

J. H. Alexander with P. D. Garside and Claire Lamont, eds., Walter Scott, *Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus: Waverley to A Legend of the Wars of Montrose*. The Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. Pp. 493. £85. ISBN 9780748605903.

J. H. Alexander with P. D. Garside and Claire Lamont, eds., Walter Scott, *Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus: Ivanhoe to Castle Dangerous*. The Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. Pp. 761. £85. ISBN 9780748614912.

The study of Sir Walter Scott's works reached a crucial stage of its development in the early 1990s, with the presentation to the public in 1993 of the very first volumes of the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels (EEWN), including *The Black Dwarf*, *The Tale of Old Mortality* and *Kenilworth*. However, this large-scale and long-term project was in fact initiated as early as February 1984, and the last two titles of the edition, *Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus: Waverley to A Legend of the Wars of Montrose* (Volume 25a) and *Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus: Ivanhoe to Castle Dangerous* (Volume 25b), were published in October 2012, almost twenty years after the appearance of the first volumes. The publication of these latest and last volumes therefore marks a significant milestone in the modern history of the publication of Scott's works for they conclude the EEWN. This complete set of the EEWN, in total, comprises thirty volumes – twenty-eight volumes of novels and two volumes of Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus, the last collected edition of Scott's novels published during the author's lifetime.

The Magnum Opus edition, published between 1829 and 1833, contains altogether 48 volumes. Its emergence was largely due to the financial crash that Scott, his publisher Archibald Constable (1774-1827), and printer James Ballantyne (1772-1833) suffered in January 1826. This financial crisis thus spurred plans for the new annotated edition of the Waverley novels, and at the same time precipitated the acknowledgement of Scott's authorship, which, out of necessity, was disclosed to the Trustees in order to deal with the outcome of the bankruptcy.

Despite its rather novel beginning, the Magnum Opus is itself a rather remarkable work as it is made up of all the corrected texts of the Waverley novels, plus newly added Introductions and Notes. These three main innovations are Scott's alone. According to the information given by the general introduction to the EEWN's *Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus*, 'Scott is probably the only writer of the Romantic period whose works were collected in his lifetime' (xliii-xliv). Despite the fact that Scott did not live to see the completion of the Magnum Opus edition as he died in 1832, the set was the most complete collection of the Waverley novels published in his time. Besides, this was the first time all Scott's novels had been brought together, and given a shared official title, the Waverley Novels. Many of the later editions, such as the People's edition (twelve volumes) and the Abbotsford edition (forty-eight volumes) published by Cadell in 1842-47, were based upon it. Because of the uniqueness and significance of this Magnum Opus edition, its Introductions and Notes are, for these reasons, included in the final volumes of the EEWN.

In addition to offering the original texts of Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus, the editors of the last two volumes of the EEWN also provide readers with highly useful introductory and explanatory notes. This EEWN's general introduction tells the story of the Magnum Opus from its genesis to publication, and finishes with a brief survey of its

reception, its import, and its later nineteenth-century history. The introduction thus encourages readers to recognize Scott's achievement as not only a great novelist but also as an outstanding editor of his own work. Scott's innovations in the Magnum Opus in actual fact served as a model for the editors of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens in the twentieth century.

The introduction and notes in these two EEWN volumes have further functions. Even though Scott's own Introductions and Notes have already served as major sources for readers to gain insight into his texts, modern readers will on occasion still require assistance from the EEWN's further introductions and notes to each work in order to fully comprehend them. It is mainly because, as David Hewitt has pointed out in the Foreword to the two EEWN volumes, Scott's Introductions and Notes are 'often not explanation but another narrative which has only a tangential relationship to the material he is illustrating' (v). For example, the Magnum series' Introduction to *Rob Roy* extends to more than fifty pages, and the story of the MacGregors it recounts is rather complex and not directly related to the main story of the novel. Therefore it may appear somewhat daunting and less useful to modern readers. In contrast, the introduction and notes provided by the editors of the two EEWN volumes are customized for modern readers. For this reason, both Scott's own Introductions and Notes and those offered in the two EEWN volumes can therefore be seen as useful complements to each other.

Scott's and the EEWN editors' introductions and notes are both of great importance and utility to Scott's domestic and international readers. They are, additionally, sources of great value for teaching, particularly when seeking to illustrate Scott's role as the father of the historical novel in English literature. In order to fully understand Scott's works from a historical perspective, these introductions and notes are most valuable sources.

The two EEWN volumes can be studied independently from the novels, as they demonstrate Scott's consummate professional editing skills. Each of Scott's introductions (or Advertisement in the case of *The Antiquary*) has its own value, whether short or long, since it enables us to understand the appropriate novel from the author's own perspective it provides. Moreover, as David Hewitt has pointed out in his General Introduction to the EEWN, Scott's 'introductions are fascinating autobiographical essays which write the life of the Author of *Waverley*' (xv). Therefore, these two volumes of the EEWN can also be taken as general reference to Scott's works as well as life.

The full set of the scholarly EEWN is vital to the development of Scott studies as it makes available not only original texts based on Scott's manuscripts but also detailed notes and a full glossary for modern readers. Moreover, as Jill Rubenstein importantly stressed, this edition helps to inaugurate 'the much-needed corrective emphasis on Scott as a conscious craftsman who carefully revised and corrected the proofs of his novels' (*Sir Walter Scott: An Annotated Bibliography of Scholarship and Criticism*, 1975-1990 (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1994), 3). The 2014 bicentenary of the publication of Scott's first novel, *Waverley*, and the completion of the EEWN in late 2012 can thus be seen as a celebration of this great work. Modern readers are extremely lucky to be now provided with such complete access to Scott's works. I myself wish to express deep gratitude to those editors of the EEWN who have devoted so many years of their life in order to give us these most reliable and high quality texts. The EEWN's completion is not a conclusion to this dedicated work, but a staging-post in a journey of discovery as it heralds the coming of the first scholarly edition of Scott's poems. We eagerly anticipate its arrival.

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