

Stirring Age

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*Scott, Byron and the Historical
Romance*

By

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For Bruce and Mary McColl

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PREFACE

It is often said that Byron and, particularly, Scott juxtapose or combine the genres of history and romance, but how they do this, and how similarly, has rarely been addressed. The predicate of this book is not only that the two writers influence each other in this style of composition, but that both suppose the historical romance to be an original form, the two terms being mutually inclusive, not antagonistic.

Two distinctions I should point out immediately. Firstly, I have differentiated throughout between “romance”—which I have often used adjectivally, and understand as generic and vital—and “romantic”, which, for Scott, as Nellist notes, belongs to a “tourist vocabulary”, parodic and nostalgic.¹ Naturally when discussing Romanticism, or the Romantic movement, I have capitalised. Secondly, where necessary, I have used the term “historiography” to denote the narrative, as opposed to the events, of history, but generally I have used the term “history”. By the end, in particular, this usage conflates the narrative and events of history, for the reason that Ricoeur gives:

This double sense of the word “history” in no way is the result of some regrettable ambiguity of language, rather it attests to another presupposition [...] namely, that, like the word “time,” the term “history” also designates some collective singular reality, one that encompasses the two processes of totalization that are under way at the level of historical narrative and at that of actual history.²

This collective singular reality, a combination of narrative and what I have called ‘event’, is what I argue Scott suggests and Byron achieves.

The difference is that, while, for both writers, romance is necessary for historical narrative to conceive of, and incorporate, a future, Scott’s rediscovery of romance currency is momentary. His novels have a mixed

¹ Brian Nellist, “Narrative modes in the Waverley novels”, in *Literature of the Romantic Period 1750-1850*, ed. by R. T. Davies and B. G. Beatty (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1976), 56-72 (56).

² Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, 3 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), III, 102. Hereafter referred to as *TN*.

character, variously featuring collusion and conflict in the relation between history and romance; an ambivalence which befits, we might think, the novel generally: a mode which emerges from and sometimes competes with romance. Finally, he depicts romance as *surviving*, through adaptation to a continuing history.

For Byron, however, romance currency is complete and repeatable. Historical rigour contributes to a sense of *revival* within romance, and this revival is not momentary, but cyclical.³ In particular, Byron associates this cycle with the erotic, whereas Scott only does so notionally in the marriages most of his novels end with. Erotic romance succeeds in directing separative historical event towards continuity. Of course, Byron rarely presents historical event and erotic encounter as simultaneous (*The Siege of Corinth* is a notable exception); nevertheless, these two patterns of history complement rather than vie to interpret each other. This complementarity reaches its apotheosis in *Don Juan*. Although *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* eulogises a lost romance, in *Don Juan* romance is a current concern, undenied by historical progress, but capable of historical plurality.

Accordingly, while in Scott's case I have focused largely on the pre-1820 Waverley novels (the most critically acclaimed of his works, with the exception of *Redgauntlet*), in the case of Byron I have found a teleology in *Don Juan*. As this book travels toward the latter, it also travels backward, from *Halidon Hill* and *Redgauntlet*, to *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, *Old Mortality* and *Waverley*.⁴ Scott's poems are touched on at various points, without disruption, I think, to this general tendency, but I have not discussed the novels set pre-seventeenth-century.

³ This "revival" is a particular usage, separate from the more general idea of romance revival as an epochal movement to resurrect a neglected idea—through publications like Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* and Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*—which represents romance as a style, outside of actual history. My usage relates to the idea of reinvigoration within romance. See Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, ed. by Henry B. Wheatley, 3 vols (New York: Dover, 1966); Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, ed. by Thomas Henderson (London: George Harrap, 1931).

⁴ Sir Walter Scott, *Halidon Hill*, in *Poetical Works*, ed. by J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); *Redgauntlet*, ed. by G. A. M. Wood (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); *The Bride of Lammermoor*, ed. by J. H. Alexander (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995); *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, ed. by David Hewitt and Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); *Old Mortality*, ed. by Douglas Mack, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993); *Waverley*, ed. by Andrew Hook (London: Penguin, 1985).

