

The Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club

Scott in 2013: *New Scholarship, Old Connections, and the Case of Rokeby*

Transcript of the talk given on the Thursday 16th May 2013 by **Fiona Robertson** to members of The Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club in Edinburgh.

One of the oldest traditions in Scott scholarship contextualises his writings in terms of place – often, detailed and specific localities – and of personal connection. Begun by Scott himself in the frame narratives of his poems and novels, most innovatively of all in the introductory epistles to each canto of *Marmion* (1808), and already a biographical and critical industry by the time of the publication of John Gibson Lockhart's *Life of Scott* in 1837-8, the desire to locate Scott, in landscapes and in personal friendships and encounters, remained strong in the early twentieth century and was a major factor in the biographically-orientated surge of new readings which marked the centenary of his death (1932).¹ In this essay, I will argue for a new way of articulating the 'place' of Scott, by examining his still-neglected poem of 1813, *Rokeby*. When, in his introduction to this poem in the collected *Poetical Works* eventually published after his death, Scott looked back (in April 1830), at *Rokeby*, he wrote relatively little about the ideas and genesis of the poem and a great deal about the genesis of his 'romance in stone', Abbotsford, by which 'the smallest of possible cottages was progressively expanded into a sort of dream of a mansion-house, whimsical in the exterior, but convenient within'.² The connections between literature and architecture, this essay suggests, are of special interest and importance in Scott scholarship in the present year, 2013, which sees the re-opening and reinvention of Abbotsford House, and a new era of invention for Scott and his cultural legacy.

At a meeting held in the Waterloo Tavern, Regent's Bridge, Edinburgh, on the 1st of June 1825 - that is, 'A General Meeting of the Share-Holders Designing to Form a Joint-Stock Company, United for the Purpose of Writing and Publishing the Class of Works called the Waverley Novels', the minutes of which are given in the Introduction to *The Betrothed* in 1825 - Scott describes 'the valuable Property which has accumulated under our common labours', amazed that the reading public should have been preoccupied with finding a single identity for the Author of Waverley.³ He writes: 'It is to me a mystery how the sharp-sighted could suppose so huge a mass of sense and nonsense, jest and earnest, humorous and pathetic, good, bad, and indifferent, amounting to scores of volumes, could be the work of one hand, when we know the doctrine so well laid down by the immortal Adam Smith, concerning the division of labour.'⁴ I propose to develop the links between new scholarship and old connections, for the central thread of this argument is the importance of 'joint stock', joint work, and the models of collaboration and conversation as ways of approaching Scott's writings. In reassessing the place of Scott in 2013 I focus on two main topics, but it is important to emphasise the ways in which they are connected. Susan Manning opened her plenary lecture at the 'Scottish Romanticism in World Literatures' conference in Berkeley in 2006, on 'Literary Friendship and Lateral Thinking' by remarking that the conjunction in the title of her lecture was very important;⁵ and the conjunction in the title of the present essay is, similarly, the key to its argument.

One recent new point of departure is the *Edinburgh Companion to Scott*, published last year, which is shaped by, and also reveals much about, the ways in which Scott is being read and discussed today, in the academy and beyond. The *Edinburgh Companion* takes the measure of contemporary Scott scholarship, including as it does work by some of the most influential scholars writing on Scott today. It also demonstrates the wider cultural significance of a university press committed to Scottish literature and to his place in it, series editors – Ian Brown and Thomas Owen Clancy – who initiated the whole project, and an international community of scholars dedicated to making Scott's work matter for existing and new generations of readers. That is, to continue the 'joint stock' motif, Scott is part of a wider resurgence of commitment to Scottish literature, and he is also part of an international scholarship. There is no previous

