

Anti-Nationalism in Scott's Old Mortality

Montserrat Martínez García
Complutense University Madrid

Follow this and additional works at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>



Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), and the [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#)

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, **Purdue University Press** selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: [<clcweb@purdue.edu>](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)

Recommended Citation

Martínez García, Montserrat. "Anti-Nationalism in Scott's Old Mortality." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 12.1 (2010): <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1576>>

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).



UNIVERSITY PRESS <<http://www.thepress.purdue.edu>>

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture



ISSN 1481-4374 <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>>

Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Volume 12 Issue 1 (March 2010) Article 5

Montserrat Martínez García,

"Anti-Nationalism in Scott's *Old Mortality*"

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss1/5>>

Contents of CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 12.1 (2010)

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss1/>>

Abstract: In her article "Anti-Nationalism in Scott's *Old Mortality*," Montserrat Martínez García examines national identity through war in Walter Scott's *Old Mortality* in order to illustrate that war was one of the main catalysts of nationhood and show, simultaneously, the disparity between the institutional and the popular attitude toward war. Martínez García pays attention to the way Scott portrayed war and identity and to what extent this literary representation coincided with or faced the uniform ideology of nationalism. Based on the historical background of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, Martínez García analyses Scott's novel to uncover focus his narrative of cracks and fissures to throw light on the parameters of war and identity construction and on the demystification of Scott as a blinkered nationalist. The results of her analysis suggest that Scott's narrative of war and its accompanying ideologies reveal that in the novel historical, political, and religious identities do not constitute the text as a description of a homogeneous nation and that Scott's text can stand as a narrative against nineteenth-century nationalism in England.

Montserrat MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA

Anti-Nationalism in Scott's *Old Mortality*

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars were not only a turning point in the history of France but also in the history of Europe. The revolutionary and expansionist policy, consolidated with Napoleon, destabilized Europe and stirred a new feeling, nationalism. The threat of invasion, war arbitrariness and French tyranny were enough grounds to raise all the European countries and social sectors against this threat. The same crisis that entered the political domain broke into literature, where the historical novel emerged as a literary genre that tried to overcome the ideological disorder. Consequently, the historical narrative became the literary paradigm of the nation by invigorating its ideology and the collective image of the community as an organism bound by close and fraternal ties.

As a mirror of the political landscape, nationalism emerged from the notion of unity, that is to say, from a deep intertwining between all discursive layers, acting as a good reminder of social harmony, security, and peace. Cultural homogeneity promoted conceptual homogeneity so that official tenets were regarded as absolute truth, as irrefutable and indisputable principles. Axiological absoluteness gave way to uniqueness in human thought and in interpretations of reality. In turn, the nation identified with this rigid reality and was conceived as a whole against other wholes. The ideological nationalist universe fractured into dichotomies; antagonisms between sameness and otherness around which prejudices, stereotypes, and hierarchies were built as barriers of isolation (Escarabajal and Escarabajal 13). The nation went hand in hand with war and militarization as bonds of national cohesion and transmission of social values, and this "brotherhood" explains why at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe the military structure was hailed as "a school for the nation," nameless, a disciplinary institution in which citizens learned the relevance of social commitment by fighting for collective and national integrity (Krebs 85). According to Raymond Williams, "War stands out as one of the fundamentally unifying and generalizing experiences: the identification of an alien enemy, and with it of what is often real danger, powerfully promotes and often in effect completes a 'national' identity. It is not accidental that talk of patriotism so quickly involves, and even can be limited to, memories and symbols of war" (182). As Patricia A. Simpson argues, the cornerstone of war culture derives from gender identity and from erotic desire, both linked to national identity (15-25). This means that not only has militarism become a rite of passage into maturity, but that it has also been a factor in the construction of gender identity (Mayer 283-84). This is Cynthia Enloe's argument when she postulates that "When a nationalist movement becomes militarized ... male privilege in the community usually becomes more entrenched" and that this process "puts a premium on communal unity in the name of national survival, a priority which can silence women critical of patriarchal practices and attitudes; in so doing, nationalist militarization can privilege men" (56-58). Walter Scott wrote *Old Mortality* in 1816 in the context of war and conditioned by three historical factors: the Presbyterian demonstration at Loudon Hill on 13 June 1815, Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, and the England's political and financial crisis in the wake of the postwar climate. Several days before the Battle of Waterloo, on 13 June 1815, a protest march took place in Loudon Hill (Scotland) to commemorate the Battle of Loudon Hill and the Presbyterian victory over the Stuart government in 1679. The demonstrators, thousands of farmers and workers from the manufacturing industry, profited by the occasion of the meeting to advocate for Napoleon's recent escape from the exile on the Isle of Elba and to protest against economic policy. The crowd tried to emulate the achievements of their Covenanter ancestors in order to seek a new era of organized activism and social mobilization (see Krull 725-26). These factors plus Waterloo and its aftermath, I argue, must have persuaded Scott to write and publish *Old Mortality*.

