

THERE WAS A WRITER, A SCOTTISH WRITER: TRANSCENDING OPPOSITIONS IN SCOTT'S *IVANHOE* (1819)

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ABSTRACT

As Humberto Lopes once wrote, "(...) as far as cultural identities are concerned, frontiers can hardly be said to be unsurpassable obstacles." (2003: 21; my translation) This idea is, I believe, a fruitful one when applied to Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), whose *début* as a novelist we commemorated in 2014; if only because, as David Daiches put it, "Scott was two men: (...) both the prudent Briton and the passionate Scot." (1968: 36). We can only speculate on how he would balance today, were he alive, these two halves of his political citizenship and view, or react to, the long-standing claims for independence espoused and voiced by the Scottish National Party; claims tested in the September 2014 referendum, two hundred years since the publication of *Waverley* (1814)

Hardly a coincidence, surely; but that lies beyond the scope and purpose of the present paper. I will simply seek to show how social, political and cultural messages may have filtered into *Ivanhoe* (1819), Scott's first published historical novel on the Middle Ages and on a specifically English theme.



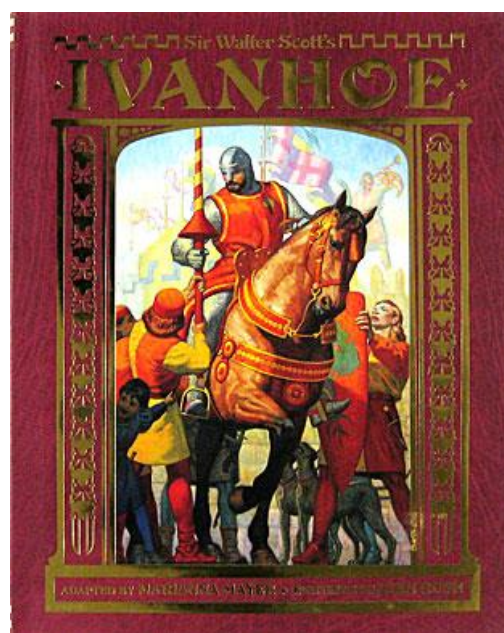
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² A different version of this article was presented by the author in 2014 at the International Congress "Transcending Oppositions in Scottish Culture: a Symposium", which was organized by CETAPS (Oporto).

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To Professor Maria Laura Bettencourt Pires
(Catholic University of Portugal), with fond and tender gratitude



As Humberto Lopes (2003: 21) once wrote on Miranda do Douro, a NE Portuguese town close to the Spanish border, '[...] em matéria de identidades culturais, as fronteiras estão longe de ser adamastores invencíveis.¹³ Indeed, paradoxically though it may seem at first, the existence and/or the very concept of "frontiers" or "borders" (including the Anglo-Scottish one) can blind us to the fact that they can also be ways of bridging, uniting, dissolving or transcending oppositions, as they are, after all, two-edged, double-faced peripheries centrally

³ "As far as cultural identities are concerned, frontiers can hardly said to be unsurpassable obstacles."
(My translation)

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located in some common (and therefore shared) middle ground. Edwin Muir (1985: 45), the Scottish poet, novelist and critic (1887-1959), has even claimed that: "The essential virtues of a nation generally gather at their greatest strength not at its centre but at the places where it is most powerfully and persistently threatened: its frontiers.", whereas Thomas Crawford (1965: 48) highlights: "[...] a fundamental Scottishness that binds together all opponents, even as they slay and persecute one another." and goes on to argue (*ibid.*: 113) that:

"Scott can still be a living influence upon those writers who wish to come to terms with all the contradictory forces in their country's history."

These points, I believe, can be fruitfully applied to Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), whose *début* as a novelist was commemorated two years ago. To start with, Scott's family, social and professional life, both as a man of law and as a man of letters, took place in his native Edinburgh, in one of the most 'progressive' --- or, according to some, Anglicized --- parts of Scotland,⁴ and further south, in Abbotsford,⁵ nr. Melrose, in his beloved border country.

