

## Towards the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry

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In 1807 Scott was given an advance of one thousand guineas for *Marmion*, an unprecedented sum of money for any poem; in 1810 the publication of *The Lady of the Lake* was the media event of the year and at least six editions (over 25,000 copies) were sold in the first year.<sup>1</sup> As Nicola Watson has demonstrated, the poem caused a wave of tourists to visit the region in which it is set.<sup>2</sup> In fact, readers could not get enough of Scott's poetry and his dazzling success in the field culminated in 1813 when he was offered, but declined, the poet laureateship. However, in spite of Scott's significance in the early nineteenth century his role in shaping our constructions of Romanticism has been occluded; Scott is only given passing reference in accounts of Romantic poetry, until recently there has been very little critical work on his poems and Scott's work seldom appears in anthologies of Romantic verse.

But why has Scott's poetry been so eclipsed? This question can, of course, only be speculated upon. Scott's own, typically self-effacing position was that the emergence of

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<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the publishing history of the poem see William B. Todd and Ann Bowden, *Sir Walter Scott: A Bibliographical History 1796 – 1832* (Newcastle DE, 1998).

Editions were being produced so rapidly between May and November of 1810 that sheets were being recycled from one to the other but there are at least six genuine new editions.

<sup>2</sup> See Nicola J. Watson, 'Holiday romances; or, 'Loch Katrine and the literary tourist'' in *Literary Tourism: The Trossachs and Walter Scott*, ed. By Ian Brown (Glasgow, 2012), pp. 56 – 69.

Byron as a major (and arguably darker and sexier) poet caused him to abandon his poetic endeavours and turn to writing fiction instead. However, while this provides a neat narrative of Scott's writing career it does not really match with the actual circumstances of it. While what we now consider to be Scott's major poetic achievements *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake* were all published before the appearance of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage Canto 1* in 1812 Scott was to write several more significant narrative poems after this date, such as *Rokeby* (1813) and *The Lord of the Isles* (1815). Work on the volume of *Shorter Poems* for the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry is demonstrating that Scott also wrote short and occasional verse throughout his life, and of course, as the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels has shown via its annotations, Scott wrote much original poetry within his fiction both in the form of mottos and to represent the (sometimes not very laudable) poetic aspirations of his characters.<sup>3</sup> If then, the idea that Scott simply gave up writing verse in the face of Byron's emergence as the great poet of the day does not hold water are there other reasons why Scott's poetry has been so woefully neglected?

In fact, many of circumstances have probably contributed to this situation. One simple response is, of course, that there is now very little appetite for reading any narrative verse, the genre on which Scott's reputation was built. However, while this may account for a general lack of readership for Scott's poetry it does not wholly justify its critical neglect. A second reason may lie in Scott's astounding success as a novelist. The neat narrative which suggests that Scott abandoned verse in order to turn, albeit anonymously, to fiction leads to a belief that his poetry was eclipsed by his fiction or that it is only of interest as a prelude to it.

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<sup>3</sup> The Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels, ed. by David Hewitt and others, 30 Vols (Edinburgh, 1993 – 2012).

While there is much interesting work to be done on the connections between Scott's poetry and his fiction, particularly in areas such as the ways in which he hones his narrative technique or in the methods by which he employs, exploits and presents his source material, it is a mistake to see the poetry only in this way and to do so overlooks both its enormous popularity and its critical success both at the point of its publication and well into the nineteenth century. Herein, perhaps, lies a third reason for its demise; so popular was Scott's work that generations of readers were force fed both his fiction and his poetry; while the claim that no-one reads Scott is often repeated it is not unusual to encounter a generation who can still recite significant passages from his poems, even if they do not know that Scott is the author. Such encounters with poetry are not always the best way to endear readers to it, and the often easy recitation of Scott's verse (something which the rhythms and meter can lend itself to, the often recited 'Young Lochinvar' being an excellent example) does not encourage careful reading or, indeed, the kind of reading that notes the nuance and complexity which is at play within it.

The overarching reason for the neglect of his poetry, however, probably lies in the general demise of interest in Scott in the twentieth century. This has been well documented in recent criticism but it is certainly fair to say that if a Modernist aesthetic that valued surface complexity, concision and the exact placing of every word above narrative coherence, storytelling and expansive prose did not lend itself to appreciation of Scott's fiction, it was even more antithetical to his poetry. Within the aesthetics of Modernist poetry Scott very rapidly came to look old fashioned and an 'easy' approach to reading it encouraged by generations of teaching it to school children did not lend itself to looking beyond its apparent surface simplicity to its greater complexities. If we want to look for a more practical reason why Scott's poetry has been neglected, however, we can find it in the fact that there is no good modern edition in which we might encounter it; Lockhart's 1834 'Magnum' edition is, as will

be discussed later, inadequate for several reasons, and J. Logie Robertson's Oxford edition, published in 1904, is incomplete, at times flawed, and presents Scott's poetry to readers in a cramped and discouraging form, offering none of the support that a modern readership requires.<sup>4</sup>