The Battle of Waterloo marked the end of Napoleon's rule. After almost twenty-five years of armed conflict with England and with virtually all European countries, Napoleon's threat to freedom and peace disappeared. The exultation brought about by Napoleon's overthrow led many writers and poets, among them Scott, to start a tour across Europe so as to visit different destinations such as Belgium, the Low Countries, and France (see Semmel). In this sense, Scott's impressions, gathered from his continental trip and recounted in his letters, constitute an invaluable historical document of the effects of the Napoleonic Wars, clearly evident in the contrast between the rejoicing, "a perpetual whirl

wind and tempest of gaiety going on among the strangers" (<<http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/etexts/etexts/letters4.PDF>>) and the ravaging experience of the event. Between 10 August and 6 September 1815, Scott sent a letter to Joanna Baillie expressing his uneasiness about the brutality of the "memorable field of battle" and about the current predicament of France, commenting on that "The fate of the French after this day of decisive appeal has been severe enough. There were never people more mortified, more subdued and apparently more broken in spirit" (<<http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/etexts/etexts/letters4.PDF>>).

Waterloo was a landmark in the political and literary context of English Romanticism since, together with the taking of the Bastille, was one of the most celebrated historical episodes during the Romantic period. It was the inspiring muse, especially in poetry, and the recurrent topic in the imaginative landscape of authors such as Scott, Southey Wordsworth, and Byron. Their fascination with Napoleon unveils to what degree Romantic writers were obsessed with this historical age and how they managed to decode and reshape Napoleon's legacy and his avowed influence on their lives and on nineteenth-century background (see Bainbridge, *Napoleon* 153-56; Lee 74-104). This means that Waterloo was not merely a military triumph but the harbinger of political and economic crisis. If France was the enemy par excellence of England and the main impulse in nourishing hostilities, the postwar years strengthened the reality of a fractured country. The French revolution and the Napoleonic Wars coincided with economic and industrial expansion: with shipbuilding, metallurgical works for arms manufacturing, or with textile production on a grand scale. However, at the end of the conflict, England had to cope with imbalance in industrial structure that at the same time was too widespread before a decline of demand for goods. Between 1815 and 1848, Great Britain's evolution was determined by a social, economic, and political metamorphosis.

