

# Unacknowledged Intellect: Scott's Changing Reputation and an Alternative Victorian Critical Mode

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**Abstract:** Despite a critical tendency, common until recently, to minimize Sir Walter Scott's impact as an intellectual, two late-Victorian reviewers, Julia Wedgwood and John Stuart Stuart-Glennie, do present Scott as a theorist and a contributor to the intellectual movements of his period. In the arguments made by these two rather minor critics on Scott, readers can recognize a moment when both Scott's critical fortunes as well as academic and popular critical practices could have taken a different path than they did. What both critics attempt is a balance of the two critical perspectives that were beginning to emerge. Rather than writing for either an audience of compliant lay people or of contentious experts, Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie ask their readers to balance rational and sympathetic responses, to read with both reason and intuition. In imagining such an audience, these critics imply that literature plays a role in the development of citizens who can, likewise, combine these responses, as they have practiced them in literature, and apply them to the problems faced by responsible citizens.

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It has until recent decades been common for critics and reviewers to minimize Walter Scott's agency, both as an innovating author and as a part of the social and intellectual conversations of his time. While early and mid-Victorian critics were likely to downplay Scott's intellect and to focus instead on his ability to render character, through the 1980s few critics could resist showing surprise that novels written so quickly could have heralded the changes with which the Waverley novels have been credited. For a brief moment, however, this was not the case. Late-Victorian reviewers Julia Wedgwood, a novelist and writer on religion, and John Stuart Stuart-Glennie, who wrote widely on literary and folkloric issues, present Scott as a theorist of the ways that Romanticism connected history, nature and the individual. Their claims that Scott was both a celebrity and an intellectual distinguish their treatment of Scott from those that were common in reviews of his career throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie emphasize Scott's ideas to persuade readers that Scott's work has a place in late-Victorian debates about the roles of individuals within a changing social order. Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie are unique in presenting Scott as a conscious participant in Scottish Enlightenment debates and in acknowledging

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their interest in translating readers' sympathy with Scott and his characters to sympathy for the ideas they, as critics, espouse.

Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie are not important because of their particular significance as periodical critics. Although both wrote a substantial number of articles and Wedgwood was also a novelist, neither was nearly as prolific as many of their contemporaries like George Henry Lewes or Leslie Stephen. Likewise, neither has had the influence on the fortunes of the novelists about whom they wrote that many other critics had, although both placed their articles on Scott in influential journals. It is, in fact, this confluence of their relative obscurity and their articles' lack of influence on the field that makes these critics and their work revealing. These circumstances show us a moment when Scott's fortunes within the critical establishment could have changed. They also offer a view of a possible alternative critical course—a middle path between the expertise of literary studies as it was then being professionalized in the academy and popular reviewing, which spoke, increasingly, to an audience of fans whose reading practices were not valued by professionals in either the academy or the periodicals.<sup>1</sup>

In her "Walter Scott and the Romantic Reaction", Julia Wedgwood recognizes a balance of rationality and emotion in Scott.<sup>2</sup> Writing for the *Contemporary Review* in 1878, her emphasis on looking at both sides is not surprising, as the *Contemporary* under various editors took pride in including conflicting perspectives. Wedgwood opens her article with a discussion of the process of reviewing, asking her readers to consider whether impartiality will allow a reviewer a more accurate view or whether partiality, while reducing critical power, might be "an adequate compensation for all limitation in critical power."<sup>3</sup> Wedgwood sidesteps any conclusions, but her choice to begin here is significant. The balance of sympathy and distance that she describes as her own critical vantage point becomes, through the body of the article, the quality that supports (and indeed constitutes) Scott's genius.

Unlike her predecessors, Wedgwood is not concerned with Scott's politics. Rather, she looks to the qualities of character, reflected in his writing, that make him representative of and significant to the Romantic Movement. Scott is, she claims, "unencumbered by his own personality," with "eminently a manly nature."<sup>4</sup> As Annika Bautz points out, Wedgwood's emphasis on biography is typical of criticism in this period, but Wedgwood uses this technique to different ends than reviewers like

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<sup>1</sup> On the professionalization of literature in this period, see Edwin M. Eigner and George J. Worth, *Victorian Criticism of the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and Ian Small, *Conditions for Criticism* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Julia Wedgwood, "Walter Scott and the Romantic Reaction," *Contemporary Review* 33 (August 1878): 514-539.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 514.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 515, 516.

