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MARY ANN WIMSATT

Ivanhoe and Simms’s Pelayo

Among students of William Gilmore Simms it has long been a truism that Walter Scott was Simms’s chief master in the art of the historical romance. Almost as commonplace is the knowledge that Ivanhoe (1819) was Simms’s favorite Scott novel, a touchstone by which he tended to judge other books. Making plain his esteem, Simms called Scott “the BUILDER!—by whose standard other artists are to model,—by whose labours other labourers are to learn”; he called Ivanhoe “a stately creation of art,” “one of the most perfect specimens of the romance that we possess.”¹ Antebellum America, particularly the South, shared Simms’s admiration for the Scotsman and his famous book;² and nineteenth-century critics, like their twentieth-century successors, briefly note his debt to it. They remark, for example, that Simms’s best-known work, The Yemassee (1835), shows the general influence of Scott’s novel; that a Hebrew char-


² Testimony to Scott’s and Ivanhoe’s popularity in the South appears in Mark Twain’s famous attack on Scott as well as in the work of more recent writers. See Twain, Life on the Mississippi, Ch. xlvi; Jay B. Hubbell, “Cavalier and Indentured Servant in Virginia Fiction,” South Atlantic Quarterly, 26 (January 1927), 25; Grace Warren Landrum, “Sir Walter Scott and His Literary Rivals in the Old South,” American Literature, 2 (November 1930), 256–76. Landrum cites several other writers who discuss Scott’s vogue in the South.
acters in *The Damsel of Darien* (1839) is a "humble follower of the old Jew in Ivanhoe"; that Lucy Monro in *Guy Rivers* (1834) faintly resembles Rebecca; and that the Tournament of Havana in * Vasconcelos* (1853) follows closely Scott's Passage of Arms at Ashby.3

The most striking evidence of *Ivanhoe's* impact on Simms, however, occurs in a novel which none of these writers mention and which readers of his time and ours have ignored, in part because the circumstances of its publication and early reception doomed it to neglect. Like *Ivanhoe* the first of its author's medieval novels and the first set outside his native country, *Pelayo: A Story of the Goth* is also Simms's first romance on Spanish themes. Published in 1838, when the Panic of 1837 had already crippled the book market, unlike other Simms books of the decade it received few reviews;4 it was not reprinted in the Uniform Edition of his novels in the


4 For remarks on the injury done to the book trade, see Holman's "Introduction" to *F&F*, First Series, pp. xx–xxii. Numerous passages in Simms's letters of the late 1830s and the 1840s attest to the poor sales of his novels.

Also harming *Pelayo* was its neglect by several journals which generally and sometimes lengthily reviewed other Simms novels of the late 1830s. I examined the following six periodicals which regularly reviewed him: the *United States Magazine* and *Democratic Review*, the *American Monthly Magazine*, *Southern Literary Messenger*, *Southern Literary Journal*, *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, and *The Knickerbocker*. Of these, although the *Messenger* and the *Journal* printed pre-publication excerpts from the novel, only the *Knickerbocker* actually reviewed it, in 12 (December 1838), 552. Clark's brief notice is favorable; but in his admittedly "cursory examination" of *Pelayo* he overlooks its parallels to *Ivanhoe*, though these are far more striking than the one he saw in *Guy Rivers* cited in the preceding note.

Yet that *Pelayo* did sell, and received some notice (apparently in newspapers), is indicated by an 1839 letter in which Simms says, "Some of the papers say that the first Edition of Pelayo is exhausted, and I have seen the laudatory notices of a few" (*Letters*, I [1952], 138).
1850s, and it is now found primarily in large microfilm or rare book
collections.\textsuperscript{5} Although it is briefly mentioned in standard works on
Simms, it has received no separate full-scale studies; nor—considering
the history of its neglect and the current tendency of scholars to
concentrate on Simms's better-known books—is it likely to receive any.

Yet this obscure novel holds some interest for the student of
nineteenth-century British and American literature and literary rela-
tions as well as for the Simms specialist. It is Simms's first significant
attempt to exploit current public interest in Spanish history,
particularly in Spain and the Moors—a subject which had earlier at-
tracted important writers like Scott, Landor, Southey, and Wash-
ington Irving.\textsuperscript{6} As sometimes noted, Pelayo is one of Simms's few
works of fiction with a European setting, an experiment perhaps
suggested by Fenimore Cooper's European novels published earlier in
the decade.\textsuperscript{7} (Simms's claim, however, that Pelayo's setting represents
an attempt at "novelty . . . in materials" sounds suspiciously like
Scott's claim that Ivanhoe's foreign setting was an effort to achieve
"an appearance of novelty" for it.\textsuperscript{8}) Discussed briefly herein, and

\textsuperscript{5} It is available from University Microfilms in the series American Cul-
ture II, Third Year, III: Literature and Language, Reel 152.

\textsuperscript{6} Scott, The Vision of Don Roderick (1811); Landor, Count Julian
(1812); Southey, Roderick the Last of the Goths (1814), Irving, The Alham-
bra (1832), Legends of the Conquest of Spain (1833). The less widely re-
membered but once popular actress and writer, Mrs. Anna Mowatt Ritchie,
in 1836 published a narrative poem, "Pelayo," which Stanley Williams notes
was "well known in its day." See The Spanish Background of American
reworking of the subject attests to its continuing appeal: Juan Goytisolo,

\textsuperscript{7} The Bravo (1831); The Heidenmauer (1832); The Headsman (1833).
Making a similar point are J. V. Ridgely, William Gilmore Simms (New
Simms, American Men of Letters Series (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892),
p. 102.