'Companion'-style volume devoted to Scott, so I was fortunate, as editor, in being able to appeal to Scott scholars' sense that such a volume was long overdue. At the same time, there was no model to follow or to react against, so taking this task on involved thinking from scratch about where Scott stood and ought to stand; what readers needed to know and what they could be expected to bring with them – that is, what the implicit contexts were in terms of what we now expect as readers and as literary critics; and what no longer needed to be said. In the introduction I quote Edwin Muir's comment from 1936 that Scott was 'by far the greatest creative force in Scottish literature as well as one of the greatest in English', point out that 'creative force' is different from 'writer', in order to make the point that 'One of the purposes of this *Companion* is to re-focus attention on the qualities of Scott's thought and style, highlighting their complexities and sensitivities.'⁶

This essay uses the example of the *Companion* and what it says about Scott today in order to set up a piece of entirely new scholarship which, in a different way, emphasises the crucial creative importance for Scott of personal links and their immediate physical contexts. Scott scholars look forward, this year, to the bicentenary of the publication of *Waverley* in 2014; but 2013 sees the bicentenary of a far less widely-known work, Scott's poem *Rokeby*. There has been one important cultural event linked to this bicentenary, the exhibition at the Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle, from the end of January to the end of April 2013 - 'Rokeby: Poetry and Landscape: Scott and Turner in Teesdale' – which celebrated the poem's rootedness in the locations and history of North Yorkshire, intertwining Scott's words with the paintings they inspired, directly and indirectly, the popular enthusiasm they created for visiting Teesdale, and the songs from *Rokeby* performed to a new public.⁷ Scott's friendship with John Morritt, the owner of Rokeby Hall and its beautiful estate, was one of the closest he formed in his lifetime: Lockhart describes it as beginning at 'a period of life after which real friendships are but seldom formed'.⁸ As Lockhart recognised, and as modern readers will also see, it is one of the most rewarding of his epistolary friendships. Yet Morritt, and his importance to Scott, are not perhaps known now as much as they might be; and certainly *Rokeby*, as a poem, is the least well-known of his really important narrative poems. There is great deal of genuinely new work to be done on this poem, its contexts, and its significance in Scott's work more generally. Revealingly, perhaps, there are only two references to *Rokeby* in the *Edinburgh Companion to Scott* - one in Alison Lumsden's and Ainsley McIntosh's chapter on the long narrative poems, and one in Alexander Dick's discussion of Scott's economic thought.⁹ *Rokeby* remains difficult to place among Scott's writings, partly because it falls into the 'fallow' year (actually, a densely productive year) before the emergence of *Waverley* and Scott's turn to a new form of historical fiction, in prose. The place of *Rokeby*, as this essay will argue, is still an elusive one, and the significance of the poem can most clearly be approached by reassessing our assumptions about what 'place' and cultural context might mean for Scott.

The remit of Edinburgh University Press's 'Companions' series is to provide authoritative and original critical assessments which do justice to the range of each author's work and which are accessible to general and first-time readers as well as to those studying and researching the field. That is a very diverse readership to satisfy. Scott, moreover, is the most prolific and varied of authors, an intellectual omnivore who was also the most influential writer of his time, worldwide. How to do something approaching justice to him in a volume of 80,000 words? I commissioned twelve essays, which was ambitious given the word limit, but which I felt was necessary. I also made a narrative decision which is very important in the design of the volume as a whole. I decided to address the different topics and preoccupations of Scott's career in conjunction with a broadly chronological treatment of his works, so that readers, at least if they read sequentially, could form at the same time a view of the many different topics which mattered to Scott and the structure of how his works amassed over time. This is an ambitious organisational structure, which attempts to signal Scott's own sophistication and complexity as a writer of narratives, as well as to convey the intellectual breadth and richness of his work. Some personal editor's highlights may serve to give something of the character of the volume. In the index of the *Companion* - from *Abbot*, *The*, to Žižek, Slavoj - the entry for Moore, Thomas (Scott's contemporary, the Irish poet), immediately follows the entry for Moore, Roger, a reference to Nicola Watson's discussion of the 1958 television series of *Ivanhoe*. Two episodes into this series, Roger Moore discarded *Ivanhoe*'s silver armour and vast plumed helmet – 'I feel

