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Ruth Eller

Themes of Time
and Art in *The Lay of
the Last Minstrel*



Current critical opinion seems to hold that the longer poems of Sir Walter Scott are merely a prelude to his later development as the first true historical novelist. As in Karl Kroeber's *Romantic Narrative Art*,¹ Scott's increasing narrative skill is stressed, as well as his re-creation of the atmosphere of time and place. The themes of the poems are rarely discussed except in the context of the major concerns of the novels, chiefly the opposition in history of various ways of life.² Donald Davie even goes so far as to say that Scott's first attempt at a long narrative poem, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, has no real theme at all: "The literal meaning [of the *Lay*] is all the meaning there is . . . [it is] a poem which is 'about' no more than what it is overtly about, that is a foray into the Scottish lowlands in the sixteenth century."³ Scott himself, with his love of the Border history he presented and his businesslike attitude towards his work, to say nothing of his native modesty, perhaps would have been the first to agree with Davie. I believe, however, that to accept such an easy judgment of what appears to be easy poetry--easily written, easily read, and some, alas, even easily forgotten--is to overlook Scott's concern with and unique presentation of some of the deepest preoccupations of his time. Romantic narrative in general--from "Resolution and Independence" to *Don Juan*--shows a marked tendency to be not about

the story it supposedly presents, but rather about the poet himself. Chiefly it is concerned with the movement of time, and the question of how the individual mind assimilates events and reconciles itself to the facts of mutability and death. For Wordsworth, the answer lay in "strength in what remains behind," the sustenance derived from memory. For Shelley, it was the expansion of a single moment into eternity, as hymned in the closing stanzas of *Prometheus Unbound*. Scott too was moved by these concerns, although he reaches conclusions peculiar to himself, informed by his special preoccupations and his philosophy of reconciliation. Because of its overt treatment of the role of the artist and enthusiastic presentation of incident and character, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* is a good example of Scott's particular handling of basic Romantic themes.

Scott's inspiration for *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* came from several sources. He was working on the third volume of his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, as well as an edition of the medieval romance, *Sir Tristrem*, but was beginning to be tempted more and more towards original composition. He found what seemed to him a perfect verse form for a longer poem in *Christabel*, part of which he had heard recited by Dr. John Stoddard. The use of irregular stanzas seemed to him well-adapted to the changing moods of the historical narrative he contemplated.⁴ He began work on his poem in the middle of the year 1802, but soon put it aside, discouraged by what he thought was the adverse reaction of two friends. When he learned that they had been not so much disapproving of the poem as stunned by its novelty, Scott resurrected it, and began work again, this time with the additional figure of the Minstrel himself. This device was Scott's response to the request made by one of these friends that some explanatory framework be provided, as otherwise the tone of the poem would be unclear. The original suggestion was for introductory quatrains such as those used by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*. Scott felt these to be themselves too cryptic, and so hit upon the character of the Minstrel, "the introduction of whom betwixt the cantos might remind the reader at intervals, of the time, place, and circumstance of the recitation."⁵ On manoeuvres with his cavalry regiment, Scott was kicked by a horse, and while recuperating from what was no doubt a blow to pride as well as body, he worked assiduously on the first Canto of the *Lay*. On November 30, 1802, he wrote to Anna Seward, a contributor to the *Minstrelsy*: "I am at present busy with the second edition of the *Minstrelsy* & preparations for the third volume particularly a sort of Romance of Border Chivalry & enchantment which will extend to some length. When it has made any progress I will send you a few stanzas."⁶ A

last, and much-debated feature of the poem yet to be added was the character of the Goblin-Page. This creature was worked into the story because of the young Countess of Dalkeith's request that Scott write a ballad on the subject of the folklore figure, Gilpin Horner. With characteristic acquiescence to his friends' wishes, Scott added Gilpin to the poem in progress--in fact, he at first intended Gilpin to be a chief figure, but as he later explained, "In the process of the romance, the page, intended to be a principal person in the work, contrived (from the baseness of his natural propensities I suppose) to slink downstairs into the kitchen, and now he must e'en abide there."⁷ It is interesting to note, however, that the Goblin-Page does in fact serve a vital function in the narrative. He is not quite the "excrescence" that Scott, in the same letter, deems him to be.