Archibald Alison or William Couthorpe.<sup>5</sup> Despite disclaiming impartiality, Wedgwood does not attempt, as do earlier reviewers, to present Scott as an advocate for her own views. Rather, she insists on his ability both to feel with and stand apart from the events and characters he depicts. Wedgwood presents Scott as unique: “a man pre-eminent in intellect” (an unusual position in Scott criticism) and “modest,” a man whose “simplicity” amounts to genius because he doesn’t try to be a genius, a man whose feudal sympathies give him “a new interest in individual life, a new respect for idiosyncrasy, and a minute and delicate appreciation for shades of character, both national and personal.”<sup>6</sup>

Wedgwood insists particularly on the importance of balance when considering Scott as a historian. She claims that “The spirit that moves men to action is not the spirit that enables them to review action.”<sup>7</sup> Scott, she argues, can present convincing historical pictures precisely because he was not a player and so can narrate with a greater degree of impartiality than a participant could. Later, discussing Scott’s choice not to write a history of Mary Queen of Scots, Wedgwood claims that in such a history “judgment and sympathy are on different sides.” This disjunction presents an unworkable situation for the objective historian but a benefit for the dramatic writer. Thus, she argues, “the balance of genius and good sense—the harmony of a cool shrewdness of intellect and a glowing fervor of imagination [. . .] gives Scott’s picture of the death of feudalism its peculiar mellowness and force.”<sup>8</sup>

Wedgwood brings her argument full circle when she returns to the issue of impartiality, claiming that the “double feeling” that is created when Scott plays his “historic sympathy, against the background of his judgment [. . .] supplies the place of impartiality.”<sup>9</sup> Here, Wedgwood raises examples, including Jeannie Deans of *Heart of Midlothian* and Rebecca of *Ivanhoe*, to help readers understand Scott’s balance of sympathy and judgment. Wedgwood claims that Scott advanced the Romantic reaction in favor of individuality by showing the weak and oppressed as feeling people set against the historical background of societies that cannot or will not understand them. That Scott can do this in spite of his sympathies with the feudal orders that perpetrate oppression is his particular genius.

In her article, Wedgwood balances the contemporary model of reviewing, which considered an author in terms of biography and often ignored a work’s social or historical aspects, and a newer scientific model of literary scholarship, which privileged

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<sup>5</sup> Annika Bautz. *The Reception of Jane Austen and Walter Scott: A Comparative Longitudinal Study*. London, England: Continuum, 2007.

Archibald Alison, “The Historical Romance,” *Blackwood’s Magazine* 58 (Sept. 1845): 345.

William John Couthorpe, “The Reflection of English Character in English Art,” *The Quarterly Review* 147 (Jan. 1879): 97.

<sup>6</sup> Wedgwood, 515, 521.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 522.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 529.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 530.

an impartial stance and attention to a literary object. In showing how Scott paved a course between the sympathetic and the impartial, Wedgwood encourages reviewers to embrace the best of popular and professional reading practices. In doing so, she opens a space for considering Scott's centrality to the intellectual currents of his era.

Likewise, in his 1880 "Macpherson, Burns and Scott in their Relation to the Modern Revolution," John Stuart Stuart-Glennie, argues that Scott "stimulated" and "originated" a new theory of history that changed both English language writing and the direction of European thought.<sup>10</sup> Writing for *Fraser's* when the once influential magazine was experiencing editorial and proprietary changes, Stuart-Glennie finds himself caught in the shifting currents of the press—shifts that *Fraser's* would not survive. Stuart-Glennie's goal in this article is to show how his titular poets, all Scots, put British writing at the center of a European intellectual revolution. Stuart-Glennie characterizes this revolution as a "return to Nature" for concepts to explain moral and intellectual problems.<sup>11</sup> To accomplish this feat, Stuart-Glennie presents Scott as the theorist of a "unified" history that his collected works purportedly present. Like Wedgwood, Stuart-Glennie asks readers to imagine a larger context for Scott. He encourages them to consider themselves as part of a European history of ideas.