A new critical edition of Scott's poetry therefore seems timely but before discussing what this will involve and how it might change our perspective on Scott's poetry, it is probably worth offering some brief thoughts on why we should be reading it at all. First and foremost, Scott clearly played a major role in how Romanticism developed and to overlook his poetry is to experience a version of it that is skewed in very particular and ahistorical ways. Such questions aside, however, a re-visiting of Scott's poetry also uncovers a far more intellectually challenging body of work than has hitherto been recognized by criticism. Such a re-evaluation of Scott more generally has, of course, been underway for the past thirty years, and our understanding of him as a novelist and of the nuances with which he approaches narrative has been transformed. Recent approaches recognize the subtlety with which he engages with questions of history, national identity, and larger questions of societal formation and individual and collective responsibility as well as the ways in which he engages with and often enhances the literary trends of his day. As a consequence they have uncovered a far more relevant and interesting Scott than that bequeathed to us by earlier critical history.<sup>5</sup> However, with some notable exceptions, Scott's poetry has not been subject

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<sup>4</sup> *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, ed. by J.G. Lockhart 12 vols (Edinburgh, 1833-4) and *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by J. Logie Robertson (London, 1904).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, work by Penny Fielding, Ian Duncan, Catherine Jones, Ina Ferris, Fiona Robertson and Caroline McCracken-Flesher.

to a similar re-assessment.<sup>6</sup> Yet for contemporary critics of his work, it was precisely its complexity that was most stimulating. As has been discussed elsewhere, it was the generic innovation of Scott's poetry that most struck early readers; Scott himself claims that he 'scorns pedantic laws of verse' and while this was at times perplexing for critics, it also prompted a recognition that something new and radical was at work within his poetry.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Scott was one of the most experimental poets of his day. As Ainsley McIntosh demonstrates, a poem such as *Marmion* was also politically controversial, and indeed, Scott uses his poems, just as he was later to employ his fiction, to engage with the social, political and societal problems of his time, to deal with questions such as the relationship between crown and state, the role of the nation state within larger political units, the nature of heroism within the contexts of modernity, and issues of gender inequality.<sup>8</sup> Such readings of his

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<sup>6</sup> These exceptions include the volumes by J. H. Alexander cited later, Nancy Moore Goslee *Scott the Rhymers* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), Andrew Lincoln, *Walter Scott and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) and Susan Oliver, *Scott, Byron, and the Poetics of Cultural Encounter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Walter Scott, 'Introduction to Canto 5', *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1805). J. H. Alexander notes that 'We have still no agreed title to designate the genre to which Scott's longer poems belong'. See *Two Studies in Romantic Reviewing: Edinburgh Reviewers and the English Tradition: The Reviewing of Walter Scott's Poetry 1805 – 1817*, 2 vols (Romantic Reassessment 49, Salzburg, 1976), II, p. 245. Francis Jeffrey famously describes *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* as 'such a romance as we may suppose would have been written in modern times', in the *Edinburgh Review* 6 (April, 1805), 1-2).

<sup>8</sup> See Ainsley McIntosh, *Marmion; A Tale of Flodden Field A Critical Edition* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Aberdeen, 2009).

poetry, however, have been largely overlooked. One step towards redressing this situation, I suggest, lies with producing a good scholarly edition. While critical editions on their own cannot, of course, fully recover the critical reputation of literary figures they are an important step along the way. The critical reputation of Scott's fiction may have been recuperated by the criticism produced in the past thirty years but the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels has also been instrumental and at times has helped to facilitate such criticism. It is hoped that a companion edition of Scott's poetry will do much to prompt a similar re-evaluation of it and, more importantly, recapture something of the excitement that Scott's 'boundary breaking' poetry prompted when it was first published. Over the past six years a team led by the University of Aberdeen has been working to develop such an edition and the first volumes of the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry (hereafter EEWSP) are about to be published by Edinburgh University Press. The remainder of this paper will explore what this edition will involve and the methodological questions that have had to be addressed to 're-purpose' Scott's poetry for twenty-first century readers.

One of the first questions that had to be addressed was the scope of the edition. While the body of Scott's fiction is fairly clearly defined the poetry is more problematic. Several models presented themselves, however. The first lies in following Lockhart's 1834 *Poetical Works* edition. However, this immediately raises questions; volumes 1 – 5 of that edition are comprised of edited works such as *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and *Sir Tristram* and very early in its discussions the EEWSP team decided that this material lay outwith the scope of the edition; editing ballad material involves its own particular skills and a project is currently underway under the directorship of Sigrid Rieuwerts at the University of Mainz. Lockhart also includes Scott's early translations from the German and Scott's drama — *MacDuff's Cross* and *The House of Aspen*, for example — and whether to include these offered another point for discussion. A second model is offered by J. Logie Robertson's