Crucial to the historical romance which Scott initiates and Byron develops is the importance of the recent past, itself reflected in both writers' admiration for Augustan writers and their conscious development of a continuing literary tradition. The frame of "sixty years since" that *Waverley* adopts, just within the scope of, or disappearing from, living memory, suggests an inclusiveness between the present and past. It represents both a limbo between a dead past and living present, and a latent threat to that present, upon which it subtly impinges, to the point where *The Antiquary* almost spills ironically into the now of writing. Scott's best novels have this suggestion of the recent past, which expands as far back as the seventeenth-century tales of *Old Mortality* and *A Legend of Montrose*, but not to the medieval of *Ivanhoe* or *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which becomes a secure and fictional past.⁵ Notably Byron takes up the *Waverley* novels' model of the recent past, with *The Siege of Corinth*, set in 1710, and, more emphatically, in *Don Juan's* siege of Ismail, of 1790. If *Don Juan*, as McGann argues, juxtaposes Byron's present with the revolutionary late-eighteenth-century, it is able to do so specifically because this recent history is incorporating.⁶

This book has two tendencies, roughly dividing at the end of Part II. The first is consciously exploratory, developed from the close-reading of certain complex scenes. It concentrates on the information of a linear and Enlightenment model of history by a stilled image, act or event (which I associate with a romance mentality). The second tendency, which is more theoretical, comprises Part III, and concentrates on the renewal of romance via the past.

Part I focuses on drama, and stems from both writers' use of Shakespeare as major precedent for the historical-romance. It shows Byron and Scott equating romance conflict with dramatic conflict, conceiving the fates of both as interlinked. This is useful in showing how both imagine the historical event as structuring a fictional work, but also as a contrast to their narrative fictions in which they are able specifically to address romance. While for Shakespeare, romance is more relevant to drama, in both Scott and Byron the alliance looks problematic. We notice that both *Halidon Hill* and *Marino Faliero* are medieval histories rather than those of the recent past, and neither has the sense of being directed

⁵ Sir Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, ed. by David Hewitt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995); *A Legend of the Wars of Montrose*, ed. by J. H. Alexander (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995); *Ivanhoe*, ed. by Graham Tulloch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

⁶ Jerome McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). See in particular, 264-93.

toward continuation, such as we see in the Waverley novels or *Don Juan*. Hence drama serves as a springboard to Part II and the discussion of the interweaving of event and narrative, which drama cannot accommodate. Finally, in Part III, the marvellous is seen by Scott as a sign of romance, but, precisely because a sign, not essential to its operations. To Byron, the “signification” of the marvellous is no obstacle to its being essential and operational; it becomes a guarantor of the intertwining of history and romance.

If this study concentrates on certain type-scenes in Scott, it also tends to juxtapose rather than unite its two writers and its approaches to their work. The procedure, generally, is a chapter on Scott, followed by a chapter on Byron, looking continually at the mutual informing of history and romance from a variety of viewpoints and through a selection of modes (specifically drama, novel and poem). From Scott’s perspective, if what I have called “event” is crucial to the historical-romance, naturally it also represents a termination-point which narrative interpretation, associated with criticism, itself complements but does not lead from. Largely, the argument rests in the description of this event, which is why it represents the main body of the text.

For critical or philosophical vocabulary I have benefited, in particular, from Paul Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative*, Tzvetan Todorov’s *The Fantastic*, Hans Frei’s *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* and Nietzsche’s essay, “The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life”.⁷ Historical and cultural theory in the twentieth century has produced a bewildering profusion of history-types. Biblical exegesis has been re-established as significant in accounting for the way in which history has been perceived and represented, and approaches to reading Biblical history have formed a background to the reading here, in particular, Frei’s book, but also Gerhard von Rad’s *The Message of the Prophets* and *From Genesis to Chronicles* and Jean Leclercq’s *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*. I have also made use of McGann’s *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory*, and other compilations dealing with the involution of history in

⁷ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980); Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Penguin, 1990); Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life”, in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

literature.⁸

Setting a standard for the study of romance in recent times, of course, were Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* and *The Secular Scripture*, whose archetypal accounts of genre have been influential, although where Scott is concerned Frye is not expansive.⁹ His chapter, "The Mythos of Summer: Romance" is an exemplary understanding, and helpfully, in *The Secular Scripture*, he disabuses us early of the idea that Scott is a study in characterisation (formula and plot are more important, he argues). The *Anatomy of Criticism* provides an obvious, but necessary, caveat too, in observing that if Scott is to be declared a romancer, he should not be judged by the criteria of the novel. Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* has also been influential, arguing for the "inescapability of romance in true history", while Stuart Curran has written a lucid account of Romantic adventures in genre in *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, which champions the currency, as opposed to the breakdown, of genre in Romanticism.¹⁰