⁴ Scott lived, among other places, in 25 George Square (Catford 1975: 72), 21 Castle Street (*ibid.*: 169) and, if different, 39 North Castle Street (Royle 1980: 125). Trevor Royle (*ibid.*: 93) evokes thus the urban developments Edinburgh went through shortly before Scott's lifetime: "By mid-century the city council was in agreement that if Edinburgh was to prosper as a *British* city and as a Scottish capital, it had to grow. In 1759 [...] a bridge was built [...] to join the Old Town with the 'rich and pleasant plain' to the North. The next step was to announce a competition for the planning of the new extension to the city, [...]" On 17th April 1767 it was announced that James Craig [...] had submitted the best plan [...] His prize-winning plan shows a carefully laid out, formal city with a symmetry and elegance [...] perfectly in keeping with the eighteenth century Smile of Reason. [...] The New Town was conceived of as being British and as equalling London and even the street names reflect the ideals of a united country --- George Street, Frederick Street, St. David Street, St. Andrew Square, Charlotte Square."

⁵ Abbotsford is obviously mentioned in most books on British medievalism and the Gothic Revival, as well as in Girouard 1981: chaps. 3-4, 29-54 *passim*. Edwin Muir's somewhat harsh comments on Scott's mansion and on Scott himself (1985: 57) deserve to be quoted: "It is a place certainly well-suited to be displayed, to astonish, to stagger, and to sadden; but that it should ever been lived in is the most astonishing, staggering, saddening thing of all. One feels, while wandering through it, [...] that if one

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Moreover, as is well known, Scott was also a keen collector (though sometimes a not very scrupulous editor...) of traditional songs and ballads, including those on the medieval warfare between England and Scotland, which he published in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-03). Finally, he was probably the first Scottish literary author to be widely and eagerly read by the English public and indeed to achieve an international recognition and reputation far beyond the British Isles.

Although deeply, patriotically and romantically committed to the preservation of Scotland's cultural identity(ies) --- heritage, memory, institutions, traditions... ---, Scott seems never to have been an uncritical defender of a petrified immutability of his country's most archaic or 'backward' features, often identified and associated with (if not indeed reduced to...) stereotyped age-old values and 'primitive' ways of life in the Highlands (outdated agricultural practices, livestock-breeding, clan feuding, Jacobitism, etc.)⁶ Not meaning to paraphrase David Daiches's summary (1968: 36) of the main ambivalences and tensions underlying the making of Scott as a novelist, he was aware of the political, commercial and industrial opportunities and advantages Scotland had benefited from (and since) the Act of

stayed here long enough one would [...] understand the mania which drove him [Scott] to create this pompous, crude, fantastic, unmanageable, heartless, insatiable, comfortless brute of a house, and sacrifice to it [...] his genius, his peace of mind, his health and his life. Everything in it [...] is designed for ostentation; it is a huge show-room of vulgar romantic properties."; "It must have been the 'Ivanhoe' side of Scott that built and furnished Abbotsford. Consequently it is both real and unreal, like 'Ivanhoe', and has the inspired tastelessness of a substitute which is indispensable. It is surely the saddest and strangest monument that Scott's genius created." (*Ibid.*: 61); and, finally, "The ubiquity of Scott's presence in the Borders a hundred years after his death [1832], the persistence with which he has set his mark on the landscape, as if he were resolved to be a Border laird and extort the homage of one in perpetuity, is exasperating." (*Ibid.*: 48) See also Muir's views *apud* Crawford 1965: 109-10.

⁶ The dust jacket of a book reproducing Colin Baxter's beautiful photos on Scotland (1999: n. p.) describes her as "[...] a land of contrasts, highland to lowland, island to mainland, east to west, while the [...] unpredictable weather creates endlessly variable light effects, from sudden golden shafts piercing a leaden sky to the silvery quality of clear northern air or the radiant warmth of a western sunset."

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Union with England (1707); he believed in the inevitability of Progress⁷ (though at a cost, as noted, among others, by Kelly⁸ and Brown⁹), a point which may perhaps be ascribed to the philosophical notions of History upheld by that Enlightenment which also flourished north of the border,¹⁰ showing 'educated' England and 'civilized' Europe that 'Scotland had got talent', long before Susan Boyle (1961-)... Moreover, although a Scot and a Tory, Sir Walter was loyal to the Hanoverian dynasty which had emerged in 1714, in the Whig-oriented wake of the Glorious Revolution (1688), the Bill of Rights (1689) and the Act of Settlement (1701), banishing the Stuarts, after Culloden (1746), "over the water" and across Skye.¹¹ Last, but not