As a representative novel of revolution, *Old Mortality* tackles the difficulty both of depicting violence and finding the means to avoid it. Scott's narrative strategy, centred on the connection past-present, "is not to distance us from but to assert the immediacy of that threat of fanatical extremism which formerly had so bloodily divided the Scots" (Humma 310). Thus, the reconstruction of Scotland's past and its antagonism with England harked back to both countries' histories and to reconciling the purpose of fiction with solving thorny matters. As Crawford Gribben states, for Scott writing or reading about the Covenanter tragedy was a political and theological task (16). This is the reason why *Old Mortality* constitutes a strong warning against the ominous path of armed fight that ought to be thwarted by politicians and citizens alike. Unlike Scott who visited Waterloo and attended as an observer the spectacle of war and its dramatic conclusion, Morton, *Old Mortality*'s protagonist, has a first hand experience of the 1679 historical crisis between Presbyterians and Episcopalian and of the wickedness coming from the different factions. Scott addresses this issue to reveal a clear contradiction between war as a grandiose exhibition of the military apparatus and war as a dark, opportunist, and disreputable affair. In doing so, *Old Mortality* allows Scott to draw a the line between England's inconsistencies in 1815 as the leading European power and the contradictions of the 1679 insurrection so as to understand and to heal traumas. *Old Mortality*'s historical and literary action is set in Scotland where James Sharp (1613-1679), the archbishop of Saint Andrews, was murdered because of his collaboration in re-establishing Episcopalianism following Charles II's intentions. In the novel, Scott focuses on the Covenanter defeat and persecution and succeeds in contrasting the conceptualization of a common phenomenon, war, in two divergent historical and temporal planes, the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries. Nationalist ideology projected a deep sense of unity between Scotland and England's past and present through a national reading of history — while the truth is that in 1816 when the novel was published, the bulk of the Scottish population still rejected the Treaty of Union in spite of having passed more than a century since this agreement. Similarly, the union between the Scottish and the English crown in 1603 under the Stuart dynasty did not bring a convergence of beliefs and feelings. If nationalism put forward that the root of the present was in the past, *Old Mortality* elaborates on the idea that national harmony could hardly exist in the nineteenth century when the seventeenth century was a source of social chaos and on-going strife.

Within the mix of war and literature and the role of literary texts as constitutive artefacts of national identity, we must recognize Scott's contribution to it, whose texts were useful as a stimulus to spur British patriotism during the offensive against Napoleon and to reinforce the influence of poetry in its reconciling, creative, and constructive function of the war against France (see Cronin). We must

call to mind that around 1811, Scott was hailed as "the war poet *par excellence*" (Saglia 106). The description of battles, the heroic demeanour of warriors and the staging of the chivalric ideology strengthened the imagery of war, instigating the mobilization of the population and also, the understanding and idealization of war in a delicate historical moment for England. In this sense, war poetry played a great part during the conflict between England and France on account of its presence felt in newspapers, theatrical performances, or songs. Closely tied to this, the visual culture of cartoons, engravings, and paintings bolstered Francophobia for the benefit of national identity. Apart from the fact that Scott along with other writers, conditioned the way in which war was imagined, one of the key ideas of its representation lay in the very essence of war, indifferent to the daily and immediate experience, disclosing a distance between readers and the tragic reality of war (see Bainbridge, *British Poetry* 1-30). According to Andrew Lincoln, *A Legend of Montrose*, a novel also related to war whose reflections throw light on *Old Mortality*, subsumes the ambivalent attitude of Scott's contemporary society toward war alluding on the one hand to the seductive idea of war ruled by civilized standards of conduct that modelled its official representations in the Romantic period and on the other the harsh reality of war without masks or idealizations ("The Mercenary" 37-47; see also Lincoln, "Walter Scott"). And Mary A. Favret suggests that although during the years between 1793 and 1815 a propaganda campaign was launched through pamphlets, newspapers, music, and literary works which proclaimed the destructive nature of war, the horrors of war were relegated to the domestic and private sphere thus erasing their tracks in the public domain. This gap in news about war, between the protection of here, home, and the risk of there, the fighting zone, helped to forge the myth of war through the fiction of male power as a defender of nation in his citizen identity. The devotion to home and nation was precisely built on that citizenship quality and specifically, on the dual body of man, that is, on the physical body, mortal and individual, and the abstract one, immortal and collective (Favret 539-48).