like a medieval fireman', he apparently protested.¹⁰ The final section, all too brief, of Kenneth McNeil's chapter on *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, parallels Scott's minstrelsy with the minstrelsy of the Texan-Mexican border. Catherine Jones follows the trail of one of Scott's abandoned projects, his plans for a 'History' of Scotland, and traces its afterlives in his own works and in the historical writings of Patrick Fraser Tytler. After the many years of apologetic or dismissive critical writing on some of Scott's works, it is a pleasure to see the pizzazz with which George Marshall states, at the start of his chapter 'Scott and the Reformation of Religion', that in *The Monastery* and *The Abbot* as well as in *The Tale of Old Mortality* Scott prefigures recent revisionist scholarship on the Reformation; and to read Ian Duncan's championing of *Count Robert of Paris*, which, he writes, has a cast of characters which includes 'Greeks, Turks, Normans, Varangians, Africans, Scythians, a bluestocking princess, a ferocious warrior-countess, a seditious philosopher nicknamed 'the Elephant', a real elephant, a tiger, a mechanical lion, and an eight-foot-tall captive orang-utan'.¹¹ In a section of my own chapter, 'Romancing and Romanticism', meanwhile, I seek to demonstrate that it is possible to write a history of the Romantic Period in Britain with sole reference to the works of Walter Scott – in two paragraphs.¹² As these examples will suggest, the *Companion* does not just represent new scholarship, but includes new scholarship in every chapter. Tara Ghoshal Wallace's chapter on Scott's Stuart monarchs is related to a major project on monarchy in the Romantic Period. Alison Lumsden and Ainsley McIntosh write on the narrative poems as two of the scholars most actively involved in the new textual editing of the poems. The supporting scholarship in all chapters is extensive: note 19 to Nicola Watson's chapter, for example, relating to games based on *Ivanhoe*, takes up a page of very small print, and appropriately so, for this chapter is the result of entirely new archival diggings in the Bodleian Library's holdings of abridged versions, play-bills, and ephemera, a snapshot in itself of Scott's huge cultural legacy.

At the same time, the *Companion* demonstrates a very strong awareness of a scholarly tradition in Scott studies. Works which university students often, now, do not have time for (under pressure always to seek out what has just been said on any essay topic), as well as works which were written in times of distinctly different cultural assumptions – about criticism, and, indeed, about literature – are nevertheless significant points of reference throughout the volume. For example, Samuel Baker's chapter echoes in its title, and explicitly addresses, David Daiches' illustrated biographical study from 1971, *Sir Walter Scott and his World*. An important early study of Scott, commonly overlooked, A. O. J. Cockshut's 1969 *The Achievement of Walter Scott*, is quoted several times in different chapters of the *Companion*. These are local examples of a bigger picture, which is that Scott scholarship today does not feel the need to hitch itself to big names from related literary studies: that it is as happy to direct new readers back to older critical evaluations as it is to draw on recent theories and debates. There is, also, important new common ground in the textual presence of the completed Edinburgh Edition of the novels, a unifying force even at the relatively basic level of cross-volume referencing.

Looking across the scholarly directions represented in the *Companion*, the following are the most significant in terms of the place of Scott in modern scholarship:

1. An interest in material production, in antiquarianism and reading habits and books as physical objects in a literary marketplace; related to this, an interest in readers, reflecting Scott's own.
2. An interest in a much wider range of Scott's writings than used to be the case. From Kenneth McNeil's chapter on the *Minstrelsy* to Ian Duncan's on Late Scott to Alexander Dick's work on political economy and Scott's place in this emerging discourse; and in my own chapter, looking at Scott's place in Romanticism not in relation to *Waverley* or *Redgauntlet* but to *Kenilworth*, *The Pirate*, *Quentin Durward*, and *St Ronan's Well*. At the same time, parts of Scott's writings are still sparsely noted in modern scholarship – the *Journal*, the letters, and the many essays, reviews, and historical accounts represented in the thirty volumes published in 1834-6 as his *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, are still undervalued.