Stuart-Glennie begins his discussion of Scott by quoting extensively from Scott's comments on his own writing, an unusual move in Victorian criticism of Scott. This move presents Scott as intentional about his effects and the points he makes about recordable history. Stuart-Glennie claims that Scott's works amount to "one great Historical Romance of the most unparalleled vastness, variety, and magnificence," a statement that he supports with a footnote laying out Scott's *oeuvre* to match this proposed pattern.<sup>12</sup> Stuart-Glennie's conclusion here echoes Wedgwood's. He claims that Scott possesses a "many-sidedness of sympathy that can see and represent not only Mohammedan and Christian, but even Protestant and Catholic, Republican and Royalist, King and Commoner, Law-maker and Law-breaker, with an almost equal impartiality."<sup>13</sup> Scott's strength lies in his ability to represent both sides of a struggle sympathetically or to see political and social issues for their complexity. In this balance of sympathy and historical distance, Stuart-Glennie recognizes the elements of "a new school of historical writing," one concerned "not with kings, but with peoples; not with characters, but with customs; and not with the succession of dynasties, but with the development of religions and of laws." According to Stuart-Glennie, Scott created not only the new form of history but also the readership that would ask for "histories of Popular Developments."

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<sup>10</sup> John Stuart Stuart-Glennie, "MacPherson, Burns and Scott in the Relation to the Modern Revolution," *Fraser's Magazine* 604 (April 1880), 516-531.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 519.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 527-8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 529.

Stuart-Glennie's explanation of Scott's ambiguous politics in the *Waverley Novels* is particularly insightful. Unlike his contemporaries, who use it to advance their own views, Stuart-Glennie examines the ambiguity itself, hoping to discover Scott's social and intellectual affiliations. Still, Stuart-Glennie, like Wedgwood, has something to gain by attempting to reinstate Scott as an intellectual figure. Where Wedgwood coopted Scott's balance to allow literary reviews to say something more than or different from the usual fare, Stuart-Glennie, moving away from biographical criticism and eschewing enthusiastic descriptions of character, hopes to capture an audience for a "[history] of Popular Developments" that connects British ideas to the best Continental tradition. By insisting on Scott as a viable intellectual voice, both Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie hope to reshape expectations about reviewing or about reading periodical literature.

This view of Scott has, until recently, been the exception rather than the rule. Instead, the tendency has been to present Scott as an intellectual lightweight. Although many have studied Scott's influence on Victorian literature, for example, such studies have often focused on characterization and plot, or on Scott as an influence on Victorian ideals rather than Victorian ideas.<sup>14</sup> Scott's use of embedded layers of narration can make it difficult for readers to know when to take his statements seriously. To derive any theory about society, then, requires attention to patterns of behavior, rather than attention to argumentation. This tendency in Scott's writing has contributed to his reputation as a feeler rather than a thinker. The reading of *Waverley* (1814) below demonstrates one way of highlighting such patterns, while also noting how literary critics in the last thirty years have reframed Scott as part of the scholarly debates of his period. Focusing on *Waverley's* skill as an interpreter, for example, reveals Scott's interest in responsible consumerism as a force for localized social action. Scott links *Waverley's* early passivity to his reading, but the centrality of *Waverley's* choices to understand or not to the novel's consumerist conclusion has not been sufficiently recognized. In fact, Scott shows that *Waverley* can be an effective reader when he has an interest—intellectual, social, or financial—in such activity. Likewise, in presenting the complex relationship between *Waverley's* developing understanding and his ability to act as a member of his society, Scott demonstrates his own participation in contemporary debates about the individual's role in the historical process.

In the young hero of his first novel, Scott creates a man with talent but without discipline, then uses the novel to teach readers how to develop discipline and understanding. *Waverley's* self-directed education does not prepare him for either a

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Judith Wilt, "Steamboat Surfacing: Scott and the English Novelists," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 35, no. 4 (1982): 459-486; John M. Shaw, "Scott's Influence on the Childhood of the Victorians," *Scottish Literary Journal* 7, no. 1 (1980): 51-64; K.M. Newton "Revisions of Scott, Austen, and Dickens in *Daniel Deronda*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 35 (2005): 241-266; Ann Rigney, *The Afterlives of Walter Scott: Memory on the Move* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Harry E. Shaw, "Scott and George Eliot: The Lure of the Symbolic," In *Scott and His Influence*, ed. J. H. Alexander and David Hewitt, *Association for Scottish Literary Studies: Occasional Papers* no. 6 (1983): 393-402.

career or a well-rounded gentleman's life. He reads only for amusement and travels to Scotland with no self-discipline and no comprehension of contemporary politics, although Scottish/English relations are about to boil over in the drama of the '45. He also remains insistently ignorant of his family's complex role in these events, including his uncle's Jacobitism and his father's political gamesmanship, both subjects on which the reader, with Scott's assistance, is better informed. By describing Waverley's undisciplined approach to his military career, Scott underscores how unsuited Waverley is for public life. He is "naturally retired" and tends more to the "abstracted" than to the "abstract" work of policy.<sup>15</sup> The narrator suggests that better training might overcome these weaknesses, but Waverley, like most of Scott's readers, is no statesman.