In *Old Mortality*, Scott resorts to his characters as a strategy to carry out two purposes: first, to break the absoluteness of reality, the definite and unique version of people and facts, and second, to undo the ideal conception of war through the analysis of the grounds which underlie the involvement and ideological tendencies of characters regarding war. The conclusion of the novel is another means used by Scott to generate uncertainty, since, according to Jane Millgate it is "unashamedly deconstructive" (128). At the end of *Old Mortality*, Peter Pattieson and Martha Buskbody talk about the denouement of novels in general, underlining that the authorial responsibility, shared among Patterson who keeps the memory of the dead and their stories as he makes and cleans the gravestones, Pattieson who chooses the stories, Cleisbotham who edits them, and Buskbody who criticizes them, crumbles so that "the characters within the main narrative seem finally to be out of control, escaping out of the realm of fiction and back into that of historical record" (Millgate 128). The fragmentation of absolute reality is performed by approaching a character from different angles, contrasting other characters' opinions of him/her, and by approaching a fact from different perspectives so that the information gathered from characters and events is not complete but reconstructed gradually like in a puzzle as the reading progresses. The kaleidoscopic focus on characters helps to understand incidents and to subvert prejudices and stereotypes of the Others. Hence, those features attributed to an individual by an adversary have to be examined scrupulously because in this (hi)story there are no heroes or oppressors, good or bad people but men who possess all those traits and more. Consequently, each time Scott speaks about heroism or wickedness, the reader must be cautious and wait until finding those traces the novel leaves to make an overall assessment but never a conclusive one. Concurrently, the variety in reactions and interpretations before the same character and events disclose the contradictions of the system, the lack of consensus on a single reality, a single whole of thoughts, and thereby, the plurality of views and truths that spread through society.

Among the characters, Claverhouse and Burley are the most controversial and complicated ones, both zealots epitomizing the two religious extremes that surround Morton. Claverhouse, repeatedly hailed as a hero by the Royalists and despised as a bloodthirsty tyrant by the Covenanters, shows signs of cruelty and high-handedness throughout the text, but near the end, in chapter 35, Morton surprises the reader with a reflection that changes the perception about Claverhouse: "The gentleness and urbanity of that officer's general manners, the high and chivalrous sentiments of military devotion which he occasionally expressed, his deep and accurate insight into the human bosom, demanded at

once the approbation and the wonder of those who conversed with him; while, on the other hand, his cold indifference to military violence and cruelty, seemed altogether inconsistent with the social, and even admirable qualities which he displayed" (291). On the other side of the spectrum is Burley. His characterization, in which the negative prevails over the positive, presents him as a ruthless being, driven by revenge and ambition, having an strict and violent behaviour that pushes him to commit James Sharp's murder. Yet, his braveness is overshadowed by his bigotry that drags him eventually into madness. Burley's classification as a rebel does not catch the reader unawares. What is really shocking about him is how he joins Claverhouse ten years after, in 1689, in order to fight against King William's hegemony. Claverhouse, now the Viscount of Dundee, together with Burley and the Highlanders, revolts to restore James II to the throne in return for the reestablishment of the terms of the Covenant. If before Lord Evandale was Claverhouse's comrade in arms, now he becomes his enemy. Again, this jump from defender of principles of the established order to offender and social agitator is a proof of human beings' contradictions and ambiguities, as well as of the arduousness of linguistic codes. In this manner, Scott warns about the risk of radicalisms and about the threat these individuals extremely jealous of their ideas pose to society.

