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This article undertakes to examine and analyze the various accounts Scott offered in explanation of his choice to publish his fiction anonymously. Such a starting point seems natural for any enquiry into Scott's fictional works — as natural as asking a man wearing a mask why he does so. Scott's decision from the first was not to speak *in propria persona* — not, that is, to use his already-established identity as a poet — and from that decision his use of fictitious narrators followed naturally (through not, it is true, inevitably). His explanations of his initial choice and his long persistence in it are in themselves, because of their frequency and elaborateness and apart altogether from their content, an indication that he felt there was something curiously complicated about the reasons underlying it. The complexity has undoubtedly a psychological dimension, but in our attempt to untangle and inspect Scott's reasons, we shall be less interested in the psychology of the author than in deriving some hints for the direction of critical attention to the works of fiction themselves.

The first accounts by Scott of his reasons for anonymity are those he gave in private and in public at about the time of the initial public choice itself, that is in 1814, the year of the publication of *Waverley*. In a letter to Morritt of 9 July 1814, just about the time of the book's publication, he tells how "the good people of Edinburgh are busied in tracing the author," adding, "they will probably find it difficult to convict the guilty author, although he is far from escaping suspicion. Jeffrey has offered to make oath that it is mine, and another great critic has tendered his affidavit *ex contrario*; so that these authorities have divided the Gude Town." But, he declares, "I intend to maintain my incognito."<sup>1</sup> After Morritt had remonstrated with him, urging him to own up to the book since it is so good that it will add to anybody's reputation, Scott explains his refusal; his hero, he writes, is "a sneaking

1. John Gibson Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, (London, 1893), p. 256 (Ch. 28). H. J. C. Grierson, ed., *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott* (London, 1932-37), III. 457.

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piece of imbecility," Scott being "a bad hand at depicting a hero properly so called, and hav[ing] an unfortunate propensity for the dubious characters of borderers, buccaneers, Highland robbers, and all others of a Robin-Hood description." He goes on:

I shall not own *Waverley* — my chief reason is that it would prevent me of the pleasure of writing again . . . In truth I am not sure it would be considered quite decorous for me as a Clerk of Sessions to write novels Judges being monks clerks are a sort of lay-brethren from whom some solemnity of walk and conduct may be expected. So whatever I may do of this kind I shall whistle it down the wind to prey on fortune.

He returns again to the topic in a postscript:

I don't see how my silence can be considered as imposing on the public — if I gave my name to a book without writing it, unquestionably that would be a trick. But unless in the case of his averring facts which he may be called upon to defend or justify I think an author may use his discretion in giving or withholding his name. Harry MacKenzie never put his name in a title page till the last edition of his works and Swift only owned one out of his thousand and one publications.

In point of emolument everybody knows that I sacrifice much money by withholding my name and what should I gain by it that any human being has a right to consider as an unfair advantage — in fact only the freedom of writing trifles with less personal responsibility and perhaps more frequently than I otherwise might do.<sup>2</sup>

Lockhart also quotes a passage not in Grierson's version of the letter of July 9 and which I cannot find elsewhere in Grierson:

The truth is that this sort of muddling work amuses me, and I am something in the condition of Joseph Surface, who was embarrassed by getting himself too good a reputation; for many things may please people well enough anonymously, which, if they have me in the title-page, would just give me that sort of ill name which precedes hanging — and that would be in many respects inconvenient if I thought of again trying a *grande opus*.<sup>3</sup>

The "muddling work" here referred to is not only the mystification about the authorship of *Waverley*, but also a similar "little plot upon the sagacity of reviewers" (as Lockhart calls it) which Scott contrived the previous year when he published *Rokeby* under his own name and *The Bridal of Triermain* anonymously at the same time, presumably to avoid having two of his works competing against one another. This

2. Grierson, *Letters*, III. 479-481 (letter of 28 July 1814).

3. Lockhart, *Memoirs*, p. 256 (Ch. 28).

hoax was also motivated by Scott's promise to himself of "particular satisfaction in *laying a trap for Jeffrey*,"<sup>4</sup> for "he expected great amusement from the comparisons which the critics would no doubt indulge themselves in drawing between himself and this humble candidate."<sup>5</sup>

From the analogy of this earlier instance, therefore, and from the quoted explanations we may distinguish several different reasons for the anonymity of *Waverley*. I shall number them for convenience of reference.