But this is the point. Although Waverley encounters History, at best he learns how to contain its effects on him. Like Mark Salber Phillips's new readers of history, who use both sentiment and sociability to understand society, Waverley is a man of private life without the "capacity to act" in significant ways.<sup>16</sup> He may understand how history has affected him by applying both his ability to read social changes and his emotive responses to those changes. However, unlike real actors (Fergus MacIvor or the Pretender), he will not make world-changing decisions. The narrator's descriptions of Waverley's responses to events reinforce this distinction.

Early on, Waverley is happy to be mystified by what happens around him and so is easily manipulated. Fergus comments that Waverley "is a true worshipper of the Celtic muse, not the less so perhaps that he does not understand a word of her language" then repeats that Waverley admires some verses "because he does not comprehend them."<sup>17</sup> Like the Highland feast whose economy the narrator understands better than his hero, these verses show Waverley ready to be entertained without concerning himself about meaning. As Yoon Sun Lee points out, "Waverley assumes that he has the power to observe the scene without being affected by it. He fails to realize that he is a spectator only in his own eyes."<sup>18</sup> Scott builds on this instance when Waverley receives letters from his commander ordering his return and then discharging him. With no knowledge of the growing unrest and no idea that his seal has been used to foment rebellion, Waverley turns to Fergus for advice. The narrator remarks that "Endowed with at least equal powers of understanding, and with much finer genius, Edward yet stooped to the bold and decisive activity of an intellect which was sharpened by the habit of acting on a preconceived and regular system, as well as by extensive knowledge of the world," reminding readers that Waverley is unfit for leadership.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Walter Scott, *Waverley*, ed. David Hewitt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993): 34.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 19.

<sup>17</sup> Scott, 110.

<sup>18</sup> Yoon Sun Lee, *Nationalism and Irony: Burke, Scott, Carlyle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21.

<sup>19</sup> Scott, 133.

Scott's narrator insists that Waverley misreads the world and is content with ignorance, but ensures that even inattentive readers know what Waverley misses. Late in the novel, the narrator shows readers how to interpret in hindsight, how to read effectively while acting locally, outside the bounds of historical events. What changes is Waverley's sense of the past. Waverley reviews his experiences in Scotland and "recollects" information he had ignored earlier.<sup>20</sup> In a visual epiphany, he notices the "wild" dress and nature of the Highland army compared with English officers.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, after joining the Pretender, Waverley finds that he "had, indeed, as he looked closer upon the state of the Chevalier's court, less reason to be satisfied with it" than he originally thought.<sup>22</sup> Waverley even loves in hindsight. He is "scarcely able to analyze the mixture of feelings" that emerge when he discovers Fergus wants to marry Rose Bradwardine.<sup>23</sup> This confusion calmed, he realizes that "if Mr Edward Waverley had had his eyes!" he would have proposed to Rose, rather than chasing Fergus's sister Flora. While Waverley struggles, the reader recognizes Waverley's position. Or so at least the narrator claims, insisting, "the reader has long since understood that Donald Bean Lean played the part of tempter" when Waverley's soldiers rebelled.<sup>24</sup> Scott shows readers how to make connections that clarify the historical picture, while congratulating them for having done so already.