\textsuperscript{8} "Dedication" to Count Julian: or The Last Days of the Goth. A His-
torical Romance (Baltimore: William Taylor and Co., 1845); Ivanhoe, with
Introductory Essay and Notes by Andrew Lang, Border Edition (London:
John Nimmo, 1896). All further references to this work are to this edition,
hereafter cited (by volume and chapter number) within the text as Iv.
I have checked my citations against an early edition of the novel which
Simms might have used: Ivanhoe: A Romance (Edinburgh: Archibald
deserving separate study, is the fact that parts of Pelayo rework a tragedy written before Simms was twenty, put in rehearsal, never performed, and never before analyzed. According to Simms himself, portions of the novel are little more than transcripts of the play, whose surviving scenes corroborate him.⁹ It thus bears indirect witness to his wide reading and lifelong interest in drama, which were nourished by his belief that his nature and talents destined him to be a playwright. Finally, and most importantly for our purposes, Pelayo's numerous resemblances to Ivanhoe suggest that Simms's indebtedness to Scott extends far beyond the fragmentary borrowings previous writers on the subject proclaim.

For all of these reasons Pelayo deserves to be resurrected, if only briefly, and if primarily for the task of comparing it to a better-known work by a more famous novelist whose influence Simms abundantly acknowledged. It seems reasonable to approach that task by locating some common ties of Scott and Simms to the romance tradition in order to furnish a context for studying Pelayo's contents, merits, flaws, and resemblances to (as well as differences from) Ivanhoe.

I

Northrop Frye's remarks in Anatomy of Criticism blaze a useful trail through the tangled thickets of romance. In Frye's view the genre, which attempts to portray an ideal world, is "the nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfillment dream." A projection of the standards of the aristocracy or ruling class, "in every age," Constable and Co., 1820), 3 vols. The passages collated revealed only minor changes.

⁹ Letters, I, 116. The surviving scenes from this tragedy were printed as "Pelayo, A Dramatic Poem" in the Charleston Rambler for November 14, 21, 28, December 12, 21, 28, 1843. In the issue for November 14, Simms explains the relationship of the play to the novel. Both Pelayo and its sequel Count Julian (1845) were based, he says, on the play. When writing Pelayo he let portions of the drama "remain in the original proof sheets of the Romance," and only removed them "when the stereotype plates were to be cast. A rapid rendering of these parts into prose of a corresponding sense, supplied the space. These fragments were preserved," he continues, and published at the suggestion of a friend. It may be of some note that the play was written not long after Scott's, Landor's, and Southey's works on Roderick, and soon after Ivanhoe, while the novel, begun in 1836, followed on the heels of Irving's Legends. Parallels between drama and novel are discussed in note 16.
Frye claims, romance recapitulates their values through stylized plots whose “virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy.” Thus, it seems safe to say, from Heliodorus and Ariosto to Scott and Simms the typical romance plot involves young lovers brought together, then separated, kept low on Fortune’s wheel, and divided by enemies and calamities until they emerge victorious at the end of the book to marry. Since such plots necessarily involve a “moral antithesis of heroism and villainy,” the characteristic structure of romance is dialectical, buttressed by a system of character pairing where every typical figure tends to have a “moral opposite,” and where in a “grave idealizing” of courage and purity, heroes and villains, heroines and ladies of pleasure are ranged against each other—the blonde and dark women of nineteenth-century fiction being a late outcropping of this pattern. Romance’s “typical setting” is the forest, Frye finds; though it may be a realm of magic and mystery hostile or neutral toward the hero, it may also function as a “green world” where issues are resolved and ideals implemented.10

This essay proposes, in part, to verify Frye’s statements by applying them to books resembling each other which have some claim to be called romances. Simms and Scott, who read extensively in the genre, insisted that their works participated in it,11 and their novels fall well within the limits of Frye’s formula, though oddly enough they have not been studied in its light. In keeping with what he calls “bourgeois romance” (p. 186), they uphold the standards

10 See Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 186, 196–97, 306, 36, 182–83. All further references to Frye in this paper are to this volume, cited in the text. In his comments on the romance he mentions Scott only in passing, Simms not at all; but he indicates (pp. 305, 307) that the historical romance is a bona fide part of the romance tradition. Also helpful on the subject of the romance is Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 67–69.

11 Simms’s most famous statement about his relationship to the romance tradition occurs in the “Preface” to The Yemassee: A Romance of Carolina, ed. C. Hugh Holman (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962). He makes similar comments in Letters, 111 (1954), 388–89. Holman points out, however, that the formula Simms evolved for The Yemassee does not fit the conditions of the Revolutionary novels and that he modified this formula to suit different groups of his works. See “William Gilmore Simms’s Theory and Practice of Historical Fiction,” Diss. Univ. of North Carolina 1949, pp. 117–19, 164–65.
of the upper or upper middle class; they also use the forest or green world as a prominent setting; have a love plot with hero, heroine, and villain as expressions of ideals threatened but victorious; and employ a carefully orchestrated system of character pairing which reflects a dialectic structure rooted in a clash of contrasting cultures. Simms's work, moreover, shows evidence of a direct debt to his acknowledged master Scott beyond that to the tradition in which they both participate.