Scott now had all the elements of the poem at his disposal--the central incident, the Goblin-Page, and the framing narrative of the Minstrel himself. He worked through the winter and spring on a number of projects, but by July, 1803, he was able to fulfill his promise to Anna Seward, and sent her some verses from Canto II. It is indicative of Scott's ambivalent attitude towards his work that he fills a hiatus in the lines (which he is writing from memory) by interpolating the off-hand comment, "Another hurly-burly verse I have forgotten"--but carefully foot-notes each allusion with which his correspondent might not be familiar.⁸ By September, he is willing to recite some of the *Lay* to Dorothy and William Wordsworth, who visit him while on a walking-tour of Scotland.⁹

Almost a year later, the poem was at last complete. It was published in January, 1805, and "its success was instantaneous; within a few months Scott found himself famous. . . . In the entire history of British poetry there had never been anything like the popularity of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*."¹⁰

Of the various elements that went into the composition of the *Lay*, perhaps the most important is the most likely to be overlooked--that is, Scott's continuing occupation with the collecting and editing of ballads. This is strongly linked, I believe, to his creation of the character of the Minstrel; and this character is himself central to what seems to me to be the chief concern of the poem, the role of the artist in a changing world. As Edgar Johnson has so eloquently stated (in explaining what a modern scholar would call the liberties Scott took in transcribing and editing the ballads): "Deep in his heart he identified himself with the old ballad singers, felt himself a *makar* like them with some of their creative privileges, a last minstrel for whom these lays were eroded torsos that he might recarve to bolder beauty."¹¹ This sense of mission informs *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, is at the

heart, in fact, of the very nature of the poem. Despite Kroeber's characterization of the poem as "apprentice work, crude and derivative and archaistic,"¹² it is unfair to judge the poem by such standards of artistic narrative, since Scott himself states in his introductory note that the story is not the point: "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 for greater latitude in this respect than would be consistent with the dignity of a regular Poem."¹³ The nature of the poem, then, is romance, which allows for digressions and interruptions and asides of all sorts. Donald Davie suggests that the plot is "only the vehicle for other matters"¹⁴--chiefly the historical milieu in which the action takes place. I submit that more than the milieu, the very mode of the poem is one of these "other matters." Scott's enthusiasm itself tricks us into thinking that his only interest is in social history. As he demonstrates in his lively if lengthy notes, Scott is particularly anxious not to be obscure; he further has a driving passion to share with his audience his immense delight in Border history and geography. It is perhaps for this reason--his zest in the subject for its own sake--that Scott's antiquarianism seems to be merely realistic reconstruction rather than symbolic mode, as is the medievalism of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, for instance, or *The Eve of St. Agnes*. Surely, however, accuracy and enjoyment do not preclude the use of historical material to express philosophical ideas.

Of particular importance both to the structure of the poem and to its themes is the alternation between the Minstrel and his story. It would be hard to exaggerate the effect of the figure of the Minstrel on the reader: the features of the poem we remember most clearly are not the convolutions of the main plot, but the Minstrel--his character and his situation--and a few isolated vivid passages, such as the description of Melrose by moonlight, or the famous patriotic stanzas which open Canto VI. These sections, moreover, are directly related to the Minstrel in that they voice his deepest feelings and commitments. The impact of the poem, then, comes not from the story, but from the way in which the story is told, from what Kroeber calls "the clumsiness of this rigid framework."¹⁵

A closer look at the structure of the poem, especially in relation to the Minstrel, will illustrate this point, as well as helping to reveal the central philosophical tendency of the work. The introductory lines of the *Lay* portray the Minstrel, "the last of all the Bards . . . / Who sung of Border Chivalry,"¹⁶ and his melancholy situation. He is depicted from the very outset as a man who has outlived his time: strangers are

in power, his art is despised, even outlawed (as propaganda for the old order, one assumes). The exact time of the framework of the poem is also established, by the allusion to the Glorious Revolution and the Minstrel's performance for "King Charles the Good," as late in the seventeenth century. The place is the Vale of Yarrow, where the Minstrel and his young companion--significantly "an orphan boy"--are given an unusually warm welcome by the Duchess in Newark Castle. After his needs have been attended to, the Minstrel offers to entertain the Duchess and her ladies. The attitude of his audience here and throughout the poem is quite significant: the ladies seem to indulge the Minstrel; although his superiors, they deign to listen to him. It is, in other words, the artist's privilege to perform, not the audience's to listen to him. For instance, when the Minstrel has trouble tuning his harp, "The pitying Duchess prais'd its chime,/ And gave him heart, and gave him time" (Introduction). Once he is performing, however, the bard's hesitation vanishes. What the "poet's ecstasy" accomplishes is transcendence of time:

The present scene, the future lot,
His toils, his wants, were all forgot;
Cold diffidence and age's frost,
In the full tide of song were lost.