⁷ "[...] if Scott's main tendency in all his novels [...] is to represent and defend progress, [...] this progress is for him [...] a process full of contradictions, the driving force and material basis of which is the contradiction between conflicting historical forces, the antagonism of classes and nations." (Lukács 1981: 57)

⁸ "Scott often registers a sense of nostalgia or incorporates an elegy for values, ways of life, and individuals necessarily lost in the historical plot of progress from savagery to civilization." (Kelly 1989: 144; see also *ibid.*: 157-58)

⁹ "On the one hand, [...] Scott feels compelled to affirm the fact of human progress through history; on the other, he is deeply sympathetic to the heroic qualities found in past societies and to people who, through no fault of their own, are bound to be destroyed by the historical process." (Brown 1979: 204; see also *ibid.*: 179, 183 and 195-205 *passim*)

¹⁰ Including names like Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696-1782), David Hume (1711-1776), James Burnett, Lord Monboddo (1714-1799), Hugh Blair (1718-1800), Adam Smith (1723-1790), Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), John Millar (1735-1801), James Boswell (1740-1795), Henry Mackenzie (1745-1831), Dugald Stewart (1753-1828), Robert Burns (1759-1796), etc. On Scott's affinities with, and indebtedness to, the philosophical historians of the Scottish Enlightenment, see Forbes 1953 and Garside 1975.

¹¹ "Scott began to wonder if he was destined to be the reconciler of the Hanoverians to the Scottish people. As soon as this idea occurred, Scott must have seemed [...] the ideal person for the task. He was a loyal subject of the crown, yet a lover of Jacobite antiquities, and a sound Anglican who understood the heart of the Lowland Covenanters. [...] He was fond of describing himself as 'an incorrigible Jacobite,' and felt sure that he would have taken arms for the Pretender if he had lived in his time. Yet he was not only a loyal subject of the Georges; he was convinced [...] of the necessity and rightness of England's decision to cast off the Stuarts. And he saw the matter [...] not just as a choice between

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least, he was a supporter of a then fairly recent United Kingdom, created by yet another Act of Union (1800).

Scott's active involvement in the organization and reception committee that welcomed a tartan-clad George IV (1820-30) in his famous visit to Edinburgh (August 1822)¹² deserves to be mentioned here. E. F. Catford (1975: 169) reports:

Scott's house was besieged by Highland chieftains, several of whom had arrived [...] for the occasion, each with a rather fierce looking 'tail', as their groups of clansmen [...] were [...] called. The chiefs applied to Scott on questions of precedence which they sought to settle on the basis of the relative positions their clans had occupied at the battle of Bannockburn [1314], a matter on which [...] they regarded Scott as an expert.

Dwelling likewise on Scott's status and image as a preserver of traditions, 'invented' or otherwise --- or, if you will, selective(ed) memory(ies) ---, Sutherland (1997: 258) alludes to

[...] what Lockhart [John Gibson Lockhart, Scott's son-in-law and biographer, 1794-1854] calls 'an orgy of Celtification': a shameless parade of kilts, bagpipes, sporrans, claymores, and the panoply of Old Gael, all of dubious accuracy but picturesque enough to establish the image of Scotland in the non-Scottish mind for all time.

Caricatures apart, the episode illustrates our 'laird' of the Isles' allegiance to a tale of two borders (or a single double border perhaps?), whereby the story (as well as the history) of two different nations --- often 'disUnited Kingdoms' in 'auld lang syne' --- might profitably

dynasties, but as involving every important question of political and cultural development." (Cockshut 1969: 14-16 *passim*; see also Wilson in Scott 1986: xxvi-xxviii)

¹² See, for instance, Catford 1975: 169-75 and Sutherland 1997: 256-60, as well as Hugh Trevor-Roper's essay in Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds.) 1987: 15-41.

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be co-written in the 19th century political (con)text of one joint British state; whereby merry England and bonnie Scotland might live, work and grow together towards common goals, while retaining, at the same time, their original, distinct(ive) and time-honoured cultural *personae*.¹³ For all these reasons, as David Daiches (1968: 36) has perceptively put it, 'Scott was two men: [...] both the prudent Briton and the passionate Scot.' We can only speculate on how he would balance today these two halves of his political citizenship and face, or react to, the long-standing claims for independence and/or devolution espoused and voiced by Scottish nationalism; claims tested in the September 2014 referendum, seven centuries past Bannockburn and 'two hundred years since' the publication of *Waverley* (1814). Hardly a coincidence, surely...; but that lies beyond the scope and purpose of the present paper.

