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*Ian Dennis*

## Rivalry and Desire in Scott's *Rob Roy*

"Can you do this?" said the young lady, putting her horse to a canter.

There was a sort of rude overgrown fence crossed the path before us, with a gate, composed of pieces of wood rough from the forest; I was about to move forward to open it, when Miss Vernon cleared the obstruction with a flying leap. I was bound, in point of honour, to follow, and was in a moment against at her side.

"There are hopes of you yet," she said.<sup>1</sup>

Walter Scott, long thought deficient in an understanding of strong emotion,<sup>2</sup> is in fact a penetrating interpreter of what René Girard, drawing on continental novelists later in this century, famously called triangular or "mimetic" desire. Indeed, it is very much through the processes of imitation, the dangerous complementarity of human desires at both the individual and national levels, that the Author of *Waverley* understands, and fears, romantic "passion."

A naïve young Englishman quarrels with his father in London and is sent north. Like his predecessor Edward Waverley, Frank Osbaldistone is in need of experience, of improvement, of some *eclaircissement* of his identity and destiny. And like another of Scott's protagonists, *Old Mortality's* Henry

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*, VII, 67-8, ch. 6. Volume and page references for Scott are to the "magnum opus" edition (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1829-33). Henceforth *Rob Roy*.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Harmondsworth, 1962), p. 38, or H. J. C. Grierson, *Sir Walter Scott, Bart.: A New Life* (London, 1938), p. 159.

Morton, he lays himself open to become an object of the competing desires of others because of his own hunger, his explicit desire to be something other than he is. Frank wants, at least at first, to be a poet, not a junior partner in the family firm. Mainly he wants to be something. His journey is the manifestation of this quite normal aspiration, and produces the usual object of motion and apparent solution to the problem: a young woman for him to fall in love with, to arouse him to be what he aspires to be, to show him, through her reciprocated love, who he is.

*Rob Roy*, however, is a memoir, told in the first person, and its retrospective point of view colors the hero's quest with a mood of doom and futility, a mixing of memory and desire. The first words heard when Frank encounters his future wife Diana Vernon are, "Whoop, dead! dead!" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 64, ch. 5) and nearly the last words of his narrative convey the melancholy revelation that, as the aged man writes, she is indeed dead and gone. This sadness is not extraneous to an otherwise happy love story, not merely the function of the particular moment of narration. Rather, a perspective of lost felicity is connected thematically and structurally to the development of the love narrative, a narrative in which Frank's object of desire, instead of drawing closer to attainment, seems from joyful beginnings to draw steadily away from him, to recede in a series of what Jane Millgate notes are "increasingly painful" partings, "a kind of hierarchy of loss."<sup>3</sup> This progress into ever-greater risk for an ever-diminishing hope of reward is intimately related to the escalating violence of rivalrous desire—the essence of passion itself—into which Frank is inexorably pulled from the moment he accepts Die's challenge-cum-invitation to try to realize himself and his desires through her.

In one sense the process has already begun in London, where Frank's first rival—for the determination of his own identity and desires—is his mercantile father, who demands that his son want what he himself wants and sets his eminently English self and profession in opposition to the muse, Ariosto, and the rest of what he perceives, perhaps accurately, to be Frank's French influences. This is the first form of a triangle which will proliferate throughout the narrative, substituting, among other things, the terms "honour" and "credit," the past and future tenses, and a series of opposing individuals for the rival forces which struggle over Frank's allegiance. These various rivals, however—and this gives the book both insight and difficulty—tend to lose, rather than increase, their clarity of difference, even as the violence of confrontation intensifies. Clashing cultures or modes of life—Scott's signature theme—undergo in the central portion of *Rob Roy* a curious exchange of qualities, a mutual modification, hinted broadly in the doubling of opposed characters and traits. Osbaldistone Sr., for example, the modern and supposedly sober man of business, is revealed as an adventurer as rash as his nephew and enemy Rashleigh, the

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<sup>3</sup>Walter Scott: *The Making of the Novelist* (Toronto, 1984), p. 141. Henceforth Millgate.

dangerously similar man of calculation, also infinitely cautious and precise in tactics but equally reckless in strategy. Rob Roy, the king of honor, and Nicol Jarvie, the champion of credit, not only are related, not only participate in the an exchange of favors and mutual compliments, but are brought to exhibit each other's defining characteristics, the Highland cateran dutifully settling his monetary accounts and pondering the idea of sending his sons into trade, while Bailie Jarvie circumvents his precious Lowland law to protect a blood relation and takes up a hot poker to do battle in a Highland row. And if credit or the future, in the normal linear sense, will certainly win out, the interplay of progress and loss in the narrative's time scheme, its elegiac quality, also complicates the temporal opposition in another way.

