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NELSON S. BUSHNELL

Scott's Mature Achievement as Novelist of Manners

Scott had already laid claim to the province of manners, before seriously attempting the composition of prose fiction; this area was thereafter exploited in his first novel, *Waverley*; and he repeatedly asserted his claim. Unfortunately, he himself never mapped exactly the boundaries of his province. "Manners" as treated in the present study may be defined, in the words of the *New English Dictionary*, as "the modes of life, customary rules of behaviour, conditions of society, prevailing in a people." This definition is to be interpreted broadly enough to include particulars of economic, political, and social organizations. . . . [Manners] 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." Manners derive their peculiarity, their distinction, from the particular time, place, and culture in which they develop.¹

Manners play a part in every one of Scott's novels; in a number of them the part is so ample and effective that the author can as properly be called novelist of manners as historical novelist. But the importance of the manners element has been sometimes neglected by English literary historians.² By contrast across the Channel while Scott was still

¹ Nelson S. Bushnell, "Walter Scott's Advent as Novelist of Manners," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 1 (July 1963), 15-34; see particularly pp. 16 f. and notes 4 and 5.

² For example, C. H. Herford in *The Age of Wordsworth*, first published in 1897 and continually re-issued (some two dozen times in all) during the subsequent two-thirds of a century, devotes a substantial amount of attention to Scott's novels, but his criticism, enthusiastic and often discriminating, centers on the repeated assertion that "Scott created the English historical novel." Once, to be sure, he submits the proposition that "of all great portraiters of character [Scott] presents men most persistently in their habits as they lived" (*The Age of Wordsworth*, London, 1960, see pp. xxiii, 111, 121). But promptly (p. 125) this is, in effect, rejected: "Even before the death of Scott the current of Scottish fiction set more and more strongly towards the painting of domestic manners, in which no influence of the *Waverley* series is to be seen."
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living Balzac was consciously following his footsteps in combining romance with the depiction of manners (in Le Dernier Chouan, 1829); and within the decade following Scott’s death the French novelist repeatedly called attention to the foundation of manners that supported the Waverley novels. French criticism has continued to insist on the organic fusion of historical romance with novel of manners and social history achieved by Scott:

Balzac pouvait trouver dans Walter Scott le modèle du roman de moeurs... Qu’est-ce, en effet, qu’un bon roman historique, sinon un roman de moeurs sous sa forme parfaite? ... Roman de moeurs dont la matière n’est pas à portée de vérification immédiate, ainsi pourrait-on définir le roman historique.*

* * *

En se faisant l’historien de l’Ecosse, avec le dessein d’en peindre les moeurs, les habitants, la vie journalière, Walter Scott ne fut pas seulement le poète du pittoresque écossais. Si l’on embrasse l’ensemble de son œuvre, on voit en lui ... l’historien d’une société et d’une civilisation. Bien que l’œuvre de Walter Scott ne soit pas toute entière consacrée à l’Ecosse, elle apparaît, avec un certain recul, comme une histoire des moeurs de l’Ecosse en quinze ou vingt romans. Elle est comme une vaste “étude sociale” qui a pour objet de retracer une société disparue. ... Les traditions et les moeurs étaient restées en Ecosse tellement immuables que les catégories sociales et les grandes images du passé se retrouvaient presque intactes de génération en génération et cette persistance établissait entre les siècles une parenté qui faisait oublier ce que Balzac appelle leur “défaut de liaison.”

*Balzac speaks through the words of an imaginary editor in an “avertissement” found at the beginning of the ms. of the Chouans and quoted in part in Maurice Bardèche, Balzac romancier (Paris, 1940), pp. 222 ff. Balzac here “essayait de montrer qu’on ne peut faire un roman historique qu’en suivant la voie ouverte par le romancier écossais, mais qu’on peut être original en faisant pour les moeurs de son pays ce qu’il a fait pour les moeurs de l’Ecosse.” Note also Balzac’s “Lettres sur la littérature ...,” #1 (1840), reprinted in Œuvres complètes de Honoré de Balzac, Vol. XL (Paris, 1940), particularly p. 286.


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It will be noted that manners have been credited with a structural function in unifying the whole series of "Scottish novels." Occasionally critics writing in English have suggested for Scott's manners additional functions—as an influence on character development:

What, then, is Scott's range? It is all that part of experience which concerns man as a product of his local environment and his historic past. . . . Scott paints [man] in relation to the circumstances and traditions — political, social, religious, natural — of the society in which he lives. . . . He was the first writer to bring these considerations into the novel at all. . . . He always envisions [the individual] in relation to his historic past: as a social animal shaped and colored by those vaster, more impersonal forces of historic condition and trend which had shaped and colored the community of which he was a member.  

—and as a basis for action:

Balzac was the first not only to see his people, physically and morally, in their habit as they lived, with all their personal hobbies and infirmities, and make the reader see them, but to draw his dramatic action as much from the relation of his characters to their houses, streets, towns, professions, inherited habits and opinions, as from their fortuitous contacts with each other. Balzac himself ascribed the priority in this kind of realism to Scott, from whom the younger novelist avowedly derived his chief inspiration.  

Turning to Scott's novels to develop the lines of inquiry suggested above, we are faced with the problems of selection and arrangement. If our study is to be focused on Bardêche's "history of Scottish manners in fifteen or twenty novels," we can stop with the fifteen (subsequent to Waverley) which are in fact laid in Scotland; of these, the subjects of eight fall within the eighteenth century. Despite the wide variety in period and locale that distinguishes the series of later stories beginning, in the order of composition, with Ivanhoe (1819), it can


8 The generally accepted chronology of Scott's novels, supported by the dates of publication and by the testimony of the author and of Lockhart, was rejected in the hypothesis postulated by Dame Una Pope-Hennessy and supported by Mr. Donald Carswell: Saturday Review of Literature, April 23, 1952, p. 686; Times Literary Supplement, May 5, 1952, p. 331. This heresy was effectively challenged by Professor Robert D. Mayo, "The Chronology of the Waverley Novels: the Evidence of the Manuscripts," PMLA, LXIII (September 1948), 923 ff.; but Dame Pope-Hennessy's Sir Walter Scott (Denver, 1949) apparently was issued too shortly thereafter to include a recantation.
be argued that all of them (except Kenilworth) are in one way or another “Scotch” novels: if Scott has not returned for his story to legends of his native land (as in the last of all, Castle Dangerous), he has at least made his protagonist a Scot (e.g. Quentin Durward), or he has toyed with the fringes of Scottish history or geography (e.g. Woodstock, The Pirate), or he has exploited races reminiscent of the Scots in character and situation, explicitly (the Swiss, in Anne of Gerstein) or implicitly (the Saxons, in Ivanhoe). The individual novels vary widely, however, in their relevance to Scott’s status as novelist of manners; significant conclusions may best be drawn from a selection of fourteen, made up of:

A. The eight stories set in eighteenth-century Scotland—

Manering (publ. 1815) — i.e. Guy Mannering
Antiquary (1816)
Dwarf (1816) — The Black Dwarf
Roy (1817) — Rob Roy
Midlothian (1818) — The Heart of Midlothian
Bride (1819) — The Bride of Lammermoor
Redgauntlet (1824)
Daughter (1827) — The Surgeon’s Daughter