Though we continue to compare Scott and Byron from time to time, it is less common now than previously. Despite islands of exception such as the useful essays of P. H. Scott and Drummond Bone in *Byron and Scotland*, Andrew Nicholson's "Byron and the Ariosto of the North", Andrew Rutherford's "Byron, Scott and Scotland"¹¹ and Peter Cochran's "*Romanticism*"—and *Byron*,¹² comparisons of the two writers are few,

⁸ Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, trans. by D. M. G. Stalker (London: SCM Press, 1972); and *From Genesis to Chronicles: Explorations in Old Testament Theology*, ed. by K. C. Hanson, trans. by E. W. Trueman Dicken (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005); Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A study of monastic culture*, trans. by Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974).

⁹ Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A study of the structure of romance* (Cambridge [Mass]: Harvard University Press, 1976).

¹⁰ Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 119; Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

¹¹ P. H. Scott, "Byron and Scott", and J. Drummond Bone, "Byron, Scott and Scottish Nostalgia", in *Byron and Scotland: Radical or Dandy?*, ed. by Angus Calder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 51-64 and 119-131; Andrew Nicholson, "Byron and the Ariosto of the North", in *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*, ed. by Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 130-150; Andrew Rutherford, "Byron, Scott and Scotland", in *Lord Byron and His Contemporaries*, ed. by Charles E. Robinson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982), 43-65.

¹² Peter Cochran, "*Romanticism*"—and *Byron* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars

although we may hope that Susan Oliver's study, *Scott, Byron and the Poetics of Cultural Encounter* (2005), is a sign of new life in the old ceremony.¹³ More particularly, there are few extensive comparisons of Byron and Scott's interweaving of history and romance, even though McGann's observation that Byron probably picked up the skill of combining narrative and historical event from Scott is a common one (McGann 1985, 269n). Hazlitt's reluctance to pair Scott's "fair" and "above board" with Byron's "extreme and licentious speculation", or Scott's unfortunate deferral to "the spirit of antiquity" with Byron's reprehensible pandering to "the spirit of the age", has become more typical for its refusal to equate the two, than for initially comparing them.¹⁴

Where the distinction has obtained, however, recent criticism, unlike Hazlitt, has tended to favour Byron over Scott. Especially useful to this study, as to many, have been McGann's *The Beauty of Inflections* and *Fiery Dust*, G. Wilson Knight's *Lord Byron: Christian Virtues* and *Byron and Shakespeare*, Jerome Christensen's readings, particularly *Lord Byron's Strength*, Jane Stabler's *Byron, Poetics and History*, Stephen Cheeke's *Byron and Place*, and Bernard Beatty's comments and writings, especially his *Byron's Don Juan* and essays on tradition and precedent.¹⁵ Notable failures of inclusion, as others have pointed out, have been M. H. Abrams', Northrop Frye's and Harold Bloom's books, all of which patronise, dislike or omit Byron, even when, like Bloom's, they are about him.¹⁶ Edward

Publications, 2009), 151-207.

¹³ Susan Oliver, *Scott, Byron and the Poetics of Cultural Encounter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

¹⁴ William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age, or, Contemporary Portraits* (Grasmere: The Wordsworth Trust, 2004), 185.

¹⁵ Jerome J. McGann, *Fiery Dust: Byron's Poetic Development* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); G. Wilson Knight, *Byron and Shakespeare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966) and *Lord Byron: Christian Virtues* (London: Routledge, 2002); Jerome Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), hereafter *LBS*; Jane Stabler, *Byron, Poetics and History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Stephen Cheeke, *Byron and Place: History, translation, nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Bernard Beatty, *Byron's Don Juan* (London: Croon Helm, 1985), hereafter *BDJ*; "Lord Byron: Poetry and Precedent", in *Literature of the Romantic Period 1750-1850*, ed. by R. T. Davies and B. G. Beatty (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1976), 114-134; and "Continuities and Discontinuities of Language and Voice in Byron, Pope and Dryden", in *Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, ed. by Andrew Rutherford (London: Macmillan, 1990), 117-135.