Simms's novels, like Scott's, reveal the romance's characteristic concern with history, a feature of the genre which Frye does not particularly explore. Simms, however, explored it, and occasionally opposed the domains of history and romance, claiming that the latter flourishes best in "dim and insecure avenues of time" which allow its author freedom from factual restrictions. Such restrictions weigh heavily on his best-known books, the Revolutionary Romances, which exist in a daylight world where motives are known, deeds achieved, events recorded, the "evidence . . . closed, the testimony . . . irrefutable"; they also operate in the Border books, which are not, strictly speaking, historical novels but tales of the nineteenth-century southwestern frontier which record events "still within recollection." 12

By contrast, however, Pelayo hovers on the verge of myth and legend. Of medieval Spain Simms notes: "Never was history, in itself, more thoroughly like romance; never was the narrow boundary between the possible and the certain, more vague, shadowy and subtle." 13

He capitalizes on this vagueness in Pelayo and Count Julian, which deal with the fall of the Gothic kingdom in eighth-century Spain, a


13 The quotation is from VGR, First Series, p. 179. For similar remarks see [Washington Irving,] "Preface," Legends of the Conquest of Spain (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1835). Irving's "Legend of Pelayo" was not yet in print when Simms's novel was published. In fact, his work on the Goths in Spain does not seem to have influenced Simms in Pelayo, though he drew heavily on Irving's "Legend of Don Roderick" for Book Sixth of his Count Julian. I have studied these borrowings in "Simms and Irving," Mississippi Quarterly, 20 (Winter 1966–67), 33–34.
remote event shrouded by confused, conflicting accounts. *Count Julian* retells the familiar though possibly apocryphal story of King Roderick’s rape of Julian’s daughter and Julian’s subsequent betrayal of Spain to the Moors. The material in *Pelayo* is less famous but, despite Simm’s claims for its historical accuracy, probably no less legendary.

When *Pelayo* opens, the Visigoths have conquered but not assimilated the native Hispano-Roman population, composed of diverse peoples whom Simm’s persistently labels “Iberian.” Noting dutifully his “few departures” from history, he depicts the early stages of a revolt against Roderick, the last Gothic king, which is led by the prince who is the novel’s title character and central figure.14 (Roderick is finally finished off in the sequel by the Moors who invade Spain at Julian’s behest.) The rebellion begins after Roderick kills Pelayo’s father, the Gothic king Witiza, in battle and assumes his throne. The novel is, in part, a study of how early Spanish nationalism emerges through the unification of Goth, Iberian, and Jew against Roderick; in an essay published near its time, Simm makes the same points made in the novel about Pelayo’s contribution to modern Spain: “In the extinction of the tyranny of Roderick [by the Moors] the kingdom perished, but the sacred principle of liberty was saved; and, in the wild recesses of the Asturian mountains, under the patriotic guardianship of native princes, the seeds of a mighty empire were planted. . . . The kingdom . . . was founded in blood by Pelayo, the great sire of guerilla warfare in Spain . . .” (*YGR*, First Series, p. 180).

To develop *Pelayo’s* dominant theme Simm centers upon a study of contrasting character types through which an ideal of national leadership is progressively defined. Central to it is the comparison

14 Simm’s remarks are from the “Advertisement” to *Pelayo: A Story of the Goth* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1838), i. Subsequent references to this, the only edition of the novel, are cited within the text. His main departures occur in his identifying Pelayo and Egiza with Evan and Siseburt, sons of King Witiza. A modern historian claims that the “almost legendary Pelayo” was supposedly Roderick’s grand-nephew, whom Witiza expelled from Toledo, the royal city of the Goths. He fled to the Asturias, where he did not revolt until after the Moslem invasion. See Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 98–100, 51–52. O’Callaghan says, p. 27, that the Iberians originally came from Africa and furnished the “basic Mediterranean element” in the Spanish stock.
between Pelayo—fiery, impetuous, patriotic, with "‘quick spirit’" and "‘true resolve’" (P, II, 254)—and Egiza, his older brother and heir to Witzia's throne, who is weak-willed, love-sick, and passive. Throughout the story Pelayo tries to enlist his brother in the conspiracy against Roderick, which is aided by Hebrew forces. Egiza, however, is so in love with Count Julian's daughter that he will not fight the ruler whom Julian supports. (That instead of the more customary "Florinda" Simms chooses the name "Cava" for this lady may indicate his attitude toward her—for though she is virtuous enough, "Cava," as both Irving and Southey remark in their works on Roderick, is a Moorish term meaning "whore."

We have seen that the romance and its relative the historical romance customarily employ a love plot as a chief expression of upper-class ideals; and in most of Simms's other novels, as in most of Scott's, the love story serves this function. In sharp contrast with Simms's usual practice, however—and in equally sharp contrast with Ivanhoe—the main plot in Pelayo helps establish Egiza's unworthiness to be king, his inability to embrace the noble principles animating his brother. He sighs to Cava, for example, "‘How hast thou come between me and my purpose’" and later complains that in regard to his duty he is "‘unmanned’" (P, I, 62; see also I, 55, II, 258). Love and heroism, connected in Simms's other books, are thus here opposed; and part of Simms's point about Pelayo involves the fact that, unlike Egiza's, his only mistresses are rebellion and her handmaiden war. Thus he scoffs Egiza's love for Cava; mocks the pastoral ideal that attracts them (P, II, 66–69); craves only victory; and is blind to the fact that Thyrza, the daughter of his Hebrew colleague Melchior, loves him as desperately as Cava does Egiza.