- (1) It stimulates interest (and sales).
- (2) It teases and perhaps will expose the pretensions of the critics.
- (3) It relieves Scott of the onus of writing so well about disreputable characters and will enable him to do so again.
- (4) It relieves him of the danger of being thought professionally indecorous.
- (5) It is morally justified and has good precedent.
- (6) It frees him to write more frequently — both fiction and the poetry under his own name — without being accused of overproduction.
- (7) It amuses him.
- (8) It allows the work a better chance of success on its own merits without endangering the literary reputation of the poet.

These reasons overlap, of course; numbers 1 and 2 are closely akin, number 5 is less a reason than an enabling factor, and number 7 is less an explicit reason than a recognition that all the other reasons combined still leave an irreducible remnant of willful and unexplained caprice. We note that while numbers 1, 2, and 8 are highly practical, numbers 3, 4, 5, and 6 exhibit a definite defensiveness on Scott's part. It is perhaps even fair to say that the large number of distinguishable reasons implies a touch of obsessiveness — as if Scott had been examining himself and finding a great many possible reasons for a choice basically, perhaps, mysterious to himself. After all, if the choice were wholly rational — that is, if it had been arrived at after a conscious process of deciding — Scott would know his own reasons in more summary form. However, it is true that the defensiveness can be partly accounted for by Scott's awareness of the deviousness which the anonymity would involve him in; he must have had to justify to himself what might well have seemed to casual eyes deliberate untruths.

4. Lockhart, *Narrative of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* (Everyman edition, London, 1906), p. 233 (Ch. 7).

5. Lockhart, *Narrative*, p. 231 (Ch. 7).

A second account of his reasons was written about this time and published (still anonymously, of course) as the Preface to the Third Edition of *Waverley* (October 1814). "Considerations," he writes, "which seem weighty in his particular situation" prevent him from disclosing his identity, and he appeals to "the candour of the public to choose among the many circumstances peculiar to different situations in life, such as may induce him to suppress his name on the present occasion." He goes on to list a series of such circumstances, mixing two of his real reasons — those numbered 6 and 4 above — with others which are red herrings.

He may be a writer new to publication, and unwilling to avow a character to which he is unaccustomed; or he may be a hackneyed author who is ashamed of too frequent appearance, and employs this mystery, as the heroine of the old comedy used her mask to attract the attention of those to whom her face had become too familiar. He may be a man of a grave profession, to whom the reputation of being a novel-writer might be prejudicial; or might appear pedantic. He may be too young to assume the character of an author, or so old as to make it advisable to lay it aside.

It is interesting to note here the use of the mask image, but it is used in a completely external way. Interest is on the effect of the mask on the beholder, not on the effect on the wearer, as it will be in Scott's later use of a similar image.

The next source materials are those from 1827, the year of Scott's public acknowledgement of his authorship of the *Waverley Novels* at the Theatrical Fund Dinner in February, the newspaper account of which he prefixed to his *Chronicles of the Canongate* published later that year and accompanied with an Introduction in which he further explained himself. In these documents we find some new reasons adduced. First, at the dinner itself, in answer to the toast which had named him as the Author of *Waverley*, Scott playfully adopting judicial language (the proposer of the toast was a judge), pleaded guilty to the charge, adding, "nor shall I detain the Court by a long explanation why my confession has been so long deferred. Perhaps caprice might have a considerable share in the matter." He went on, "The wand is now broken, and the book buried. You will allow me to say, with Prospero, it is your breath that has filled my sails . . ."<sup>6</sup> We note with interest here that Scott, speaking impromptu, seems in his first instinctive movement of thought to have assumed that with the disclosure of his identity his fiction-writing power was ended. It would be oversimplifying to claim a complete cause and effect relation here, no doubt; other

6. Lockhart, *Memoirs*, p. 653 (Ch. 73).



causes — the financial crash of 1826 among them — may well have contributed to Scott's readiness to feel his literary career was finished; but nevertheless it would be hard to deny that Scott's allusions here imply that he felt anonymity was deeply connected with his creative power. Such a connection is equally clearly implied in the comic self-portrait of the author as Harlequin that Scott gives a few months later in the Introduction to the *Chronicles*. He writes:

All who are acquainted with the early history of the Italian stage are aware, that Arlechino is not, in his original conception, a mere worker of marvels with his wooden sword, a jumper in and out of windows, as upon our theatre, but, as his party-coloured jacket implies, a buffoon or clown, whose mouth, far from being eternally closed, as amongst us, is filled, like that of Touchstone, with quips, and cranks, and witty devices, very often delivered extempore. It is not easy to trace how he became possessed of his black vizard, which was anciently made in the resemblance of the face of a cat; but it seems that the mask was essential to the performance of the character, as will appear from the following theatrical anecdote . . .