¹⁶ M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) and *Natural Supernaturalism:*

Said's famous *Orientalism* includes some brusque dismissals of the most celebrated British Orientalist.¹⁷

Scott has been worse off. Poetry anthologies habitually ignore or marginalise Scott, as in Duncan Wu's 2002 collection, *Romantic Poetry*. But popular criticism too, such as *Beyond Romanticism* (1992), *Romantic Writings* (1996), or *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1740-1830* (2004) has paid him scant attention.¹⁸ Even in less general studies, a confessed admirer like McGann finds no room for Scott in *Byron and Romanticism*, while Leslie Marchand implies, in his edition of *Byron's Letters and Journals* that Byron's admiration for Scott is "strange" and lacks justification.¹⁹ Coming from Byronists, these omissions and derogations are unfortunate. When Scott is allowed association, more often he will be cited as influential in the line of British novelists, as in Shaw or Ian Duncan,²⁰ rather than with the contemporary poets whose ground he cedes, and contests, with *Waverley*. This may have to do with a presupposition—articulated by Curran, for example—that genre studies must make distinctions between poetry and prose. However, a reconsideration of poetry and drama in genre theory, such as David Duff calls for, and, in particular, the "need to return to Romantic genre theory

Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (New York: Norton, 1973); Harold Bloom, ed., *George Gordon, Lord Byron* (New York: Chelsea House, 1986).

¹⁷ Cf. Peter Cochran "Edward Said's Failure with (inter alia) Byron", in *Byron and Orientalism*, ed. by Peter Cochran (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), 183-96.

¹⁸ Duncan Wu, ed., *Romantic Poetry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Stephen Copley and John Whale, eds, *Beyond Romanticism: New approaches to texts and contexts 1780-1832* (London: Routledge, 1992); Stephen Bygrave, ed., *Romantic Writings* (London: The Open University, 1996); Thomas Keymer and John Mee, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Cf. also Deborah Elsie White, *Romantic Returns: Superstition, Imagination, History* (Stanford [CA]: Stanford University Press, 2000); Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of "Culture"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Mark Canuel, *Religion, Toleration, and British Writing, 1790-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). All have remarkably little to say about Scott.

¹⁹ Leslie A. Marchand, ed., *Byron's Letters and Journals*, 12 vols (London: John Murray, 1973), III, 271. Hereafter, *BLJ*.

²⁰ Harry E. Shaw, *Narrating Reality: Austen, Scott, Eliot* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) and *The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and His Successors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, and Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[...] a much under-explored field”, could conceivably link Scott (as crucial figure for genre) again to his contemporary poets.²¹ It is not surprising that Scott’s popular and influential Waverley novels should have attracted the bulk of scholarship, and, although expounding initially on the drama *Halidon Hill* and using the poems as a touchstone throughout, this study will follow the main line in that respect. Nevertheless it is useful to situate Scott in a tradition of romance and poetry, not only that of the novel.

To say, then, that Scott has returned to vogue among scholars would perhaps be putting it too strongly, but certainly the occasion of Georg Lukács’ *The Historical Novel* (1937, published in English, 1962) restored to him some credibility, since when he has enjoyed more attention.²² Indeed, A. N. Wilson has argued that Scott is as relevant now as ever (and more than other novelists) to contemporary global politics—the problems of urban “terrorism” and East-West culture clash in particular.²³ Scott ordinarily resurfaces wherever romance and history are studied in connection with Romanticism, and such instances are becoming more frequent, particularly as genre studies become more fashionable. Although some of it is doubtless of the reactionary kind normally aroused in figures of neglect—especially a neglect so virulent—the increased interest in Scott in the last twenty years has induced Jill Rubenstein to declare we are “fortunate indeed to be here now”, as regards a “flourishing” Scott criticism, and she reiterates David Brown’s announcement that Scott is a “literary figure whose moment has once again arrived”.²⁴ Tracing a line from Frye to Nellist, from Levine to Shaw and Kerr, Rubenstein cites in particular Marjorie Levinson’s essay in *Rethinking Historicism*, and, by inference, glories in Scott’s “betrayals” and “indiscretions” towards an

²¹ David Duff, ed., “Introduction”, in *Modern Genre Theory* (Essex: Longman, 2000), 18.

²² Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin, 1989).

²³ A. N. Wilson, *A Life of Walter Scott* (London: Pimlico, 2002), 112. Wilson has reiterated this argument frequently in *The Daily Telegraph*; for example, in “Melodramatic, sexless—but Scott foresaw 9/11” (14 October 2002), “Scott translates well to the violent steppes” (28 October 2002), and “Verbose, but a great novelist” (29 November 2004).

