the bigger issue of civil justice.<sup>39</sup> Their words may be more vigorous, but are no more effective, than Saddletree's hair-splitting legalism. They remind the reader of an earlier ridiculing by Scott of such wee-minded Scottishness - the anti-Union plotters of *The Black Dwarf*.<sup>40</sup> Mrs Howden brings the patriotic issue right down to the level of domesticity, even to disparaging the maternal instincts of the Queen - Scotifying and familiarising her name as "Carline" or "old witch".<sup>41</sup>

Reuben Butler, the ultra-conservative who, over the next few chapters, looks set to become the latest in a line of passive heroes, is embarrassed by even this ineffectual level of anti-establishment feeling - his schoolmasterly view of the importance of authority is quite clear: "Ye may be very right, ladies . . . but I would not advise you to speak so loud."<sup>42</sup> Butler shuns what he sees as the imprudence of anti-government talk, and thus, in a situation where public order has broken down, he implicitly rejects any action whereby the governed might try to reconstruct that order, by taking the law into their own hands. Prudence, as Alexander Welsh has pointed out, if it is not to appear as a modified form of self-interest, must be seen not to be calculating, to be *inactive*:

Expelling calculation from prudence destroyed its one attribute as an active virtue. A prudent hero who cannot be deliberately prudent can have no active role. He can do no deeds of violence; nor can he survive by cunning. He is wholly at the mercy of the forces that surround him, and thus acted upon rather than acting.<sup>43</sup>

This not only accurately describes Reuben Butler but reflects the critical analysis of the Waverley Novels made by both Scott and Thomas M'Crie. Edward Waverley, of course, does imprudently find himself placed in awkward situations, but he is saved from any disastrous irreversible consequences by the fact that he never acts, is always acted upon: on the contrary, as we have seen, associating imprudence with a past which is gone but which still hangs framed in the dining-parlour is central to Scott's portrayal of Scotland's relationship to the British present. The prudent Reuben Butler, however, through no fault of his own, finds himself in precisely the position described by Welsh in the third stage of the Porteous affair, the riot itself.

The extent to which Butler is out of touch with the real state of affairs (he returned from Dumfries only the previous day) and is still operating within perimeters which the "active agents"<sup>44</sup> are about to break down utterly, is highlighted by his attempts to search out legal acquaintances who might offer advice on the plight of Effie Deans. Meanwhile, as we discover much later, Robertson and his friends are busy exploiting "the general rage excited among the citizens of Edinburgh on account of the reprieve of Porteous". The language used by Robertson to recollect events is notably direct:

"I flung myself among the multitude in the moment of fermentation; so did others among Wilson's mates, who had, like me, been disappointed in the hope of glutting their eyes with Porteous' execution. All was organised, and I was chosen for the captain. I felt not - I do not now feel - compunction for what was to be done, and has since been executed."<sup>45</sup>

Butler never in fact states a view on Porteous' reprieve, but we can assume from his behaviour both before and during the action of the mob that he sees no need to argue with either the jury decision against Porteous or the government reprieve in his favour. Thus it is that he, the passive figure of acquiescence, confronts, or rather is caught up by, the active opposition of the Porteous mob led by Robertson. The latter group recognise and accept Butler's ambivalent position as unwilling participant: "Come along, for come you must, by force or fair means; and I warn you to look neither to the right hand nor the left, and to take no notice of any man's face, but consider all that is passing before you as a dream." "I would it were a dream I could awaken from," says Butler, echoing Waverley caught up among the Highlanders of the 'Forty-five. But, "having no means to oppose the violence with which he was threatened, he was compelled to turn round and march in front of the rioters. . .".<sup>46</sup>

This mob is not like the Grassmarket crowds of the earlier stages, although as it grows its numbers must include many individuals from them. The resolve, planning and determination to carry out a specific act, and that act alone, are emphasised again and again by Scott. He credits the mob with "prudence"<sup>47</sup> in sealing off the approaches to the Tolbooth, and this relates also to the rioters' aspirations to an accepted standard of public behaviour. Thus some of them escort ladies of the higher, in this case more suspect, orders of society to their homes, "from the apprehension, probably, that some of those who had casually united themselves to the riot might disgrace their systematic and determined plan of vengeance, by

those acts of general insult and license which are common on similar occasions."<sup>48</sup> Again, no violence other than the minimum necessary to prevent interruption is used against the magistrates' officers: "these men had united a sort of moderation towards all others with the most inflexible inveteracy against the object of their resentment." The magistrates are obliged to retreat, "possessing no means of enforcing their authority", and indeed the "passive resistance of the tolbooth gate promised to do more to baffle the purpose of the mob than the active interference of the magistrates."<sup>49</sup>

At this point, it is worth considering how Scott's treatment of the Porteous Riot relates to the themes which were so prominent in the previous novels. It might seem, for example, that Scottish patriotism - a concept which Scott generally associates with private, passionate or ill-considered activities which are linked irrevocably to the past - is here attached firmly and intentionally to public-oriented, deliberate and positive actions, and that this marks a complete change. As he put it in the *Tales of a Grandfather*, the Porteous affair was "unmingled with politics of Whig and Tory, and must be simply regarded as a strong and powerful display of the cool, stern, and resolved manner in which the Scottish, even of the lower classes, can concert and execute a vindictive purpose."<sup>50</sup> However, at no point does Scott offer support - even qualified support - for the actions of the mob. He records the events with accuracy, remarking on the discipline and single-mindedness of the mob as we have seen, but, like Butler, he remains appalled at the outcome, and

consistently reminds the reader that the rioters are engaged, not in an act of justice, but in one of vengeance. Thus, when Robertson dissuades the rioters from killing Porteous in his cell - "Are ye mad . . . or would ye execute an act of justice as if it were a crime and a cruelty? . . . We will have him die where a murderer should die, on the common gibbet. . . ." - Scott invokes his authorial "objectivity" to show that this speech suits the temper of the mob - "a temper rather stubborn than impetuous, sedate though ferocious, and desirous of colouring their cruel and revengeful action with a show of justice and moderation."<sup>51</sup> Such sentiments may be genuine enough, but for Scott they are fundamentally anti-social and their violent effects potentially disastrous for the structure of society. It is Scott's purpose in the story of Jeanie Deans to offer an alternative form of patriotic behaviour which, non-violent and prudent as it is, does not challenge authority, but manages to extract a concession from it. (This alternative is, of course, a fiction based only loosely on fact.)

For Scott, then, there is no question but that a crime is being committed, and Butler's appeals to "the laws of God or man"<sup>52</sup> make this quite clear: Butler, in his role of observer, also articulates an acceptable Christian and civil conscience for the reader. So, too, are the passive citizenry engaged as observers on the reader's behalf:

Some of the spectators muttered accents of encouragement; but in general they were so much appalled by a sight so strange and audacious, that they looked on with a sort of stupified astonishment. No one offered, by act or word, the slightest interruption.<sup>53</sup>

Non-violent non-interference or acquiescence is thus as notable a feature of this third stage of crowd behaviour as it was of the first two.

The standard of public behaviour, for possession of which various parties have been struggling during these passages, re-emerges with utmost clarity in the three-way conversation that occurs in the moments before Porteous' death. In this climactic scene, the chaos of claim and counter-claim is striking: the language of the "stern voice" of the mob is once more reminiscent of the Covenanters, while Scott's own sympathies lie obviously with the powerless Reuben Butler:

Butler endeavoured to avail himself of the delay afforded by these circumstances to turn the people from their desperate design. "For God's sake," he exclaimed, "remember it is the image of your Creator which you are about to deface in the person of this unfortunate man! Wretched as he is, and wicked as he may be, he has a share in every promise of Scripture, and you cannot destroy him in impenitence without blotting his name from the Book of Life. Do not destroy soul and body; give time for preparation."

"What time had they," returned a stern voice, "whom he murdered on this very spot? The laws both of God and man call for his death."

"But what, my friends," insisted Butler, with a generous disregard to his own safety - "what hath constituted you his judges?"

"We are not his judges," replied the same person; "he has been already judged and condemned by lawful authority. We are those whom Heaven, and our righteous anger, have stirred up to execute judgment, when a corrupt government would have protected a murderer."

"I am none," said the unfortunate Porteous; "that which you charge upon me fell out in self-defence, in the lawful exercise of my duty."

"Away with him - away with him!" was the general cry.<sup>54</sup>

This echo of the text of the Gospel (John, XIX, 15: "But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him") adds to the sense that the crowd's behaviour is, in spite of its discipline, to be disapproved of. That combination of vocabularies which hitherto have been found in opposition in Scott's writing - what in the *Tales of a Grandfather* he calls "the extraordinary mixture of prudence and audacity"<sup>55</sup> - is unique, and hence is given regular notice throughout these chapters, and to the very end of the riot: thus the rioters, having disposed of Porteous, dispose also of their weapons and disperse, "completely satiated with the vengeance they had prosecuted with such stanch and sagacious activity."<sup>56</sup>

That the normal processes of public affairs have been severely disturbed by this particular expression of Scottish patriotism is demonstrated by the reaction in London: the Queen

considered her own authority as exposed to contempt by the success of this singular conspiracy. Nothing was spoke of for some time save the measure of vengeance which should be taken, not only on the actors of this tragedy . . . but upon the magistrates who had suffered it to take place, and upon the city which had been the scene where it was exhibited.

It takes a display of "national spirit" by the Duke of Argyle and "most of the Scottish nobility and gentry"<sup>57</sup>, threatening rather than active (as the mob has been), to check the royal displeasure. At this point the narrative switches to the private tale of the Deans family: fictional characters are juxtaposed with historical figures such as the Queen and Argyle, or - in the case of Robertson/Staunton



- actually supersede the historical original. The blend of fact with fiction is far more subtle and successful in this novel than in *Old Mortality*, and this is important, for it is through *fiction* that Scott offers an alternative form of patriotic behaviour to that of the Porteous Mob, a form which in his view is more successful in the long term.

To achieve this, then, Scott is careful to locate his fictional characters accurately in the context of the period 1736-51. The national and religious convictions and prejudices of Douce Davie Deans, "a tough true-blue Presbyterian"<sup>58</sup>, are far more realistic than some of Scott's other Calvinist portraits. Though he may denounce "union, toleration, patronages, and Yerastian prelatie oaths" as "national defections"<sup>59</sup>, yet his beliefs have sound historical foundations, and Scott allows him to be a "good old man"<sup>60</sup>. Deans' strength of character is built on his interpretation of the godly struggle in Scotland, the latter days of which occurred in his own youth, and which Reuben Butler, in time and intellect, is too far removed from to understand. But Butler too is in his historical place - a post-Union intellectual who, though "a wise and strong-minded man", is "neither wiser nor more strong-minded than those of his age and education, with whom to disbelieve witchcraft or spectres was held an undeniable proof of atheism."<sup>61</sup> And Jeanie's personality provides a link between the two, as she progresses to a limited form of enlightenment while retaining something of the national principles of her father: as she tells the Reverend Staunton,

"I have been bred in the faith of the suffering remnant of the Presbyterian doctrine of Scotland, and I am doubtful if I can lawfully attend upon your fashion of worship, seeing it has been testified against by many precious souls of our Kirk, and specially by my worthy father."<sup>62</sup>