Reader and hero are brought together when Waverley establishes himself as a private man rather than an historical actor. Fergus's execution signals that the historical stage has receded into the background while Waverley's private actions take center stage.<sup>25</sup> Many critics have commented on the political ramifications of Waverley's purchase of the forfeited Bradwardine estate, Tully-Veolan, and of his commission, from London, of a portrait of himself and Fergus in Highland dress. Each has been seen as an attempt to resurrect Stuart chivalry and as a reappropriation of Highland culture for the Hanoverian government. In "Wandering Narratives," Frank claims these symbols remind readers that Scott's ending challenges Waverley's conservatism, suggesting that "such a state [of stability] may be impossible, and this in itself is a radical position."<sup>26</sup> Frank balances these options, allowing for the overt conservatism of the landed, moneyed marriage between Edward and Rose (England and Scotland) and for the narrative

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>25</sup> Regina Hewitt (*Symbolic Interactions*) interprets *Redgauntlet* similarly: "The device of sending away the Stewart prince and his last supporter creates a memorable dismissal of the historical determinism they represent and leaves the novel with the more flexible, usable attitude toward the past represented by the erstwhile conspirators" (181).

<sup>26</sup> Catherine Frank, "Wandering Narratives and Wavering Conclusions: Irreconciliation in Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* and Walter Scott's *Waverley*," *European Romantic Review* 12:4 (Fall 2001): 429-56.

omissions and glosses that have troubled many readers.<sup>27</sup> If stability consists of purchased objects, it is a function of controlled change rather than of stasis.

Similarly, Ian Duncan claims that Scott connects both national and individual history to literary images, balancing the radical and conservative within different layers of his narrative. This allows Scott to challenge his readers on one level while reassuring them on another.<sup>28</sup> In Duncan's argument, painting and estate are feeble attempts to appropriate a lost culture for the winners. Likewise, Trumpener claims that Scott's readers recognize that his conclusions choose only one of the historical possibilities for each story.<sup>29</sup> According to Trumpener, the historical novel, as written by Scott, regularizes critiques of the state by reflecting new social paradigms in a unified national ideal. Though she doesn't look at *Waverley*, this would make the painting and the land transfer reminders of a history that didn't happen, but could have done. That is, a history wherein the Stuarts win, Highland culture survives, and Tully-Veolan never changes hands. Painting and estate are symbols of the turbulent past that underlies the "stable" present.

The most basic meaning of these symbols is commercial. In restoring a Scottish estate and commissioning a romanticized picture of himself, *Waverley* cements his apolitical position. The man who daydreamed during war councils was never more than a spectator to the rebellion.<sup>30</sup> As a spectator, though, he connects his private fortune (and fortunes) to the political upheavals that later give a romantic tinge to his appropriately domestic life. *Waverley* is not a leader, a politician or even an effective soldier, but he has money, education and imagination. *Waverley* consumes his way into historical narratives that present the experience of an era.

In this sense, *Waverley* earns a place in history despite his inability to act as traditionally significant figures do. By encoding the passage of larger history, onto the surface of the new history (economic, cultural and domestic) *Waverley* becomes a figure for rereading the historical and for reevaluating the reading process. As Isabelle Bour insists, "The history that matters in [*Waverley*] is the cumulative and progressive process that constrains individual behavior; this new way to historicize action and behavior is widely seen as activating a new kind of fictional realism."<sup>31</sup> This shift from public to private is also at play when Hewitt explains that Scott was "keenly aware of the inadequacy of political responses to social problems and eager to pursue more

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<sup>27</sup> For example, Stefan Thomas Hall ("Awkward Silences in Scott's *Waverley*," *Scottish Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (2003): 82-97.) attempts to interpret the significance of those silences.

<sup>28</sup> Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 112.

<sup>29</sup> Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: the Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> Scott, 265.

<sup>31</sup> Isabelle Bour, "Sensibility as Epistemology in *Caleb Williams*, *Waverley*, and *Frankenstein*," *SEL* 45, no. 4 (2005): 814.

comprehensive interventions” by private means.<sup>32</sup> Such arguments insist that Scott saw more scope for improvement through private individuals than through public history.

As a private man, *Waverley* is only expected to understand historical forces that affect him and to be a responsible member of his community. Reading Scott against Adam Smith, James Chandler points out that where Smith attempts to systematize without dogmatizing, Scott “[insists] at every turn on the institutionality of the media, genres, and practices of his commitment to the court of ‘sentiments and feelings.’”<sup>33</sup> As the painting and the purchase of Tully-Veolan demonstrate, Scott’s institutionalizing impulse operates on a cultural and moral scale, rather than a political one. Art and culture, commodified, can unite and direct private men, superseding politics or nationalism.