3. Independently of this, an interest in making Scott more integral to received ideas of Romanticism, and to asserting a primary role for him as a shaper of ideas and approaches, especially in understanding Romanticism as an international style.

4. Something of a counter-historicist turn, in a new awareness of the relevance of Scott to the issues of our own time. Some emphases in new scholarship might have surprised Scott as major forces in 2013: banking, religious fundamentalism, Scottish independence.

5. Absolutely taken for granted: his sophistication and richness, a mark in itself of how far Scott scholarship has come in the last twenty years. Again, the Edinburgh Edition has been transformational in helping readers to see the density and particularity of Scott's creative engagement.

As I have begun to suggest, the case of *Rokeby*, in its bicentenary year, marks work which has not yet been attempted in Scott scholarship, and also some of the preconceptions about Scott's writing, and the structure of his writing career, which persist, unexamined and unremarked. *Rokeby* has always seemed to me a difficult poem; an elusive poem. It is notoriously complicated as a narrative line, as early reviewers all complained. But there is a more fundamental issue, to do with the poem's relationship to place. *Rokeby* was the first of Scott's poems to tie its colours to a particular place, unequivocally, on the title page. When the title of Scott's new work was announced, it seemed even to the best-informed readers in Edinburgh, or in London, a title which gave nothing away. Lord Byron, at this stage in his career a reluctant admirer of Scott's poems, wrote on 5 September 1812 to his publisher, John Murray, as soon as he saw the poem advertised: 'Send me "*Rokeby*" who the deuce is he? no matter – he has good connections, & will be well introduced.'¹³ Even Byron, that is, supposed *Rokeby* to be the name of the hero – as it is, of course, though not in the way he assumed. The hero of the poem is its place. *Rokeby* takes possession of Teesdale in brilliant, limpid, compressed but expansive lines of local description. *Rokeby* is also about broken lines: lines of history, of family, of literary tradition. Scott's works connect past and present, but they also expose the fractures and the silences in lines of tradition and inheritance. In the 'Advertisement' which prefaces the poem, Scott states briefly that it was set at Rokeby and at Barnard Castle (then in North Yorkshire, since 1974 in County Durham); that the action takes place over five days, immediately after the battle of Marston Moor in 1644. He then adds: 'This period of public confusion has been chosen, without any purpose of combining the Fable with the Military or Political Events of the Civil War, but only as affording a degree of probability to the Fictitious Narrative now presented to the Public.'¹⁴ This disclaimer is the first of the poem's disconnections: *Rokeby* is set in the Civil War, but it is not combined with or designed to reflect on the Civil War. It is given a temporal context but not, quite, a historical context. The national and local historical events of relevance to it are largely occluded.

As reviewers complained when it was first published, it has a complicated, elliptical, line of narrative.¹⁵ A generation before the action begins, Philip of Mortham has killed his young wife and her brother in a fit of mistaken jealousy. Their only son is kidnapped, and Mortham, in despair, turns soldier and adventurer in South America, bringing home a treasure of gold and jewels. In the narrative present, Mortham has just been murdered by Bertram Risingham at the Battle of Marston Moor – or so Bertram thinks. The agent of this plot is Oswald de Wycliffe, scheming for the Mortham estate and for the treasure. Wilfrid, his son, is in love with Matilda of Rokeby, but she with the young Irishman Redmond O'Neill.¹⁶ It turns out that Matilda is the key to Mortham's treasure, because Mortham has entrusted it to her, with a letter telling his story, and leaving it to her should his long-lost son and heir never be found. Bertram joins forces with a gang of thieves and outcasts, led by Guy Denzil, and attempts to kidnap Matilda. Meanwhile, Oswald de Wycliffe attempts to force her to marry his son; Wilfrid refuses to be party to this, and dies; she marries Redmond, who turns out to be Mortham's long-lost son. The old fortified mansion of Rokeby is destroyed by fire. The two family estates, of Mortham and Rokeby, are thus united, and nobody says anything further about the treasure, though it is presumably inherited by Redmond and Matilda. Bertram reforms, and is killed

