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WALTER SCOTT, THE TWO SICILIES, AND EVENTS OF "RECENT DATE"

Graham Tulloch

Walter Scott was fascinated throughout his life by the area known in his time as the Two Sicilies, that is Sicily itself on the one hand and the southern part of the Italian peninsula with its chief city and capital at Naples on the other. His childhood interest manifested itself in his earliest surviving poem, a translation of a passage describing Mt Etna from the *Aeneid*.[1] This interest in volcanoes continued to be very strong during his trip to Malta and Italy in 1831 and 1832. On his way to Malta he landed on a newly risen volcanic island, in a letter to his friend James Skene he described his view of Etna from the sea as he sailed by Sicily, and to his son Charles he wrote jokingly about being carried up Vesuvius and "how you will bear you[r] old padre pick a back like father Anchises."[2] Finally, in a neat framing of his whole career, his very last piece of creative writing, *Bizarro*, contains two references to Etna.[3]

Volcanoes, however, were not the only source of Scott's interest in the region. As regards Sicily, references to it regularly appear in his writing. In *Marmion*, published in 1808, he refers to Saint Rosalia of Palermo as well as mentioning the "reverend pilgrim," Patrick Brydone, whose much admired travel book, *A Tour through Sicily and Malta, in a Series of*

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[1] Walter Scott, "His First Lines," in P. D. Garside and Gillian Hughes, eds, *The Shorter Poem*s [*The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry*] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 1.

[2] W. E. K. Anderson, ed., *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 682; Walter Scott to James Skene, 5 March 1832, National Library of Scotland MS 965, f. 245r.; Walter Scott to Charles Scott, 8 August 1831, in H. J. C. Grierson *et al.*, eds, *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, 12 vols (London: Constable, 1936–37), XII: 28.

[3] Walter Scott, *Bizarro*, in J. H. Alexander, Judy King and Graham Tulloch, eds, *The Siege of Malta and Bizarro*, by Walter Scott (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 172, 179. In the second reference, Etna is referred to by its alternative name of Mongibel.

Letters to William Beckford, Esq., of Somerly in Suffolk, was published in 1773.[4] In London he told John Scott of Gala that

> I paid a visit to my friend [the bookseller] Whittaker to ask him for some books of travels likely to be of use to me on my expedition to the Mediterranean. Here's old Brydone accordingly, still as good a companion as any he could recommend.[5]

The notes to *Marmion* show he had also read *A Voyage to Sicily and Malta* by John Dryden, the son of the poet, published in 1776.[6] Later in life, in 1828, he wrote to Lady Northampton, who was planning to spend the winter in Palermo, about his interest in the island:

> Seriously I have often thought of setting to work on Sicily. It is a noble subject for a tale of the middle ages and these normans and saracens the bravest and most romantic of men run strongly in my head.[7]

This interest in Sicily continued strong and in August 1831, only a couple of months before he set off for the Mediterranean, he wrote to his son Charles, then living in Naples as a diplomat, "I shou[ld] like to see some thing of Sicily but when I think of Vesuvius and Ætna it is too late a week in life for visiting the Cyclops her reverence."[8] Finally, there is a brief mention of Palermo in *Bizarro* which shows that Sicily was still on his mind when he was writing the story.[9]

By contrast with these regular but brief references to Sicily, Scott's writing about the other Sicily, Naples and the rest of southern Italy, particularly Calabria, is much more extensive. Even before he arrived in Naples he had written two quite substantial pieces on Neapolitan history, an account of the downfall of Joachim Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law and king of Naples from 1808 to 1815, published in the *Edinburgh Annual Register* in 1816, and a review of two books dealing with revolution in

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[4] Scott, *Marmion*, Canto 1, line 736 and Canto 6, line 779: see Ainsley McIntosh, ed. *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* [*The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry*] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 32, 189.

[5] John Scott quoting Walter Scott, in J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 7 vols (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1837–38), VII: 313.

[6] Canto 1, note XVI: see Scott, *Marmion*, 224–25.

[7] *Letters*, X: 474–45.

[8] *Letters*, XII: 28.

