Scott's Authorship of the Songs in Daniel Terry's Plays

William Ruff
University of Florida

Ward Hellstrom
University of Florida

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Scott's Authorship of the Songs in Daniel Terry's Plays

Literary investigation may sometimes reasonably follow the methods of criminal investigation for best results. In endeavoring to prove Scott's authorship of the songs in Daniel Terry's dramatic adaptations of Scott novels, the literary detective should perhaps begin with opportunity, motive and modus operandi before marshalling the circumstantial evidence which hopefully puts the case beyond a reasonable doubt.


These then are the plays, which in manuscript contain some forty-nine songs, but before turning to the plays individually to see if Scott did indeed write the songs, it is perhaps well to establish whether Scott could or would have entered into such anonymous collaboration. Certainly Scott could have written the songs as he was in correspondence with Terry throughout the periods mentioned; moreover, we know that Scott was the author of at least one of the songs in "Right and Might; or, The Castle of Ellangowan," "Lullaby of an Infant Chief," because it appeared under Scott's name in Albyn's Anthology in 1815. Obviously Scott could have written the songs if he did write one of the songs. The fact that he wrote one song in one play does not, of course,

prove that he wrote the songs in all three plays. The question then is, would he have done so and done so anonymously? There is every reason to believe that Scott would have involved himself in dramatic collaboration. Scott evidenced an early and abiding interest in the drama: as Sir Herbert Grierson points out, Scott’s “first ambitions... seem to have been for the stage. He translated at least five plays from the German and composed two original dramas, ‘The House of Aspenn and ‘Halidon Hill.’”8 Another play not mentioned here by Grierson was The Doom of Devorgoil (for which Scott sought and received theatrical advice from Terry) written in 1816 and not published until 1830.9

If Scott collaborated with Terry on the plays, he would certainly have done so anonymously.4 Scott’s addiction to anonymity is well-known. Though Waverley was published in 1814 and though the public was relatively certain of Scott’s authorship of the Waverley novels by 1817, Scott himself did not admit his authorship until 1825. To admit collaboration on the dramatic adaptations of those novels would have been tantamount to confirming the suspicions of the public, a procedure which Scott sedulously avoided.5 Further, Scott’s correspondence to Terry of February 8, 1818,4 shows that Scott intended to give his play “The Doom of Devorgoil” to Terry to be published under Terry’s name. It seems reasonable, then, on the basis of these facts that Scott had the opportunity, and the motive through his interest in the drama, and that anonymity was his modus operandi.


9 In a letter to Terry April 30, 1818 (see Letters, V, 135) Scott writes, “At present I will never write for the stage; if I do, ‘call me hero.’ And indeed I feel severely the want of knowledge of theatrical business and effect; however, something we will do.” One need not take this statement to mean that Scott would take no hand in the writing of plays. He may mean that he will not avow his part in such writing or that he must work with someone who knows “theatrical business and effect” as the “something we will do” suggests.

* Though Scott’s name necessarily appears on the manuscript of “Right and Might” sent to the Lord Chamberlain, the first edition of Guy Mannering; or, The Gipsy’s Prophecy appeared under the name of Terry alone.

* E. g. see Scott’s concern about the risk of discovery of his authorship of “Lullaby of an Infant Chief,” a song included in the play in Letters, IV, 218.

* See Letters, V, 77-78.
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I

Turning our attention to *Guy Mannering; or, The Gipsy’s Prophecy*, we can begin the search for evidence of Scott’s authorship of the songs. We are, first of all, concerned with the manuscript of the play, that is, ”Right and Might; or, The Castle of Ellangowan,” because the evidence for Scott’s hand is there more abundant than for the first edition of the play, from which ten of the original eighteen songs were dropped. A chronological account will perhaps clarify the background of some of the puzzles of a suspected joint authorship:

1. March 1815. Terry receives the novel *Guy Mannering* from James Ballantyne. He recognizes some of the characters as intimates of Scott. (National Library of Scotland MS 3886/l. 113; hereafter cited as NLS.)


3. January 26, 1816. Scott writes Terry, ”I am very glad you have been able to suit your effort to the taste of those who are arbiters of public pleasures. For my share in it Dumple it as you list so it pleases the public & serves you. It was a very rough combed thing & I had no time to make it better. . . . If the prophecy of Daniel are correct he will be obliged to come down now & then to Tweed side to seek advice & cooperation on future occasions. But we must not reckon our chickens &c. I fear the effects of a twice told tale. A great deal depends upon your keeping your own secret which is no deception after all for you have only received a very ugly lump of a thing. You will let me know how you get on. I think you should apply for a song to Mrs. Baillie; she would be flattered with the request . . . (*Letters*, IV, 169-70)."

