

THE ROMANCE OF COMMERCE

Rob Roy, 1817–18

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WALTER SCOTT'S *ROB ROY* was published on the last day of December 1817, only a few days after the posthumous publication of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. That both novels bore the date of 1818 on their title pages is not the only connection between these two seemingly disparate novels. Both are *bildungsromane* of sorts: one, the story of a young woman's visit to Bath, where after some misguided attempts to transform herself into a gothic heroine, she is more than content to make an ordinary marriage; and the other of a young man who, having been banished to the North of England on account of his disinclination for commerce, finds himself occupying the position of a gothic heroine until he is rescued by the combined efforts of a Highland chieftain and a lovely young woman who help him restore the credit of his father's firm. Austen's protagonist, Catherine Morland, is an avid reader of gothic fiction and imaginatively shapes her own experiences through gothic conventions until her suitor Henry Tilney calls into question her judgement. Although Tilney manages to convince her that gothic novels do not accurately represent metropolitan southern Britain, 'Catherine dared not doubt beyond her own country, and even of that, if hard pressed, would have yielded the northern and western extremities.'¹ Depending on whether Catherine considers England or Britain 'her own country', the 'northern extremities' could refer either to the Scottish Highlands or to Northumberland. While the former was a more conventional setting for gothic fiction in the early nineteenth century, it is in the latter that Scott's protagonist Frank Osbaldistone finds himself living in the most gothic of circumstances—an ancient hall with a mouldering library in which strange lights and shadows are seen at night, in the company of a young woman who is surrounded by vague mysteries and very real dangers.

But if *Northanger Abbey* invokes unstable oppositions between gothic romance and realism, and between the extravagance of fantasy and the ordinariness of reality, the latter terms of these oppositions are largely missing from *Rob Roy*. Instead, *Rob Roy* incorporates related but distinct varieties of romance: the gothic and the adventure story. In this, *Rob Roy* also differs from *Waverley* (1814), which literary scholars once saw as a superior prototype of which *Rob Roy* was the degraded imitation.² Both *Waverley* and *Rob Roy* describe a dreamy, impractical young Englishman's journey north, where he is accused of treason and finds himself mixed up in rebellion. However, *Waverley* is more similar

to *Northanger Abbey* than to *Rob Roy* in its opposition of romance and the real. Like Catherine Morland's, Edward Waverley's worldview is shaped by his reading, and he finds at Tully-Veolan and Glennaquoich the romance he has hitherto only read about. When Rose Bradwardine tells Waverley of the frequent Highland raids on Tully-Veolan, he 'could not help starting at a story which bore so much resemblance to one of his own day-dreams', and reminds himself delightedly, 'I am actually in the land of military and romantic adventures, and it only remains to be seen what will be my own share in them.'³ Journeying further north through the sublime Highland landscape in the company of the fierce Donald Bean Lean, Waverley 'give[s] himself up to the romance of his situation' (p. 84). Later, he is introduced to Charles Edward, 'a Prince, whose form and manners, as well as the spirit he displayed in this singular enterprise, answered his idea of a hero of romance' (p. 206). And finally, after the defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden, Waverley 'felt himself entitled to say firmly, though perhaps with a sigh, that the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced' (p. 301). Waverley's hasty conclusion is almost as affected as his earlier tendency to romanticise the Highlands as the land of his daydreams. Nonetheless, there is in *Waverley* a 'real history' that Waverley can embrace: an 'amiable' Rose Bradwardine (p. 70) instead of an 'exquisite' Flora (p. 114), the improvement of Tully-Veolan in place of a military career and an uninspired but reliable loyalty to the current government rather than a fervent but transient allegiance to an exiled king.

In *Rob Roy*, I will argue, there is no alternative to romance, and no opposition between romance and 'real history'; there are only different kinds of romance—the gothic romance, associated primarily with Northumberland, where Osbaldistone Hall is located, and the commercial adventure, the quest narrative generated by the network of speculation, credit and debt that extends from London into the Scottish Highlands and around the globe. Ian Duncan and Andrew Lincoln have argued persuasively that in its representation of the relations between metropolitan England and its peripheries, *Rob Roy* is more complex and less schematic than *Waverley*. It acknowledges Britain's imbrication in a system of global, imperial trade that renders the nation state, in Duncan's words, a 'network of uneven, heterogeneous times and spaces, lashed together by commerce and military force'.⁴ Whereas Waverley's journey into the Highlands is figured as a journey from modernity into the primitive past, in *Rob Roy* 'savagery and commerce sustain rather than cancel out each other'.⁵ Rob Roy's practices of freebooting coexist with his kinsman Bailie Jarvie's prosperous trade so that 'the primitive signifies an origin still structurally present within modernity—disavowed but persistent—rather than a superseded developmental form'.⁶ The raids through which Rob Roy and his followers make a living are an uncanny version of the daring speculations made by the firm of Osbaldistone and Tresham. If, as Duncan suggests, *Rob Roy* challenges the Enlightenment theories of progress that would contrast the commercial prosperity and refinement of metropolitan southern Britain to the primitive feudalism of the Highlands, it

also refuses to neatly map literary genres onto Britain's topography. Rather than associating romance with the primitive Highlands and realism with civilised southern Britain, as *Waverley* does, *Rob Roy* undoes the opposition between realism and romance, leaving in its place only varieties of romance.