Oxford edition of 1904, which does not include *Minstrelsy* but does include Scott's original contributions to it. It also expands upon Lockhart's body of miscellaneous and shorter poems, although sources for some of these are not always given. More controversially, it also incorporates the poetry from the Waverley Novels. After much discussion it has been agreed that the EEWSP will include, as would be expected, the narrative poems and all the shorter and lyric poems that appear in Lockhart's edition. Several new shorter poems have come to light in the course of editing and these too will be included, thus significantly expanding Scott's body of work and our understanding of him. The edition will not include the work collected by Scott for *Minstrelsy* or in other of Scott's edited works, but Scott's original contributions will be represented. Scott's verse drama will appear on the basis that it has traditionally formed part of what has been regarded as the body of his poetic output; while there may be little appetite for verse drama at the moment including it in the edition will hopefully facilitate scholarship on it, and more importantly, allows for a full representation of Scott's oeuvre. Whether to include the incidental original poetry in the Waverley Novels and other works was also debated among the team. Historically it formed part of Scott's poetic canon before Logie Robertson's edition and Scott himself sanctioned its separate collection and publication by Constable. On 9 March 1822 Constable wrote to Scott stating:

I must now come to the concluding object of the present [letter] — which is to ask your approbation of a publication, of which I now take the liberty of sending you a specimen, *The Poetry of the Novels, Tales, and Romances of the Author of Waverley* — which abound with so many beautiful fragments and pieces of poetry, and of which I propose printing a small impression, something on the plan of the enclosed, which contains the poetry of the first volume of *Waverley*. Preparing the copy for the press would be a delightful amusement to me, and I shall take care that the whole be accurately printed. If there should be a demand for

the work in this collected form, which I flatter myself there would be, the future editions would of course be printed in Edinburgh.<sup>9</sup>

Scott was happy with this arrangement and replies on March 23<sup>rd</sup>:

Though I have time but for a brief letter, I do not put off much time in assuring you that you have my entire approbation, were that of any consequence, in the publication you intend to form from the prose vols. It is odd to say, but nevertheless it is quite certain, that I do not know whether some of the things are original or not, and I wish you would devise some way of stating this in the title. 'The Author of Waverley, finding it inconvenient to look over books for a motto, generally made one without much scrupling whether it was positively and absolutely his own, or botched up out of pieces and fragments of poetry floating in his memory;' but that would have an awkward effect if he were supposed to found merit on them as original.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of Scott's endorsement, however, there are risks in reproducing this material in a modern edition. Leaving aside Scott's very valid observation that we cannot always be sure which of the poems he has actually written, some of Scott's characters who consider themselves to be poets are woefully bad (Waverley himself or Frank Osbaldistone, for example) and taken out of context such material may seem strange. More practically this material has, of course, already been edited by the EEWN team and the virtue of reproducing it had to be considered. On balance, however, it was agreed that such material should appear.

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<sup>9</sup> Letter from Constable to Scott, 9 March 1822 printed in *Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondents*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1873) III, pp. 205-6.

<sup>10</sup> Scott to Constable dd. 23 March, 1822, in *Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondents*, III. Pp. 206-7.

Even since the publication of EEWN resources such as ECCO (which Scott himself would clearly have been grateful for) have allowed us to identify the sources for some of the poetry attributed to Scott in the novels and it was agreed that with careful contextualisation no disservice would be done to Scott's poetic reputation by reproducing some of his characters' bad verse in the edition.<sup>11</sup>

A final area for discussion focused upon Scott's own essays on poetry, published as the 1830 Introductions to *Poetical Works* and in the 1833 edition.<sup>12</sup> While it is not true to say that Scott never provides us with a theory of fiction, for much of this can, in fact, be found embedded within the novels themselves, particularly in the introductory chapters, and, indeed, in his essays on and reviews of other authors, nowhere does he provide so comprehensive and extensive an account of it as he does in these essays on poetry. It was therefore decided that they should be made more readily available. The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry will, therefore, consist of ten volumes: 1. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, 2. *Marmion*, 3. *The Lady of the Lake*, 4. *Rokeby*, 5. *The Vision of Don Roderick*, *The Bridal of Triermain*, *The Field of Waterloo* and *Harold the Dauntless*, 6. *The Lord of the Isles*, 7. *Shorter Poems*, 8. *Poetry from the Waverley Novels and Other Works*, 9. *Verse Dramas*, 10. *Scott's Reflections on Poetry*.

Having determined what was to appear in the edition, the next step for the team was to agree upon a methodology for editing it. Establishing a base text is arguably the most theorized aspect of textual editing and certainly an exploration of the options available is one

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<sup>11</sup> A database of addenda and corrigenda is being compiled and will be located on the web site of the University of Aberdeen's Walter Scott Research Centre.