4. February 24, 1816. Application for ”Right and Might; or, The Castle of Ellangowan” to the Examiner of Plays.

5. February 26, 1816. Larpent dates the above manuscript.

6. March 12, 1816. John Fawcett, of Covent Garden, applies for permission to stage play under the title of *Guy Mannering; or, The Gipsy’s Prophecy*. (First performance at Covent Garden Theatre, according to the title page of the first edition in play form.)

7. March 22, 1816. Terry writes to Scott, “The Opera, my dear Sir, has succeeded as well as your best wishes cd have desired — to the 4th representation last night there was a

7 It is clear that Scott is referring to *Guy Mannering*, as Terry did apply to Mrs. Baillie, received the song, published it, and gave credit to Mrs. Baillie in the first and subsequent editions of the play.
crowded house & all its effects were as strong & many stronger than ever,—Listen is growing mellow & wanton with the Dominie. . .” (NLS/MS 3887/f. 34.)

8. [April 11, 1816]. Terry says that the first edition was printed without prefatory matter, but that he has prepared a preface from Scott's dictation, which William Erskine has disapproved of. He adds that he wishes he could "acknowledge the Author of that ballad of which I have hitherto been under the necessity of receiving the praises that its excellence has called forth & enduring the pains of undeserved admiration—" (NLS/MS 866/f. 87.)

9. April 18, 1816. Scott writes to Terry apologizing for giving "O hush thee, my babie" to Alexander Campbell for Albyn's Anthology. "... for as it never occurred to me that there was anything odd in my writing two or three verses for you, which have no connexion with the novel, I was at no pains to disown them; .... Erskine and you may consider whether you should barely acknowledge an obligation to an unknown friend, or pass the matter altogether in silence" (Letters, IV, 218).

10. May 11, 1816. Terry writes that he will send the Opera and the music. The music sheets say Terry is the "universal author": "You will observe that the Composers took it for granted that I was the universal author & designated me as such — I have however suggested that for the subsequent impressions the plates may be altered. . ." (NLS/MS 3887/f. 57.)

11. May 19, 1816. Scott writes to Terry that "I have safely received the play, music & the scenes seem to hang much more cleverly together than in the original sketch & [It] is upon the whole incalculably improved. The songs are very good. I would have you make no alteration in the plates for the music. I have arranged with Campbell so that 'Rest thee babie' will not in any shape interfere with the way in which they now stand" (Letters, IV, 238).

12. Lockhart writes in his Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1839, V, 130): "Mr Terry produced, in the spring of 1816, a dramatic piece, entitled "Guy Mannering," which met with great success on the London boards, and still continues to be a favourite with the theatrical public. What share the novelist himself had in this first specimen of what he used to call 'the art of Terrysying,' I cannot exactly say, but his correspondence shows that the pretty song of the Lullaby was not his only

"O hush thee, my babie" appeared in Albyn's Anthology under the title "Lullaby of an Infant Chief."

*Scott refers here to "O hush thee, my babie," which in its changed form in the play has as part of its chorus "Rest thee babie."
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correction to it; and I infer that he had taken the trouble to modify the plot, and rearrange, for stage purposes, a considerable part of the original dialogue. The casual risk of discovery, through the introduction of the song which had, in the meantime, been communicated to one of his humble friends, the late Mr Alexander Campbell, . . . will amuse the reader . . .”

This then is the evidence for ascribing to Scott the songs of the manuscript "Right and Might; or, The Castle of Ellangowan," even though the songs added to the first published edition, Guy Mannering; or, The Gipsy's Prophecy, cannot be safely ascribed to him: 1) Scott's name appears as co-author on the manuscript in the Larpent collection; 2) There are a number of references by Scott to his rough work on the play; 3) Terry, who was later to describe himself as a "compiler," nowhere in the correspondence refers to himself even as part author on the manuscript; 4) Terry specifically denies his universal authorship; 5) Scott wrote the "Lullaby" and admits to "two or three verses," but he is speaking of the first edition, not the manuscript; two or three verses may be Scott's approximation of the nine songs retained in the first edition from the manuscript; 6) Lockhart's comment about "the art of Terryfying" is in reference to the first edition, a considerable portion of which he attributes to Scott; that portion may well have been the manuscript; 7) and finally, Terry is not known to have written any other plays except in collaboration but the three adaptations of Scott novels, suggesting that Terry's role was as "arranger" and that Scott was the force behind the plays.