Jeanie, as a woman, has neither the Amazonian noblesse of Die Vernon, nor the selfless devotion to a doomed cause of Flora MacIvor, nor the helpless beauty of Rose Bradwardine or Edith Bellenden. She is "no heroine of romance"<sup>63</sup> but, instead, a "rustic heroine",<sup>64</sup> whose heroism lies in her moral sense of right and wrong, in her duty, perseverance and Christian love. She can promise nothing to save her sister "which is unlawful for a Christian".<sup>65</sup> She "canna change right into wrang, or make that true which is false."<sup>66</sup> Rather she depends on truth, and the light cast upon truth by an appeal to human sympathy. Such sympathy is aroused all around - in the "hard-hearted turnkey" Ratcliffe<sup>67</sup>, in the judge and jury, in Davie Deans himself, in those who befriend her on her journey to London, in Argyle, and finally in the Queen. Scott describes Jeanie as a pilgrim, and her pilgrimage is away from confrontation towards compromise, from the harshness of the mob's treatment of Porteous and of Scots law's treatment of Effie, towards tolerance. It is, concurrently, a journey from one manner of being Scottish to another. Again, Scott is careful to keep pace with history, for Jeanie, like her father and Butler, is no person "beyond her time, rank and country."<sup>68</sup>

Jeanie's patriotism is, in Scott's scheme, in no way diminished, but rather enhanced, by her sense of realism. This realism is indeed

partly what makes the Scots stick together furth of Scotland, and is defended by Scott as "a most justifiable and honourable feeling of patriotism" and not "prejudice and narrowness of sentiment." He adds that its usefulness is that "the habits and principles of the nation are a sort of guarantee for the character of the individual"<sup>69</sup> - but conversely the fictional role of Jeanie Deans is to be an individual whose good character represents the nation. "She's a bit of a Scotchwoman," the Reverend Staunton is told, ". . . and they say the worst donnot of them can look out for their own turn."<sup>70</sup> And yet at the root of this patriotic realism we find a principle taken from that form of patriotism which spurred on the mob: to inform on George Staunton (Robertson) - even at his own behest - would be an act against Scotland. In a passage which demonstrates how profoundly Scott had considered the relationship between violence and the defence of Scottish interests, Jeanie's private dilemma is placed in its public context:

Neither did it seem to her that [Staunton's] share in the death of Porteous, though her mind revolted at the idea of using violence to any one, was in the relation of a common murder, against the perpetrator of which every one is called to aid the public magistrate. That violent action was blended with many circumstances which, in the eyes of those of Jeanie's rank in life, if they did not altogether deprive it of the character of guilt, softened, at least, its most atrocious features. The anxiety of the government to obtain conviction of some of the offenders had but served to increase the public feeling which connected the action, though violent and irregular, with the idea of ancient national independence. The rigorous procedure adopted or proposed against the city of Edinburgh, the ancient metropolis of Scotland, the extremely unpopular and injudicious measure of compelling the Scottish clergy, contrary to their principles and sense of duty, to promulgate from the pulpit the reward offered for the discovery of the perpetrators of this slaughter, had produced on the public mind the opposite consequences of what were intended; and Jeanie felt conscious that, whoever should lodge information concerning that event, and for whatsoever purpose it

might be done, it would be considered as an act of treason against the independence of Scotland. With the fanaticism of the Scotch Presbyterians there was always mingled a glow of national feeling . . .<sup>71</sup>

Thus the old heroic features of Scottish patriotism still inform Jeanie's behaviour, but in such a way that they can actually hinder what she seeks to achieve. What she has to learn, in fact, is the ability to balance. The Duke of Argyle becomes her principal model, for he, though "Scotland's friend" and "ane native true-hearted Scotsman",<sup>72</sup> knows how to accommodate these attributes in a modern British context. The measures proposed against Edinburgh in Parliament he opposes as "repugnant to the international treaty of union, to the liberty of Scotland, and, reflectively, to that of England, to common justice, to common sense, and to the public interest."<sup>73</sup> To Queen Caroline he speaks in the same terms: "My sword, madam . . . like that of my fathers, has been always at the command of my lawful king and of my native country: I trust it is impossible to separate their real rights and interests."<sup>74</sup> Yet, when even he appears to falter in his efforts to save Effie from execution, it is Jeanie's ability to subsume her sense of Scottish patriotism in the "eloquence"<sup>75</sup> of compassion which wins the Queen's favour. The scene recalls Scott's explanation in the General Preface of what he sought to achieve for Scotland with *Waverley* - to produce "something which might introduce her natives to those of the sister kingdom, in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles."<sup>76</sup> As a representative of the positive

aspects of modern Scotland - reliable, decent, Christian, homely and full of common sense, and no conceivable enemy to the stability of the British state - who better to send to London than Jeanie Deans?

Against Jeanie's wisdom, which enables her to complete this pilgrimage from Edinburgh to London (and back to Roseneath), from past to present, is opposed the doomed wilfulness of Effie and George Staunton. Effie is an "untaught child of nature, whose good and evil seemed to flow rather from impulse than from reflection."<sup>77</sup> Where Jeanie's "taste for the picturesque, if she had any by nature, had never been awakened or cultivated"<sup>78</sup>, Effie's "higher degree of imagination" makes her "an admirer of the beauties of nature, a taste which compensates many evils to those who happen to enjoy it."<sup>79</sup> When Effie, now "the elegant, well-bred, beautiful" Lady Staunton<sup>80</sup>, comes to Roseneath, Jeanie struggles to recognise her, but for the reader she represents the past as surely as any Jacobite: "There was something about the whole of this stranger's address, and tone, and manner which acted upon Jeanie's feelings like the illusions of a dream, that teaze us with a puzzling approach to reality."<sup>81</sup>

These are, of course, familiar oppositions, but, as the novel reaches its conclusion, Scott draws them out in a carefully constructed conversation between Reuben Butler, now married to Jeanie, and Sir George Staunton (formerly Robertson), now Effie's husband. They are crossing to Roseneath by boat, and a storm threatens. Staunton's observations suggest the notion of the pathetic fallacy, but Butler rejects such romanticism:

Large broad drops fell from time to time, and induced the gentlemen to assume the boat-cloaks; but the rain again ceased, and the oppressive heat, so unusual in Scotland in the end of May, inclined them to throw them aside. "There is something solemn in this delay of the storm," said Sir George; "it seems as if it suspended its peal till it solemnised some important event in the world below."

"Alas!" replied Butler, "what are we, that the laws of nature should correspond in their march with our ephemeral deeds or sufferings? The clouds will burst when surcharged with the electric fluid, whether a goat is falling at that instant from the cliffs of Arran or a hero expiring on the field of battle he has won."

"The mind delights to deem it otherwise," said Sir George Staunton; "and to dwell on the fate of humanity as on that which is the prime central movement of the mighty machine. We love not to think that we shall mix with the ages that have gone before us, as these broad black raindrops mingle with the waste of waters, making a trifling and momentary eddy, and are then lost for ever."

"*For ever!* We are not - we cannot be lost for ever," said Butler, looking upward; "death is to us change, not consummation, and the commencement of a new existence, corresponding in character to the deeds which we have done in the body."<sup>82</sup>

Although apparently at odds, the contributions to this dialogue actually complement each other. Butler's realism is fitting, since he is to be a survivor: his view of human history is informed not by an heroic imagination that exalts man's importance beyond perceived reality, but on the lessons of "Experience, as well as Scripture."<sup>83</sup> Staunton is also right, however, since the peal of the storm is, ironically, his own death-knell. In his case Scott's fiction can manipulate the laws of nature since he belongs essentially to the past, and hence - even though originally a real figure - to the imagination only. It is Butler, and what he represents, which "cannot be lost for ever": interestingly, in the last of Scott's Jacobite novels, it is the doomed Redgauntlet who articulates the

very reverse of Butler's assertion: "Then, gentlemen . . . the cause is lost for ever!"<sup>84</sup>

Earlier in the same conversation, Staunton asks Butler about the Highland bands which have roamed the country since 1745: "whether the violences which they have committed were not sometimes atoned for by acts of generosity, and whether they did not possess the virtues, as well as the vices, of savage tribes?" To this Butler responds,

that certainly they did sometimes show sparks, of which even the worst class of malefactors are seldom utterly divested; but that their evil propensities were certain and regular principles of action, while any occasional burst of virtuous feeling was only a transient impulse not to be reckoned upon, and excited probably by some singular and unusual concatenation of circumstances.<sup>85</sup>

Staunton's questions are, of course, also about himself, and there is little doubt that Scott is classifying him - the criminal forever misplaced in civilised society - with the savages.

Effie's case is similar, if handled still more subtly. In her years of posing as Lady Staunton, she has had to endure fashionable society recounting the tale of her own miserable past to her: "I suffered with courage," she tells Jeanie, "like an Indian at the stake."<sup>86</sup> In those same circles the odd remnant of her disguised past takes on a new aspect, which even the Duke of Argyle completely misinterprets:

"now and then a provincial word drops out so prettily, that it is quite Doric . . . . Amidst her noble and elegant manners, there is now and then a little touch of bashfulness and conventual rusticity, if I may call it so, that makes her quite enchanting."<sup>87</sup>

This is dualism of a sort, but it is based on a deception which is unacceptable to Scott. The real divide between the Stauntons and the Butlers, the doomed and the survivors, is not between "acquired politeness of manners" and "real and natural good-breeding"<sup>88</sup>, but between their relationships with the past and present. Their children are symbolic of this: Jeanie's, good, upright and wholesome; Effie's, the Whistler, a brutal, treacherous, violent savage, devoid of religious or any other virtue, who murders his father and escapes to America to join a tribe of wild Indians.<sup>89</sup> Scott could hardly have emphasised his point more dramatically: Sir George, the historical misfit, lies murdered by his bastard son; Effie retires to a foreign convent; there is no place for any of this family in the Scotland of the 1750s.

For Scotland has changed. It is a country where Highland meets Lowland at Roseneath, and Duncan of Knockdunder, uniting the two in his dress - "an Englishman's head on a Highlander's body"<sup>90</sup> - is halfway between an Evan Dhu Maccombich and a Hector M'Intyre; where energies are expended on agricultural improvements rather than on religious or political argument; where Jeanie Butler, the Minister's dutiful wife, does not pretend to understand her husband's expositions of divinity, but cooks his humble dinner to perfection<sup>91</sup>; where that Presbyterian Minister can say of Effie's Roman Catholicism, "any religion, however imperfect . . . was better than cold scepticism"<sup>92</sup>.



The Butlers are settled in this landscape. Reuben once refused Sir George Staunton's offer of an English living of £1200 a year, on both spiritual and temporal grounds. Staunton did not understand:

"This is philosophy," said Sir George; "I have heard of it, but I never saw it before."

"It is common sense," replied Butler, "which accords with philosophy and religion more frequently than pedants or zealots are apt to admit."<sup>33</sup>

The transition has been made by the end of the novel. Scotland is no longer a country of rashness, zeal and wild adventures, but one of prudence, "pleasantness and peace". It is not surprising, then, that when Scott introduces a fictitious Jacobite conspiracy into this land, in *Redgauntlet*, it is doomed to failure from the outset.