At the core of all struggles and oppositions in *Rob Roy*, however, structuring all relationships and distributing all identities, seeming for a time even to determine history itself, is its love story. Critics have often noted that *Rob Roy* is not *Waverley*, that it is more private. One might go further and say that, of all Scott's novels, it is the most centrally concerned with the nature of sexuality, selfhood and love. As he first approaches his uncle's Northumberland estate, Frank begins to associate the north, hitherto the territory of malignant nursery-tale Scotchmen, with his own identity. This, he seems suddenly to discover, is "my native north" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 61, ch. 5) and "the abode of my fathers," presided over by the impressive family seat amidst its "Druidical grove" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 62, ch. 5). The northern setting itself seems to promise a new energy, a new authenticity. The streams not only flow more actively and invitingly, but they now "more properly deserve the name" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 61, ch. 5) of streams: names and things come into phase, into identity, or at least so Frank eagerly imagines. But at the same time another note is remembered: a little like the cliffs that rose ominously after the young Wordsworth in the "troubled pleasure"<sup>4</sup> of his stolen boat, the Cheviots rise before Frank as he advances, "gaining, by their extent and desolate appearance, an influence upon the imagination" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 61, ch. 5). Out of this landscape rush a doomed fox, pursuing dogs with attendant carrion crow, Frank's indistinguishable and bestial cousins and, as a "vision" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 63, ch. 5), dressed like a man, riding with the men, long black hair streaming on the breeze, his future and late lamented wife Diana.

Tantalizingly—the memory of a lost moment of possibility—everything seems assembled for Frank: homeland, bride, true selfhood. Of course, there are fences to be jumped. "Can you do this?" A sexual invitation, surely, but also an invitation to *be*—to be one of them, the northern, fox-hunting brethren so much the opposite of his father and the other business-folk. Frank leaps; if it is so easy, Frank can. But as soon as he lands on the other side he finds he has committed himself to an incessant struggle to define and maintain these

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<sup>4</sup>*The Prelude* (1850), 1.362.

new desires, this new self. He is rapidly assigned a series of parodic identities: "duteous knight" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 71, ch. 5), de facto horse groom, forlorn stranger. Osbaldistone Hall dwindles to "Cub-Castle" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 68, ch. 5), resembling an inferior college at Oxford or, worse, sign of the ultimate failure of all Frank's desires, a Catholic convent.

Higher than all other obstacles soon loom the disarming and dangerous manners—indeed, the gender—of Die Vernon, and the corresponding manners and gender they rivalrously force upon Frank. If such opposites as honor and credit tend to blur in *Rob Roy*, so also do the sexes. Die's behavior towards him from the beginning is a potent mixture of sympathy and competition, of attraction and taunting rejection. "Be a man," she several times exhorts him, but she also constantly expresses her own desire for this role and wrests away from Frank any sense of control or capacity—in particular by denying him the information he needs to make sense of the situation—even as she urges upon him his masculine duty. In order for the story which *should* happen, *to* happen, Frank must somehow avoid being pursued by the dogs himself, must pick himself up from the strand upon which he has been "wrecked" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 66, ch. 5) and become a true huntsman. He must save Diana from the fate of the dark-haired heroine—chaste moon goddess—she both loudly proclaims to be hers and seems to defy with every other word and act. She demands and refuses to be saved. At Justice Inglewood's she saves *him*.