[9] *Bizarro*, 186. A magistrate threatens a witness that "if you proceed in refusing to the King's magistrate what it is his duty and right to demand of you, I will send you over in chains to Palermo, and your husband for company, … till he recover his hearing and you your recollection." The reference is inappropriate as a witness to a crime in Calabria, whether under French or under Bourbon rule, would never have been sent to Palermo but rather to Naples. While Scott may be suffering from some confusion here, it nevertheless shows that Sicily was still very much in his mind.

Naples in the 1640s, published in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* in 1829. Once in Naples he described his experiences in his journal and letters, recording the places he visited, the people he met, and stories he heard. Afterwards in Rome he wrote his Calabrian story, *Bizarro*.

However, despite his intense interest in both parts of the Two Sicilies, in the event all Scott ever saw of Sicily itself was Etna as he sailed along the eastern coast, as already noted, and he set foot only on the mainland part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.[10] He was thus denied the opportunity to compare what he had read about the island with his direct experience of it. While this was undoubtedly a disappointment, it was Naples that he wanted to visit. Expressing his hope of soon working off his debts, he told Charles, in the letter quoted above, that "One of the most agreeable uses I can make of the ease & amusement which this will afford me will [be] to pay Italy & especially Naples a visit for the dead months of winter."[11] It was only in Naples and its surroundings that Scott was able to compare his previous reading about the region with his actual experiences while he was there. The focus of this article then is on Naples, on what Scott knew before he arrived and what he encountered and wrote about after his arrival. Sicily the island was destined to remain an unfulfilled hope.

Two significant books, Donald Sultana's The Siege of Malta *Rediscovered: An Account of Sir Walter Scott's Mediterranean Journey and his Last Novel*, published in 1977, and Iain Gordon Brown's *Frolics in the Face of Europe: Sir Walter Scott's Continental Travel and the Tradition of the Grand Tour*, published in 2020, have described his journey and discussed in considerable detail many of the things that interested Scott during his visit to Naples and his surroundings as well as things that did not appear to interest him, an equally absorbing topic.[12] Both books have drawn very productively on Scott's letters and journal as well as dealing comprehensively with the accounts by people who met him in Naples, most notably Sir William Gell, but also a number of others.[13] This

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[10] The kingdoms of Sicily and Naples were formally combined as the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in 1816 but the term "Two Sicilies" had been in use for a long time before that.

[11] *Letters*, XII: 28.

[12] Donald E. Sultana, The Siege of Malta *Rediscovered: An Account of Sir Walter Scott's Mediterranean Journey and his Last Novel* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1977); Iain Gordon Brown, *Frolics in the Face of Europe: Sir Walter Scott, Continental Travel and the Tradition of the Grand Tour* (Stroud: Fonthill, 2020).

[13] See especially Sultana, The Siege of Malta *Rediscovered*, 54–93, Brown, *Frolics*, 131–76. Amongst other contemporary accounts of Scott in Naples cited either by Brown alone or by both Brown and Sultana are Owen Blayney Cole, "A Last Memory of Sir Walter Scott," in "Memorial of a Tour," *Cornhill Magazine* 55, no.

essay supplements their findings by dealing with an element of Scott's interest in Naples, both before and during his visit, to which they have given no substantial attention. In what follows, the focus is on Scott's own writing about Naples, rather than other people's accounts of encountering him in Naples, as Brown and Sultana do. For background, however, it may be useful to have a brief summary of what we learn from Gell, who is certainly the most important external witness to Scott's experiences in Naples.

Sir William Gell (1777-1836) was an expert on the cities of Antiquity. He met Scott shortly after his arrival in Naples and took him to Pompeii, Paestum and other classical sites as well as to the medieval convent at La Cava. He wrote an account of his time with Scott, which he sent to Lockhart, who made use of it in the biography, though with considerable cuts.[14] It provides a fascinating first-hand account of Scott's Italian experiences, and it can be supplemented by the accounts of others who saw Scott in Naples without spending as much time with him. However, because these other accounts have played such a large part in our understanding of what interested Scott in the Two Sicilies, we end up with what is, to some extent, a tale of their expectations, whether fulfilled or not. Scott's kinsman, John Scott of Gala, who met Scott in London before he left on his journey, expected that he would want to see the medieval castle of Saint Elmo in Naples and the classical ruins of Pompeii and Paestum.[15] Gell likewise obviously expected that Scott would be interested in the Middle Ages but also in the Ancient World. While he found Scott unable to take in his lectures on classical antiquities, he did find, as expected, that Scott was intensely interested in anything from the Middle Ages. This prompted him to tell Edward Cheney in Rome that Scott was

