THOUGHTS ON ROKEBY BY WALTER SCOTT

It may seem strange to write on a poem that is by common consent not one of Scott's best, and which must be very seldom read today. However, this generation that hardly dares to narrate in verse is not in a position to mock previous ones for writing bad poetry — one need only peruse the *Times Literary Supplement* to perceive that the effusions there can only claim the designation by the assertion of New-Speak. Some comments suggested by the old poem *Rokeby* from one conservatively educated may then have value or even a quaint interest to those confident in modern dogmatisms.

Since most will not have read the poem, it will be useful to summarize the story, which is set in Teesdale, where the river which divides Yorkshire from County Durham leaves the bare moors for the richer lowlands. Oswald Wycliffe, an amoral renaissance baron, hopes to acquire the estate of *Rokeby* by marrying his fushonless son Wilfred to the heiress, who will also be heiress to the treasure her uncle Mortham has *amassed* by bucaneeering in the West Indies. Mortham had taken to this piratical career after a tragedy in his life. Returning to England he has taken the Parliamentary side while *Rokeby* took the Royalist (though Scott depicts this as from principle, not as a matter of family insurance as was common in the '15 & '45). Oswald Wycliffe plans to kill Mortham and seize the *Rokeby* treasure. Bertram duly reports that he has killed Mortham treacherously at the battle of Marston Moor — he has in fact only killed his hores — and so at once Owsward, not trusting himself with Bertram, sends his son Wilfred with him to take possession. They are shadowed on the way by Mortham whom Bertram claims to have shot in the back. Wilfred Wycliffe shows unexpected spirit and is only saved from death at Bertram's hand by the timely appearance of Mortham, who does not want his survival to be known. Bertram, foiled as he thinks by Oswald's treachery, vows revenge, and falling in with a band of broken men, surprises *Rokeby* castle by a ruse, using a minstrel, Edmund. Wilfred is of course in love with the heiress Matilda, but not surprisingly is quite outclassed in her eyes by the youth Redmond, who turns out to be Mortham's lost son, carried off to Ireland and returned in his almost infant years. Wilfred and Redmond manage to save them, though the castle is burned. Oswald has now *Rokeby* and Redmond in his power and is going to behead them unless Matilda marries Wilfred. But he,

sick at heart as the rejected lover, and wounded, refuses and collapses in death. Oswald is now determined on an execution, but all are saved by the sudden arrival of Bertram who has found out all the treacherous schemings of Oswald and shoots him dead. Turning to go, his horse stumbles bringing him down, and he is killed, before he can escape. Mortham arrives, discovers Redmond is his son, and Redmond marries the heiress, of whom he is worthy.

Rokeby was written in about 15 weeks in 1812, and published in 1813. In these years the excesses of the French Revolution were long passed and its doctrines consequently seemed less dangerous: it had ended in French imperialism (just as the Russian Revolution has ended in Russian imperialism). Society was securer, and ideology being less pressing, people had time for entertainment. Just as the Napoleonic wars hardly feature in Jane Austen's work, except that an officer may win prize money in the novels, and there is an unfailing supply of officers (who are usually gentlemen) for young ladies of quality to marry, so we have no echos of the present in *Rokeby*. With internal peace, and prosperity in an everelaborating economic structure, civilization and life tend to put emotional strain on the human animal. Hence there was in Scott's time an appeal in the Romanticism of the past, where we can be honest about our emotions without the hypocrisy or politeness; they are mostly honourable, and purgation is quick. The popularity of MacPherson's Ossian illustrates the 'Back to simple nature' appeal (though it is a selective nature). But we must note that Scott however Romantic, never forgot the less pleasant side of the past or its people.

Scott's connection with literature began with the ballads, and in *Rokeby* he is between the ballads and the novels. A stanza epic like Spencer's or Ariosto's would be too professional for him. It is the story that interests him more than beauty of language — and in this respect we may remember that English was in some degree a learned language for him; the Edinburgh society of his childhood and wholly at Sandyknowe, spoke Scots, though religion used English. With Scott's interest in action the story is very much in a man's world; women are to be wooed, won or rescued if possible. The verse and speed of narration do not permit the close study of character, and the giving of character to the lower social order is just beginning in the role of Edmund, who moves from the evil ways of his fellow broken men and tries to gain time for Matilda's

rescue. To bring all ranks of society, i.e. including the lower, into the story with action and character demanded prose, if it was not to be done in the drama. But the drama, depending on sight, lacks the permanence of pageantry and description. Scott's successors are still apt e.g. Thackeray in *Esmond* or Sienkiewicz, to be uninterested in the servants. Before continuing on the literary side, we should think of Scott's audience and their expectations. Traditional literature was basically for entertainment in accordance with the values of society. In Scotland the church had established morality among the people, and the Wesleyan revival had produced a serious public in England. Literature was not concerned with social or political didacticism, but the appreciation helped to make a gentleman.