She dazzles Frank, of course, because she baffles him.<sup>5</sup> She incites and challenges his desire for male identity, competes with him for it, and leaves him unsure as to whether or not he should really want to win this competition. On the one hand, she takes up the position of his father, telling Frank he should not aspire to be different, and advising him to return to London. But at the same time she repeatedly makes clear that it is his gentleness, his non-typical maleness—if not his poetry itself—that distinguishes him in her eyes and forms the basis of their maddeningly imprecise "friendship," their "intimacy without confidence" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 238, ch. 16). In short, Die draws Frank into a triangle of their own, in which she plays two roles, both as the object of his desires and as a rival—for himself—whose "superior manliness" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 238, ch. 16) inflames those desires, and becomes itself a focus of his aspirations to make himself new. That she is thus offering herself as a mate and yet also as a model or double is the most unsettling consequence of the slyly punning "over-frankness of her manners" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 71, ch. 5). Should he make love to Diana Vernon, or imitate her? It seems impossible to do both, but of course both is what Frank attempts to do.

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<sup>5</sup>And not just Frank. This is one of Scott's most effective characterizations precisely because it has been able to engage readerly desires (mainly male) in just the same kind of dance. Die has had many admirers. W. M. Parker provides a thumbnail history of responses to her in his Preface to the 1962 Everyman edition of *Rob Roy*.

This peculiar—but somehow plausible and familiar—structure is shortly reinforced by the emergence of a figure Frank does not hesitate to call a literal rival: Die's cousin Rashleigh Osbaldistone. Although Rashleigh seems to be only the first of several men about whom Frank must be jealous—Father Vaughan and the mysterious visitor known as “his Excellency” replace him in turn—he is, in fact, “the one single individual, or the masculine sex” whom Frank burns to discover and who must be “at the bottom of Miss Vernon's conduct” (*Rob Roy*, VII, 249-50, ch. 17). He is all rivals—the others are of course doubles, and dissolve into a final blocking figure: Die's father. Rashleigh is the real opponent and, like Edward Waverley's rival Fergus, like Morton's Lord Evandale, he must die. He has been Diana's sexual pursuer—she provokingly tells Frank that she might have loved him—and his insinuations of this old ambition quicken Frank's own desire for her. For an evening, Frank falls under Rashleigh's spell, participates in an emblematic competition at piquet, and is seduced as Die was by his cousin's conversation, his imagination, by a “companion so fascinating” (*Rob Roy*, VII, 164, ch. 10) he can hardly tear himself away. Thus Rashleigh bids to replace Die as Frank's model and obstacle, inspiring mimetic hungers that must ultimately become fixed upon himself rather than on the ostensible object of his desire.<sup>6</sup> But soon the operation grows reciprocal—as Girard observes it will—and Rashleigh, undermined (despite himself) by Frank's attraction to Diana, starts hinting of renewed designs on their common object and treating Frank with increasingly pointed hostility.

As the triangle develops intensity, the signs of doubling and imitative behavior among the three principals also increase. Rashleigh's father, Sir Hildebrand, echoes Frank's father in thinking that his son's character has also been deflected by “French antics, and book learning” (*Rob Roy*, VII, 190, ch. 12). It turns out that Die may in good part be the creation, the mirror of the rival; Rashleigh has not only provided her with all her cultural attainments, and taught her to want such things in Frank, but apparently it is he who has tampered with her gender—deliberately setting out “to break down and confound in her mind the difference and distinction between the sexes” (*Rob Roy*, VII, 207, ch. 13)—and thus caused, in short, the triangular confusion that she and Frank are suffering from. Who then, in effect, is Frank really desiring? He veers, angrily decides Diana is a coquette, then, in what is clearly a displaced gesture, strikes Rashleigh physically. Wrenched from Rashleigh's orbit by Die's equally furious counterattack—simultaneously discrediting Rashleigh and reheating Frank's resentment of him as a sexual competitor—Frank's

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<sup>6</sup>The terminology is Girard's, initially from *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, 1965) and perhaps most fully explicated in his *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford, 1987). Book III of the latter work is most relevant to the current discussion.

attitudes switch polarities again, and he falls into undisguised enmity with this erstwhile model. Continuing north to Glasgow, he fights a duel with him—sparked off by “a home-taunt” (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 109, ch. 25) about Diana at the peak of a crescendo of personal insults—in the course of which he learns from Rashleigh the now mortal seriousness of their rage. He therefore tries to kill Rashleigh—after Rashleigh has first attempted to do the same to him.