I will just seek to show how this social, political and cultural message may have filtered into *Ivanhoe* (1819), a book I have discussed elsewhere (Alarcão 2001: 336-64 and *id.* 2007: 639-48). Let me start by noting that this was Scott's first published historical novel¹⁴ on the Middle Ages and on a specifically English theme,¹⁵ a venture of which he was aware, as documented in his introduction, dated 1st September 1830 (Scott 1986: 534-36 *passim*):

It was plain [...] that frequent publication must [...] wear out the public favour, unless some mode could be devised to give an appearance of novelty to subsequent productions. Scottish manners, Scottish dialect, and Scottish characters [...], being those with which the author was most intimately and familiarly acquainted, were the groundwork upon which he had hitherto relied for giving effect to his narrative. It was, however, obvious, that this kind of

¹³ As Scott himself wrote in the overtly political *Letters of Malachi Malagrowther* (1826), "For God's sake [...] let us remain as Nature made us, Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotchmen, with something like the impress of our several countries upon each." (*apud* Wilson in Scott 1986: xxvii-xxviii)

¹⁴ Bearing in mind its full title (*Ivanhoe: A Romance*), the taxonomical description of the book as an "historical novel", an "historical romance" or (a mixture of) both is, obviously, a relevant question, though beside our point here; see Chandler 1975, and Kelly 1989, especially chapters "History and Romance" (142-49 *passim*) and "The Romance of History [...]" (157-60), as well as below, n. 13.

¹⁵ "In 1819, Scotland's greatest novelist re-emerged as England's chronicler." (Sutherland 1997: 227)

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interest must in the end occasion a degree of sameness and repetition, if exclusively resorted to, [...]

Whether this reasoning be correct or otherwise, the [...] author felt that, in confining himself to subjects purely Scottish, he was not only likely to weary out the indulgence of his readers, but also greatly to limit his own power of affording them pleasure. [...]

It is not, perhaps necessary to enumerate so many reasons why the author of the Scottish novels, as they were then [...] termed, should be desirous to make an experiment on a subject purely English.¹⁶

The 'experiment' paid off, as Wilson recalls (in Scott 1989: xix):

Ivanhoe was Scott's most popular novel to date. Lockhart [John Gibson Lockhart, Scott's son-in-law and biographer, 1794-1854] tells us 'it was received throughout England with a more clamorous delight than any of the *Scotch novels* had been' and that it sold twelve thousand copies of the expensive edition alone. It remained, throughout the nineteenth century, the most popular of Scott's novels, '*la véritable épopée de notre âge*', as Victor Hugo called it.

Set in the absence of Richard I (1189-1199), due to his involvement in the Third Crusade and the ensuing captivity in Austria, the (re)presentation of late 12th century England as still strongly dominated by racial, social and political divisions between the 'good' Saxons and the 'bad' Normans is historically debatable..., as is, indeed, the clear-cut opposition between 'heroes' and 'villains', 'freedom' and 'tyranny', traditionally upheld by the Norman Yoke thesis which Scott knew and Christopher Hill (1986) masterly reviewed.¹⁷ However,

¹⁶ See also the Dedicatory Epistle, signed by an entirely fictitious 'Laurence Templeton' and dated 17th November 1817 (*Ibid.*: 521-33).

¹⁷ See also Wood 2000: 3-22, Alarcão 2001: 340-48 and *id.* 2007: 639-48.

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things are often less straightforward or 'black-and-white' than we tend to think and the possibility that Scott may have written *Ivanhoe* with an eye in the medieval past and the other in his own present¹⁸ is thus deconstructed by A. N. Wilson (in Scott 1986: xxv):

For 'Normans', read 'English'; for 'English', read 'Scotch'; for 'Plantagenet', read 'Hanoverian', for the line of Athelstane, that of the exiled Stuarts; for the destruction of the Anglo-Saxon tongue, read that of the Gaelic, and for the dountreading of the Anglo-Saxon serfs, read the failure of London governments to broaden Scottish franchise, to extend the numbers of Scottish members in Parliament, or to subsidize such flagging resources as the Scottish fishing industry....¹⁹

As Paul Gilroy (1956-) might say, 'There ain't no 'Jocks' in the Union Jack' ...; but, more seriously, I would suggest that Scott, the historical novelist committed to setting into fiction what Scott, the political citizen, seems to have believed in and stood for, would probably lean towards a consensual (and very British!) *via media*, in order to transcend the oppositions, tensions and conflicts lurking in the novel. As Lukács (1981: 36) once wrote on Scott's heroes:

It is their task to bring the extremes whose struggle fills the novel, whose clash expresses artistically a great crisis in society, into contact with one another.