<sup>12</sup> *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 11 vols (Edinburgh 1830) and *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, ed. by J. G. Lockhart 12 vols (Edinburgh, 1833-4)

of the crucial steps in the editing process. Ostensibly Scott presents fewer problems than other Romantic poets; because he predominantly writes long narrative poems rather than lyrics he does not constantly engage in acts of major recasting. While there are some exceptions in his shorter poems we generally do not have variations of Scott's poems as we do, for example, in the case of Coleridge; Scott's poems do not become alternative texts as he engages with them. However, less visible complexities arise in the transmission of his work in part caused by its unprecedented popularity. As a consequence of this his work goes through many editions very rapidly; as noted above, 6 editions of *The Lady of the Lake* were published between May and November of 1810, and over 25,000 copies sold. Moreover, there are numerous collected editions of the poems published in Scott's lifetime culminating in J. G. Lockhart's Magnum edition of 1834 (published just after Scott's death). These texts do not remain stable, but evolve and change in subtle ways from one edition to the next. In such circumstances the choice of a base text is complex and the principles for intervening in it to produce a scholarly edition more complex still.

The process of editing the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverly Novels has, of course, given us a very clear understanding of how Scott's fiction made its way from manuscript to print and how the texts evolved over the many editions published in Scott's lifetime. While much useful information was inherited by the poetry team we could not to assume that the conditions under which the poetry came into being were necessarily the same. Most crucially, while the novels were published anonymously, the poetry was published openly by Walter Scott. In addition, when Scott first started to write poetry he was a much younger and less influential figure, presumably with less control over his work than when the 'Waverley Machine' had revved into full gear. Our first task, therefore, was to discover the processes by which a Scott poem as opposed to a Scott novel made its way from manuscript into print and what happened to it as it rapidly went through those many early editions. Only by this process

could we fully understand the options available to us for the edition and the nature of the emendation that would have to be undertaken in order to produce robust and reliable texts.

The first investigations into this question were undertaken by Ainsley McIntosh who, for her Aberdeen doctoral thesis, explored a model for a scholarly edition of Scott's second narrative poem *Marmion*.<sup>13</sup> The primary aims of McIntosh's investigation were to determine what would constitute an authoritative base text and to ascertain the ways in which it should be emended in order to produce a scholarly edition for the twenty-first century. Her methodology involved the collation of all relevant textual witnesses and the examination of the poem's publishing history. Traditional editorial theory would suggest that there are normally several contenders for base text in any critical edition; the manuscript, and the first and the last editions to appear in the author's lifetime. The manuscript, as with Scott's fiction, could be easily dismissed since Scott wrote in the knowledge that his holograph text was part of an evolving creative process; punctuation, for example, is often added in print. In the case of Scott's poetry the 1833-34 *Poetical Works* edited by J. G. Lockhart and appearing just after Scott's death offered the model for *Marmion*'s latest appearance in print. However, it quickly transpired that as a base text for a new edition it is problematic. There is no evidence to suggest that Scott was artistically engaged in the production of this edition and while Lockhart makes reference to the existence of an interleaved set of the poetry similar to that used in the preparation of the Magnum edition of the novels, he makes only one emendation to his edition of *Marmion* as a result of it.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, while he records 214 variant readings from the manuscript in footnotes to the text, he does not use any of these to emend the text. Their inclusion gives no indication of their textual relevance or relationship to the

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<sup>13</sup> McIntosh, 'Marmion; A Tale of Flodden Field A Critical Edition'.

<sup>14</sup> For a full discussion of this see McIntosh, p. 70.

composition or transmission of the text, thus rendering his text highly problematic as the basis of a modern edition. Lockhart's approach to annotation also compounds the inadequacy of his edition as the basis for a scholarly edition. While Scott makes a clear distinction between end notes and what he calls 'glossarial' notes at the foot of the page Lockhart muddles this distinction and even adds his own observations about the poem and its reception amongst the annotation material.<sup>15</sup>

Lockhart's final edition was therefore inappropriate. Another option clearly lay with the first edition. While the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels never explicitly stated that the first editions of Scott's novels should form the base text for their new edition, arguing instead that this should be the first fully articulated version of the work, in nearly every case it was the first edition that was chosen, since there is very little evidence that Scott intervened in the texts of his novels between the first editions and the late Magnum project. McIntosh presumed that this model might be applicable to *Marmion*. However, a very different picture emerged from collation of the relevant textual witnesses and investigation of Scott's correspondence. Indeed, the lack of anonymity surrounding the production of *Marmion* led to what McIntosh, taking the lead from Jerome McGann, identified as a highly 'socialised' form of development and production where dialogues and interactions between Scott and his audience had direct consequences for the development of the text in both its pre- and post-

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<sup>15</sup> Scott makes this distinction in a letter to Robert Cadell of 8 October 1828 where he writes 'No notes except such as are merely *glossarial* or otherwise brief notices necessary to explain the text, are to be placed at the foot of the page [...] This practice must be observed in all cases'. See *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, 11 p. 5. While he is referring to the Magnum edition of his fiction here we can assume that he would have wished the same procedures to be followed in the *Poetical Works*.

publication stages.<sup>16</sup> In the case of *Marmion* 8,000 copies of three editions sold out within six months of its first publication, and during this rapid and as it transpired intense process the text continued to develop and evolve. Often this was in response to information that Scott received from his readers. For example, several new notes were added, others were expanded and revised, and the narrative itself was altered as correspondents suggested revisions to Scott. In short, Scott remained creatively engaged with the text at least up to and including the third edition where he was still responding to responses from readers and changing his text accordingly. As a consequence of McIntosh's discoveries it became clear that it would be wrong to follow EEWN practice and use the first edition as the base text for the new edition of *Marmion*. Instead, the third edition was chosen on the basis that it is the culmination of a single compositional process that began in the manuscript, continued almost certainly in the lost proofs, and on into the first three editions. In other words, if the early editions are taken as part of what may be defined as an initial creative process (and it must be remembered that early editions were appearing within weeks of each other), the third edition represents the earliest fully articulated form of the poem.

