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Walter Scott's Advent as Novelist of Manners

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Walter Scott’s Advent
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On New Year’s Day of 1829 the world’s most prominent novelist, in a letter to the Bishop of Llandaff, gave his reasons for not writing a story about Owen Glendower. Sir Walter Scott, by that time the acknowledged author of some two dozen novels published during the preceding fifteen years, began by praising the suggested subject: it provided a contrast between British and Norman cultures, a warrior “assuming the character of a Necromancer,” and a “gallant resistance” affording “as many grand situations as the romantick country which they inhabit contains beautiful localities all of which... are perhaps a little in my way.”

Here in brief was the popular conception of what a historical novel should be. “But,” the novelist continued, “the misfortune is that I am totally ignorant on the subject not merely of Welch history... but the far more indispensable peculiarities of language habits and manners... If we have not a full and clear view of ones subject... we may perhaps be able to sketch out an outline of a story but I should doubt extremely the possibility of being able to colour it according to nature so as to acquire that distinctive individuality which ought to distinguish so interesting a topick... I am no longer as at 25 years old ready to walk thirty miles a day or ride a hundred to get hold of an old ballad or tradition and without such exertions one can do little for it is in out of the way corners and among retired humourists that men find whatever can be found of national manners.”

A sharp distinction is sometimes attempted between the “romantic” historical novel and the “realistic” novel, of


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manner.² Scott, though traditionally the father of the former type, is credited with occasional excellence in the "manners" style, and his remarks to the bishop recognize the mastery of manners as requisite to success in his special field. Thus it becomes desirable to scrutinize his purposes and initial achievements in the area of manners.

Unfortunately, scrutiny is at the outset clouded by confusion as to what the term "manners" actually denotes. Everybody talks about the "novel of manners," but almost no one attempts to define it. And it cannot safely be assumed that there is any tacit consensus that makes definition unnecessary. If there exists anywhere an analysis of the methods and function of the novel of manners as a literary type, it seems to have been generally overlooked. Without attempting any universal definition, we may at least inquire what Scott himself meant by "manners," whence he derived his conception of the importance of manners to the novel, and what contributions manners made to his own first novel, over and above the "distinctive individuality" which he later specified. On the many occasions when Scott writes the word "manners," it is clear that he is referring to attributes not of an individual as such but as a member of a society — for example, the society of the Highland clans as it survived to the middle of the eighteenth century. The frequent linking of "manners" with some other term suggests that the category of social attributes must be broad enough to include particulars of economic, political, and social organizations.³ "Manners" are paralleled to "domestic customs" and "usages:" they are perhaps reflected superficially in the typical "costume" of a people, but they also seem to extend their influence inward to affect "habits of thinking" and "traits of . . . characters," and thus become extremely relevant to the purposes of the serious

² Scott himself insists on distinguishing between "Novels" and "Romances and Tales." Letters, II, 119.

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novelist. “Manners” derive their peculiarity, their distinction, from the particular time, place, and culture in which they develop; in Scott’s practice that time is almost always in the past; and (at least throughout his early career) he felt that first-hand knowledge of the local language and terrain was a prerequisite to a satisfactory grasp of “manners.”

The examples of his use of the term justify the conclusion that by “manners” Scott meant the activities, behaviour, and attitudes of members of a distinct social group. “Manners” in this sense suggest the Latin “mores,” the French “moeurs,” though Scott almost always avoids any suggestion that they are to be used as a basis for moral judgments. The works of Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, and other writers whom he admired, as well as his own novels, are brimming with examples of such “manners.” One of many definitions to be found in the New English Dictionary comes close to confirming Scott’s use: “The modes of life, customary rules of behaviour, conditions of society, prevailing in a people.” Lionel Stevenson, in his recent The English Novel (Boston, 1960), consistently writes “manners” to indicate such phenomena, and it is thus that the term is to be understood in the following pages.

Scott had recognized the importance of manners as an ingredient in his particular brand of poetry, and it has been made clear that he later realized that a mastery of manners was likewise essential to success in prose fiction. In the works of those novelists, past and contemporary, whom he singles out for praise, or whose influence is flatteringly apparent in his own works, the exploitation of manners is often a dominant characteristic even where he does not specifically refer to it. Some of these, to be sure, subject manners to moral valuation, or highlight them as a source of comedy or satire in the style of certain examples of the dramatic comedy of manners. Among others, manners are displayed for their own sake, or as an aid to suspension of disbelief, or as a determining influence on

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5 Letters, I, 309, 345, 347; III, 104; IV, 166, 298 f., 418; XII, 278 f.
6 E.g., on 26 April 1808, referring to Marmion and other poems: “My plan . . . has always been . . . to exhibit ancient costume, diction, and manners”—Letters, II, 35. A week later George Ellis wrote to Scott of the poet’s “intention . . . of making that story [Marmion] subservient to the delineation of the manners which prevailed at a certain period of our history”—L Lochhart, p. 139.
character. But whatever the motive, they are there, and there Scott saw them.