Essentially one has a benevolent audience emotionally cultivated rather than intellectually sophisticated, with sufficient certainties to make a generally accepted outlook on life, and without the Oedipodal resentment of previous generations and professional breastbeating of today's sophisticates that is supposed to prove independent open-mindedness and objectivity. Neither Scott nor his audience have any doubts of their values. Scott's epics are for quick reading, and matter is more important than form. In modern terms Scott is a careless, but better, a carefree writer, because he is not a pretentious one. He is not to be read as one would read Milton, but he writes for a moral audience, who did not object to moral or reflective passages — in which he is not commonplace, e.g. his comments on man's aggression at the beginning of Canto 3. Nor, unlike the modern artistic establishment who are happy to bite the hand that feeds, does Scott despise his audience, though his own sympathies lay with the landed gentry and peasants rather than the middle class who were making the prosperity of the country.

Modern theory and training has produced many impediments — and they are always more serious for the second best — to appreciating *Rokeby*, which did not exist in his day. Today verse is 'out' — verse libre is a contradiction in terms, however prestigious the jargon; how do we say Cicero's *Verrines* are not verse libre? After World War I verse and beauty became 'cissy' escapist, showing lack of courage to face 'reality' (which is really real when it is sordid or repulsive). Beauty was an assumption of art and literature in the 18th and 19th centuries; the self had not yet been exalted above moral values by existentialisms. As beauty was not the universal quality of everything, a certain unreality was expected and even

wanted — one may need to look for beauty, but not ugliness. The modern student is indoctrinated with the attack on beauty in the name of truth, producing the repulsive under which rubric proves the moral courage and integrity that go with genius. Beauty cannot be a matter of concern or interest under an education for selfishness which unlimited individualism has produced in the name of freedom. The result is that violence has been substituted for beauty. Rhyme was an added beauty to verse, and it is more necessary in the short octosyllabic to mark the line. Beauty of sound has not the place the short octosyllabic to mark the line. Beauty of sound has not the place it had in the criteria of poetry, and Scott is again at a disadvantage.

Rhyme and rhythm are attacked as hindering expression and freedom, and causing distorted grammar and word order. That they do so in the hands of the incompetent is true. But in fact most of our greatest poetical sentiments do not alter the flow of grammar or word order. The discipline of rhyme and rhythm make beauty of sound, and often help the force and clarity of expression of sentiment or emotion, just as a gorge speeds a river, and an epigram maximizes meaning. In every sphere of life the disciplined is more effective than the undisciplined, and as one of the beneficial facts of life, discipline is still a value, especially to one socially oriented as Scott was. In verse it presents certain problems already solved, though limiting the worst, it may not prevent the bad. Rokeby is not free from banalities (though I do not recollect Scott making the 'Stuffed Owl' anthology of bad verse). But the poem was to be read quickly, and the highest standard was not expected from every line. Scott was probably not more self-conscious about his verse than about his prose, where his Scots speeches give the impression of more affectionate interest in the reality.

There is no saying from how much bad poetry rhyme and rhythm may have saved us in the past, though they have been a great shield of doggerel at the street level. But they were not felt as illegitimate infringements of freedom, and in English with the loss of inflectional endings there is a great freedom and variety of rhyme possible. But since rhythm and rhyme are not normal speech, there can be no objection on principle to other artificialities of speech. Scott therefore avails himself of the fact of poetic diction and expectation which does not impede easy reading for his audience. One must remember the importance of Latin in education, and poetic diction was an assumption in Latin poetry.

Literary allusion was expected. Scott has some literary allusions (to Spenser 2/6.5 ff, 3/14.34 to *Paradise Lost* - we also have a rath(e) primrose with Milton - and there are some references to Shakespeare). There are historical allusions. But none of these are obscure, and while some readers might not know them all they are rather surface ornament, and not deeply set in the poem (unlike Milton's, whose classicisms are part of his aesthetic).