The following is a list of songs by first lines as they appear in the manuscript; the * designates those songs retained in the first edition:

*"The winds whistle cold," (24 lines)
*"Ye dear paternal scenes, farewell!" (14 lines)
"And when shall we meet again, brave boys?" (8 lines)
"And the grey Goose came to the parson's gate" (5 lines)
*"Oh! slumber, my darling," (20 lines)
*"Oh! tell me, Love, the dearest hour" (10 lines)

30 See, for example, NLS/MS 3890/1, 212 and the "advertisement" to The Antiquary play.

31 Terry apparently collaborated with John Fawcett and with George Soane: See Allardyce Nicoll, A History of Early Nineteenth Century Drama: 1800-1850, II (Cambridge, 1930), 301, 393. In both cases Terry's name was second on the title page. For his collaboration with Isaac Pocock, see our discussion of The Antiquary below.
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* "Be mine, dear maid! this faithful heart" (12 lines) 12
* "In ancient times, in Britain's Isle" (16 lines)
  "At Trumpet-call, or glance of love" (12 lines)
* "Without a companion, what's life but a heath," (12 lines)
  "Now, dark, dark, thro' the Glen and Glade," (8 lines)
* "Oh! hark thee, young Henry!" (8 lines) 13
* "Listen, youth, to words of pow'r" (8 lines)
  "Hillihio! Hillihio! the stag's in the glade" (9 lines)
  "Round, and round, my comrades stout," (12 lines)
  "The Steward he flitch'd the old Man's gold," (12 lines)
  "Like the wild whispering's of a spirits voice" (10 lines)
  "I fear you read my heart too well," (8 lines)
  "Protected by the power above" (14 lines) 14

Two conclusions can be drawn from the changes made between the manuscript and first edition of the play: first, most changes appear in the final act, where Terry's correspondence shows the plays generally bogged down;15 and second, the first edition tended to have fewer songs, but longer ones. These changes seem to have been made on "theatrical" rather than on "dramatic" grounds, and theatrics, of course, was Terry's business, not Scott's.16 One may conclude that changes in Scott's work by Terry for theatrical effect would have been acceptable to Scott and necessary to make the manuscript successful in production.

II

We may now turn to the next adaptation, The Heart of Mid-Lothian, and follow the same chronological procedure:

1. May 16, 1818. Scott writes to Terry, "I think we could hammer a neat comédie bourgeoise out of the Heart of Mid-Lothian" (Letters, V, 148).

12 There are considerable changes in this song in the first edition.

13 There are considerable changes in this song in the first edition.

14 Those songs which appear in the first edition and not in the manuscript are: "The fox jumps over the parson's gate," (25 lines); "The chough and crow to roost are gone," by Mrs Joanna Baillie (30 lines); "Follow him, nor fearful deem," (18 lines); "Now fill the glass, and let it pass" (24 lines); "Oh! blame me not, that such high worth" (16 lines); "Oh! let your hands assure the youth," (21 lines).

15 Terry's later letters show, as we shall see when we consider The Heart of Mid-Lothian, that most changes in the plays were made in the third act on the advice of theater managers and Terry himself on theatrical grounds, that is, for "effect;" because the leading actress had insufficient chance to sing etc.

16 Scott continually defers to Terry's theatrical knowledge. See Letters, V, 45, 61, 62, 77, 88, 100.
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2. September 16, 1818. Terry writes Scott, “I perhaps need not say my dear Sir, that one motive of my visit is to take advantage of your friendly offer concerning the Heart of Midlothian, a Tale with which I have been delighted, tho’ I have shamefully postponed my acknowledgement of your goodness & the gratification it gave me...” (NLS/MS 3889/f. 189.)

3. January 14, 1819. Scott recovering from illness. Terry writes Scott, transcribing Mr. Harris’s comments about the weaknesses of the third act of “The Heart of Midlothian.” Terry continues, “...if it should not suit either your present leisure or feelings to trouble yourself more with the piece I will, with a very grateful sense of what is already indeed more than I deserve—go up to London & try my own cabling hand upon the suggestions with which he says he will be ready for me—but I feel that this will indeed be weakness meddling with it, just where we want the greatest strength... It is your own hand alone can finish the race [?] with the vigour it has begun.” He then goes on to suggest theatrical changes, including situations where songs might be added (NLS/MS 3890/f. 8.)