The genre of *Rob Roy* has been debated by scholars, with Lars Hartveit describing it as a picaresque; Anna Faktorovich as a 'popular rebellion novel', the invention of which she attributes to Walter Scott; and Fiona Robertson noting its incorporation of gothic conventions.⁷ Significantly, all of these genres resolve into varieties of romance. And the predominance of romance perhaps owes something to the novel's form. *Rob Roy* is Scott's only novel to employ first-person retrospective narration, although others contain first-person narratives embedded within them. First-person narration is a common authenticating device in the early novel, and if 'real history' or mundane experience resides anywhere in *Rob Roy* we might expect to find it in Frank Osbaldistone's present, the time and place of the story's telling rather than the time and places of the story's action. But retrospection arguably accounts for Frank's tendency to romanticise his experiences. Jane Millgate has described Frank as an 'unreflecting narrator' whose story is 'absolutely resistant to the opportunities for commentary, analysis, and moralization implicit in the retrospective memoir form',⁸ and whose inability to distance himself from his narrative renders causal connections murky. In *Waverley*, Scott's loquacious narrator comments on Waverley's romantic interpretation of his experiences, and other characters, such as Colonel Talbot, offer correctives to Waverley's perspective. This narrator informs us in no uncertain terms that Waverley is left wiser and sadder by his participation in the Jacobite rebellion. Frank has no comparable moment of realisation. Instead, the Frank who relates this story in the 1760s seems unchanged from the Frank who experienced it in 1715, leaving us to wonder what he learned from his adventures and why he continues to dwell on them. In Millgate's reading, Frank must retell the 'guilts and horrors of the past' because of his 'inability or refusal to confront them and their meaning'.⁹ Frank is unable to confront the implications of his story, I argue, because in the course of his adventures he succumbs to the romance of commerce, which colours his retrospective narration.

While Frank might remain blind to his own imbrication in the commercial system that has rendered Rob Roy an outlaw and left many Highlanders impoverished and without work, Walter Scott was perhaps not similarly blind to his own position as a novelist commanding a commercialised literary marketplace, and who made his money by manufacturing a romanticised version of the Scottish Highlands. For, while Scott was writing *Rob Roy*, money was on his mind. Like his hero, Rob Roy, he was in debt. When he brought the idea for *Rob Roy* to Archibald Constable, Scott hoped that the sales of the novel would enable him to repay a loan from the Duke of Buccleugh that had helped him to survive the near failure in 1813 of John Ballantyne and Co., the publishing house in which Scott had held a half-share. The bewildering complexity of Scott's financial affairs at this time are well represented by a letter in which he tells James Ballantyne to

'renew Constables bill of the 12 to meet mine of the 6th and I will renew mine to take up his'.¹⁰ Scott's literary endeavours entangled him in a system of credit and debt that he, perhaps wilfully, never entirely understood. The financial crash that brought him to the brink of bankruptcy for the second time would not occur until 1826, but much earlier than that Constable had begun to pay Scott for works that had yet to be written, or even envisioned.¹¹ While Scott may have considered the intricacies of business beneath him as a gentleman, he was also keenly aware that these advances helped to fund his improvements to Abbotsford, such as the purchase of the neighbouring estate of Kaeside in 1816 ('a sort of fairy land marching with Abbotsford'), and the first expansion of the original 'cottage' in which the family lived.¹² Scott evinced the preference for heritable property over mobile forms of wealth common to his time; and from Thomas Carlyle onwards, critics have noted with disapproval his desire to transform himself into a landed gentleman.¹³ But *Rob Roy* reveals heritable property in the form of land to be no more stable than the bills of credit that Frank chases across Scotland.

Economic anxiety was by means no peculiar to Scott in 1817 but was widespread throughout Britain. Scott may have hoped that the publication of another novel set in his highly marketable version of the Highlands would resolve his personal financial difficulties, but *Rob Roy* also reflects the financial difficulties of the British nation both in 1817 and 1715. Although Scott, unlike some of his lesser-known contemporaries, never wrote a novel specifically about the Highland Clearances, *Rob Roy* contains his closest scrutiny of the economic patterns that in 1817, as in 1715, led to the eviction of Highlanders from their homes.¹⁴ The Parliamentary Union of 1707 had opened up England's colonies to Scottish trade; and while this would eventually enrich the Lowlands, it did not reach the Highlands, which were economically depressed by laws which, in David Hewitt's words, 'enforce[d] the [...] mercantile ideology of the Hanoverian state'.¹⁵ This economic depression is evident in *Rob Roy* when Baillie Jarvie explains of Highlanders that

there is neither wark, nor the very fashion or appearance of wark, for the tae half of thae puir creatures; that is to say, that the agriculture, the pasturage, the fisheries, and every species of honest industry about the country, canna employ the one moiety of the population.¹⁶

Britain in 1817 was experiencing a post-war recession that similarly left many small farmers and industrial workers out of work. John Sutherland suggests that, 'as a sheriff and a landowner', Scott would have witnessed 'much distress, particularly in the Scottish countryside', at this time.¹⁷ And indeed, while working on *Rob Roy*, Scott wrote to Joanna Baillie that the 'distress' of 'the poor folks' near Abbotsford 'has been extreme and [...] they have borne severe privations with great patience'.¹⁸ The Highlands were especially hard hit, and the plight of *Rob Roy*'s Highlanders in 1715, as described by Jarvie, resembles that of Highlanders in 1817.¹⁹

Malcolm Gray has described Britain's hard-won victory in the Napoleonic Wars as marking 'the end of an era' for the Highlands, as skyrocketing rents left the subsistence farmer, 'who had never possessed any surplus for personal use [...] now a serious debtor'.²⁰ These subsistence farmers saw none of the wealth that landowners, many of whom did not live on their estates for much of the year, acquired through the introduction of large-scale sheep farming. For, as Eric Richards explains, in the wake of the Napoleonic wars,

[t]he Highlands of Scotland were transformed as much as any colony in the Empire in that age, fully incorporated into the role of supplying the metropolitan economy [...]. The benefits which accrued from this great upheaval did not flow in the direction of the people who inhabited the region.²¹

Rob Roy, more than any of Scott's other novels, situates the Highlands in an economic network that connects them not only to metropolitan southern England, but also to the urban Lowlands, Europe and the Caribbean.²² As Richards suggests, this network tended to extract wealth—in the form of manpower, land or natural resources—from the Highlands, in the process gradually undermining traditional ways of life so that by 1715, only the remnants of the feudal clan system continue to exist in the form of fierce loyalties. *Rob Roy*, through his 'trade o' theft-boot, black-mail, spreaghs, and gill-ravaging' (p. 185),²³ attempts with some success to intercept and redirect a small part of this flow of wealth out of the Highlands. His practices of blackmail, extortion and plunder are distorted versions of the commercial exchanges practiced by tradesmen like Jarvie or merchants like William Osbaldistone.