When a poetic diction is one of the facts of poetry, much that we feel stilted and insincere would not be so felt by the early reader. Poetic diction is like a modern academic jargon (except that it would be felt to have some beauty), that is supposed to speed up understanding and limit ambiguity; both may end up by bypassing thought. Most of Scott's language would be found perfectly natural - there are no elaborate conceits - the more as it would not be obnoxious to the charge of obscurity. We would cite a parallel in Wesley's hymns: their sincerity I would strongly assert as a fact, but the language does not convey this to me today, when it feels like uninspired conventional verse. But Wesley was much more than a conventional man or a commonplace mind. The phrases of polite society, the way people talked differed from those of our own time. But the avant-garde have commonly used a double standard in condemning the old diction: for Scott's verb/noun or noun/adjective inversions (easy as Latinisms) are not obscure; while Empson's or Dyland Thomas' contortions of words and grammar are frequently caliginous and meant to be 'to make the reader think'. Scott had precedent in the ballad and high class poetry, while the moderns did not, and can't make one, as theirs were all to be original. But having to be concerned with current problems or pseudo-problems, their language ages and withers with the currency; Scott did not expect the absolescence of his idiom, and in fact it was reasonably current till the First War. With the loss of classical and biblical education his language has become more distant, and he may often seem stilted and unnatural because of changes in connotation, restriction of meaning, obsolescence and infrequency of current use, together with the loss of knowledge of the classical meaning of words. Biblical English is becoming a foreign language, and in North America Wordsworth is as distant as Chaucer. This rejection of the past to give the pupil an idea of his importance is one means of currying favour - the pupil must see himself for realism - which has not done the pupil much good.

Scott uses archaisms. These probably acquired flavour with the

Romantic turn to the past, though they have always been admitted within limits to poetry. They do not have this charm in our concentration on the present and future of our experience. But Scott's archaisms have often become more archaic still with the cultural generation gap, and were often less archaic in his day because of the classical literature that was read; e.g. 'methinks' was ordinary to Shakespeare, and in 5/28.1 Matilda 'methinks'. 'Thou' was not obsolete in religion, but its obsolescence in speech (which has not reached Yorkshire) would be fairly recent. 'Maid' is another good example: to us she is a servant, but when Wordsworth in *We are Seven* addressed a little maid, he is not thinking of her as a servant, or even as a virgin which one might in those days excusably take for granted. Maid was originally the ordinary word for an unmarried female above infancy (though such a creature in mediaeval times over 20 unless a nun would have been incredible). 'Rokeby's maid', or Wilfred's 'Dear Maid' would cause no comment, though we could not use them now. So in 2/11.1 'village swains' are quite acceptable, though today a girl's swain is not taken seriously, or there is an undertone of contempt. Originally we would have had the village teenagers, young working peasants. 'Brand' is more archaic since its original meaning sword (cf the names Hildebrand, Gudbrand) has gone out of use — swords were no longer an article of common dress. The phrase 'the honoured tomb' is not mere padding of the verse; in the familial society the nobility did respect (and the peasantry might fear) the tombs of their ancestors, even if we now vandalize graveyards. But the truth is that when we jump in our education from Shakespeare (only permitted because of his connection with the stage, which is a good platform for narcissism and since Shaw, propaganda) to Att-Mailer and Irving Layton, we do not help the young generation to appreciate the past or other peoples and cultures, nor motivate them to do so.

Scott then uses archaisms, which can contribute to atmosphere; many he owing to his familiarity with the ballads may not have seemed so; but there is very little of the ballad language in *Rokeby* — it may be useful for a rhyme. But the ballads are not in our English curricula, and poetry is not popular reading matter for the youth, so that the old poetic diction is fully strange. With the hedonistic and therefore anti-intellectual cast of our society that has flourished since the de-bacle of World War I, for all the money spent on education we are producing illiterates, as deplored by our Universities; but Scott did not expect his public to be illiterate; his

Scottish public knew their Bible and were widely literate. And he did not believe in writing down to children or adults.

Scott uses pretty well the current vocabulary of his day, much as Wordsworth does despite his theory; but he does not use slang — the morality of literature precludes the ugly, and the Byronic has not yet appeared. There are only traces of ballad influence; events do not take place by the wan water, or on the brown bent of the brae. And there is nothing of their repetition, or grim irony, or terseness or the bare and to-the-point conversations of the ballads. We do near the ballad in 3/16-8 in Brignall Banks, which is a powerful poem. In 5/27 Darrell begins well but tails off, and is not so capably inserted. But 'Disastrous news' and 'assumed despondence' of 1/14.1-2, however appropriate and unpoetic or not, are current, not ballad speech.