The anecdote relates how a famous Harlequin was beguiled by well-intentioned but misguided critics to act his role without his mask, for, they said, his wit was rendered ludicrous by his disguise and would be far more impressive if aided by his expressive features. The unmasked jester failed completely, having "lost the audacity which a sense of incognito bestowed, and with it all the reckless play of raillery which gave vivacity to his original acting." Cursing his flatterers, he resumed his mask, "but, it is said, without ever being able to regain the careless and successful levity which the consciousness of the disguise had formerly bestowed." Scott draws the moral:

Perhaps the Author of Waverley is now about to incur a risk of the same kind, and endanger his popularity by having laid aside his incognito. It is certainly not a voluntary experiment, like that of Harlequin; for it was my original intention never to have avowed these works during my lifetime . . . But the affairs of my publishers having unfortunately passed into a management different from their own [through bankruptcy], I had no right any longer to rely upon secrecy in that quarter; and thus my mask, like my Aunt Dinah's in "Tristram Shandy" having begun to wax a little threadbare about the chin, it became time to lay it aside with a good grace, unless I desired it should fall in pieces from my face, which was now become likely.

One could perhaps distinguish almost as many varied reasons for Scott's having dropped his disguise as for his having adopted it, but for the moment our attention goes again to the emphasis Scott gives to the

liberating effect on its wearer of a comic mask. We inevitably feel, I believe, that in his use of the image here Scott is getting at deeper truths about his own impulses than he did in stressing merely the external effect of anonymity on book buyers. It is apparently the newly-to-be-assumed public identity of Sir Walter Scott that the Author of *Waverley* believes will have a dampening effect on his creative impulses. Thus we see a surprising reversal of the initial fear that the novel writer's identity would damage the reputation of Walter Scott, poet and Writer to the Signet. "Caprice" is presumably equivalent to reason number 7 above ("it amuses him"), but to those listed we may now add one more:

(9) Anonymity is somehow essential to the performance of the fiction writer's role.

Further on in this 1827 Introduction Scott confronts the question "why I have so long persisted in disclaiming the works of which I am now writing." The evasive recourse to "caprice" is again his first answer, but then he goes on, without making clear just how it is relevant to the question at hand, to discuss at length the matter of literary fame and an author's temptation to become too concerned with it. He claims to be relatively indifferent to literary success or failure. He was thirty before he "made any serious attempt at distinguishing myself as an author," and by that age, he says, "men's hopes, desires, and wishes, have usually acquired something of a decisive character, and are not eagerly and easily diverted into a new channel." One's first thought here is that he means us to apply this generalization to his own case: his hopes and ambitions at thirty were fixed on his legal career and therefore he was relatively indifferent to his literary fortunes. But how then does such indifference explain his adopting anonymity with such elaborate precautions when he virtually began a *second* literary career at the age of forty-three? On the other hand, if he wishes us to *contrast* the generalization with his own case and thus realize his sense of the risk he was taking in starting to write, we are better able to understand why preoccupation with fame would be a real temptation to him, though the choice of anonymity for the second career rather than the first remains puzzling. Perhaps then we are to realize how much his fame as a poet, achieved during the decade following his embarking on a serious literary career, meant to him and thus to understand his anonymity as a device to protect that fame from possible failure in the fiction. (Compare reason 8, above.) Yet while this makes sense in itself, it is curiously at odds with the drift of the whole passage that follows,

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where the emphasis is on Scott's determination to protect himself not from failure but from caring about success *or* failure.

When I made the discovery, — for to me it was one, — that by amusing myself with composition, which I felt a delightful occupation, I could also give pleasure to others, and became aware that literary pursuits were likely to engage in future a considerable portion of my time, I felt some alarm that I might acquire those habits of jealousy and fretfulness which have lessened, and even degraded, the character even of great authors, and rendered them, by their petty squabbles and mutual irritability, the laughing-stock of the people of the world.