It is also significant that it is not the memory of times past alone that lifts the Minstrel out of the present into timelessness; it is the very act of creation as well: "Each blank, in faithless memory void,/ The poet's glowing thought supplied." This lay, then, is no mere recitation of a memorized song transmitted to the performer by oral tradition--it is a living blending of old and new, of past incident and spontaneous expression. The Minstrel, in fact, is doing in his song what Scott does in the poem as a whole.

The first Canto creates the atmosphere of tension which pervades much of the poem. With an opening reminiscent of *Christabel*, and a section of dialogue between the Mountain and River Spirits similar to passages in *The Ancient Mariner*, this Canto is the most clearly influenced by Coleridge. Scott adds to this atmosphere of foreboding his own love of Border lore, and the combination is a curious one of supernatural prophecy and galloping incident, as William of Deloraine rides off to fetch the magical Book of Might from the tomb of the wizard Michael Scott. We are also introduced to the chief characters of the plot: the proud Lady of Branksome; her daughter Margaret; Margaret's lover Cranstoun, at feud with Margaret's clan; the young heir to the Barony; and the faithful if slow-witted William of Deloraine. William's ride to Melrose, which

climaxes the Canto, is justly praised for its sense of movement and vitality; but it is interesting that this effect is created almost by the very fact of repeated digression: for at each stage of the journey we are given some incident of local history associated with the surrounding landscape. Thus our sense of time is expanded one step farther: we are reading a poem (time present) written about a Minstrel (time past) who sings a lay about a Border raid (Minstrel's past) and includes allusions to the layers of history which are background to the story (characters' past). William's ride is a ride through *time* as well as space; and this intensifies the sense of motion, and makes this passage one of the best in the poem. William stops at Melrose, and so does the Minstrel, his courage failing. Revived by his audience's praise, he continues immediately with the story.

The opening of the second Canto is one of the most famous passages in the poem. As a set-piece describing the ruined Abbey by moonlight, it is indeed effective. However, taken in its proper context, it becomes more than a versified depiction of Melrose: it is central to the theme of the poem. First, the passage is addressed directly to the audience: theoretically, the Minstrel speaks to the ladies of Newark, but the lines seem to bear more than the Minstrel's voice. It is the reader, one feels, who is being instructed by the poet on the proper way to visit the Abbey: he is to see it in its most fitting setting, "the pale moonlight"(II.i), when the stonework seems not gray, as it does in the daytime, but stark black and white, and the sounds of the river and the owl are intensified by darkness:

Then view St. David's ruin'd pile;
And, home returning, soothly swear
Was never scene so sad and fair. (II.i)

Both Minstrel and poet are here speaking of the past itself, which must be approached in the appropriate spirit, and which holds sorrow in the very heart of its beauty. In a way, this scene is much like Keats's "Ode on Melancholy" where joy and grief are inextricably bound together, where "in the very temple of delight/ Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine." Here the theme is reversed: the melancholy scene holds within it the possibilities of strength and contentment; for we are, after all, to *return home* to our present lives, bearing with us the lessons taught by the ruined Abbey.

The poem plunges abruptly from the picture of the Abbey as it is now, in ruins, to the Abbey of the past, a seat of power, a scene of action. It remains, however, the place of death. Not only are William and the priest surrounded by tombs of

dead knights and rulers, but the very building is adorned with images of arrested life:

Spreading herbs, and flowerets bright,
Glisten'd with the dew of night;
Nor herb, nor floweret, glisten'd there,
But was carv'd in the cloister-arches as fair.
(II.viii)

Surely this is the nature of a work of art: to carve life into dead substance, so that the work outlives both subject and artist. But the passage goes on to become an even more specifically appropriate description of the poem of which it is a part:

And the pillars, with cluster'd shafts so trim,
With base and with capital flourish'd around,
Seem'd bunches of lances which garlands had bound.
(II.ix)

This could be taken as the perfect image of the Minstrel's craft and mission: to bind with the engaging garland of song the stern materials of the heroic past. So will history be softened and given artistic form, in order to please and have meaning for the modern audience.