This work raised two crucial points both for an edition of *Marmion* and the EEWS project as a whole. Firstly, it was clear that any critical edition of the poetry could share with the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels the realisation that the standard 'Magnum' edition was an insufficient model for a modern scholarly edition of Scott's poetry. Not only did Lockhart fail to follow Scott's wishes about the notes it was clear that the text had

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<sup>16</sup> Jerome McGann writes that 'Because literary works are fundamentally social rather than personal or psychological products, they do not even acquire an artistic form of being until their engagement with an audience has been determined'. See Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Editing* (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1983), p.43-44).

deteriorated significantly in the process of transmission: composers' errors, mis-readings, and variations in punctuation had all moved it very far way indeed from Scott's early texts. Secondly, and perhaps more interestingly, this work demonstrated that while the expertise of the EEWN can provide the backbone of an edition of the poems, its procedures cannot simply be transferred wholesale to this endeavour, since the circumstances of production surrounding the poems seems to raise new and complex issues concerning textual transmission. The next question for the edition, therefore, was to ask if the case of *Marmion* was typical, or exceptional? Do all of Scott's longer narrative poems emerge from a similar process of 'socialisation' or is *Marmion* unique?

Establishing this was fundamental to the formulation of a broader editorial policy for the edition as a whole and it was at this point that a pilot project for the edition was established, with funding from both the British Academy and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland. It was crucial to test McIntosh's discoveries against other of Scott's longer poems and to both collate the relevant editions of them and explore their publishing histories. Three further poems were chosen for this purpose: *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, as Scott's first narrative poem, *The Lady of the Lake*, which is the next to be published after *Marmion*, and *The Lord of the Isles*, chosen deliberately for its later publication date and for the fact that it is produced after Scott had begun to publish fiction.

The results of this investigation were fascinating. To focus on one example, work on *The Lady of the Lake* suggest that, like *Marmion*, Scott's public nature as he was writing this poem results in a kind of pre-publication 'socialisation'. Certainly, Scott is not slow to tell others that he is writing the poem, and that to claim that he will value their thoughts on it before it is published. The summer before its publication Scott went to the Trossachs with his family and J.G Lockhart reports that 'He gave a week to his old friends at Cambusmore, and ascertained, in his own person, that a good horseman, well mounted, might gallop from the

shore of Loch Vennachar to the rock of Stirling within the space allotted for that purpose to FitzJames. From Cambusmore the party proceeded to Ross Priory, and, under the guidance of Mr Macdonald Buchanan, explored the islands of Loch Lomond, Arrochar, Loch Sloy, and all the scenery of a hundred desperate conflicts between the Macfarlanes, the Colquhouns, and the Clan Alpine'.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Lockhart suggests that 'At Buchanan House, which is very near Ross Priory, Scott's friends, Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stuart, were then visiting the Duke of Montrose; he joined them there, and read to them the Stag Chase, which he had just completed under the full influence of the *genius loci*'.<sup>18</sup> Lockhart also suggests that James Ballantyne, Scott's printer and publisher for this poem with his brother John, read selections of it to 'select coteries' as it advanced through the press. 'Common fame' we are told, 'was loud in [The Lady's] favour; a great poem was on all hands anticipated.'<sup>19</sup> This could hardly be more different than the secretive processes that surrounded the production of a Waverley novel.

Scott himself also indicates that he is willing to show the poem to others before its publication. In March 1810 he sent a printed version of the first two cantos of the poem to Lady Abercorn, whose husband was the dedicatee, noting 'how desirous I am your Ladyship should think well of these Minstrel stanzas. The deuce take my lover I can make nothing of him; he is a perfect automaton. It is very odd that the Border blood seems to rise in my veins whenever I begin to try couplets however torpid on other occasions. I am in my own person as Hamlet says *indifferent honest* and a robber or Captain of Banditti never comes across me

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<sup>17</sup> J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 7 vols (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1837), II, p. 250.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

but he becomes my hero'.<sup>20</sup> Around the same time he also wrote to his friend Morritt 'My present attempt is a poem partly highland – the scene Loch Katrine ... I hope to show this ditty to you soon in Portland Place for it seems determined I must go to London though the time is not fixed'.<sup>21</sup> Most tellingly of all, in his 1830 Introduction of the poem Scott recounts how he showed sections of the poem to a farmer friend prior to its publication and a result was prompted to make considerable changes. He reports:

I determined rather to guide my opinion by what my friend might appear to feel, than by what he might think fit to say. His reception of my recitation, or prelection, was rather singular. He placed his hand across his brow, and listened with great attention through the whole account of the stag-hunt, till the dogs threw themselves into the lake to follow their master, who embarks with Ellen Douglas. He then started up with a sudden exclamation, struck his hand on the table, and declared, in a voice of censure calculated for the occasion, that the dogs must have been totally ruined by being permitted to take the water after such a severe chase. I own I was much encouraged by the species of reverie which had possessed so zealous a follower of the sports of the ancient Nimrod, who had been completely surprized out of all doubts of the reality of the tale.