He resolved, he says, to protect himself against this moral temptation, and he goes on to claim that he has done so successfully, usually finding discussions about his own writing, even when flattering to himself, "embarrassing and disagreeable." The next sentence begins a new paragraph, and reads:

I have now frankly told my motives for concealment, so far as I am conscious of having any, and the public will forgive the egotism of the detail, as what is necessarily connected with it.

One does not wish to make mysteries where there are none in reality, but that "frankly" surely strikes one as odd, given the paucity and obscurity of the account of motives we are looking at, and its qualification by "so far as I am conscious of having any" only piques one's attention and leads one to the inference that Scott was the reverse of eager to clarify and examine his own inner workings. Of course, he is writing thirteen years after his initial decision (though note that the question being answered, as he himself phrased it, has to do with the continuation of the concealment, not its beginning), so that we could hardly expect him to repeat all eight of the reasons then offered; yet to be given only two reasons — one the most frivolous of those offered earlier (caprice) and the other ambiguous — is less than satisfyingly frank. The new reason, which I have called ambiguous, may be stated thus:

(10) Anonymity (a) was a product of his indifference to fame, since he cared more about his legal career:

or (b) protected him from the moral danger of caring too much about fame, by placing a distance between his reputation and himself,

or (c) protected his already earned fame as a poet, about which he cared more deeply than he liked to admit (variant of reason 8 above).

It is easy to see how the second and third parts here could both simultaneously contribute to Scott's decision to publish anonymously. Moreover one can infer with sympathy that Scott might well have felt the moral ambiguity involved — was the decision self-diminishing or self-serving? — and have been naturally reluctant to analyze too far. For the literary critic perhaps the most interesting aspect of the reasons given is the attention drawn to the limitations of the ideal of the gentleman of letters. We could wish that Scott had cared much *more* about his fame, since such a concern might have led him to take his art more seriously. But from the start it was a matter merely of "amusing" himself with a "delightful occupation" which could "give pleasure to others." Lionel Trilling has recently written of the loss in modern literature of the notion of pleasure as a worthy end, but what's wrong with Scott's way of thinking about his art is not the stress on pleasure — which has after all classical sanction — but the lack of any complementary stress on anything more serious to give point to the pleasure. We see the same attitude a few lines later in this Introduction as Scott is explicitly claiming his works. "I do this without shame," he writes, "for I am unconscious that there is any thing in their composition which deserves reproach, either on the score of religion or morality . . . ." Artistic reproaches, obviously, had no weight with him. Such a casualness is certainly a welcome contrast to its opposite extreme, the cloistral and obsessive concern which in a Flaubert, say, makes art seem a substitute religion, but we could have wished for Scott a position somewhere in between.

One further passage in this 1827 Introduction is of interest. Scott is thanking the small group of intimates who kept his secret for so long. He writes:

. . . I am the more obliged to them because the slight and trivial character of the mystery was not qualified to inspire much respect in those intrusted with it. Nevertheless, like Jack the Giant-Killer, I was fully confident in the advantage of my "Coat of Darkness," and had it not been from compulsory circumstances, I would have indeed been very cautious how I parted with it.

The image here, self-deprecating like that of Harlequin, nevertheless suggests, like it, a more intimate and mysterious (even magical) connection between Scott's disguise and his fiction-writing feats than his early rational explanations. It is certainly fair to say that nothing in the preceding account of his motives — an account whose frankness he has emphasized — explains the confidence and "advantages" mentioned here.

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The final source of Scott's explanations about his anonymity is the General Preface to the collected *Waverley Novels* which began publication in 1829. This is by far the fullest of Scott's accounts, and contrasts markedly in its detail and convincingly frank tone with the account in the 1827 Introduction just examined; this one really does deserve to be called frank, largely because he admits that he does not fully understand his own motives. He gives no fewer than eight reasons, most of them naturally among those which we have already enumerated. "My original motive for publishing the work anonymously," he writes, "was the consciousness that it was an experiment on the public taste which might very probably fail, and therefore there was no occasion to take on myself the personal risk of discomfiture" (reason 8 and 10c). But, he continues, "it is more difficult, it may be thought, to account for the same desire for secrecy during the subsequent editions . . . I am sorry I can give little satisfaction to queries on this subject." He can only fall back on caprice (reason 7). Moreover he "had not the usual stimulus for desiring personal reputation," having already achieved literary fame and his place in society and his friendships being fixed (reasons 10a and 10c). The next consideration mentioned is a new reason for continuing with the anonymity.

