GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Even although Scott's literary reputation has been transformed by a tide of critical studies by international scholars, and by the first critical edition of his novels which appeared between 1993 and 2012, little attention has been paid to the poetry. One of the reasons is that there has never been a scholarly edition, and no complete edition is in print. The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry (EEWSP) will be the first to provide a reliable text, and it will be the first to make all his poetry available. No previous edition has been as comprehensive, and none claiming to be comprehensive has appeared for over one hundred years.

On historical grounds the neglect of Scott's poetry is curious. It was his poetry that defined the new sensibility which is now termed 'Romanticism'. His poetry was incomparably the most popular in the first decade of the nineteenth century: in 1810 the publication of *The Lady of the Lake* was the media event of the year and over 25,000 copies were sold in the first twelve months. His success was dazzling: readers could not get enough of his work. Further, to understand Scott it is necessary to understand his career as a poet, for it was his poetry, particularly *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*, which first established his reputation.

Of course, Scott did not help himself. In the Introduction to *Rokeby*[1] he made a typically self-effacing suggestion that the emergence of Byron as a major (and arguably darker and sexier) poet caused him to abandon his poetic endeavours and turn to writing fiction; this almost certainly instigated in later generations a sense that his poetry was less significant than the novels that followed. In fact Scott's narrative distorts the actualities of his poetic career. 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 certainly all published before the appearance of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Cantos I and II, in 1812, but Scott wrote several more significant narrative poems after this date, including *Rokeby* (1813) and *The Lord of the Isles* (1815). The current volume of *The Shorter Poems*, moreover, demonstrates convincingly that Scott also wrote short and occasional verse throughout his life, and of course, as the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley

Novels (EEWN) has shown, Scott wrote much original poetry for the novels as mottos and to represent the (sometimes deliberately inept) poetic aspirations of his characters. Writing poetry was an activity that spanned his whole career.

A new critical edition of Scott's poetry therefore seems timely but what it should include is less evident. While the body of Scott's fiction is fairly well defined the poetry is less so. Several models present themselves. The first lies in J. G. Lockhart's 1833–34 *Poetical Works* edition, but this is problematic. Volumes 1–5 comprise *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and Scott's edition of the medieval romance *Sir Tristrem*. Early in its discussions the EEWSP team decided that edited works lie outside the scope of this edition. A second model is offered by J. Logie Robertson's Oxford edition of 1894, as republished in 1904, which does not include the *Minstrelsy* material but does include Scott's original contributions to it. It also expands upon Lockhart's body of miscellaneous and shorter poems, and incorporates the poetry and verse Scott wrote for the novels. After much discussion it was agreed that the EEWSP should include not just the narrative poems and all the shorter and lyric poems that appear in Lockhart's edition, but also the uncollected poetry then in process of being discovered by the editors of *The Shorter Poems*, which significantly expands the known body of Scott's work. Original works by Scott himself which appeared in the *Minstrelsy* are included, but not the poems and songs he collected. His verse drama appears in its own volume and its inclusion will facilitate scholarship and comparison with the plays of contemporaries like Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron. The incidental original poetry in the Waverley Novels also forms part of the edition, for Scott himself sanctioned its separate collection and publication by Archibald Constable in 1822. The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry will also include Scott's own essays on poetry, published as the 1830 Introductions to *Poetical Works* and as essays in the 1833–34 edition. It is true to say that Scott never provides us with a formulated theory of fiction, although we can see one if we synthesise views articulated in the introductory chapters in the Waverley Novels, in reviews, and his 'Lives of the Novelists'. But nowhere does he provide so comprehensive a view of literature as he does in these essays on poetry.

The Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels provided a wealth of information about publishing practices relating to Scott's fiction, and indeed nineteenth-century fiction more generally. But the EEWSP team recognised that the poetry was written and published in different conditions and so it examined the publishing history and the textual archaeology of a number of key texts; all textual witnesses published in Scott's lifetime were collated against a standard of collation and

publishing papers were comprehensively examined. It was found that Scott's poetry, being published under his own name, was subjected to considerable social pressure, unlike the novels where the main problem was the copying which preserved Scott's anonymity, but generated many errors. It was concluded that the discoveries of the EEWN editors, and the methodologies developed from them, cannot be transferred and applied wholesale to editing the poetry. New approaches were required.