The unfolding of this deadly process is made poignant by the degree to which Frank is conscious—in retrospect—of his own helpless slide into its maelstrom. Hard words like “jealousy” and “envy,” “rival” and “hate,” sprinkle his account. He cannot hide from himself the reasons he was so prematurely eager to “run Rashleigh Osbaldistone through the body all the while he was speaking” (*Rob Roy*, VII, 175, ch. 11), any more than he can deny watching the MacGregor eventually do the bloody deed itself in his stead. Killing Rashleigh in revenge for his betrayal of King James, a betrayal motivated by Rashleigh’s rivalry with Frank, Rob Roy by extension participates in the violent jealousy of the central triangle. Frank sees, above all, the direction in which he was headed as he began seriously to desire Diana, and that “to look that way were utter madness” (*Rob Roy*, VII, 178, ch. 11), the madness that does indeed overtake him in the Scottish highlands, the “*hysterica passio* of poor Lear,” a “paroxysm” of “bitter tears” (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 272-3, ch. 33). Genuine passion Scott implies, is a mortal matter, full of distinctly unpleasant truths.

Rashleigh has been criticized for being an artificial villain, the “spidery Jesuit of literary tradition,”<sup>7</sup> but his character makes more sense when he is placed in his triangular context, when he is seen as the rival whose machinations, whose boundless influence and depthless, infuriating fascination take on an almost hallucinatory power, at least from the perspective of the tormented lover who in this case is telling the story. What Rashleigh is in fact reported as doing—dishonoring financial bills, trying to seduce his handsome pupil, participating skillfully if recklessly in Jacobite plotting, and then changing sides—is not extravagantly or improbably evil. Or, at any rate, people as evil as Rashleigh Osbaldistone are not mere literary embellishments. But for Frank, and Die, he is the master puppeteer, the “great author of all ill” (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 106, ch. 25). His “few drops” of poison can “infect a whole fountain” (*Rob Roy*, VII, 198, ch. 13)—an image suggestive of the terrible contagion of passionate rivalry—and can certainly turn the narrative lurid and melodramatic. Indeed all the events and characters of a world teeming with incipient rebellion, with the energies of history, begin to be haunted by the central preoccupying relationship and its patterns. Frank starts to look for Die everywhere, expecting to find her at every turn, in the most improbably places—in prison,

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<sup>7</sup>Robert C. Gordon, *Under Which King? A Study of the Scottish Waverley Novels* (Edinburgh, 1969), p. 72.

in a remote Highland inn—so that when she does appear the event possesses a nightmarish, belated quality, as of an aching dream or memory of something which is irredeemably lost—as indeed in the context of his memoir it is. Similarly, Rashleigh's malignant influence begins to feel almost supernaturally pervasive. The whole rebellion is practically his doing, so he will boast, and so Frank is ready to believe, while its failure seems to stem from Rashleigh's turning on his former patron in jealous rivalry over Diana and over this patron's thwarting of his desire for vengeful destruction of Frank—another extension of the struggle.<sup>8</sup>

The propagation of figures who seem in different ways to mimic or double those of the central triangle is also part of this general effect,<sup>9</sup> and is most disturbingly seen in the ghastly parody of Die Vernon who looms over the ultimate extent of Frank's northward journey: Rob Roy's wife, Helen MacGregor. The scene in which Helen appears to Frank—an "apparition" (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 211, ch. 30) where Die was a vision—closely echoes Frank's first encounter with his own wife. In the primally barren Scottish Highlands, rather than the merely troubling Cheviots, once again appearing suddenly amongst men and where only men are expected, this is the huntress Diana taken several frightening steps further. Or, if Die is "the daughter of a Scotchwoman" (*Rob Roy*, VII, 162, ch. 10), this is her mother. Emerging from the threatening rocks as if part of them, like Diana black-haired, handsome and commanding, Helen too is a striking *mélange* of male and female signs: she has "masculine cast of beauty" imprinted both by "rough weather" and by "grief and passion," her plaid is worn in "the fashion of the women of Scotland" and yet "disposed around her body as the Highland soldiers wear theirs," capped by "a man's bonnet, with a feather in it, an unsheathed sword in her hand, and a pair of pistols at her girdle" (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 211, ch. 30).