April of 1817 saw the publication of the most important work of political economy since Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776)—David Ricardo's *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, which examines the economic relationships between landowners and capitalists. There is no evidence that Scott read Ricardo, but given that he lived through the same moment of economic crisis, it is perhaps not coincidental that *Rob Roy* represents feudalism and commerce as coexisting and interconnected socio-economic states, one epitomised by the landowner and the other by the capitalist. The novel explores these socio-economic states through two genres of romance: the gothic and the adventure story. The late eighteenth-century gothic, as E. J. Clery has argued, explores anxieties surrounding the ongoing transition from feudal society, in which wealth took the form of heritable land, to bourgeois society, in which it took the form of moveable property.²⁴ The horrors, real or imagined, of late eighteenth-century gothic romance often emanate from contested property—the castle, abbey or hall within which the heroine is confined and to the patrilineal inheritance of which she is often key. The gothic was considered a feminised and debased genre even though some of the best-known gothic romances were written by men, such as Scott's friend Matthew Lewis.²⁵ The adventure story, by contrast, would become in the course of the nineteenth century a distinctively masculine genre. A modern version of the chivalric quest, the adventure

story often takes as its protagonist a young man on the cusp of adulthood, and dramatises his loyalties, rivalries and love affairs, as he undertakes a quest to prove his worth not necessarily to the woman he loves, but to older men who wield power over him.²⁶ *Rob Roy* embodies the proximity of these two genres, which together structure its complicated plot.

The primary locus of the gothic in *Rob Roy* is Osbaldistone Hall, the Northumberland estate that belongs to Frank's uncle Hildebrand only because Frank's father William was disinherited after a family quarrel. Osbaldistone Hall is replete with hidden rooms and secret passages: Diana Vernon, who is a captive inmate, describes the building as a 'fearful prison-house' (p. 110). During his evening walks in the garden, Frank sees 'lights which gleamed in the library at unusual hours' along with 'passing shadows' and 'footsteps which might be traced in the morning dew from the turret-door to the postern-gate of the garden' (p. 136). As in Ann Radcliffe's novels, the servants attribute these phenomena to all kinds of supernatural causes. Frank more rationally assumes them to be produced by the visits of Diana's confessor, Father Vaughan. In contrast to the Protestant South, the North of England remained a strongly Catholic region well into the eighteenth century, and Scott, like his contemporaries, exploited Catholicism's gothic associations, including the Church's supposed tyranny over the minds of Catholics, supported by the perpetuation of superstition. Catholics were politically and economically marginalised by the penal laws, which may have provoked the region's participation in the 1715 Jacobite uprising.²⁷

Rob Roy's incorporation of gothic elements highlights the barbarism of the North of England. Were Catherine Morland to have read *Rob Roy*, she might have felt her belief in the persistence of gothic customs in the 'extremities' of England to be vindicated. Osbaldistone Hall's locality is untouched by the refinements introduced by commerce or the niceties of metropolitan society, and its situation in a 'Druidical grove of huge oaks' (p. 36) associates the family with ancient Britishness, as if it were the relic of an earlier age. Sir Hildebrand's boorish sons are like 'rough, unhewn masses of upright stones in Stonehenge, or any other druidical temple [...] heavy, unadorned blocks' (p. 43). Rather than evoking the spirituality associated with Stonehenge, Scott emphasises the sheer mass and durability of the Osbaldistone men. In addition to the massive stone 'blocks' of Stonehenge, the family name perhaps alludes to Osbald, an eighth-century king of Northumbria known for his violence and greed.²⁸ Until its gradual disintegration in the ninth through eleventh centuries, Northumbria comprised the North of England and South-East Scotland, so that when Frank's childhood nurse told him stories of the 'northern wars' between the Scots and the English, she was describing conflicts between people that were for several centuries of the same kingdom. In Mabel Robson's stories, however, the 'warlike' Scots played 'the parts which ogres and giants with seven-leagued boots occupy in the ordinary nursery tales' (pp. 30–31). To Mabel, and thus to the young Frank, Scots are the enemy—cunning and violent. Yet, the latter-day inhabitants of both Northumberland and Scotland are not very different from

these ‘ogres and giants’ of old, again suggesting an underlying similarity or even kinship between these antagonistic peoples.

Indeed, Northumberland of the early eighteenth century turns out to be almost as lawless as it was in the time of Mabel Robson’s tales. As Scott represents it, Northumberland is beyond the reach of centralised government. The rule of law—safeguard against the violence Catherine Morland fears—is attenuated here. Andrew Fairservice, the gardener at Osbaldistone Hall, explains:

‘The priests and the Irish officers, and the papist cattle that hae been sodgering abroad, because they durst na bide at home, are a’ fleeing thick in Northumberland e’en now, and thae corbies dinna gather without they smell some carrion [...] there’s naething but gun and pistol, sword and dagger, amang them [...]’ (p. 152)

Frank benefits from the attenuation of rule by law when, much to his surprise, he is accused of stealing important state papers from Morris, his fellow-traveller on the northern road. Diana accompanies him to visit the justice of the peace, noting, “you have no one to stand by you—you are a stranger, and here, in the outskirts of the kingdom, country justices do odd things” (p. 59). The Justice, a reformed Jacobite who more than occasionally regrets his allegiance to the new regime, is willing to let Frank go—an escape that surprises Frank less when he realises that, thanks in part to its distance from the seat of monarchical power, Northumberland is a Jacobite stronghold, and Diana, according to Andrew, is ‘the bitterest jacobite in the haill shire’ (p. 52). Diana’s familiarity with the lawlessness of the region enables her to assist Frank repeatedly, but she is also a victim of this lawlessness—or rather of a feudal social order in which the patriarchal authority embodied in her father and uncle replaces the rule of law and leaves her unprotected when the ‘perfidious’ Rashleigh attempts to seduce her (p. 111).