So much for the disadvantages under which Rokeby labours today. It sold well, but there were clear indications of less enthusiasm: the work was not equal to its three predecessors. The ease of Scott's verse had been one of its charms. Epics had been slow and solemn, though Homer and Ariosto could permit humour (which is not to be found in Latin, or therefore Milton), and they were expected to be long. Rokeby's 5000 about lines are not half the length of the *Odyssey*, and the octosyllabic line chosen makes speed, and its rhyme helps the speed as it were marking the distance passed. The heroic decasyllabic cannot be read quickly owing to the way it breaks unevenly, and the longer interval of its couplet rhyme slows it. Other technicalities speed the narration; the avoidance of involved metaphors or complicated similes (for which the decasyllabic has time), the stock epithet, which acts as a signpost, but does not involve thought every time, just as in driving a car one does not want to have to think about avoiding potholes all the time. The octosyllabic is not a self-conscious line, but it has a respectable ancestry in English, going back to Chaucer's *Roman de la Rose*.

Scott seems to have been thinking of an English audience — there is a bow to Robin Hood in 5/12.5-6 where Redmond is in the greenwood in hunter's green — and is doing in verse what he later does in the English novels. *Ivanhoe*, *Kenilworth*, *Woodstock*. The story has nothing to do with Scotland, and could have no appeal there except for itself. Yorkshire had not part in border warfare. Scott has a complete freedom from national prejudice, which never diminished his patriotism, Scottish and British — Ireland receives

acknowledgement in Redmond as compliment to the recent union of Parliaments.

Where did Rokeby fail in comparison with its predecessors? I suggest the chief reason is the monotony of metre and rhyme. The natural variation of the octosyllabic is the hexasyllabic, which ending a sentence will also give a rest after a series of the other. There are none in Rokeby. The easy split of 8 into 4 + 4 helps the speed but limits the variety. Thus in Canto 5/2 we have caesura after the 4th syllable in 14 lines, after the 5th in 12; but if we divide by accent the division is 2 + 2 25 times, 1 + 3 once. 1/13 has 12 caesuras after the 4th, 11 after the 5th syllable; but by accent the division is 27 of 2 + 2, 4 of 1 + 3, 1 of 3 + 1. For 6/32 caesura 4th: 5th is 19:11, but of accent 26 times 2 + 2, 3 of 1 + 3, 1 of 3 + 1. For 6/32 caesura 4th : 5th is 19 : 11, but of accent 26 times 2 + 2, 3 of 1 + 3, 1 of 3 + 1. There is clearly a monotony of rhythm that is not much relieved by the position of the 1st accent of the line; in 5/2 3 on 1st syllable, 23 on the 2nd, and in 6/32 the figure is 3 against 29. The 4th is always accented. The iambic is invariable except in the first two syllables; there are never two syllables between accents, 2, 3, 4.

The monotony is further emphasized by the invariable couplets; there is no alternate rhyme, abab, or unrhymed line, and there are not 6 triplets in 6 cantos. There is virtually no enjambement of couplets; I have found 5, 4 of them close together, with stop at the 4th syllable. Within couplets I found 12 with stop at the 4th syllable, 16 with stop elsewhere. In the previous poems, and in the Lord of the Isles there is more versatility. Scott seems to have been aware of the monotony, for he inserts several songs, not alas, particularly good ones except for Brignall Banks, especially in the 5th canto. The irregularities of ballad rhythm are not permitted.

There are some inexact rhymes, but some were still exact or within living memory, or still so in Scots, as love/prove, blood/good, evil devil *Scots are still deevils. Said is only once rhymed with fled, always elsewhere with maid, etc., and similarly again only once pronounced agen (and so written) in a refrain. Quantity is ignored in rhyme, e.g. we have good/pursued, deed/agreed. Scott avails himself of English liberties as heaven/given. Change/revenge is certainly false rhyme, but I cannot be so sure of sword/afford, sworn/borne. The -y suffix, e.g.