The central incident of the second Canto, the opening of the tomb of Michael Scott, might signify another variation on the theme of time. It is repeatedly stressed that violation of Michael's tomb is in some way sinful, perhaps because it is not given to those who live in the present to encroach upon the life of the past, lest they be drawn in by its "glamour" and be prevented from returning to their proper sphere. It might be important, too, that Michael's might is in a book--that power lives in words, and that this power must not be misused, on pain of damnation.

The Canto ends with the *Christabel*-like meeting of Margaret and Cranstoun, and the introduction of the Dwarf-Page. This section is interrupted once by the Minstrel's comment that he is now too old to sing of love. In the concluding passage, the Minstrel falters again--but is given wine, which strengthens him. He laughs, as do the members of his audience, and again one has the curious sense that the old man is being humored. This is no stern and unbending bard, but a tired old man, whose art is failing him. We pity him; our respect for him comes not from his skill or his high seriousness, but from his loyal determination not to desert his calling.

In Canto III William and Cranstoun meet and do battle, and while returning the wounded William to Branksome, the Goblin

steals the Book. It is interesting that the spell Gylbin learns from the Book is one of illusion, giving him the power to make one thing appear to be another: "All was delusion, nought was truth" (III.ix). Certainly this is an accurate description of one who has so immersed himself in the book of the past or his own imagination that he loses touch with the objective realities of time and place.

The Minstrel has been gaining strength throughout the poem. The opening of Canto III has him singing confidently of love, a subject he felt incapable of treating only a few stanzas earlier. The concluding passage for the first time presents the Minstrel as "Master of the Song." When asked if he has any family, he gives more of his history, replying that his only son is dead. This makes him indeed the last of his race.

The allusion to his son naturally leads the Minstrel to the lament which opens Canto IV. This passage is extremely important to this study, as it presents the Minstrel's grief in terms of the passing of time, taking as its central image the River Teviot. The river is compared to "the tide of human time" (IV.ii) which, unlike the constant Teviot, reflects every change and sorrow in life. The Minstrel reconciles himself only partially, we feel, to the grief of mortality, by his pride that his son died in a cause worth fighting for, at the Battle of Killiecrankie. History proved it to be a lost cause, however; and perhaps it is not looking too deeply to see in this passage the suggestion of a recurrent theme in Scott: that he who does not reconcile himself to a changing world is doomed to destruction. Such characters as Roderick Dhu in *The Lady of the Lake* and Fergus MacIvor in *Waverley* are in effect paralled figures to the nameless son of the Last Minstrel.

The main part of Canto IV is taken up with the arrival of the various clans. There are two interesting digressions, however. One is the story of the Scotts of Eskdale. These are the forebears of the Lady of the audience, and the story is obviously inserted by the Minstrel to please her. This is a direct example of one of a minstrel's chief duties, that of retaining and transmitting the history of the family to which he is attached. Another reference to minstrels and their work comes at the end of the Canto. The Minstrel is commenting on the manner of the projected combat between Deloraine and Musgrave, and claims the authority of his teacher. He then goes on to grieve over the execution of his master, and over the fact that none of his fellow-students remains; he can no longer even be envious of his rivals: "For, with my minstrel brethren fled,/ My jealousy of song is dead" (IV.xxxv). So the Canto ends as it began, with a lament for the irretrievable past, the ineradicable grief.

The framing section again shows the audience as tolerant, praising "In pity half, and half sincere" (IV, epilogue) the Minstrel's ability to re-create such long-forgotten deeds. The suggestion here is interesting: the listeners do not consider the matter of the song important. It is the Minstrel who informs the Lay with meaning: his character and the associative patterns of his mind, coupled with his sense of duty to communicate, are what make the audience attend. Without the audience's approval, however, the poet himself is nothing. Poets are "A simple race! they waste their toil/ For the vain tribute of a smile" (IV, epilogue).

This light comment is deepened considerably by the opening stanzas of the following Canto. The subject of this section is the death of poets. Nature mourns when the poet dies--not of herself, but as the expression of the ghosts of the past, heroes and lovers to whom the poet had given life. The implication is that without the poet, they are no longer alive, since they are relegated to oblivion. The poet is the mediator between the dead past and the living present, and therefore, "All mourn the Minstrel's harp unstrung,/ Their name unknown, their praise unsung" (V.ii). This passage serves a dual function. First, it reminds us of the impending death of the old harper; but also it presents his motive for singing these stories which his audience has just suggested were forgotten, and even of no importance. The Minstrel's sacred duty is to make the past live in the present, as it must if the present is to be solidly linked to the rest of human history. Again, this is an apt description of the life of Sir Walter Scott.