Enhancing the sensationalism and complicating the action of the novel is its lengthy subplot, through which the enemies to Pelayo's scheme and hence the other side of Simms's dialectic emerge. Here we find the Hebrew Amri, son of Melchior's friend Adoniakim, who is as false to his father and his people as Thyrza is true to hers. He lusts after her while aiding brutal Edacer, Roderick's henchman who tries to extirpate Pelayo's party. Helping Amri and Edacer is the Gothic prostitute Urraca, the "dark lady" of the book whose contrast with virtuous Thyrza reflects the romance convention of opposed heroines; whose sensualism typifies Gothic luxury; whose
sexuality provides a spicy undercurrent in the proceedings; and whose history of betrayed virtue and stifled repentance plucks sentimental strings. Simms always tended to get bogged down in plots of this sort, and he lingers too long on Urraca’s story; yet it advances some of his major themes, and links his work to long-standing romance patterns.

The way he employs these patterns raises some interesting points about the metamorphoses of the romance tradition in nineteenth-century fiction. We have noted that the romance tends to pair or contrast characters as a tool of its dialectic; and we have cited Frye’s observation that the light and dark heroines of Victorian fiction are a late expression of this tendency. By convention the blonde, who is almost inevitably the hero’s proper mate, is pure, timid, domestic, passive, sweet, virtually devoid of sexuality, and somewhat less interesting than her dark counterpart; by convention the brunette—one thinks at once of Hawthorne’s Miriam and Cooper’s Cora—may have mixed, foreign, or Jewish blood, esoteric knowledge, intellectual acuity; she is usually aggressive, courageous, voluptuous, and passionate; her life is sometimes unhappy, perhaps because it may be tinged with sexual sin. Ivanhoe’s carefully contrasted Rowena and Rebecca repeat these configurations, while Simms’s Cava, Urraca, and Thyrza echo yet vary them.

Like Scott, Simms gives his novel both fair and dark heroines, though he does not directly contrast them. Cava, whose hair color is unspecified, is by temperament a blonde, with “nice modesty . . . shrinking gentleness . . . winning timidity” (P, I, 55), and we grow almost as tired of her personality as Pelayo does. Meanwhile, the dialectic of Simms’s subplot with its idealized Hebrews and debased Goths demands that he split the dark woman who is Cava’s natural foil into two characters, both of foreign stock, both exotic; but one pure, the other sinful—the Gothic Lady Urraca (the true “whore” of the novel) and the Jewish Thyrza. In an unexpected twist of romance conventions, Simms contrasts these ladies not with Cava but each other (P, II, 15), in effect dividing Rebecca’s qualities between

15 Except in the matter of sexual sin. For a study of Scott’s contrasted dark and fair heroines see Alexander Welsh, The Hero of The Waverley Novels, Yale Studies in English, No. 154 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 70–82. He does not, however, attribute this contrast, as I do, to the influence of the general romance tradition.
them and adding some from the general romance fund. Thus, though more timid than Rebecca, Thyrza has her coloring, her dignity, her tenderness, and her purity—while Urraca, who has likewise her coloring, has also her fire, her fairly explicit sexuality, her courage, and her remarkable skill at healing. Urraca, in short, serves to implement his stress on Gothic decadence, while Thyrza reinforces his picture of Hebrew virtue; and thus this pairing contributes, in typical romance fashion, to the dialectic scheme we have already noted—while Scott's pairing contributes to a dialectic scheme where Hebrew and Gentile are, in effect, complementary ideals.

As the most consistently idealized figures in the novel the Jewish characters are, in fact, major vehicles of Simms's moral statement and important instruments of Pelayo's education. He has, he says, a dream of man's freedom, "such as no season can change, no condition magnify or depress, no rule subjugate" (P, I, 79). These highflown views are tested when he meets Melchior, a living emblem of oppression. Influenced by Christian prejudices of the time "which held the Jews an odious race on many accounts" (P, I, 84), Pelayo at first treats him harshly; but if he is to grow and his cause succeed he must learn that Melchior too is inspired with "a patriotic and unselfish zeal" (P, II, 195) for Spain and his people. To his credit Pelayo accepts Melchior and acknowledges their common humanity. In the fight against Edacer's forces, he promises "the Jew shall be a fellow with the Goth" (P, I, 100), and makes clear that to him national loyalty transcends religious divisions—an attitude shared by Melchior, who says, "The prayers of the Hebrew and the Christian unite against the oppressor" (P, II, 268).

