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WALTER SCOTT

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WALTER SCOTT

BY
ROBIN MAYHEAD

Reader in English Studies
University of Stirling



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FOR MY MOTHER

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General Preface

This study of Walter Scott is the sixth in a series of short introductory critical studies of the more important British authors. The aim of the series is to go straight to the authors' works; to discuss them directly with a maximum of attention to concrete detail; to say what they are and what they do, and to indicate a valuation. The general critical attitude implied in the series is set out at some length in my *Understanding Literature*. Great literature is taken to be to a large extent self-explanatory to the reader who will attend carefully enough to what it says. 'Background' study, whether biographical or historical, is not the concern of the series.

It is hoped that this approach will suit a number of kinds of reader, in particular the general reader who would like an introduction which talks about the works themselves; and the student who would like a general critical study as a starting point, intending to go on to read more specialized works later. Since 'background' is not erected as an insuperable obstacle, readers in other English-speaking countries, countries where English is a second language, or even those for whom English is a foreign language, should find the books helpful. In Britain and the Commonwealth, students and teachers in universities and in the higher forms of secondary schools will find that the authors chosen for treatment are those most often prescribed for study in public and university examinations.

The series could be described as an attempt to make available to a wide public the results of the literary criticism of the last thirty years, and especially the methods associated with Cambridge. If the result is an increase in the reading, with enjoyment and understanding, of the great works of English literature, the books will have fulfilled their wider purpose.

ROBIN MAYHEAD

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I am indebted to the Editor of *The Library Review* for permission to reprint my notice of Ioan Williams's book in Chapter 7. Chapter 3 is a greatly expanded version of an article which first appeared in *Essays in Criticism*, while Chapter 4 includes a few passages based on parts of an essay, 'Scott and the Idea of Justice', which was written for an anthology entitled *Scott's Mind and Art*. I have to thank Mr F. W. Bateson for permission thus to use my material in respect of the former, and Professor A. N. Jeffares and Messrs Oliver and Boyd likewise in respect of the latter. My discussion of *The Antiquary* in Chapter 4 incorporates material used in a paper given at Edinburgh University during the Scott Bicentenary Conference in 1971, and I am grateful to the organizers for the opportunity given me to test my approach to the book on a public platform.

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Note. All passages quoted from the Waverley Novels are taken from the Holyrood Edition (Gresham Publishing Co., London, n.d.), except in the case of *Old Mortality* where the text used is that of the Centenary Edition (Edinburgh, 1886), and page numbers refer to these texts. The chapter on the poetry makes use of *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, with introduction by W. M. Rossetti (London, Ward Lock and Co., n.d.). Part of Chapter 7 originally appeared as a review of Ioan Williams (ed.), *Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction* (London, 1968), and all I have said about Scott as a critic refers to the material assembled in that volume.