Of his predecessors in prose fiction, and of those contemporaries who published early enough, nine at least may be named whose writings won Scott's regard and influenced his theory and practice of the novel: Defoe, Fielding, Smollett, Walpole, Fanny Burney, Charlotte Smith, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, and Susan Ferrier. In view of a notion current today that Scott's claim to dubious fame rests on his development of the historical novel from the eighteenth century Gothic romance, it is surprising to note the absence from this list of such names as Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliffe, and M. G. Lewis. 7 In their place we find a group of writers (the latter five—all women) whom we should label primarily novelists of manners, while of the others the three earliest all incorporate large swatches of manners material in their narratives, and Scott himself repeatedly insists that a prime object of Walpole in The Castle of Otranto was "to draw such a picture of domestic life and manners during the feudal times, as might actually have existed." 8

7 There is a passing complimentary reference to Reeve and Radcliffe in the memoir of Charlotte Smith prepared by Scott for John Ballantyne's projected Novelists' Library—Miscellaneous Prose Works, IV, 69. But in essays specifically devoted to each of them in the same series, Scott is critical of their achievements: "In The Old English Baron... all parties speak out much in the fashion of the seventeenth century... It cannot compete with that [interest] which arises out of... a strict attention to the character and manners of the middle ages." "The species of romance which Mrs. Radcliffe introduced, bears nearly the same relation to the novel that the modern anomaly entitled a melodrama does to the proper drama."—Miscellaneous Prose Works, III, 532 f., 559.

Scott's choice of authors for representation in the Novelists' Library, avowedly a money-making scheme, is not necessarily evidence of his critical regard. Note, for example, his actual contempt for Cumberland, and his comment on Richardson: "a heavy dog, but I fear we cannot do without him"—Letters, II, 170, 175, f. and n. 1; VII, 15.

Miscellaneous Prose Works, III, 513-24. A selection, by no means exhaustive, of explicit statements of Scott's regard for each of the nine novelists is given below. While reading this evidence, it is well to bear in mind that Scott's loyalty toward friends and compatriots frequently betrayed him into an uncritical admiration for their writings. On a later page of this article there will be a further treatment of the influence of Walpole and Edgeworth, in greater detail.

Defoe — "peculiar charm... carries the reader through... De Foe's compositions, and inspires a reluctance to lay down the volume till the work is finished;... the desire, not generally felt in the perusal of works of fiction, to read every sentence and word upon every leaf." Miscellaneous Prose Works, IV, 261. See also John R. Moore, "Defoe and Scott." Publications of the Modern Language Association of America. XVI (1911), 710-15

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Scott's recognition of the manners elements in the works of these novelists—and in many others with which he was familiar—is a reflection of his inveterate personal respect for "the ordinary business of the world, . . . the exercise of the useful and domestic virtues, . . . the temper of well-ordered and well-educated society, . . . the career of simple and commonplace duty." This respect is of course reflected in his preferred way of life at Abbotsford and in Edinburgh:

I wish you could . . . light on us in an Abbotsford evening with cousins by the score & piper and dancers and old songs & a little good claret and whisky punch & people contented to be happy as their fathers were before them upon the same occasion.10

The same reverence for established manners underlies the whole massive structure of loyalties—family, feudal, religious; economic social, political—through which his personal integrity operated; it even penetrates his most intimate relationships, as on the occasion of Lady Scott's death:

The Highlanders speak of their dead children as freely as of their living, and mention how poor Colin or Robert would have acted in such or such a situation. It is a generous and manly tone of feeling—and, so far as it may be adopted without affectation or contradicting the general habits of society, I reckon on observing it.11

And of course it predetermined the whole line of his literary development from antiquary to poet to novelist.

Scott's youthful raids on Border territory were inspired by a mixture of motives: love of exercise, adventure, and fun; pride

Fielding—"While passing from the high society to which he was born, to that of the lowest and most miscellaneous kind to which his fortune condemned him, . . . he acquired the extended familiarity with the English character, in every rank and aspect, which has made his name immortal as a painter of national manners. . . . Joseph Andrews continues to be read, for the admirable pictures of manners which it presents."

Miscellaneous Prose Works, III, 78, 94.

Smollett—"Roderick RANDOM may be considered as an imitation of Le Sage, as the hero fits through almost every scene of public and private life, recording, as he paints his own adventures, the manners of the times. . . . The wonderful knowledge of life and manners . . . is evinced in the tale of Count Fathom, as much as in any of Smollett's works." Miscellaneous Prose Works, III, 126, 127.

Walpole—"We refer the reader to the first interview of Manfred with the Prince of Vicenza, where the manners and language of chivalry are finely painted. . . . The applause due to . . . a
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of race and region; thirst for glamour; inquisitiveness as to an outmoded culture. Much of the booty he brought home was later (1802) incorporated in Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border. For this collection he wrote a lengthy "Introduction," beginning with a summary of Border history, of which he says:

In these hasty sketches of border history, I have endeavoured to select such incidents, as may introduce to the reader the character of the march-men, more briefly and better than a formal essay upon their manners. . . . It is, therefore, only necessary to notice, more minutely, some of their peculiar customs and modes of life.