As noted earlier, Pelayo gains some interest from the traces of its origin in Simms's youthful play, corroborated by the drama's extant passages and apparent in both style and technique. In this connection, the novel testifies to Simms's lifelong admiration for "the old blood & bone & sinew" (Letters, II, 156) Elizabethan dramatists, for, to a greater degree than in his other books, the speech of the characters is lofty and archaic, depending heavily on asides and soliloquies. That of Pelayo in particular is filled with metaphors, conceits, word-plays, and paradoxes in attempted imitation of Renaissance drama, and streaked with a grim humor redolent of the Jacobean stage. He calls Julian "a stale soldier" and Egiza "a dangling shame," considers killing his brother and threatens him and Cava
with "'grave counsel,'" mutters "'There they palm it,'" and, watching them, contrasts love with honor: "'If he doth not forswear her he will yet forswear himself; and if he keep truth with her he were but basely false to his people'" (P, I, 35, 57, 65, 63).16

These features do much to redeem a book flawed by prolixity, melodrama, and slightly salacious sexuality. And for students of transatlantic literary currents, redeeming it further are suggestions of its multiple debt to Ivanhoe.

II

The first and most basic link between Ivanhoe and Pelayo stems from historical as well as fictional circumstances: it inhere in the situation, essential to each novel, of different cultures contending on the same soil. To a student of history’s “contrived corridors” eighth-century Spain and twelfth-century England show unusual parallels: both endured foreign invaders who subjugated the native population and quarrelled among themselves; both suffered from class strife among nobles, king, and commoners; from clashes between conquerors and natives; from a common domestic enemy, the Hebrews, and a common foreign enemy, the Moslems. (Or, more accurately, the Hebrews in both countries suffered from relentless Christian oppression.) It seems likely that such similarities in fact may have bolstered those in fiction; at any rate, both Simms and Scott selected an era and a country that offer especially strong evidence of cultural strife.

Such a situation was fundamental to Scott’s procedure in the novel. In the 1830 “Introduction” to Ivanhoe, for example, he claims that he chose “the reign of Richard I” as “affording a striking contrast betwixt the Saxons, by whom the soil was cultivated, and the Normans, who still reigned in it as conquerors, reluctant to mix

16 The extant scenes of the “Dramatic Poem” printed in the Rambler correspond to sequences in the novel in which Archbishop Oppas, Pelayo, and Egiza seek Julian’s aid against Roderick (I, 29–54, 68–76); Pelayo comments in sarcastic asides upon Egiza’s suit to Cava (I, 54–68; II, 64–77); Oppas plans to incite Roderick to ravish her (I, 155–67); Julian accosts Egiza, and Pelayo and Egiza quarrel (II, 77–101); and Egiza temporarily joins the rebellion (II, 255–58). Simms did not exaggerate when he said that in writing Pelayo he turned verse into prose “of a corresponding sense,” for the phrasing of the pieces is extremely close. Many lines are carried verbatim from play into novel, while longer speeches exhibit only minor changes.
with the vanquished, or acknowledge themselves of the same stock.”
“Four generations,” he says later, “had not sufficed to blend the
hostile blood of the Normans and Anglo-Saxons, or to unite, by
common language and mutual interests, two hostile races, one of
which still felt the elation of triumph, while the other groaned under
all the consequences of defeat” (Iv, I, Ch. i). At about the time
Simms was writing Pelayo, Ivanhoe with its “hostile races” was in
his thoughts, and he singled them out for special comment. Praising
Scott’s “uses of skeleton history,” he insists:

It was, for example, only with the publication of Ivanhoe, one of the most
perfect specimens of the romance that we possess, that the general reader
had any fair idea of the long protracted struggle for superiority between
the Norman and the Saxon people. Nay, it was not till that stately creation
of art, with all its towers and banners, blazed upon the eyes of the de-
lighted nations, that the worthy burghers of London and Edinburgh were
made aware that there had been any long continued conflict between these
warring races. . . . It was reserved for the romancer to show . . . how
reluctant was the Saxon to forego his hope of the final expulsion of the
intruder, and the restoration of his sceptre in the hands of a native. (F&R,
First Series, pp. 45–46)

Rooted in similar facts of history, each novel boasts similar basic
conditions: a country beset by “general ferment” (P, I, 17); a
usurper trying to retain power; oppressed subjects; avaricious and
powerful nobles; unhappy Hebrews who prefer Moslem to Christian
rule. Buttressing primary parallels, incidental conditions are also
similar: in each book there is a high living, treacherous, “dark, cold
designing” (P, I, 96) churchman; a trial scene in which a man is
accused of abandoning his high calling because of witchcraft; and a

17 In “Scott and the Historians,” G. M. Young suggests that Scott may
have given “a lasting distortion to our concept of mediaeval history, by his
fancy that Norman and Saxon persisted as consciously hostile races.” Sir
86–87. See also Andrew Lang’s “Introduction” to Ivanhoe, pp. xiii–xv. Edgar
Johnson, however, feels that Scott consciously shows Cedric as a “belated
holdout maintaining a hopeless cause.” See Walter Scott: The Great
and first chapter—not to mention his dramatized portrayals—stress the
division between the races almost as forcefully as Cedric does.

18 In a footnote to this passage Simms did, however, criticize the
“mummery” of Athelstane’s resurrection. Elsewhere he criticized Scott’s
typical passive hero; see F&R, First Series, p. 262.
subordinate story involving a "fallen" woman once the mistress and
now the murderess of a vicious man of another race. Scott may have
furnished the name "‘Adonikam’" (IV, II, Ch. xv) for one of
Simms's Hebrews; his tyrannical usurper Prince John may have in-
fluenced Simms's tyrannical usurper Roderick; Rebecca may have
inspired the unusual number of hymns about Israel which Thyrza
sings; and King Richard's friendly battle with Friar Tuck, who has
reluctantly put him up for the night, may have suggested Pelayo's
friendly battle with the giant Britarmin, who with equal reluctance
has sheltered him and Egiza. Taken together, the numerous simi-
larities between the novels suggest that Pelayo reveals Simms's deepest
and most detailed borrowings from Scott, as well as some ingenious
transformations of the romance tradition behind him.