> the Master Spirit of the history of the Middle Ages, of feudal times, of spectres, magic, abbeys, castles, subterranean passages, and præternatural appearances, but that he was more animated on the history of the Stuart

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327 (September 1923), 257–67; Marianne Talbot, *Life in the South. The Naples Journal of Marianne Talbot*, ed. Michael Heafford (Cambridge: Postillion Books, 2012); and N. P. Willis, *Pencillings by the Way*, 3 vols (London: John Macrone, 1835). Both Sultana and Brown also cite writing by Scott family members who were with him in Naples.

[14] Sir William Gell, *Reminiscences of Sir Walter Scott's Residence in Italy, 1832*, ed. James C. Corson (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957). On Lockhart's handling of Gell's manuscript, see Donald Sultana, "Sir William Gell's Correspondence on Scott from Naples and his 'Reminiscences of Sir Walter Scott in Italy, 1832,'" in J. H. Alexander and David Hewitt, eds, *Scott and His Influence* (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1983), 243–54.

[15] John Scott's account of his conversation with Scott is recorded in Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life*, 313–16; see 314.

> family than on any other topic, and … always contrived to divert the conversation into that channel.[16]

The picture that emerges from this is a Scott who is primarily interested in medieval relics and surrounds anything surviving from the Middle Ages with his own imagined attributes (Gell, 17); who admires classical ruins but sees them, to use Gell's phrase, "with the eye not of an antiquary but a poet" (Gell, 8); who recalls the Jacobites in unexpected places, such as when he allegedly confuses the town of Albano with Albany, a title associated with the Stuart pretenders to the British throne (Gell, 26);[17] and who appreciates the beautiful scenery but views it through Scottish eyes, as when he finds pleasure in the Lago d'Agnano because it reminds him of a particular Scottish loch of which Gell cannot remember the name (Gell, 2). Above all the picture is of a man regularly unable to take in the full meaning of what he sees and hears: according to Gell "his only pleasure in seeing new places arose from the poetical ideas they inspired, as applicable to other scenes with which his mind was more familiar" (Gell, 2). All of this seems to be heavily conditioned by expectations based either on Scott's known interests (especially Scotland and Scottish history and the Middle Ages) or on the traditional sources of interest for travellers in Naples (particularly the relics of Antiquity). However, Gell believed that "Sir Walter's intellect had not suffered so severely as those who saw him seemed inclined to believe," and that "he was generally clear in his ideas, and even brilliant and full of anecdote when the conversation turned upon subjects on which he had ever bestowed his attention" (Gell, 37). There is plenty of evidence that Scott was interested in things closer in time and place than the Middle Ages and Scotland. In fact, he had a deep interest in the recent history of Naples, particularly the period of French domination, though it would have been unwise for him to dwell much on this in conversation while in the Naples of 1831, with its restored and repressive Bourbon monarchy; this may explain why Scott's interest in recent Naples history was not particularly evident to those who met him.

Looking at Scott's own writing about Naples, rather than what Gell and others wrote about him, can amplify understanding of what interested him during his stay. Alongside Scott's journal and letters, already discussed very productively by Sultana and Brown, it is valuable to consider three other relevant works, not utilized in the studies by Sultana or Brown. The

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[16] Gell, *Reminiscences*, 26.