courtesy conventionally rhymes with be, twice eye (-ly eye, die/infamy). Beyond the -y suffix we have 10 cases where an unaccented syllable rhymes with an accented (e.g. game, tame/Risingham(e), but it gets a secondary accent. I find only 2 cases of clear trochaic rhyme, (evil/devil and the final trochaic couplet of the envoi), but there are 8 instances of given/heaven/dri-ven/even/riven, but they were not necessarily felt as dissyllabic; power/lower/bower/shower/tower are not, as some rhyme with hour: i.e. hardly 20 lines out of 5000 have trochaic ending. Scott was certainly not going to be stumped for a rhyme, and spelling may get him out but there are bad rhymes, as love/wove, far/war, forth/worth/north, earls/Charles; twined/wind is doubtless a higher class convention. I have used modern pronunciation for bad rhyme, but pointed out the uncertainties of this. On my definition they come about 1 couplet in 8 or 9. Of 34 different in Canto 1 I find only 9 used more than once, and 7 of 28 in Canto 4. Scott never seems to have to search for a rhyme, and he controls his metre with ease, perhaps too much ease. Whatever his insight into human psychology, he was by nature an extrovert and conceived himself primarily as a (cultured) gentleman, only secondarily as a professional author; he is in fact an amateur, and could never have taken himself so seriously as to correct like Flaubert. The story is the important thing, and he means to get on with it. The speed of narration helps to hide the monotony, while the heroic decasyllabic couplet would have reduced the speed without greatly reducing the monotony.

We may now make some remarks on the story. It is more dramatic and with a longer suspense than the other lays: 54 lines after Wilfred's death Oswald is killed, 36 more and Bertram is dead and dismissed; in 20 Mortham comes and recognizes his son and total peace and reward is restored in a final 20 lines; 130 lines out of 5000 finish everything; 4 lines envoi added. Almost all stories of romance need some improbabilities and coincidence, just as real life has some. The former are acceptable as making an artistic or purposeful pattern which those of life generally don't. Scott weaves in his strands e.g. the histories of Mortham and Redmond and their communication to unintended quarters very well. We might note the old Celtic trait of the importance of birth and the family; even Dickens had people discovering brothers or sisters, which would be uninteresting to today's siblings unless there was money to divide. Society was satisfactorily stratified; and it should be remembered that accepting the common belief of his and certainly his father's

generation Scott had more sympathy with and understanding of the poor than hosts of democrats: the class was not yet organized, so that it was possible to see good in all strata of society and the good remained moral.

Violence is still in male nature to be expressed if not sublimated, and guns are safer for the cowardly — unisex permits girls to share in the fun. It is easier to sublimate violence at a distance, and while Scott did not live in a pacifist age, the internal peace of society softened the reality of the past. Narration mutes violence — consider how visual presentation of films and TV has propagandized for it. Verse further dilutes it; form and art allows it as a visitor to literature.

A story of any length needs some diversion: in Rokeby we have two kinds, the moralizing passages and the description of nature (both vestigial in the ballads). Landscape had won its place in painting, and could therefore now be described in literature. An English traveller passing from Carlisle to Edinburgh about 1760 could note the pleasing pastoral hills of the Borders, but there were 'some ugly crags' near Moffat. Such crags were romantic landscape by 1800 and are often exaggerated in the paintings of the day, e.g. Thomson of Duddingston or later Turner. The rough and savage aspects of nature are receiving appreciation, having imposed on them the natural passions of the noble savage, Romantic youth. Remote mountain glens or bare moors are not cursed with human civilization or economic realities. And today the great charm of such places is that they offer urbanized man escape from economic and political tensions. Rokeby is full of such descriptions — the pastoral swains have disappeared with their shepherdesses, and Bo Peep has been fired — and the novelty of the appreciation of the wilder aspects (no longer the hideouts of robbers), which goes with the desire for emotional emancipation from the artificiality of society, would leave some exaggeration less felt than in our photographic culture. Canto 2/1-3 gives 70 lines and 2/6-9 99 of description of scenery. Such passages are there to give rest before further emotional or intellectual tension. Scott's picture of nature is somewhat heightened, partly for what he thought historical accuracy: there would probably have been fewer and less impressive trees (though scrub trees common enough by the waterside), for the northern hills had been much deforested. The word Forest would connote trees by his time, but it was originally the uncultivated/unimproved land. Peaks are not common in the

Pennines, and gorges of small streams moderate, though they may dwarf man, who has been reduced in Nature by Newton.