Here follow twenty-two thoroughly documented pages descriptive of Border manners. At the end of his "Introduction" Scott mentions the critical apparatus designed to accompany the ensuing ballad selections:

In the notes and occasional dissertations, it has been my object to throw together . . . a variety of remarks, regarding popular superstitions, and legendary history, which, if not now collected, must soon have been totally forgotten. By such efforts . . . I may contribute somewhat to the history of my native country; the peculiar features of whose manners and character are daily melting and dissolving into those of her sister and ally.12

Obviously, the material that went into the editorial apparatus shared Scott's enthusiasm equally with the ballads themselves, and George Ellis quickly pointed out to the editor that Scott had taken advantage of his own "Introduction" to present a

tone of feudal manners and language . . . must be awarded to the author of The Castle of Otranto." Miscellaneous Prose Works, III, 323 f.

Fanny Burney—"Evelina and Cecilia are uncommonly fine compositions." Letters, III, 465. "A plan different from any other that the author [Scott] has ever written, although it is perhaps the most legitimate which relates to this kind of light literature . . . to give an imitation of the shifting manners of our own time, . . . daily passing round us. . . . Formidable competitors have already won deserved honours in this department. The ladies . . . gifted by nature with keen powers of observation and light satire, . . . from the authorship of Evelina to her of Marriage . . . including the brilliant and talented names of Edgeworth, Austin, Charlotte Smith, . . . have appropriated this province of the novel." The Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. (London, Nelson, 1901), Vol. XVII, St. Ronan's Well, "Introduction," pp. v f.

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body of documentary evidence in support of "your view of the state of manners among your Borderers, which I venture to say will be more thumbed than any part of the volume."13

In the meantime Scott had begun (c. 1799) his attempts at prose fiction with "the ambitious desire of composing a tale of chivalry, which was to be in the style of the Castle of Otranto, with plenty of Border characters, and supernatural incident."14 These first attempts—a fragmentary "Chapter 1" of *Thomas the Rhymer*, and *The Lord of Ennerdale*—in which, incidentally, manners are pretty well ignored except in the rituals of knightly service, were quickly abandoned, and he next tried his hand at sustained narrative composition in the verse of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), which "is intended to illustrate the customs and manners which ancienly prevailed on the Borders of England and Scotland. . . . The description of scenery and manners was more the object of the Author than a combined and regular narrative."15 But Scott had not renounced "the idea of fictitious composition in prose, though [he] determined to give another turn to the style of the work." By the time of his next attempt, his "early recollections of the Highland scenery and customs," along with his personal acquaintance "with many of the old warriors of 1745," had naturally suggested to him "that the ancient traditions and high spirit of a people, who, living in a civilized age and country, retained so strong a tincture of manners belonging to an earlier period of society, must afford a subject favourable for romance. It was with some idea of this kind that, about the year 1805, I threw together about one-third part of the first volume of *Waverley,* . . . having proceeded as far, I think, as the Seventh Chapter; . . . not . . .

Charlotte Smith—"We must have as many of Charlotte Smith's novels as we can compass—the 'Old Manor House' in particular."

"We should have all Charlotte Smith's very entertaining novels which are not property." "I thought of Charlotte Smith whom I admire very much." *Letters*, II, 120; VII, 15; X, 95.

Maria Edgeworth—"I liked Patronage excessively. . . . It will perhaps on the whole be less poignant, than some of her other works . . .—but in other respects I think it fully equals, and even in some degree excels it's admirable Predecessors—Indeed this Lady is one of the wonders of our age." "There is no person in the world of literature for whose name I have more sincere respect. . . . You have had a merit transcendent in my eyes."

"I will never believe but what she has a wand in her pocket and pulls it out to conjure a little before she begins to write those very striking pictures of manners."

*Letters*, III. 445; V, 147; VIII, 48. "Reading at intervals a novel . . . of that very difficult class which aspires to describe
beyond the departure of the hero for Scotland.” 16 Waverley was soon laid aside, and for some years Scott's chief creative energy was expended in long verse narratives, while the dream of recording Highland manners in verse continued to obsess him, even after The Lady of the Lake (1810). 17 Meanwhile, two circumstances nourished and conditioned in Scott the impulse toward prose fiction: the “well-merited fame of Miss Edgeworth, whose Irish characters have gone so far to make the English familiar with the character of their gay and kind-hearted neighbours of Ireland;” and Scott's undertaking (1807-8) to write a conclusion to Joseph Strutt's Queen-Hoo-Hall, a work “written to illustrate the manners, customs, and language of the people of England during the reign of Henry VI. “This concluding chapter... was a step in my advance towards romantic composition.” In his continuation Scott has gone a considerable way to carry out Strutt's intentions with respect to manners: for instance, the description of the gathering for the stag-hunt, the “lost” account of the wedding with “running at the quintain, and other rural games practised on the occasion,” and the mock sermon introduced “in compliance with Mr. Strutt's plan of rendering his tale an illustration of ancient manners.” But the “indifferent reception” of Queen-Hoo-Hall taught Scott to avoid “language too ancient” and “antiquarian knowledge too liberally” displayed, and persuaded him “that the manners of the middle ages did not possess the interest which I had conceived”—obviously, he was otherwise persuaded before undertaking Ivanhoe—and led him “to form the opinion that a romance, founded on a Highland story, and more modern

the actual current of society, whose colours are so evanescent that it is difficult to fix them on the canvass... The women do this better—Edgeworth, Ferrier, Austen have all had their portraits of real society, far superior to anything Man, vain Man, has produced of the like nature.” Journal, p. 145.