## Chapter Eleven

### THE SHAPE OF THE PRESENT AND THE RUINS OF THE PAST:

#### *ST. RONAN'S WELL AND REDGAUNTLET*

*"Redgauntlet!" I involuntarily repeated.*

*"Yes, Redgauntlet," said my alleged guardian, looking at me keenly; "does that name recall any associations to your mind?"*

*"No," I replied, "except that I lately heard it given to the hero of a supernatural legend."<sup>1</sup>*

Scott's nineteenth novel, one which today enjoys as much critical approval as any of his works, was published in June 1824. Once again, for the purposes of this study it is useful to turn to Lockhart, whose comments are illuminating:

The re-introduction of the adventurous hero of 1745, in the dulness and dimness of advancing age and fortunes hopelessly blighted - and the presenting him - with whose romantic portraiture at an earlier period historical truth had been so admirably blended - as the moving principle of events, not only entirely, but notoriously imaginary - this was a rash experiment, and could not fail to suggest disadvantageous comparisons; yet, had there been no *Waverley*, I am persuaded the fallen and faded *Ascanius of Redgauntlet* would have been universally pronounced a masterpiece.<sup>2</sup>

There was a contrast also with the novel which preceded it, *St. Ronan's Well*, Scott's only attempt at a novel of contemporary

manners. The unremitting petty-mindedness of the inhabitants of a Borders spa makes the occasional heroic gestures of a melodramatic plot seem badly out of place - and while this seems in part to have been Scott's intention, the overall impression is that he was ill at ease when addressing his fiction to the present. His own remarks on preparing the text for the Magnum Opus support this view:

Read through and corrected *Saint Ronan's Well*. I am no good judge but I think the language of this piece rather good. Then I must allow the fashionable portraits are not the true thing. I am too much out of the way to see and mark the ridiculous in Society. The story is terribly contorted and unnatural and the catastrophe is melancholy which should always be avoided.<sup>3</sup>

His evident dislike of the majority of the characters, and the pessimistic conclusion of the novel, give some indication why he should next have reverted to a novel about Charles Edward Stuart, the invented setting of which freed him almost completely from the restraints of historical truth. *Redgauntlet's* location in a past of some sort, however, did enable Scott to employ his usual vocabulary pattern and set up his usual balance of oppositions. *St. Ronan's Well*, in which the present, far from informing a view of the past as in the other novels, had become detached imaginatively from it, was a trickier and less satisfying proposition. A brief survey of it should make this clear.

*St. Ronan's Well* could almost be a fictitious rendition of the sixth section of Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Ferguson wrote that, "The habits of a vigorous mind are

formed in contending with difficulties, not in enjoying the repose of a pacific station." In this latter condition,

mankind generally flatter their own imbecility under the name of *politeness*. They are persuaded, that the celebrated ardour, generosity, and fortitude of former ages, bordered on frenzy, or were the mere effects of necessity, on men who had not the means of enjoying their ease, or their pleasure. They congratulate themselves on having escaped the storm which required the exercise of such arduous virtues; and with that vanity which accompanies the human race in their meanest condition, they boast of a scene of affectation, of languor, or of folly, as the standard of human felicity, and as furnishing the properest exercise of a rational nature.<sup>4</sup>

This could be the blueprint for Scott's novel, which opens with a depressing description of old St. Ronan's village, "ancient and decayed", a place of "neglect and desertion" which most of the former inhabitants have left for locations more suited to commerce and convenience - just as had been described in the postscript to *Waverley*.<sup>5</sup> But Scott himself, as we have seen, had, in Ferguson's phrase, constructed an image of the "ardour . . . of former ages" which "bordered on frenzy". The difference is that the inhabitants of St. Ronan's Well have almost no conception of the Scottish past, and certainly no wish to inhabit it imaginatively: thus any hint of patriotism among them is, by comparison with Scott's massive scheme, a paltry affair. For example, Hector MacTurk (a Highlander who cuts a figure more absurd by far than Hector M'Intyre in *The Antiquary*) at one point attempts to gloss the spa community with a sense of patriotism, claiming that the Well is to its residents "as a common country"; but he urges Sir Bingo Binks to be "more public-spirited" only for the purpose of picking a squabble with Francis Tyrrel.<sup>6</sup> A

somewhat effete prefiguring of the "damned mischievous Englishmen" of whom Scott wrote at the time of the Malachi Malagrowth episode in 1826, appears in the character of the local laird John Mowbray, who goes by the affected English title of "Squire". These are typical examples of Scott's description of a contemporary society with no recourse to the past in times of difficulty.

History, Scott's opening paragraph implies, lies in "scattered ruins" on the "wild moor", while the people at the spa are oblivious to it. We expect in Francis Tyrrel, perhaps, a contrast, some kind of mysterious poet-hero surviving in the modern world, but he too is discovered to be "after all a very ordinary sort of person - quite a commonplace man . . . nothing at all *frappant* . . . ."7 "Honour", when it arises, does so in defence of the most petty causes, and any heroic description applied to the characters becomes perverse, as for instance when Tyrrel awaits Clara Mowbray on the road from the spa "like a hunter watching his game, or an Indian for his enemy, but with different, very different purpose."<sup>8</sup> Likewise, in planning for his and his sister's future, "virtuous resolution" only momentarily gains the upper hand in the bosom of John Mowbray.<sup>9</sup> There is a bitter denunciation of the state of Scotland by the returned nabob Touchwood, but even he cannot escape criticism as an interfering and self-important busybody. Still, what he has to say is apposite: the Scottish peasants are no longer "honest and industrious" workers, but schemers whose heads are filled with Tom Paine and Voltaire; above them, a great show of opulence is no replacement for real wealth in society, "any more than the fat of a corpulent man is health or

strength." As for the Well, "it is the very fountain-head of folly and coxcombry - a Babel for noise and a Vanity Fair for nonsense - no well in your swamps tenanted by such a conceited colony of clamorous frogs."<sup>10</sup>

As if to complement - or even to explain - this unremitting imbecility, Scott uses a conversation between Lady Penelope Fairweather and the antiquity-delving Reverend Joseph Cargill to underline the poor condition of the historical consciousness:

She began by begging him to draw his chair close, for an instinctive terror of fine ladies had made him keep his distance. At the same time, she hoped "he was not afraid of her as an Episcopalian; her father had belonged to that communion; for," she added, with what was intended for an arch smile, "we were somewhat naughty in the forty-five, as you may have heard; but all that was over, and she was sure Mr Cargill was too liberal to entertain any dislike or shyness on that score. . . ."<sup>11</sup>

Mr Cargill's liberalism has nothing to do with the matter: he is too absent-minded to be bothered by doctrinal differences. But how far removed is that arch smile and that "naughtiness" from the great conflicts described in *Waverley* - and yet it is not so unnatural a development from the framed painting at Tully-Veolan! Scott detests the spa at St. Ronan's Well, and at the close he has Mowbray symbolically demolish it (although not thoroughly enough to hinder Innerleithen, its prototype, from becoming a flourishing centre for Scott-tourism). He wants to protect the past from the degeneracies of such a present, but it is a hard task. When he writes that "the little watering-place has returned to its primitive obscurity"<sup>12</sup>, he

has also brought us full-circle to the deserted ruins of the first chapter.

Lockhart tells us that Scott turned "immediately" from *St. Ronan's Well* to *Redgauntlet*<sup>13</sup>, and it is not hard to see why. As he wrote in the 1832 Introduction to the latter novel, "The Jacobite enthusiasm of the 18th century, particularly during the rebellion of 1745, afforded a theme, perhaps the finest that could be selected for fictitious composition, founded upon real or probable incident."<sup>14</sup> The reasons were, first, that these events were "remembered without any degree of the bitterness of spirit which seldom fails to attend internal dissensions"; and, secondly, that the Highlanders were

an ancient and high-spirited race . . . brave to romance, and exhibiting a character turning upon points more adapted to poetry than to the prose of real life. Their prince, young, valiant, patient of fatigue, and despising danger, heading his army on foot in the most toilsome marches, and defeating a regular force in three battles - all these were circumstances fascinating to the imagination, and might well be supposed to seduce young and enthusiastic minds to the cause in which they were found united, although wisdom and reason frowned upon the enterprise.<sup>15</sup>

This is familiar territory, and the linguistic battle-lines are marked out as clearly as Jacobite and government troops deployed on Drummoisie Moor. The contrasts are carried over in Scott's description of events *after* Culloden: "as the political enthusiasm died gradually away among men of ordinary temperament, it influenced those of warm imaginations and weak understandings, and hence wild schemes were formed, as desperate as they were adventurous."<sup>16</sup>

One is aware, then, of a mood of relief in the opening Letters of the novel itself, as Scott takes up again the language pattern temporarily disrupted in *St. Ronan's Well*. The correspondence between Allan Fairford and Darsie Latimer shows, however, that they are more conscious of the compromise implicit in this pattern, and less naive, than previous *Waverley* heroes: the two friends are more patronising towards the past and towards romance, as if they themselves had read and noted the lessons of *Waverley*. Fairford warns Latimer against the "wildfire chase of romantic situation and adventure" and instructs him to "keep guard . . . on your imagination"<sup>17</sup>, but Darsie is a good deal less inclined to adventure than either likes to think: he spends most of the novel hoping to be rescued from dangerous and unfamiliar experiences, except where he is attracted by the picturesque (as in his association with Wandering Willie - "Altogether, there was something more wild and adventurous-looking about the man than I could have expected to see in an ordinary modern crowder"<sup>18</sup>). True, he left Edinburgh for the southwest as opposed to the Highlands because in the latter he was unlikely to find much of interest - "the targets are used to cover butter-churns"<sup>19</sup> - but at the same time he is not about to risk the "solid comforts of his present condition", by breaking an embargo on crossing the Solway to England, simply in order to "satisfy the imaginary longing of an idle curiosity".<sup>20</sup> Again, after a narrow escape from the Solway tide, he would willingly have swapped "the romance of my situation" for "the comforts of the chimney-corner".<sup>21</sup>



And yet, no hero of Scott's is more "acted upon" than he, even to being forced to adopt female disguise. The mechanics of plot - mysterious inheritance, captivity, legal MacGuffin, conspiracy and so on - have not altered: but the principal characters, in a post-Jacobite setting invaded by an invented Jacobite conspiracy and by the middle-aged Pretender himself, play out their roles with an almost cynical awareness of the balance of oppositions created by their Author. If Waverley and Frank Osbaldistone were at times like readers transported onto the page, Fairford and Latimer display attitudes as though they were themselves seated in armchairs, wielding the paper-knife. Fairford's explanation of the new context for heroism, as he defends his father's courage in the court-room, is apposite: "civil courage, Darsie; and it is of little consequence to most men in this age and country whether they ever possess military courage or no."<sup>22</sup>

This is not to diminish the success of Scott's division of language. In the above discussion the contrast is clearly delineated - between "young/ enthusiastic/ seduced/ warm imaginations/ weak understandings/ wild schemes/ desperate/ adventurous/ wildfire chase/ romantic/ adventurous-looking/ imaginary longing/ idle curiosity" on the one hand, and "wisdom/ reason frowned/ gradually/ ordinary temperament/ keep guard/ ordinary modern/ solid comforts" on the other. Scott can write with greater subtlety too, for example when he shows a grudging admiration for Saunders Fairford and his methods of evading difficulties of political principle with his clients:

. . . as he had clients and connexions of business among families of opposite political tenets, he was particularly cautious to use all the conventional phrases which the civility of the times had devised as an admissible mode of language betwixt the two parties. Thus he spoke sometimes of the Chevalier, but never either of the Prince, which would have been sacrificing his own principles, or of the Pretender, which would have been offensive to those of others. Again, he usually designated the rebellion as the "affair" of 1745, and spoke of any one engaged in it as a person who had been "out" at a certain period.<sup>23</sup>

Here, Scott's language is hedged to reflect the political hedging of Mr Fairford. He uses the same tone when Darsie Latimer is resisting Redgauntlet's efforts to persuade him to join his cause:

Darsie was not sorry to reply, that his respect for the person of his relation would induce him to listen to all which he had to apprise him of before he formed any definitive resolution upon the weighty subjects of deliberation which he proposed to him."<sup>24</sup>

Redgauntlet, predictably, scorns such deliberation and the methodical coolness of the polite culture in which his nephew has been raised. For Redgauntlet, it is the "grovelling habits of a confined education among the poor-spirited class" of the legal profession which obstructs Darsie's commitment to the Jacobite cause: "You scarce yet believe yourself a Redgauntlet: your pulse has not yet learned the genuine throb that answers to the summons of honour and of patriotism."<sup>25</sup> But Darsie is never, even temporarily, deluded by such appeals, as Waverley was. "I must," he tells his uncle, "see some *reasonable* hope of success in the *desperate* enterprise in which you would involve me."<sup>26</sup> His assessment of the state of 1760s

society crystallises all the arguments against the doomed cause of Jacobitism which have been rehearsed in *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*:

"I look around me, and I see a settled government - an established authority - a born Briton on the throne - the very Highland mountaineers, upon whom alone the trust of the exiled family reposed, assembled into regiments, which act under orders of the existing dynasty. France has been utterly dismayed by the tremendous lessons of the last war, and will hardly provoke another. All without and within the kingdom is adverse to encountering a hopeless struggle, and you alone, sir, seem willing to undertake a desperate enterprise."<sup>27</sup>

When Redgauntlet responds that he "would undertake it were it ten times more desperate", it is clear that what is being articulated through him bears no relation at all to reality. Indeed, the invented, non-historical scenario of the novel, Redgauntlet's barely credible lack of realism, and the fact that it is largely his influence which dictates the movements of the "modern" characters (Fairford and Latimer), all indicate that the various characters simply represent different, complementary facets of Scott's patriotic symbiosis. In the historical imagination as constructed by Scott, there is a place for Redgauntlet's wild patriotism, which is made *desperate* precisely by being opposed to what is *reasonable*.