In some ways Simms out-HERODS Herod in employing his master's
favorite formulas. For perhaps even more than Ivanhoe, Pelayo
throbs with the kind of conflict Scott favored. Its opening chapters
give an overview of the Gothic/Roman clashes which preceded the
Gothic dynasty in Spain, while both the novel and the essay written
soon after it discuss the Moorish culture which contributed to Roder-
rick's fall and the "eight centuries of conflict" between Christian and
Moor which followed it (F&R, First Series, p. 180). The novel
stresses Gothic decadence which the essay corroborates, and which
tends to bring Scott's pleasure-loving Normans into view. In both
books, foreign nobles of the enemy faction are "luxurious and sen-
sual," extravagant and licentious; and in both they scorn the "‘base
puddle’" (P, I, 17, 71) of the native people. In Simms's presentation,
however, the Goths are more brutal and intemperate, the Iberians
more servile and debased, than are Scott's "hostile races": a Simms
character deplores "‘the vice of the [Gothic] nobles, to whom good-
ness is a thing of mock, and debauchery and sin the practice,'" while
another asks, "‘What is the Goth in Spain? Rude, wild, ever bent
for action, sickening with peace, yet swilled and drunken with the
sensuality of the Greek. . . . What of the Iberian? . . . broken in
spirit—dispersed and ill-directed. Dreading every leader as a new
tyrant, and having but little hope from any'" (P, I, 128, 32). It is
noteworthy, however, that such comments as these are put chiefly
in the mouths of Roderick's enemies, while in Scott they occur in
commentary as well as in conversation and dramatized scene.
In fact, where other writers stress the gradual assimilation of conquerors and natives in Spain, Simms stresses their continuing division, a procedure which makes his dialectic sharper than Scott's. His authorial attitude is correspondingly more biased. In *Ivanhoe* both Saxons and Normans are praised as well as maligned: though the scale is not heavily tipped in their favor, the Saxons come off slightly better, but the Normans are not without their virtues. The sensuality typical of Prince John's party is not characteristic of all Norman nobles, Scott says; and chivalry, though ultimately "useless," has many admirable features (*Iv*, I, Ch. xv; II, Ch. xviii). Simms by contrast wastes no praise on the Goths who oppose Pelayo; strongly favoring the prince's faction, he does not achieve—nor was he apparently interested in achieving—Scott's relative impartiality toward his contending sides, generally seen as a hallmark of his art. Simms's management of the dialectic is a feature, then, which relates *Pelayo* to his Revolutionary Romances of the decade and moves it, with them, away from Scott.

In *Pelayo*, moreover, the split Simms dramatizes through major figures is between Goth and Goth (or Goth and Jew) rather than Goth and Iberian. And unlike Scott's Saxons, Pelayo—who is of the new king's race—can hardly call him a "foreign intruder." Instead he calls him a usurper who first gained power by murdering the true monarch and was ratified in it by only a fragment of the population, "an army of ruffians" (*P*, I, 51). Since the Gothic throne was both hereditary and elective, Pelayo capitalizes on the divisions within the kingdom. Increasingly dissociating himself from

19 See, for example, Irving in the nearly contemporary *Legends of the Conquest of Spain*, and O'Callaghan, p. 49.


21 On this point see O'Callaghan, pp. 47, 51, 58, who claims "throughout Visigothic history the elective principle was in conflict with the hereditary one."
Roderick's followers, as part of his emerging nationalism he emphasizes his ties to the Iberians \((P, I, 32; II, 31, 279)\) and then, opportunely enough, to the wealthy, disaffected Hebrews. He and his followers, Goth and Iberian alike, band together as the "National Council of Iberia" and insist that their group holds "the true popular sovereignty of Spain" (and "from that hour," Simms adds, "we may date her deliverance from the Goth, and her first rise as a nation in the presence of the world" \([P, II, 210]\)). In Simms's book, then, the existence of different cultures is an undercurrent in the political conflict; it is nonetheless important for the psychological weapon it gives Pelayo and the Hebrews: "Now . . . two factions rage . . . the children of the Goth and the descendants of the Roman struggle against each other, and . . . the people of the soil, hating both and fearing both, are not unwilling to join with any power which may give battle to their double tyrannies . . ." \((P, I, 125)\). Given Ivanhoe's prominence on the literary scene, perhaps any cultural strife outlined in this fashion tends to recall the similar strife in Scott.

III

Also recalling Ivanhoe are elements in Pelayo which Simms may have extracted from Scott's fictional situation. Some of these features grow out of the cultural split we have just been studying; thus, for example, in each book the dispossessed faction puts forth its own candidate for the monarchy. The reluctant Athelstane in Ivanhoe is the Saxons' choice, while in Pelayo the National Council of Iberia designates the equally reluctant Egiza as its true king, and anticipates the overthrow of the usurper Roderick much as Scott's Saxons, particularly Cedric, look forward to the day when they will once more control England.