A new edition of Scott's longer poems could be based on the manuscripts, most of which are close to being intact: only that of the *Lay* is missing. However the manuscripts are not appropriate since Scott expected the conventions of print to be imposed upon his poetry before its publication. The 1833–34 *Poetical Works*, edited by Lockhart and appearing just after Scott's death, offers the model of a collection supposedly based on the latest texts approved by the author. However, it is clear that as a base-text for a new edition, at least for those poems examined to date, it would be wholly unsuitable. There is no evidence to suggest that Scott was artistically engaged in its production, 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, no set has been found, and Lockhart makes almost no emendations on its supposed authority. In fact, Lockhart's edition reveals more about the commercial agenda that he and Robert Cadell were pursuing at the point of its publication than it does about Scott's 'final intentions' for his poetry. Unfortunately Lockhart's edition provided the textual basis for all other editions published in the nineteenth century, and for the collection most widely available in the twentieth century, that edited by J. Logie Robertson.

If Lockhart's edition is inappropriate what of the first editions of Scott's poems? While the EEWN never explicitly states that the first editions should form the base text, 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 (with some notable exceptions such as *Waverley*) there is very little evidence that Scott intervened in the texts of his novels between the first editions and the late Magnum project. However, a very different picture emerges in relation to the long poems. The different versions of those works examined in detail reveal that the texts do not remain stable but evolve and change in subtle ways from one edition to the next. We can reflect on the reasons for this: when Scott was writing the early narrative poems he was a much younger and less influential figure and it is possible that he had less control over the publication of his work. However, Scott's open avowal of authorship and the freeness with which he communicated

his plans to friends makes the production of the poetry significantly different to that of the novels of the 'Great Unknown'.

With no need for secrecy Scott's poetry reached print very publicly, with friends and correspondents contributing their thoughts and responses. After publication, this process continued, with correspondents advising Scott on how his poems could be improved and contributing additional material for notes; his friends too criticised what he had written, and made suggestions for revisions, and even rewrote lines of verse. Ainsley McIntosh, editor of *Marmion*, following Jerome McGann, has described this process 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-publication stages. This pattern is replicated in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) and, tellingly, even in *The Lord of the Isles* (1815), published after Scott had begun to publish fiction. In each Scott continues to be artistically engaged with the poem beyond its first appearance in print; the first edition is not the end point of its creative evolution. However there comes a point, usually about a year after a poem was first published, where the continuing process of adjustment and augmentation more or less ceases. The editors consider this point to be the culmination of the creative process. In other words, these early editions are part of what we might call an initial creative process which is in the main Scott's, but which takes in and responds to the public context. As a consequence the base-text for each of these long poems is the edition in which the poem settles into its fullest articulation.

Collation also revealed that while Scott may have been 'improving' his poems at this early stage, they were also simultaneously deteriorating: punctuation, layout, and even occasional words were inevitably corrupted as compositors 'translated' the manuscript into print, and repeatedly used the last published edition as the copy-text for the next. Scott's handwriting is much easier to read in his younger years than his later and the layout of a poem on the page mitigates against the kind of cramped script that is found in the manuscripts of the novels. However, this does not mean that there were no errors in reading them; as with his fiction, Scott's poetry reveals that he has a more extensive and technical vocabulary than those who were preparing his work for publication and it was not always understood. The manuscripts of his poems also reveal layers of revision which were sometimes brought into the printed text incorrectly. While the manuscripts are lightly punctuated, Scott is emphatic when punctuation is meaningful but his wishes were not always followed. At times he was also emphatic

about the layout of his text: indentation is closely aligned with his complex rhyming pattern but it was not always followed and errors were made. As new editions appeared further deterioration inevitably ensued. Scott's texts, therefore, came 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, is to emend copy-texts both where there are obvious misreadings of the manuscript and where there is clear deterioration which can be attributed to compositors' errors and blundered attempts at correction. By returning to manuscript readings the freshness of the original texts can be captured without detracting from the developed text, and by removing the accretions of printing errors Scott's intentions, as discerned in what *he* wrote, can be recovered. While emendation may not be as extensive as in the novels, it is nevertheless significant, and it is hoped that it results in a text that fully captures Scott's artistic vision.