This is well illustrated by the following contrasts. In Letter III of the novel, Latimer applies a touch of modern cynicism to the story of Bruce and Comyn, by commenting that Bruce became a "king and patriot" by first being a "church-breaker and a murderer".<sup>28</sup> Redgauntlet's interpretation is somewhat different: passing the site of the grave of Edward I at Burgh-upon-Sands, he declares that it is

"within sight of that great landmark of our liberty that I have to propose to you an undertaking second in honour and importance to none since the immortal Bruce stabbed the Red Comyn, and grasped, with his yet bloody hand, the independent crown of Scotland." The gap between these views of the Scottish past - and its relevance to the present - illustrates that, Redgauntlet's hope or delusion to the contrary notwithstanding, Darsie is "so utterly degenerate from the blood and sentiments of your ancestors, as not to feel my summons as the horse hears the war-trumpet."<sup>29</sup> Additionally, though heir to a fervently patriotic Scottish family, Darsie has always been enthusiastically convinced of his Englishness. His responses to his uncle's demands contain combinations of words from what are usually opposing vocabularies in Scott's novels, which serve to demonstrate that Redgauntlet is articulating nothing but the unsubstantiated rhetoric of Scottish patriotism: "an enterprise directed against a dynasty now established for three reigns requires strong arguments, both in point of justice *and* of expediency, to recommend it to men of conscience *and* prudence."<sup>30</sup> Or later: ". . . Darsie's heart sank within him, when he reflected on the storm of passion which he must encounter if he declined to join his uncle in a project to which prudence *and* principle made him equally adverse."<sup>31</sup>

The nearest Redgauntlet comes to such an amalgamation is through the eyes of his niece, Darsie's sister Lillias, who has seen him act the part of both "hero" and "mere vulgar conspirator", and who reckons him "a political enthusiast of the most dangerous character . . . [it is] as if he felt himself the very Atlas who is alone capable

of supporting a sinking cause."<sup>32</sup> She recounts the ("entirely imaginary"<sup>33</sup>) episode of the gauntlet challenge at George III's coronation to Darsie because "it will better teach you to appreciate the romantic and resolved nature of his character than anything which I could state of his rashness and enthusiasm."<sup>34</sup> Far from being inspired by this tale, as Edward Waverley might have been, Darsie recognises that his uncle suffers from "a strange delusion", and adds: "it is wonderful that he does not yield to the force of reality."<sup>35</sup>

In other words, in *Redgauntlet* all the linguistic and conceptual ingredients of the earlier Scottish novels reappear, but in forms which show that the relationship between past and present, between rashness and prudence, between fantasy/fiction and reality/fact has become so well defined that the principal characters themselves seem to recognise it, and hardly move at all between the two sets of oppositions. In this novel Scottish history has been invented expressly for the benefit of fiction, and yet its construction is the same - except that it is less ambiguous - as those earlier novels in which fiction intruded upon history. The different effects of, say, *Waverley* and *Redgauntlet* may be summed up as follows: "With the first, dear Reader, if *you* had been there, this is how you would have experienced Scottish history; with the second, if Scottish history had continued, you would have experienced it like *this*." It would be reading too much into "Wandering Willie's Tale" to see it as an allegory of this relationship, but Steenie's awakening after his trip to Hell has perhaps a passing relevance: "Steenie would have thought

the whole was a dream, but he had the receipt in his hand, fairly written and signed by the auld laird. . .".<sup>36</sup>

Another character in the novel, Pate-in-Peril, similarly recollects his involvement in the 'Forty-five: "I dinna mind very weel what I was doing swaggering about the country with dirk and dagger at my belt for five or six months, or thereaway; but I had a weary waking out of a wild dream."<sup>37</sup> Darsie Latimer, too, does undergo a change in perception, brought about by the revelations concerning his real identity and inheritance, but this change relates exclusively to love - which is not linked to heroic or political delusions: Greenmantle, the object of his affection (which, to avoid any hint of incestuous overtones, Scott ensures is curiously dispassionate) is revealed as his sister Lillas, with the result that "his fever-fit of love had departed like a morning's dream, and left behind but a painful sense of shame, and a resolution to be more cautious ere he again indulged in such romantic visions."<sup>38</sup> And the same kind of adjustment occurs in the concluding pages, which, for the purposes of this study, are clearly the most significant of the novel.

Latimer (or, as he is revealed to be, Sir Arthur Darsie Redgauntlet) has from the outset suspected that the establishment figures on his uncle's list of Jacobite supporters "must be aware of some mode of excusing themselves from compliance with its purport."<sup>39</sup> And this is indeed the case: "We owe caution to ourselves and our families . . .", one of them tells Redgauntlet.<sup>40</sup> This is the very

sentiment to which General Campbell appeals when, coming among their plot, he disarms them not with violence but with conciliation:

"Come, do not be fools, gentlemen; there was perhaps no great harm meant or intended by your gathering together in this obscure corner, for a bear-bait or a cock-fight, or whatever other amusement you may have intended; but it was a little imprudent, considering how you stand with government, and it has occasioned some anxiety. . . .

". . . His Majesty will not even believe that the most zealous Jacobites who yet remain can nourish a thought of exciting a civil war, which must be fatal to their families and themselves, besides spreading bloodshed and ruin through a peaceful land."<sup>41</sup>

Campbell's assertion, that "this will be remembered against no one", brings to them all the realisation that their Jacobitism is tolerable, even acceptable, so long as it does not lead to real political action. When Redgauntlet makes his famous exclamation, "Then, gentlemen . . . the cause is lost for ever!"<sup>42</sup>, he is admitting that, in the terms of patriotic dualism, prudence will always neutralise rashness. Even Charles Edward himself, resorting to Scott's vocabulary, describes his own cause as "our bull-fight, or by whatever other wild name this headlong enterprise may be termed."<sup>43</sup> He is escorted to the waiting boat by men "looking on the ground, their feelings struggling against the dictates of their reason."<sup>44</sup> "It is now all over," says General Campbell, "and Jacobite will be henceforward no longer a party name." Redgauntlet is ultimately *glad* that he was not able to breed his nephew up in his own political opinions,<sup>45</sup> but he is himself a character too far removed from modern realism to exist peacefully in Hanoverian Britain. Like other doomed heroes of earlier novels, he ends his

days in a monastery abroad after tiring of the exiled Stuart household.

But as that most fervent Jacobite makes his exit, General Campbell is generously compromising himself, accepting, as it were, the romance of unreality into his own historical consciousness - "it is said that, Whig and Campbell as he was, he could not help joining in the universal 'Amen!' which resounded from the shore."<sup>46</sup> That innocent little phrase "it is said that . . ." is a deft touch from Scott, adding as it does that familiar flavour of what might be termed "authoritative mythology" to the proceedings. From here it is not altogether surprising to find, in Dr Dryasdust's concluding "Letter to the Author of *Waverley*", the elision of fiction and real contemporary events. When Sir Arthur Darsie Redgauntlet was presented to His Majesty George III by General Campbell, writes Dryasdust, "many well-instructed persons of the period" were apprehensive "that the young king might himself be induced to become one of the Stuarts' faction - a catastrophe from which it has pleased Heaven to preserve these kingdoms."<sup>47</sup> This was written just two years after Scott's personal stage-management of George IV's bekilted visit to Edinburgh had made that absurd improbability, symbolically at least, an actuality. The symbiosis was complete: the relationship between the Scottish past and the British present had become expressed at the highest political and constitutional level, with great care and attention to detail by the Author of *Waverley* himself, in terms of a patriotic system worked out through poetry and fictional romance.



## Chapter Twelve

### PATRIOTISM AND POLITICS:

#### *THE VISIONARY AND MALACHI MALAGROWTHER*

*"But besides this, I can tell my timorous friends, as Hotspur does his cautious correspondent, - 'Out of this nettle Danger we pluck the flower Safety.'"*

There was never any doubt as to Scott's political persuasion, even though he was, throughout his life, usually reluctant to take an active or public part in politics. His letters and journal reveal an intense concern for the cause of Toryism (he was, of course, indebted to the Dundas family, through whose patronage he gained his early legal posts), for the preservation of property and for the restriction of the franchise. At certain times - for example during the Revolutionary 1790s and the succeeding wars with France - his political opinions became quite strident, even at a private level, although he generally tended to avoid personal disputations. He was also instrumental in setting up *The Quarterly Review* in 1808-09, to counter what he considered the unfortunate mix of good literary criticism with bad politics in *The Edinburgh Review*: what was needed, he wrote in a letter, was a London-based Review "totally independent of bookselling influence, on a plan as liberal as that of the

Edinburgh, its literature as well supported, and its principles English and constitutional."<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of his life, too, he attempted to involve himself in opposition to the Reform Bill, but was restrained by those around him from publicising his by then highly reactionary and somewhat erratic opinions. Still, on two occasions he did publish political pamphlets, once during the Radical disturbances of 1819-20, and once in 1826, in opposition to the government's proposal to prohibit the issue of small bank-notes. The latter, the *Letters of Malachi Malagrowth*, are of particular interest, since they deal specifically with the question of Scotland's relationship with England and its position within the United Kingdom. But *The Visionary*, consisting of three articles which appeared in James Ballantyne's *Edinburgh Weekly Journal* in December 1819, also exhibits some familiar characteristics, especially when read in the context of Scott's general anxieties about Radicalism.