However, if the images of Claverhouse and Burley are relatively stable due to their designation as intransigent, greatly limiting their development, the opposite occurs with Morton. His impartiality when taking a stance and his human quality make him the richest character in nuances, paradoxes, and psychological growth. Although he champions the Covenanter cause after considering it thoughtfully, he does not hesitate to save Lord Evandale's life against Burley's will, help unconditionally the Bellenden family despite becoming an enemy of his fellows in arms, negotiate peace with the Duke of Monmouth and, particularly, behave unselfishly in order to achieve peace and freedom of conscience. Contrary to all expectations, it is his generosity and empathy what leads him to be misunderstood and to his unjust treatment as a traitor. Morton has several identities that force him to cross different borders: suitor of Edith Bellenden who belongs to a Royalist family, leader of the Covenanter party, prisoner of both factions, exiled, and an officer of King William. This wavering among diverse ideological frontiers, primarily religious and political ones, keeps the plot alive and explains contrasts as a mirror of seventeenth-century ideological struggles. And that is exactly where the trouble starts since the main difficulty Morton has to face stems from crises of conscience in the wake of the extreme circumstances in which he gets involved (see Chandler 212-16). Morton's perilous position brings to the forefront the ambiguities of the social structure and specifically of ideology. Morton's characterization, a man with noble and high ideals, caught between the two warring and extremist parties, is a clue to why the historical years in which the novel is set were called the Killing Years (1684-1688). *Old Mortality*'s readers have to deal once and again throughout the novel with the drama of war, religious intolerance, fanatical expressions, and cruelty to keep themselves alert against the abuses of war. Thus, *Old Mortality* unfolds as a sociological study of the range of individuals involved in war and of the way that a group of extremists divided the country into belligerent factions, passing over those exhortations coming from reasonable people (see Daiches, "Scott's Achievement" 159-61).

Morton, a Presbyterian son of an exiled leader of the Covenanter movement, embodies the common sense that Scott considered imperative to solve the 1816 crisis. Morton's involvement in the 1679 insurrection is due to four main reasons: the heavy legacy of his father, Silas Morton, a reputable soldier whose demise made him a local legend; the conviction that Edith Bellenden was engaged to Lord Evandale; the assistance given to John Burley of Balfour, pursued by the royal guard for the murder of the archbishop; and Morton's detention by the royal guard accused of harbouring a murderer. Morton decides to join John Burley after having felt an abuse of power by the monarchical faction and in particular, by Claverhouse who almost shoots him in a fit of pride. Getting into contact with Burley pinpoints Morton's growth as a character as this fact not only changes him into an outcast and traitor to his own country, an unwanted in social and legal terms, but compels him to meet an inheritance from the past. Burley, who saved the life of Morton's father, asks him to assist him in his fight to reform the Covenant and to battle against the injustices of the Royalist regime. From that point of the plot on, Morton's fate gets intertwined with the rebels' fate, his private life turns into public life and his ideology places him in an anti-system stance. However, being peace his chief target once war begins, Morton strives to civilize the conflict, minimize the bloodshed and reach an armistice (see Welsh 155-77). Morton, seeking the middle way, balances the weight of the novel. Located between

two radical ends, he acts as an observer who guides the reader through a historical and literary journey so that he/she can draw his/her own conclusions while opening a door to the inner world of characters. Thus, in those moments when the authorial voice disappears, Morton is the link between the reader and characters that become visible through their thoughts, words, and actions. Morton is one of the characters through which the contrast between appearance and reality becomes more striking. Scott draws a clear line between the information accessible to readers and the knowledge other figures of the novel have about him in the narrative either from their personal relationships with him or from rumours about his life and deeds, both of them based on prejudices. This imbalance opens a fissure in the novel: while readers know Morton's thoughts and reasons to act, the other figures in the novel express recurrently ungrounded judgements. Thus, the divergence between the "reality" of the narrative and the projected image on Morton, that is to say, expectations put on him, most of them based on his Presbyterian ideology, is a source of constant friction. Morton, like everyone involved in war, is often coerced to behave against his will and conscience and to play a part in the fate of his community's history. All this contributes to his suffering from a radical identity change: from being an anonymous member of the community he turns into a murderer's helper, a revolutionary, and a moderate leader of the insurgency. Morton has to make decisions without too much time to think and this provokes him to take responsibilities which result in situations inconsistent with his personality.