At Osbaldistone Hall, Frank occupies a feminised position, relying on Diana’s greater knowledge and decisiveness for direction. While his blockish cousins spend their days hunting and drinking, Frank spends most of his time alone or in the library conversing with Diana, of whom he is soon enamored. He exerts a great deal of effort fuming about his ‘reputation’, which he considers to have been ‘publicly attacked’ when his name is mixed up in the robbery of state papers from Morris (p. 124) and further endangered by his ‘correspondence’ with the mysterious Mr Campbell (p. 197). But although he regards himself as the victim of ‘infamous calumnies’, he is slow to take action to prove his integrity, particularly if it might involve leaving Osbaldistone Hall. When Diana comes across the translation of *Orlando Furioso* that Frank has been working on, she asks him “whether you could not spend your time to better purpose?” (p. 131). Initially and delightedly assuming that she means to encourage him to write his own verse rather than waste his talents on translation, Frank is mortified at ‘the childishness of my own conduct, and the superior manliness of Miss Vernon’s’ (p. 132) when she informs him that the credit of his father’s firm is in danger. Diana possesses the ‘courage and activity’ that Frank lacks, and she

readily acknowledges to him, “I belong, in habits of thinking and acting, rather to your sex, with which I have always been brought up, than to my own” (p. 110).

Thanks to her perspicacity, Diana often plays the part of Frank’s rescuer. At the same time, however, her own agency is much more limited than his; and, like more conventional gothic heroines, she is involved in a ‘series of nets, and toils, and entanglements’ (p. 79). Frank employs the language of magic to describe Diana’s odd position in the household, wondering: ‘Of what nature could those mysteries be with which she was surrounded as with an enchanter’s spell, and which seemed continually to exert an active influence over her thoughts and actions, though their agents were never visible?’ (p. 135) While it may seem mysterious to Frank, the ‘enchanter’s spell’ is no more than a patriarchal system that reduces women to objects of exchange: Diana’s father, a Catholic and a Jacobite, has decreed that she must either marry one of the Osbaldistone men or join a convent. Diana too resorts to the language of magic to explain her knowledge of circumstances that elude Frank and enable her to mysteriously extricate him from difficulties. For instance, she equips him for his journey to Glasgow with ‘a spell contained in a letter’, a packet that he must not open ‘until other and ordinary means have failed’ (p. 143). She ultimately fulfils the aim of Frank’s foray into the Highlands when she delivers to him the papers that Rashleigh had taken from the house of Osbaldistone and Tresham, explaining that she would have brought him ‘these representatives of commercial wealth’ sooner, ‘but there were giants and dragons in the way’ (p. 285). Again, the supernatural becomes a metaphor for obstacles that she cannot describe directly: her giants and dragons are the government troops that Rashleigh’s treachery has unleashed on the Highlands and that she and her father must elude.

Diana’s dual roles as Frank’s courageous rescuer and powerless gothic heroine—pawn of her father, uncle and blockish male cousins—highlight Scott’s transformation and even inversion of gothic conventions in *Rob Roy*. Fiona Robertson and Michael Gamer have shown that over the course of his literary career, Scott made a practice of selectively borrowing gothic conventions while distancing himself rhetorically from the gimmicks of this genre in its most popular forms, such as the novels that the Minerva Press spewed forth.²⁹ This practice contributed to what Ina Ferris has described as Scott’s remasculinisation of the novel, a genre that by the late eighteenth century had come to be associated with women writers and readers, and above all with romance.³⁰ In *Rob Roy* Scott further distances his fiction from the Minerva variety by incorporating the conventions of the masculine adventure story or quest narrative along with the feminised gothic romance. While these genres of romance turn out to be more proximate and even overlapping than Scott might have liked to acknowledge, the Highland section of *Rob Roy* moves the reader rhetorically away from the gothic realm of Osbaldistone Hall and into the world of commercial adventure.

While Osbaldistone Hall and its feudal traditions belong to the gothic, with its language of magic, the commercial speculations of the house of Osbaldistone and Tresham belong to the genre of the adventure story. In 1714, when the ac-

tion of *Rob Roy* takes place, the word ‘adventure’ could refer to what we would now describe as a ‘venture’—a financial risk or commercial enterprise.³¹ To speculate, in the economic sense, is to court dangers, albeit of a different kind than a questing knight might encounter. Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is thus for Martin Green an archetypal adventure story. When Crusoe sails to Guinea, he takes with him ‘a small Adventure’ consisting of ‘Toys and Trifles’ which he ‘increased very considerably’ by selling them, and his financial speculations result in the shipwreck and ensuing events that we would now think of as his adventures.³² In *Rob Roy*, too, adventure in the economic sense leads to Frank’s perilous undertaking in the Highlands.

Frank describes his father William as an adventurer in his commercial speculations. The elder Osbaldistone is ‘impetuous in his schemes, as well as skillful and daring’ a man to whom it is as ‘necessary [...] as to an ambitious conqueror, to push on from achievement to achievement’ (p. 10). Commerce offers him scope for his ‘active energies, and acute powers of observation’; for, as Frank explains, ‘in the fluctuations of mercantile speculation, there is something captivating to the adventurer, even independent of the hope of gain’ (p. 7). William intends Frank to ‘extend and perpetuate the wealthy inheritance’ he can offer his son; but Frank himself seems insensible to ‘the animating hazards’ of commercial pursuits (p. 10). Far from an adventurer, Frank is a homebody, preferring to translate the exploits of *Orlando Furioso* than to participate in his father’s commercial quests.