Certainly, as we saw in both Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie, the *Waverley* Novels have frequently been cited as a force for British unity. Christensen claims that Scott’s “self-authorizing task under the post-Napoleonic dispensation was to teach the British people new things as if those things were common knowledge.”<sup>34</sup> Likewise, Lee claims that Scott’s ironic antiquarianism “bears an uncanny relation to the idea of the British nation, revealing the seams that ought to remain hidden within the larger whole, and pointing to the contingent movements of imperial history.”<sup>35</sup> Lee argues that conservatism maintains balance while showing the “seams” left by the creation of a stable whole. Similarly, Gottlieb asserts, “as some of the best known, most widely read novels in Britain [. . .] the *Waverley* Novels encouraged a homogeneous readership simply by being read simultaneously across the United Kingdom.”<sup>36</sup>

Each credits Scott with enabling or recording wide-reaching changes in British culture and society. Like the reading of *Waverley* above, however, each is also dependent on patterns within the novels. Scott’s narrator does not outline a clear theory of historical change or historical writing. The absence of explicit theorizing or argumentation in the novels has made it easy for many critics to dismiss Scott’s contributions to the intellectual debates of his time. The examples described above are a product of scholarship in the last thirty years. As Lumsden points out, citing Jill Rubenstein, by the 1990s, “Scott criticism no longer assumes a defensive stance” and new approaches to his work showed Scott as “reflexive, self-conscious, and more-or-less experimental.”<sup>37</sup> Prior to that time, as Rubenstein insinuates, few critics presented Scott as a man of ideas. Rather, critics tended to see Scott as accidentally significant. A 1941

<sup>32</sup> Hewitt, *Symbolic Interactions* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2006), 23.

<sup>33</sup> James Chandler, *England in 1819* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 320.

<sup>34</sup> Jerome Christensen, *Romanticism at the End of History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 153.

<sup>35</sup> Lee, 102.

<sup>36</sup> Evan Gottlieb, *Feeling British: Sympathy and National Identity in Scottish and English Writing, 1707-1882* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 173.

<sup>37</sup> Alison Lumsden, *Walter Scott and the Limits of Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010).

article, investigating Scott's debt to Defoe, remarks on Scott's unorganized childhood reading and his "muddling-work" in the periodicals as the basis of his writing.<sup>38</sup> In "Of Kettledrums and Trumpet," James C. Simmons claims Scott believed fiction had "very limited possibility for the serious moral or practical instruction of the reader" and links this throughout the article to comments on Scott's slap-dash writing practices and inability to handle complex plots.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, while he argues that the complexity of Victorian uses of Scott undermine twentieth-century presentations of Scott as either "single-minded" or "simple-minded," John Henry Raleigh takes on only the task of recording Scott's fall from recognition as an intellectual but does not offer an argument that places Scott in the intellectual history of his time.<sup>40</sup> In his 1957 "The Question of Scott," Herbert Goldstone notes that while other nineteenth-century novelists enjoy critical attention, Scott has been consigned to the high school classroom. Considering the most commonly taught text, *Ivanhoe*, Goldstone concludes, "it is always interesting as spectacle but only sometimes interesting and revealing as a serious work of fiction," supporting the critics who have turned from Scott to other, seemingly worthier, subjects.<sup>41</sup> Indeed through much of the twentieth-century, when Scott attracted critical attention at all that attention focused more on the antiquarian than on his works. Not until 1972, do we see P.D. Garside claiming that Scott can be better understood against a "Scottish 'philosophical' tradition of historiography" and claiming for Scott "a more intellectual type of conservatism."<sup>42</sup>

The shift away from intellectualism in discussions of Scott had already occurred in the Victorian period and was a result of Scott's enormous popularity and the terms in which critics had framed that popularity. Although Scott was universally acknowledged as an influence on literature and morals, by the late-nineteenth century critics worried that his popularity was beginning to fade and that his influence would dissipate as well.<sup>43</sup> Tilottama Rajan claims that Romantic critics moved away from didacticism, giving readers more authority. This is a shift from the moral, which she describes as "the authorial intention, whether original or final," to the tendency, "an intersubjective and historically developing significance."<sup>44</sup> In Victorian periodical criticism, however,

<sup>38</sup> John Robert Moore, "Defoe and Scott," *PMLA* 56, no. 3, (1941): 710-735.

<sup>39</sup> James C. Simmons, "Of Kettledrums and Trumpets: The Early Victorian Followers of Scott," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 6 (1968): 47-59.

