

WALTER SCOTT - A FOUNDER OF A GENRE OF A HISTORICAL NOVEL IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ANNOTATION

This chapter delves into Walter Scott's influence on the historical novel genre. Scott transformed the novel into a contemporary epic by infusing it with national themes, achieved through its historical elements. This approach lent the novel a sense of scholarly significance associated with history, particularly in Scotland during the Enlightenment era. Throughout the nineteenth century, the historical novel became the predominant form of the genre, maintaining its popularity and prestige long after Victorian writers adopted Scott's techniques. Scott's fusion of history and Bildungsroman, as seen in "Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since" (1814), served as a model for aspiring national literatures across Europe, its imperial borders, and colonial territories well into the following century.

Key words: Novels, Scottish Borders, Poetry, Literary influence, Tourism, Financial crisis

INTRODUCTION

Sir Walter Scott (1771 – 1832) is renowned as one of Scotland's most celebrated figures. During his lifetime, he achieved unprecedented international success as the first bestselling author and his novels continue to be widely read in numerous translations worldwide. In Edinburgh, his influence is pervasive, evident in landmarks like the towering Scott Monument and the unique distinction of Edinburgh Waverley as the only train station named after a book. Scott's advocacy for Scottish banknotes is commemorated by his presence on Bank of Scotland currency to this day. Though born in Edinburgh, Scott's formative years were spent in the Scottish Borders, where he developed a deep interest in the region's songs and folklore. Initially gaining fame as a poet with works like "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," "Marmion," and "The Lady of the Lake," Scott shifted to novel writing in response to the rising popularity of his rival, Byron. Despite initial anonymity, his

debut novel, "Waverley," published in 1814, became a sensation, selling out its first print run within days. This marked the beginning of a prolific period in which he produced 27 novels, including classics such as "Ivanhoe," "Rob Roy," and "The Heart of Midlothian." With "Waverley," Scott is credited with pioneering the historical novel genre by blending fictional characters with real historical events, notably the Jacobite Rebellion. This innovative approach not only garnered immediate acclaim but also elevated the status of novel reading, contributing to the emergence of the modern novel in the Western world. His influence extended to subsequent literary giants such as Balzac, Tolstoy, Dickens, and Verne. The Walter Scott Prize, named after his novel "Waverley," adopts its time setting rule from the subtitle, requiring nominated books to be set at least 60 years in the past.

Scott ignited a fervor for Scottish culture that swept across Europe and America. During the Napoleonic Wars, when British travelers couldn't embark on the traditional European 'Grand Tour,' Scott's poems and novels attracted them to the Highlands in large numbers, arguably kickstarting Scotland's modern tourism industry. Scott orchestrated King George IV's landmark visit to Scotland, the first by a reigning monarch in over 150 years, with elaborate pomp and ceremony. This event also saw the revival of tartan attire, previously banned after the 1745 rebellion, now mandated even for the King. Despite his numerous triumphs, Scott faced a severe financial crisis in 1826 when the printing and publishing firms responsible for his works collapsed. Determined to clear his debts, Scott committed himself to an intense writing regimen despite declining health, vowing not to burden any friends with his financial troubles. Sir Walter Scott had close ties to the Dukes of Buccleuch, dedicating his first major success, "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," to Henry, the 3rd Duke, and maintaining friendships with Charles, the 4th Duke, and Walter Francis, the 5th Duke, whom he also mentored. Scott frequently visited Bowhill, the Buccleuch family residence in the Scottish Borders, where a dedicated room now holds significant artifacts, including the renowned portrait by Sir Henry Raeburn depicting Scott in his youth. Today, the Duke continues the legacy by supporting the Abbotsford Trust, which oversaw the restoration of Scott's Scottish Baronial home and the construction of a celebrated heritage center. In honor of his literary contributions, the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction participated in the festivities commemorating the 250th anniversary of Scott's birth in 2021.

In 1828, the esteemed German writer Goethe lauded Sir Walter Scott's novel "Waverley" as one of the finest works ever created, a remarkable commendation from such a renowned European literary figure. This endorsement underscored the significant impact of the Scottish author's influence on European culture. Born in 1771, Sir Walter Scott pursued legal studies at Edinburgh University, following his father's footsteps into the legal profession. He served as a Clerk in Edinburgh's Court

of Session, the senior civil court in Scotland. Scott's literary journey began in the early 19th century with poetry, notably works like "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," "Marmion," and "The Lady of the Lake," which enjoyed widespread popularity and established him as a prominent literary figure. These poetic compositions were informed by Scott's profound understanding of the Scottish Borders and its inhabitants. Similarly, in his later novels, Scott's vivid portrayal of landscapes and romanticized depictions of their magnificence attracted numerous visitors from across Britain eager to experience the settings he vividly described.

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