

Ainsley McIntosh, ed., *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2018, The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry. Pp. 486. £90. ISBN 9781474425193.

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Walter Scott's *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* was published in February 1808 when the poet was thirty-seven years old. The first edition of 2,000 copies sold out in less than two months, and with a third edition by the end of May, a total of 8,000 copies were sold in a little over three months. *Marmion* remained a best-seller throughout the nineteenth century. The Brontë sisters were admirers of the poem and it is mentioned in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847).

Marmion, a historical romance having the Battle of Flodden in 1513 as its focus, along with *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), has been regarded as the best of Scott's poetry. These three works were translated into Chinese between the 1980s and 1990s, and they remain the only poems by Scott that have Chinese translations.¹ In marked contrast to his novels, with the earliest Chinese translation of the Waverley Novels (*Ivanhoe*), by Lin Shu (林紓, 1852-1924), appearing in 1905, the Chinese have been introduced to Scott's poetry only relatively recently, and it is probably the case that most Chinese speaking readers today are unaware of the fact that Scott began his literary career as a poet, and that writing poetry was an activity that spanned his whole career. Moreover, it would follow that these readers would have no knowledge that it was Scott's poetry "that defined the new sensibility which is now termed Romanticism," as it is pointed out by Professor Alison Lumsden, the general editor of the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry (EEWSP) (ix).

When, early in the last century Lu Xun (魯迅, 1881-1936), a leading figure of modern Chinese literature, introduced Romantic poetry to his readers through his essay "On the Power of Mara Poetry" (1908), he accorded little

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¹ As I have pointed out in the Foreword to this special Scott issue, the Chinese translation of *The Lady of the Lake* appeared as early as the time when Taiwan was under Japanese rule (1895-1945). However, since this translated work was to some extent more like an adaptation of the original work, instead of a proper translation, the first generation of Chinese translation of Scott's poetry should be understood as appearing between the 1980s and 1990s.

space for discussion of Scott's poetry. Most of his attention was devoted to the Satanic school of poets, such as Byron and Shelley, as the revolutionary power of their works was what he admired the most. Lu Xun was not aware of the fact that the protagonist of Scott's *Marmion* is, in essence, a mingling of evil and magnificence, precisely the character he sought to introduce to Chinese readers. As Edgar Johnson points out, "the dark villain-hero [of *Marmion*] holds our interest and is the center of attraction, and the crashing scenes around him only enhance his dramatic fascination" (347). Besides, *Marmion* importantly provided the model for *Ivanhoe* (Scott's most renowned work) in its negotiation of the medieval. Thus well before the arrival of Byronic heroes, Scott had already produced his own highly ambiguous protagonists, as well as most of his major poetic works.

Despite the fact that Scott's poetry is as yet little known to Chinese speaking readers, growing numbers of this community of readers have, in the last ten years, been gradually drawn to Scott's novels. Therefore, I would like to say that the publication of the Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* is timely, as the work invites readers of Scott's novels to become aware of another important aspect of the writer's literary achievement.

The Edinburgh Edition of *Marmion*, published by the Edinburgh University Press in 2018, is the first scholarly edition of Scott's poem and is also the first of the ten-volume EEWSP to be published so far. Following the standards established by the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels (EEWN), the project devoted to the publication of the EEWSP was launched in 2010 to mark the anniversary of *The Lady of the Lake*. However, to my knowledge, Dr Ainsley McIntosh, the editor of the Edinburgh Edition of *Marmion* (and also the author of "Writing the Nation: Walter Scott's Narrative Poetry" in this special Scott issue), had as early as 2005 started to undertake a preliminary investigation of the textual issues involved in creating a scholarly edition of *Marmion* for her PhD thesis. The thesis was completed in 2009, and thus a template for the first scholarly edition of *Marmion* was completed. However, a further period (almost ten years) of investigation was undertaken by the editorial team of EEWSP to establish a robust methodology and policy for the edition as a whole. It took, in total, almost fifteen years for the publication of the Edinburgh Edition of *Marmion* to be completed. The entire set of Scott's poetry will be completed over the next eight years.

Along with the text of the poem, the Edinburgh Edition of *Marmion* provides an essay on the text, an emendation list, a historical note, explanatory notes, and a glossary of Scots, foreign and archaic words. According to McIntosh, this first scholarly edition of *Marmion* is based on the third edition of the poem, published in July 1808. She made it clear that each edition represents a different *Marmion* to its readers, and she carefully set out her reasons, in her “Essay on the Text,” for rejecting the manuscript and the first two editions (314-18). Another important contribution that McIntosh made is to apply the theorizing related to the process of socialisation the text may have gone through as offered by Jerome J. McGann in his *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (1985). McGann uses the term “socialisation” to describe the readers’ involvement when the text is produced. Influenced by McGann’s theory and also arising from her own findings, McIntosh adopts a different policy than that followed by the EEWN concerning the advice from Scott’s friends when the poet was writing the poem. As she argued, “Unlike other Scott works that had their gestation primarily in his own reading or in the historical record, *Marmion* had its genesis in a milieu of correspondence, dialogue and exchange” (290). This is one of the most important findings from McIntosh’s research.

Thus, for the above-mentioned reasons, the Edinburgh Edition of *Marmion* significantly offers a model for the forthcoming edition of Scott’s poetry. Moreover, McIntosh’s edition of *Marmion* is not just the first critical edition of the poem, but it will also be seen as a legacy bequeathed to latter generations of Scott’s readers. Readers world-wide will all benefit.

Works Cited

Johnson, Edgar. *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*. Hamish Hamilton, 1970. 2 vols.

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