However, much of the dramatic tension in the poem results from the fact that James IV traverses the Highlands in the guise of James Fitz James, the Knight of Snowdon, and Scott goes on to tell that in this respect his friend's comments were less favourable:

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<sup>20</sup> Letter to Lady Abercorn, dd. 14 March, 1810. *Letters*, II, p. 312.

<sup>21</sup> Letter to J. B. S. Morritt, dd. 2 March, 1810. *Letters*, II, p. 306.

Another of his remarks gave me less pleasure. He detected the identity of the King with the wandering knight, Fitz-James, when he winds his bugle to summon his attendants. ...This discovery, as Mr Pepys says of the rent in his camlet cloak, was but a trifle, yet it troubled me; and I was at a good deal of pains to efface any marks by which I thought my secret could be traced before the conclusion, when I relied on it with the same hope of producing effect, with which the Irish post-boy is said to reserve a 'trot for the avenue'.<sup>22</sup>

While the manuscript of *The Lady of the Lake* includes many small revisions that might suggest an attempt to obfuscate the identity of the king there is no evidence for a more wholesale revision of the poem to this effect, reminding us that the stories of composition Romantic writers tell about their work may not always be true; however, the truth that is revealed here is that Scott is listening to the opinions of his friends as he writes this poem.<sup>23</sup>

What is equally clear is that, in spite of his assertion that he would be more private in his composition following *Marmion*, Scott is showing this new poem to friends and family

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<sup>22</sup> 'Introduction' (April, 1830), in *The Lady of the Lake* in *Poetical Works* (1833-34), pp. 8 - 9.

<sup>23</sup> The manuscript of *The Lady of the Lake* is owned by the Morgan Library and Museum, New York, MA443. J. H. Alexander provides a list of Scott's correspondents who expressed surprise at the revelation of the king's character. These include Lady Hood, Joanna Baillie, Richard Heber and Tom Scott, the poet's brother. See *The Reception of Scott's Poetry by his Correspondents: 1796 – 1817*, 2 vols (Romantic Reassessment 84, Salzburg, 1979), II. p. 361).

before it is printed, and that he is taking their reactions to it on board. As with *Marmion*, but in a manner very different from the fiction, the production of this poem is, then, as McIntosh identifies, a social process, where Scott is seeking, and at times responding to, the reactions of others during composition.

But what happens to the poem after publication? As mentioned earlier the *Lady of the Lake* rapidly sold out and six editions were required within six months: a circumstance that allows for continued creative evolution in a period where Scott was still actively and artistically engaged with the poem. Critical response for *The Lady of the Lake* was almost without qualification positive; even Jeffrey (who had reviewed *Marmion* negatively) seems to have liked the poem and appears to have regretted his harsh treatment of its predecessor.<sup>24</sup> As J.H. Alexander notes ‘For Lord Abercorn, the dedicatee, it was “the most delightful as well as interesting Poem I have read in any language”’.<sup>25</sup> Yet this does not mean that the poem was above criticism by reviewers, by Scott’s friends and even by very slight acquaintances. *The Scots Magazine* found James's wanderings improbable and imprudent<sup>26</sup> and the *Christian Observer* thought that Roderick's death was ‘a blot on James's character’.<sup>27</sup> Lady Hood along

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<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey’s extensive review of *The Lady of the Lake* appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, 16 (August 1810), 263 - 93. Alexander, *Two Studies*, provides a full list of all of the reviews of *The Lady of the Lake* and notes that ‘Of the twenty reviews, thirteen were favourable (five of those enthusiastic), three were neutral, and four were critical (two of them very hostile)’ II, p. 369).

<sup>25</sup> Alexander, *Two Studies*, II, p. 353. Alexander is quoting NLS Ms 3879, f.139 v, a letter to Scott on 2 July 1810.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 379. This review appeared in the *Scots Magazine*, 72 (May, 1810). 359-64.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 379. The review appeared in the *Christian Observer* 9 (June, 1810), 366 – 89.