Scott seems to owe nothing to Wordsworth in speech or view of nature. They are at opposite poles of Romanticism, and Wordsworth seems to come into his life when he was essentially formed. Wordsworth's perception of the possible interest of ordinary things, people or events is profoundly original, but also far more intellectual than Scott's; Scott was far more sociable, and his interest in the poor and people and their characters is far more personal, and his originality different. He only has full freedom for this in prose, for octosyllabic couplets certainly cripple reproduction of speech. The matter of what would be said is there, and the character may be inferred, but not being individualized is hardly felt. A good example is in 5/8, Shall the door be opened to Edmund?; 5/14, Redmond's benevolence, or 5/15 Matilda's remonstrance are not very successful speeches, though 'Noble Wilfred' is good Shakespearean civility. The stronger characters speak better, e.g. Bertram in 1/15, 1/23. There is not enough clash of speech to make the characters vivid — they are condemned to much the same idiom though they are different — and a good deal therefore has to be put into description, e.g. 1/9 Bertram, 1/24 Wilfred. This is not the best way of story-telling, but there was nothing wrong with the abstracts involved in Scott's time, nor to Kant, whose influence was by now widespread. Spiritual description was not by definition worse than physical or material, and description makes metaphors less necessary. Metaphor connects the object with the outside world, giving it wider significance.

This brings us to the moralistic passages, which offend the modern hatred of morality, which is justified philosophically (sic!) by materialist nominalism, since abstracts are meaningless as not sensually verifiable, and moral or spiritual abstracts brainwash the innocent by value judgement; transferred to literature this meant that only the concrete, not the abstract was poetically permissible. But in fact there are abstract realities as well as concrete, moral/mental generalities as well as physical/scientific, and Scott's generation was well aware of them. Poetry cannot exclude any save what are contradictory to its own nature. Nor is poetry itself a concrete experience of fact. The expulsion of judgement also dehumanizes, and in academic circles we have known 'We found ...' rejected for 'It was found ...' as introducing the personal element makes the result unscientific. In fact some of the greatest statements

of poetry have always been moral, abstract and general. Modern theory of the necessity of the concrete has made no attempt to fit the facts. Scott's moralizings are more than commonplace, and can be still relevant, e.g. 3/1, 6/31.16-7, or the powerful last verse of Brignall Banks, 3/18.5-8. Moralizing was perfectly acceptable in Scott's time, because sin and guilt had not been abolished by scientific psychology; people realized they had or could have faults, while egalitarian humanist man has to deny this, being perfect; he cannot admit a superior, hence his hatred of morality as e-litist. There is often good sense in Scott's moralizing passages, e.g. 1/31, where Scott is warning us that his hero Wilfred does not meet his whole-hearted approval, and with such comments Scott rests his reader on familiar but not uninteresting ground.

Finally a word on the characters. As in the novels Scott continually redeems his people somewhat: e.g. Wilfred, who in my school slang would have been called a thorough wet, though impractical is spurred to courage. As Goethe put his failings he rather liked into Werther, so Scott does his into Wilfred, whose spiritual ancestry includes Mackenzie's Man of Feeling, and whose descendent is Shelley's Alastor. Edmund and even Bertram are not impervious to better thoughts, and even Oswald who has almost nothing to redeem him, behaved like a politician for a cause (his family — he would not have said himself. Wilfred, who, it must be confessed, dies in bathos in 6/30, and Redmond, his attractive foil, prefigure Morton and Evandale in *Old Mortality*; good characters can be on both sides and in all ranks of society — the self-centered Romantic tends to paint in black and white. The Romantic world tends to be a male one — as it still is to Sienkiewicz — and the admirable damsel is the reward of male virtue and morality. But males have to be more adventurous, as nature has to kill them off more. Matilda remains colourless, however necessary to the plot, and speaking in rhyme does not help. But in a male world women like children are to be seen, not heard, and the well-bred young lady of quality had a very disciplined upbringing, toward the self-effacement of marriage and motherhood, when her character could blossom. Incidentally, Scott is not very imaginative with personal names; but it could be interesting to follow fashions of euphony; there were probably very few Matildas in the 16th-18th centuries. And women as beautiful creatures deserve more euphonious names than males. I doubt if a Wilfred could have been found in Scotland, but one was a good bishop of York.

We may seem to have said more against Rokeby than for it; criticism always sounds more. But we have also been pointing out or suggesting the disadvantages it has in the current world; it is no use trying to read past poetry with modern prejudices, even though something may always get through them. Beauty and bathos are close together as in Wordsworth, and some has become more bathetic since it was written. The great majority of the verse is adequate; highlights are few in any poem, and the great skill is to maintain a level. Scott did not expect his readers to come with preconceived demands, least of all revolutionary. *Tabula rasa* is still the scientific approach to poetry, and when it has made its own impression, we can judge. Scott rather appreciated than craved popularity, and was willing to accept a public verdict.

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