<sup>40</sup> John Henry Raleigh, "What Scott Meant to the Victorians," In *Critical Essays on Sir Walter Scott: The Waverley Novels*, ed. Harry E. Shaw (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1996): pgs.

<sup>41</sup> Henry Goldstone, "The Question of Scott," *The English Journal* 46, no. 4 (1957): 187-195.

<sup>42</sup> P.D. Garside, "Scott, the Romantic Past and the Nineteenth Century," *The Review of English Studies* 23, no. 90 (1972): 147-161.

<sup>43</sup> William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Annika Bautz, *The Reception of Jane Austen and Walter Scott: A Comparative Longitudinal Study* (New York: Continuum Press, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> Tilottama Rajan, "Wollstonecraft and Godwin: Reading the Secrets of the Political Novel," *Studies in Romanticism* 27, no. 2 (1988): 224.

didacticism continues to be a debated quantity. Many Victorian critics insist that the novelists they treat ought to avoid didacticism but critics often treat their own readers as uncritical or incompetent.<sup>45</sup> Early in the Victorian period, critics had emphasized the magic of Scott's work and had praised him for the "fine scorn of all that is mean and base in thought and action [. . .] it is always a summons to generous sentiments, and never falls below an elevated tone."<sup>46</sup> Later, they began to worry that those "fine sentiments" were rather too obviously presented.

Even as they praised Scott's work, many also claimed that he was not a man of ideas. The tendency to ignore Scott's critical work, both about other novelists and in prefaces to his own novels highlights efforts to restrain discussions of Scott within discussions of moral authorship rather than opening them to a broader spectrum of ideas. In his *Women Novelists before Jane Austen*, Brian Corman claims "When taken together with Scott's occasional essays and reviews [the essays in *Lives of the Novelists*] form one of the most important bodies of novel criticism in English" but goes on to show that "Scott is remarkably underrated as a critic."<sup>47</sup> This predisposition to ignore Scott's critical contributions began with Victorian periodical reviewers who almost never refer to Scott's critical work when discussing his career. Stuart-Glennie, as we have seen, is an exception to this rule.

Other downplayed Scott's intellect more overtly. Carlyle was famously doubtful, claiming in 1837 that Scott's novels "are altogether addressed to the every-day mind; that for any other mind, there is next to no nourishment in them. Opinions, emotions, principles, doubts, beliefs, beyond what the intelligent country gentleman can carry along with him, are not to be found."<sup>48</sup> Scott's ideas simply aren't out of the common run. W.Y. Sellars offers a more direct assault when he claims, "The great creators have, in general, been like Sir Walter Scott, men deficient in reflective power."<sup>49</sup>

"Deficient" though he might be, by the 1860s critic after critic decries shifting public tastes that ignore Scott to "break their hearts over the sorrows of bigamists and

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<sup>45</sup> See, for example, W.Y. Sellars ("Religious Novels," 26 (1856): 112-122.) and H. Buxton Forman ("Samuel Richardson, as Artist and Moralist," *Fortnightly Review* n.s. 5 (1869): 428-443.). On the question of audience, in *The Dynamics of Genre: Journalism and the Practice of Literature in Mid-Victorian Britain*, Dallas Liddle claims that mid-century reviewers "constructed readers as passive and uncritical adopters of prepackaged opinions," as open to didactic statements by critics (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009: 101). Alternatively, Harold Orel records the assumption that the audience was "literate, intelligent and curious, but relatively uninterested in technical nomenclature and the specialized concerns of research scholars" (*Victorian Literary Critics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984): 2-3.). The reality of the readership for such reviews probably falls somewhere in between these positions. Both reveal the ongoing concern with didactic techniques.

<sup>46</sup> W.F. Pollock, "British Novelists—Richardson, Miss Austen, Scott," *Fraser's Magazine* 61 (1860): 37.

<sup>47</sup> Brian Corman, *Women Novelists Before Jane Austen: The Critics and Their Canons* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008): 39.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, v. 4 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1857): 175. This edition is a reprinting of the original 1837 essay.