with several others, objected to the soldier's song in the final canto, commenting 'I have only to quarrel with you for continuing the Soldiers song in the 2d edition it is really unworthy of your muse & the sentiments are such that I don't think it is your own composition, pray erase it, all your friends wish you wd'.<sup>28</sup> Alexander also reports that 'Lady Abercorn, encouraged by Scott himself, was openly contemptuous of Graeme's character'. She writes 'How much it is against constancy that even you cou'd not make your Knight of love who never broke his vow a more interesting character, I am afraid I am more in love with any of them than I am with him'.<sup>29</sup> She was not alone in this respect and responses to Graeme differed widely. Morritt wanted Brian the hermit to reappear in the denouement<sup>30</sup> and Southey thought the songs in the poem a mistake or at least misplaced.<sup>31</sup> Scott, however, does not seem to have been inclined to change his poem as a result of these criticisms, as Lady Hood's complaint that the soldier's song persists into the second edition implies. Her sense that he *may* have changed it is, nevertheless, interesting, for it implies an expectation that Scott will alter his work in response to public feeling even after its publication. To other comments made about the poem he responds, but again does nothing to alter its composition. Both Southey and Ellis, for example, have reservations about the meter of the poem. Scott, of course, can do nothing to

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 359-60. Alexander is quoting a letter of Lady Hood to Scott of 26 August 1810 to be found in NLS Ms 3879, ff.166v – 167r.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 367. Alexander is quoting a letter from Lady Abercorn to Scott of 18 July 1810 to be found in NLS Ms 3879, f.147v.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 370. See also NLS Ms 3879, f.108v, Morritt to Scott, 17 May, 1810.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 371. See also NLS Ms 3879, f.82 r-v, Southey to Scott, 11 May, 1810.

change this but instead offers a vigorous defence of his chosen style, outlining its benefits to Ellis.<sup>32</sup>

If Scott was reluctant to change the body of this poem in response to reader criticisms, however, he does seem to have been more willing to make changes to his notes. For example, Mrs Clephane, who had advised Scott in some of the Gaelic in the poem writes to thank him for preserving a coronach which she had sent him but adds ‘you must correct one letter – “Thou hast forsaken us before Sawaine” – in place of Lawaine’.<sup>33</sup> Scott duly makes this change in the second edition. Moreover, if Scott at times reserved judgment about altering *The Lady of the Lake* because of the suggestions of readers this does not mean that the poem was not evolving in its early editions, for collation shows that he is still artistically engaged with it and altering it in line with his artistic sensibilities. Again this is most pronounced in the notes. There are 10 new notes in the second edition of *Lady of the Lake* and several existing notes are significantly expanded. Several errors in the notes are also corrected, such as in note 6 to canto 3 where it is pointed out that the Ben-Shie had been incorrectly equated with the Head of the Fairies, when in fact a female fairy should be implied. The note originally reads ‘The Ben-Shie, or *Ben-Schichian*, implies the head, or chief of the Fairies’ but is altered in the second edition to read ‘The Ban-Shie implies the female Fairy’ and a footnote added to state ‘In the first edition this was erroneously explained as equivalent to

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<sup>32</sup> See Lockhart , II. pp. 296 - 304 and *Letters*, II. p. 340, 346-48. The letters from Southey and Ellis to Scott can be found in NLS Ms 3879 and are also reprinted in *Alexander Two Studies* 1, pp. 104 -8.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85 and NLS Ms 3879, f.110.

*Ben-Schichian*, or the Head of the Fairies'.<sup>34</sup> Changes are also made to the body of the poem, with the majority of changes take place between editions 1 and 2. Some of these are fairly routine but there are other changes that imply a more creative engagement. In Canto 1 stanza 12 a pine tree's 'scattered trunk is altered to read 'shatter'd'. In canto 2 the rather awkward lines 'Not so had Malcolm strained his eye | The step of parting fair to spy' becomes 'Another step than thine to spy'.<sup>35</sup> In Canto 3 it is no longer simply the thunder that has split a pine, but a 'thunderbolt'<sup>36</sup> while in Canto 5 the king's description of Roderick Dhu as 'exiled' is changed to the more correct 'outlaw'd' (197).<sup>37</sup> A more wholesale revision again occurs in the description of the prison room at Stirling Castle where several lines are added and others significantly re-written.

Without pre-empting the new edition these examples give just a flavour of the changes that occur to the poem between the first and second editions. Fewer, but at times significant changes have also been found in later editions. All this suggests that, as with *Marmion*, Scott continued to be artistically engaged with the poem beyond its first appearance in print, and that the first edition is not, perhaps, the end point of its creative evolution. A similar pattern emerged in our investigation of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) and, tellingly, even in *The Lord of the Isles* (1815). *The Lord of the Isles* is Scott's last long narrative poem, and the picture that has emerged from a textual investigation of it supports the pattern that we have observed for the earlier poems. Although by this point Scott

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<sup>34</sup> *The Lady of the Lake*, 1st edn (Edinburgh: John Ballantyne and Co., 1810), p. lvi and *The Lady of the Lake*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: John Ballantyne and Co., 1810), p.346.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, II.6

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, III.7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, V.5

(who was now publishing his novels anonymously) was striving for greater secrecy regarding the details of his unpublished poems, examination of his letters reveals that he continued to discuss his works-in-progress with close friend including Lady Abercorn, Joanna Baillie and Robert Southey. Moreover, examples of revisions between first and second editions that could only have been made by Scott again strengthen the suggestion that he is artistically engaged with the poem after the printing of the first edition.