²⁴ Jill Rubenstein, “Scott Scholarship and Criticism: Where are we now? Where are we going?”, in *Scott in Carnival*, ed. by J. H. Alexander and David Hewitt (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1993), 593-600 (600); Jill Rubenstein, ed., “Sir Walter Scott: An Annotated Bibliography of Scholarship and Criticism 1975-1990 (Occasional Paper Number 11)” (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, University of Aberdeen, 1994), 1; David Brown, *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 4.

“ideological” past, just as Galperin argues Byron has become postmodern partly because he is not a liberal humanist.²⁵ In this way, recent criticism has at least abandoned the jejune portrayal of Scott as unconscious essayist in cliché. Although it is possible to go too far in Levinson’s direction, so that Scott becomes a champion only of the deferral of meaning, the advent and claims of deconstruction, as also New Historicism, have been kind enough to lead Scott back near the limelight.

Specifically, writers like Duncan Forbes and Avrom Fleishman have sited Scott among the philosophical historical tradition surrounding Adam Smith and Hume,²⁶ whose nephew’s lectures Scott attended in Edinburgh,²⁷ and Robert Irvine has discussed Scott’s attachment to Enlightenment philosophy and historical method in *Enlightenment and Romance*.²⁸ P. F. Fisher, in “Providence, Fate and the Historical Imagination in *The Heart of Midlothian*”, has touched on Scott’s larger scheme whereby two types of history—secular bardic history and religious chronicle—are both overtaken by history as progress;²⁹ while writers like Murray Pittock, H. B. de Groot, Cyrus Vakil, and Thomas Mockaitis have all expounded the nature of Scott’s historical inquiry, and, often, its political implications.³⁰ De Groot, while, like Irvine, placing Scott in the context of eighteenth-century historians and philosophers (like Gibbon and

²⁵ Rubenstein, “Scott Scholarship”, 599. See also Marjorie Levinson, Marilyn Butler, Jerome McGann, Paul Hamilton, *Rethinking Historicism: Critical readings in Romantic history* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 6 and 12; and William H. Galperin, *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 245-46.

²⁶ Duncan Forbes, “The Rationalism of Sir Walter Scott”, in *Critical Essays on Sir Walter Scott: The Waverley Novels*, ed. by Harry E. Shaw (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1996), 83-97; Avrom Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).

²⁷ J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of Sir Walter Scott*, 5 vols (London: Macmillan, 1900), I, 45.

²⁸ Robert Irvine, *Enlightenment and Romance: Gender and Agency in Smollet and Scott* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000).

²⁹ P. F. Fisher, “Providence, Fate and the Historical Imagination in *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*”, in *Walter Scott: Modern Judgements*, ed. by D. D. Devlin (London: Macmillan, 1968), 98-111.

³⁰ Murray Pittock, “Scott as Historiographer: The Case of *Waverley*”; H. B. de Groot, “History and Fiction: The Case of *Redgauntlet*”; Cyrus Vakil, “Walter Scott and the Historicism of Scottish Enlightenment Philosophical History”; Thomas Mockaitis, “Sir Walter Scott and the Problem of Revolution”, in *Scott in Carnival*, 145-153, 358-369, 404-418, 419-433.

Hume), in particular cites contemporary historians like R. G. Collingwood, Hayden White, A. J. Youngson, Natalie Zemon Davis and Simon Schama,³¹ and ties into literary criticism modern historiography's concern for fiction and subjectivity, itself influenced by literary criticism. Scott is taken to be a type and example of this concern. Thus, for example, historian Hugh Trevor-Roper argues the case for Scott as "historical innovator" in the tradition of Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Herder, Hegel and Marx.³² Then Alexander Welsh, James Kerr and Ian Duncan have all dealt usefully with romance in their major books on Scott, all of which have been helpful to this study.³³

Certainly there is much to be gained from recent criticism's realignment of history and literature as mutually inclusive. Similarly useful is the twentieth century's apparent rediscovery, in its theory, of oral tradition and conversational models as applied to literature,³⁴ which have opened further the field for genre studies and questioned the totality and unity of the literary sample—and fiction in general—which appeared to typify New Criticism. Scott is now less likely to be characterised as a charming fireside read, who veers into romantic cliché; whose plots are rather preposterous, but whose characters are the most Shakespearean after Shakespeare (Robert Louis Stevenson's typical view). Instead, however he is in danger of being over-defined as a subverter of romance cliché and historical veracity, whose deployment of perspective and narrative layering erode at the meaning or extra-literary nature of the situations he constructs, and diffuse the energies of information into gossip, inevitably ending where ends Pattieson's "Conclusion" to *Old Mortality*—drinking tea with Mrs Buskbody:

a history, growing already vapid, is but dully crutched up by a detail of circumstances. (350)

³¹ See Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); A. J. Youngson, *The Prince and the Pretender* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1996); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth Century France* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987); Simon Schama, *Dead Certainties: (unwarranted speculations)* (London: Granta, 1991).

³² Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Sir Walter Scott and History" in *A Second Listener Anthology*, ed. by Karl Miller (London: BBC, 1973), 189-207.

³³ Alexander Welsh, *The Hero of the Waverley Novels* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); James Kerr, *Fiction Against History: Scott as Storyteller* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

³⁴ I have found particularly useful Michael Oakeshott, *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind: An Essay* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1959); and Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982).

And again he is a good fireside read! Ian Duncan, whose book *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel* contains one of the most impressive accounts of Scott, finds himself irresistibly drawn to this degrading conclusion. The novel notices romance only in order to notice romance's calcification, and—aligning romance with history—to justify its own separation from both romance and history. For Duncan, Scott personifies “the canonisation of the novel as a national cultural form”. He is “counter-revolutionary”—private, sentimental, elegiac and containing, turning “contradiction into ambiguity” (Duncan 1992, 15), a phrase reminiscent of Christensen's remark that Byron turns the antithetical into the equivocal (*LBS*, 96-97). Harry E. Shaw says reading Edward Said's *Orientalism* could make admirers of Scott “uneasy” about the delight they take in a “world that is historically Other” (Shaw 1999, 171-72). The modernising Cyrus Vakil is useful on Scott's use of Enlightenment philosophical history and Scott as satirist, but, damning him first with faint praise, drags him to a nasty end:

Modern commercial, polite society has arrived and is here to stay, complete with its dull evenings and its historical novelists to enliven them. (Vakil 1993, 415)

It all conjures C. S. Lewis' distressing claim for the romances of Boiardo, Ariosto and Tasso: that ideally one would read them “always convalescent from some small illness”.³⁵ Truly, as M. G. Cooke says of Byron's “To Romance”, “romantic courtesy is a hypochondriacal hypocrisy”.³⁶ We are always infecting romance with our diseases. Scott, it should be thought, resists easy conclusions of this kind. It is true, he is a relentless plier of perspectives; but plying perspectives alone does not undermine the viability of historical circumstance, or of the currency of romance models. Without reducing him quite to an ambiguity, Scott shows both sides of most arguments, and appears to deflect the claims either of the “escapist” school, or that which insists upon his intertextual evasion of significance. With regard to such a critical atmosphere, it is this deflection and the concomitant investment in the historical romance, in both writers, that this book will be testing.

³⁵ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 304.

³⁶ M. G. Cooke, *The Blind Man Traces the Circle: On the Patterns and Philosophy of Byron's Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 92.

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

Unless otherwise specified, the editions cited here are McGann's for Byron, and for Shakespeare, the Arden. I have used the Edinburgh editions of the Waverley novels where possible, and unless otherwise stated, and for Scott's *Miscellaneous Prose Works* I have used two different volumes, owing to the difficulty of access and variations in the texts. Again the change is noted. Chapters in the Waverley novels are given according to the chapters of the individual novels as opposed to the series of volumes that make up the *Tales of my Landlord*. All the etymology here is taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Citations from the Bible are from the King James.

A variation on the "Siege of Corinth" section of Chapter Five appeared in *Byron and Orientalism*, edited by Peter Cochran (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006).

ABBREVIATIONS

- BDJ* Bernard Beatty, *Byron's "Don Juan"* (London: Croon Helm, 1985)
- BLJ* Leslie A. Marchand, ed., *Byron's Letters and Journals*, 12 vols (London: John Murray, 1973)
- CHP* *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, in *Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), II
- CMP* *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. by Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991)
- CPW* *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986)
- DJ* *Don Juan* in *Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), V
- ER* Sir Walter Scott, "Essay on Romance", in *Essays on Chivalry, Romance and the Drama* (London: Frederick Warne [n.d.]), 65-108
- FD* Jerome J. McGann, *Fiery Dust: Byron's Poetic Development* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968)
- LBS* Jerome Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)
- MPW* *Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1827)
- OED* *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001)
- SPW* Sir Walter Scott, *Poetical Works*, ed. by J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1971)
- TN* Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, 3 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), III