Jane Austen—“Miss Austen, the faithful chronicler of English manners, and English society of the middling, or what is called the genteel class.” Miscellaneous Prose Works, IV. 69. “Miss Austen’s [novels] are inimitable.” Letters, X. 96. “Keeping close to common incidents, and to such characters as occupy the ordinary walks of life, she has produced sketches of... spirit and originality. . . . The turn of this author’s novels... affords... a pleasure nearly allied with the experience of [the reader’s] own social habits.” Walter Scott, review of Emma, Quarterly Review, XIV (1815), 195, 200. Susan Ferrier—“The living excellence of... the Authoress of Marriage and the Inheritance.” Miscellaneous Prose Works, IV. 64. “He spoke with praise of Miss Ferrier as a novelist.” Lockhart, p. 738.
events, would have a better chance of popularity.\textsuperscript{18} In 1810, therefore, he revived the project of \textit{Waverley}; the title was included in John Ballantyne and Co.'s list of "New Works and Publications for 1809-1810," but James Ballantyne's lukewarm enthusiasm for the 1805 fragment of six chapters only — oddly enough, he found the "air of antiquity . . . too great" for a mere "sixty years since" — was insufficient to rouse Scott to carry on the endeavour.\textsuperscript{19}

But all during this time, a nagging desire "to say something about poor Charley" was haunting Scott's consciousness;\textsuperscript{20} until, apparently around Christmas-time, 1813, the impulse was reinforced by economic pressure, the chance recovery of the abandoned fragment, and (possibly) the impending anniversary of the first Jacobite rising; and the first volume (Chapters I-XXXIII) of \textit{Waverley} was completed. Although publication of the complete novel was announced on 1st February, 1814, Scott was distracted by other commitments and did not write the remaining two volumes until June of the same year—in three weeks. The whole was published on 7th July, 1814.\textsuperscript{21}

Our response to Scott's own account of his emergence as novelist outlined above as found, mainly, in his "General Preface" ("Abbotsford, 1st January, 1829") to the \textit{Waverley} novels, is at first one of scepticism, so pat does his hindsight appear. But his circumstantial story of the recovery of the abandoned fragment of \textit{Waverley}, the contemporary evidence supplied in "Appendix No. I." and "Appendix No. II." and his observations elsewhere on \textit{The Castle of Otranto} and on the novels of Maria Edgeworth are very compelling. And the

\textsuperscript{9} Letters, II, 278.
\textsuperscript{10} Letters, X, 144 f. See also Lockhart, pp. 428, 429, 435, 443.
\textsuperscript{11} Journal, p. 173.
\textsuperscript{12} Walter Scott, \textit{Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border} (London, 1839), "Introduction," pp. xxix l, iv i.
\textsuperscript{13} Lockhart, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{14} He writes in the "General Preface" of 1819, "About this time (now, alas! thirty years since) . . . the commencement of the foundation which had so nearly taken place in the first year of the century being postponed for fifteen years later [i.e., 1814]: . . . the time of composition . . . about the end of the eighteenth century." Works, I, \textit{Waverley}, "General Preface" and "Appendix No. I." pp. xvii, xxxii-xl.
\textsuperscript{15} The Poems and Ballads of Sir Walter Scott (6 vols., Boston, 1900), "Preface." I, xxxvii. Scott's basic pre-occupation was immediately confirmed in the \textit{Annual Review}, 1814: "The chief excellence of \textit{The Lay} consists in the beauty of the descriptions of local scenery, and the accurate picture of customs and manners among the Scottish Borderers at the time it refers to." Poems, I, xxxvii, n. 1.

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implication of these testimonies is increasingly clear: that Scott was preparing himself for the rôle of novelist of manners.

We have seen that Scott’s earliest avowed model for prose fiction was Horace Walpole’s notorious novel, Now the author of that preposterous concoction had from the first insisted on the importance therein of the manners ingredient:

Belief in every kind of prodigy was so established in those dark ages, that an author would not be faithful to the manners of the times who should omit all mention of them. 22

In the “Preface” to the second edition, published in the following year, Walpole lays claim to having created a new species of romance, . . . an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance: the ancient and the modern. . . . In the latter, nature is always intended to be . . . copied with success. . . . The great resources of fancy have been damned up, by a strict adherence to common life.

But the effect of common life is achieved, it appears, through the plausibility of the characterization:

The author . . . wished to conduct the moral agents in his drama according to the rules of probability; in short, to make them think, speak, and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions. 23

The claim of novelty is immediately repeated in a letter to Joseph Warton:

I am not quite sure whether its [The Castle's] ambition of copying the manners of an age which you love may not make you too favourable to it. . . . In fact, it is but partially an imitation of ancient romances; being rather

16 Waverley. “General Preface,” pp. xvii f. Scott is guilty of a rather unusual inaccuracy when he states here that the favourable impression made by The Lady of the Lake (not published till 1810) was partly responsible for his first attempt at Waverley.
17 Letters, I, 303, 512 f., 524, 547; II, 36; III, 115 f.; XII, 278 f., 284, 286.
21 Lockhart, 255 f.