5. April 12, 1819. Terry writes Scott, “I have made several alterations, particularly in the 3d Act of the play... I felt however greatly at a loss for the original M. S. There were a few alterations of connective importance which I could not remember and the copyist or someone had lost a sheet or two of my Copy—if you could make a parcel of it—I should be much relieved & assisted. They talk of next Saturday for its appearance but I scarcely think it possible” (NLS/MS 3890/f. 71.)

6. April 17, 1819. Henry Harris of Covent Garden receives permission to produce the play. First performance at Covent Garden, according to the title page in play form of the first edition.

7. April 18, 1819. Scott writes Terry, “I send the MS.—I wish you had written for it earlier. My touching, or even thinking of it, was out of the question [because of Scott’s illness]; my corrections would have smelled as cruelly of the cramp, as the Bishop of Grenada’s homily did of the apoplexy. Indeed I hold myself inadequate to estimate those criticisms which rest on stage effect, having been of late very little of a play-going person. Would to Heaven these sheets could do for you what Rob Roy has done for Murray; he has absolutely netted upwards of £3000:...” (Letters, V, 362.)

8. June 7, 1819. Terry writes to Scott, “The Heart of Mid-

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Lothian goes on, but I cannot say with that vigor of effect & power of Attraction that could have been wished — but it comes in once a week or so. —*" (NLS/MS 3890/f. 112.)

9. June 15, 1819. Scott writes Terry, "I am sorry, not surprised, that the H. of M.L has done but so so,—better luck another time; if it does anything to do you good the end will be answered: . . ." (Letters, V, 397.)

10. June 1819. Blackwood's Magazine reviews the play: "The songs in this piece are said to be by Walter Scott; and they are, certainly, much above the usual style of opera poetry" (p. 320.)

11. July 1819. Terry writes to Scott, "I take the opportunity of sending a copy of the H of M L . . ." (NLS/MS 3890/f. 141); he undoubtedly refers to the printed version, not the manuscript.

The above chronological account suggests that Scott's was the dominant hand at least in the manuscript of the play: 1) it was Scott who suggested collaboration; 2) Terry demurs at "meddling" with his "cobbling hand" with the work as it is Scott's "own hand alone [which] can finish the race [?] with the vigour it has begun," quite clearly suggesting that it is Scott's play, not his; 3) Terry's comments about the manuscript and its loss seem to imply that it was Scott's manuscript, of which he had a copy, rather than his own; 4) Scott would hardly have said he was not surprised that The Heart of Mid-Lothian went badly if it had been Terry's work, but he might well have expressed such thoughts if the work were his; 5) and finally, Blackwood's is apparently reporting rather than originating the conclusion that the songs are Scott's, though Scott had not at this time admitted his authorship of the novels.

The following is a list of songs by first lines as they appear in the manuscript; the * designates those songs retained in the first edition:

*"Shout, Comrades, shout! the work is done!" (6 lines)
*"Haloo! to the greenwood" (4 lines)
*"There Gowans are gay, my love," (4 lines)\(^{17}\)
*"What did ye with your bridal ring, bridal ring, bridal ring," (4 lines)\(^{18}\)
*"My friends and fame are from me gone," (16 lines)

\(^{17}\) This and the preceding song are combined in the first edition to form one song of eight lines, the first four beginning, "There Gowans are gay . . ." and the second four "Haloo. . . ."

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*I'm weary awa' Jean," (16 lines)
"Oh! thou by Love's eternal power imprest," (8 lines)
"The Owl is abroad, and the thievish Fox," (4 lines)
"All hail, fair Moon! and all hail unto thee!" (4 lines)
"I'm Madge of the Country! I'm Madge of the Town—" (4 lines)\(^{10}\)
"O! sleep ye sound, Sir James, she said," (8 lines)\(^{20}\)
"When the Wolf is a ranger," (10 lines)
"For Willie he looked kindest when other folks were gone," (2 lines)
"The World is but a prison barred," (8 lines)\(^{21}\)
"Away! away! to prison bear them!" (14 lines)
"The Linnen, over wild, and woodland" (20 lines)
"With her babe in her arms, and her love at her side," (4 lines)
"My Lover in the Ocean lies," (8 lines)
"None here, I hope, will now refuse" (36 lines)\(^{22}\)