This is Scott’s favorite field, already established in Waverley, in which he had the advantage of first-hand observation and eye-witness evidence. The first six of these novels were written in almost immediate succession after Waverley, and all but the last are products of his full powers. It is worth noting that not one of the eight is so markedly historical as Waverley had been, where the interest was focused on historical events, without which there would hardly have been a story. The first two, composed immediately after Waverley, though based in part on (presumably) actual occurrences, betray a wide divergence from the model of their predecessor; they might almost be classified as domestic novels, for in each of them the issues of family vindication, security of property, and marriage (emotionally and socially appropri-
are) are of prime importance. In the next five—Dwurf through Redgauntlet—motivation is in fact powerfully conditioned by historical factors, which, however, remain partially concealed through much of the narrative, and are not the foci of interest. The last-written of the eight, Daughter, may be taken to include the seven introductory chapters to Chronicles of the Canongate, First Series, in which the novel made its first appearance; the narrative after an opening set in eighteenth-century Scotland ends in India as sheer romance.\(^{11}\)

B. Four works non-Scottish in setting and based on Scott's reading and research but included because of their historical quality, their wide and powerful appeal, and their Scottish affiliations—

* Ivanhoe* (1819)
* Nigel* (1822) — The Fortunes of Nigel
* Durward* (1823) — Quentin Durward
* Geierstein* (1829) — Anne of Geierstein

C. *St. Ronan* (1824)—St. Ronan's Well—which Scott himself looked upon as more peculiarly a novel of manners than any of his other works, "a tale of modern manners" such as he had specifically eschewed in Waverley.\(^{12}\)

D. *Fair Maid* (1828)—The Fair Maid of Perth—which originated as an attempt to sketch the manners of the Scottish Gael (Highlander) at a period when the Crown was exposed to constant difficulties from the encroachments of the house of Douglas on the southern border and of the clans and their chieftains to the north.\(^{13}\) Although this novel itself turns out to be not completely satisfying, manners play a considerable part in its development, and questions are raised as to the relative value of various systems of manners.

Having applied this drastic process of selection, we shall treat the remaining twelve novels only incidentally. However, little significant loss is thereby entailed, for in them the manners element is either negligible (e.g. Woodstock) or irrelevant to their existence as novels (e.g. Kenilworth); or their subject and treatment is remote from Scott's usual practice (e.g. Count Robert of Paris); or they are products of almost fatally flawed creative powers (e.g. Castle Dangerous).

\(^{11}\) It is perhaps worth noting that six of these eight novels—all but the first and the last—follow the lead of Waverley, in that Jacobitism (or Scottish nationalism, as in Midlothian) is a factor powerful (Redgauntlet) or trivial (Antiquary).

\(^{12}\) *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 1, 29 f.

\(^{13}\) Scott's 1831 "Preface," *Fair Maid*, p. v.
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Study of the fourteen novels selected for special attention reveals two broad purposes served by the manners material; autobiographic, and artistic. Personal considerations were influential in determining Scott's development as novelist; and unfailing interest and charm spring from his own career and personality. The temptation is irresistible to call attention to the exploitation of manners that reflect the author's own experiences, his tastes, and his ideas and convictions. Redgauntlet is one of the most interesting of Scott's novels; in part for its autobiographic elements, to which the considerable amount of manners material contributes in the pictures of student life and of the personal and professional behavior of lawyers. Scott's social rather than his professional activities are reflected in the seven chapters prefatory to the first Chronicles of the Canongate, which constituted the first of Scott's fiction to appear after the identity of the author of Waverley was made public in February 1827. As Scott later explained, on determining to continue the composition and publication of prose fiction he decided to create a new persona, an imaginary coadjutor, Chrysta Croftangry, who, with his chief source of materials, Mrs. Bethune Baliol, is introduced in the section prefatory to the fictitious narratives, of which only one in this first series of Chronicles can properly be called a novel. These introductory chapters themselves could in fact serve as the leisurely opening of a complete novel of manners, which unfortunately was never to be written. Croftangry presents himself as having been a young laird, born at about the same time as Scott but of a somewhat higher social rank. We get glimpses of the typical way of life of young men of his class both in Edinburgh and on their rural estates. Croftangry introduces us to Mrs. Bethune Baliol, a contemporary of his mother's, who is to be the source—and virtually

16 Written in the first half of the year and published in June, 1824, "it contains perhaps more of the author's personal experiences than any other of [his novels], or even than all the rest put together." J. G. Lockhart, The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. New Popular Edition (London: Black, 1893), p. 314.

18 These two volumes, published in November, 1827, included along with Daughter two interesting short stories: The Highland Widow and The Two Drovers, both located in the Scottish Highlands and the Border country. The action of Widow, and presumably that of Drovers, is placed in the mid-eighteenth century. They might be called "tragedies of manners," as in each a distinctively Highland pattern of behavior is vindicated at the cost of the life of the male hero.

18 1831 "Introduction," The Betrothed and Chronicles of the Canongate, pp. xxi f.
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the narrator—of some of the ensuing fictions. Her familiarity with manners "far back behind her own time" she explains in a fashion reminiscent of Scott himself. She

cannot boast any personal knowledge of the great personages you inquire about, yet I have seen and heard those who knew them well, and who have given me as distinct an account of them as I could give you myself of the Empress Queen, or Frederick of Prussia; and I will frankly add . . . that I have heard so much of the years which immediately succeeded the Revolution, that I sometimes am apt to confuse the vivid descriptions fixed on my memory by the frequent and animated recitation of others, for things which I myself have actually witnessed. 17

Several of Scott's personal tastes, already familiar to us through the evidence of Lockhart and of his own letters and other writings, are revealed in the pictures of Dandie Dinmont's way of life at Charlie's Hope, and of Pleystell's habits as a lawyer in Edinburgh (habits which Scott describes as already archaic by the time of composition of Mannering). The manners exploited in Midlothian are first of all those of the Edinburgh lower middle classes, with their obsession with the complexities of law. Scott's own personal attitude here seems to be one of amused indulgence toward the generic pre-occupation of his fellow-Scots; his personal tastes favor the stubbornly assertive. Likewise the glimpses of super-annuated Jacobites and of canting smugglers, in Redgauntlet, appeal to Scott's (and the reader's) interest in the distinctive habits of persistent minorities.

Scott's genuine comic sense, and his occasional affinity for sharp satire, influenced his choice and treatment of manners subjects in St. Roman. The scene chosen for that novel is a contemporary watering place, because the social system there is "much more indulgent than that which rules the world of fashion, and the narrow circles of rank in the metropolis." Here, "the strongest contrast of humorous characters and manners may be brought to bear on and illustrate each other with less violation of probability." 18 The inference arises that Scott himself is antipathetic to Well society. The vulgarity of the present clientele is unfavorably contrasted with the tone of the indigentous gentry; the types that compose it are held up to ridicule. Similarly in Goethe's, Scott's personal prejudices are, conceivably, responsible for his satiric exposure of the typical German inn, and of the practices

17 "Introductory" chapter vii, Chronicles of the Canongate, p. 78.
18 St. Roman, "Introduction," pp. vi i.
of Continental Roman Catholicism. But his attempts at social satire were not admired:

Some Edinburgh critics, however—(both talkers and writers)—received with considerable grudging certain sarcastic sketches of the would-be fine life of the watering place—sketches which their Southern brethren had kindly suggested might be drawn from Northern observation, but could never appear better than fantastic caricatures to any person who had visited even a third-rate English resort of the same nominal class. There is no doubt that the author dashed off these minor personages with, in the painter's phrase, a rich brush. 