It is to save the credit of Osbaldistone and Tresham that Frank journeys north to Glasgow and onwards into the Highlands, enduring dangers and discomforts in an adventure that was not of his seeking. For he knows that, to his father, ‘mercantile credit’ is a form of ‘honour’: ‘if declared insolvent, [he] would sink into the grave, oppressed by a sense of grief, remorse, and despair, like that of a soldier convicted of cowardice, or a man of honour who has lost his rank and character in society’ (p. 142). Credit is to the modern commercial adventurer what honour once was to the questing knight, and Frank thinks more in terms of the latter than the former. When Frank speaks of restoring his father’s honour, Jarvie warns him:

‘I maun hear naething about honour—we ken naething here but about credit. Honour is a homicide and a bloodspiller, that gangs about making frays in the street, but Credit is a decent, honest man, that sits at hame and makes the pat play.’ (p. 207)

Honour belongs to the gothic and Jacobite world of aristocratic chivalry, and credit to the Whiggish world of commerce. Jarvie’s personification of credit as a staid man of regular habits might seem antithetical to the elder Osbaldistone’s adventurous spirit, but Jarvie’s willingness to join Frank on his journey into the Highlands suggests his awareness that adventures are as necessary to create and protect credit as they are to establish honour.

On the eve of the Jacobite rebellion, the Highlands are full of activity compared to the stasis of Osbaldistone Hall, even though the remnants of a

stagnant feudal social order are still visible there. The secretive furore of activity reminds us that, as Eric Richards has emphasised, the Highlands ‘were not simply the passive victim and receptor’ of economic developments initiated by southern metropolitan England; instead ‘they were a vital contributor’ to the eventual emergence of industrial capitalism.³³ Frank is initially surprised that ‘the mercantile transactions of London citizens should become involved with revolutions and rebellions’ in the far north of the country (p. 216) and finds it hard to believe that Rashleigh has made away with bills from his father’s house ‘merely to accelerate a rising in the Highlands, by distressing the gentlemen to whom these bills were originally granted’ (p. 215). His surprise indicates his ignorance of how far the power of credit extends. Jarvie must explain to him that Osbaldistone and Tresham has bought forested land from ‘some o’ the Highland lairds and chiefs’, to whom they ‘granted large bills in payment’ (p. 214). If Osbaldistone and Tresham fails, and the bills are not honoured by merchants in Glasgow, Jarvie informs Frank, “the stopping of your father’s house will hasten the outbreak that’s been sae lang baling us” (p. 215). According to Jarvie, Rob Roy himself lost ‘his living and land’ to creditors because he ‘was venturesome’ in his business dealings (p. 211). Like William Osbaldistone, albeit less successful, Rob Roy is a daring speculator—an adventurer.

Frank’s difficulty in unravelling the specifics of the commercial entanglement of Highland lairds with London merchants has been shared by generations of readers. The restoration of Osbaldistone and Tresham’s credit depends upon the recovery of a valise of papers the exact nature of which is never specified. Nassau Senior wrote in an 1821 review of the novel, ‘the whole business of the assets—what they were—the objects for which they were taken—the manner in which they are recovered, is one mass of confusion and improbability.’³⁴ We know only that they are important to Britain’s economic stability and political security. But their mystification encapsulates the way commerce is represented in the novel—as a powerful and inscrutable system that exceeds the individual’s control and understanding. It would seem, then, that commerce, as a kind of supernatural force, should belong in *Rob Roy* to the genre of the gothic, as it does in Jamison Kantor’s reading of *The Castle of Otranto*. In Walpole’s gothic, according to Kantor, ‘finance capital finds itself refigured as a new, unavoidable, supernatural apparatus from which characters attempt to flee, but to which they are hopelessly bound.’³⁵ The impossibility of locating in any one place or person the dominion of commerce contributes to the sense of foreboding that animates much of *Rob Roy*; however, the ‘finance capital’ represented in the mysterious bills or assets also belongs to the adventure narrative, driving Frank’s quest in the Highlands.

The proximity of the gothic and the adventure story as forms of romance is implied by the two characters who move most easily between them, and between the feudal and commercial modes of society with which these genres are respectively allied. Rashleigh Osbaldistone and Rob Roy belong equally to the novel’s gothic and adventure plots, and this, along with their outward deformati-

ties, and their shared capacity for disguise, signifies their status as doubles.³⁶ Rashleigh, with his designs on Diana's chastity, is in some ways a conventional gothic villain who wears his moral deformity in his person. He is 'bull-necked and cross-made,' with an 'imperfection in his gait' (p. 44). His expressions seem to change 'almost instantaneously from the expression of one passion to that of the contrary', like 'the sudden shifting of scene in the theatre, where, at the whistle of the prompter, a cavern disappears and a grove arises' (p. 102). Rashleigh's transition from the gothic world of Osbaldistone Hall into his position with Osbaldistone and Tresham is as sudden and as seamless as his changes of mood. Frank comes to regard Rashleigh as 'the great author of all ill' (p. 199) because he seems as much at ease in undertaking the 'education of a deserted orphan of noble birth [...] with the [...] purpose of ultimately seducing her' (p. 111) as he is in making Osbaldistone and Tresham's 'revenues and property the means of putting in motion his own ambitious and extensive schemes' (p. 133). In both situations, his aims are entirely 'selfish and unconscientious', making Frank's passivity seem positively benign by contrast.

Rob Roy is also adept at moving between feudal and commercial modes of life, and between the registers of gothic romance and adventure story. Like Rashleigh, Rob is 'for his ain hand' and will 'tak the side that suits him best' (p. 217). His Jacobitism stems from the belief that a Stuart restoration will further his own interests rather than from deep loyalty to a wronged monarch. Rob's appearance is as malleable as his principles. Frank first encounters Rob at an inn on the North Road, where he appears as Mr Campbell, a 'Scotch gentleman' and a 'dealer in cattle' (p. 29). When Frank sees Rob in his Highland dress, he can 'scarce recognize him to be the same person' as Campbell (p. 275). In his Highland garb, Rob Roy belongs to the gothic. His 'wild, irregular, and, as it were, unearthly' appearance reminds Frank

of the tales which Mabel used to tell of the old Piets who ravaged Northumberland in ancient times, who, according to her traditions, were a sort of half goblin half human beings, distinguished, like this man, for courage, cunning, ferocity, the lengths of their arms, and the squareness of their shoulders. (p. 187)

It is difficult enough for Frank to accept that the unknown and apparently undistinguished Mr Campbell might be able to help him resolve his father's difficulties, almost impossible for him to believe that Rob Roy—a quasi-supernatural being from 'ancient times'—can, as Rob himself puts it, 'stead your father in his extremity' (p. 188).