No mere adolescent experiment in rivalrous identity, Helen's very being is made over into the form of vengeance, specifically for a wrong which Diana has been able to evade at Rashleigh's hands, but which is several times hinted at in Helen's past, both in the text of the narrative and in Scott's reference in his *Magnum Opus* Introduction to "a story" which "for the sake of humanity, it

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<sup>8</sup>Plotting is somewhat complicated at this point. Rashleigh's patron turns out to be Sir Frederick Vernon, Diana's father. The main thrust is that the progress of the domestic rivalry over Diana determines the larger, political struggle.

<sup>9</sup>As examples: the echoing of Diana and Helen has the effect of doubling Frank with Rob Roy, but may also suggest the sense in which Rob Roy and Osbaldistone Sr. are connected, as Frank's two fathers, pulling him in opposite directions, yet not without having their own similarities. Frank is united to Diana partly through their common plight with regard to mortally rivalrous and interfering parents. Diana's terrifying Scottish "mother" and her archaic and oppressive father are paired in Frank's literal nightmare, as the executioners of himself and Die.



is to be hoped" is a "popular exaggeration" (*Rob Roy*, VII, xxxvi). In brief, she has been "sair misguided" (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 131, ch. 26), or, for the reader with the stomach to look into the dark center of the story Scott is telling, raped. She too has been entangled in the violent triangle which takes form everywhere in *Rob Roy*, caught between her husband's honor and his creditors, between the claims of the past and the future. Vengeful hatred as intense as hers inevitably involves a doubling, a becoming of the male enemy. She is now totally a creature of struggle, swallowed by the endless regress of violent revenge. She is not a baffling but attractively passionate woman, endearingly taking up masculine postures and claiming masculine power in the cause of her own emancipation; she is a killer.

Perhaps the point of Frank's extended journey is to see this, whether it is an hallucination or not. He is given the opportunity, in short, not just to experience the madness of infinite loss, but also to glimpse the shape of his own passionate conflict expanded exponentially, following its inevitable logic, driven by the dynamism of violent emotions he has experienced himself. This revelation may be chastening, and practically useful, but it is not cheering. The death at Helen's hands of the hostage Morris may, in obscure ways, set Frank free. Shocked, he can, and does, step back, but the process continues without him, and he watches himself give up, irretrievably, at least as much as he has gained.

Revenge is uncontrollable and endless. Its insensate demands for total allegiance, its capacity to absorb and echo and invert every other feeling, as well as its interminableness—like the "dreary, yet romantic country" (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 317, ch. 36) which seems to be its natural habitat—become particularly apparent when one tries to pull away from it, when one is at least partly not of it. And perhaps this is particularly so for the older Frank, as he looks back also over time. Via the murderous Helen MacGregor, he receives yet another two-edged communication from Die, a ring of remembrance and loyalty—and the command to forget her. "Can she... imagine this is possible" he murmurs, seeming even at this instant to arrive at a more complete understanding of the terrible double bind of passion. "All may be forgotten," Helen brutally and inevitably answers his question, "all—but the sense of dishonour, and the desire for vengeance" (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 315, ch. 35).

As the north erupts he flees for London, dodging the fires of violence on every side. The problems he came up to solve either have been dealt with by others, or have become irrelevant. Diana has been sucked away into the inferno and Frank's father reclaims him for his own adventure, his own identity. Old distinctions, blurred by his involvement with northern passions, reassert themselves. Frank, after all, is a Whig. He does as he is told, which involves abandoning Jacobitism and acknowledging his Hanoverian self but also allowing the power of revenge—as well as of love and acquisition—to devolve upon the law. Only law can, or should, interrupt the otherwise endless struggle. Only law can, or should, legitimately kill.