What this revealed was that not only *Marmion* but all of the poems we examined were undergoing a rapid process of creative evolution during their early editions and that Scott continued to be artistically engaged with the poems, adding to them, altering them, and responding to comments from friends and the wider public both before and after their publication, at least for the first year after their appearance. As one might expect, however, collation also revealed that while Scott may be ‘improving’ his poems at this early stage, the poems are also simultaneously deteriorating; punctuation, layout and even occasional words are subject to a ‘Chinese whisper’ type corruption that is inevitable as compositors transmit one version of a text to the next.

So what are the implications of this for the textual policy of the EEWSP? First and foremost, it is clear that, unlike with most of his works of fiction, Scott does not become disengaged with his work after its appearance in print. On the contrary, he remains creatively engaged with it, both continuing to respond to his own imaginative impulses and the suggestions of others. As a consequence we concluded that the first editions of the poems could not necessarily be the end of the line and that the chosen base text for each poem should be that which represents the point at which the poem settles into its earliest fullest articulation. In other words, because of the rapidity at which these early editions are being produced we will consider them to be part of what we might call the initial creative process and, as with *Marmion*, the base text may well be the first, second, third or even a later edition

– whatever is deemed to be the point at which Scott seems to have ceased to become actively engaged in the creative evolution of it, within the early time frame of its production. This decision, however, renders the fact that the texts are simultaneously deteriorating in ways consistent with the transmission of hand-set nineteenth century editions particularly problematic our copy texts come under pressure both from what might be seen as authorial improvement and textual deterioration thus raising particularly interesting questions for legitimate emendation. Our policy, therefore, aims to emend these base texts both where there are obvious misreading or errors from the manuscript and where there is clear deterioration which can be attributed to compositors' errors and blundered attempts at correction, thus capturing both the freshness of the original texts and the adjustments made by Scott and rendering, as far as it can be ascertained, the author's intentions during the early lifetimes of these poems.

Having reached this position it might be expected that we had made sufficient decisions about the nature of the text itself to move forward but one final issue remained and that is the fraught issue of Scott's own notes to his narrative poems. While the majority of Scott's notes to the novels were introduced as part of the Magnum Opus edition it is important to recall that the notes were *always* intrinsic to the narrative poems; they are an important part of their paratextual dialogue, and, as discussed above are frequently the feature of them which is textually most unstable. How, though should the notes be treated? Are they part of the 'text' of the poem or do they function as supplementary and explanatory material, overtaking the need for a modern textual apparatus of annotation? A very cursory look at the notes of any of Scott's longer poems will reveal that they do not serve the function of modern annotation. In fact, rather than being notes as we would now understand them, Scott's notes function to give accounts of his sources, supplementary material, and narratives in their own right. Indeed, Scott's notes are best understood as a kind of *surplusage*, indicative of a

process which he describes late on in his career as an inability to resist the act of story telling, stating in *Reliquiae Trotcosienses* that he could never prevent himself from ‘gliding into the true musing style of an antiquarian disposed to “spin a tough yarn”’.<sup>38</sup> Having identified this feature of Scott’s notes, then, it became clear that Scott’s notes must be presented as part of the text of his poems, and that further modern annotation, including annotation of the notes themselves, would be required. Along with the text of the poems (which will include Scott’s notes), therefore, the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott’s Poetry will provide an emendation list, an essay on the text, an historical note, explanatory notes, where necessary a glossary and, in some instances, a map. The poetry volumes will therefore follow the pattern of the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels and provide a companion to it.

At the time of writing the first volume in the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott’s Poetry, *Marmion*, edited by Ainsley McIntosh, is about to go to press. Work on the volume to follow, the *Shorter Poems*, edited by Peter Garside and Gillian Hughes, is well underway as is that on *Poetry from the Waverley Novels and Other Works*, edited by David Hewitt and *The Lady of the Lake*, edited by myself. The aim of the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott’s Poetry, like that of the Edinburgh Edition of the Novels, is to restore Scott’s poems to a form which best reflects his intentions during the initial creative process and which is freed as far as possible from the various errors and non-authorial interventions that arose in the course of their publication and successive re-printings. It also aims to facilitate the reading experience of a modern reader by providing supporting editorial material in the form of notes, essays

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<sup>38</sup> Walter Scott, *Reliquiae Trotcosienses or the Gabions of the Late Jonathan Oldbuck. Esq. of Monkbarns*, ed. by Gerard Carruthers and Alison Lumsden, EEWN (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 34.

and, where necessary, maps and glossaries. It is the hope of all involved that by doing so the full significance of Scott's poetry will be realized, along with the complexities at work within it and the relevance of the issues with which it deals. We are not blind to the challenge; reading nineteenth-century narrative poetry of the kind that Scott writes, to say nothing of verse dramas, requires a kind of retraining of the mind, perhaps a type of reading that has to some extent been forgotten. It is hoped that a critical edition that provides readers with clear and accurate texts along with the support they need to understand them in a twenty-first century context will at least encourage a willingness to rediscover and revisit this kind of reading. The rewards are, I would suggest, invaluable.