INTRODUCTION

Rubrick on the Wall

Why Scott and Byron? The two have been continually linked almost since Byron's appearance on the literary scene. Byron notes in his journal:

As Sharpe was passing by the doors of some Debating Society (the Westminster Forum), in his way to dinner, he saw rubricked on the walls *Scott's* name and *mine*—"Which was the best poet?" being the question of the evening [...] Which had the greater show of hands, I neither know nor care; but I feel the coupling of the names as a compliment,—though I think Scott deserves better company. (*BLJ*, III, 250)

They were associated for a variety of reasons. Both were very popular; both were principally rhyming poets, both wrote long poems, sometimes in a similar (varied octosyllabic) metre and style, and both came out of, and defended, the Augustan tradition. Scott edited Dryden; Byron wrote heroic couplets, and attacked the anti-Pope school. Then they were friends, both "men of the world" (*BLJ*, IX, 30) and both lame. Byron quotes, and writes about, Scott, once disparagingly (in "English Bards and Scots Reviewers"), later eulogistically. Byron to Scott, January 12th, 1822:

—You disclaim "Jealousies" but I would ask as Boswell did of Johnson "Of *whom could* you be jealous"—of none of the living certainly—and (taking all into consideration)—of which of the dead? (*BLJ*, IX, 86)

Elsewhere, Scott is Byron's "Ariosto of the North" (*CHP* IV. 40), the "Monarch of our Parnassus" (*BLJ*, III, 219), "the "superlative of my comparative" (*DJ* XV. 59). For his part, Scott reviewed Byron's poetry and character, lauding the first, always sympathetic to the second. Byron was that "mighty genius, which walked among men as something superior to ordinary mortality, and whose powers we beheld with wonder and something approaching to terror".¹ They met and socialised in London for two months in the spring of 1815, as Scott travelled to and from Paris. For

¹ Sir Walter Scott, *Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1827), IV, 393. Hereafter, *MPW*.

three years previous to meeting, and until Byron died in 1824, they were occasional correspondents, also exchanging gifts (an urn, a dagger and skulls)² and invitations to visit either Scott's Abbotsford or Byron's residences in Italy. Byron continually plagues his publisher, Murray, to send him the latest of Scott's novels (*BLJ*, VII, 200-1, for example) which he admits to never travelling without.

Both also contest their supposed synonymity, each advancing the standard of each. "Byron hits the mark where I don't even pretend to fledge my arrow" Scott remarks to Ballantyne (Lockhart 1900, II, 508). Byron, on the other hand, notes in his Journal, November 17th, 1813:

George Ellis and Murray have been talking something about Scott and me, George pro Scoto,—and very right too. If they want to depose him, I only wish they would not set me up as a competitor [...] The British Critic, in their Rokeby Review, have presupposed a comparison, which I am sure my friends never thought of, and W. Scott's subjects are injudicious in descending to. (*BLJ*, III, 209)

It should be said, they are also careful to detach themselves from each other's politics. Scott's review of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* III "would willingly avoid mention of the political opinions hinted at by" the poem,³ while Byron retorts, "with his politics I have nothing to do" (*BLJ*, X, 189).⁴ Scott in particular goes further, censuring Byron's excess, and advising him in the same review to "submit to the discipline of the soul enjoined by religion, and recommended by philosophy" (Rutherford 1970, 97), so that he sounds remarkably like *Manfred's* Abbot:

[...] there is still time
For penitence and pity: reconcile thee
With the true church, and through the church to heaven. (III. 1. 49-51)

But *Manfred* is sympathetic to its Abbot, and Scott's closing benediction ("I decus, I nostrum, melioribus utere fatis" – "Go, glory of our race, and enjoy a happier fate") could almost have been the Abbot's. Similarly, Scott thought *Cain*—dedicated to himself—might benefit from a counterpoint to

² *BLJ*, II, 59n2. See also Lockhart, II, 516.

³ Andrew Rutherford, ed., *Byron: The Critical Heritage*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 92, ("From the *Quarterly Review* 1817", 84-97).

⁴ Byron also becomes caustic in *Don Juan* XII. 13-16, at the "lapsus" of Voltaire's heir, in painting love at the centre of the camp and court, in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* III. 2.