While Rob Roy and Rashleigh pass easily between feudal and commercial social orders, they belong fully to neither. To the extent that the novel reconciles these social modes and their literary corollaries, the gothic and the adventure story, it is through Frank. Rob Roy lives out his days in a liminal state, practising his distorted parodies of commercial exchange, and eventually acquiring 'to a certain degree, the connivance of government to his self-erected office of Protector of the Lennox, in virtue of which he levied black-mail with as much

regularity as the proprietors did their ordinary rents' (p. 342). By contrast, Rashleigh's death—fittingly at Rob Roy's hands—signifies his expulsion from both social systems. Having failed to bring down Osbaldistone and Tresham and instead betrayed his Jacobite allies to the government, Rashleigh attempts to recover what he regards as his rightful inheritance—Osbaldistone Hall and Diana Vernon's hand in marriage. When his plot is foiled, Rashleigh's dying words to Frank are a curse:

'in love, in ambition, in the paths of interest, you have crossed and blighted me at every turn. I was born to be the honour of my father's house—I have been its disgrace—and all along of you. My very patrimony has become your's [*sic*]—Take it [...] and may the curse of a dying man cleave to it.' (p. 341)

The speech is almost parodic in its villainous intensity, and yet, Rashleigh's curse seems to have some efficacy. For although Frank acquires Osbaldistone Hall, his father's rightful inheritance, he apparently has no children to inherit it or to listen to his story.

If, as Alexander Welsh has argued, the rightful inheritance of landed property signifies the perpetuation of tradition and the restoration of national stability in the Waverley novels, then the ending of *Rob Roy* would seem to depict the triumph of a feudal hierarchy that values honour over a commercial society that privileges credit. However, in fact Frank's inheritance reveals that the vagaries of commerce underlie all semblance of order in the modern nation state.³⁷ With its good standing restored, Osbaldistone and Tresham, along with other London 'bankers and eminent merchants [...] agreed to support the credit of the government and to meet that run upon the Funds, on which the conspirators had greatly founded their hope of furthering their undertaking, by rendering the government, as it were, bankrupt' (p. 317). The stability of George the First's government turns out to rest not on any kind of inherited authority, or even, as David Hume would have it, on custom. Rather it rests on 'credit', and it is thus as susceptible to sudden changes of fortune as any other house of business. Frank's father uses 'a great share of the large profits which accrued from the rapid rise of the funds upon the suppression of the rebellion' to pay off the 'large mortgages affecting Osbaldistone Hall', of which Frank, following the sudden death of Sir Hildebrand and his several sons, takes ownership. While Frank's father may be inspired by 'the experience he had so lately of the perils of commerce [...] to realize, in this manner, a considerable part of his property', his investment in Osbaldistone Hall suggests that commercial endeavour is necessary to sustain landed property. Frank is sent back to Northumberland to take possession of Osbaldistone Hall 'as its heir and representative of the family', but we learn that he also joins 'with heart and hand in his [father's] commercial labours' (p. 342), uniting the two social orders that he initially regarded as antithetical.

At the outset of his narrative, the young Frank expresses 'insuperable objections' to adopting his father's profession (p. 8), declaring himself uninterested in learning about 'emptions, orders, payments, receipts, acceptances, draughts,

commissions and advices' (p. 15). He prefers the army 'to any other active line of life' (p. 18), choosing a profession founded in honour to one grounded in credit. Yet he evinces the highest respect for 'the commercial character', which 'connects nation with nation, relieves the wants, and contributes to the wealth of all' (p. 14). But Frank's adventures seem to bring under thrall to the system of credit that underwrites his position as Lord of Osbaldistone Manor. By the end of his adventures, Frank has succumbed to the romance of commerce despite having witnessed that it does not in fact relieve the wants or contribute to the prosperity of all, but rather creates dramatic disparities in wealth across Britain. Hewitt attributes Frank's evident 'melancholia' at the time of writing his narrative to 'his perception of the cultural costs of the expansion of trade'; yet while readers may perceive these costs, it is unclear that Frank does.³⁸ Despite the 'checkered and varied feeling of pleasure and pain' that writing down the story of his adventures evokes in Frank (p. 3), he seems to have no sense of his privileged position in a global commercial system that renders some men wealthy landowners and others dispossessed outlaws, and no sense of how others' misfortune, debt or even dishonour might be the inadvertent by-product of Osbaldistone and Tresham's investments and speculations. Frank's self-absorption, Andrew Lincoln has shown, reveals a 'split between the benevolent ideology of commerce and the actual consequences of commercial activities' of which Frank remains unaware.³⁹ Perhaps, though, it is a mistake to expect such psychological development in a hero that, as Hewitt argues, is 'only a means by which we look at the condition of Britain'.⁴⁰ Frank's purpose is not to draw moral conclusions for readers, but rather to allow them to draw their own.