The three articles submitted by the Visionary (signing himself SOMNAMBULUS) have been admirably summarised by Peter Garside in a recently reprinted edition. In the first, there is a description of the house of the Visionary's uncle:

It was an excellent old mansion, which had been founded in the feudal times, but by additions and alterations, of which it was particularly susceptible, it had been adapted to modern ideas of convenience; so that, still retaining the exterior of a gothic castle, it was in the inside as warm and comfortable a habitation as you could desire. In fact, the whole neighbourhood had long regarded it as a sort of public citadel.<sup>3</sup>

This is a representation of the British constitution, adaptable and able to accommodate changes as required. A visiting architect, Mr Vitruvius Whigham, is in favour of demolishing "certain garret-rooms" (or rotten boroughs): "the dry rot, he said, had got into them; nor was there a single inconvenience that he did not ascribe to these d----d rotten holes."<sup>4</sup> The Visionary subsequently falls asleep and dreams that the combined efforts of Mr Whigham and a mob headed by Rob Radical lead to an assault on the mansion which is likely to lay it flat: Whigham, not realising the nature of the unholy alliance of which he is a part, protests that he intends to make only a few alterations, and is constantly reviled by the mob with as much bitterness as they direct at the house's occupants: the mob's determination is "to pull it down, and erect a number of wigwams on the site."<sup>5</sup> The intercourse between Whigham and the Radicals is recorded in the best satirical style - "brief, but beautiful", Lockhart called the articles<sup>6</sup> - but Scott makes it clear in the Preface that he separates "the leaders and more respectable part of the followers of the Whig party in Scotland from the more unworthy part of their own body, as well as from the mob of Radicality. . .".<sup>7</sup>

The second vision, motivated against the Duke of Hamilton's sympathetic attitude towards Reform, is based more obviously in Scotland. It shows an agrarian society ruined in the wake of an egalitarian land redistribution, the spokesman for which, Tom Ten-acres, is so lacking in moral scruples that no sooner has he explained the situation to the Visionary than he sets about robbing him of his clothes: "I want; you have - I am strong, and can take;

you are weak, and cannot defend. This is the end of all radical justice - so down with your duds, or I knock your brains out!"<sup>8</sup>

The third vision, as Peter Garside has explained, offers

an alternative Tory nightmare, depicting a world dominated by "demagogues" and mass politics. . . . The dreamer's questioning again serves as a vehicle for some of Scott's firmest convictions, including his undying belief in "property" as an essential steadying force in politics. The action similarly unfolds a succession of fears about an extended franchise: that it would merely exacerbate the present "interest" system; that the ballot-box would prove unmanageable; that mass politics would lead inevitably to military despotism. Had not the French Revolution spawned Napoleon?<sup>9</sup>

Scott was throughout this period busy writing letters to his friends in government, requesting permission to raise a Volunteer force to counter the threat of Radical insurgency. His tone would have found favour with both Andrew Fletcher and the pro-Militia literati of the 1760s. To Lord Melville, in seeking his approval to raise a loyalist force against the Radicals, he wrote in December 1819:

. . . in a moral point of view the appearance of such a corps would operate forcibly on the *morale* of the people. It would confirm the loyal of the lower orders by showing confidence in them and it would intimidate the disaffected by showing plainly they cannot rely on even the neutrality of the Scottish peasantry.<sup>10</sup>

And again later the same month, "it is rather to its *moral* effect than to its military service that I look for immediate consequences."<sup>11</sup> Additionally, however, he seems to have adapted the

themes of his Jacobite fiction to suit the political moment - writing of "raising" the Highland clans and Borderers in order to *preserve* the status quo.\* It is a remarkable but, in the light of his construction of patriotism, not an inconsistent contradiction that he seems to welcome the possibility of being "out" in order to safeguard the political and social establishment. The reason, however, is obvious. Whereas a hundred years before the Jacobites were patently a threat to the British state, now the threat lies with the Radicals. Raising clans and peasants, in Scott's paternalistic view of society, is now a safety mechanism, not an act of rebellion:

The western districts of Scotland where the manufacturing interest prevail are in a bad way. All the rest of the country is steady enough for the Scottish peasantry are more attached to their *lairds* than is the general case in England.<sup>12</sup>

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\* As the following extracts from his correspondence indicate:

To Lady Abercorn: "The Chiefs of the Highland clans I understand have offerd government the support of their people to march where they may be required. The greater part of the South is very loyal & ready to rise with their gentlemen if we can get arms." (*Letters* Vol. VI, p.30.) To his son Walter: "The Highland Chiefs have offered to raise their clans and march them to any point in Scotland where their services shall be required. To be sure the Glasgow folks would be a little astonishd at the arrival of Dugald Dhu, 'brogues and brochan and a'.'" (*Ibid.*, p.40.) To John Croker: "The people of property, by which I mean all who have anything to lose, however little that may be, are taking the alarm, and mustering fast." (*Ibid.*, p.43.) To Croker: "We are gathering and arming fast here, and I expect to be obliged to go to the country to bring out those with whom I may hope to have some influence. They are, high and low, extremely loyal, and ready to take arms; and if Cumberland and Northumberland be but half so bad as you say in London, it is time the pleasant men of Teviotdale were in motion." (*Ibid.*, p.56.) To his brother Thomas: "Our neighbours in Northumberland are in a deplorable state; upwards of 50,000 blackguards are ready to rise between Tyne and Wear. On the other hand, the Scottish frontiers are steady and loyal, and arming fast." (*Ibid.*, p.76.)

In fact the tone of Scott's correspondence is strongly reminiscent of the last chapters of *The Antiquary* when the alarm against French invasion is raised; as an editorial footnote in the *Letters* points out, in writing of the loyal peasantry Scott echoes the very phrases which he earlier put into the mouth of Edie Ochiltree.<sup>13</sup>

Against this background, the linguistic divisions of Scott the Visionary's patriotism are subject to some interesting variations, especially in the second vision. Like a *Waverley* hero, the Visionary enters a fantastic world in which passion and prudence are once again at odds:

Thought after thought rolled on my mind, like a troubled sea, until I fell asleep, and failed not as usual to dream.

Methought that I started up from slumber, and that the whole landscape was changed around me. The steeple of the church - the towers of the palace - the chimnies of the neighbouring town - all had disappeared. Not a tree remained standing on the domain, which exhibited a sterile and paltry succession of little patches of ground, some half cultivated, some lying quite barren. The rocks, the sky, the rivers of Evan and of Clyde were the same, but every vestige of beauty and of plenty, once the distinctive marks of the landscape, were vanished and gone. "Can this be Scotland?" said I, gazing around me.

"Scotland," said a rough voice behind me, "no! it is the Land of the Radicals."

I turned and looked with wonder and fear on the half naked ruffian, who approached me with a huge club in his hand. He was unshaved and uncombed; the matted locks of his hair and his beard obscuring a physiognomy, which, from the unbridled indulgence of every passion as it awaked in its turn, was rather brutal than human. In dreams we do not always obey the dictates of prudence. "Can this be a man?" said I.

"A man?" answered the ogre, "ay, a man of men, such as all men were before priests and kings had the modelling of them." . . .

"My name is Tom Ten-acres," said he, "not at your service, nor at any one's service, but my own. If you will come with me to my den," said he, with a savage, and at the same time a sly look, "I will satisfy your curiosity about all this change."

None is so bold as a dreamer, and I accompanied my strange guide.<sup>14</sup>

The differences between SOMNAMBULUS's journey and that of Edward Waverley are clear enough. Whereas Waverley's wild guide, Evan Dhu, led him, effectively, into the past, the ruffian Tom Ten-acres' tour is of a future which Scott is determined should not come about. There is therefore no question of accommodating the kind of brutal passions exhibited by Tom Ten-acres into present British social and constitutional arrangements. The violence that Waverley experiences at second hand is a necessary precursor of the arrangement which emerges at the end of the novel, but the violence offered by Tom Ten-acres is in no way therapeutic, except that the threat of it is enough to wake the Visionary from his nightmare: the dream of the future, in other words, is not admissible into the present, as the past has been. Finally, the Ten-acres vision is the complete fulfilment of Scott's oft-quoted rebuke of Jeffrey and other reformers on the Mound in 1806: "little by little, whatever your wishes may be, you will destroy and undermine, until nothing of what makes Scotland Scotland shall remain."<sup>15</sup> What was the most pressing concern of Scott's work, the identity of Scotland, was, as he perceived things, put most at risk by the threats of the future, and bolstered most effectively by the threats of the past.

## II

In 1826, when amidst the ruins of his own financial disaster Scott produced his *Letters of Malachi Malagrowth* in defence of the Scottish paper currency, the identity of Scotland was again the principal point at issue, and again he sought to counter the future he feared by recourse to the past as he had so carefully constructed it over the previous quarter of a century. The preservation of Scott's Scotland, however, went hand in hand with the preservation of the Union. Indeed, if Scotland were to undergo social or political changes which undermined the chief characteristics of the country as Scott perceived them, then the British state itself - one of the mainstays of which was the Union - would be threatened. P.H. Scott, referring to Scott's resistance to anglicisation, has written that, "He saw Scottish national feeling as part of the cement which held society together."<sup>16</sup> Although Paul Scott might not agree, his description applies not just to Scottish but to British society. An entry in Scott's Journal for 14th March 1826, three and a half weeks after he wrote the first Malachi Letter, makes this clear:

They are gradually destroying what remains of nationality and making the country *tabula rasa* for doctrines of bold innovation. Their lowering and grinding down all those peculiarities which distinguishd us as Scotsmen will throw the country into a state in which it will be universally turnd to democracy and instead of canny Saunders they will have a very dangerous North British neighbourhood. Some [English] lawyer express[d] to Lord Elibank an opinion that at the union the English Law should have been extended all over Scotland. "I cannot say how that might have answerd our purpose" said Lord Patrick who was never nonsuited for want of an answer "but it would scarce have suited yours since by



this time the *Aberdeen Advocates* would have possessed themselves of all the business in Westminster Hall."<sup>17</sup>

How, though, can it be that the defence of an important Scottish institution (and there is little doubt that the currency question was of enormous significance to the economic well-being of Scotland), couched in the most passionate terms and motivated by the most sincere sentiments of patriotism - how can it be that this was a reinforcement of the Union and of the British state, and was intended so to be? In the first place, as we shall see, the evidence lies in the text itself. In the second, as this study has tried to show, the ethos of all Scott's written work was that of patriotic dualism: expressions of Scottish patriotism were always designed to enhance the accommodation of Scotland in the British present by locating the Scottish sense of identity in the past, where it could pose only a rhetorical threat - which was in effect no threat at all - to political and social stability. In 1819, elements of that sense of identity surfaced in defence of the British government against Radicalism. It was no different in 1826, for underlying the Malachi Letters is a discernible fear of democracy and social upheaval. What Scott could not see, or what he was determined to prevent, was the possibility that a revived sense of Scottish identity might ever be allied to the political doctrines he most abhorred. He detested the social changes brought about by industrialisation precisely because they destroyed the paternalistic relationship between laird and peasant which he celebrated in his novels, and so brought his construction of Scotland into question:

The state of society now leads so much to great accumulations of humanity that we cannot wonder if it ferment and reek like a compost dunghill. Nature intended that population should be diffused over the soil in proportion to its extent. We have accumulated in huge cities and smothering manufactories the numbers which should be spread over the face of a country and what wonder that they should be corrupted?'<sup>18</sup>

When P.H. Scott describes the Malachi Letters as "the first manifesto of modern Scottish Nationalism"<sup>19</sup> he is, then, entirely correct. Modern Scottish Nationalism has always had to contend with the fact of Scotland being a substantially integrated part of the British State. Like Walter Scott, modern nationalists have therefore often been obliged to express their nationalism as a series of defensive measures of specific institutions or practices against creeping anglicisation, rather than as a coherent and forward-looking ideology. This is neither reprehensible nor surprising; but it has its roots in the same conditions which caused Scott to orientate his Scottish patriotism around a fictionalised past, and has been generally implicitly linked to conservatism, both political and cultural. When MacDiarmid commented that the stance adopted by Scott as Malachi Malagrowther - his "regret for the quite needless passing of Scottish institutions, mannerisms, &c., into English" - "leads on naturally to the separatist position", he also made the point that Scott failed to move to that position. He condemned the Waverley Novels as "the great source of the paralysing ideology of defeatism in Scotland", while acknowledging that Scott's significance "lies in his preoccupation with the National Question" - thus recording a paradox in Scott's work which is defined in this study as patriotic

dualism or symbiosis. Interestingly, MacDiarmid's perception of Scott's view was that it "amounted to a fatalistic pessimism about Scotland's future."<sup>20</sup>

The elements of that dualism appear both in the *Letters* themselves and in the *Journal* and personal letters of the time. In fact, the growing realisation in early 1826 of the full extent of his own financial ruin seems to have concentrated Scott's writing on familiar patterns of language and vocabulary. On 20th January he recorded in his *Journal*:

- So the Tories and Whigs may go be damnd together as names that have distracted Old Scotland and torn asunder the most kindly feelings since the first day they were invented. Yet d--n them they are spells to rouse all our angry passions, and I dare say notwithstanding the opinion of my private and calm moments I will open on the cry again so soon as something occurs to chafe my mood. And yet God knows I would fight in honourable contest with word or blow for my political opinions but I cannot permit that strife to "mix its waters with my daily meal", these waters of bitterness which poison all mutual love and confidence betwixt the well disposed on each side, and prevent them if need were from making mutual concessions and balancing the constitution against the Ultras of both parties.<sup>21</sup>

On 17th February there is more of the same:

I have, to be sure, some of my constitutional and hereditary obstinacy. But it is in me a dormant quality. Convince my understanding and I am perfectly docile. Stir my passions by coldness and affronts and the Devil would not drive me from my purpose . . . .