rescuing Matilda's father and Redmond from Oswald's attempted execution. Those left standing live happily ever after; though, importantly for the present argument, the old house, the architectural embodiment of tradition, does not survive.

In Canto 5 of the poem, the three young lovers are together in Rokeby Hall. Matilda's father is being held captive in Barnard Castle after the defeat of the Royalists at Marston Moor, and the guard is being kept only by an old and grey porter. A minstrel arrives at the gate and begs admission, which the porter tries to refuse. The three lovers all love songs and ballads, however, and they cannot resist letting him in. For Redmond O'Neill, the appeal of the minstrel is that he brings back memories of childhood in Ireland, before the destruction of his family's ancient lands and inheritance. Matilda, who faces the imminent destruction of her own family and name, sympathises with his feelings, replying to him:

And think'st thou, Redmond, I can part

From this loved home with lightsome heart,

Leaving to wild neglect whate'er

Even from my infancy was dear?

For in this calm domestic bound

Were all Matilda's pleasures found.

That hearth, my sire was wont to grace,

Full soon may be a stranger's place;

This hall, in which a child I play'd,

Like thine, dear Redmond, lowly laid,

The bramble and the thorn may braid;

Or, pass'd for aye from me and mine,

It ne'er may shelter Rokeby's line.¹⁷

This is elegy before the event, an enjoyment of an imagined future loss. 'Rokeby's line' is an especially suggestive phrase – drawing attention to lines of inheritance, also of political allegiance (Royalist line), and its poetical line, both literary lineage and style of verse, a way of imagining and expressing.

I want to develop the strong links between *Rokeby's* lines and building houses, architectural lines so to speak, because the first hint we have of Scott's plans for the poem come in a letter to the owner of Rokeby Hall, John Morritt. On 20 December 1811 Scott wrote: 'I want to build my cottage a little better than my limited finances will permitt out of my ordinary income'.¹⁸ The architectural fantasy – which took various forms over the first eighteen months of Scott's ownership – was to develop the farmhouse originally called Clarty Hole, which Scott had bought in 1811.¹⁹ May 1812 saw the Scotts 'flitting' from Ashestiel to Abbotsford. Scott wrote to Morritt on 4 May: 'As for the house and the poem there are twelve masons hammering at the one and one poor noddle at the other so they are both in progress.'²⁰ Building, gardening, tree-planting, all went on while Scott worked not just on *Rokeby* but also on the anonymous Arthurian romance which came out a few months after it, *The Bridal of Triermain*, and on his edition of the works of Jonathan Swift and various other smaller projects. The lines of connection between Abbotsford

and Rokeby are very strong indeed, though the houses themselves represent entirely different architectural principles – one precisely articulated Palladian order, the other, in its eventual manifestation, romantic, irregular, and eclectic.