[17] This is Gell's interpretation. Though Scott himself does not exhibit any such confusion in his journal entry regarding his journey from Naples to Rome, this does not in itself invalidate Gell's interpretation, which is based on a remark made on a different occasion: see W. E. K. Anderson, ed., *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 712.

first two are the periodical contributions on Neapolitan history already mentioned, Scott's account of the downfall of Joachim Murat, published in 1815, and his review of two books dealing with revolution in Naples in the 1640s, published in 1829. Neither Sultana nor Scott discuss the Murat story, and, though Sultana mentions the review, it is without going into detail. The third work to be considered is Scott's unfinished short novel *Bizarro*, written in 1832 but first published in 2008, which was therefore unavailable when Sultana was writing, and which Brown chose not to consider.[18]

Joachim Murat (1767-1815), a French general and Napoleon's brother-in-law, ruled as King of Naples from 1808-1815, the year of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. Scott's story of Murat's downfall and death appears in the "History of Europe, 1815," which he contributed to the volume of the *Edinburgh Annual Register* dedicated to that year.[19] These annual accounts of events in Europe were a regular feature of the *Register,* and Scott wrote those for 1814 and 1815. Kenneth Curry, in *Sir Walter Scott's Edinburgh Annual Register*, remarking that "for the most part reading the 'History of Europe'" is a dull business," notes that there are some chapters of "lively narrative," of which Scott's chapter on the fall of Murat is one.[20] It is, indeed, a quick moving narrative with a dramatic conclusion. Scott is clearly fascinated by the story of Murat's rise and fall. Seeking a balanced judgement, he recognises Murat's achievements as the ruler of Naples:

> His sovereignty had been attended with considerable advantages to Naples, as often happens upon the introduction of a new dynasty. Ancient abuses had been corrected, assassinations were rendered less frequent by abridging the privilege of sanctuary, the insolencies of the turbulent Lazzaroni had been checked, and a more strict police was established both in Naples and Calabria.[21]

Scott acknowledges Murat's courage in battle, but after describing Murat's bravery when he was executed by firing squad he comments:

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[18] Another reflection of Scott's interest in Calabria is his naming of his dog Maida. Sir John Stuart defeated a French force at Maida, a town in Calabria, in 1806. The name also served as a compliment to Alexander Macdonell of Glengarry who gave him the dog and whose brother had commanded the 78th Highlanders at the battle.

[19] "History of Europe, 1815," *Edinburgh Annual Register for 1815,* 8 (1817): 3–367; for the chapter on Murat see 185–99.

[20] Scott also wrote, briefly and with less obvious interest, about Sicily, in "The History of Europe, 1814," *Edinburgh Annual Register for 1814,* 7 (1816): 316–17. Because Sicily did not fall under Murat's rule, remaining nominally under Bourbon rule if effectively under Britain's protection, it provided less scope for Scott's imaginative engagement.

[21] "History of Europe, 1815," 199.

> Thus fell Murat, who, from the meanest rank of society, had raised himself by military courage alone,—for he was devoid of talents,—to the throne of one of the most delightful countries in Europe (199).

Recognizing that Murat's "remarkable history is less striking, from its being interwoven with that of Buonaparte," Scott concludes that "Future times … might assign to Murat a fairer rank than his patron and relative" (185).[22]

The comparison with Napoleon is instructive. While he began from less humble origins than Murat, Napoleon's rise to become Emperor was one of the most remarkable and unexpected events of Scott's time and one which he attempted to explain and understand, most notably in his *Life of Napoleon Buonaparte* (1827) but in other writing as well. In this context, where the old world was overthrown and people of the lowest ranks became kings, Scott was bound to be fascinated by a figure like Murat whose rise to fortune he had neatly summarised with explicit reference to Napoleon:

> Joachim Murat had trodden the paths of French revolution with success, which was only surpassed by the progress of his brother-in-law and patron. Originally the stable-boy, or waiter of a cabaret—then a soldier of fortune—then a jacobin, so enthusiastic, that he requested permission to change his name to Marat, in honour of that deceased worthy—he had become successively General, Marshal, Grand Duke of Berg, and King of Naples (185).

Scott's next engagement with Neapolitan history came in August 1829, in the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, when he reviewed two books about Naples in the 1640s.[23] In 1647-1648, Naples saw a popular revolution against new taxes imposed by the Spanish viceroy. The revolutionary leader, the fisherman Tommaso Aniello, known as Masaniello, ruled Naples for just ten days before he was assassinated. In the aftermath, the Duke of Guise took over command of the revolutionaries in an unsuccessful attempt to carve out his own kingdom. The two books, both in French, are the *Memoirs of the Comte de Modène* about the Naples revolution and Amédée de Pastoret's *The Duke of Guise at Naples,* a heavily fictionalised work though based on the duke's own memoirs. Ostensibly a review, the article is largely Scott's own account of the dramatic events in those two years based partly on the two texts but also

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[22] Murat was brother-in-law to Napoleon, having married his sister Pauline.