And the author himself came to realize his shortcomings in this vein:

Read through and corrected St. Remar's Well. . . . I must allow the fashionable portraits are not the true thing. I am too much out of the way to see and remark the ridiculous in society.

The failure of an earlier attempt had not been taken sufficiently to heart.

Scott's own passionate addiction to antiquarian pursuits led him to exploit that congenial and profitable field of manners. The meticulous detail with which he describes ceremonies of funeral and wake (e.g. in Bride, chapter ii), of hunt (chapter ix), of betrothal and wedding (chapters xxxii-iv), reflects the loving concern of the dedicated antiquary; this is seasoned by an undertone of disdain for the aristocrat who is unwilling to participate, or unable to perform the rite effectively. In Ivanhoe the author revels in the re-creation of a vanished age, though his antiquarianism is careless of scholarly exactitude, and not overly


[^4] See The Monastery, "Introduction," pp. xv-xix, where Scott tried to explain his failure in Sir Piercie Shafton by arguing that satire aimed at affected manners and extravagant follies must fall flat when the targets have become extinct. But Sir Piercie's fault is rather that he is nothing but a bundle of absurd manners,.unrelieved by humanity of sentiment or principle. At the end of his career Scott was once again to dabble in satire. His prime interest seems initially to have been to ridicule the "trumpety etiquette" of the superannuated empire, "affecting a degree of state which was closely allied to imbecillity." (Counts Robert of Paris, p. 6). The tone of satire on meaningless ceremony is perhaps enhanced by the exaggeratedly pompous and stilted style in which much of the dialogue is couched, to a degree even beyond Scott's usual practice when presenting speakers of high rank.
sensitive to anachronism unless it be "obvious." The subject matter of the opening chapters suggests Scott's particular interest in the manners, particularly the domestic manners, of the Saxons. But when the subject moves to "the fantastic fashions of Norman chivalry," he writes with equal fullness and enthusiasm. Similar materials are exploited periodically throughout the story, and especially in the closing scenes of Athelstane's funeral and Rebecca's trial by combat. The trouble with such details is that Scott often neglects to make them functional in the development of characters and action—for example, Geierstein, where information concerning the status of the public executioner and the procedures of the Vehme-gericht merely cater to personal predilections, the author's or the reader's: "in the following details there is no doubt much that will instruct the antiquarian, as well as amuse the popular reader."  

Scott's antiquarian enthusiasm is really only one phase of his dilettantism, his amateur's intoxication with the unusual, with whatever novel fact reveals the how and why of specific human societies. In Geierstein again, the story is diluted by a detailed treatment of the court of the troubadour king, René of Provence, introduced, it would seem, because of an interest inherent in the manners involved.  

Ways of life that are remote from the everyday, the here and now, appeal to Scott by the magic of their strangeness, by their promise of a heightened level of experience. His shrewd Lowland common sense was qualified by a susceptibility to glamour best evoked in him by the spirit of Jacobitism:  

Those who remember such old men [who had been out in the 'Forty-five] will probably agree that the progress of time, which  

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25 Note, too, *The Pirate*, where the presence of extended manners passages—the sword dance, for example—which are quite irrelevant, create the impression that Scott's chief intention is to engage the reader's interest by filling him with supposed information about a quaint, unfamiliar, and outdated culture (*The Pirate*, 1831 "Introduction," pp. viii f.). The author's own insatiable curiosity concerning unfamiliar manners is illustrated not only in his presentation of such details as common soldiers' diet and pastimes, Moslem battle cries, and Scythian military sports (*Count Robert of Paris*, pp. 22, 43, 74, 77, 182, 184), but also as reflected in the personalities of his fictitious characters: a "principal object in the East" of Robert and his Countess is to see "strange sights;" they wonder at "accidental touches of manners exhibited by those who met or passed them" (*Ibid.*, p. 167).
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has withdrawn all of them from the field, has removed, at the same time, a peculiar and striking feature of ancient manners. Their love of past times, their tales of bloody battles fought against romantic odds, were all dear to the imagination, and their idolatry of locks of hair, pictures, rings, ribbons, and other memorials of the time in which they still seemed to live, was an interesting enthusiasm. . . . It was while reflecting on these things that the novel of Redgauntlet was undertaken.***

But Scott had other, more responsible intentions. Early in his career as novelist he nursed the ambition to compose a series of stories reflecting the social history of his own country during the preceding century:

The present Work [Antiquary] completes a series of fictitious narratives, intended to illustrate the manners of Scotland at three different periods. Waverley embraced the age of our fathers, Guy Mannering that of our own youth, and The Antiquary refers to the last ten years of the eighteenth century. I have, in the last two narratives especially, sought my principal personages in the class of society who are the last to feel the influence of that general polish which assimilates to each other the manners of different nations. . . . I have been more solicitous to describe manners minutely, than to arrange . . . narrative, and have but to regret that I felt myself unable to unite these two requisites of a good Novel.**

Manners provide not only the mirror by which society reveals itself,

***Redgauntlet, 1832 "Introduction," pp. xvi f. It was similar enthusiasm which fired Scott so far afield as to the Near East and the period of the Crusades, in The Talisman. His Near-Eastern setting provides an entertaining background, and though Scott pleads his ignorance of Eastern manners, he concocted out of his reading and his imagination a substitute sufficiently plausible and colorful to serve his purposes (The Talisman, 1832 "Introduction," pp. v-vii).

**Antiquary, 1816 "Advertisement," pp. v f. Compare also The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, edited by H. J. C. Grierson (12 volumes, London, 1932-7), III, 317 f. and n. 1 (10 November 1814), "Another novel, descriptive of more ancient manners still, may be expected ere long from the Author of Waverley." This letter, to Maria Edgeworth, though signed "James Ballantyne" is obviously Scott's composition in the main and must refer to Mannering, begun around Christmas, 1814, and published February, 1815 (Lockhart, pp. 304-7), though that novel turned out to present a more recent rather than a more ancient period. Note also Letters, IV, 292 f., "I intended [in the first series of Tales of My Landlord, i.e., Dwarf and Old Mortality] to have written four tales illustrative of the manners of Scotland in her different provinces. But . . . I totally altered my plans before I had completed my first volume." Cf. also Letters, IV, 166, 318, 323; and Barchèche as quoted above, p. 4.
but also the machinery through which it operates. The preservation of manners contributes to the stability of society as a going concern—and thereby to the security of its individual members. The earliest extended biography of Scott presents evidence that already in his early twenties he was interested in the manners peculiar to individual social systems and in the idea of "the growth of civil society." Later, in his novels, Scott is consistently concerned with showing that rebels against society's manners are the true enemies of the people—the criminals who violate the laws by which established manners are defended, and the imposters seeking to profit by the manners to whose sanction they are not entitled. In *Mannering* the manners of the McCandlish inn, of the independent farmer Dandie Dinmont and the Edinburgh lawyer Pleydell, illustrate a stable society in alliance with the law-abiding protagonists in their struggle against the anti-social swindler (Glossin), criminal (Dirk Hatteraick), and, to some extent, the vagrants (the gypsies—though the role played by the latter is ambiguous). The manners of the gentry—illustrated, for example, in Mrs. Bertram's lying-in—have been so far neglected by her husband as to generate a fatal irresponsibility in the laird toward his dependents, including the gypsies and his rascally agent Glossin, which in turn precipitates the abduction of his heir, the death of his wife, and his eviction from Ellangowan. The role of Meg Merrilies is only superficially antagonistic; in fact, she is the champion of manners; her sense of the tie that should bind laird and dependents is so strong that she avenges her breach against the unfit landlord (by abducting his son) but later (assisted by her nephew Gabriel) works to establish that son in his inheritance against the opposition of criminal interlopers, in the course of which activity she loses her life.