<sup>49</sup> Sellars, 114.

adulterers.”<sup>50</sup> With the changing tastes of a new generation of novel readers, critics worried that Scott’s importance might be secure but that his popularity was on the decline. Alarmist as these statements sound, though, the critics were not entirely wrong. Scott had begun to slip into the place that he would hold throughout the twentieth-century, a mainstay of high-school syllabi and workingmen’s libraries, assigned and idolized but not loved as he had been. Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie are significant in this context. Unlike their predecessors or critics of the next century, they consciously place Scott within his intellectual climate and assign him a purposeful role in advancing late-Romantic social and historical theory. Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie use Scott’s ability to show multiple perspectives on social, intellectual and political issues to reinforce the importance of complex debate and to raise the possibility of a reading audience that engaged both sensibility and reason in judging texts. This is a balance that is echoed in both late twentieth-century criticism of Scott and in the reading of *Waverley* above.

In creating their arguments for a new way of reading and contextualizing novels, both Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie refer to a specific anecdote. In this tale, a teenage Walter Scott meets Robert Burns at the home of historian and social theorist Adam Ferguson.<sup>51</sup> Burns, moved by a painting and by the attached verse, asks the name of the poet. Scott timidly offers the name, attracting Burns’s attention. Most obviously, this scene provides a “torch-passing” moment as Burns recognizes the genius in the countenance of his young successor. For both Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie, however, this anecdote serves additional purposes. Scott, at sixteen, is already expert enough in the poetry of his country to identify the source of indifferent verses and thus becomes a living repository of British literary knowledge. Additionally, he is able to share information and add to the emotional resonance of the moment.

So far, this is the familiar Scott. Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie’s emphasis on the circumstance of the anecdote’s being set Ferguson’s home during a gathering of scholars reveals their divergence from typical presentations of Scott. Retailing this anecdote insists on Scott’s place, even as a young man, in British intellectual life. Scott is an observer of the best minds and a participant in their discussions. Scott *is* the outgrowth of Scottish Enlightenment thought and, at the least, a translator of that thought into the medium of historical fiction. By emphasizing Scott’s role in Burns’s reactions, Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie also call attention to the significance of bringing information and historical perspective to bear on sentimental reactions to art—the theoretical innovation for which they both credit Scott.

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<sup>50</sup> G.R. Glieg, “Sir Walter Scott,” *The Quarterly Review* 124 (Jan. 1868): 1-2. For other examples, see: H.L. Mansel, “Sensation Novels,” *The Quarterly Review* 113 (April 1863): 481-514. and Wilkie Collins, “The Unknown Public,” *Household Words* 21 (August 1858): 217-222.

<sup>51</sup> For the purposes of his title, Stuart-Glennie also imagines James MacPherson, who would have been an old man at the time, into the scene.

While frequently aligned with the techniques of Victorian reviewing and criticism, Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie introduce new ways of historicizing Scott and his work. Their arguments anticipate critical discussions that would not reemerge for a century, as most of their immediate successors ignored their attempts to reframe Scott and adopted the pattern of the intuitive, but not very wise, Wizard of the North perpetuated by most early-Victorian criticism. This tendency reveals the continued importance of understanding the dispositions of Victorian criticism by demonstrating how Victorian reviewers shaped the questions twentieth-century critics would ask about specific novelists, even as critical methods changed.

Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie's arguments reveal countercurrents in discussions of reading that were occurring at the moment when literature was being professionalized within the academy. Rather than moving to purely systematic criticism, both use history, and Scott as the ultimate historian, to argue for critical work that considers both the intellectual currents that inform and are informed by an author's work and the emotional reactions that attract readers. By calling readers to balance rational and sympathetic responses, Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie attempt a literary criticism that assumes neither an audience of experts nor one of sheep. Readers who could think critically about the ideas that literature brought alive were also, presumably, readers who, like *Waverley*, could be trusted to combine their rational and sympathetic reactions and respond appropriately as private citizens. In painting Scott as an observer and balancer of ideas and emotions, Wedgwood and Stuart-Glennie also offer him as an example. Scott is not the great theorist of society; however, both present him as the great synthesizer of what has been thought and felt by individuals under specific historical circumstances. Likewise, their readers, like Wedgwood, may never be "impartial" and may never write the history of popular movements as Stuart-Glennie claims that Scott was able to do. Still, each imagines readers who can encounter such histories, can recognize their own enthusiasms and sympathies, and can act rationally based on those observations. Such readers would neither be the fans imagined by much popular criticism of the day, nor the experts imagined by the newly emerging academic criticism. Instead they would be citizens, active and purposeful within their own spheres.