Scott and John Morritt met in Edinburgh in June 1808, when Scott was 36 and Morritt 35. As Lockhart notes: 'Several friends had written to recommend Mr Morritt to his acquaintance – among others, Mr W. S. Rose and Lady Louisa Stuart.'²¹ Scott showed Morritt Edinburgh and the countryside around it, and after a few weeks further north the Morritts spent a week with the Scotts at Ashestiel, exploring Melrose Abbey, Newark Castle, St Mary's Loch. Scott and Charlotte spent two days at Rokeby on their way back from London in 1809, when Scott first explored the meeting of the waters, of the rivers Greta and Tees, and the town of Barnard Castle. In a letter to George Ellis on 8 July 1809 Scott called Rokeby 'one of the most enviable places I have ever seen, as it unites the richness and luxuriance of English vegetation with the romantic variety of glen, torrent, and copse, which dignifies our northern [i.e. Scottish] scenery'.²² The first inklings of *Rokeby* as a poem come as he is finding ways of financing his architectural plans for Abbotsford, announcing as a 'grand project' in a letter to Morritt: 'Nothing less than a fourth romance in verse, the theme during the English civil wars of Charles I. and the scene your own domain of Rokeby.'²³ Morritt's 'Memorandums' of the week's visit in 1812 tell of Scott's obsessive attention to physical detail, to the actual flowers and rock formations, and to finding real places to satisfy his fiction: 'You have often given me materials for romance – now I want a good robber's cave and an old church of the right sort.'²⁴ Morritt noted that Scott always wanted to hear the story connected with a place, and that sometimes he had to confess that he didn't know one: 'he would laugh and say, "then let us make one – nothing so easy as to make a tradition."²⁵

While planning to visit Morritt to find out more, Scott bombarded him with questions in letters: 'What the deuce is the name of that wild glen where we had such a clamber on horseback up a stone staircase? – Cats-cradle or Cats castle I think it was.'²⁶ Was there a book on the scenery of Teesdale? He wanted to know the traditional tragedy of Morritt's old house at Mortham and its ghost. Morritt was one of only four people to know the secret of Scott's authorship of *Waverley* before the novel was published, and one of its first commentators – a copy was sent immediately to Rokeby on publication in July 1814. Morritt also knew well the house and domain at Abbotsford to which his own estate was so closely tied, first visiting it in 1816, then staying in the much-changed house in 1820 and throughout the 1820s. Scott broke his journeys to and from London at Rokeby in 1826 and 1828. When Scott retired from the court of session in 1830 Morritt invited him in telling terms to Rokeby, saying that in Scott's home 'I have enjoyed [...] something which is not Home and yet with the liberty of Home, which is not Solitude, and yet hath the ease of Solitude, and which is only found in the house of an old friend. [...] Pray – pray as the children say – come to us [...] I have books; also a room that shall be your own, and a pony'.²⁷

There are sadnesses as well as pleasures in the exchange. After his last brief visit to Rokeby, on his way south for his last voyage, to Malta, in 1831, Scott realised that he had left at an inn a ring he had always worn, dug up from the ruins of Hermitage Castle. He wrote to Morritt, asking him to retrieve it and to wear it for his sake until he returned home. Morritt did not see him again, but he wore the ring for the rest of his life.²⁸ There is a hint of sadness and disappointment, too, in what Scott came to write about *Rokeby* in the Introduction to his collected *Poetical Works* in 1830:

If subject and scenery could have influenced the fate of a poem, that of "Rokeby" should have been eminently distinguished; for the grounds belonged to a dear friend, with whom I had lived in habits of intimacy for many years. [...] But the Cavaliers and Roundheads, whom I attempted to summon up to tenant this beautiful region, had for the public neither the novelty nor the peculiar interest of the primitive Highlanders.²⁹

By 'the primitive Highlanders' he meant the subjects of his most popular poem, *The Lady of the Lake*, 1810. Scott is famously self-deprecating in his comments about his own work, but, as I have argued before, we