But from the north creep down again the agents of the rival, earlier principle, to try to keep the cycles of revenge going—in their terms, to finish unfinished business. The rebellion has been suppressed, and in the process all the other heirs to Osbaldistone Hall eliminated; Frank returns to the scene of his first meeting with Diana not in his own right, but at his father's behest and as the passive functionary of the law. In angry revenge for his youngest son's treason, Sir Hildebrand has changed his will in favor of Frank. Rashleigh descends upon Frank, but his rogue attempt to employ a rascal attorney and ridiculous charges to destroy him and seize his inheritance is not sound, and would never have succeeded. It is true, in Frank's toneless words, that Rob Roy's sword-thrust "gave me access to my rights of inheritance, without further challenge" (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 377, ch. 39) but this does not really imply—as has been claimed<sup>10</sup>—that Frank's fortune and position ultimately depend upon such a lawless act of blood. Rob Roy does, after all, kill Rashleigh because Rashleigh is his enemy, and, in fact, as he says, Frank has "nothing to fear" (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 374, ch. 39). There are two copies of a legitimate will, and what has actually been avoided is a potentially long and wearying course of litigation which Frank and his father would have had no reason finally to lose. Frank's position depends on the efficacy of the law and upon the deaths of his cousins and uncle in the war fought to sustain the authority of that law. His position in the coming Whig world, like that of his father and Nicol Jarvie, depends upon the many legally legitimated acts of violence which have terminated the ethos succinctly expressed in the book's epigraph, Wordsworth's lines on Rob Roy: "the good old rule... That they should take who have the power / And they should keep who can."

Frank's position also depends upon his surrender of the ambitions with which he went north in the first place, upon his resignation of the place he claimed in its competitive, vengeful world when he responded to Die Vernon's challenge. He has taken another place now, on the sidelines. He can only record the final words of the man he once panted to kill, without comment, without engagement, without reciprocal emotion:

"I hate you!" he said, the expression of rage throwing a hideous glare into the eyes which were soon to be closed forever—I hate you with a hatred as intense, now while I lie bleeding and dying before you, as if my foot trode upon your neck"

"I have given you no cause, sir," I replied. (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 376, ch. 39)

Frank's words reflect the perspective of someone who has been able to distance himself, who has been pulled clear of the vortex of mimetic rage. Why, indeed, should Rashleigh hate him? Frank has had, in fact, little demonstrable effect in thwarting him. Others have done that, to the extent that Rashleigh

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<sup>10</sup>See Bruce Beiderwell, *Power and Punishment in Scott's Novels* (Athens, GA, 1992), p. 47.

hasn't done it to himself, especially through his rivalry with Frank. What has clearly happened now is that Frank's comparative indifference has given him, in Rashleigh's view, that maddening appearance of self-sufficiency and omnipotence which Frank formerly attributed to Rashleigh. Frank has become the rival, the obstacle, capable of denying every happiness. Rashleigh seems nearly to foam at the mouth as he lists the things he imagines Frank to have done:

"You *have* given me cause," he rejoined—"in love, in ambition, in the paths of interest, you have crossed and blighted me at every turn. I was born to be the honour of my father's house—I have been its disgrace—and all owing to you!" (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 376-77, ch. 39)

With the rivalry, however, has gone the value, the desire. "This," Frank has already mused in premonitory loneliness, "is the progress and the issue of human wishes!" (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 354, ch. 38). On the night of Rashleigh's death, in the last of their many partings, Die Vernon—like Morton's Edith Bellenden, pale and reduced from her former self—vanishes "like a meteor" (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 367, ch. 39), swept away by the final version of the triumphant rival, the father who even now is "aware and jealous" (*Rob Roy*, VIII, 359, ch. 38) of the despondent Frank's lingering desire for her, and who even—small, significant cruelty—uses his words to enflame that helpless desire. But it is a real rivalry no longer; Frank has capitulated, withdrawn. If she does eventually fall back into his arms it is through no effort of his own or for that matter of hers, but only because her exiled father, his power over her intact, implausibly and inexplicably grants her a respite from the destined convent. Inexplicably, that is, unless by reason of Frank's very refusal to contend further. But the spiritless paragraph which summarizes the couple's married life and announces Frank's bereavement suggests that this is no victory. That the marriage is dealt with in this way does not so much indicate a compliance with convention, the distortion of a story which should have left the two apart, as it signifies the death of desire, the emptiness which is left when the powerfully animating rivalry which connected Frank and Die has been suppressed in favor of the law, their strange doubling in favor of the arbitrarily differentiated genders male and female. Intense sexuality cohabits with violence and the breakdown of such distinctions: this too is part of the dark meaning of passion.