Canto V brings the major action of the poem to a climax and a resolution. After a day of sport and revelry the combat between Deloraine and Musgrave takes place. The victorious Scottish combatant is revealed to be not William but Henry Cranstoun. The lovers are united, the young heir restored. Again, however, the Canto closes on a note of grief, a double lament for the fallen Musgrave, first spoken by his old enemy, Deloraine, then sung by a minstrel (V.xxix-xxx). In the framing scene which concludes the Canto, the Minstrel takes up the death march on the harp. The ladies admire his skill, and ask why he does not leave thankless Scotland and play for greater reward south of the Border. His anger is quick--not only because he is a patriot, but also because they seem to prefer his playing to his poem. To go to England would be to desert his country; merely to play the harp, and abandon the Lay, would be to betray his duty to his country's past.

The final Canto of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* has been criticized as an excrescence on the simple narrative, which seemed so neatly closed at the end of Canto V. Scott himself

said in a letter to Anna Seward: "The sixth canto is altogether redundant; for the poem should certainly have closed with the union of the lovers, when the interest, if any, was at an end. But what could I do? I had my book and my page still on my hands, and must get rid of them at all events. Manage them as I would, their catastrophe must have been insufficient to occupy an entire canto; so I was fain to eke it out with the songs of the minstrels." (I, 243) Although it is certainly true that in terms of narrative form Canto VI is a clumsy anomaly, it is nevertheless of great interest in terms of Scott's handling of his themes. Perhaps even because of its lack of connection to the main structure of the plot, it gave Scott an opportunity to write literally whatever came into his head, his only requirement being that he get the Book back to Michael Scott, and take care of the Goblin-Page. The things he does include, the ideas that came to him most vividly after finishing the main body of the poem, are therefore bound to be thematically significant.

The Canto begins, picking up from the preceding section, with the celebrated passage on patriotism:

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
 Who never to himself hath said,
 This is my own, my native land! (VI.i)

Like the lines on Melrose, this section is often quoted out of context, and so loses some of its force. For these stanzas are not about patriotism only, but about patriotism in its relation to poetry. No minstrel will sing of the man who does not love his country, "The wretch, concentrated all in self" (VI.i); and the poet himself is inextricably tied to the land which gave him birth. His country is his sustenance, and his duty is therefore chiefly to her. It is no accident that the people of Selkirk, when erecting a statue of their old friend and Sheriff, chose for the inscription the closing lines of this passage:

By Yarrow's stream still let me stray,
 Though none should guide my feeble way;
 Still feel the breeze down Ettrick break,
 Although it chill my wither'd cheek;
 Still lay my head by Teviot stone,
 Though there, forgotten and alone,
 The Bard may draw his parting groan. (VI.ii)

In spite of their unfortunate conclusion, these stanzas are obviously a sincere expression not only of the Minstrel's feeling but also of that of his creator. It has become clear,

I think, by this point in the poem that the author has come to identify himself in a very real sense with the Minstrel.

From the Minstrel's rumination on his solitary death, the poem moves easily to the songs of other minstrels of happier times, "The jovial priests of mirth and war" (VI.iii), with whose songs so much of the Canto will be occupied. At the wedding, three minstrels sing three songs of love. Albert Graeme's tells of the English lady who loved a Scot; Fitz-traver's (in Spenserian stanzas, with an opening strangely like that of *The Eve of St. Agnes*) tells of his master Surrey's magical vision of his beloved; and Harold of Orkney's is of a girl sailing to see her lover. In their presentation of star-crossed lovers and supernatural powers, all of these songs clearly reflect the central plot of the *Lay* itself. More interesting is the fact that each of the poems is about *unhappy* love: the English lady is poisoned by her brother; Surrey is fated to die by royal decree; the girl of Harold's ballad is drowned. These are surely strange subjects for what should be a joyous occasion.