A similar part in supporting the forces of order in their struggle against swindlers, and against extremists who assert exaggerated claims of family superiority, is played by the manners exploited in *Antiquary*. The dignity, the common sense, and the loyalty of peasants, fishers, and beggars, seen in their typical activities at the country post-office, at the Mucklebackits' (particularly at Steenie's funeral, with the laird, the Antiquary, carrying the coffin head), in Elspeth's death, and in Edie Ochiltree, are affirmed as values superior to, and eventually overcoming, the dishonest schemes of Dousterswivel, the heartless intrigues of the old Countess of Glenallan, and the vanity and arrogance of Sir Arthur Wardour (chapter vi) and Hector M'Intyre (xix). Edie Ochiltree (with the assistance of Steenie Mucklebackit against Douster-
swivel, and of old Elspeth against the Countess of Glenallan's plotting) is chiefly responsible for the establishment of "Lovel's" true identity and of his claim to the Glenallan estates and Isabella's hand, as well as for the restoration of the Wardours to their property.

Again, in the closing chapters of *Midlothian*, the manners of the manse and farm at the edge of the Highlands, and in conflict with their representative Donnacha Dhu, illustrate the superiority of a godly, righteous, and sober (also secure and prosperous) way of life under the aegis of a powerful and benevolent patron. The whole tenor of the novel is to show that the inhabitants of such a paradise, rather than the outcast gypsies and highwaymen whose "way" of life is revealed in chapters xxxviii-xxxix, have had opportunities to display a type of heroism and to participate in perilous adventures far more significant than the casual vices and violences indulged in by Staunton and Effie, and the sterile, blood-curdling savagery of their son, the Whistler. The Deans and Butler interests, involved in those of their patron Argyle—whose family sympathies, despite their Highland background and focus, are as everybody knows Whiggish and Hanoverian—are victorious over the Highlanders and over the aggressive intrusion of an alien (lawless, English, aristocratic) adventurer, the dilettrante seducer George Staunton, who quite appropriately is murdered by his own misbegotten whelp, a Highlander (and later to become a Red Indian) by adoption. The alliance between an enlightened aristocracy (Argyle) and a self-respecting Protestant middle-class (Deans and Butler) represents an ideal Edinburgh society, and it is too bad it is consummated in the novel on an island on the wrong side of the Clyde rather than on the Edinburgh High Street, on the site of the gate of the old Tolbooth, which was to be built into the fabric of Abbotsford.

The social order may be stabilized by a reconciliation between conflicting systems of manners, as in *Ivanhoe*, where central to the novel as a whole, and incidentally reflected in the character of the king, is the theme of reconciliation, reconciliation not as a religious duty but as a concession to common sense and the public good. All the conflicts inherent in the action: of Saxon against Norman—cultural, dynastic, political, economic; of outlaw against established authority; of Jew against Christian; of clerical against civil authority; of father against son; of rebel against ruler; of brother against brother; of lovers against rivals; all are in one fashion or another resolved at the end of the novel and dramatized in the spree of forgiveness in which the king indulges. So too in *Redgauntlet*: the reconciliation of Jacobites and
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Hanoverians that brings the story to a close so consonant with history and with the reader’s predilections symbolizes a reconciliation of the two in Scott the romancer and the sheriff-laird.

Scott’s respect for principle, and his admiration for stubborn-principled characters, are emphatic in Midlothian. The manners of the Camerons, developed in chapters xviii f. and xliii, appeal to Scott because of their obstinate intransigence, their dogged refusal to compromise with a fait accompli; more functional in the novel is the influence of her father’s Cameronian teachings in sharpening Jeannie’s moral problem. When Douce Davie finally gives implied consent to her appearing to testify in the abbotted courts of the “new” government, her misunderstanding—i.e., that he permits her to lie to save her sister’s life—forces the issue back into her own unsupported conscience. 29 Jeanie Dean’s triumph as a champion of principle is seen as more notable when her behavior is contrasted with that of the Master of Ravenswood. Jeanie is caught in the dilemma between conflicting ways of life. English vs. Scottish, legalistic vs. Cameronian, law-abiding vs. lawless—these are the forces among which she must pick her way, and through which, by the aid of her indomitable spirit, she does win to victory for herself and for the Lowland, lower-middle-class Scotch culture of which she herself epitomizes the “Heart.” In a comparable situation, Edgar’s weakness (in Bride)—his inability to make up his mind and keep it made up (as in his muddling engagement to Lucy), 30 or even to compromise like his noble relative—leads to his defeat and the defeat of the feudal power and privilege which he hopes to retain without assuming the pertinent responsibilities, responsibility for supporting dependents like Caleb and Alice and Johnny Mortshaug, responsibility to commit acts of violence such as his ancestors undoubtedly would have committed, assassinating (or allowing the bull to assassinate!) Sir William and abducting Lucy.

The decay of one system of manners, or a conflict between it and another, is a theme to which Scott seems peculiarly responsive. In Bride again, the manners are, significantly, those of the feudal aristocracy and of their dependents—some, like Caleb, unconstructed; others, like the Girders, committed to a newer way of life; yet all of

29 Surely Alexander Welsh, in his searching analysis of The Hero of the Waverley Novels (New Haven, 1963), pp. 134 f., has overlooked this misconception of Jeanie’s.