need to watch him when he offers up a particular work as a relative failure or disappointment.³⁰ In this case, Scott's choice of language is very revealing, or at least very suggestive; and I think this little passage, written years later, offers us some ways back into the poem itself. 'For the grounds belonged to a dear friend', he writes. This is at once an accurate phrase, since Scott is describing the period in which he wrote the poem, now in the past; and an odd one, since the use of the past tense in 1830 is not quite a natural thing to do. 'The grounds belong to a dear friend' would surely be a more natural way of writing, in 1830, when Morritt was still very much alive and still the owner of his estate. There is an ambiguity about the tense, as if Scott were unconsciously conflating the anxieties about ownership within the poem with those outside it. And although the point about the public not finding as much interest and novelty in Cavaliers and Roundheads as in 'primitive Highlanders' sounds convincing enough, and in fact probably was the reason some were disappointed in *Rokeby* – just not enough tartan – it is actually, within Scott's sentence, covering up a much more important and aesthetically damaging charge. 'The Cavaliers and Roundheads, whom I attempted to summon up to tenant this beautiful region': it's an acknowledgement of attempted, but not entirely successful, magic; but to tenant, rather than to inhabit, or own, or possess. These are renting ghosts; they are, Scott's turn of phrase again unconsciously suggests, not an organic unity with the land. These are just small details in a brief passage of later prose, but they are interesting because they carry forward – show still to be alive in Scott's imagination, in fact – a crux of *Rokeby* as a poem, which is the difficult co-existence of possession and dispossession.

The Rokeby family's early medieval dwelling was burnt by Scots raiders following the Battle of Bannockburn. Scott lifts an element of this destruction in the wake of one great battle to the aftermath of Marston Moor, so that for readers familiar with the history of Rokeby there is an additional parallel suggestive of an entirely different struggle between nations. The intermediary house was built after the acquisition of the estate by William Robinson in about 1610; and this in turn made way for Sir Thomas Robinson's house in 1725-30. The destruction of the house as narrated in Scott's poem, that is, is a historical conflation. It also performs a distinct act of historical repositioning, in creating, in effect, a new history for the house of Scott's good friend. What Scott does historically, politically, and psychologically, is to clear the ground for his friend's great house, reinventing it not as a chosen act of destruction followed by a new architectural start, but as a house built on ancient, but unoccupied, territory. In the wider context of the possession of land, or of imperial conquest, it is always important to be able to claim that there was nothing there before – except, of course, story, and tradition; though one can always make those up. Is important for Scott's creation of his own house and estate to realise how he chose to reimagine the history of Morritt's Rokeby. As in the case of *Rokeby* as an unhistorical historical poem, Scott anchored his own estate in an old tradition, that it occupied the site of a ford across the Tweed, used by the abbots and monks to move between the great medieval monasteries of Melrose and Dryburgh, while eliding altogether the different line, the modest agricultural context of Clarty Hole. Traditions seem anchored in an area, but they are always chosen lines of narrative, like all narratives shaped from a particular perspective and in the service of a particular view of the past. On the one hand, one of the ironies of *Rokeby* seen as a celebration of a friendship and of a friend's wonderful house, is that that house is edited out of the narrative altogether. On the other, the poem prepares the way for Morritt's house by clearing the ground of the old one, a comfortable eighty years before its time. One of Scott's letters to Morritt (10 December 1812) says: 'I am glad my geography is pretty correct. [//] It is too late to enquire if Rokeby is insured for I have burnd it down in Canto V.'³¹

Both Scott and Morritt bought new lands for their estates: but Morritt also inherited additional lands, again a reminder that Rokeby was an established reality, Abbotsford always an invention. In creating Abbotsford, Scott was building a romance in stone, but it was always built on fantasy and credit. In our own time, too, Rokeby remains in family hands. Morritt's nephew inherited it on his death in 1843, and the line of inheritance has been unbroken since then. Abbotsford, after extensive refurbishment and redesign in the past two years, is due to reopen in the summer of 2013 as part-hotel, part-visitor centre, part-study centre. In terms of physical and intellectual inheritances, the estates remain revealingly different; and, once again, it is important to note the greater instability of Scott's cultural and architectural capital, the

poignancy but also the appropriateness of its broken line of inheritance and its modern cultural role, simultaneously more fragile and more substantially realised for modern cultural consumers than Rokeby Hall, which is still emphatically a private mansion, opened to the public on two afternoons each week during the summer months.