It is the same with me in politics - in general I care very little about the matter and from year's end to year's end I have scarce a thought connected with them except to laugh at the fools who think to make themselves great men out of little by swaggering in the rear of a party. But either actually important events - or such as seemd so by their close neighbourhood to me - have always hurried me off my feet and made me, as I have sometimes afterwards regretted, more forward and more violent than those who had a

regular jog-trot way of busying themselves in public matters. Good luck, for had I lived in troublesome times, and chanced to be on the unhappy side I had been hanged to a certainty. . . .

I am horribly tempted to interfere in this business of altering the system of Banks in Scotland and yet I know that if I can attract any notice I will offend my English friends without propitiating one man in Scotland.<sup>22</sup>

The entry for the following day records that Scott "set about Malachi Malagrowther's letter on the late disposition to change every thing in Scotland to an English model but without resolving about the publication. They do treat us very provokingly."<sup>23</sup>

A week later he sent two copies of the first *Letter* to Lockhart, commenting that

I am turnd politician as is usual with those who have shown themselves incapable of managing their own affairs with discretion. What has tempted me I cannot tell unless that I am savage at the cold insolence with which the English treat us. In the mean while they may carry it too far. Saunders is rousing fast and will make an awful fight . . . . There is some pleasure in mischief after all.<sup>24</sup>

On 7th March he wrote to his son Walter in Dublin:

If I had been very wise I would have let things take their own way but I think the Ministers have for ten or twelve years back been pursuing a System highly insulting towards Scotland and this sudden and violent change of currency will produce the greatest mischief.<sup>25</sup>

And in another letter to Lockhart, on 3rd March, he remarked on another aspect of the relationship between his intervention in public affairs and his personal difficulties:

One good thing is that from striking into this row I have got people out of the detestable fashion of grimacing and pitying and *poor manning* me and let them know A man's a man for a' that.<sup>26</sup>

All these examples - and there are others - indicate a considerable tension in Scott's mind between the dual elements of his patriotic scheme. Nowhere is this more clearly stated than in his *Journal* entry for 26th March. This was the day on which he began the second Malachi Letter, in the belief that "If I can but get the sulky Scottish spirit set up the Devil won't turn them."<sup>27</sup> The division operates at three inter-related levels, all very familiar - Scottish/British, private/public, and passionate/prudent:

It is difficult to steer betwixt the natural impulse of one's National feelings setting in one direction and the prudent regard to the interests of the empire and its internal peace and quiet recommending less vehement expression. I will endeavour to keep sight of both. But were my own interest alone concern'd, d-----n me but I wa'd give it them hot.<sup>28</sup>

There are indeed restraining influences at work in the text of the Malachi Letters, even where Scottish sentiments appear at their hottest. It is this relationship, not the details of the currency debate itself, which is central to this study. As far as the currency question is concerned, it is necessary only to note that it was not, as has been claimed, "a subject of limited significance",<sup>29</sup> but that on the contrary the proposed government restrictions on paper money would have been an economic disaster for Scotland.<sup>30</sup> Scott's "aggressive emotion" then was not "diverted from political

actuality to an almost irrelevant area of play."<sup>31</sup> What is significant about the Malachi episode is that Scott's patriotic formula was applied to an explicitly political question, and did not blow up in his face. (There will be more allusions to fires and explosions later on.)

The creation of the character of Malachi Malagrowther is itself an indication of the tone of the *Letters*: a linear descendant of a character from *The Fortunes of Nigel*, Malachi has inherited his ancestor's "hasty and peevish humour" - but, he explains, this may be no bad thing, since "it often happens that this disposition leads me to speak useful, though unpleasant truths, when more prudent men hold their tongues and eat their pudding." The unpleasant truth that this fictional relic has to relate is that he sees his "native country of Scotland, if it is yet to be called by a title so discriminative, falling, so far as its national, or rather, perhaps, I ought now to say its *provincial*, interests are concerned, daily into more absolute contempt."<sup>32</sup> In his own younger days, "such ameliorations in our peculiar system as were thought necessary, in order that North Britain might keep pace with her Sister in the advance of improvement, were suggested by our own countrymen . . ."; but for a long time since,

those who have stepped forward to repair the gradual failure of our constitutional system of law, have been persons that, howsoever qualified in other respects, have had little farther knowledge of its construction, than could be acquired by a hasty and partial survey, taken just before they commenced their labours.<sup>33</sup>

The effects of the incorporating Union, then, together with the "advance of improvement", have caused Scottish law, as designed and developed for an independent constitution, gradually to become redundant and require adjustments to suit modern British circumstances. Scott has no quarrel with this development, since it accords with his understanding of Scotland's association with the past rather than the present: as he writes further on, "I do not mean to deprecate a gradual approach to the English system, especially in commercial law."<sup>34</sup> But he does object to these adjustments being imposed by English outsiders rather than by those Scots best equipped to manage Scottish affairs. He goes on to note, in a passage strongly reminiscent of Neal Ascherson's depiction of the "Druids" who guard the "modern" British constitution, that the English, "wisely and judiciously tenacious of the legal practice and principles received at home, are proportionately startled at the idea of any thing abroad which cannot be brought to assimilate with them"<sup>35</sup>:

The English seem to have made a compromise with the active tendency to innovation, which is one great characteristic of the day. Wise and sagacious themselves, they are nervously jealous of innovations in their own laws - *Nolumus leges Angliae mutari*, is written on the skirts of their judicial robes, as the most sacred texts of Scripture were inscribed on the phylacteries of the Rabbis. The belief that the Common Law of England constitutes the Perfection of human reason, is a maxim bound upon their foreheads. Law Monks they have been called in other respects, and like Monks they are devoted to their own Rule, and admit no question of its infallibility. There can be no doubt that their love of a system, which, if not perfect, has so much in it that is excellent, originates in the most praiseworthy feelings. Call it if you will the prejudice of education, it is still a prejudice honourable in itself, and useful to the public. I only find fault with it, because, like the Friars in the Duenna monopolizing the bottle,

these English Monks will not tolerate in their lay-brethren of the North the slightest pretence to a similar feeling.<sup>36</sup>

Scott, not surprisingly, approves the conservative inclinations of these English "Guardians of the Law",<sup>37</sup> as summed up in the old saying, "Touch but a cobweb in Westminster-Hall, and the old spider will come out in defence of it." He supports this "wise policy" with the same metaphor which he developed with regard to the Constitution in the first Dream of the Visionary:

An ordinary mason can calculate upon the exact gap which will be made by the removal of a corner-stone in an old building; but what architect, not intimately acquainted with the whole edifice, can presume even to guess how much of the structure is, or is not, to follow?<sup>38</sup>

But what puts the Constitution at risk - unwarranted and ill-informed interference - is also detrimental to the good government of Scotland:

a spirit of proselytism has of late shown itself in England for extending the benefits of their system, in all its strengths and weaknesses, to a country, which has been hitherto flourishing and contented under its own. They adopted the conclusion, that all English enactments are right; but the system of municipal law in Scotland is not English, therefore it is wrong. Under sanction of this syllogism, our rulers have indulged and encouraged a spirit of experiment and innovation at our expense, which they resist obstinately when it is to be carried through at their own risk.<sup>39</sup>

The approval of English constitutional conservatism and the repetition of the architectural metaphor are not merely fortuitous in relation to Scott's defence of the Scottish paper currency: the very



nature of his dualistic patriotism obliged him, when defending Scottish interests, to shape his defence so as to prevent any irrevocable clash between those and British interests. As this study has tried to demonstrate, the risk of such a clash was effectively eliminated by locating "unimproved" Scottish sentiments firmly in the pre-Union or pre-1745 past. The next paragraph of *Malachi* conforms to this model:

For more than one half of last century, this was a practice not to be thought of. Scotland was during that period disaffected, in bad humour, armed too, and smarting under various irritating recollections. This is not the sort of patient for whom an experimental legislator chooses to prescribe. There was little chance of making Saunders take the pill by persuasion - main force was a dangerous argument, and some thought claymores had edges.<sup>40</sup>

But this period was followed by "a happier one" (again, a familiar succession), and Scotland, "no longer the object of terror, or at least great uneasiness, to the British Government, was left from the year 1750 under the guardianship of her own institutions, to win her silent way to national wealth and consequence." Neglected through contempt, Scotland's prosperity increased at five times the rate of her "more fortunate and richer sister". Noticed again as a result of these new circumstances, Scotland "has been of late a sort of experimental farm, upon which every political student has been permitted to try his theory . . ."<sup>41</sup> Again, Scott objects not so much to the changes as to the spirit of change:

I do not mean to dispute, sir, that much alteration was necessary in our laws, and that much benefit has followed many of the great changes which have taken place. . . . I beg therefore to be considered as not speaking of the alterations themselves, but of

the apparent hostility towards our municipal institutions, as repeatedly manifested in the course of late proceedings, tending to force and wrench them into a similarity with those of England.<sup>42</sup>

And later: "I am not, I repeat, complaining of the result of the Commissions, but of the spirit in which the alterations were undertaken."<sup>43</sup>

Scott ascribed this "general spirit of slight and dislike manifested to our national establishments, by those of the sister country who are so very zealous in defending their own",<sup>44</sup> to

the entire conviction and belief of our English brethren, that the true Themis is worshipped in Westminster Hall . . . while she, whose image an ingenious artist has depicted balancing herself upon a *te-totum* on the southern window of the Parliament House of Edinburgh, is a mere idol . . .<sup>45</sup>

What underlies this conviction, on which he expounds at some length later in the Letter, is the desire to impose *uniformity* (or, rather, *conformity* with the English model). But before Scott turns to this issue, he addresses, in the best-known and most controversial passage of the Letters, the question of violent resistance to such changes.