. . . I have seldom felt more satisfaction than when, returning from a pleasure voyage, I found *Waverley* in the zenith of popularity, and public curiosity in full cry after the name of the author. The knowledge that I had the public approbation, was like having the property of a hidden treasure, not less gratifying to the owner than if all the world knew that it was his own.

This sense of secret power and pleasure we may call reason 11. Scott continues by mentioning the protection against the charge of overproduction (reason 6), the stimulating effect on sales (reason 1), and his dislike of hearing his work discussed and his fear of the morally corrupting power of flattery (reason 10b). His final reason, new in form but essentially a version of reason 9, is, like the earlier forms of that reason (*Harlequin* and *Jack the Giant-Killer*), offered half-facetiously but is nonetheless interesting for that.

If I am asked further reasons for the conduct I have long observed, I can only resort to the explanation supplied by a critic as friendly as he is intelligent; namely, that the mental organization of the novelist must be characterized, to speak craniologically, by an extraordinary development of the passion for delitescency [concealment]! I rather suspect some natural disposition of this kind; for, from the instant I perceived the extreme curiosity manifested on the subject, I felt a secret satisfaction in baffling it, for which, when its unimportance is considered, I do not well know how to account.

This, like the recourse so frequently to the notion of "caprice" — an explanation which explains nothing — and the obscure and reticent "frankness" of the 1827 Introduction, is virtually an admission that Scott does not understand completely his own motives in the matter. This latest account has been full and open, yet it ends by emphasizing the residue of mystery, and it does so in connection with that one of all the reasons we have distinguished which is itself most convincingly true yet most mysterious to understand — the idea that secrecy is obscurely but vitally connected with the sources of the writer's creativity. Scott's reason tells him this connection is unimportant, but his unconscious impels him to protect it stubbornly, and rewards him by a sense of "secret satisfaction."

I have no wish to overstress the exactitude of the enumeration of reasons which I have attempted; in fact I have admitted the overlapping of some of them. It remains true that from the many explanations Scott offered for his interesting choice, we can distinguish a large number of logically distinct motives. Of this number, the majority — naturally — are rational and practical (those I have numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 would fall under this head). Of the others, the explanation by saying it amused him or was a caprice offers no foothold for understanding and is effectively an admission of his own bewilderment. The ambiguous though understandable moral reasons connect with Scott's admirable lack of pretentiousness and determination to preserve his sense of modesty. Literary critical interest in them seems limited to one's regret that for Scott there seemed to be only two alternatives: modest offhandedness about his writing, or absurd and morally culpable personal pretentiousness. There remains for further comment the intriguing notion of a vital but rationally inexplicable connection between the author's anonymity and his writing of fiction. Scott himself, he admits, did not understand this connection, yet he insisted on it repeatedly in the metaphorical references to Harlequin, to Jack the Giant-Killer, and the facetious reliance on craniology. Can we hope to understand it better than he? Or if not, what significance can we find in it?

The biographer of Scott might well wish to associate this deep impulse to fictional anonymity with the increasing commercial difficulties which he found himself in and which were themselves secret. (The year that saw the writing of the first seven chapters of *Waverley* — 1805 — was also the year of Scott's secretly entering into partnership with James Ballantyne.) More plausibly yet, these secret speculations themselves may be judged to derive from some deeper source, some compulsion to a hidden life — perhaps some turning away from

a *marriage d'amitié* and from the unexciting life of a Writer to the Signet in Hanoverian Edinburgh. Edwin Muir would unhesitatingly adduce here the one love affair of Scott's life, his unsuccessful courting of Williamina Stuart-Belsches, and would stress the analogies between his determined repression of that unhappy emotional surge, his passion to set himself up as Laird of Abbotsford, his secret business ventures, and his secret fiction writing.<sup>7</sup> And David Daiches has recently drawn attention to a small but revealing detail further illustrating this cast of Scott's mind. On certain special books in his library he had stamped a motto borne on the shield of an ancestor in a tournament at Stirling: *Clausus ruitus ero*, I shall be safe when closed in. As Daiches suggests, it is a motto that invites a more than military application.<sup>8</sup>

But though the issue thus radiates into Scott's life as a whole, our attention here is more narrowly on the fiction that his life produced. What, we ask ourselves, might it have been that made Scott feel his fiction writing was bound up with his anonymity? What led him so immediately, speaking almost totally unprepared that night of the Theatrical Dinner, to echo that speech of Prospero's which has traditionally been thought to be its author's leave-taking of his art:

I'll break my staff,  
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,  
And deeper than did ever plummet sound,  
I'll drown my book.