[23] Review of *Mémoires du comte de Modene* [*sic*], *sur la Revolution de Naples de 1647*. Troisième edition. Publiée par J.-B. Mieille. Paris, 1827. 2 tom. 8vo. *Le Duc de Guise à Naples, ou Mémoires sur les révolutions de ce royaume en 1647 et 1648*. Deuxième edition. Paris, 1825, *Foreign Quarterly Review*, 4 (1828): 355–403.

drawing on other sources. In the story of Masaniello, which Scott relates as a fast moving and dramatic journal over the ten days, he found a parallel to other men of humble origins who had risen to the highest level in his own time, including Murat. Once again, he emphasises the extraordinary nature of the rise to power of a poor man "for whom fate had destined such rapid change of condition as never mortal underwent within the same space of time."[24]

As with Murat, Scott aims for a balanced assessment of his character. While arguing that "his extraordinary rise was rather the work of fortune and contingency, than of his own device in the conception, or his own exertions in the execution" (373) and that he "was totally destitute of that knowledge of mankind so essential to a truly great leader, which enables him to select counsellors and assistants suitable to the times and the purposes in which he is engaged" he nevertheless acknowledges that "he was at the same time totally free from any sinister views of personal aggrandizement" (374).[25] In the end he concludes that Masaniello's sudden rise to unaccustomed power upset his mental balance and led him to excesses which alienated even his supporters. In other words, it is a case of a lower-class man who was not born to rule and who has no natural talent other than boldness and who is unable to maintain the power which he has unexpectedly attained. In short, another Murat. However, as with Murat, Scott is obliged to recognise that Masaniello did attain the highest power and, after describing how he bravely faced the men sent to kill him, he writes

> Thus ended the short but eventful life of Masaniello, who, in the course of ten days, rose from the most humble situation to an unrivalled height of despotic authority; and after reigning like a monarch, was by common consent, shot and dragged through the city like a mad dog, yet finally buried like a prince, and almost worshipped as a saint (373).

The mystery of how a man of the lowest caste can become a king remains.

By way of contrast, in the Duke of Guise Scott offers us a man who was indeed born to rule:

> The Duke of Guise united in his person the qualities both of the romantic heroes of the period, and such as stood high in the political world. Young, handsome, accomplished in all exercises, witty and agreeable as Grammont, amorous as Amadis, inconstant as his brother Don Galaor, he was accounted irresistible among the fair sex. A soldier as brave as Bayard, and possessed of all the

[24] Review of *Mémoires*, 363.

[25] The description of Masaniello's principal supporters which accompanies these statements is devastating as to their characters. Gennaro Annese, for example, is described as "an ignorant and brutal mechanic, cruel, avaricious, and cowardly."

> ambition of all the Guises, Henry of Lorraine was fit both to conceive and to execute the most extraordinary enterprises (379).

He fails because he is supported neither by the French government nor his lower-class followers. He fails also because he has tried to place himself at the head of an irrational and ignorant mob. In Scott's words,

> The story affords a melancholy proof how much revolutionary movements are in the power of the lowest and most ignorant of the people, and how insufficient are courage and talent of the highest order in extinguishing a conflagration which has been kindled by the most trifling accident (355).

As Scott tells the story, the connection with events of his own time is obvious. However, in case we fail to see this, he reminds us that the story

> affords grounds for deep reflection for those who may be disposed to compare events passed on another stage and terminating in a different manner, with the singular occurrences of the same character which have astounded our own time.

And he concludes that

> the mob of an enlightened city like Paris in the 18th century, seems to differ little more from that of Naples in the preceding, sunk as it was in ignorance and superstition, than a philosopher differs from a clown, when they are both in the delirium of the same fever of the brain (357).