The example he uses to this purpose is the Commission set up to investigate the Revenue Boards in Ireland and Scotland.\* In Ireland, "great mismanagement was discovered; for Pat, poor fellow, had been

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\* The Commission for inquiring into the Collection and Management of the Revenue arising in Ireland, and into certain Departments of Revenue arising in Great Britain, produced twenty-two reports between 1822 and 1830. Major recommendations for standardising procedures in Ireland and Scotland according to the English model were made in the first twelve reports between 1822 and 1825.

playing the loon to a considerable extent." By contrast, in Scotland, he emphasises, "*not a shadow of abuse prevailed.*" And yet, in both countries, the Boards "underwent exactly the same regulation, were deprived of their independent consequence, and placed under the superintendence of English control; the innocent and the guilty being treated in every respect alike."<sup>46</sup> Scott gives two reasons for this indiscriminate action: the second was the "*necessity of UNIFORMITY* in all such cases"<sup>47</sup>; the first was Irish contumaciousness. Ireland "would never have quietly submitted to the indignity offered to her, unless poor inoffensive Scotland had been included in the regulation."<sup>48</sup> Scott goes on:

This gratification of his humours is gained by Pat's being up with the pike and shilelah on any or no occasion. God forbid Scotland should retrograde to such a state - much better that the Deil, as in Burns's song, danced away with the whole excisemen in the country. We do not want to hear her prate of her number of millions of men, and her old military exploits. We had better remain in union with England, even at the risk of becoming a subordinate species of Northumberland, as far as national consequence is concerned, than remedy ourselves by even hinting the possibility of a rupture. But there is no harm in wishing Scotland to have just so much ill-nature, according to her own proverb, as may keep her good-nature from being abused; so much national spirit as may determine her to stand by her own rights, conducting her assertion of them with every feeling of respect and amity towards England.<sup>49</sup>

This paragraph characterises - indeed, may be said to define - the modern political relationship which Scott thought should exist between Scotland and England. Violence (even though he acknowledges that the threat of it induces caution in pressing unpopular policies on Ireland) is rejected: rather than "retrograde to such a state", Scotland would be better becoming something less than an English region. But this appears directly to contradict the Journal entry

for 9th June 1826, which was effectively Scott's last word on the Malachi affair:

One effect of running causes through the courts below is that they go by Scores to appeal and Lord Gifford has hitherto decided them with such judgement and so much rapidity as to give great satisfaction. The consequence will in time be that the Scottish Supreme court will be in effect situated in London. Then down fall - as national objects of respect and veneration - the Scottish bench - the Scottish Bar - the Scottish Law herself - And - And - there is an end of an auld Sang. Were I as I have been I would fight knee-deep in blood ere it came to that - But it is a catastrophe which the great course of events brings daily nearer

And who can help it, Dick?

I shall always be proud of *Malachi* as having headed back the Southron or helped to do so in one instance at least.<sup>50</sup>

In fact, in this entry too the threat of violence is raised only to be dismissed: its retrospective location in the past - "Were I as I have been" - ensures as much. The solution offered in *Malachi* is to use such rhetoric to represent "just so much ill-nature" as may allow, as it were, a slow death without dishonour. Thus the underlying message in *Malachi* does not disturb the construction of Scottish history which we have traced through the poems, novels and histories, which places uncompromised Scottish national identity in the pre-Union/Culloden past. England must always be treated amicably, and bursts of ill-nature are actually designed to reinforce the Union when the English, whether through arrogance or ignorance, disregard its terms.

This becomes clear some pages further on, when Scott deals with the Treaty of Union itself, introducing it ironically as the subject of "a story, often told by my poor old grandfather . . . which I own

I am inclined to doubt." The old man "had learned in his youth, or dreamed in his dotage, that Scotland had become an integral part of England, - not in right of conquest, or rendition, or through any right of inheritance, - but in virtue of a solemn Treaty of Union." When the grandfather recited the article protecting Scottish subjects against legislation which was not for their "evident utility",

he always clenched his fist, and exclaimed, "*Nemo me impune lacesset!*" which, I presume, are words belonging to the black art, since there is no one in the Modern Athens conjuror enough to understand their meaning, or at least to comprehend the spirit of the sentiment which my grandfather thought they conveyed.<sup>51</sup>

The time-slip, the doubt cast upon the authenticity of history, and the accompanying failure in understanding of the old man's patriotic sentiment, reflect with delightful irony the past/present theme of the Waverley Novels. Scott as Malachi Malagrowther is, like the Author of Waverley, encouraging his fellow-Scots to take an imaginative step back into history, and to use an outdated form of patriotism to prevent the decoupling of Scottish and British interests which the currency issue threatens. This "Old Treaty" should be searched for, and, if found, would prove the wrongness of the government's proposals. "Even if the old parchment should be voted obsolete," he continues, it should be preserved in the Museum of Antiquaries,

where, with the Solemn League and Covenant, the Letter of the Scottish Nobles to the Pope on the independence of their country, and other antiquated documents once held in reverence, it might silently contract dust, yet remain to bear witness that *such things had been.*<sup>52</sup>

It is *because* of this acknowledgment that Scotland's independence pertains exclusively to the past that Scott can then prick the conscience of the English:

I earnestly hope, however, that an international league of such importance may still be found obligatory on both the *high* and the *low* contracting parties; on that which has the power, and apparently the will, to break it, as well as on the weaker nation, who cannot, without incurring still worse, and more miserable consequences, oppose aggression, otherwise than by invoking the faith of treaties, and the national honour of Old England.<sup>53</sup>

This is an argument from a position of weakness, as Scott well knew, which was why references to the pre-Union past were so important in supplying stronger rhetoric. The cases of the Porteous affair and of the Bill for Catholic Emancipation (of 1780) are cited as occasions when the government desisted from applying unpopular policies in Scotland, yielding to "the voice of the Scottish people, or rather of the Scottish mob" - but they are cited as evidence of how Scottish behaviour has improved, not as warnings of how it might develop in the future:

The cases were different, in point of merit, though the Scots were successful in both. In the one, a boon of clemency was extorted; in the other, concession was an act of decided weakness. But ought the present administration of Great Britain to show less deference to our temperate and general remonstrance, on a matter concerning ourselves only, than their predecessors did to the passions, and even the ill-founded and unjust prejudices, of our ancestors?<sup>54</sup>

On the contrary, as he says a little later, "it would be a dangerous lesson to teach the empire at large, that threats can extort what is not yielded to reasonable and respectful remonstrance."<sup>55</sup> Yet these very passions and prejudices, throughout Scott's writing, form an integral part of his construction of Scottish identity: as we shall see, it is Scotland "unscotched" which may, in Scott's estimation, pose the greater danger for England. This is implicit in the next, self-recommending paragraph of the Letter, in which the Scottish contribution to the Empire is dealt with:

Times, indeed, have changed since those days, and circumstances also. We are no longer a poor, that is, so *very poor* a country and people; and as we have increased in wealth, we have become somewhat poorer in spirit, and more loath to incur displeasure by contests upon mere etiquette, or national prejudice.

But the Scots can "plead for favour with England" on grounds of having "in every respect conducted ourselves as good and faithful subjects of the general Empire":

We do not boast of these things as actual merits; but they are at least actual duties discharged, and in an appeal to men of honour and of judgment, must entitle us to be heard with patience, and even deference, on the management of our own affairs, if we speak unanimously, lay aside party feeling, and use the voice of one leaf of the holy Trefoil, - one distinct and component part of the United Kingdoms.<sup>56</sup>

P.H. Scott, then, is quite right to say that "Scott's appeal to the Treaty was a debating tactic, a delaying action designed to slow down the advance of anglicisation . . .".<sup>57</sup> Without a complete

alteration of his historical and political perceptions, that was all it could be. Without rejecting the Union itself, such a stance could never reverse the trend.

But so, too, in substance if not in detail, are N.T. Phillipson's remarks anent *Malachi* - with which P.H. Scott vehemently disagrees - equally valid.<sup>58</sup> According to Phillipson, Scott provided a formula, based on a careful balance of "the contradictory truths of fact and fancy", for "what we may call a passive ideology; one that would combine a stoical acceptance of the passing of an old Scottish way of life with a legitimate means of protesting against it without in any way harming the essential economic and political structure of the union." While Phillipson overstates his case in describing the *Letters* as "not a call to action but a substitute for it" (the huge petitions submitted to Parliament did, after all, get results) and as "a fuss about nothing", nevertheless his main point is true: that Scott gave to Scottish "nationalism" an ideology constructed on the basis of support for the Union. This, as we have seen, was a natural feature of Scott's dualistic patriotism: later manifestations of "nationalist" activity which followed this model, insofar as they aspired to alter the fundamental political relationship between Scotland and England, were indeed being informed by "an ideology of noisy inaction", since that aim was specifically excluded from the model.<sup>59</sup> Contradictions therefore appeared to be built into many expressions of Scottish patriotism. Only a new perspective, one which categorically rejected the Union and the politics of the society which upheld it - the perspective of Hugh MacDiarmid, for



example - could escape both these contradictions and the Scottish-British dualism which spawned them.

Viewed in this perspective, and with "even hinting at the possibility" of breaking the Union effectively rejected, the British context of Scott's argument is self-evident. All the other details of the Letter - the case against uniformity "for uniformity's sake"<sup>60</sup>, the success of the Scottish banking system contrasted with the disasters of the English, the anecdote of the "Leetle Anderson" against "persuading folks to take medicine, which their constitutions do not require"<sup>61</sup> - reinforce the idea of that mutually supportive relationship which Scott believed ought to exist between Scottish and British interests. As he wrote in his Journal of the government's annoyance at the success of *Malachi*:

. . . as they are about to throw this country into distress and danger by a measure of useless and uncalld for experiment they must hear the opinion of Scotsmen to whom it is of no other consequence than as a general measure affecting the country at large, and mine they *shall* hear . . . It is like a frenzy that they will agitate the upper and middling classes of society, so very friendly to them, with unnecessary and hazardous [measures].<sup>62</sup>

Innovation should be tempered and conditioned by the "experience of ages", and "the *evident utility* of every alteration demonstrated before it is adopted upon mere speculation."<sup>63</sup> If this were done, the Union relationship need never be disturbed.

The second Letter, which Scott owned to be "more serious than the first and in some places perhaps too peppery"<sup>64</sup>, does appear to be a less restrained attack on the government and a more "reckless" defence of Scotland. Some indication of Scott's motivation in composing it can be gleaned from the Journal: "I trust to see Scotland kick and fling to some purpose."<sup>65</sup> A day earlier, as has already been quoted, he had recorded how difficult it was to "steer betwixt the natural impulse of one's National feelings . . . and the prudent regard to the interests of the empire and its internal peace and quiet recommending less vehement expression."<sup>66</sup> But of course it was this very dualistic approach - this "keeping sight of both" - which Scott had developed to perfection. When he saw the first Letter published in *The Edinburgh Journal* on 1st March, he noted that it

reads like the work of an uncompromising right forward Scot of the Old School. Some of the cautious and pluckless instigators will be afraid of their confederate, for if a man of some energy and openness of character happens to be on the same side with these truckling jobbers they stand as much in awe of his vehemence as doth the inexperienced conjuror who evoked a fiend whom he cannot manage.<sup>67</sup>

Scott, on the contrary, was the most skilled of magicians, and by strengthening the passion of his arguments in the second Letter he could reinforce the cause of Scotland's interests within the Union. "It is," he said, "to explain more particularly to the English nation, the real and deep reason which Scotland has to combat the

present purpose of the Ministers, that I have chiefly undertaken this Second Epistle."<sup>68</sup>

To this end, he could give free rein to his rhetoric. He prefaced the Letter with the following verse-motto (omitted in later editions, "some cautious friends thinking it liable to misinterpretation"<sup>69</sup>):

"When the pipes begin to play  
Tuttie taittie to the drum,  
Out claymore, and down wi' gun,  
And to the rogues again!"