The dire aftermath of war is evident in the Puritan Elizabeth Maclure, in the most dramatic story of *Old Mortality*. Her feat consists in protecting Lord Evandale's life from insurgents in spite of the fact that her husband and children were killed by the Royalists. However, the reader has no access to the full details of this tragedy but through two accounts in two different historical points. In chapter 24 when the revolt is at its peak, Lord Evandale explains to Lady Margaret that during his flight from the enemy, he found shelter "in the cottage of a poor widow, whose husband had been shot within these three months by a party of our corps, and whose two sons are at this very moment with the insurgents" (250). Yet in chapter 42, ten years after the rebellion, the very Elizabeth offers her own version of the same facts so that the reader may discover the identity of the woman who saved Lord Evandale's life, as well as the brutal way her children were executed. To sum things up, Maclure's words epitomize the human greatness of those who decry violence as a way to solve conflicts and, instead, radiate love and kindness even in the darkest times. It also foregrounds the absurdity and insanity of war, the lifelong scars it leaves on a country, and the irreversibility of events.

The war that runs through *Old Mortality* is not solely a historical war framed in the seventeenth century, but an open war against nineteenth-century society. Actually, the narrated historical event is a mere excuse that allows for contradictions, irrationalities, manipulations, and impostures of the nineteenth century, even if in a veiled way. Scott brings into the open the underside of nationalism not through an explicit criticism but through cracks, fissures, silences, and inferences about situations and behaviours through a reading between lines. The supposed unity, harmony, balance, namely, the gallery of concepts spread by the state seem to collapse in the novel. Religion, history, nation, politics, identity, war, and all pillars of society fall apart. Facts appear as misleading, linked to incoherence, endless fights, imbalance, and to the impossibility of reconciliation. Ideologies burst into pieces resulting in disparate and conflicting visions. Inevitably, the explosion in the unity of thinking creates chaos and bewilderment, an anarchy that reinforces the havoc of war and relativizes not only the narrated truth but also the truth of the establishment. The questioning of the whole brings about the break with absoluteness which opens the door to a complex network of social and literary interpretations, to a world-text composed of disturbing representations and meanings, to a plurality of truths. But in this war, who is really the enemy? Who the Other? The answer depends on the vantage point adopted and it is not at all a simple one although it may seem so. What starts as an inner war, specific to Scotland, ends up being a war between Scotland and England that takes part to suffocate the rebellion.

Plato in *The Republic* asserted that Greeks could attack the barbarians and the reverse since they were natural rivals (217). However, when it came to speaking of Greeks fighting among themselves, it was without doubt a disease. All things considered, the plot in *Old Mortality* alludes to a confrontation both between friends, Scots against Scots, and friends-enemies, Scots against Scots along with Scots against English and thereby, two simultaneous combats. Nevertheless, Rousseau argued that any criminal who attacks the social pact and breaks the law not only becomes immediately a rebel and a traitor to his country but also ceases to be a member of it on account of his declaration of