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intended for an attempt to blend the marvellous of old
story with the natural of modern novels. In
Walpole's actual narrative, however, the jaded twentieth-
century eye recognizes precious little human nature, and of
manners in our sense the only examples to be found are in the
herald's challenge, the retinue of the Knight of the Gigantic
Sabre, and the table manners at the ensuing feast — unless the
comic relief of the servants' behaviour be admitted as represen-
tative of "common life."

A dozen years later, however, Clara Reeve presented her
Old English Baron as a follower of The Castle in terms that
indicate that she has swallowed Walpole's prospectus whole.
This Story is the literary offspring of the Castle of
Otranto, written upon the same plan, with a design to
unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of
the ancient Romance and modern Novel; . . . a
picture of Gothic times and manners . . . The Castle of
Otranto . . . is an attempt to unite the various merits
and graces of the ancient Romance and modern Novel.
. . . There is required . . . enough of the manners of
real life, to give an air of probability to the work.
. . . The book . . . is excellent in [this respect].

It would appear that Scott in his turn was more influenced
by what had been claimed for The Castle of Otranto than by
what had been actually illustrated in it. Scott's interest in
Walpole's book as a specimen of prose fiction — already aroused
in 1790, as we have seen above — was sustained over a long period.
In 1811 he published a critical "Introduction" to a new edition
of The Castle, containing the following glowing tributes:
Mr. Walpole's purpose was . . . to draw such a picture of
domestic life and manners, during the feudal times,
as might actually have existed . . . It seems to have
been Walpole's object to attain, by the minute accuracy
of a fable, sketched with singular attention to the

24 The Letters of Horace Walpole, edited by Mrs. Paget Toynbee (16
vols. Oxford, 1903-5), VI, 198; see also 201.
25 Clara Reeve, The Old English Baron (Revised and re-titled edition,
26 "A finely printed Copy of the Castle of Otranto (1811) which was
printed by the Ballantynes here & to which at their request I wrote
a hasty sort of a preface," Letters, II, 499. Presumably this is "Sir
Walter Scott's Introduction" included in Caroline F. E. Spurgeon's
edition of Otranto (New York, n.d.) from which I quote, pp. xxxiii,
xxxiv l., xl, xli, xli l.
costume of the period in which the scene was laid, that same association which might prepare his reader's mind for the reception of prodigies congenial to the creed and feelings of the actors. . . . The remote and superstitious period. . . . its Gothic decorations, the sustained, and, in general, the dignified tone of feudal manners, prepare us gradually for the favourable reception of prodigies. . . . The bold assertion of the actual existence of phantoms and apparitions seems to us to harmonize . . . naturally with the manners of feudal times. . . . [Walpole's plan was] calculated . . . to exhibit a general view of society and manners during the times which the author's imagination loved to contemplate. . . . We refer the reader to the first interview of Manfred with the Prince of Vicenza, where the manners and language of chivalry are finely painted. . . . The applause due to . . . a tone of feudal manners and language . . . must be awarded to the author of the Castle of Otranto.

Seven years later, in reviewing a collection of Walpole's letters, Scott was less enthusiastic:

His Castle of Otranto, notwithstanding the beauty of the style, and the chivalrous ideas which it summons up, cannot surely be termed a work of much power. 27 But the "Dedictory Epistle" to Ivanhoe (1819) is somewhat more favourable: "Horace Walpole wrote a goblin tale which has thrilled through many a bosom;" 28 and the biographical memoir of Walpole which Scott prepared for Ballantyne's Novelist's Library (1821-4) 29 is a mere expansion of the 1811 "Introduction" to Otranto, incorporating all the high praise of

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27 The Quarterly Review (New York reprint, 1819), XIX (1818), 122. This number, dated "April," was not actually published till September of the same year. The review is identified as Scott's in Letters, V. 109 and n. 3, 110 and n. 1, 116, 140; see also 159 and n. 1.
29 Miscellaneous Prose Works. III (1834), 299-324. The memoir of Clara Reeve in the same collection again praises Walpole's manner of manners: "In what may be called the costume, or keeping of the chivalrous period in which the scene of both is laid, the language and style of Horace Walpole, together with his intimate acquaintance with the manners of the middle ages, form an inexplicable difference betwixt The Castle of Otranto and The Old English Baron. . . . In the present day, . . . authors . . . are obliged to make attempts . . . to imitate the manners . . . of the times in which the scene is laid. . . . It is not improbable that the manner in which Walpole describes his dialogue . . . within the stiff and stern prudences prescribed by a strict attention to the manners and language of the
that novel's manners detailed above. Under these circumstances it seems fantastic to deny Walpole's contribution to Scott's evolution as a novelist of manners.30