As Byron asked, 'Send me "*Rokeby*" who the deuce is he? no matter – he has good connections, & will be well introduced.' *Rokeby*'s connections are, indeed, very good, but they are more complicated, in their own time and in ours, than has been recognised. A poem rooted in an unexpected place and in a very private friendship, *Rokeby* also shows that connections can be fragile and are always contingent – that they can be lost, and also that they can be rediscovered in new contexts and new times. Serious work on *Rokeby* also involves opening literary scholarship up to new forms of connection, notably the connectedness of literary and architectural estates, and the significance of writing a poem while building a house. An integrated aesthetic of building and text is one of the many new directions Scott scholarship can take, now, in 2013.

NOTES

1. See especially W. S. Crockett, *The Scott Country* (Edinburgh and London: Adam and Charles Black, 1902), and *The Scott Originals* (London and Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1912); and Florence MacCunn, *Sir Walter Scott's Friends* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1909), esp. pp. 309-23 on J. B. S. Morritt.
2. *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, ed. J. G. Lockhart, 12 vols. (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1833-4), 9, pp. 10-11.
3. *The Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels*, 30 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993-2012), 18a, p. 3.
4. *Waverley Novels* 18a, p. 4.
5. A revised version of this lecture will be published as ch. 5 of Susan Manning, *Poetics of Character: Transatlantic Encounters, 1700-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
6. Fiona Robertson, ed., *The Edinburgh Companion to Sir Walter Scott* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 2.
7. See Emma House, Michael Rudd, and Tony Seward, *Rokeby: Poetry and Landscape. Walter Scott and Turner in Teesdale* (Barnard Castle: Bowes Museum, 2013).
8. John Gibson Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 2nd edn., 10 vols. (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1839), 3, p. 94.
9. *Edinburgh Companion*, pp. 46, 126.
10. *Edinburgh Companion*, p. 153.
11. *Edinburgh Companion*, p. 138.
12. *Edinburgh Companion*, pp. 95-6.
13. 'Famous in my time': *Byron's Letters and Journals vol. 2, 1810-1812*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (London: John Murray, 1973), p. 191. See also p. 197 (14 September 1812): 'I thirst for Scott's Rokeby let me have ye. first begotten copy.'
14. *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), p. 311.
15. See the unsigned review in the *British Review* for May 1813 (4, pp. 126-33), rpt. in John O. Hayden, ed., *Scott: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1970), pp. 62-66.
16. The Irish aspects of the poem have been analysed by Nancy Moore Goslee, *Scott the Rhymers* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), ch. 4; and by Owen Dudley Edwards in a 2006 essay in this *Bulletin*, 'Scott and Ireland'.
17. Canto Fifth, st. xi; *Poetical Works of Scott 1904*, p. 356.
18. *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson et al, 12 vols. (London: Constable, 1932-7), 3, p. 40.
19. I am grateful to Peter Garside for allowing me to read the latest scholarship on this subject, an essay by Michael Buck and Peter Garside, 'Early Planning at Abbotsford, 1811-1812: Walter Scott, William Stark, and the Cottage that Never Was', forthcoming in *Architectural Heritage*, vol. 24, 2014.
20. *Letters*, 3, p. 115.
21. Lockhart, 3, p. 95.
22. *Letters*, 2, p. 204. Scott uses similar terms in a later letter to Joanna Baillie (29 November 1812), *Letters*, 3, p. 199.
23. *Letters*, 3, p. 40.
24. Lockhart, 4, p. 20.
25. Lockhart, 4, p. 21.
26. *Letters*, 3, p. 41.
27. Edgar Johnson, *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*, 2 vols. (paginated as one) (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970), p. 1148.
28. Lockhart, 10, p. 108.
29. *Poetical Works*, 9, p. 12.
30. See for example *Legitimate Histories: Scott, Gothic, and the Authorities of Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 4-5, 134-5, 153.
31. *Letters*, 3, p. 205.