When Michael Scott appears, genie-like, to summon Gylbin and retrieve his Book, the entire company is stunned. All swear to pray for the repose of the wizard's soul; the Lady even gives up dabbling in magic (VI.xxvii). We are reminded here of our first sight of Michael in his tomb, and of the sense of sin at the encroachment of the living on the dead, of the present on the past, which pervaded that vision. The end of the Canto significantly converts the marriage-feast into a pilgrimage to Melrose Abbey, where the group prays in repentance, and is blessed by the Abbot. The final stanza is a version of the *Dies irae*, the great "Hymn for the Dead" which sings, in fearful anticipation, of the Day of Judgment (VI. xxxi).

If this examination of the themes of time and art in the poem has been at all accurate, it must be clear that the nature of the final Canto is by no means accidental. The preoccupation with death at the greatest of the feasts of life is not unlike the opening of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, where the grim figure from another world stops the Wedding Guest and forces him to listen to his terrible story. The last scene of this poem is equally significant, in that it shows the living making their peace with the dead, while the deadly feud is ended by the marriage. The implication is that unless the ghosts of past enchanters are laid, the life of the present will become in some way corrupted. The concluding passage, describing the Minstrel's subsequent history, brings the same theme into the present of the poem: the Minstrel is given a cottage near Newark tower, and himself extends hospitality to travellers. In summertime he sings his songs, and

their music still serves to enchant those who chance to hear, so that they pause in their activity and are lifted momentarily out of their own and into another world and time:

Then would he sing achievements high,
 And circumstance of chivalry,
 Till the rapt traveller would stay,
 Forgetful of the closing day;
 And noble youths, the strain to hear,
 Forsook the hunting of the deer;
 And Yarrow, as he roll'd along,
 Bore burden to the Minstrel's song. (VI, epilogue)

Although he may sing in and of a twilight realm, the artist is at last in harmony with the world at large: he can rest content, being the past's representative but living and doing in the present. No longer is the river a blank and ominous reminder of the grievous tide of time, but a sympathetic, responsive part of the reconciled artist's vision of the world of the present and his role within it.

The Lay of the Last Minstrel shows Scott to be deeply concerned with the major themes of time and the function of art in the quest for timelessness. The history of its composition demonstrates the identification of the author with the artist as minstrel, or *makar*, even to the adjustment of the poem to suit his audience--particularly exemplified by the fact that the Countess of Dalkeith, who had requested a ballad about Gilpin Horner, was officially Scott's chieftainess. The poem itself bears out this notion, both in structure and content. The major themes that emerge, then, from a study of the poem prove to be Scott's own version of the Romantic ideas of time, change and death. The chief difference between Scott and other Romantic writers is that Scott, older when he wrote the *Lay*, his first long poem, than were Keats and Shelley when they died, and more of a solidly-rooted public figure than Byron or the Wordsworth of the major poetry, comes to a resolution of the dilemma. Believing that art is the servant, not the substance of life, Scott sees in it a means of reconciling the various levels of time which confuse our lives. Living, however, can only take place in the present. The past and the world of the imagination, closely linked ideas in Scott, are like the ruined Abbey and the Book of Might: they are part of the present world in that the past has given it birth, and the imagination gives it order and meaning. But just as important as recognizing their value, as we are reminded to do by the work of the artist, is to come to terms with their magic, to lay the ghosts of Michael Scott and his ilk, and live in the world, as does the Minstrel at the end of the poem. The poem

itself is like Melrose: it is a beautiful place to visit at night, it is enduring, but it is not to be confused with the true action of daylight; its purpose is to give us a sense of solid foundation in the past in order that we may live better in our proper time.

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NOTES

1. (Madison, 1960), pp. 168-87.
2. Ibid., p. 169. See also Edgar Johnson, *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown* (New York, 1970, 2 vols) I, 355.
3. Donald Davie, "The Poetry of Sir Walter Scott," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 47 (1961), 74.
4. Sir Walter Scott, "Introduction and Notes to *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*: Introduction to the Edition of 1830," *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. J. Logie Robertson (London, 1904), p. 52.
5. Ibid., p. 53.
6. *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson (London, 1932-7, 12 vols) I, 165-66. Further references will be to this edition and volume and page number will be inserted in the text.
7. Ibid., p. 243.
8. Ibid., p. 193-94.
9. Johnson, I, 213.
10. Ibid., p. 225.
11. Ibid., p. 205.
12. Kroeber, p. 171.
13. Scott, *Poetical Works*, p. 1.
14. Davie, p. 74.

15. Kroeber, p. 170.
16. Scott, *Poetical Works*, p. 1. All quotations from the poem, identified by section or by Canto and stanza numbers, are from this edition.