Patrick Brantlinger has described how the realist novel was a creature of 'credit' in at least two senses. First, it was a commodity, produced to be transformed into money in the increasingly capitalized and bourgeois literary marketplace. Second, it begged to be 'credited' or taken at face value as true.⁴¹

Although, as I have shown, *Rob Roy* incorporates varieties of romance, it nonetheless exemplifies Brantlinger's claims, suggesting that they may not be specific to realist fiction. Scott undoubtedly understood the novel's value as a commodity, and its first-person retrospective form invites readers to take Frank's story as true. As Nassau Senior remarked of *Rob Roy* a few years after its publication:

Nothing but the novel's being in the first person, so that the author appears bound to relate the events which his hero saw and heard, without detailing the steps by which they are brought about, could have enabled him to make it hang together, even with the small portion of plausibility which it now possesses.⁴²

Yet, much as the seeming security of landed property is shown to rest upon volatile commercial investments, so the novel's truth claim rests in a stock convention of gothic romance: the found manuscript. 'Throw, then these sheets into some secret drawer of your escritoire', Frank instructs Will Tresham at


the beginning of his story, 'till we are separated from each other's society by an event which may happen at any moment' (pp. 5–6). By encouraging Will to lay aside the story in a 'secret drawer' until after its writer's death, Frank creates the conditions for a found manuscript that recalls Scott's story of coming across the incomplete manuscript of *Waverley* in his own drawer. This gothic convention underwrites *Rob Roy's* publication, as we are informed in the 'Advertisement' that the Author of *Waverley* 'received a parcel of Papers, containing the Outlines of this narrative' from 'his respectable Publishers' (p. 3).

It was through the sales of this thinly veiled fiction that Scott funded the enlargement of his own estate. In October of 1817, while nearing the end of his work on *Rob Roy*, Scott purchased another piece of land, writing to John Balantyne: 'I have closed with Usher for his beautiful patrimony, which makes me a great laird. I am afraid the people will take me up for coining. Indeed, these novels, while their attractions last, are something like it.'⁴³ Coining literally means to stamp metal into a coin, but figuratively it can mean making money rapidly and easily, or to fabricate, invent or counterfeit.⁴⁴ Scott's cryptic note implicitly compares his novels to coins—means of purchasing the land that he covets—but also suggests that they are counterfeit, and that his status as 'great laird' is also a fiction.

In representing his novels not just as a way to make money, but as money itself, Scott implies that they bear a certain resemblance to each other, just as coins must carry certain markings in order to pass as currency. This sameness was troubling to Scott insofar as it threatened to render him a writer of formula fiction, akin to the authors who published their works with the Minerva Press. While working on *Rob Roy*, Scott remarked anxiously in a letter to James Balantyne that 'the Highlands are rather a worn out subject'.⁴⁵ He feared that the literary market might be satiated with stories about Scotland and that sales of *Rob Roy* might suffer accordingly.

Scott's anxiety was reasonable, under the circumstances, even if he was largely responsible for creating the vogue for Scottish fiction in the first place. In the years between the publication of *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*, readers might have enjoyed the following novels, which announced their Scottish subjects in their titles: *Monriethe; or, the Peer of Scotland* (1814), *The Scotchwoman. A Novel* (1814), *The Saxon and the Gaël; or, the Northern Metropolis* (1814), *The Castle of Strathmay* (1814), *Clan-Albin: A National Tale* (1815), *Anna; or, Edinburgh* (1815), *The Lairds of Glenfern; or, Highlanders of the Nineteenth Century* (1816), *Howard Castle; or, a Romance from the Mountains* (1817), *Reft Rob; or, the Witch of Scot-Muir* (1817), *The Wife of Fitzalice, and the Caledonian Siren* (1817) and *Strathbogie; or, the Recluse of Glenmorris* (1817). These vividly titled novels, most of which were published by the Minerva Press, joined others that did not announce their Scottish subjects as boldly, including Scott's own *Guy Mannering; or, the Astrologer* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816) and *Tales of my Landlord* (1817), as well as Mary Brunton's *Discipline* (1815).

Yet, the flooding of the market with Scottish fiction only seemed to increase demand, and the first print run of *Rob Roy*, consisting of 10,000 copies, brought in a net profit of almost of £127,000, of which Scott received half.⁴⁶ Readers perceived *Rob Roy* as at once similar enough to its predecessors to be recognisable as the work of the Author of *Waverley*, thereby satisfying those who wanted more, and different enough from them to be fresh and interesting. *Rob Roy*, in E. T. Channing's opinion, provided 'proofs on all hands that the author is not exhausted, that he has not yet forsaken invention and become an artisan'.⁴⁷ In other words, it was not merely a well-crafted copy of earlier novels by the Author of *Waverley*, or of other, inferior Scottish novels. The novel's title marks its difference from Scott's previous works, as it is the only one of the *Waverley* novels to be titled after a real person rather than an imaginary character. In this case, as in most others concerning the *Waverley* novels, financial need determined Scott's decisions. Scott titled the novel *Rob Roy* at the suggestion of Archibald Constable, who thought, correctly as it turned out, that the title would help it sell well.

Yet *Rob Roy* is hardly the protagonist of *Rob Roy*, even though Nicol Jarvie informs Frank that the outlaw's exploits "wad fill a buik, and a queer ane it wad be—as gude as Robin Hood or William Wallace—a' fu' o' venturesome deeds and escapes, sic as folk tell ower at a winter-ingle in the daft days" (p. 213). This is not the book that Scott wrote in 1817, although he added a lengthy preface recounting *Rob Roy's* 'venturesome deeds' to the *Magnum Opus* edition of 1830.⁴⁸ Still, *Rob Roy* does not appear in his own person until the middle of the novel, and the section set in the Highlands accounts for about one third of the whole. It's difficult to imagine that the novel would have fared as well had it been called *Osbaldistone*, but it remains the case that it is less about *Rob Roy* the culture-hero than about *Rob Roy* as symbol and victim of the continuities and conflicts between feudal and commercial orders, and of Scott's own ambivalent relationship to them. 

