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Alexander Welsh. *The hero of the Waverley Novels*.  
New Haven. Yale University Press. 1963. xiv + 273  
pp. \$6.00.

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along with those of Barbour, Blyn Hary, and Lyndsay, until the nineteenth century. Dr. Coldwell's glossary is useful but it is only a working vocabulary; a key to a translation of an epic like the *Aeneid* is obviously not going to be provided in 18 pages of dialectal and obsolete words taken from a translation in a language almost entirely dialectal or obsolete. The work is a sourcebook of what we call "Middle Scots"; no other *makar* has preserved the "wordhord" available to him so completely. For this reason the writer of the dust-jacket description deserves one bad mark for pointing out that "by some critics it [Douglas's version] has been accounted the best in *English*," and a second for drawing attention, with misquotation, to Ezra Pound's absurd claim for the translation as "actually better than the [*sic*] original." The audience for whom a text like this is intended do not need such crude salesmanship, particularly when about all it reveals is the ignorance of the seller concerning the nature of his wares. One may, of course, cut off the offending flap.

The printers have made an excellent job and it is hard to fault them. Dr. Coldwell's book is not a "populariser," but is more likely to be read or rather dipped into, than any full-scale edition of Douglas. This is the seventh in the Clarendon Mediaeval and Tudor Series and it is well up to the standard of its predecessors.

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Alexander Welsh. *The hero of the Waverley Novels*.  
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Most careful readers of Scott have noted that there is something odd about his heroes: they are altogether too passive, they are acted on rather than act, they have an exaggerated, even a self-defeating, respect for law and public authority. This can be partly explained by interpreting the ostensible heroes of the *Waverley Novels* less as conventional heroes of fiction than as symbolic observers through whose innocent and law-abiding eyes the reader is allowed to see the tensions between picturesque violence and civilised order (with the latter in the end approved and victorious) that constitute the theme of most of Scott's best work. Mr. Welsh accepts this up to a point, just as he accepts and refers with gratifying generosity to my own argument about the centrality of Scott's concern with the transition from the age of heroic violence to the age of prudence. But he takes the point much further than this. He examines in perceptive detail

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patterns of behaviour in a widely representative selection of Scott's heroes, and he relates these patterns to the moral, social and political principles which are pointed to by the general shape of the action as well as by critical scenes and especially revealing moments. The result is a genuinely helpful book, which not only directs us towards a more perceptive reading of the novels but also demonstrates the source of the superiority of the better novels, notably of *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*.

Mr. Welsh contrasts the "passive hero" (Nigel Olifaunt, Henry Bertram, Francis Osbaldistone) with the "dark hero" (George Staunton, Rob Roy, Saladin) and demonstrates how the latter, something of a Robin Hood figure, often generous and compassionate, moved by an intuitive morality rather than by public authority, can be highly sympathetic yet must in the end be (to Scott) unacceptable. "The romantic hero has a part to play in the structure of the Waverley Novels, but he has no ethical currency. He represents, therefore, an emotional force. 'Courage and generosity' are good qualities, but in Scott they are not moral qualities. When Scott thinks of morality, he speaks in terms of regulation and restraint—rational and social functions." Thus the appearance of *two* heroes in many of the novels, the passive successful hero and the active and in the end rejected romantic hero, is related to a dualism in Scott's own attitude, a diagnosis which is convincingly reinforced by quotations from Scott's own non-fictional writings. "The proper and passive hero adheres to law or accepted morality; the dark hero boasts his own morality and places himself outside the law." This is in itself not an original insight; but Mr. Welsh develops the point with an abundance of well-chosen detail and a supporting analysis of Scott's ethical and social ideas and of the accepted ideas of his time. He also extends the analysis to include an interesting discussion of the two heroines (often a blonde—passive and good—and a brunette—romantic and wild) that appear in some at least of the novels—Rose Bradwardine and Flora Mac-Ivor in *Waverley*, Brenda and Minna Troil in *The Pirate*, and, most famous of all, Rowena and Rebecca in *The Talisman*. There are interesting variations on this. Diana Vernon in *Rob Roy* is a "dark heroine" who is not in the end relegated to exile or otherwise moved out of the novel, but actually (though in a pretty perfunctory coda to the novel) marries the hero, a destiny usually reserved for the "blonde heroine." Jeanie and Effie Deans are in fact both blonde; indeed Effie, who is morally the "dark heroine," is the fairer; but the voluptuousness of her bodily structure and the impulsiveness of her character sufficiently attest to the side on which she is ranged. In the course of his discussion of Scott's heroines, and of the heroes' behaviour towards them, Mr. Welsh pin-points some paradoxes and (in modern eyes at least) some profound

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inadequacies in Scott's view of the ideal relationship between the sexes. The good, passive hero marries as a rule the good, passive, fair-haired heroine, who has never been romantically impulsive enough to show her love before she has been proposed to. Marriage is a disciplined submission to the laws of society and (as Mr. Welsh very interestingly shows) of property. We knew, of course, that Scott was uncomfortable with sexual passion, but this throws a new light on the discomfort. Mr. Welsh does not go into the biographical background of this; but the story of Scott's early and unsuccessful love affair with "Greenmantle" and his marriage of moderate affection rather than love is relevant, if not to a critical assessment of the novels, at least to a study of the attitudes that underlie them.

In a careful account of Scott's view of reality as consisting of the necessity which in turn represents "the constraining relation of things and of commitments" (based on a perceptive reading of passages from *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*), Mr. Welsh takes us close to the heart of Scott's socio-moral world. I wish, however, that he had cited the confrontation between Peter Peebles and Redgauntlet in *Redgauntlet*, for that superb meeting between obsessive legal-mindedness and obsessive heroic-romantic nostalgia illuminates in one great dramatic moment not only Scott's concept of reality but also his view of the equal and opposite deviations from it (reliance on public formulas, reliance on private passion) that threaten the good society. There are other points one would have liked to see developed further. Was Scott really prejudiced against commerce in the way Mr. Welsh believes? True, in many of the novels it is the landed gentleman who represents, however tamely, the ethical centre; but the vitality of such a character as Bailie Nicol Jarvie also represents something that Scott believed in as representing an important part of Scotland's future. The defence of the Union on merchantile grounds that Scott puts into the Bailie's mouth is vibrant with genuine feeling, for all the humorous quirks that Scott introduces into the Bailie's character. Vitality, as well as social approval, can be a clue to how we are to take the activities and views of a character in a Scott novel. If Mr. Welsh had extended his study to include the minor characters—who are, after all, far more memorable and possess far more vitality than the passive heroes as well as far more psychological authenticity than most of the dark, romantic heroes—he would have seen other patterns of meaning at work in the novels. A study of Scott's heroes, however carefully and sensitively carried out, can only take us so far. To get at the true centre of Scott's world we must look closely at the minor characters of the "Scotch novels" and trace the sources of their interest and appeal. The reality of marriage contracts and legal relationships may indeed be the reality which lies beneath the world in

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which Scott's passive heroes surrender themselves to be acted on in the virtuous knowledge that the establishment has taken over their right to individual action and can therefore be trusted in the end to set everything right. But there is another kind of reality at work in the novels, built up by the racy Scots dialogue of characters who may in themselves (like Andrew Fairservice or the Laird of Dumbiedykes) be offensive or ridiculous; and this is surely worth some examination, for this is why the novels are read.

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