Emendations to the poetic texts are not, however, the only changes. This edition is novel in its treatment of Scott's annotation. In the novels the majority of Scott's notes were introduced as part of the Magnum Opus edition of 1829–33, but the notes to his longer narrative poems, and indeed some of his shorter verse, were *always* intrinsic to the original texts. The notes constitute an important part of their paratextual dialogue, and they are frequently textually unstable. A cursory look reveals that they are not notes as we would now understand them: they give accounts of his sources; they provide supplementary material; at times they are narratives in their own right. Indeed, they 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 storytelling, stating in *Reliquiæ Trotcosienses* that he could never prevent himself from 'gliding into the true musing style of an antiquarian disposed in sailors' phrase to "spin a tough yarn"'.[2] Lockhart's approach to this annotation compounds the inadequacy of his 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 annotatory material. Other editions omit the notes altogether. However, in the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry his notes are presented, as they were in the early editions, as part of the text of his poems, thus restoring a relationship that was clear in Scott's mind but has been lost in later reprintings of his poems.

The notes introduce an additional textual complication: Scott often relied upon amanuenses to copy material from other works to include in his own notes, and examining the copies against their sources it is

possible to see where mistakes were made. When Scott himself copied documents he often adjusted and modernised his source, and this is allowed to stand in this edition for it is what Scott intended. But when an amanuensis misread a manuscript, introduced errors, or provided an 'interpretation' of the source, the EEWSP emends.

This, then, is the textual policy and general procedure governing the treatment of the longer narrative poems. However, while these general principles are applied throughout the edition whenever possible, in some instances they require adjustment. In the case of the present volume, for example, the varied nature of the textual witnesses (including magazines, newspapers and even funerary inscriptions) had to be accommodated. The particular approach for *The Shorter Poems* is outlined in its Essay on the Texts, but at all times the overriding principle is that the text demonstrably closest to the author will be preferred. Of course the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry also provides its own paratextual material to re-invigorate understanding of Scott's verse. The appropriate form of this material for *The Shorter Poems* is outlined in the Essay on the Texts but as elsewhere in the edition its aim is to support modern readers without imposing unnecessary interpretation upon the work they are encountering. In these respects the poetry volumes follow the pattern of the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels and provide a companion to it.

Walter Scott's poetry is truly innovative. In *Marmion* Scott suggests that the poet should 'scorn pedantic laws' (Canto 5, line 183) and while his extraordinary dexterity in handling verse forms was at times perplexing for critics, it also prompted a recognition that something new and radical was at work within his poetry. He was also experimenting with the supernatural as was Coleridge, and with the construction of memory in relation to time and locale long before Wordsworth's *Prelude* was published.

The aim of the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry is to restore his 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 reprintings. It also aims to enrich the reading experience of those who come fresh to Scott's poetry. It is the hope of all involved that by doing so his full significance as a poet will be realised, and that the complexities at work within his poetry, and the relevance of the issues with which it deals, will be revealed. The editorial team is not blind to the challenge; reading nineteenth-century narrative poetry of the kind that Scott writes, to say nothing of verse dramas, requires a re-discovery of a type of reading that has to some extent been forgotten. It is hoped that a critical edition, which

provides readers with clear and accurate texts along with the support they need to understand them in a twenty-first century context, will encourage a rediscovery of the pleasures of this kind of reading. The rewards are, we are certain, invigorating.

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Notes

1 Walter Scott, Introduction to *Rokeby, The Poetical Works of Walter Scott, Bart.*, [ed. J. G. Lockhart], 12 vols (Edinburgh 1833–34), 9.15–20.

2 Walter Scott, *Reliquiæ Trotcosienses or the Gabions of the Late Jonathan Oldbuck Esq. of Monkbarns*, ed. Gerard Carruthers and Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh, 2004), 34.