Some conclusions can be drawn from a comparison of the manuscript and first edition versions of the play: first, the printed version is much closer to the manuscript version than was the case with Guy Manering. Where in Guy Manering six new songs (a total of 142 lines) were added and ten were dropped, in The Heart of Mid-Lothian only one new song was added (though some were changed or combined) and only three were dropped. The closeness of the manuscript and the printed version may be accounted for by the fact that Scott was too ill to revise. Terry, of course, was well and could have revised the manuscript; the fact that he did not tamper with the songs to any great extent (though he was probably responsible for shortening the third scene of Act III) suggests that the songs were Scott's responsibility, not his. Secondly, the fact that The Heart of Mid-Lothian is the only one of the three Terry adaptations which borrows songs from the novel may perhaps be accounted for again by Scott's illness: Scott may have borrowed the songs rather than write original ones in his weakened condition.

\(^{20}\)This song appears with considerable variation in the novel, see Scott's Poetical Works, p. 774.
\(^{22}\)This song is placed in the first edition at the end of the next song, forming the finale of the second act.
\(^{22}\)There are radical changes for this song in the first edition of the play.

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III

We may now turn to the final Terry adaptation, *The Antiquary*, in search of evidence of Scott's hand. In contradistinction to the two previous plays, there is considerable evidence that Scott had no hand in *The Antiquary*. To begin with, the play is not an original one: it is a revision of a play by Isaac Pocock which had failed at Covent Garden in 1818. But again a chronological account may clarify the situation:

1. November 1819. Terry writes Scott that he would like to see *Ivanhoe* before publication in the hope of dramatizing it (though nothing apparently ever came of this hope.) He then adds, "I have done something from the Antiquary but the conclusion is very puzzling to make at all Effective — & deviation from the Story experience shews to be bad — the public expects as rigid adherence as possible to it — arrangement & transcription therefore will be the only Task..." (NLS/MS 3890/f. 213.)

2. November 10, 1819. Scott answers Terry's letter, promising the "Ivanhoe" manuscript but does not mention at all *The Antiquary* (*Letters*, VI, 10-12.)

3. [Late November or early December 1819.] Terry writes Scott saying that he received the manuscript of *Ivanhoe* and will turn to it "as soon as I have finished the third act of the Antiquary, which I shall do by tomorrow morning — with what I have already done viz Two Acts & half the Third the Covent Garden folks express themselves very greatly pleased and in their present moment of distress and insipidity are delighted with the prospect of its immediate production. — I do assure you it makes a very light curious & entertaining sort of Musical Drama — and the Business of Elspeth and Glenallan varies it with a serious feature of very powerful effect — My task has been almost literally nothing more than Transcription and compression — The necessity of introducing one of our singing Ladies & of making her sing when there was no need of such variety sometimes is provoking enough — but as neither Fiddlers managers or the Public were very nice about these matters why should I make myself uneasy about a ridiculous impropriety about which they were insensible..." (NLS/MS 3890/f. 276.)


There are radical changes in the first edition of this song, which is the finale of the third act; e.g. five singers are reduced to three. Only one new song, "O baby! you're my darling," (4 lines), is added to the manuscript for the first edition of the play.

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5. January 13, 1820. Larrent dates the above manuscript.
6. January 25, 1820. John Fawcett, Covent Garden, applies for permission to stage play.
7. July 31, 1822. First letter to Terry from Scott in Letters since November 10, 1819. No mention in this or subsequent letters to the play, The Antiquary, is made by Scott.

It seems quite clear from the above that Scott had no hand in the reworking of Pocock's play. Not only does Scott neglect to mention it at all, but Terry's extended comments on his work of revision, or "Transcription and compression," distinguish this play from the previous two. Terry quite clearly considers the revision his work and speaks at length about it, something he did not do on the earlier plays. On the other hand, the nature of the work that he describes himself as doing on The Antiquary, that is, "Transcription and compression," may be the kind of work that he did to a lesser degree on Scott's manuscripts of "Right and Might" and "The Heart of Mid-Lothian," which makes the printed versions different from them. At any rate, circumstantial evidence is all against Scott's having anything to do with The Antiquary.

We can perhaps never know with certainty whether the songs in the manuscripts of "Right and Might" and "The Heart of Mid-Lothian" and perhaps the songs of the printed versions as well are indeed Scott's; but on the basis of circumstantial evidence, the case for the manuscript songs is, we hope, beyond a reasonable doubt.

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

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