30 In spite of the warning of old Alice’s ghost, the cogent purpose of which seems to have escaped Coleman O. Parsons, Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott’s Fiction (Edinburgh, 1964), pp. 116 f. and note 37.
them, like Alice and the sexton Johnny Morshough, sensitive to the failure of the current peers to fulfill the obligations of their predecessors. This issue, the tension between feudal and modern ways, between the Ravenswoods and the Ashtons, is central in the novel; it generates the conflict in which Edgar destroys himself. Scott's own sympathies are indecisive: the domestic manners of the emancipated Girders give off an aura of security and cheer, yet the women of the family still betray an uneasy deference to their former overlords as represented in the person of Caleb, and even Gibbie acknowledges a new kind of servitude in his dependence on the Ashton influence to assist him to government office. Scott seems, like Norman and Alice, to feel nothing but contempt for Sir William's personal shortcomings as proprietor of Ravenswood; and he recognizes the force of Lady Ashton's determination to vindicate the distinction of her own family. Yet the Marquis of A., whose position is reminiscent of that of the Duke of Argyle in Midlothian—a hereditary nobleman who uses the prerogatives of his rank to maintain his status among the forces of the new age—does not enjoy any such affectionate approval as Scott lavished upon Argyle. Possibly the difference in treatment is appropriate to the Marquis's basically selfish motives; Argyle was notably without immediate self-regard in his efforts to assist his country, his countrymen, and the descendants of his family allies. When in 1831 Scott came to write his "Introduction" to the new edition of Nigel, he was clearly of the opinion that his hero is victim of the conflicting manners of the period, a period which he characterizes as follows:

The most picturesque period of history is that when the ancient rough and wild manners of a barbarous age are just becoming innovated upon and contrasted by the illumination of increased or revived learning, and the instructions of renewed or reformed religion. The strong contrast produced by the opposition of ancient manners to those which are gradually subduing them, affords the lights and shadows necessary to give effect to a fictitious narrative; and while such a period entitles the author to introduce incidents of a marvellous and improbable character, as arising out of the turbulent independence and ferocity belonging to old habits of violence, still influencing the manners of a people who had been so lately in a barbarous state, yet, on the

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other hand, the characters and sentiments of many of the actors may, with the utmost probability, be described with great variety of shading and delineation, which belongs to the newer and more improved period of which the world has but lately received the light.  

In several novels Scott takes a further step and shows a new system of manners developing out of the conflict of cultures as a stage in social evolution. Behind the alarms, confusions, and absurdities of Ivanhoe there is a fundamental conflict between Normans and Saxons. All of the important characters of the novel are assigned to one or the other of these parties: Robin Hood and his outlaw band are definitely allies of the Saxons; the Jews are supported by the Saxons against Norman aggression. But avenues of mediation between the two are provided by the fictitious hero Ivanhoe, the Saxon heir who is a favorite of the Norman king and is victor in the Norman lists, and by the historical hero Richard, the Norman king who patronizes Ivanhoe, banquets with the outlaws, and disperses the Templars. The action of the novel postulates a last flare-up of Saxon nationalistic resistance against the conquerors, and their final submission to and integration with the Normans as reflected in Athelstan’s surrender of his claims and Rowena’s marriage to Ivanhoe under the king’s auspices. English culture thus moves forward into the Anglo-Norman stage, a by-product of the reconciliations discussed on p. 14 above. (The Jews, whom history, and Scott’s own prejudices, exclude from the new order, are conveniently dismissed to Granada.)

In Fair Maid dynastic intrigues, and feudal rivalries and interference, complicate the action, and we are left with no clear indication of Scott’s championship of any particular system of manners, except that he seems consistently to approve of the citizenry of Perth. On the other hand, the generous loyalty of the Highland clansmen, epitomized in the sacrifice of Torquil and his sons—“Another for Hector!”—obviously appeals to his sympathies. He seems to share Catherine’s distaste for the universal pattern of violence, yet Conachar-Eachin-Hector and Father Clement, who share her attitude—the one for psychological, the other for ethical reasons—both come to an ineffective and, significantly, a common end (it is suggested). Catherine herself eventually arrives at the realization that men rarely advance in civilization or refinement beyond the


The historical accuracy of Scott’s picture has been seriously questioned by Andrew Lang, ed., Ivanhoe (Boston, 1893), “Editor’s Introduction,” pp. xiii f.
ideas of their own age; and that a headlong and exuberant courage, like that of Henry Smith, was, in the iron days in which they lived, preferable to the deficiency which had led to Conachar's catastrophe.\textsuperscript{26}

Her wedding with Henry Smith forces the story to a happy ending, and seems to assert the triumph of middle-class manners over those of the contrasted Highlanders and of the intriguing courtiers with their vile henchmen.

The passage just quoted reveals Scott's awareness that a trait of character not intrinsically blameless may nevertheless be praiseworthy within the context of a given period. The same historical sense operates in his treatment of manners in \textit{Durward} and in the related \textit{Geierstein}. Scott's instinct seems to detect in the late fifteenth century the same yielding-place of an old order to a (temporary) new one, of feudalism to nationalism, that Shaw found in the period of Saint Joan. The gypsies in \textit{Durward} represent an independent way of life struggling to survive under the new suzerainty. And in the picture of the rich commercial bourgeoisie of Liége we catch a glimpse of manners foreshadowing an internationalism destined to emerge as a still newer order in social evolution. The narrative of \textit{Geierstein} exploits contrasting courtly conventions, especially as seen among the troubadours of Provence,\textsuperscript{27} and in the camp and court, and among the nobles, of Burgundy,\textsuperscript{28} and it is deepened, as in \textit{Durward}, by Scott's explicit awareness of the political evolution it reflects, in the decline of chivalry and the substitution of constitutional democracy or regal absolutism.\textsuperscript{29}

The preoccupation with subjects involving cultural conflict reflects a fundamental aspect of Scott's own personality. His position is somewhat like Edgar's (in \textit{Bride}) in that he is caught in the dilemma between two ways of life; fortunately for the novelist, however, he doesn't have to do anything about it except write novels. His own failure to achieve an exclusive commitment, by provoking in part the unresolved tension which energized his creative genius, has thus contributed to the delight of subsequent generations. Perhaps one reason for the integrity and vitality of Jeanie Deans is that her heroic exploit is performed within a framework of almost-contemporary bourgeois

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Fair Maid}, p. 556.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Geierstein}, pp. 354, 387, 460-6, and notes, pp. 591 f.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., pp. 396, 429, 436.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 1.
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respectability. The conflict within the author, between Border laird and Edinburgh lawyer, is vicariously solved in her. Basically the same conflict is reflected in Ivanhoe's remonstrance to Coeur de Lion:

But... my Liege,... your... subjects [are] menaced with every species of evil, if deprived of their sovereign in some of those dangers which it is your daily pleasure to incur;

and again in the dialogue between Wilfred and the Earl of Essex.38 The double heroes of Redgauntlet, Darsie and Alan, represent the two sides of Scott's own character, the romantic and the practical; and the younger Fairford's glorification of civil over military courage 39 repeats the solution (which Scott was himself to practice in his own grim last years) to the problem of an appetite for heroic achievement in the humdrum modern world. Peace hath her victories.

The personality divided against itself reappears in Crystall Croftangry, of the chapters introductory to Chronicles of the Canongate, who ascribes to himself a situation that we recognize as paralleling Scott's; he is "a borderer... between two generations," and he lives in the Canongate in the best location in which to sustain "a publication of a miscellaneous nature" (i.e., the proposed series of Chronicles): looking out "in front upon the palace, and from behind towards the hills and crags of the King's Park." "A nobler contrast there can hardly exist" than that between "the huge city" and "the misty and lonely mountain."