The influence of Strutt's Queen-Hoo-Hall does not seem to have continued operative upon Scott very long, except as we have seen in persuading him to abandon for a decade the middle ages as a source for the manners which he held to be so essential to prose fiction. But there was another literary source of Waverley which Scott specified in the "General Preface" and in the pages of the novel itself. He—like most critics since—recognised the Irish novels of Maria Edgeworth 31 as important because of their revelation of manners. The first—and probably the most important for Scott's purposes—announces its function in its "Preface":

Those who were acquainted with the manners of a certain class of the gentry of Ireland some years ago, will want no evidence of the truth of honest Thady's narrative... The manners depicted in the following pages are not those of the present age.32

Within the brief compass of the novel itself there are some two dozen passages illustrative of distinctively Irish manners in the eighteenth century—in dress, entertainment, eating, drinking; in education; in tenancy; even in burial; in fact, in practically every type of activity that the Irishman practised jointly with his fellows. These examples are reinforced by copious footnotes, and in later editions by a "Glossary" of notes, one-fourth as long as the narrative itself—apparatus prophetic of that which was to encumber Scott's own novels.

30 But cf. Stephen Gwynn, The Life of Horace Walpole (Boston, 1924), pp. 192 f. "It is really pushing the claims for this fantasy much too far to say, as Miss Dorothy Stuart does in her Horace Walpole (F.M.L. series, New York, 1927), that Walpole practised a kind of 'compared with that [interest] which arises out of... a strict attention to the character and manners of the middle ages.' Miscellaneous Prose Works, III, 532 f.

31 Castle Rackrent, 1800: Ennui, 1809; The Absentee, 1812. The last of the series, Ormond, was not written till three years after Waverley.

32 Maria Edgeworth, Tales and Novels (London, 1857), IV, v f.
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Ennui is cluttered with moral purpose and with a complicated plot—the hero turns out to be a changeling. Many of the characters, titled and Anglicized, lack the distinctively regional quality of those in Rackrent; nevertheless, there are extensive passages, notably in Chapters VI and VII, detailing the typical behaviour of groups of the peasantry. Although by its title The Absentee indicates its special concern with a phenomenon proverbially central in Irish social and economic organization, Richard Edgeworth's "Preface to the First Edition" points out that the novel is more concerned with the behaviour of Irish landlords in London than it is with conditions in Ireland, where in fact only seven of its seventeen chapters are placed. But here again we find examples of distinctively Irish manners, and the novel closes with Larry Brady's delightful account of the tenantry's reception of the absentees returning to their ancestral estate.

During the period when Waverley was awaiting and achieving completion, Scott records his admiration for two of Miss Edgeworth's Irish novels; and his tributes to her influence indicate a special personal motive for his own exploitation of Scottish manners, the motive of patriotism. The first circumstance that recalled my recollection of the mislaid manuscript [Waverley] ... was the extended and well-merited fame of Miss Edgeworth, whose Irish characters have gone so far to make the English familiar with the character of their gay and kind-hearted neighbours of Ireland, that she may be truly said to have done more towards completing the Union than perhaps all the legislative enactments by which it has been followed up.

Without being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact which pervade the works of my accomplished friend, I felt that something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland — something which might introduce her natives to those of the sister kingdom, in a more favourable light than

33 "The present volumes are intended to point out some of those errors to which the higher classes of society are disposed"—Tales and Novels, IV, "Preface" by Maria's father, 211.
34 Tales and Novels, V, 257.
they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles. I thought, also, that much of what I wanted in talent might be made up by the intimate acquaintance with the subject which I could lay claim to possess, as having travelled through most parts of Scotland, both Highland and Lowland; having been familiar with the elder, as well as more modern race; and having had from my infancy free and unrestrained communication with all ranks of my countrymen, from the Scottish peer to the Scottish ploughman. Such ideas often occurred to me, and constituted an ambitious branch of my theory, however far short I may have fallen of it in practice.

The triumphs of Miss Edgeworth . . . worked in me emulation.\textsuperscript{36}

For the purpose of preserving some idea of the ancient manners of which I have witnessed the almost total extinction, I have embodied in imaginary scenes, and ascribed to fictitious characters, a part of the incidents which I . . . received from those who were actors in them . . . The Lowland Scottish gentlemen, and the subordinate characters, are not given as individual portraits, but are drawn from the general habits of the period, of which I have witnessed some remnants in my younger days, and partly gathered from tradition.