NOTES

1. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, ed. by James Kinsley, John Davie and Claudia L. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 147.
2. See e.g. Donald Davie, *The Heyday of Walter Scott* (London: Routledge, 1961), pp. 56–64; Francis R. Hart, *Scott's Novels: The Plotting of Historical Survival* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1966), pp. 33–48; and A. O. J. Cockshutt, *The Achievement of Walter Scott* (London: Collins, 1969), pp. 153–70.
3. Walter Scott, *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, ed. by P. D. Garside (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 77. Subsequent references to this edition will be made parenthetically in the text.
4. Ian Duncan, 'Primitive Inventions: *Rob Roy*, Nation, and World System', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 15.1 (2002), 81–102 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/ecf.2002.0061>> (p. 100). See also Andrew Lincoln, 'Scott and Empire: The Case of *Rob Roy*', *Studies in the Novel*, 34.1 (2002), 43–59.
5. Duncan, p. 96.

6. Ibid., p. 97.
7. See Lars Hartveit, 'Interaction between Genre and Social Content in Sir Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*', in *Papers on Language and Literature Presented to Alvar Ellegård and Erik Frykman*, Gothenburg Studies in English, 60, ed. by Sven Bäckman and Göran Kjellmer (Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1985), pp. 165–82; Anna Faktorovich, *Rebellion as Genre in the Novels of Scott, Dickens and Stevenson* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), pp. 28–29, 78–80 and 103–08; Fiona Robertson, *Legitimate Histories: Scott, Gothic, and the Authorities of Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), pp. 180–87.
8. Jane Millgate, *Walter Scott: The Making of the Novelist* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 134.
9. Ibid., p. 146.
10. *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by H. J. C. Grierson, 12 vols (London: Constable, 1932–37), IV, 504.
11. Eric Hayle relates the complicated history of Scott's financial entanglements in *The Ruin of Sir Walter Scott* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968)—see pp. 85–93 for Scott's dealings with Constable.
12. *Letters of Scott*, IV, 508.
13. In his review of John Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, Carlyle accused Scott of writing 'with the ardour of a steam-engine, that he might make £15,000 a-year and buy upholstery with it', evidence that 'his life was worldly, [and] his ambitions were worldly'. See Thomas Carlyle, 'Memoirs of the Life of Scott', *Westminster Review*, 6.2 (January 1838), 293–345.
14. Novels about the Clearances include Christian Isobel Johnstone's *Clan-Albin* (1815), Felix Macdonogh's *The Highlanders* (1824) and Susan Ferrier's *Destiny* (1830).
15. David Hewitt 'Rob Roy: Trade, Improvement, and the Destruction of "Native" Cultures', in *Literary Tourism, the Trossachs, and Walter Scott*, ed. by Ian Brown (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2012), p. 95.
16. Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*, ed. by David Hewitt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 209 <<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748628384>>. Subsequent references to this edition will be made parenthetically in the text.
17. John Sutherland, *The Life of Walter Scott* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 204.
18. *Letters of Scott*, IV, 477.
19. On various schemes to employ Highlanders evicted from their homes, see Eric Richards, *The Highland Clearances: People, Landlords and Rural Turmoil* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000), pp. 40–53.
20. Malcolm Gray, *The Highland Economy 1750–1850* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1957), pp. 155 and 181.
21. Richards, p. 327.
22. On *Rob Roy* and the Caribbean, see Carla Sassi's 'Sir Walter Scott and the Caribbean: Unravelling the Silences', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 47 (2017), 224–40 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/yes.2017.0003>>; and Lincoln, *passim*.
23. This passage translates roughly as 'practice of returning stolen goods to their owner in exchange for payment, blackmail, stolen herds of cows and roving plundering'.
24. E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 54–79 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511518997>>.

25. On the feminisation of the gothic, see Bradford K. Mudge, 'The Man with Two Brains: Gothic Novels, Popular Culture, Literary History', *PMLA*, 107.1 (1992), 92–104 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/462803>>.
26. See Martin Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p. 70. Green discusses the Waverley novels' place in an Anglo-American tradition of adventure fiction on pp. 83–86.
27. See Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain 1689–1746* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 118.
28. 'Osbald 1 (Male)', in *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England* <<http://www.pase.ac.uk/jsf/persons/CreatePersonFrames.jsf?personKey=9863>> [accessed 23 November 2018].
29. Robertson, pp. 3–16; and Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 165–80. Peter Garside demonstrates Scott's familiarity with at least some of the Minerva Press's novels in 'Walter Scott and the "Common" Novel', *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text*, 3.2 (1999), 1–9 <http://www.romtext.org.uk/articles/cc01_n01/> [accessed 23 November 2018].
30. Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992) <<https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501734533>>.
31. *OED*: 'adventure' definition 7a.
32. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. by Michael Shinagel (New York: Norton, 1994), p. 14.
33. Richards, p. 33.
34. Nassau Senior, Review of *Rob Roy, Heart of Midlothian, Bride of Lammermoor, Legend of Montrose, Ivanhoe, The Monastery, The Abbot, and Kenilworth*, *Quarterly Review*, 26 (October 1821), 110.
35. Jamison Kantor, 'Horace Walpole and the Fate of Finance', *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 58.2 (Summer 2017), 135–55 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/ecy.2017.0013>> (p. 137).
36. For a fuller discussion of Rob Roy's capacity for disguise, see Judith Wilt, *Secret Leaves: The Novels of Walter Scott* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 68–69.
37. Alexander Welsh, *The Hero of the Waverley Novels* (1963; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). For Welsh, the Waverley protagonists' passivity aligns them with the inert forces of property, stability and tradition.
38. Hewitt, p. 96.
39. Lincoln, p. 49.
40. Hewitt, p. 88.
41. Patrick Brantlinger, *Fictions of State: Culture and Credit in Britain, 1694–1994* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 150 <<https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501711794>>.
42. Senior, p. 110.
43. *Letters of Scott*, v, 5.
44. *OED*: 'coin' v. 1a, 1c, 5b.
45. *Letters of Scott*, IV, 504.

46. See William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 510.
47. Edward Tillery Channing, Review of *Rob Roy*, *North American Review*, 7 (July 1818), 184.
48. On the effects of this preface on the experience of reading the novel, see Jane Millgate, 'Scott as Annotator: The Example of *Rob Roy*', *The Bibliothek*, 12.4 (1985), 93–102.

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