The object of the whole publication is to throw some light on the manners of Scotland as they were, and to contrast them occasionally with those of the present day. My own opinions are in favour of our own times in many respects, but not in so far as affords means for exercising the imagination or exciting the interest which attaches to other times. I am glad to be a writer or a reader in 1826, but I would be most interested in reading or relating what happened from half a century to a century before.39

There is no denying that the author of

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

was responsive to the stimulus of patriotism, and the presence of much

38 Ivanhoe, pp. 306, 552; cf. also 507 f.
39 Redgauntlet, letter v, p. 51.
40 Chronicles of the Canongate, "Introductory," Chapter v, pp. 55-61.

[19]
of the manners materials in his novels can be recognized as gratifying his own patriotic instincts. Scott is indulgent (without renouncing his sense of the comic) to the generic preoccupations of his fellow-countrymen, such as the members of the Edinburgh lower-middle class so prominent in the early chapters of *Mildothian*. And behind all the ambiguities of that novel—in the characters themselves, and in the narrator's attitude—there is a basic conflict between national cultures, Scottish against English, of which the outcome is decisive: the Edinburgh mob goes unpunished for the lynching of Porreous,^6^ Scots conscience and Scots law are both vindicated by Jeanie's truthful testimony and Effie's conviction, and Argyle and Jeanie dissipate the English queen's rancor and win a reprieve for the so-called "lily" of St. Leonard's. Examples of manners reflecting this patriotic bias are too numerous and obvious to mention. But casual readers of *Geierstein* may possibly overlook the significance of Scott's glorification of Swiss manners. The similarity of the Continental mountaineers to the Scottish Highlanders is implied in the terms in which the former are described at the outset:

Notwithstanding their rugged and desolate appearance, the secluded vallies which winded among [the Alps] nourished a race of hunters and shepherds—men who, living in a state of primeval simplicity, compelled from the soil a subsistence gained by severe labour, followed the chase over the most savage precipices and through the darkest pine forests, or drove their cattle to spots which afforded them a scanty pasturage, even in the vicinage of eternal snows. ... Down to the middle of the fifteenth century, and at a later date, the Swiss retained in a great measure the wisdom, moderation, and simplicity of their ancient manners.^[4^]

The importance of the point of personal honor and of sharing in the hazards of the chase; the deference paid to elders; the intimacy of the mistress-maid relationship^[5^]—these aspects of the manners of Swiss mountaineers are representative likewise of Scottish Highlanders. The comparison is made explicit in the conversation between Charles and

^[4^] Scott's happy stroke of inspiration in making the story of the heroic sister contemporary and involved with the Porreous riot strengthens the structure and the theme of the novel immeasurably; everything is seen in the frame of the Tolbooth; the political, legal, and nationalistic influences are all strengthened, and the title of the novel is re-inforced to support its symbolic applicability to Jeanie.


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the elder Philipson, and is later echoed in Scott's 1831 "Introduction" in the likening of the weapons used by the Swiss to those of "Wallace and the sturdy foot-soldiers who, under his guidance, laid the foundations of Scottish independence." 44

A relationship has been suggested between manners and morals. 45 Much of the manners material in Nigel serves to illustrate such relationship, as Scott indicates in his 1831 "Introduction." Here he cites from contemporary sources several pages of details of the characteristic manners of the age of James VI and I: the lingering relics of chivalry, the violence, the criminal and debauched gangs, the domestic vice, the extravagance and coarseness—which in turn lead him to generalize on the relationship and common origin of manners and morals:

Such being the state of the court, coarse sensuality brought along with it its ordinary companion, a brutal degree of undisguised selfishness, destructive alike of philanthropy and good breeding; both of which, in their several spheres, depend upon the regard paid by each individual to the interest as well as the feelings of others. 46

All the examples of manners referred to above have, then, the—slightly dubious—sanction of biography; they help to illumine or confirm our understanding of Scott himself. But the purer-minded literary critic will ask, "What is their function in the novel as an independent work of art, whose chief concern is—or was—traditionally with individual human character, as it interacts with conduct, presented through a narrative specifically located in time and space?"

The first and possibly the most important organic function of manners in Scott's novels is to influence and determine the development of individual personality. 47 In Manment, as noted above, p. 14, the way of life of an exhausted gentry contributes to the infirmity of Godfrey Bertram. Durward is doubly relevant; medieval superstition and reliance on astrologers and soothsayers condition the character of

44 Ibid., pp. 419 f., xix. Although The Abbots is outside the immediate focus of this study, one may mention its inclusion of extensive episodes of popular assertiveness of the Scots—the antics celebrating the Abbots of Unreason, the Edinburgh street scenes, and the revels of the fair at Kinross culminating in the performance of the rustic drama—primarily motivated, it would appear, by the author's antiquarian and nationalistic zeal.


46 Nigel, pp. viii-xl.

47 See Cecil, p. 5 above.
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Louis (and mislead him into false steps that complicate the action). At the same time, it is the condition of life in Scotland that has contributed to the formation of Quentin’s character. In Redgauntlet, the central “straight” characters (and their conduct) are conditioned by the manners in which they were nurtured; Jacobite manners have produced the fanaticism of a Redgauntlet, the enthusiasm of a Lilias; Edinburgh legal manners bear fruit in Alan Fairford’s stubborn-principled loyalty and Darsie Latimer’s stubborn-principled independence. Bride, in spite of all the hocus-pocus about fate, is essentially a tragedy—or at least a tragic melodrama—of character. The reminiscences of Romeo and Juliet, the legend of the Mermaid’s Well, the tradition of the black bull, the meteorological omens, the incident of the raven’s blood, the addiction to prophecy (Alice’s, Caleb’s, and Ailsie’s) all merely disguise the fact that Edgar is the “infatuated and predestined fool” that Alice calls him, and that the infatuation and the destiny are grounded in his own character. As in Mannering, the omens do not determine, they merely reveal in anticipation events to be precipitated by character acting within circumstances. His inability or his unwillingness to penetrate Sir William’s devices, or to take account of Lady Ashton’s implacable opposition and Lucy’s feeble malleability, brings about Edgar’s destruction. But his character is itself the product of the poverty and the ruined pride of Wolf’s Crag, and the ruined condition of the Ravenswoods is in turn a byproduct of contemporary political circumstances: the uncertainty as to dynastic and party supremacy reflected in the stock behavior of Edgar’s class. So too each member of the Ashton family, whose character assists the action toward its tragic conclusion, is in one way or another the product of the manners of a parvenu aristocracy, or of a powerful family dynasty. And all these influences are objectified in specific scenes of manners, such as the funeral of the elder Ravenswood, the conference of the Edinburgh judges, and the meeting of Lady Ashton and the Marquis.