It has been my object to describe these persons, not by a caricatured and exaggerated use of the national dialect, but by their habits, manners, and feelings; so as in some distant degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits drawn by Miss Edgeworth.\textsuperscript{37}

The author [of \textit{Waverley}] must have had your inimitable Miss Edgeworth strongly in his view, for the manner is palpably imitated while the pictures are original.\textsuperscript{38}

Before proceeding to an analysis of the manners elements in \textit{Waverley} it is well to take account of a remark of Scott's which appears in the very first-written pages of the novel:

By fixing, then, the date of my story Sixty Years before this present 1st November 1805, I would have my readers

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Waverley}, "General Preface," p. xix.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Letters}, III, 465.
understand that they will meet in the following pages neither a romance of chivalry nor a tale of modern manners. . . . From this my choice of an era, the understanding critic may further presage that the object of my tale is more a description of men than manners. \textsuperscript{39}

This remark has been cited in support of a somewhat baffling statement: "He expressly separated [\textit{Waverley}], when accounting for its qualities, from the novels of manners."\textsuperscript{40} In its context, however, the Scott passage patently refers only to contemporary (1805) manners: "modern manners, . . . the present fashion of Bond Street, . . . a modern fashionable." The section of the "General Preface," pp. xvii f., quoted above has already made clear the importance that Scott ascribed to the manners motive for first embarking on \textit{Waverley}; furthermore he was (in 1814) to describe the novel as a "slight attempt at a sketch of ancient Scottish manners," and he was (in 1829) to excuse its haphazard structure on the ground that it permitted him "to introduce some descriptions of scenery and manners."\textsuperscript{41}

Another passage from "Chapter I. Introductory" is more puzzling in that Scott here argues that "a tale of manners to be interesting, must either refer to antiquity, . . . or . . . those scenes which are passing daily before our eyes." Furthermore, he questions the interest of costumes of the period of George II, and of the manners of the last generation (for example, apparently "the splendid formality of an entertainment given Sixty Years since"). This contention is so obviously and immediately demolished in the pages of the novel itself\textsuperscript{42} that one is forced to conclude that Scott is for the moment adopting the pose of that master ironist whom he knew and admired so well.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Waverley}, "Chapter I. Introductory," p. 11.
\textsuperscript{40} Ernest Rhys, "Introduction" to \textit{Waverley} (Everyman's Library, London, 1906), p. viii.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Waverley} (London, Nelson, 1904), "Preface to the Third Edition," p. l: "General Preface," p. xxi f. Oddly enough, the specific sections of the narrative for which Scott apologizes—"the whole adventures of Waverley, in his movements up and down the country with the Highland cattle at Bear Leap"—constitute in fact only three chapters (XVII and XXXVI f.) and are practically barren of manners material.
\textsuperscript{42} Note especially "Chapter LXXII. A Postscript . . ." p. 554. "For the purpose of preserving some idea of the ancient manners of which I have witnessed the almost total extinction, I have embodied in imaginary scenes, and ascribed to fictitious characters, a part of the incidents which I then received from those who were actors in them."—that is to say, precisely "Sixty Years since" and in "the period of George II."
SCOTT AS NOVELIST OF MANNERS

It was through the publication and success of Waverley that the Great Unknown was created and in the process committed to the basic formula of his future novels. But the function of manners in this formula is, in spite of Scott's repeated assertions, only partially revealed in the course of his first completed prose narrative. In the seventy chapters that actually tell the story of Waverley (omitting "I. Introductory" and "LXXI. A Postscript") there are some three dozen passages, ranging in length from one sentence to a couple of pages, presenting examples of manners. One is immediately struck by the fact that none of these examples is to be found within the first six chapters of the novel, written in 1805, and that almost half of them appear in Chapters VII-XXII, written when work was first resumed, in 1813. Over half of the "Notes explanatory of the ancient customs and popular superstitions" 43 added in later editions are based on the same section, just one-quarter of the entire novel. We have already seen what had occurred within the years between 1805 and 1813 to give a new direction to Scott's pen: his reading of the manners novels of his predecessors and contemporaries, his critical assessment of them in preparation for editing a series of British Novelists, 44 and his avowal of the determination to record Highland manners. He had also become middle-aged, a laird, and a prominent public figure; and he had lived (and was continuing to live) through critical years of egalitarian and Napoleonic threats to the status quo. These later circumstances create an added motive for affirming established manners, to which Waverley itself points. 45

The manners passages in Waverley can be roughly assigned, according to their function, among several different categories. whose limits are of course loosely defined and often overlapping.

44 which he was planning in collaboration with John Murray as early as 1808 (Lockhart, pp. 156, 168; Letters, II, 114, 119). though only in 1821 did the project begin to be realized.
45 On p. 90: "to perpetuate a great deal of what is rare and valuable in ancient manners;" p. 46: to maintain "the natural dependence of the people upon their landlords;" and (p. 554) "disinterested attachment to the principles of loyalty." Scott's sympathy for the Jacobites was undoubtedly enhanced by the fact that theirs was that "party, which long continued to pride themselves upon maintaining ancient Scottish manners and customs."-p. 555. He affirms the importance of the manners motive in Waverley in letters of July, 1814: "It was a very old attempt of mine to embody some traits of those characters and manners peculiar to Scotland the last remnants of which vanished during my own youth." "It may really boast to be a tolerably faithful portrait of Scottish manners." Letters, III, 45 f., 478.
Some examples of manners appear to have been introduced primarily to gratify Scott's private antiquarian tastes — for instance, the Scotch breakfast at Tully-Veolan (Ch. XII), the morning dram (Chs. XVIII, XLIV), the Highland practice of medicine (Ch. XXIV); or his dilettantism; 46 or his appetite for glamour and his sense of the comic. 47 These same passages, however, have some slight relevance to the business of the novel, in filling out "an outline of a story" by colouring "it according to nature." 48