¹⁸ "[...] Scott's novels, in the way they treat the past, are about the immediate present and future of Scotland, of Britain, and the Christian West [...]" (Kelly 1989: 141) and "[...] in all of his novels Scott's first point of reference, explicit or implicit, is his own present and the immediate future of Britain." (*Ibid.*: 142)

¹⁹ John Sutherland (1997: 228) puts forward an alternative view: "In the novel, the English state is paralysed by a monarchic power vacuum. Prey to an uncontrolled oligarchy of barons [...], the country must wait until its true king [...] returns to occupy his throne. This interregnant state of things is analogous to the [...] condition of England in 1819. It was titularly under the rule of a [...] disabled monarch, the mad George III [1760-1820], with a competent [...] heir-presumptive in the wings waiting to sweep in like the black knight and rescue his country from scheming politicians [sic]."

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Through the plot, [...] a neutral ground is sought and found upon which the extreme, opposing social forces can be brought into a human relationship with one another.

He [Scott] finds in English history the consolation that the most violent vicissitudes of class struggle have always finally calmed down into a glorious 'middle way'. Thus, out of the struggle of the Saxons and the Normans there arose the English nation, neither Saxon nor Norman; [...] (*Ibid.*: 31)²⁰

This view is endorsed by the narrator himself in the final pages (Chap. XLIV, 515), *a propos* the marriage of Ivanhoe and Rowena:

[...] as the two nations mixed in society and formed intermarriages with each other, the Normans abated their scorn, and the Saxons were refined from their rusticity.

Let us then look closer at some major characters, starting with Cedric of Rotherwood, the old, die-hard and unflinching Saxon patriarch. According to Aymer, Prior of Jorvaulx Abbey, 'He stands up so sternly for the privileges of his race, and is so proud of his uninterrupted descent from Hereward, a renowned champion of the Heptarchy, that he is universally called Cedric the Saxon.' (Chap. II, 26) Cedric is, in fact, deeply committed to promoting the marriage of Prince Athelstane of Coningsburgh, whose lineage goes back to the last Saxon kings, to the Lady Rowena, Cedric's ward and herself a descendant from Alfred, the Great (871-899). Nevertheless, Rowena's love for Ivanhoe has strained even further Cedric's relationship with his son, whom he disinherits on two related grounds: Ivanhoe's *penchant*

²⁰ "In *Ivanhoe* he [Scott] treated the chaos arising from the struggle between Saxons and Normans and the beginning of a new, more ordered society. But he realized that there was much of the heroic and romantic in both cultures that would unfortunately have to be sacrificed before the two peoples could fuse and form the English nation." (Duncan 1968: 143)

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for, or conversion to, the Norman ways²¹ and his close military involvement with Richard the Lion-Heart (Chap. XXVIII, 296), a great great-grandson of William, the bastard Conqueror (1066-1087), formerly Duke of Normandy.

Cedric's staunch Saxon patriotism and mixed feelings towards Richard can be illustrated by his reaction to the news of the conquest of Acre²² or when, facing Prince John full in the face at the banquet in Ashby-de-la-Zouche, he boldly proposes a toast to John's absent royal brother.²³ Speaking of the king, attention should be drawn to his self-presentation as "'Richard of England' (Chap. XL, 464), rather than "'Richard Plantagenet' or "'Richard of Anjou',²⁴ after the attack on Front-de-Boeuf's stronghold, the first instance of a truly patriotic 'English' rise against the 'Normans'.²⁵ However, Richard's attempts at transcending oppositions in the name of an 'unitable' England had already been announced by the king incognito, when The Black Knight declares to Locksley:

²¹ For some curious examples of *Ivanhoe*'s 'Normanization', as Cedric sees it, check chaps. XIV, 159, XVIII, 191 and XLII, 486. But he is not the only one, as the narrator makes clear before Athelstane's aborted funeral: "[...] the younger race, to the great displeasure of the seniors, had, like *Ivanhoe*, broken down many of the barriers which separated for half a century the Norman victors from the vanquished Saxons." (Chap. XLII, 479-80)

²² "I forgive him his descent from the tyrant Duke William" (Chap. V, 54).