Yet from the start Cedric's effort to whet Athelstane's appetite for his duty is doomed, for it can be whetted only by food. And Pelayo in his similar task with Egiza is likewise doomed, for his brother's only passion is love; no more than Athelstane does he want the throne. Pelayo and Cedric nevertheless strive to change their wayward relatives; and at one point in their tales their arguments are almost identical. While imprisoned in Torquilstone, Cedric talks of the glorious Saxon past to a hungry, disgruntled Athelstane, and dilates upon the bravery of their noble ancestors against Danish and Norman invaders. Similarly, in a crucial section of Simms's novel
Pelayo relates tales of their gallant forbears and boasts of the "old Iberian valour" (P, II, 120) against Roman invaders to Egiza, who is mooning over Cava. Despite all their pains he and Cedric fail, for Athelstan and Egiza persist in renouncing their claims to the monarchy. "'Alas!'" says Cedric, whom Pelayo might have seconded, "'that so dull a spirit should be lodged in so goodly a form!'" (Iv, I, Ch. xxii).

It is quite a jump from Athelstane to Bois-Guilbert as a source for Egiza, yet it is a jump we must make to see further parallels between the two novels. Like the Templar, Egiza is bound to a group whose strict principles dictate his conduct; and like the Templar his love leads him to abandon his standards. In courtship the behavior of the two men is comparably extravagant: admitting female "witchcraft," each proclaims his enslavement and offers to renounce fame, power, and a proud destiny for his sweetheart—a sacrifice easier for Egiza who dislikes the "ambitious and striving" world (P, II, 254) than for Bois-Guilbert who craves it. Powerful counsellors condemn the Templar and Egiza for their transgressions and threaten them with punishment and even death unless their actions can be justified. Taking literally a reference to Rebecca as "'this second Witch of Endor'" (Iv, II, Ch. xii), the fanatical Templar Beaumanoir decides she has enchanted Brian and brings her to trial. To explain Egiza's behavior Simms may have used some details from her famous courtroom scene.

There, we remember, the "'Jewish sorceress'" is charged with having "'maddened the blood, and besotted the brain'" (Iv, II, Chs, xiii, xiv) of the Christian knight. Perhaps picking up this argument, Simms has Pelayo first use the terms "witch" and "witchcraft" as metaphors for Cava's power over his brother: for example, early in the novel he sarcastically snorts that "'a witch hath fettered'" Egiza; and later, like Brian's friends he urges "'Cast out from thy soul the unruly devil'" (P, I, 158; II, 253). When Egiza deserts the rebellion for Cava, Pelayo captures him and drags him before the National Council, which brands him as a traitor and decrees his death. Omitting direct reference to Cava, Pelayo pleads that Egiza is under a magic spell and cannot control his actions. Portions of his plea seem to follow the sequence of argument at Rebecca's trial. In both scenes the lover's past heroism is contrasted with his present lassitude: Bois-Guilbert's "'many deeds of valour'" (Iv, II, Ch. xiv) in the Holy
Land are recalled, while Pelayo dilates upon the "'bloody laurels'" which the young Egiza won in battling the "'insurgent Basques'" (P, II, 223). Speakers in both scenes go on to argue that witchcraft is at the bottom of the strange situation. The "'evil demon'" blamed in Ivanhoe for Bois-Guilbert's "temporary alienation of mind" (Iv, II, Ch. xiv) resembles Pelayo's "'evil power'" which similarly exerts "'some potent witchery'" in Egiza's brain, with similar results —"to impair its reason and to enfeeble the manhood of his soul'" (P, II, 230, 228). Both Scott and Simms attribute the force of the testimony about witchcraft to the superstition and ignorance of the times. A familiar judgment of the nineteenth century upon the Middle Ages, within the context of the novels this point is important as one of several parallels between them.

IV

"Ivanhoe to all intents made the Jews' fortune in the novel," Edgar Rosenberg affirms (p. 4); and Simms's overlooked imitation of Scott's Hebrew figures corroborates this point, while providing the most impressive evidence of his use of both fictional and historical elements in Ivanhoe. Again real circumstances buttressed the imaginary situation; describing medieval Spain, a modern historian remarks: "Standing apart from the Visigoths and Hispano-Romans and inferior to them in the eyes of the law were the Jews, whose religion and social isolation made them an object of suspicion and persecution. . . . It is not surprising that . . . they welcomed the Muslim invaders as liberators from a cruel oppression." 22 In Pelayo and Ivanhoe the Jews add another dimension to the conflict by forming a third culture scorned by foreigners and natives, yet ironically in some ways superior to both. If in Ivanhoe they are linked with the Saxons by the title "disinherited," 23 in Pelayo they are linked with the prince's party by the term "oppressed"; if in Ivanhoe they provide a standard by which Normans and Saxons may be judged, 24 in Pelayo they pro-