Obviously more organic are examples of manners which predetermine the course of the action, or assist its progress. The business of the stirrup cup involves Waverley in his minor conflict with Balmumwhipple, and along with the code of the duel, 49 blackens the blot on his reputation in Gardiner's regiment. The Highland habits of cattle-lifting and the Lowland response in protection-money serve to get Waverley involved in the great adventure of his life, while the whole inception, progress, and collapse of the Rising are predicated to a considerable extent on the structure of clan society and the relations in which the Chieftain is involved with the paramount government, with his peers, and with his followers of varied degree; that is to say, in the field of manners with which Scott is primarily concerned throughout the whole novel. It appears that Scott himself was brought to see the necessity of integrating his manners scenes with the action of his story; the elaborate description of that Highland stag-hunt in which Waverley got his ankle sprained (and was thereby kept in ignorance of the extent of the Rising till it was too late for him to extricate himself) is further justified (if somewhat inadequately) by Scott's addition of a footnote in later editions, pointing out that such a hunting-party had in fact prepared for the prior rebellion of 1715. 50

46 And note Frank Stanley's infection, in his turn, with the virus of Waverley's "tartan fever," Chs. LXII, LXII.
47 E.g., the feudal homage of personal service to the sovereign—pulling off his boots (Ch. XLVIII), a custom converted to serious use (in Ch. I) when it is included among "acts of feudal homage" recalling "the ties which united to the Crown the homage of the warriors by whom it was repeatedly upheld and defended."
48 Letters, XI, 84 f.
49 Chs. XI and XIV. The latter subject impinges on the action again in the abortive squabble between Fergus and Waverley (Ch. LVII), where Scott adds his own comic interpretation—in spite of which he himself was seriously disposed to play the part of principal in an "affair of honor" as late as 1827, see Lockhart, pp. 665-7.
50 Waverley, p. 195 n.
SCOTT AS NOVELIST OF MANNERS

The critic who feels that the chief concern of the novel as a literary type should be with individual human character, as it interacts with conduct, will observe that much of the manners material is applied to the determining or illustrating of the personalities of the actors. The background of Highland manners, so influential on the action, also serves to explain vivid and serviceable minor participants like Donald Bean Lean, or Bradwardine (surely one of Scott’s most plausible, lovable, and memorable achievements), as well as Fergus and Flora, who perhaps best represent as much of the technical “antagonist” of the plot as is external to Waverley himself. Fergus, a creature of some complexity, capable of extraordinary energy and of a charm reflecting, flickeringly, his Prince’s, becomes really almost believable in the light of the almost unbelievable, but true, account of the manners out of which he sprang.

It appears as if Scott, having by 1813 made up his mind as to the importance of manners to his programme, utilized them to the utmost in those first seventeen chapters (VII-XXIII) immediately following his resumption of work on Waverley, and then, having set his scene, established his main characters, and got his action well launched, relegated manners to a slighter rôle in the carrying out of his narrative. But the effects of the manners earlier presented continue operative, so that one might say that the prime narrative function of manners in Waverley is to get the hero himself (granted his romantic disposition, which is of course given to him in Don Quixote fashion, in order to minister to this function) involved with the ’Forty-five and with Flora, entanglements essential, respectively, to the historical and the sentimental plots.

In addition, the manners serve a deeper and more pervasive purpose in providing material for the thematic conflict between the antique and the contemporary, the dilemma between charm and utility that generates Scott’s creative activity and persistently underlies his subsequent work as a novelist and his life as a man. Yet when all (perhaps too much) has been made of Waverley as a novel of manners, there remain potentialities of the genre still untapped. If we seek that affirmation of manners which may be a legitimate part of the novelist's business, we find that Scott has not paid them the supreme compliment of taking them for granted — though that is hardly possible when the particular manners are chosen partly because they are unfamiliar.
What Scott might have done, however, is to make the manners themselves the real bone of contention, to be jeopardized by the villain and maintained by the hero. But this possibility is fatally obstructed by Fergus’s rôle as villain when he is in fact the chief advocate of the old clan life. Conversely, Bailie Macwheeble, who will have no truck with the carryings-on of the wild Hielan’ men, is on the side of the angels throughout. Furthermore, any attempt to centre the technical conflict on the value of the manners would be frustrated by the fact that Edward Waverley (and the reader) have to cope with two very distinct types of antique behaviour; the manners of Tully-Veolan, and the manners of Glennaquoich. Though the two are first presented in conflict, in the affair of the creagh, they are harmonized by the exigencies of the Rising, and both apparently suffer defeat with it. But then we discover that while Fergus goes to the block, Tully-Veolan is reprieved after all, as symbolized in the return of the Blessed Bear.

Although Scott failed in Waverley to take full advantage of the possibilities inherent in the novel of manners, the triumph of his prentice-work demonstrated his right to respectable rank among the practitioners of that type, and committed him to further efforts in it. He did not know that the financial success of this first novel and of its offspring was to lead to the ultimate disaster of a Tully-Veolan attempted at Abbotsford.

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