Likewise, he tells us that the people who supported Masaniello's revolution—the Unshod as they were called—are "the *Sans Culottes* of the place and time" (394), and he compares their leaders with Marat and Robespierre (388). Although his main point of comparison is between the French Revolution and Masaniello's, he even makes a link between the Duke of Guise and Murat, noting that Guise made "another attempt … upon Naples, as rash as that of Joachim Murat's last attempt on the same kingdom, but fortunately attended with less tragic circumstances" (403).

Thus events in Naples nearly two centuries apart offer lessons for Scott's time. But this is not Scott's only interest. References in the review to other works he has consulted show that Scott had read widely in Neapolitan history, and he hoped that the story he was telling would be "especially acceptable to our English readers, some of whom, in these days of Continental rambling, are perhaps better acquainted with the streets of Naples than with its history" (357). Nevertheless it is Scott's particular focus on the parallels between the 1640s and events of his own time that is particularly pertinent to his actual experience there in 1832.

For Scott to say in 1829 that certain things should be in the minds of those who ramble about Naples and its surrounds does not of course prove that these things were on his own mind when he found himself in Naples two and a half years later. For that we need to turn to the *Journal*. Sure

enough, we find abundant evidence that Scott was still reflecting on these events during his visit. He landed in Naples on Christmas Eve 1831 and almost immediately set off in search of related sites. The first journal entry written in Naples informs us that "The day after Christmas I went to see some old parts of the town amongst the rest a tower calld torre del Carmi[ne] which figured during the Duke of Guise's adventure and the gallery of as old a church w[h]ere [Masaniello] was shott at the conclusion of his carreer."[26] A little later he records that "We have seen the Strada Nuova, a new access of extreme beauty which the Italians owe to Murat" (692). In March he was taken by Gell on a major expedition to view the ruins of Paestum and recorded that on the way he saw a road constructed by the French zigzagging up a mountain (701). Finally just before he left Naples Scott recorded in his journal the story which was to become *Bizarro*. Although he dates it "about six years ago" it is clearly set in the time of French rule since the brigand Bizarro is said to have "maintained [his band] in the mountains of Calabria between the French and the Neapolitan both of which he defied" and we are told of a French colonel who pursued him (708–09).

The journal contains only one other direct allusion to events during the reign of Murat when, on the way to Rome, his party passed a place "where Murat used to quarter a body of troops and cannonade the English Gun boats" (712). However it is possible, even probable, that Scott was being rather cautious, even in his journal, about raising such politically sensitive matters after the restoration of the Bourbon kings. On the other hand we do find a number of references to a much earlier period of history when the Normans ruled over a kingdom with many Muslim inhabitants. Given his abiding interest in the clash of Christianity and Islam, which had been given its most recent expression in his writing about the siege of Malta by the Ottomans, Scott was bound to have a strong interest in a part of the Christian world where for a period Muslim influence had been very strong. Thus at the monastery at La Cava he was fascinated to see "a number of interesting deeds," one of which, by Roger, King of Sicily "extend[s] his Majestie's protection to some half dozen men of consequence whose names attested their sarac[en]ism" (705). Similarly, passing a village called Nocera de Paganis, he notes that in it "the Saracens obtaind a place of Refuge from which it takes its name" (706), and, seeing a tower, he records that the Amalfitans built it "as an exploratory Gazabo from which they could watch the motions of the Saracens" (701).

The journal thus offers us an insight into Scott's interests and concerns while he was in Naples, but it is to *Bizarro* that we must turn for an even more complete picture and particularly for his interest in recent Neapolitan

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[26] *Journal*, 691.

history. Strikingly, this interest is proclaimed as early as the subtitle: "A Calabrian Tale of Recent Date."[27] Next, after a chapter motto by Byron, the story itself begins with a direct reference to recent events:

> It is but of late years, and in consequence of the mutations, menaces, and struggles which have agitated almost every corner of the universe, except Britain itself, that Calabria has come to arrest the general attention [having been, like other parts of] the Peninsula of Italy, …disorganized, and almost reduced altogether, by a dislocation of whatever resembled civil society (159).