provide an ideal of selfless love and patriotism. Meanwhile in both books Jewish language, religion, homes, and clothing furnish exotic backdrops for the action. Here is the first suggestion of Simms's use of Scott, whom he may follow in focusing on the gorgeous trappings of Jewish homes and calling Jewish love of luxury a compensation for Gentile harassment. More important is the fact that both novelists stress the "unintermitting, general, and relentless persecution" (Iv, I, Ch. vi) of Hebrew by Christian as a central element in their criticisms of medieval Christianity. In each case the condemnation is twofold: Christian avarice covets the great wealth of the Jews; Christian fanaticism scorns their religion. At times Scott's Hebrews and Simms's buy security, power, and a degree of friendship from the Gentiles. But ruthless nobles in each book, after draining them of wealth, repay them with violence; and even such honorable figures as Pelayo and Ivanhoe, who are at times necessarily dependent on the "dispersed children of Zion" (Iv, I, Ch. xi), nonetheless consider them an "odious race" (P, I, 84) which Christians should shun whenever possible. Rebecca's preference for the Moslems seems therefore justified as well as poignant. To her father she writes, "less cruel are the cruelties of the Moors unto the race of Jacob, than the cruelties of the Nazarenes of England" (Iv, II, Ch. xv). A Hebrew patriarch in Pelayo echoes her sentiments; "... though cruel is captivity by whatever name, and softened by whatever indulgence, yet was it with the Saracen a gentle providence, when compared with the intolerance of the Christian rule!" (P, I, 86).

Simms's tale of unrequited love provides the capstone for the complex structure of similarities between Ivanhoe and Pelayo. Like Scott he tells the story of an old Hebrew man, a widower with a single daughter who secretly loves the Christian hero of the book. To any careful reader it is obvious at once that except in fatherly affection Melchior and Isaac are not comparable. Rosenberg rightly notes (p. 75) that Isaac is Shylock's "historical ancestor and fictional heir," while Melchior, a magnificent old man who has none of Shylock in him, belongs rather to the tradition of the "saintly Jew" which Rosenberg likewise identifies (Ch. iii). Isaac's money-pinch, his timidity, and his humorousness are foreign to Melchior, to whom "the glitter of the mine, the glow of the palace, the pomp of aught

in Ivanhoe it seems "Scott is out to pillory Christianity," giving the Jews "the complete moral superiority."
save Heaven, were as nothing . . .” (P, I, 119). Devoted to his people and his daughter, with Pelayo he furnishes a standard of leadership in keeping with the romance’s commitment to noble ideals.

But if Isaac and Melchior occupy opposite poles, there seems little doubt that Melchior’s ties to Thyrza derive from Isaac’s love for Rebecca, and that Thyrza with her brunette beauty and her chastity is modeled after Scott’s dark heroine. Both maidens are the centers of their fathers’ lives: like Isaac toward Rebecca, Melchior is extremely protective toward Thyrza, shielding her from contact with the licentious Goths as Isaac tries to shield Rebecca from the gaze of equally licentious Normans. Like Isaac, Melchior justifiably fears for his daughter’s safety, for Thyrza like Rebecca is pursued and almost caught by a lustful suitor; moreover, perhaps echoing Rebecca’s threat to Bois-Guilbert, Thyrza vows to choose suicide above “dishonor.”

In addition to her somewhat awesome virtue, Thyrza resembles Rebecca in her exotic beauty, her loyalty to her father, her concern for her people, and her single-minded affection for the hero. When depicting her love Simms seems to be closely following Scott. He focuses, for example, almost entirely upon the Jewish maiden’s growing attachment to the hero, emphasizing her admiration for his courage and manliness and her unselfish, secret passion. And Simms, like Scott, makes only passing reference to the hero’s feeling for the maiden, although in both novels it is clear that he, despite his religion, is more than casually attracted to the daughter of a “‘despised Jew’” (Iv, II, Ch. v) and that his gallantry toward her is more than superficial. Since medieval Christians and Jews could hardly wed, both love stories of necessity end unhappily: after Ivanhoe and Rowena marry, Rebecca plans to devote herself to “‘works of kindness’” (Iv, II, Ch. xxi), while Thyrza is accidentally killed during a battle between Goths and rebels. Thus concludes the part of Pelayo’s narrative which readers familiar with Simms’s book and Scott’s could readily identify as an imitation of Ivanhoe. The book itself ends with Thyrza’s death, which occurs at the moment of Pelayo’s victory.

25 Unlike Rebecca’s, Thyrza’s pursuer is of her own race, and he merely threatens to embrace, not rape, her.
26 For a similar point of view see Welsh, p. 78; for a different one, see Hare, pp. 156–57.
IVANHOE AND SIMMS'S PELAYO

V

It is hardly strange that among Simms's books Pelayo sticks especially close to Ivanhoe. In earlier volumes Simms had already shown a tendency—which would be evident throughout his life—to use literary models for his works, especially those which like the Spanish romances unfold on unfamiliar ground. Scott was one of his idols, Ivanhoe one of his favorites; the historical periods with which he and Scott were dealing had, to say the least, unusual parallels. Ivanhoe's pageantry, its humor, its varied characters and story lines had fascinated British and American readers; it is not hard to see why Simms apparently kept one eye upon it when working in a new field.

Thus Simms's indebtedness to his Scottish master, though evident in other works, extends beyond them to culminate in the obscure Pelayo, and thus his general and specific debt to Scott and his famous medieval romance is larger than earlier treatments of the subject affirm. Proclaiming his admiration for Ivanhoe, Simms paid it several fulsome compliments; but the most extreme of these, his 1845 remark that it is a nearly "perfect" romance, is not actually his highest praise of the novel. His imitation, seven years earlier, of Ivanhoe in Pelayo renders a greater if more subtle tribute.

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