And already, more than a year earlier, at the onset of his financial crisis, he had written in his journal for 18 December 1825, "For myself, the magic wand of the Unknown is shiverd in his grasp. He must henceforth be termed the Too-well-known."<sup>9</sup> We must guess at the answers, but it seems certain that the feeling of being anonymous — or more exactly, the feeling that although many guessed who the Author of Waverley was, hardly any knew for sure — liberated Scott from inhibitions in some way. It concealed his social and thus fixed (in the eyes of others) identity and allowed — even demanded — that he create on paper a new freely improvised personality. His consequent recreation of his own self thus accompanied and perhaps stimulated

7. See Edwin Muir, "Sir Walter Scott," in Derek Verschoyle, ed., *The English Novelists* (London, 1936), and his lecture in W. L. Renwick, ed., *Sir Walter Scott Lectures, 1940-1948* (Edinburgh, 1950).

8. David Daiches, *Sir Walter Scott and his World* (New York, 1971), pp. 96-97.

9. *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, ed., John Guthrie Tait (Edinburgh, 1950), p. 47.



his creation of fictional characters. And self-creating would define by contrariety the fixed personality which he lived daily, thus assuring stability, while at the same time betokening his quasi-infinite and never delimited or frozen fluidity. So one speculates, about an undertaking which still has something magical about it, the quasi-divine creation of human characters, the adoption of other identities. (Several of Scott's metaphors in this connection, as we have seen, have magical overtones.)

But leaving without further exploration the inviting psychological perspectives which this line of questioning has opened up, let us ask what literary consequences we might be prepared to find if what we have been inferring as to Scott's motives is true. First of all, if indeed the cloak of anonymity was successful in allowing Scott as Harlequin to indulge in his quips and sallies, one might fairly expect to find aspects of his personae answering to this light and facetious note. This turns out to be true for the persona of the first part of *Waverley* and for such a later persona as Jedediah Cleishbotham. Secondly we might expect to find a marked difference between the works written for anonymous publication and those later ones which were written after the public disclosure of identity. This expectation is not clearly fulfilled; it leaves out of account, for example, the possibility of the game of anonymity having palled in its effects after so many years. A third and final expectation might be teased from the date, though it could scarcely be noticed without the hindsight given by one's having read Scott's novels. It has to do with just this matter of the palling of the high jinks. Can we believe that an adult and intelligent man would long be content to indulge solely in literary self-portrayal analogous to the jesting of Harlequin? Certainly, if Scott had done so we may doubt that he would merit prolonged interest today. So given some prior faith in his maturity, it is possible to expect that the playfulness might well not be unrelieved, that indeed it might be only preliminary to a more sober and complete self-embodiment in his personae — and this of course we do in fact find in the mature voice of the Author of *Waverley* as well as in the later self-portrayal of Croftangry.

There are perhaps few effects which could be said to be strictly inevitable consequences of anonymity. Logically it would be possible for an anonymous author to tell his story self-effacingly, in the manner, say, of Jane Austen, and to omit all personal relations with his readers, such as are established by giving them his name, furnishing self-portrayals, addressing them in prefatory notes and epistles, and the like. Such directness and impersonality, implying attention primarily to the novel artifact as complete in itself, was never Scott's way. Coming as he

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did from a culture in which oral tale-telling was still a living tradition, and having himself discovered his fictional talents as a boy spinning yarns for the amusement of his school-fellows, and moreover proposing in his novels to undertake not a work purely and simple of fiction but always in some sense a chronicle or portrayal of a historical past, he was peculiarly aware of being in a relation with his readers like that of an oral narrator with his listeners and consequently almost always went to elaborate pains to provide a definition of the narrator of his fictions. The anonymity threw this definition into high relief, since there was no pre-established identity which he could invoke by simply putting his well-known name on the title page — not, at least, until the Author of *Waverley* was as well-known in his own right as Walter Scott, the poet. The result was a proliferation of personae and of the introductory apparatus in which they introduce and define themselves and their relation to the story to follow. We are naturally most aware of these personae in the course of the initial apparatus or of the opening chapters of the books; after that our interest is mainly in the narrative, and the voice of the narrator, however initially defined, recedes from the foreground of our attention, though its effect may be demonstrably present throughout.

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