Lucifer,⁵ but concedes its brilliance: “He has certainly matched Milton on his own ground” (Rutherford 1970, 215). For those who would compare them, such protests as they offered were probably protests too much, and the ongoing comparison could not be discouraged, either by their mutual detachment, or their mutual eulogy.

Byron in particular is always alive to this irony, and plays with it from time to time. “You must recollect”, he writes to Murray,

that the letter in the British Review signed *Clutterbuck* must have a note stating that the name of *Clutterbuck* was adopted long before (a year I think) the publication of the Monastery & Abbot.—If you don’t do this —, I shall be accused (with the usual justice) of plagiarism from Walter Scott. (*BLJ*, IX, 58)

Though he contests the *Scottish Review*’s claim that *Childe Harold* resembles *Marmion*, he is surprised they find no such resemblance in *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos*:

I certainly never *intended* to copy him—but if there is any copyism—it must be in the two poems—where the same versification is adopted— (*BLJ*, IV, 107)

and it occurs to him later,

there might be a resemblance between part of “Parisina”—& a similar scene in Canto 2d. of “Marmion”—I fear there is—though I never thought of it before—and could hardly wish to imitate that which is inimitable. (*BLJ*, V, 22)

If he is always keen to avoid plagiarism, Byron is consistently swift to acknowledge a debt and a resemblance.

The “Tales of my Landlord” I have read with great pleasure—& perfectly understand now why my sister & aunt are so very positive in the very erroneous persuasion that they must have been written by me—if you knew me as well as they do—you would have fallen perhaps into the same mistake (*BLJ*, V, 220)

For Scott the coupling with Byron may have seemed a burden, because with the epitaph, “Byron beat me”, he retreated from poetry (Lockhart

⁵ As Peter Cochran comments, Scott is keen to give every viewpoint its “dialectical answer” (Cochran 2009, 193).

1900, V, 391). But that it may also have proved an incentive is suggested by the rejoinder of the Waverley novels which came after that retreat, generally accepted (also by Byron—*BLJ*, VII, 45) as Scott's best work. For Byron the comparison was in the end natural and perhaps useful. Though he keeps distance from the novel, he continues to compare his own work with that of Scott, both as pointer for the combination of romance and history, and perhaps as anchor amid the giddier revolutions of Romanticism.

Their similarities of background as well as subject-matter affirm the connection. Both write about aristocrats or quasi-aristocrats. Byron, of course, is an aristocrat, and Scott a quasi-aristocrat, while Scott is a Scot and Byron a semi-Scot ("half a Scot by birth, and bred/A whole one"—*DJ* X, 17). Indeed, Byron tempers Scott's novels, if not the author, down to this divided status, questioning the term "Scotch novels" and attesting "two of them [...] wholly English—and the rest half so" (*BLJ*, IX, 86). Doubtless some of the feeling he has for them is tied up with personal association. Just as he cannot look upon Venice without recalling "Shylock or the Moor" (*CHP* IV, 4); just as "Loch-na-gar with Ida" looks "o'er Troy" (*The Island* II, 12, 291); and just as the Arnauts strike him "by their resemblance to the Highlanders of Scotland", carrying him "back to Morven" (note to *CHP* II, 38), so, as he enters Tepaleen, he is reminded of the description of Branksome Castle in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (*BLJ*, I, 227). If, as Tom Scott points out, Childe Harold is not dissimilar to a wandering Scot, "more at home in Europe than in England, more international than the insular Englishman",⁶ he comes in the vein of Scott's Scots like the MacIvors, or *The Bride of Lammermoor*'s Marquis of A—.

Not only does Scott keep Byron in touch with Scotland and his youth, or with Britain and romance (which Byron never avouches so canonically), he also inadvertently celebrates a Byron-like past, and ties it in with national history. It is not that he flatters Byron's vanity, but he does write richly about Byron-like local and family histories, and shows their connection with the present. Byron is grateful for it. He writes to Murray:

The Abbot will have more than ordinary interest for me; for an ancestor of mine by the mother's side, Sir J. Gordon of Gight, the handsomest of his day, died on a Scaffold at Aberdeen for his loyalty to Mary, of whom he was an imputed paramour as well as her relation. His fate was much commented on in The Chronicles of the times. If I mistake not, he had

⁶ Tom Scott, "Byron as a Scottish Poet" in *Byron: Wrath and Rhyme*, ed. by Alan Bold (London: Barnes & Noble, 1983), 17-36 (25-26).