A related function is that of explaining the characters to the reader and enhancing their credibility. The manners scenes that serve as a context for Dandie Dinmont and Pleydell (Mannering) help to support the validity of these indispensable characters. Just as the Cameronian background of Davie Deans contributes to an understanding of Jeanie’s integrity, the manners of the Whackbaurn school, at which poor dear Reuben teaches (Midlothian, chapter xxvii), and of the deplorable Dumbeldikes household (viii, xxvi), bring out the futility and ineffectiveness of the two admirers who should have actively aided

*Bride, p. 221.*
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Jeanie. The charming manners material included in the introductory chapters to *Chronicles of the Canongate*: the sketches of the debtors' sanctuary in the environs of Holyroodhouse, of travel by mail coach, of the condition of poor rural tenants, of activities of superannuated gentlemen in Edinburgh and in the country—put to no narrative use but presumably introduced to gratify Scott's personal tastes—also serve to invest the prospective narrator with plausibility and appeal.49

Manners may serve another fundamental purpose in a novel by providing a basis for action, or a stimulus to it.50 In *A Legend of Montrose*, in *Roy*, and in *Fair Maid*, the descriptions of Highland manners support the tensions of inter-clan and inter-party feuds which are prominent in the action, just as the Border manners of *Dwarf* provide a breeding ground for Jacobite intrigue. The legalistic predilections of the common citizens of Edinburgh nor only reflect Scott's personal tastes but also serve to heighten the seriousness of Effie's plight and sharpen Jeanie's dilemma. More immediately do the funeral ceremonies of the elder Ravenswood contribute to plot, for they themselves provide a bone of contention between Whigs and Tories out of which the action of *Bride* directly develops. In *Nigel*, the untypically compact plot deals with the attempts of a young Scots hero to redeem his estate and brings him to the first Stuart court in London; here we have the converse of the formula initiated in *Waverley* and exploited in a number of the strictly Scottish novels in which is presented the impact of Scottish manners upon an outsider or an exile introduced into the scene. Nigel's own situation is paralleled in that of a number of his compatriots concentrated in London: the clock-maker David Ramsey and his daughter, the goldsmith George Heriot, Nigel's servant Richie Moniplies, his landlords the Christies, the king's former whipping-boy Sir Mungo Malagrowther, the Earl of Huntington, and finally James I himself. The practical bourgeois tastes and talents of the Scots are consistently set off against the artificiality and corruption of the court. The London apprentices and the refugees in Alsatia, both groups semi-allied to Nigel in his struggle against the court, provide the chief fields of manners, which are also reflected in the relations of

49 The reliance of the indigenous Norse on spells and charms (*The Pirate*) strengthens the authority of the pseudo-sibyl Norna, who is really the key figure in the complex plot.

50 See Edith Wharton, p. 5 above.

51 The contrasts between Cavalier and Cameronian manners in *Old Mortality*, and especially the ferocity of the Cameronian clergy, underscore the central military conflicts.
servants and pages to their masters. Most of this material is presented in the first half of the novel, where it helps to clarify and to enhance the difficulties of Nigel's own situation and the struggle in which he is involved. *Durward* likewise relies heavily on manners to galvanize the action: the practices of feudalism survive not only in the courtly ceremonial that enriches the color of the narrative, but also in the overlord's right to control the marriage of his vassal, which precipitates the struggle over the custody of Isabelle de Croye. The decay, in turn, of feudalism and of the principles of chivalry results in the insecurity, disorder, and violence pictured in the opening pages of the novel, which provide Quentin with the opportunity for winning fame, fortune, and a bride. And the sketches of Scottish manners explain the nature, the presence, and the position of the Scottish Guard in Louis's court—powerful influences again on the course of the story. *Redgauntlet*, which illustrates so many of Scott's different uses of manners materials, not surprisingly keeps the action almost continually going by copious pressure of manners: the customary activities of fisher-folk, Quakers, and Border lairds lead to the riot in which Darsie falls into Redgauntlet's hands; Border lawlessness favors the abduction of Darsie and the plotting of the Jacobites; the procedures by which Alan is admitted to the bar keep him in Edinburgh during the early part of Darsie's adventures and are finally used by Alan's father as an excuse to prevent Darsie from returning to Edinburgh; the Scottish passion for litigation likewise ties Alan at first to Peter Peebles and later sends Peter in pursuit of Alan, thus providing for his participation in the denouement; the fishermen's dance gives Darsie the opportunity for a long and serious conversation with Lilias; the professional trick of musicians (communicating by scraps of tunes) enables Wandering Willie to assist Darsie; the smugglers' standard operating procedure secures secret entry into England for Darsie and the Prince; even such a trivial detail as the customary female riding garb is used to facilitate Darsie's removal to the Crackenthorp inn and his reunion with Alan. *Fair Maid* (a novel not presently in high favor) owes much of the esteem it deserves to the powerful part played by manners in supporting the central struggle. The historical incident selected as the core of the narrative was the combat (in 1396) between representatives of two feuding clans in the presence of King Robert III, his brother, and his court. This incident involved the flight of one champion (Conachar-Fachin-Hector) and the substitution of a townsman (Henry Smith); through this last element the emerging bourgeoisie is involved. Some implications of this subject are reminiscent of *Durward*; here again we are concerned
with aspects of political evolution, but the lack of a central figure shrewd, persistent, and daring like Louis XI, makes the course of evolution vague and inconclusive. Manners are introduced to support social groups, the pressure of whose conflicts will force some kind of evolutionary change. The clans, the urban middle class, the royal family, and the feudal peerage are the groups from which the leading characters are enlisted; the manners of these groups precipitate many of the incidents of the story.52

Even more fundamental, more central, to a novel as a whole, is the role of manners when it appears that the very principle of manners, of manners conceived of as the machinery and the expression of a stable society, is itself jeopardized in the course of the action. Scott postulated such a total conflict in explaining his choice of the setting for *St. Ronan*: in such a scene characters are frequently mingled who are not merely ridiculous, but dangerous and hateful—the gamester, the fortune-hunter, and all those who pander to the vices and follies of the rich and gay, found where their victims naturally resort. By this means, the author secures a great advantage for the management of his story. The imposter and the gambler are to be found at such retreats. Besides those characters who are actually dangerous to society, the scene presents a sprinkling of eccentric characters—individuals ambitious of distinguishing themselves by some striking peculiarity, by such affectations as are frequently to be found among the English. The witty Irishman, on the contrary, adapts his general behavior to that of the best society. The hindsight attempt to justify the distinctive "plan" of this novel, some years after its first publication, had already suggested fundamental questions as to the nature of the novel of manners: what is the function of the manners material?—what is the attitude of the novelist toward the manners which he depicts? *St. Ronan* is composed

upon a plan very different from any other that the author has ever written, although it is perhaps the most legitimate . . . —to give an imitation of the shifting manners of our own time, . . . daily passing around us. . . . Many formidable competitors . . . have already won deserved honours in this department. The ladies, in particular, gifted by nature with keen powers of observation and light satire, have been . . . distinguished by these

52 *The Abbot, The Pirate, The Talisman, and Count Robert of Paris*—all provide further illustration of action excited by manners: those of sixteenth-century Scotland, of Shetland, of the Austrian Crusaders, and of the court of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus, respectively.

[ 25 ]
works of talent, ... reckoning from the authoress of Evelina to
her of Marriage, ... including Edgeworth, Austin (Mrs), Char-
lotte Smith, and others.