war upon society. Given that the preservation of the State was incompatible with the preservation of the individual, it was necessary to die for one of them, which meant that the culprit's death was the death of an adversary who had broken the social contract and his bond with the state. From this new angle the landscape blurs. Who infringes the social pact, Puritans when burning the Act of Supremacy and committing violent acts or Royalists when abusing of their authority and harassing them relentlessly? For Claverhouse, the dilemma does not make him doubt when before the first battle he answers to Lord Evandale he says that "we shall lose many brave fellows, and probably be obliged to slaughter a great number of these misguided men, who, after all, are Scotchmen and subjects of King Charles as well as we are ... Rebels! Rebels! And undeserving the name either of Scotchmen or of subjects!" (Scott 151). This disallows coherent interpretation and celebrates ambiguity. And this is precisely what Scott intends to do: to play with concepts, distort the strict dividing lines between terms, and propose new possibilities that subvert the political dogmas and push readers to think for themselves and interact with the text. The confusion between the identity of the enemy or the identity of the Other obscures the issue because it severs the idea of national unity, of the country as an absolute and accordant whole. Indeed, the novel turns upside down the concept of nation. If nationalism depicted people as a real community that shared a common territory, culture, language, beliefs, and principles, with a strong sense of membership and kinship, in which homogeneity of thought and mutual understanding prevailed, *Old Mortality* portrays a community torn by hatred and resentment by the political and religious ideology in a world of oppressors and oppressed. War not only fuses with this climate of insecurity by bringing more chaos and cruelty but makes it even more difficult to distinguish between those who resist saving their lives from those defending freedom of conscience and a wild crowd that fights crazily. Following this line of thought, the division between Presbyterians and Royalists stresses that the so-called cultural union that nationalism projected in all fields of knowledge and that derived from the past, was just an unequivocal ideological construct. If we delve into the classification between the moderate or the radical cause, we find out the diverse motives and interests that drive each personage to war so that the foregone conclusion leads us to an absurd reality where the real reason behind actions does not always correspond with self-preservation and let alone with nation preservation. Thus, *Old Mortality*'s subversive subtext tells us about the violent and spurious origins involved in the nation construction, about the hypocrisy that permeates the official war propaganda and the past and present military achievements, and last but not least, about the savagery implicit in war ideology. On the other hand, we must point out the prominent role played by violence in this novel. The minute description of scenes of capital punishment and the attention paid to legal procedures are inherent pieces in any historical novel as a genre dealing with the making of the modern nation and its manipulating attitude toward tenets and judicial practices. Since the understanding of any political system is linked to the understanding of its legal structures, Scott moves to narrate the social and political Scottish order of the seventeenth century in an attempt to suspend the reader between judgement and terror. In parallel, this social context emulates nineteenth-century England in which the penal code was one of the bloodiest in Europe (see Edwards 293-08).

Seventeenth- and nineteenth-centuries warmongering burst destructively into the narrative framework dismantling the text in such a way that literature is overrun by conflict. The unity of the play is torn and instead, fragmentation and multiplicity bloom. In addition, the authorial function is affected by that internal war that subverts the authority of omniscience. The notion of totality gets distorted and the failure to know the whole is promoted while official history and literary history as seamless structures are challenged. The central role of contradiction throughout the novel backs up the hypothesis that Scott did not engage stubbornly with values and principles but on the contrary, he paid attention to ambiguity as an integral part of existence. That is why it is so difficult to make a conclusive and unique reading of *Old Mortality* since the novel, a small-scale replica of life, covers a field of boundless possibilities and the richness of diversity that reigns in nature. Facts and characters are simultaneously the same and its contrary and they prompt the reader to empathize with them, to understand war danger and barbarity.

In conclusion, Scott's *Old Mortality* is overflowed with lights and shadows, antagonisms, evolution and involution, warnings about ideological extremism, and its negative effects embodied in the horror of war. War is not imagined in heroic terms but as an injustice, an orgy of madness and destruction which is temporarily suspended thanks to the restraint and clarity of those who fight for peace. Scott's

writing, therefore, threatens the security and integrity of the process of nation formation. From that perspective, *Old Mortality* is a good example of how the foundations of nations are rooted in civil war and forcibly held together through conflict. England struggles against Scotland and the text shows how the margins of the British nation burst into the core stability of society exposing the force of marginal and marginalized stories excluded from the national and hegemonic narrative. For Scott, nations are not a past or present unity but a space of battle redefined unceasingly, an entity at war with itself which remains divided by a distinguishing belief system trying invariably to dominate over the rest.