This leads into a chapter, typical of many of the first chapters of Scott's novels from *Ivanhoe* onwards, which describes the geographical and historical setting of the story to follow. However, there is no other introductory chapter which begins with explicit reference to such recent, and dramatic, historical events. Even *Saint Ronan's Well*, set in the early nineteenth century, begins with only a very general reference to the recent changes in the Scottish economy. In this chapter Masaniello appears three times, each time as a way of explicating events in the recent history of Naples. First he appears as evidence of the continuing personal courage of Neapolitans both in his own time and as corroboration of their courage in more recent times:

> Without going back to the remote age of Masaniello and other periods when, whatever might be awanting to the Neapolitan character, the quantity of their personal courage certainly abounded, we may shortly observe that the instances of failure, which have been quoted as affecting the character of the Italian common soldier, flow in general from a timidity rather the consequence of a distrust of their commander, their officers, their comrades—of all or anyone sooner than themselves (165).

Secondly Scott notes that "it was not until the long and various wars which followed upon the French Revolution, that once more, as in the time of Masaniello, the brigands assumed the honourable title of insurgent, while the French endeavoured to suppress this wide-wasting plague [of brigandage]" (166). Thirdly, "the history of Masaniello" provides evidence of the role of gangs of brigands in Calabria over the centuries and up to Scott's time (164–65). There are also references to Nelson's view of Neapolitan soldiers, and to "the three days' defence of Naples by the Lazarone, or lower class of its citizens," against the French in 1799 (162,163).

Scott goes to some pains to point out that he is writing about contemporary times including events in the past which he links, and had

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[27] *Bizarro*, in *The Siege of Malta and Bizarro*, ed. Alexander, King and Tulloch, 159.

linked, to recent events. It is almost as though he is deliberately pointing to his change of focus, especially after the seventeenth-century events of *The Siege of Malta*, which is backward looking in the sense that it is very much presented as the end of an age, the medieval era of chivalry. By contrast *Bizarro* is forward looking, with Scott emphasising the links between the past and his own present. Interestingly he seems to have even overstated the recentness of the events.

The historical character upon whom Scott based his story, Francesco Moscato, known as Il Bizzarro, died in 1810, when the French were in charge, and at various points Scott places his Bizarro firmly in the period of French domination which ended in 1815. For instance, Bizarro is said to have assumed "the character of a partizan of the Bourbon" yet to have made war on both the Bourbons and the French (167). Furthermore, a French officer offers the resources of the French army in trying to find the person responsible for the hideous murder Bizarro has perpetrated (183). Yet, in contradiction of this placement of Bizarro in the French period, Scott also writes that "the person of whom it is my purpose to tell the following extraordinary story flourished in Calabria within these seven or eight years before the present date of 1832" (166). It is as if he is excessively conscious of writing about contemporary times. Perhaps, as himself now one of those ramblers on the Continent he had written about in 1829, he is conscious of how much his reaction to Naples and Calabria was shaped as much by events within the last thirty years as by the ancient and mediaeval past. *Bizarro* gives us plenty of examples of Scott's broader interests, such as the beauty of the countryside, the majesty of Paestum, the scourge of brigandage, and the importance of volcanoes and earthquakes in shaping the land. All of this was evident to those around him but not so obvious to them was the significance of recent revolutionary events in his understanding of Naples.

Perhaps Scott's insistence on the recentness of the events he was describing is evidence that he was himself a little surprised about how strongly these events figured in his imagination. Indeed, the emphasis on recent political events in his last piece of fiction may well surprise us as well, so little are we accustomed to it in his novels. However, we should not be surprised: he had after all lived through the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars and had only finished his life of Napoleon a few years earlier. Throughout his life he wrote about contemporary events—in his letters, in his journal, in his occasional poetry, in pamphlets and in pieces for newspapers and periodicals, but rarely in his fiction. Escape from the closed world of his printer and publisher in Scotland seems to have given him new freedom, such as the freedom to describe extreme violence evident in both *The Siege of Malta* and *Bizarro*, which has very little parallel elsewhere in his novels and short stories; perhaps it also freed him

to introduce a new focus on contemporary history into his fiction. Scott had gone to the Two Sicilies with the idea of writing a work set in the medieval past of Normans and Saracens but he also went with a profound interest in the history of Naples over the last thirty years or so and found himself writing a book set within the recent past. It was for him, and is for us, an unexpected outcome of his encounter with the Two Sicilies.

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