It would at first appear that the author's responsibility is primarily that
of presenting and recreating. To give an imitation of the shifting man-
ners of our own time, keen powers of observation are necessary, but
Scott felt he had not enjoyed sufficient opportunity to observe con-
temporary society. When we turn to the novel itself after reading

In this respect, the author of St. Ronan's Well could not be
termed fortunate. His habits of life had not led him much, of
late years at least, into its general or bustling scenes, nor had he
mingled often in the society which enables the observer to
"shoot folly as it flies." 8

Scott's statement of intentions, we are disappointed to find how far the
novelist has departed in method, how short he has fallen in achievement,
in comparison with those illustrious predecessors whom he cites. The
author unfortunately lacked the satirical gift necessary to exploit charac-
ters not merely ridiculous, but dangerous and hateful, actually dangerous
to society, along with those eccentric or affected, who are likewise anti-
or extra-social. And despite the promising setting—a newly developed
watering place in the valley of the Tweed—little use is made of its dis-
tinctive manners in developing the action and the principal actors. Meg
Dodd's inn existed independently of the spa, and its clientele of retired
hunters, elderly fishermen, Edinburgh roisterers, and occasional bona
fide travelers, is more central than that of the parvenu Well. The Mid-
summer Night's Dream party at Mowbray's represents country life, not
resort life. And at any rate little use is made of the party except insofar
as a misleading bit of costume enables Lady Penelope to catch the
scents of gossip concerning Clara. To be sure, some half a dozen chap-
ters near the beginning of the novel are devoted to the society of the
Well, and to its established patterns: Administration— with the rival
factions and the Committee, Invitations, Tabletalk and Tea-Table.
But this material is presented largely through typical "characters" in the
seventeenth-century style: the Man of Medicine, the Man of Taste, the
Man of Law; and we are given no continued survey of the institutional
program of the resort. Once Tyrrel and Clara Mowbray are brought
together again, all this aspect of the novel is forgotten, which is just
as well, for the resort manners are irrelevant to and out of key with
the lurid plot of false marriage, rival heirs, disputed legitimacy, and
stained honor, involving a relatively small but highly complicated

8 St. Ronan, 1832 "Introduction," pp. v-ix.

[ 26 ]
group of characters. The penchant of well society for drinking, gambling, and quarreling is demonstrably a source of trouble; this is one of the few areas in which well manners and Mowbray plot are mutually involved. Despite the slurring allusion to "eccentrics" in the "Introduction," a character "ambitious of distinguishing" himself from the Well (Touchwood) is a notable organizing factor and a power for good in the plot, while the chief villain, Bulmer-Etherington, operates substantially within the accepted social framework. In conclusion, the basic cause for the tragic developments in the story turns out to have been the secret love affair of Tyrrel and Clara that took place seven years before the action of the novel commences, an ethical and religious error rather than a rebellion against social custom.

The rather unsatisfactory Daughter, broken-backed in structure and collapsing into exotic absurdity in the second half, may perhaps be taken to some extent seriously if it is seen as illustrating a conflict between society and its enemies. The story itself opens in "one of the midland counties of Scotland," and takes place in the second half of the eighteenth century. To be sure, the initial incident foreshadows the theme of the conclusion by illustrating the melancholy consequences of a seduction and elopement in defiance of family, social, and religious manners. But the novel then proceeds to give a close view of the activities of a Scottish provincial doctor, with glimpses of Edinburgh student life and of the social behavior of young people in a country town. The second half of the story—the core and raison d'être of the sensational narrative—is set in India, and local manners are disregarded. The only function for the manners material in the first half appears to have been to establish a way of life, whose violation by selfish, unprincipled, and deceitful individuals results in tragedy. A parallel theme appears in one aspect of Fair Maid, where the compulsive cowardice of Hector makes him a traitor to his clan, and as a traitant from his society he attains at last the isolation of suicide or a hermitage.

Surprising in a poet is the infrequency with which Scott suggests symbolic implications in phenomena reflecting manners. In this connection it is noteworthy that the resort, in St. Ronan, can exist only by virtue of a type of land tenure inimical to landed estates such as the novelist admired; and that the whole establishment, not only as a physical entity but also as a social institution, is demolished at the end of the novel.

Manners scenes contribute powerfully to intensify the mood of a

54 "Few," in spite of Scott's claim to have used the profusion of parasitical characters to "great advantage for the management of his story."
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chapter, or even of a whole novel, as in Bride, where the various scenes of funerary rites: the funeral and wake for Edgar’s father, the laying-out of Alice, and Lucy’s burial—deepen the tone of tragic gloom. Similarly, the courtly ceremonies in which the practices of feudalism survive, in Darward, enrich the colorful tapestry of the action.

The same materials serve to complete the historical picture, in the latter novel.55 When belief in the supernatural is a feature of a particular society, Scott fills out his story’s background of manners by introducing supposedly supernatural phenomena.56 But in Redgauntlet, and in the introductory chapters of Chronicles of the Canongate, it is not so much the historical as the personal, the autobiographical background that Scott is building up, as discussed above, particularly on pp. 8, 15, 19.

A glance back over examples of manners material culled from Scott’s most relevant novels makes it evident that the author was persistently conscious of the desirability of building on a solid foundation of such materials, and unfailingly subject to their charm (for himself if not quite so consistently for the reader). Naturally, therefore, illustrations abound, and some reason for their inclusion can always be found in addition to the doctrinaire one that Scott just thought they ought to be there.57 Little question can be raised as to the vividness and thoroughness with which these materials are usually presented, but their indispensability is less obvious. To the fulfillment of his own personality they were essential; they adumbrated passages in his own life and character that he recognized as central; they flattered his tastes for the distinctive and the comic; they reflected his avocations as antiquary, and dilettante, and connoisseur of glamour. They provided a

55 As do the details of Elizabeth’s court, in Kenilworth. With little regard for chronological accuracy Scott ransacked the wardrobe of history and the arts for attributes with which to adorn the queen; in actual fact, her personal taste and political acumen led her to exploit the trappings and the rituals of court etiquette, much of which has been preserved for us reflected in the permanent accomplishments of her reign. Thus the details of the queen’s progress and of the revels at Kenilworth are essential to the completeness of Scott’s delineation. Manners were a subject of intense concern to the members of the court, as imagined by Scott as well as in fact; Leicester, when spurned on to shine his brightest on the royal barge, entertains the company with discourse on “foreign countries—their customs, their manners, the rules of their courts—the fashions, and even the dress of their ladies” (chapter xvii, p. 256).

56 This function of the supernatural is suggested by Coleman O. Parsons, op. cit., pp. 221, 223 f., 244, 251, 253, 283.

57 See Studies in Scottish Literature, 1, 15 f., with Scott’s reference to “the indispensable peculiarities of . . . manners.”
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means for projecting consistently maintained ideas—of the continuity of social history and evolution, of society's dependence on order and principle and morality. They could be so juxtaposed as to objectify the basic, the vitalizing and fructifying conflicts within his own nature. And they catered to the demands of his insatiable love for his native land—not only its men and institutions but even its actual physical being.

What has all this to do with the business of the novel? Very little, it may be. But over and above the examples just summarized—and especially in certain novels which we would rank among the best: The Bride of Lammermoor, Redgauntlet, The Heart of Midlothian, Guy Mannering, and Quentin Durward—manners materials are made to function organically in the development and presentation of character and action, in the implication of themes and values, in the projection of tone and background. To such extent, Scott is entitled to rank among the novelists of manners.

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