Works Cited

- Bainbridge, Simon. *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Visions of Conflict*. London: Oxford UP, 2003. 1-30.
- Bainbridge, Simon. *Napoleon and English Romanticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. 153-82.
- Chandler, James. *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999.
- Cronin, Richard. "Walter Scott and Anti-Gallican Minstrelsy." *The Politics of Romantic Poetry: In Search of the Pure Commonwealth*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000. 92-109.
- Daiches, David. "Scott's Achievement as a Novelist. Part Two." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 6.3 (1951): 153-73.
- Edwards, Simon. "The Geography of Violence: Historical Fiction and the National Question." *Novel* 34.2 (2001): 293-08.
- Enloe, Cynthia. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. London: Pandora, 1989.
- Escarabajal Frutos, Andrés, and Andrés Escarabajal de Haro. *Trabajando la Interculturalidad*. Murcia: Diego Martín, 2004.
- Favret, Mary A. "Coming Home: The Public Spaces of Romantic War." *Studies in Romanticism* 33.4 (1994): 539-48.
- Gribben, Crawford. "James Hogg, Scottish Calvinism and Literary Theory." *Scottish Studies Review* 5.2 (2004): 9-26.
- Krebs, Ronald. "A School for the Nation?: How Military Service Does not Build Nations, and How It Might." *International Security* 28.4 (2004): 85-124.
- Krull, Andrew D. "Spectacles of Disaffection: Politics, Ethics, and Sentiment in Walter Scott's *Old Mortality*." *ELH: English Literary History* 73.3 (2006): 695-727.
- Humma, John B. "The Narrative Framing Apparatus of Scott's *Old Mortality*." *Studies in the Novel* 12.4 (1980): 301-15.
- Lee, Yoon Sun. *Nationalism and Irony: Burke, Scott, Carlyle*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004.
- Lincoln, Andrew. "The Mercenary, the Savage and the Civilized War: Scott and *A Legend of the Wars of Montrose*." *Scottish Studies Review* 4.2 (2003): 37-47.
- Lincoln, Andrew. "Walter Scott and the Birth of the Nation." *Romanticism* 8. 1 (2002): 1-17.
- Mayer, Tamar. "From Zero to Hero: Masculinity in Jewish Nationalism." *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*. Ed. Tamar Mayer. London: Routledge, 1999. 283-307.
- Millgate, Jane. *Walter Scott: the Making of the Novelist*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1984.
- Plato. *The Republic*. Trans. H.D.P. Lee. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Du Contrat Social*. Aubier: Montaigne, 1943.
- Saglia, Diego. *Poetic Castles in Spain: British Romanticism and Figurations of Iberia*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000. 106-15.
- Scott, Walter. *Old Mortality*. London: Routledge, 1879.
- Scott, Walter. *The Walter Scott Digital Archive. The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*. Vol. 4 (1815-1817): <<http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/etexts/etexts/letters4.PDF>>.
- Semmel, Stuart. "Reading the Tangible Past: British Tourism, Collecting, and Memory after Waterloo." *Representations* 69 (2000): 9-37.
- Simpson, Patricia A. *The Erotics of War in German Romanticism*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2006.
- Welsh, Alexander. *The Hero of the Waverley Novels: With New Essays on Scott*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Year 2000*. New York: Pantheon, 1983.

Author's profile: Montserrat Martínez García holds a doctorate in English literature from Complutense University Madrid. Her interests in scholarship include postmodernist topics such as counter-narratives of Otherness and hybridization and deconstruction of gender roles in Walter Scott's historical novels. Martínez García's publications include "Anatomía del terror. Instrumentos controladores del cuerpo y la conciencia femenina en *El corazón de Midlo-*

thian," Sites of Female Terror / En torno a la mujer et terror (Ed. Aranzadi, 2008) and "Bridging Cultures and Languages: Towards the Creation of a Hybrid Identity in Walter Scott's *Waverley*," *Proceedings of the 30th International AEDEAN Conference* (Ed. María Losada Friend, Pilar Ron Vaz, Sonia Hernández Santano, and Jorge Casanova, 2007). She has also translated texts by Frantz Fanon, Itamar Even-Zohar, Adrian Marino, and Randolph Pope. E-mail: <simunaran1@gmail.com>