National passion is not exempt from these processes. Long before Frank first crosses its borders Scotland seems to hover over the narrative, as an almost obsessive topic of conversation, an occasion of rivalrous argument between Die and Rashleigh, the subject of Frank's dreams. Die points to its hills in the distance as the natural place of refuge for the outlaw she at that moment thinks Frank must be. The Scotsmen "Campbell" and Andrew Fairservice are closely scrutinized by Frank for signs of their national peculiarities. *Rob Roy*,

like almost all the Scottish Waverley novels, is in good part about the differences, similarities, and ongoing relationship between Scotland and England.

Scotland is thus, almost necessarily, a player in the triangular love story which is so important to this novel, and her position in that structure is thematized as part of the larger relationships of history. English Frank's marriage to half-Scotch Die is an echo of the reconciliatory marriage which concludes both *Waverley* and such precursors as Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), and Frank's and Rashleigh's rivalry for Die plays out the drama of 1715 in several familiar if not entirely satisfactory ways. None of the complexities of the situation developed in the earlier Waverley Novels, of course, are left behind; *Rob Roy* is surely written for "the initiated Waverley reader."<sup>11</sup> Such a reader would be fairly dexterous by now in handling Jacobites and Whigs, Lowlands and Highlands, the allegory of progress and loss, the conflict of reason and loyalty, or even that master theme of "the loss that gains" which Judith Wilt places at the center of Waverleyan mythology.<sup>12</sup> More subtle, and more disconcerting, however, is the way in which the new novel continues these themes and yet connects them to a love story whose revelatory functions and allegory of reconciliation are both deformed by interference from violent personal passions. Edward Waverley was a naïve but a clear-sighted observer, and his point of view was furthermore mediated by a comparatively wise and detached authorial voice. Frank Osbaldistone is not nearly so reliable a "viewing-glass."<sup>13</sup> Visions, apparitions, nightmares and tormented imaginings are major features of a text in which, as Alexander Welsh points out, things more often "seem" than are.<sup>14</sup> The persistent doubling of characters and of situations, the disturbing inclusion of far more than the Scott average of person-to-person violence, especially violence against helpless people, and the unleashing of negative emotions—there are few expressions of hatred in Scott as stark as the final words of Rashleigh quoted above—disrupt the sense of place, of exemplary human cultures, of "great historical trends."<sup>15</sup> Scotland, especially, seems to be as much a vivid but untrustworthy projection of Frank's feverish expectations, his anguish, his troubled memory, as Frank's narrative is a means of describing or dramatizing Scottish conditions in the year 1715.

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<sup>11</sup>Millgate, p. 133.

<sup>12</sup>*Secret Leaves: The Novels of Walter Scott* (Chicago, 1985), p. 20.

<sup>13</sup>Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore, 1974), p. 94.

<sup>14</sup>Welsh's observations are extended generally to Scott's "tentative fiction" but are made as part of a discussion of *Rob Roy* and are particularly appropriate to this work. *The Hero of the Waverley Novels* (New Haven, 1963), pp. 189-92.

<sup>15</sup>George Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. H. and S. Mitchell (London, 1962), p. 35.

Scotland is, as it was in *Waverley*, a place of heightened, prestigious experience. For Frank, this means it is a reservoir of intensified emotion, and of the old or counter-ethic of revenge; it is the realm of the admirable shadow-king Rob Roy<sup>16</sup>—among other things a kind of hyper-masculine guardian angel, or model, for a young man lost in gender crisis. But it is also, and not coincidentally, the bleak land of his frightening wife, who is the threat of what the young man's own fascinatingly half-masculine beloved might be, the specter of untethered gender and sexually motivated violence run amok. Frank's Scotland is uncanny, the site of unconscious struggle, out of whose darkness loom muffled male figures who carry away—again and forever—the woman desired above all things. It is a place at the edge of anarchy, where motiveless fights may break out at any moment, where kidnapping or arrest are always imminent, and where maddening servants never do what they are told and yet cannot be gotten rid of. It is also, perhaps no more reliably, a place of almost preternatural solidity and civic virtue—of stone houses in Glasgow more substantial than the perishable brick of England—the world of Nicol Jarvie, where honor and credit can combine, and decency can determine behavior without sacrifice of profit. But above all else, Frank's Scotland is strange, foreign, and different.