By the second paragraph he was well into his theme: "The heather is on fire far and wide; and every man, woman, and child in the country, are bound by the duty they owe to their native land, to spread the alarm and increase the blaze." Scottish "feelings", "intellect" and "spirit" were all aroused to right a "national wrong" and maintain "our rights both individually, and as a people"<sup>70</sup>. In both Houses of Parliament Scottish "patriotic sentiments" were entertained in "this great national crisis" on behalf of this "public cause". In the past the Scottish dimension of the "great political quarrel" between Whig and Tory was as insignificant as two bulldogs scrapping under a table over which their masters were having a set-to, or resembled, in a play, "the part of *Mob on both sides*" scuffling upstage of the main characters, and shouting "so that their cries at least may be heard, since no one will attend to anything which they say in articulate language."<sup>71</sup> But now -

Let these follies be ended; and do not let us, like our ancestors at Falkirk, fall to jealousies among ourselves, when heart, and voice, and hand, should be united against the foreign *enemy*. I was about to erase that last word; but let it remain, with this

explanation - that the purpose of this invasion of our rights is acknowledged to be kind and friendly; but as the measure is unauthorized by justice, conducted without regard to the faith of treaties, and contrary to our national privileges, we cannot but term the enterprise a hostile one.<sup>72</sup>

As hostile, he adds, as the Rough Wooing of the 1540s. Scott then goes so far as to propose that the Scottish MPs absent themselves from parliamentary business until the government withdraws the "threatened and obnoxious measure". Should any of them break such a boycott, preferring "the orders of the Minister to the unanimous voice of his Country",

. . . let England keep him to herself. Such a man is deaf even to the voice of self-interest, as well as of patriotism. He cannot be a Scotch proprietor - he hazards his own rents; he cannot be a Scotchman employed in commerce - he undermines his own trade; he cannot be a professional person - he sacrifices the law of his country; he cannot be a Scottish man in spirit - he betrays the honour of Scotland. Let him go out from among us - he is not of us.<sup>73</sup>

All of this is strong stuff, although a careful reading shows a subtle distinction between the mobbishness of the past and the deliberate resolve of the present. In particular, the suggestion of withdrawal from Westminster is as dramatic as anything proposed by an establishment figure in the entire post-Union period, and Scott is careful to explain why he is recommending what is effectively a "means of interrupting the general business of empire."<sup>74</sup> First, he offers it only as "an *ultimum remedium*, after every other and milder mode of seeking redress shall have been resorted to, and exhausted without effect." Secondly, the plan is "a Parliamentary remedy", and

is justifiable in comparison with "the conduct of patriots upon former occasions". Thirdly, the temporary inconvenience will be far less than the evil effect of the measure, if introduced, not just in Scotland, but in England and Ireland also - "for no component part of the empire can have sufferings so local, that the consequences do not extend to the others . . . . When a limb of the human body is disjointed or broken, the whole frame must feel the effect of it."<sup>75</sup>

Scottish and British interests, then, are at one - although it may take all of Scott's high-flown *Scottish* patriotic rhetoric to convince the government of that. Ireland should take Scotland's part in this matter, because, "if she countenance the obvious desire which exhibits itself to break down all peculiar privileges due to the separate nations of the Union", she will only "accelerate her own then unpitied degradation."<sup>76</sup> But it is to England and her parliamentary representatives that Scott makes his "most immediate" appeal:

The motto of my epistle may sound a little warlike; but, in using it, I have only employed the summons which my countrymen have been best accustomed to obey. Saunders, if it please your honours, has been so long unused to stand erect in your honours' presence, that, if I would have him behave like a man, I must . . . slap him on the shoulder, and throw a word in every now and then about his *honour*. *But it is not a hostile signal towards you.* The drums beat *to arms* and the trumpets sound *Heraus*, as well when the soldiers are called out for a peaceful as for a military object. And, which is more to the purpose, the last time the celebrated Fiery Cross was circulated in the Highlands . . . the clansmen were called forth not to fight an enemy, but to stop the progress of a dreadful conflagration which had been kindled in the woods. *To my countrymen I speak in the language of many recollections, certain they are not likely to be excited beyond the bounds of temperate and constitutional remonstrance, but desirous, by every effort in my power, to awaken them to a sense of their national danger.*<sup>77</sup>

Thus does Scott explain his patriotic system to the English. The rest of the second Letter details the reasons why paper currency is so crucial to the well-being of Scotland, and makes further comment on the different treatment by the English of the Scots as individuals and as a nation. As individuals, the Scots are welcomed in England, their national character "supposed to imply the desirable qualities of information, prudence, steadiness, moral and religious feeling"<sup>78</sup> - just those qualities which Scott had represented in Jeanie Deans. But where Scotland is considered as a country, its people become

a sharp sharking race, whose wisdom is cunning, and whose public spirit consists only in an illiberal nationality, inclining us, by every possible exertion of craft, to obtain advantage at the expense of England.<sup>79</sup>

All of Scott's writing was designed to counter such a divided view: the division he emphasised, between past and present, and between passion and prudence, served to promote the Scots, in the modern age, as "a moral people . . . a loyal people"<sup>80</sup>, whose imaginative recourse to the pre-Union past was simply a means of maintaining their position within the Union:

For God's sake, sir, let us remain as Nature made us, Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotchmen, with something like the impress of our several countries upon each! We would not become better subjects, or more valuable members of the common empire, if we all resembled each other like so many smooth shillings . . . . The degree of national diversity between different countries, is but an instance of that general variety which Nature seems to have adopted as a principle through all her works, as anxious, apparently, to avoid, as modern statesmen to enforce, anything like an approach to absolute "uniformity."<sup>81</sup>

The third Letter, as P.H. Scott has correctly observed, addresses the details of the currency question more thoroughly, and, insofar as it tends only to reiterate the arguments already noted regarding Anglo-Scottish relations, is not of direct relevance to this study. It is, however, a measure of how concerned Scott was to give an appropriate political expression to his literary patriotism that he reworked the same themes three times publicly during the Malachi episode, and many times privately in his Journal and correspondence. There was no barrier of time or art here to protect against the consequences of imprudence and passion, and hence it was essential that Scott define his cause with utmost clarity.

But then, to re-emphasise the point, although the Malachi Letters were clearly inspired by sincere Scottish patriotic sentiments, they were written not *against* the Union but in support of its terms. Scott's underlying fear was that, if Scotland (as he saw it) were to be much altered, there would be no defence against the advances of democracy and radicalism. His defence of Scotland was as much a defence of England. The Journal entry for 14th March, quoted above, \* is evidence of this proposition. Again, in a letter to Lockhart of 17th March 1826, he wrote:

Scotland will in twenty years perhaps much sooner be revolutionized from head to foot and then let England look to herself for she may have some reason to resume her own old proverb All ill comes from the North. The present time reminds me strongly of that of 1638-9 when useless & uncalld for changes unsettled the minds and irritated the temper of the Scotch who

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\* See above, pp. 324-5.

were not long in communicating the infection to England. Then the opinions were religious now they are political but the effect may - indeed I think *will* prove the same.<sup>82</sup>

Two days later he made the same point to J.W. Croker:

Depend upon it, that if a succession of violent and experimental changes are made from session to session . . . Scotland will, within ten or twenty years, perhaps much sooner, read a more fearful commentary on poor Malachi's epistles than any statesman residing out of the country and strange to the habits and feelings which are entertained here can possibly anticipate. My head may be low - I hope it will - before the time comes. But Scotland, completely liberalized, as she is in a fair way of being, will be the most dangerous neighbour to England that she has had since 1639. There is yet time to make a stand, for there is yet a great deal of good and genuine feeling left in the country. But if you *unscotch* us you will find us damned mischievous Englishmen. The restless and yet laborious and constantly watchful character of the people, their desire for speculation in politics or any thing else, *only restrained by some proud feelings about their own country*, now become antiquated and which late measures will tend much to destroy, will make them, under a wrong direction, the most formidable revolutionists who ever took the field of innovation."<sup>83</sup>

Bruce Lenman has commented that this forecast was "curiously misguided", "presuming as it did that Scotland was capable of generating a political culture independent of the prevailing pattern of power at Westminster."<sup>84</sup> But while it was in one sense as far-fetched - though not as hysterical - as his 1819 anti-Radicalism, it does indicate how deeply Scott believed the preservation of a distinctive Scotland within the Union, and the political stability of Britain as a whole, to be inter-linked. In his work he had developed a means of articulating that relationship, and in the *Letters of Malachi Malagrowther* he managed to transfer the elements of that imaginative model to a major political issue. The experiment was a



success. Nowhere is the effect of its success illustrated more clearly than in the conclusion to Lockhart's *Life*, where the themes of political balance between "calm reason" and "fancy run wild", of unreal past and prudent present - the very phraseology itself - owe so much to Scott's own careful design:

Of his political creed, the many who hold a different one will of course say that it was the natural fruit of his poetical devotion to the mere prejudice of antiquity; and I am quite willing to allow that this must have had a great share in the matter - and that he himself would have been as little ashamed of the word *prejudice* as of the word *antiquity*. Whenever Scotland could be considered as standing separate on any question from the rest of the empire, he was not only apt, but eager to embrace the opportunity of again rehoisting, as it were, the old signal of national independence; and I really doubt if any circumstance in his literary career gave him more personal satisfaction than the success of Malachi Malagrowther's Epistles. He confesses, however, in his Diary, that he was aware how much it became him to summon calm reason to battle imaginative prepossessions on this score; and I am not aware that they ever led him into any serious practical error. He delighted in letting his fancy run wild about ghosts and witches and horoscopes - but I venture to say, had he sat on the judicial bench a hundred years before he was born, no man would have been more certain to give juries sound direction in estimating the pretended evidence of supernatural occurrences of any sort; and I believe, in like manner, that had any Anti-English faction, civil or religious, sprung up in his own time in Scotland, he would have done more than any living man could have hoped to do, for putting it down. <sup>25</sup>

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In his Journal for 2nd March 1826 Scott wrote of Malachi: "The Bankers will be persuaded that it is a squib which may burn their own fingers and will curse the poor pyrotechnist that compounded it - if

they do - they be d----d."<sup>26</sup> A few months later he recorded a dinner conversation anent a Radical named Kinloch:

Dined with John Swinton *en famille*. He told me an odd circumstance. Coming from Berwick Shire in the Mail coach he met with a passenger who seemd more like a military man than any thing else. They talkd on all sorts of subjects and at length on politics. *Malachi's Letters* were mentiond when the stranger observed they were much more seditious than some expressions for which he had three or four years ago been nearly sent to Botany Bay . . . . It seems to have escaped Mr Kinloch that the conduct of a man who places a lighted coal in the middle of combustibles and upon the floor is a little different from him who places the same quantity of burning fuel in a fire grate.<sup>27</sup>

Scott's political control of his art was sublime. He could create the impression of setting the heather on fire, and yet have it burn safely in a parlour fireplace. In quite another context, he wrote a fortnight earlier in his Journal: "Our passions are wild beasts. God grant us power to muzzle them."<sup>28</sup> Scott did not muzzle the beasts of Scottish patriotism: instead, fascinated by them and yet apprehensive of their power, he let them roam behind a barrier of time.

## NOTES

References to the Waverley Novels are to the 25-volume Victoria Edition, published by A. & C. Black in 1897. These references are also valid for most of the various 25-volume editions published by A. & C. Black. In the first reference to each novel the volume number is given (e.g., *WN XIX*); in all cases the chapter number is given, as there are occasional page variations in some of these editions.

References to Scott's poetry are to the 12-volume *Poetical Works*, published by A. & C. Black in 1880. The volume number is given only in the first reference to a poem.

References to Scott's letters are to the 12-volume *Letters* (1787-1832), edited by Herbert Grierson and published by Constable between 1932 and 1937.

### Chapter One

1. Allan Massie, *101 Great Scots*, (Edinburgh, 1987), p. 150.
2. J.G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, (10 volumes, 2nd edition, Edinburgh, 1839), (hereafter referred to as "*Life*"), Vol. X, p. 227.
3. Thomas Carlyle, "Sir Walter Scott" (1838) in *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, (30 volumes, London, 1899), Vol. XXIX (*Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, Vol. IV), pp. 22-87, p. 44.
4. *Life*, Vol. X, pp. 248-249.
5. *WN XIX, The Betrothed & Chronicles of the Canongate*, Appendix, p. 471.
6. P.H. Scott, *Walter Scott and Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 1981), p. x.
7. P.H. Scott, letter in *Chapman* No. 37, (Autumn, 1983), p. 64.
8. Andrew Noble, "Scott, Scott, and Scottland", in *Chapman* Nos. 35-36, (July, 1983), pp. 72-75, p. 75.
9. Allan Massie, op. cit., p. 145.
10. "Carlyle", "Too Long Neglected", in *The Glasgow Herald*, 25th June, 1987.
11. *The Scotsman*, 17th April, 1985, p. 1.
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