²³ "Your Highness has required that I should name a Norman deserving to be remembered at our banquet. This [...] is a hard task, since it calls on the slave to sing the praises of the master – upon the vanquished, while pressed by all the evils of conquest, to sing the praises of the conqueror. Yet I *will* name a Norman – the first in arms and in place – the best and the noblest of his race. I quaff this goblet to the health of Richard the Lion-hearted!" (Chap. XIV, 162)

²⁴ When Cedric addresses him as Richard of Anjou, the king replies: "No, noble Cedric – Richard of England! whose deepest interest -- whose deepest wish, is to see her sons united with each other". (Chap. XLII, 484-485) Even De Bracy, one of John's Norman supporters, names Richard, in one single sentence, as Richard Plantagenet, Richard Coeur-de-Lion and Richard of England (Chap. XXXIV, 380).

²⁵ To John Sutherland (1997: 230), "[...] what really transforms the Black Knight into 'Richard of England' is his fighting shoulder by shoulder with the Saxons against his brother Normans at Torquilstone. By this act of fratricide, he becomes an adoptive Saxon."

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"You can speak to no one [...] to whom England, and the life of every Englishman, can be dearer than to me.' (Chap. XX, 212), later describing himself as '[...] a true English knight [...]' (Chap. XXXI, 332).

Despite Cedric's grandiose plans regarding the two Saxon magnates, Prince Athelstane and Lady Rowena, his high hopes are often thwarted by their choices, actions, reactions and/or inactions. As far as Rowena is concerned, she remains, throughout the novel, a rather hazy character, especially when compared to Rebecca, the charismatic daughter of the Jew Isaac of York.²⁶ The narrator also alludes to Athelstane's shortcomings from his first appearance on stage (Chap. VII, 84); not only is he dubbed "The Unready",²⁷ but his passive behaviour --- and even his language! --- falls dramatically short of Cedric's great expectations.²⁸ How then, one may reasonably ask, would either (or both) of them ever be able to inspire and lead any Saxon resurgence, let alone restoration? At the end of the novel, even the old thane will have to face up to reality and pragmatically bow down to the inevitable.²⁹

²⁶ The sharp contrast between the two women was soon noticed and commented upon by a public bent on poetic justice, causing Scott to offer an apologetic explanation (See his introduction in Scott 1986: 544-45) and inspiring, a generation later, a burlesque sequel by William Thackeray (1811-1863), *Rebecca and Rowena* (1850).

²⁷ Whereas the name "Athelstane" evokes the memory of Alfred's grandson (King of Wessex, 924-939), associated with the reconquest of the Danelaw, the surname "the Unready" ironically recalls that of Ethelred II (978 or 979-1016), often blamed by the Danish conquest of England (Canute or Cnut, 1016-1035).

²⁸ See, for instance, chaps. VIII, 94-95, XII, 133, XVIII, 195-198 and XXI, 222-223.

²⁹ "In fact, the return of Richard had quenched every hope that he [Cedric] had entertained of restoring a Saxon dynasty in England; [...]" (Chap. XLIV, 512) and "There remained [...] two obstacles – his own obstinacy, and his dislike of the Norman dynasty. The former feeling gradually gave way before the endearments of his ward and the pride, which he could not help nourishing in the fame of his son. Besides, he was not insensible to the honour of allying his own line to that of Alfred, when the [...] claims of the descendant of Edward the Confessor were abandoned for ever. Cedric's aversion to the Norman [...] kings was also [...] undermined – first, by [...] the impossibility of ridding England of the new dynasty, a feeling which goes far to create loyalty in the subject to the king *de facto*; and, secondly,