In short, Scotland is to an unsettling degree what Frank's passions make it, a creation of his desires and fears, of his expectations and counter-expectations, of his early naiveté and his grieving memories. It is implicated in the violence of those passions, and in the rivalries which mushroom out of the little private struggle over Die Vernon at Osbaldistone Hall. *Rob Roy* apparently reflects a distinct stage in Scott's ongoing investigation of what Scotland looked like through foreign eyes, of its identity—its difference—as the object of imagined foreign perceptions and desires. One can well imagine how this line of reflection emerged for a writer whose simpler, early enthusiasm for his own country's culture and poetry catapulted him into fame in England, forcing into the foreground the question of the role played by a huge, attentive—even addicted—foreign audience in his own relationship with his national material. He seems to have been led now to experiment with an intensely personal and limited point-of-view, and through this perhaps to ponder the very nature and operation of desire itself. If he and his fellow-Scots created themselves and their new Scottish identity in the widening world at least partly through the imagined desires of others—an operation, as I argue elsewhere,<sup>17</sup> in which both the central action of *Waverley* and such episodes as George IV's donning of highland kilts on his celebrated state visit in 1822 were implicated—did something similar not also happen at the personal level, where individual sex-

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<sup>16</sup>See Wilt's discussion in *Secret Leaves*, 49-70.

<sup>17</sup>*Nationalism and Desire in Early Historical Fiction* (Basingstoke, 1997).

ual desires or the desire for individual identity were concerned? Were the two processes not just similar, but linked? And where did they lead? Perhaps, in fact, to look this way was a formula, at both levels, for endless frustration, for inevitable disappointment and even madness. Not because one could not have one's object, but because having it might not finally be the point.

Set against Scott's preferred modes of interaction with the Other—marriage, federal political relations<sup>18</sup>—were desires embodying the emotional logic of separatism: a passion full of ever more feverish demands for an ultimately differentiated self, but even thus encountering ever diminishing resistance, indicative of maddening indifference on the part of the fascinating Other. And thus a passion requiring ever more violent demonstrations of a distinctiveness less and less believed in and less and less real; a passion which at last does indeed leave the self alone—doubled but alone—helplessly trying to call on the wells of memory, monuments, martyrs, its old rivalrous hatreds and loves, for the energy, the sense of meaning, it has lost. Frank's retreat from such desire, and the replacement of Rob Roy's good old rule with Osbaldistone Sr.'s law, were necessary for the very survival of self, of nation, even of sanity. Here indeed was the source of Scott's deeply felt "prejudice against getting,"<sup>19</sup> against desire itself, even in love. This replacement, or retreat, furthermore, was as much a perennial necessity as a specific and inevitable historical development. The old Highland cultural system presumably had its own means of survival, of limiting violent feuds, for example, before they spread to destroy the entire community. But this was only ever a temporary order, dependent on isolation. The arrival of the Other, the finally ineluctable union or Union, like the injection of a rival into an unstable sexual relationship, required a wholesale abandonment of the status quo and a reimagining of the basis of collective life. And nothing guaranteed, either for a nation or for individuals, that such an adjustment would not need to be made again.

But no one was to expect, even as such difficult accommodations were achieved, that the old hungers would cease entirely to gnaw, or that the promises of desire—especially remembered desire—would ever quite be equaled by the rewards of peaceable dominion. The permeating sorrow of *Rob Roy* suggests that even if this loss preserves, it can never whole-heartedly be said to gain.

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<sup>18</sup>For Scott's explicit approval of federative over incorporating union, see *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. John Gibson Lockhart, XXV, 66. *Tales of a Grandfather* (Edinburgh, 1834-46).

<sup>19</sup>Welsh, pp. 120-21.