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Turning now to the Norman party, although Prince (later King) John (1199-1216)³⁰ and his *entourage* remain as vilified as one would expect, there is something grand about Brian de Bois-Guilbert,³¹ the Knight Templar love-struck by Rebecca, the Jewess maid who, against all religious and social odds, falls in love with Ivanhoe, her Christian champion and former English patient. But there is still as little room for the Jews in the 'New Jerusalem' hinted at in the final pages³² as there is for the most obstinate Saxons and Normans in the "New England" heralded,

by the personal attention of King Richard, [...] the countenance which he afforded [...] to the distressed and hitherto degraded Saxons, gave them a safer and more certain prospect of attaining their just rights than they could reasonably hope from the precarious chance of civil war." (*Ibid.*: 514)

³⁰ "His own character being light, profligate, and perfidious, John easily attached to his person and faction not only all those who had reason to dread the resentment of Richard for criminal proceedings during his absence, but also the numerous class of 'lawless resolute' whom the crusades had turned back on their country, accomplished on the vices of the East, impoverished in substance, and hardened in character, and who placed their hopes of harvest in civil commotion." (Chap. VII, 74-75) Even De Bracy (Chap. XV, 167) describes John as "[...] too weak to be a determined monarch, too tyrannical to be an easy monarch, too insolent and presumptuous to be a popular monarch, and too fickle and timid to be long a monarch of any kind."

³¹ "Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert is a fanatical man, consumed with pride and frenzy. But he is not, in the last resort, evil, as Front-de-Boeuf is evil. The Templar has honour and courage and there is something admirable [...] in his distracted love for Rebecca. [...]"

The Templar, then, is a characteristically poised Scott creation. He stands between the brutality of the oafish Norman barons like Front-de Boeuf and de Bracy, and the rather idealized heroism of Richard Coeur-de Lion and Ivanhoe himself. One almost sees in him the spirit of chivalry at its cruel worst: but one also sees it rise to its heroic best." (Wilson in Scott, 1986: xiii-xiv; see also Cedric's view in chap. III, 38) Even Rebecca, whose life lies on trial, acknowledges, facing Bois-Guilbert: "There are noble things which cross over thy powerful mind; but it is the garden of the sluggard and the weeds have rushed up, and conspired to choke the fair and wholesome blossom." (Chap. XXXIV, 445)

³² Suffice it to remember that Rebecca and Isaac decide to leave England, a country the Jewess maid considers peopled by "[...] a fierce race, quarreling ever with their neighbours and among themselves, and ready to plunge the sword into the bowels of each other." (Chap. XLIV, 516), and head for Granada.

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rather than fulfilled, by Richard's return, for reasons disclosed by the narrator himself (Chap. XLI, 471-472):³³

Novelty in society and adventure were the zest of life to Richard Coeur-de-Lion, and it had the highest relish when enhanced by dangers encountered and surmounted. In the lion-hearted king, the brilliant, but useless, character of a knight of romance was in a great measure realized and revived; and the personal glory which he acquired by his [...] deeds of arms was far more dear to his excited imagination than that which a course of policy and wisdom would have spread around his government. Accordingly, his reign was like the course of a brilliant and rapid meteor, which shoots along the face of heaven, shedding around an unnecessary and portentous light which is instantly swallowed up by universal darkness; his feats of chivalry furnishing themes for bards and minstrels, but affording none of those solid benefits to his country on which history loves to pause, and hold up as an example to posterity.³⁴

³³ Fitzurse, one of John's advisors, describes Richard as "[...] a true knight-errand he, and will wander in wild adventure, trusting the prowess of his single arm [...] while the weighty affairs of his kingdom slumber, and his own safety is endangered." (Chap. XXIV, 380)

³⁴ Some of these points are twice taken up in the final chapter: "[...] whatever head the Saxons might have made in the event of a civil war, it was plain that nothing could be done under the undisputed dominion of Richard, popular as he was by his personal good qualities and military fame, although his administration was wilfully careless --- now too indulgent and now allied to despotism." (Chap. XLIV, 512) and "With the life of a generous, but rash and romantic, monarch perished all the projects which his ambition and his generosity had formed; [...]" (*Ibid.*: 519) Gary Kelly (1989: 159) subscribes to these views when he notes that "[...] the great hope and agent of social redemption, King Richard, proves unwilling and unable to sustain his magical powers, for we are told at the end of the novel that he goes off on yet another crusade, only to die ignominiously."

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Bois Guilbert and Rebecca

As Joseph Duncan (1966: 144) argued in a thought-provoking essay, "The two peoples cannot achieve unity so long as the Saxons dream of re-establishing their old kingdom and the Normans seek personal glory in irresponsible adventure. Both are short-sighted [...] because of their enslavement to [...] outworn ideals and the consequent disunity and disorder in England.",³⁵ whereas Wilson (in Scott, 1986: xxviii-xxix) sums up:

If the book has a political message, it seems to have two very incisive points of view, hard, but necessary to reconcile. One is that there is a wickedness in failing to preserve our racial and ethnic heritages; that Jews and Saxons and Normans are all totally different, and it is [...] dishonest to suppose otherwise. At the same time, no society can work without recognizing our interdependence and our common good. [...] the ruling *caste* trample on the [...] traditions of the minor

³⁵ "Both Cedric and Richard are victims of their own romantic dreams of ways of life that belong to the past. Cedric desires to re-establish the Saxon kingdom; Richard envisions a progressive and unified English nation, but is too committed to knight-errantry [...]" (*Ibid.*: 147)

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ones not merely at their own peril, but at the peril of the nation as a whole. It was in its appeal to be *one nation* that made *Ivanhoe*, for the Victorians, '*la véritable épopée de notre âge*'.³⁶

To conclude, I would suggest that, when it comes to transcending oppositions, the characters occupying, by and large, the middle or central borderline ground --- the 'half-Norman' King Richard, and his 'half-Saxon' forward-looking companion, *Ivanhoe*³⁷ ---, rather than Cedric or Athelstane (who actually ends up dropping both his lukewarm claims to Rowena and the kingdom!), are those better prepared to start negotiating and building up new embryonic forms and meanings of 'Englishness',³⁸ much as, in Scott's view and time, the

³⁶ To Thomas Crawford (1965: 56), "*Ivanhoe* [...] presents a paradigm of how new nations are created out of subsidiary tribal or national units [...]"

³⁷ *Ivanhoe*'s occasional disagreements with, and implicit criticism of, Richard's character, options and priorities deserve to be illustrated here: "[...] why – oh why, noble Prince, will you thus vex the hearts of your faithful servants, and expose your life by lonely journeys and rash adventures, as if it were of no more value than that of a mere knight-errant, who has no interest [...] but what lance and sword may procure him? [...] your kingdom is threatened with dissolution and civil war; your subjects menaced with every species of evil, if deprived of their sovereign in some of those dangers which it is your daily pleasure to incur, [...]" (Chap. XLI, 470-71).

³⁸ To Joseph Duncan (1968: 145-47 *passim*), "*Ivanhoe* and Richard are the pivotal characters who indicate the possibility of a better future. *Ivanhoe*, though a Saxon, has given up the claims of his race in fighting for England and Christendom in the Crusades. Richard is a Norman who, however, honors Saxons from Cedric to Robin Hood. Richard [...] is a paradoxical figure, and Scott's treatment of him is ambivalent. Richard's 'gay, good-humoured, and fond of manhood in every rank of life', can unite Saxons and Normans, barons and yeomen. [...] Yet Richard is too committed to the old outworn heroic ideal to lead the people into the promised land of a new England. [...] The closing pages [...] suggest that a step has been taken forward toward a less adventurous, but more stable and fruitful society, but they also warn that a relapse is inevitable because of an adherence to outworn traditions. [...] *Ivanhoe* himself, a native Saxon, but representative of the best in Norman chivalry, is a [...] symbol of a new, unified England. [...] *Ivanhoe* and England prosper under Richard, but their prosperity is cut short by Richard's premature death, a result of his continued chivalric irresponsibility. [...] Scott's main concern

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ancestral oppositions between 'Scottishness' and 'Englishness' should be transcended, if not harmonized, in, through and towards British Culture(s), in order to bring about (a) more modern and inclusive sense(s) of 'Britishness(es)'. Whether or not the lion shall lie with the unicorn and irrespective also of our own speculations on Scott's vote, (t)his message remains relevant to our multiethnic, multiracial and multicultural societies, where the 'roses' and the 'thistles' can be found growing side by side.

in this novel [...] was with the difficult but necessary transition from a romantic, heroic era to a comparatively drabber period of unity, peace, and progress. [...] He recognized that the reconciliation of Saxons and Normans was a permanent contribution; but he also recognized that the impingement of the past on the present, as in Richard's irresponsible heroism, could have serious consequences."

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